



The Regional Civil Society Observatory  
المركز الإقليمي لمؤسسات المجتمع المدني

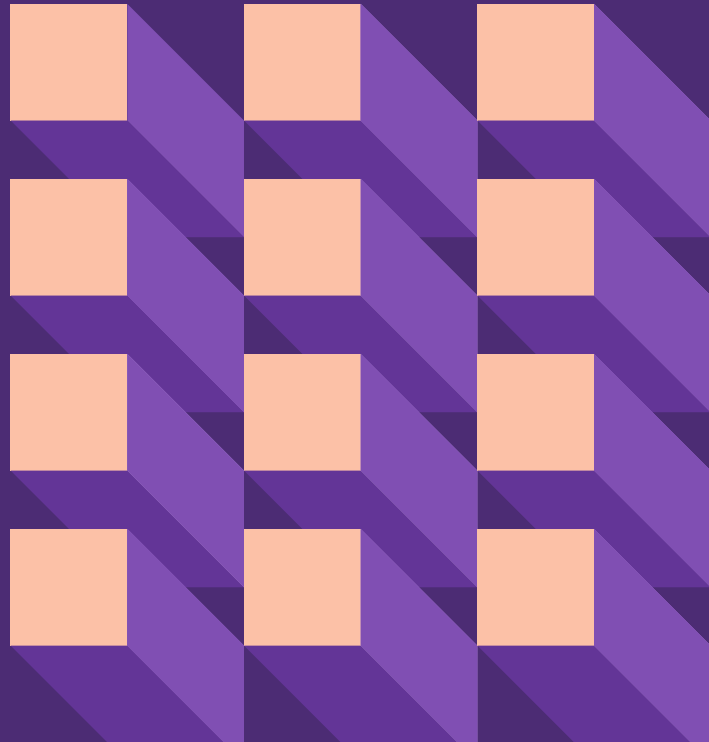


EuroMed Feminist Initiative  
المبادرة النسوية الأورومتوسطية  
Initiative Féministe EuroMed

## Regional Study

# Violence Against Women and Girls in the South Mediterranean

2020



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بتمويل من الاتحاد الأوروبي

# Regional Study

## **Violence Against Women and Girls in the South Mediterranean**

### 2020

Regional Civil Society Observatory (RCSO)  
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# Acknowledgment

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# Glossary

**Affirmative action:** Deliberate and proactive measures and actions to improve the rights, opportunities and access to resources and responsibilities of social groups who are considered to be discriminated against on the basis of gender, ethnic origin, age, disability or other characteristics, in order to compensate for structural power imbalances and overcome their exclusion from public and political spaces. For example, policies, programmes and procedures giving preference to women in job hiring, admission to higher education institutions and other social benefits.

**Assault:** Act of inflicting physical harm or unwanted physical contact upon a person or, in some specific legal definitions, a threat or attempt to commit such an action. Sexual assault is sexual activity with another person who does not consent. It is a violation of bodily integrity and sexual autonomy and is broader than the notion of 'rape', especially because (a) it may be committed by other means than force or violence, and (b) it does not necessarily entail penetration.

**Conflict-related sexual violence:** Incidents or patterns of sexual violence (including rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilisation, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity) that is directly or indirectly linked (temporally, geographically or causally) to a conflict. This link with conflict may be evident in the profile of the perpetrator (e.g. affiliated with a state or non-state armed group), the profile of the victim (e.g. a member of a persecuted political, ethnic or religious group), the climate of impunity (e.g. associated with state collapse), cross-border consequences (e.g. displacement or trafficking in persons) and/or violations of the terms of a ceasefire agreement.

**Constitution:** A set of fundamental principles and values, typically contained in a single document, which establishes and regulates the division of powers within the state, as well as the rights, freedoms, and obligations enjoyed by individuals in that state.

**Culture:** A set of customs, morals, traditions that are related to a society in a specific time and place. The Beijing Platform for Action, 1995 affirms that: "No state may refer to national custom as an excuse for not guaranteeing all individuals human rights and fundamental freedoms."

**Democracy:** Political system, or system of decision making involving periodic elections and a plural party system, in which all individuals have an equal access to power, duties and responsibilities. Democracy implies freedom, dignity, physical and psychological integrity, equal access to resources and opportunities, health, education, and decision making for all regardless of gender, ethnic origin, disability etc. It also implies the elimination of any discrimination based on these or any other characteristics, as well as a comprehensive approach to women's rights as universal human rights.

**Disability:** A long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder the full and effective participation of a person in society on an equal basis with others.

**Discrimination against women:** "Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of women and men, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." (CEDAW, Article 1)

**Gender:** Gender is the social construct of what is 'masculine' and 'feminine'. "Gender is used to describe those characteristics of women and men which are socially constructed, while sex refers to those which are biologically determined. People are born female or male but learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men. This learned behaviour makes up gender identity and determines gender roles." (World Health Organization, 2002).

**Gender-Based Violence:** Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a pervasive form of violence and harassment rooted in unequal power relations between (and among) women and men, and it both reflects and reinforces the subordinate status of women in many societies (Cruz and Klinger, 2011). This term qualifies gender inequality as a cause of violence, without identifying the victim or the perpetrator. While anyone can be victim of such violence, including those who do not conform to gender stereotypes or to traditional, societal expectations based on gender – for example, LGBTI persons – the vast majority of reported GBV cases concern women.

**Gender equality:** The principle of gender equality refers to women and men enjoying the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities in all areas of life. Everyone, regardless of gender, has the right to work and support themselves, to balance career and family life, to participate in political and public life on equal footing and to live without the fear of abuse or violence. Gender equality also means that women and men are of equal worth and are equally protected before the law, in law, and in practice.

**Gender mainstreaming:** Gender mainstreaming is a political and legal strategy to tackle formal and informal barriers to achieving gender equality by integrating the gender equality and gender power perspective into all areas and at all levels of society. “The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetrated.” (ECOSOC, 1997)

**Gender power relations:** A system of socially created relations that reflect the way in which power is shaped by considerations of gender and provides men with privileged access to power and material resources as well as status in society. Gender power relations cross all categories such as class, ethnicity, skin colour, age etc., and contribute to other forms of inequality.

**Gender power structures:** The prevailing patriarchal order of power structures in society which determine how power is held according to gender roles and expectations in which men are generally placed above women and which sustain and reproduce barriers to gender equality. Understanding these structures is a point of departure for approaching legislation and exploring fair treatment.

**Harassment:** Unwanted or unwelcome behaviour or conduct with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

**Sexual harassment** includes “such unwelcome sexually determined behaviour as physical contact and advances, sexually coloured remarks, showing pornography and sexual demand, whether by words or actions. Such conduct can be humiliating and may constitute a health and safety problem; it is discriminatory when the woman has reasonable ground to believe that her objection would disadvantage her in connection with her employment, including recruitment or promotion, or when it creates a hostile working environment.”

**‘Honour’ crimes:** “A crime that is, or has been, justified or explained (or mitigated) by the perpetrator of that crime on the grounds that it was committed as a consequence of the need to defend or protect the honour of the family.” (“So-called ‘honour crimes,’” rapporteur of the Council of Europe Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, 2003 <https://endvawnow.org/en/articles/731-defining-honourcrimes-and-honour-killings.html>)

**Intersectionality:** The interconnected nature of social categorisations such as ethnicity, origin, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, creates overlapping and interdependent levels of discrimination or disadvantage. “An intersectional approach to violence against women and girls [VAWG] includes a consideration of where gender intersects with other inequalities/oppressions (sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity, indigeneity, immigration status, disability) to produce unique experiences of violence. By understanding the different ways in which violence is perpetrated and experienced, an intersectional praxis can design and develop appropriate context-specific responses when addressing VAWG” (“The value of intersectionality in understanding violence against women and girls”, UN Women 2019 <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/10/the-value-of-intersectionality-in-understanding-violence-against-women-and-girls>)

**Rape:** Penetration to any extent of any body part of a person who does not consent with a sexual organ and/or the invasion of the genital or anal opening of a person who does not consent with any object or body part. (Thematic Glossary of current terminology related to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the context of the United Nations, Second Edition, 24 July 2017)

**Secularism:** The principle of the separation of the public, political and legal spheres from religion.

**Sexual abuse:** Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. ‘Sexual abuse’ is a broad term, which includes a number of acts including rape, sexual assault, sex with a minor and sexual activity with a minor. (Thematic Glossary of current terminology related to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the context of the United Nations, Second Edition, 24 July 2017)

**Sexual exploitation:** Any actual or attempted abuse of position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

**Social norms:** Unwritten rules of behaviour that are considered acceptable in a group or society or common standards within a social group regarding socially acceptable or appropriate behaviour in particular social situations, the breach of which has social consequences.

**Violence against women:** All forms of violence perpetrated against women. “Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in discrimination, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberties whether occurring in public or private spheres.” (UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women 1993) While the term violence against women puts the spotlight on the victims, the term “male violence against women” is also used to highlight the perpetrator, in acknowledgement of the fact that 90% of its perpetrators are men. (World Health Organization)

# Acronyms

<b>ACT</b>	<b>Association for Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development</b>
<b>AFTURD</b>	<b>Association of Tunisian Women for Research on Development</b>
<b>AWO</b>	<b>Arab Women Organization of Jordan</b>
<b>CEDAW</b>	<b>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</b>
<b>CoE</b>	<b>Council of Europe</b>
<b>CBO</b>	<b>Community-Based Organisation</b>
<b>CSOs</b>	<b>Civil Society Organisations</b>
<b>EFI</b>	<b>EuroMed Feminist Initiative</b>
<b>FARD</b>	<b>Femmes Algériennes Revendiquant leurs Droits</b>
<b>FGM</b>	<b>Female Genital Mutilation</b>
<b>GDP</b>	<b>Gross Domestic Product</b>
<b>GII</b>	<b>Gender Inequality Index</b>
<b>HDI</b>	<b>Human Development Index</b>
<b>KII</b>	<b>Key Informant Interviews</b>
<b>MENA</b>	<b>Middle East and North Africa</b>
<b>NGOs</b>	<b>Non-government Organisations</b>
<b>OECD</b>	<b>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</b>
<b>PWWSD</b>	<b>Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development</b>
<b>PVE</b>	<b>Preventing Violent Extremism</b>
<b>RCSO</b>	<b>Regional Civil Society Observatory</b>
<b>RDFL</b>	<b>The Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering</b>
<b>SDG</b>	<b>Sustainable Development Goal</b>
<b>UAF</b>	<b>Union pour l'Action Féministe</b>
<b>UfM</b>	<b>Union for Mediterranean</b>
<b>UNDP</b>	<b>United Nations Development Program</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>
<b>VAWG</b>	<b>Violence Against Women and Girls</b>
<b>WPSA</b>	<b>Women, Peace and Security Agenda</b>

## BACKGROUND

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a global phenomenon and is recognised, in line with international human rights standards, as a violation of women's human rights. Important efforts have been made in recent years to adapt national legislation, strategies and policies to international standards to address and prevent VAWG more effectively.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial process on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, with adopted Ministerial Action Plans and Declarations from Istanbul 2006, Marrakech 2009, Paris 2013 and Cairo 2017 have reinforced the commitment of the governments to promote and strengthen women's rights and gender equality as an essential foundation for socio-economic development. The last UfM Ministerial Declaration on women's rights from 2017 presents a Roadmap for Action to achieve this objective.

Ministers committed to enhance governmental efforts towards:

- Increasing women's participation in public life, decision making, and economic activity.
- Combating all forms of VAWG.
- Challenging harmful cultural and social norms and eliminating gender stereotypes, particularly in education and the media.
- Implementing agreed actions and strengthening cooperation.

Furthermore, they agreed to establish a follow-up mechanism to monitor progress on agreed indicators, evaluate the gender gap and provide recommendations to policymakers and stakeholders, in coordination with existing gender equality monitoring mechanisms and programmes in the region.

The Declaration also highlights the importance of an inclusive approach and the role of CSOs. Many recommendations emerged from the Gender Regional Platform 2015-2017<sup>1</sup> and the Euro-Med Civil Society Conference held in 22-23 November 2017<sup>2</sup>. In the areas of "Strengthening regional co-operation and welcoming an inclusive and pragmatic methodology of work", the Declaration states:

"The Ministers welcome the contribution and work accomplished by CSOs, including social partners' organisations and the dialogue led by them on women's empowerment and gender equality, and acknowledge their understanding, experience and great value in helping develop and implement adequate responses to gender inequality, as well as their key involvement in understanding and removing barriers to women's enjoyment of their rights, and achieving greater empowerment of women and girls in the Euro-Mediterranean region."

Civil society plays an important role in supporting the development, implementation and monitoring of policies and strategies for gender equality to ensure effectiveness and real progress in implementation.

In 2019, the Regional Civil Society Observatory (RCSO) on VAWG was established as an independent civil society mechanism to follow up and support the implementation of the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society<sup>3</sup> (27 November 2017, Cairo), in the areas of combating all forms of VAWG, implementation of Women, Peace, Security Agenda (WPSA), and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE).

The RCSO is hosted by EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) in Amman in the frame of the regional programme, "Combating Violence against Women and Girls in the Southern Mediterranean" funded by the European Union (EU). Its aim is to provide an update on the status of VAWG legislation, policies and actions in South Mediterranean States.

1 <https://www.efi-fe.org/gender-regional-platform-policy-recommendations>

2 [www.efi-fe.org/declaration-euro-med-women-s-rights-civil-society-conference-2](https://www.efi-fe.org/declaration-euro-med-women-s-rights-civil-society-conference-2)

3 The Declaration can be found at: <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/11/womenfinaldeclaration.pdf>



Between December 2019 and November 2020, the RCSO conducted its first regional study on “Violence Against Women and Girls in the South Mediterranean”, focusing on the seven countries in the regional programme: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia.

The RCSO research team set two specific objectives for the study:

- ▶ To provide an overview through relevant quantitative data on women’s experience of VAWG, their level of awareness and attitude towards VAWG.
- ▶ To gain insight into people’s awareness and perceptions of VAWG and existing services, as well as their knowledge of international and national frameworks.

**The study looked at three main areas:**

1. Characteristics of VAWG, using data reflecting women’s own experiences and attitudes.
2. Efficiency of existing legal frameworks and public policies to counteract VAWG.
3. Awareness of relevant national and international instruments, including the UfM Ministerial Declaration.

The study is part of ongoing efforts to raise awareness of VAWG among stakeholders, including policymakers, law enforcement agencies, civil society organisations (CSOs) and the general public including women themselves. It aims to highlight effective approaches which help to realise women’s right to a life free from violence.

## GENERAL CONTEXT OF VAWG IN THE SOUTH MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

Despite the diversity in this region, South Mediterranean countries have several cultural, historical and religious aspects in common, facing shared challenges in terms of gender equality and VAWG. Over a third (35%) of married, or formerly married women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime, which is slightly higher than the global average.<sup>4</sup> Women in the region make up fewer than 1 in 5 (19%) of all members of parliaments.<sup>5</sup> The region also has some of the lowest rates of women's economic participation in the world. According to estimates modelled by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 2019, the rate of women's participation in the labour force in MENA countries is 20%, very low compared to the global average of 47%, and 46% for all low- and middle-income countries.<sup>6</sup>

The role of women is a regular subject of public debate, and campaigns for equal treatment are strongly resisted by patriarchal and conservative forces. Policies often reinforce women's traditional roles and influence family structures among both urban and tribal kinship groups. These divisions are reproduced via 'homosocial capital', networks of men who leverage their resources to maintain power.<sup>7</sup>

Men are the pillars of patriarchal societies and power structures across the MENA region<sup>8</sup> and women suffer violence through legal, economic, sociocultural, and political discrimination. VAWG is rooted in the social and cultural norms of male superiority and dominance. VAWG may be carried out by individuals in private and/or by institutional forces.

Occupation, conflict, and the consequences of conflict (including displacement and expropriation) aggravate the situation, as women are more likely to experience certain kinds of violence such as restrictions on their freedom of movement. Many displaced and refugee women are solely responsible for earning money for their family and taking care of their children. They are double vulnerable to VAWG and to extreme poverty. Trafficking, prostitution, displacement and imprisonment by armed forces or militias are common forms of VAWG in Libya, Yemen, Palestine, Iraq, and Syria<sup>9</sup>.

Recent studies indicate that VAWG in the South Mediterranean persists. In Morocco, more than half of women (54%) have experienced violence<sup>10</sup>. In Jordan 11,923 cases of VAWG were reported in 2018<sup>11</sup>. In Egypt, 92% of women and girls between 15 and 49 years of age have experienced Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)<sup>12</sup>. Tunisia and Algeria have the lowest rates of child marriage at 2% to 3% respectively<sup>13</sup>, while 35% of Syrian refugee women in Lebanon currently aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, incidents of VAWG are widely under reported in the region, as domestic violence is typically treated as something that women must endure in private. According to UN Women, more than 6 out of 10 women victims of violence in Arab countries refrain from asking for support or protection of any sort.<sup>15</sup> In Morocco, it is estimated that 90% of victims of VAWG refuse to file a complaint.<sup>16</sup>

South Mediterranean countries are still far from achieving gender equality in political and economic participation. Women generate only 18% of the MENA region's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), despite accounting for half of the working age population<sup>17</sup>. Women's political participation ranges from 4,5 % to 31%.

The series of shocks and profound changes in recent years have delayed addressing gender equality legislation. Some countries have experienced political transitions leading to major constitutional changes, while others have seen a more gradual transformation.

4 WHO, Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence (Geneva, 2013), p. 47, at: [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241\\_564625\\_eng.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241_564625_eng.pdf)

5 Women in National Parliaments, at: <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/world010915.htm>

6 Modelled ILO estimates, ILOSTAT database. Data retrieved in June 21, 2020 at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>

7 Women and Gender in Middle East Politics, POMEPS studies 19 (2016), Middle East Political Science, P13

8 Understanding Masculinities, International Men and Gender Equality Survey, UN Women 2017, P256

9 OXFAM, Factsheet: Women, Peace and Security in the Middle East and North Africa region, P4, at:

[https://knowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/oxfam\\_women-peace-and-security-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-region-factsheet.pdf](https://knowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/oxfam_women-peace-and-security-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-region-factsheet.pdf)

10 Government official report at <https://bit.ly/2PokqEg>

11 Solidarity is Global Institute -JQ(SIGI), Periodic Report13/1/2019

12 UNFPA Egypt website, at <https://egypt.unfpa.org/en/node/22544>

13 Yumnah Hattas, Philippa Tucker, AIDS accountability International, a snapshot assessment of child marriage in Africa, 2016, P8 and P10, at: [http://www.aidsaccountability.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Child-Marriage-SC\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.aidsaccountability.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Child-Marriage-SC_WEB.pdf).

14 Susan Andrea Bartels et al., "Making sense of child, early and forced marriage among Syrian refugee girls: a mixed methods study in Lebanon," BMJ global health vol.3(1) (2018)

15 UN Women Survey at: <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

16 Government official report, at <https://bit.ly/2PokqEg>

17 Women's Economic Empowerment in Selected MENA Countries, OECD, 2017

Despite setbacks, in recent years many countries have improved legislation or introduced laws to address VAWG, often following advocacy campaigns by women's rights organisations: In 2017 a specific law on eliminating VAWG was enacted in Tunisia, which criminalised economic, sexual, political and psychological violence against women and enabled survivors to access necessary services including legal assistance and psychological support. In 2018 Morocco adopted law No.103.13 on eliminating violence against women. In 2017, Article 308 of Jordan's penal code, which exempted the perpetrator from the punishment if he married the victim, was annulled and parliament endorsed a law on Protection from Domestic Violence, followed by Palestine in 2018, adopting law No. 5, repealing same Article 308 of the 1960 Penal Code. In Egypt the penal code of 2018 criminalised FGM. In Lebanon, a law about protecting women from domestic violence was endorsed in 2014.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) requires State parties to protect women rights through legislation. It provides a complete definition of sex-based discrimination and recognises the root causes of discrimination against women. Despite ratification of CEDAW, many South Mediterranean countries have reservations on some articles. Article 9, which is related to women's equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children, is not ratified by Jordan and Lebanon. Article 16 related to gender equality in all matters relating to marriage and family relations, is not ratified by Algeria, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. Algeria still has reservation to article 15, which is related to women's equal rights to men with regards to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their domicile. Morocco maintains a declaration to article 15 (4) stating that it can only be bound by the provisions of this paragraph, in particular those relating to the right of women to choose their residence and domicile, as long as these do not contradict articles 34 and 36 of the Moroccan personal status code. Tunisia declared that it shall not take any organizational or legislative decision in conformity with the requirements of the Convention where such a decision would conflict with the provisions of Chapter I of the Tunisian Constitution, which establishes Islam as the State religion.

Although not applicable to every country in the South Mediterranean, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) is a key point of reference in combating VAWG. To be noted that the UfM Declaration explicitly refers to the Istanbul Convention and calls for greater awareness of its provisions. Non-Council of Europe members can ask to be signatories, as is currently the case for Tunisia.

Improving legislation is a first necessary step to address violence and discrimination. However, gender equality, also requires equal rights as well as access to services and resources, economic opportunities, and political voice. Women's improved role in society is key to achieving this, as is raising awareness and changing attitudes.

# METHODOLOGY

The research team conducted a desk review of existing studies and data on VAWG in the region and on country level. This was followed by both quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyse VAWG and discrimination against women within the legal environment, to shed light on areas where progress is being made and where further actions are needed.

## Quantitative phase

The quantitative phase aimed at identifying women's personal experience awareness and perception regarding VAWG. In total, 2870 women in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia completed questionnaires. The representativity of the sample was ensured in the seven countries by including four diversified governorates in each country and both rural and urban areas.

## Qualitative phase

During the qualitative phase, 137 in-depth interviews were conducted with privileged observers to know about their perceptions and analyses of national laws and existing services to tackle VAWG and of international agreements, including the 4th UfM Ministerial Declaration. The interviews were conducted in Arabic. The privileged observers include representatives of relevant ministries, the police force, the justice system and medical services, gender experts from CSOs, researchers and the media.

The topic guide for the structured interviews developed by the research team was validated during the RCSO Coordination Committee meeting held in Amman on 25-26 September 2019.

## 1. Data collection process

A team of researchers and data collectors carried out the study in each country. The field data collection teams were composed of a team leader and four data collectors selected by the partners and member organisations – a total of 35 data collectors were recruited.

For the qualitative phase, two experts in each country were selected to carry out in-depth interviews.

The data collection team leaders and the interviewers received training delivered by the RCSO, to make sure that the rules and code of ethics both for the interviews and for the self-administrated questionnaires were known and respected.

The data collection process took place between December 2019 and January 2020. The surveys and in-depth interviews were administered under the guidance of EFI partner organisation in Algeria, Femmes Algériennes Revendiquant leurs Droits (FARD) and by EFI member organisations in the other countries: Association for Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development (ACT) in Egypt, Arab Women Organisation (AWO) in Jordan, Association Najdeh and Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering (RDFL) in Lebanon, Union pour l'Action Féministe (UAF) in Morocco, Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD) in Palestine and Association of Tunisian Women for Research on Development (AFTURD) in Tunisia.

To make sure the sample was representative, half of the questionnaires were administrated in cooperation with community-based organisations (CBOs) in the selected villages and towns. The data collectors highlighted the importance of the study and made sure women were willingly filling in the questionnaires.

All questionnaires were shipped to the RCSO in Amman for data entry and analysis, except for those completed in Algeria, who used KoBo Toolbox link to enter data online.

In-depth interviews were conducted during the same period as the questionnaires. The RCSO sent an invitation letter to each privileged observer explaining the objectives of the study and inviting them to participate. All interviews were conducted face to face in Arabic and took one to one and a half hour. Audio recordings of the sessions were made if participants did not object to it; otherwise only written notes were taken. The transcripts of interviews were sent to the RCSO for analysis.

## Ethical considerations of the survey

Due to the sensitivity of the subject, procedures were put in place to guarantee the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents. All respondents were informed of the objectives of the survey and provided their explicit consent to participate. For some questions, participants completed the questionnaire directly themselves and not through the data collector, except when they needed help. Once completed, the questionnaire was immediately put inside an envelope to ensure the privacy of the participants.

Participants in the in-depth interviews were as well assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of the process before each interview.

## Data entry and analysis

RCSO ensured that handling, transportation and storage of the completed questionnaires were carefully managed. After receiving all the questionnaire responses, the information was entered and compiled using KoBo software, ahead of full quantitative analysis. Researchers ensured that data collection techniques were disaggregated according to the country of intervention or geographical location. A data analyst conducted statistical analysis of the data. The data entry process was validated by the researchers.

## Data collection tests

The questionnaire was tested with a few participants to measure the time needed to complete it and to make sure that the questions were understandable. To reflect diversity in culture and language, some words were amended to suit the national accents and idioms.

For the in-depth interviews, a small-scale simulation of the data collection process was conducted to check for gaps and adapt some questions. Accordingly, two to three interviews were carried out to help confirm the participants' understanding, and the flow, coherence, clarity, and adequacy of the questions. The time planned per interview was assessed as well.

## 2. Challenges and limitations

This first study could not take into account other factors that intersect with discrimination against women and girls, such as disability, social origin, refugee or migrant status. This would have required wider sampling and more resources. Due to time constraints, as both interviews and questionnaires were completed in two months, the questionnaire was not tested in all countries. However, the questionnaire benefited from the contributions of both partner organisations and data collection team leaders.

The length of the questionnaire was among the reasons some women gave for refusing to participate in the study. Besides a small number of questionnaires were excluded from analysis because they had not been completed. In Lebanon women asked the data collectors to read the questionnaire aloud and fill in their answers for them. This imposed a greater burden on the data collectors.

In all countries the open-ended questions posed challenges as some of them were perceived as difficult. Explaining the content of all the different types and forms of questions to women who were illiterate, or had low literacy, took longer time and increased the work on data collectors.

Questions related to violence and sexuality were challenging for data collectors in all countries as these topics are not often discussed with women. Some women in rural areas in Tunisia refused to participate in the study and speak about violence because it is considered embarrassing or taboo. In Jordan, some women declined to answer due to the "intimate" nature of the questions and concerns about privacy. On the other hand, many women in rural areas in Tunisia who showed enthusiasm for participating, encouraged the data collectors to continue this type of research to bring about policies that protect women's rights.

In Algeria there were difficulties in shipping the questionnaires to the regional office in Amman, so KoBo Toolbox software was used to transmit the completed data. Three planned in-depth interviews were not conducted due to time constraints. Bad weather in some mountain areas like the Meknes region of Fez in Morocco also delayed the process in Morocco. In Tunisia while 341 completed questionnaires were received, 38 questionnaires were not completed. This represents a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, which did not affect the results of the study. Lebanon was going through political upheaval during the survey period, due to public demonstrations and widespread protests. At the beginning of the study, it was a challenge for the data collectors to reach the office as many roads were closed. In response, data collectors were assigned work in their own areas. Palestine's political situation presented challenges to data collectors in some cases, due to restrictions on mobility. The data collectors had to distribute extra questionnaires in each area to mitigate the problem. It was challenging in some areas to find a discreet space in which women could have privacy and feel safe while answering the questions. Some women were understandably very emotional (in some cases crying) when the questions addressed previous experiences of violence.

To address these challenges and accommodate the requests of the respondents, data collectors worked flexible hours and the timeframe of data collection was extended. The data collectors made additional effort and took longer time coordinating and implementing field work and motivating women to participate by explaining the importance of the study, as in Egypt.

Regarding the in-depth interviews, it was difficult in some cases to make appointments due to work and travel commitments. In addition, representatives of government institutions often required an official letter addressed to their administration and the approval of their line manager to participate. This caused delay and at times difficulties for the interviewers.

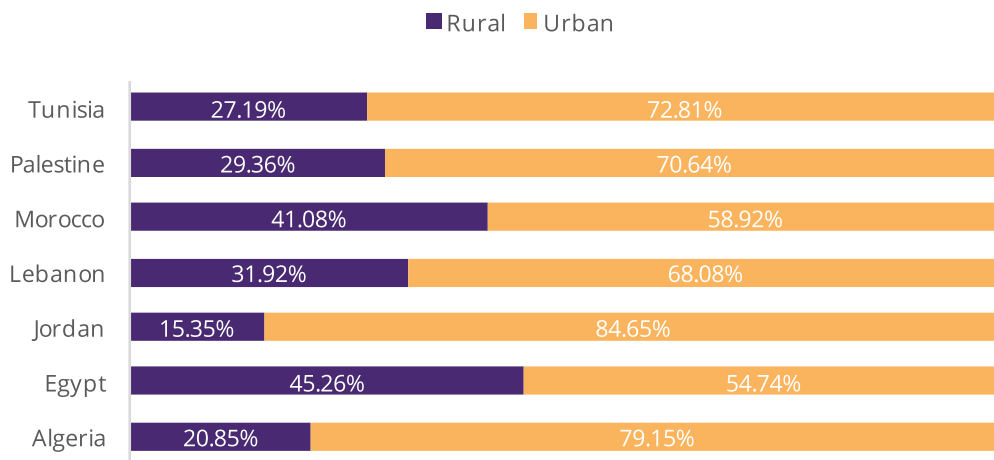
## QUANTITATIVE PHASE: SURVEY RESULTS

### Characteristics of survey respondents

A total of 2,870 women participated in the questionnaire. The highest proportion of respondents are aged 26-40 years (40%), followed by 41-60 years (27%), and 18-25 years (25%). One third (34%) of the respondents has completed secondary school, and 33% has received higher education.

The figures below present respondents' distribution by geographic area, completed education level, and education group.

**Figure 1: % of respondents disaggregated by rural and urban areas per country**



**Figure 2: Respondents level of education**

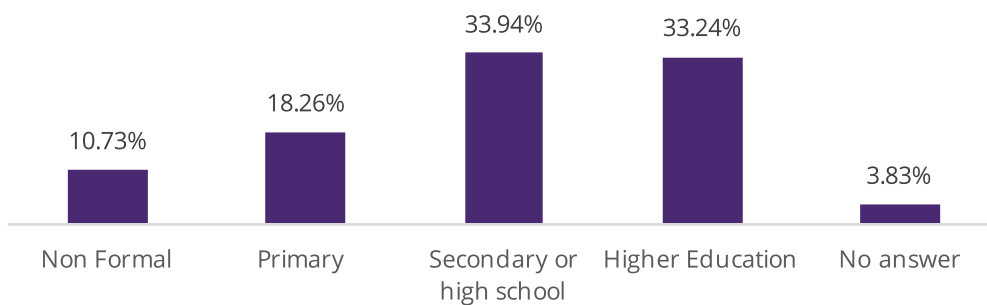


Figure 3: Respondents' level of education, by country

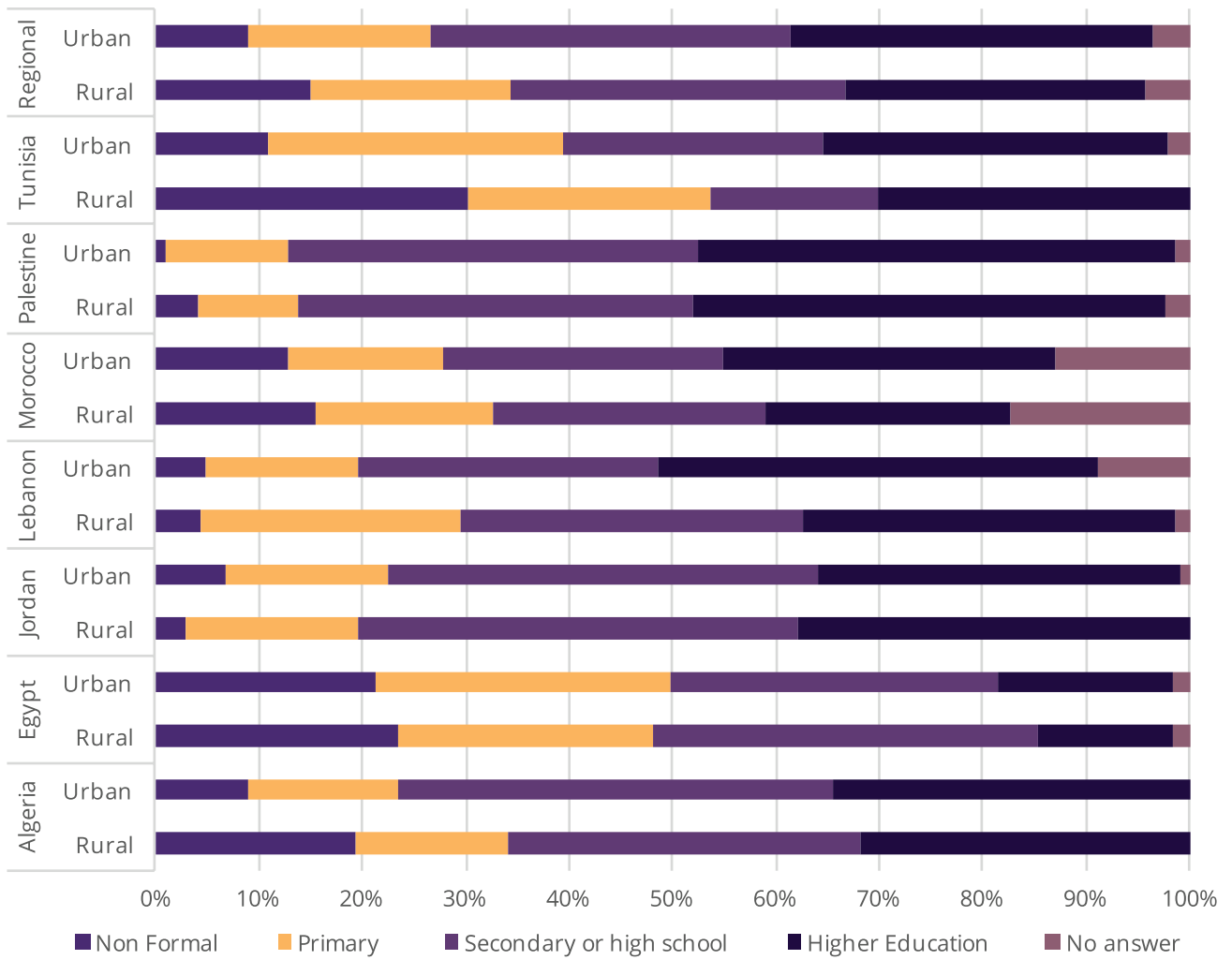


Figure 4: Percentage of respondents per age group

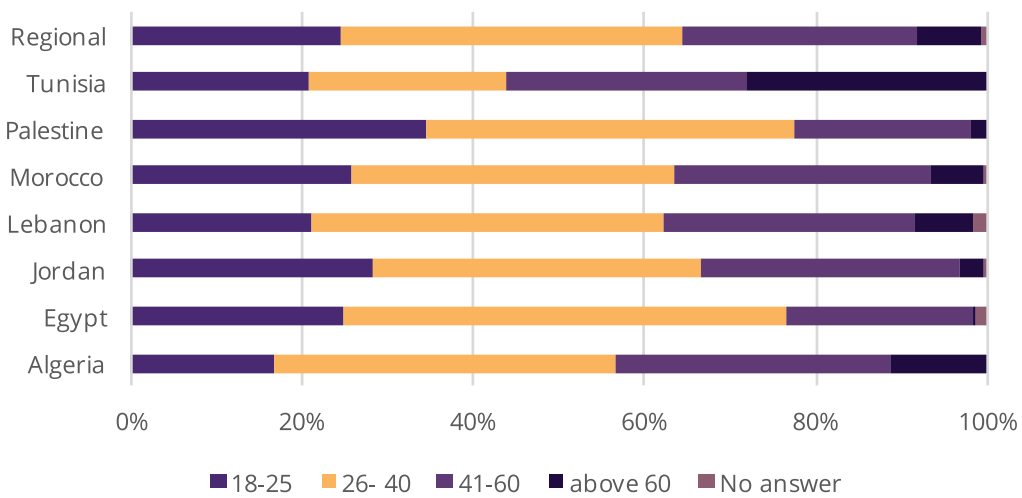
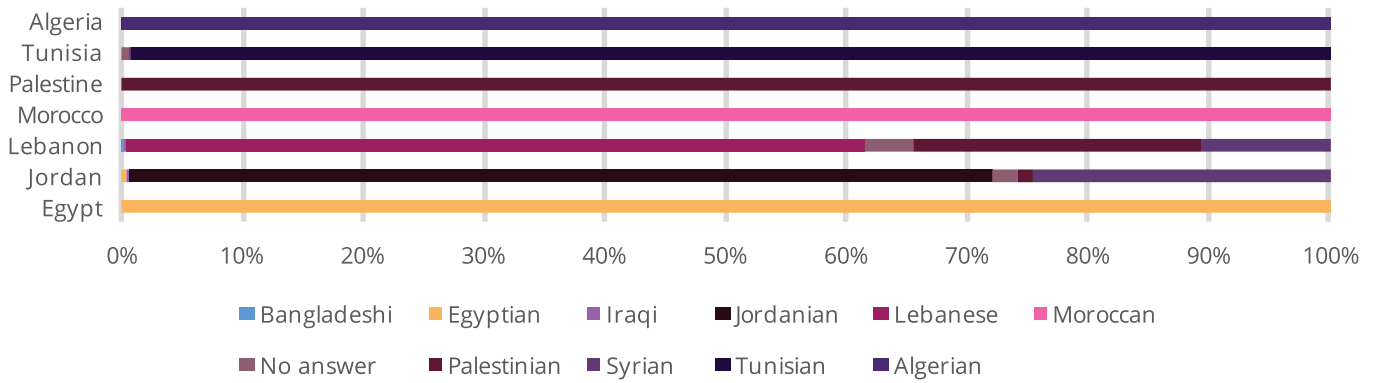


Figure 5: Nationality of respondents per country



### 1. Legal framework

At the regional level, only 43% of women respondents stated that women’s rights and participation are recognised by law in the same way as men. Only 33% believed that women have the same right of movement in public space, even though all countries have ratified article 15 of CEDAW relating to women’s right to free movement and freedom to choose their residence and domicile except Algeria, and Morocco which maintains declaration to this article 15(4).

However, most South Mediterranean countries have not yet aligned their national laws to give women the right to choose their residency, travel, and hold their own passports without a male guardian’s consent.

Figure 6: Women’s rights and equal participation recognised by the law in the same way as men, all countries

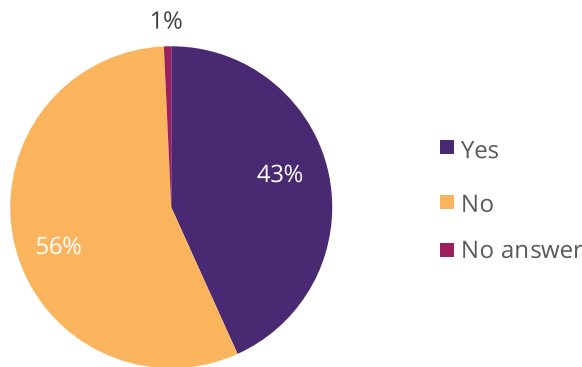
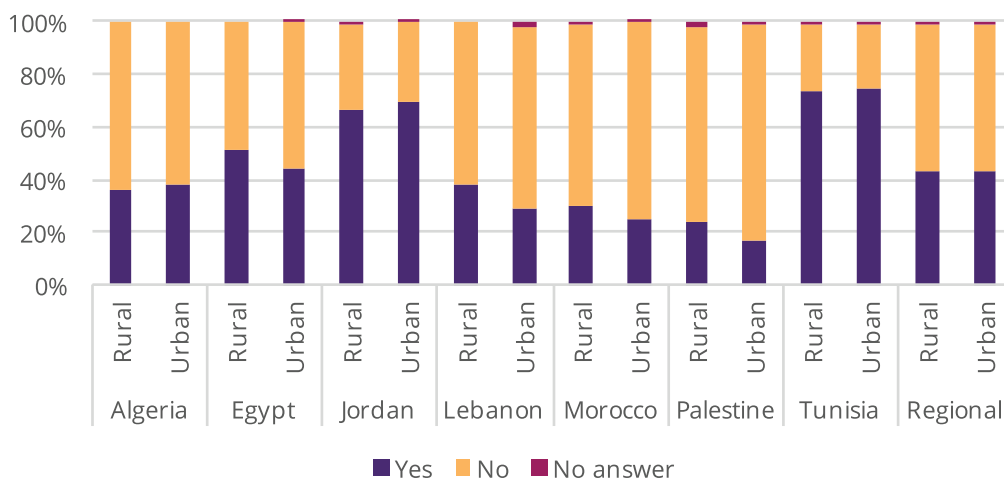


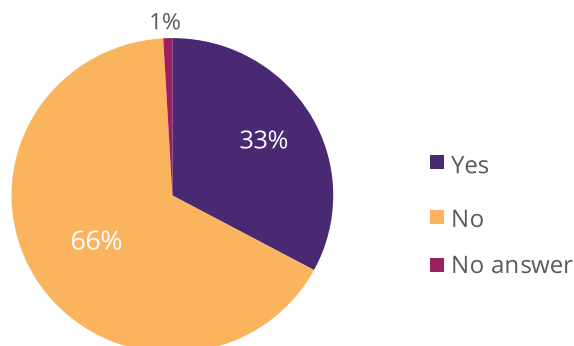
Figure 7: Women’s rights and equal participation recognised by the law in the same way as men, by country



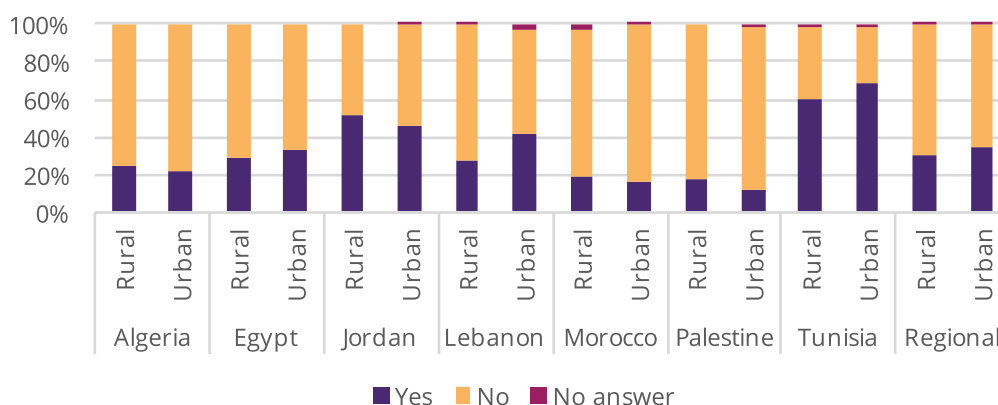


The highest percentage of respondents who said that women have equal rights of movement in public as men was 66.3%, in Tunisia. National laws in Tunisia are considered advanced in this respect compared to other countries in the South Mediterranean. Women's perception of their right to freedom of movement is reflecting social and family norms which discourage women's mobility and participation in public life.

**Figure 8: Women have the same rights of movement in public space as men, all countries**



**Figure 9: Women have the same rights of movement in public space as men, by country**



Half of the women reported that they could apply for a passport or identification papers for themselves or their children in the same way as men. The highest percentage reporting this was in Algeria (78.5%).

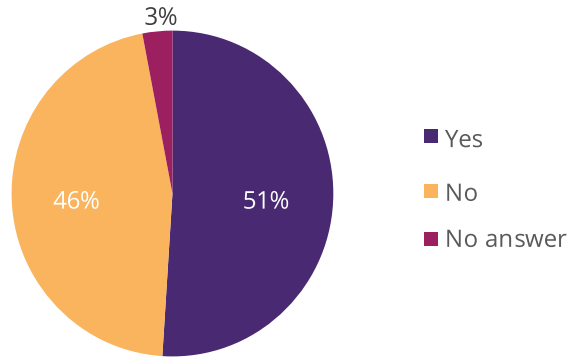
In Algeria women can pass their nationality to their children even if they are married to foreigners. This is also the case in Tunisia, but not in Jordan and Lebanon.

A relatively high percentage (17.8%) of respondents in Lebanon had a "no answer" for this question. A probable explanation is the number of Syrian and Palestinian refugees in the country who participated in the study (24% Palestinians and 10.5% Syrians), many of whom do not have Lebanese passports and identification cards.

Figure 10: Women can apply for a paper or identification papers for themselves in the same way as men

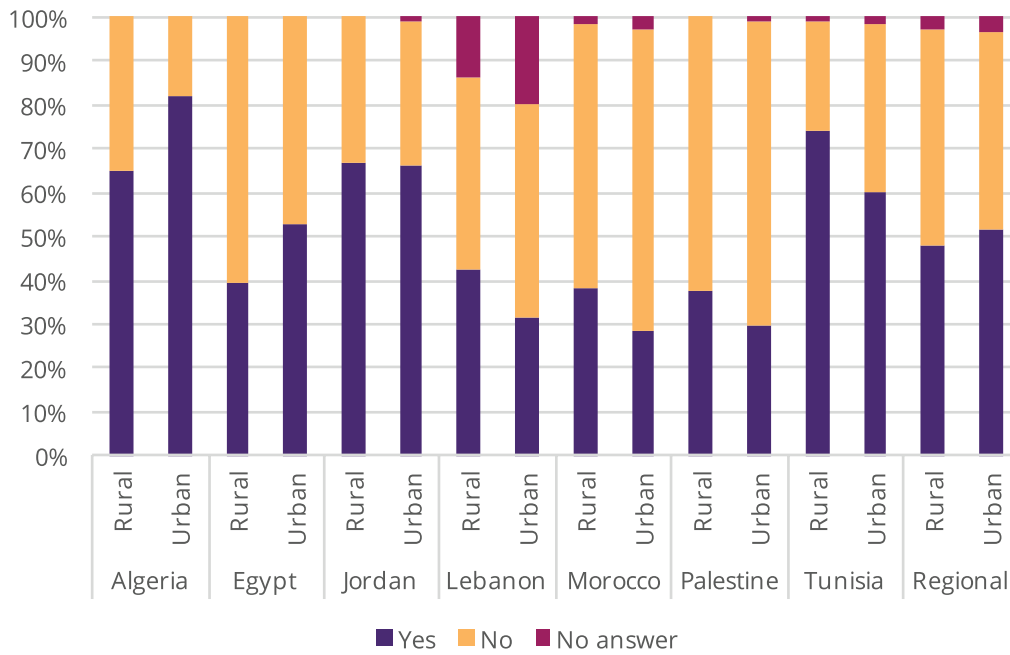
**A. All countries**

**Figure 10: Women can apply for a passport or any identification papers for her or her children in the same way as men**



**B. By country**

**Figure 11: Women can apply for a passport or any identification papers for her or her children in the same way as men**

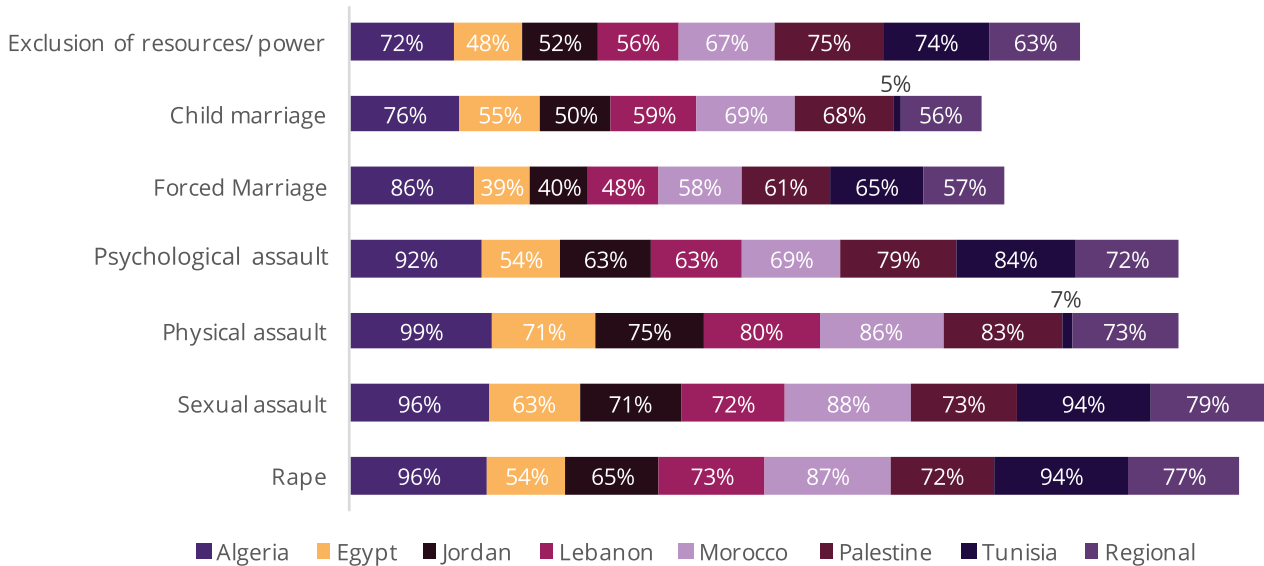


## 2. Awareness and perception of VAWG

### What is VAWG?

When asked what they understand by VAWG, respondents most frequently answered: sexual assault (79%), rape (77%), physical assault, (73%), exclusion from power (63%), and to a lesser degree forced marriage (57%) and child marriage (56%).

Figure 12: Respondents understanding of VAWG

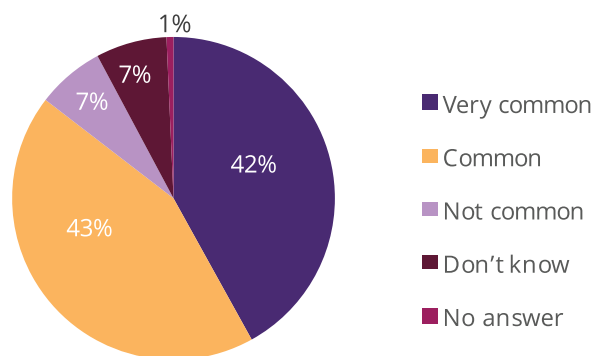


### Prevalence of VAWG

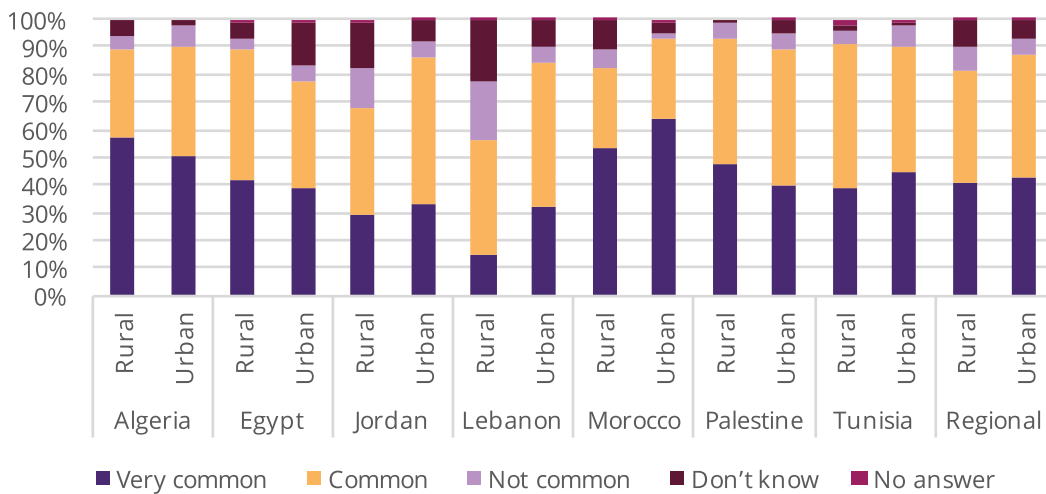
VAWG is “common” or “very common” for 85% of respondents, and according to 62% of them, it is on the rise. These findings are consistent with the results of other national studies in the Arab region, indicating that VAWG rates are increasing. All the privileged observers interviewed for the study confirmed this.

To be noted that in rural Lebanon only 55% of survey respondents consider VAWG to be “common” or “very common”.

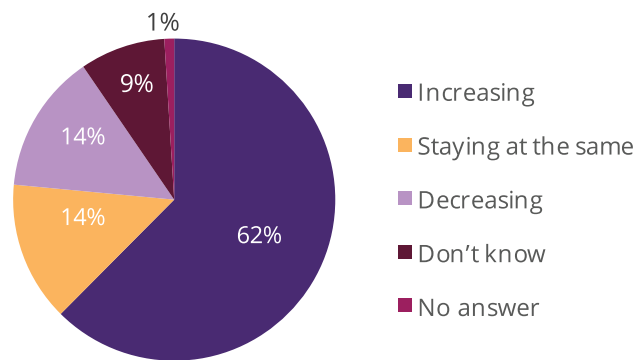
Figure 13: Respondents' perception of the prevalence of VAWG in the community, all countries



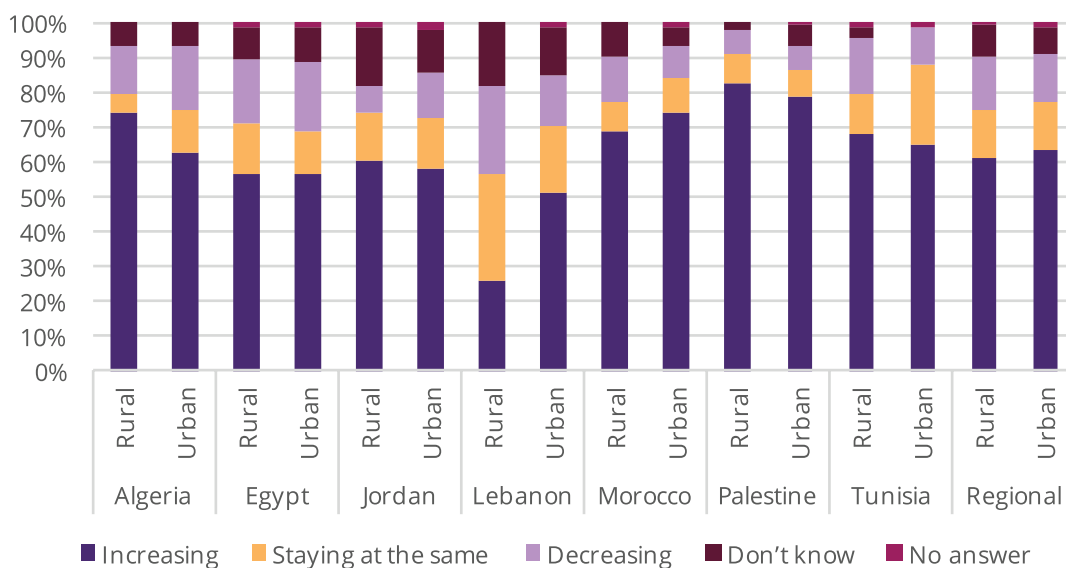
**Figure 14: Respondents' perception of the level of prevalence of VAWG in the community, by country**



**Figure 15: Respondents' perception of the level of VAWG, all countries**



**Figure 16: Respondents' perception of the level of VAWG, by country**



## Most frequent forms of VAWG

Physical assault is the most frequent form of VAWG in women's communities (59%), followed by psychological assault (39%), sexual assault (21%), forced marriage (18%), and then exclusion from education, health and inheritance (1%).

Figure 17: Most frequently forms of VAWG spread in all countries

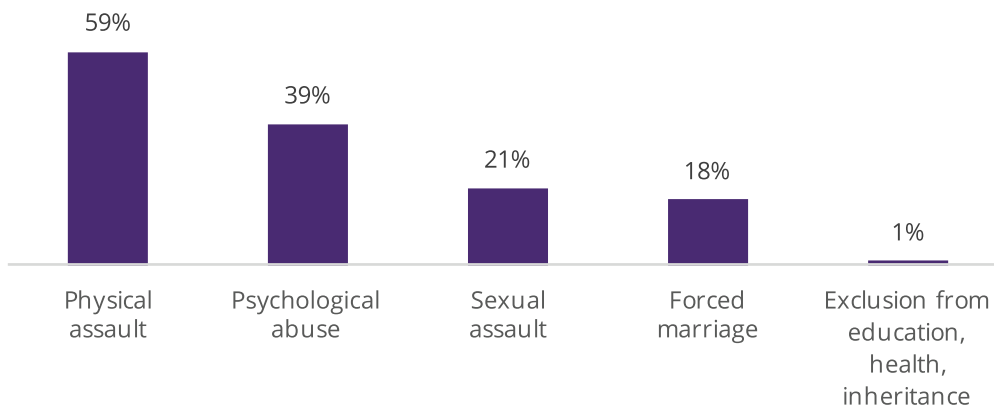
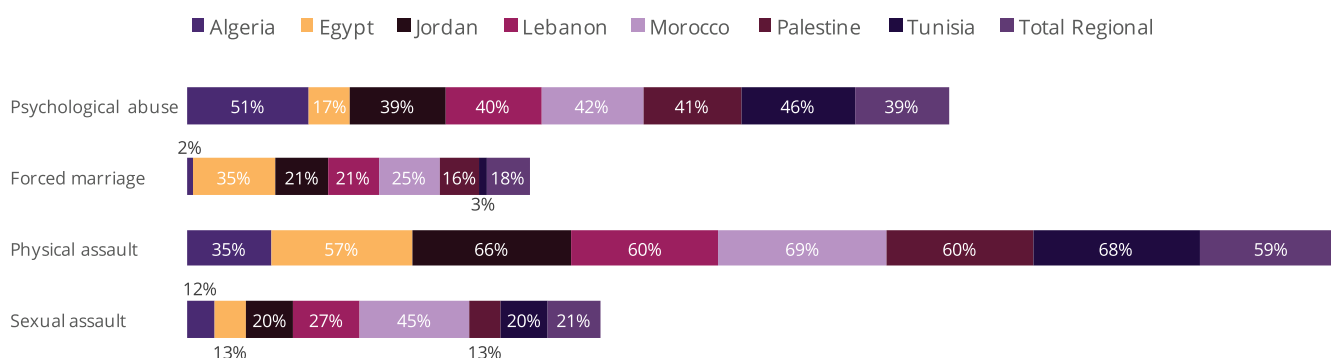


Figure 18: Most frequently forms of VAWG spread in your community

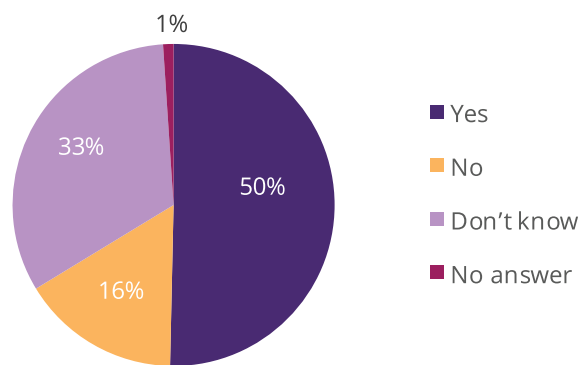


## Legislation specifically addressing VAWG

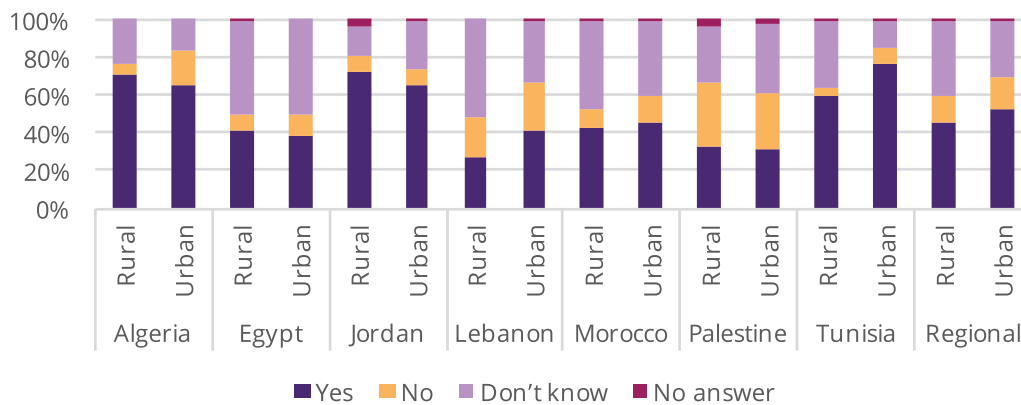
One third (33%) of the respondents stated that they do not know if there are laws explicitly addressing VAWG and domestic violence. The countries where women were most aware of specific legislation against VAWG are Tunisia, Algeria and Jordan. The countries where women displayed lower levels of awareness are Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon and Palestine.

Tunisia and Morocco are the only countries that have a specific law on combating VAWG. Some forms of VAWG like domestic violence and sexual harassment are criminalised in Jordan and Lebanon respectively under protection of women and family members from domestic violence and the protection from domestic violence law and in the penal code in both countries. In Palestine and Egypt – some forms are criminalised only in the penal code. Although Algeria does not have a dedicated law against domestic violence or VAWG, there are articles in the penal code as amended in 2015 that specifically criminalise some forms of domestic violence with tough penalties and harassment in public spaces.

**Figure 19: Availability of legislation specifically addressing violence against women and domestic violence, all countries**



**Figure 20: Availability of legislation specifically addressing violence against women and domestic violence, by country**

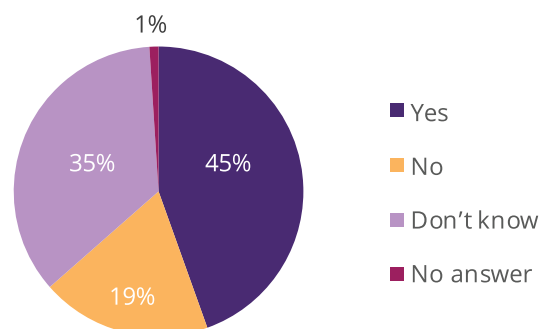


### Legislation specifically addressing sexual harassment at workplace

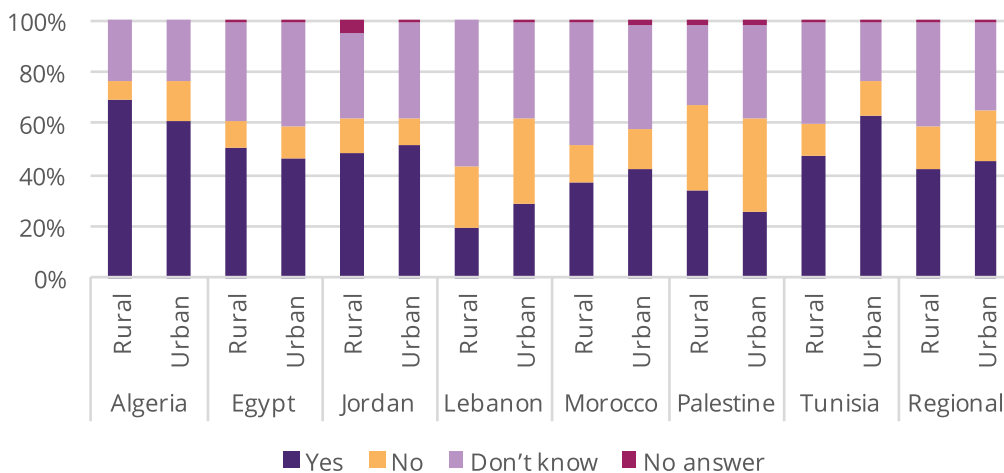
About a third of respondents (35%) said they did not know if there are any legal protections against sexual harassment. A much higher percentage of respondents in Algeria (63%) and Tunisia (58%) reported that there is legislation addressing sexual harassment in their country, compared to, e.g. Lebanon (26%).

In all countries, sexual harassment in public places and at work is criminalised under the penal code. Only in Jordan and Morocco sexual harassment at the workplace is prohibited in the labour laws. In Tunisia, labour laws do not clearly prohibit sexual harassment but instead refer to “good manners” and “public morality”.

**Figure 21: Availability of legislation addressing sexual harassment including at the work place, all countries**



**Figure 22: Availability of legislation addressing sexual harassment, including at the work place, by country**

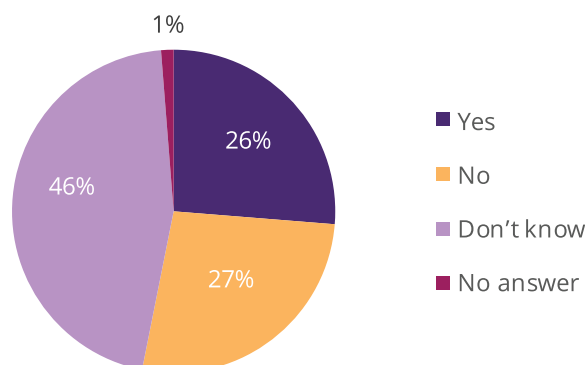


### Legislation guaranteeing full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health

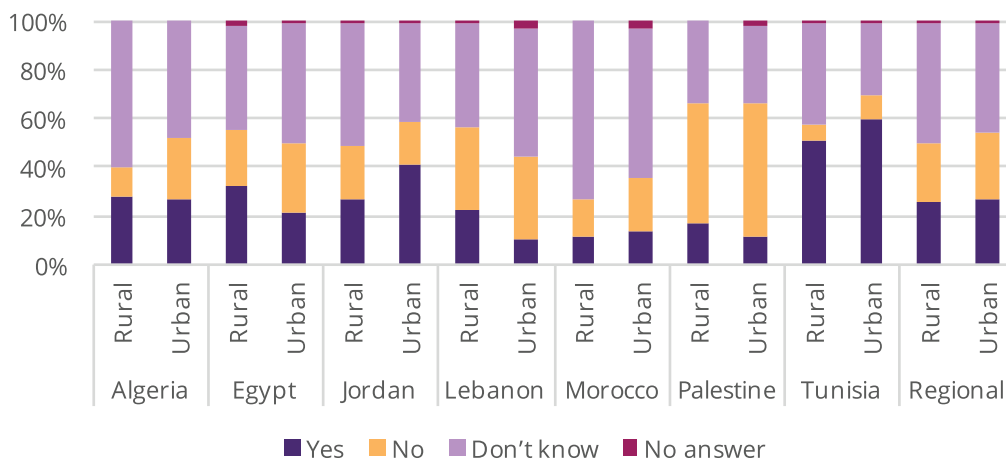
A high percentage of women in all countries (on average 46%, except in Tunisia at 33%) said they were unaware of any legislation that specifically guarantees full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health care for women aged 15 years and older, and related awareness-raising information.

In all countries, legislation does guarantee equal access to reproductive health for women. Tunisia is regarded as a pioneer among South Mediterranean countries regarding women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. It also has a reproductive health policy, and abortion is legal. Despite this, in Tunisia, 42% of respondents neither knew nor believed there was such legislation, suggesting a need for increased awareness-raising efforts. The survey does not show a significant discrepancy between rural and urban areas, recording 58% in the former and 55% in the latter who were unaware of this legislation.

**Figure 23: Availability of legislation that guarantees full and equal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare for both women and men aged 15 years and older, and related awareness-raising information, all countries**



**Figure 24: Availability of legislation that guarantees full and equal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare for both women and men aged 15 years and older, and related awareness-raising information, by country**



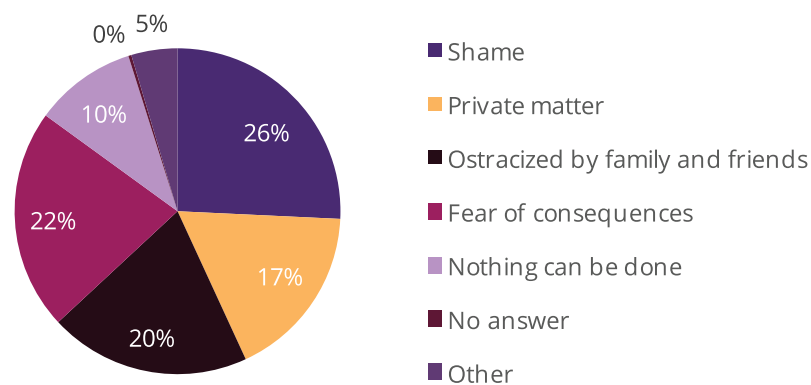
### Barriers to reporting VAWG

When asked to identify barriers that stop women from reporting VAWG, “shame” (26%) and “fear of consequences” (22%) came first and second respectively, closely followed by the risk of being “ostracised by family and friends” (20%), next because “it is a private matter” (17%) and 10% because “nothing can be done”.

These findings are consistent with most studies on VAWG, which show that women victims of VAWG are often afraid to report violence to authorities due to social pressure and shame. Dominant culture and traditions often dictate that women should keep sexual assault or domestic violence behind closed doors.

Fear of consequences is a common factor that prevents women from reporting violence, particularly fear of reprisal from the perpetrator and where law enforcement officers are not trusted to protect women who report violence. Women victims of domestic violence also fear losing their income, as husbands are the breadwinners for most families.

**Figure 25: Barriers that hinder women from reporting violence, all countries**





### First persons to whom women turn for help

According to survey respondents, when victims of VAWG do seek help, they first turn to relatives (75%), then to a far lesser extent, the police (17%), special centres for VAWG (6%) or telephone hotlines (2%). In most South Mediterranean countries, it is customary that relatives are the first ones from whom women and girls seek help in cases of violence.

Figure 26: Where victims of VAWG first seek help, all countries

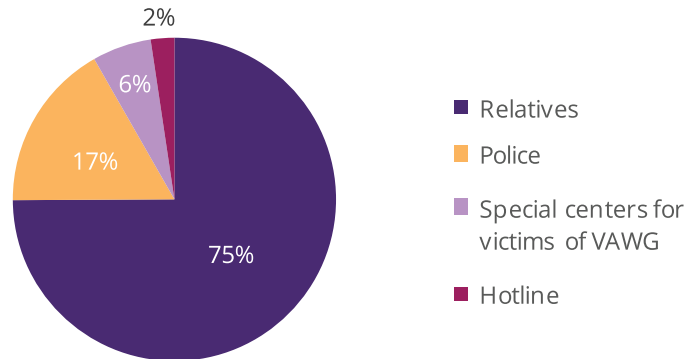
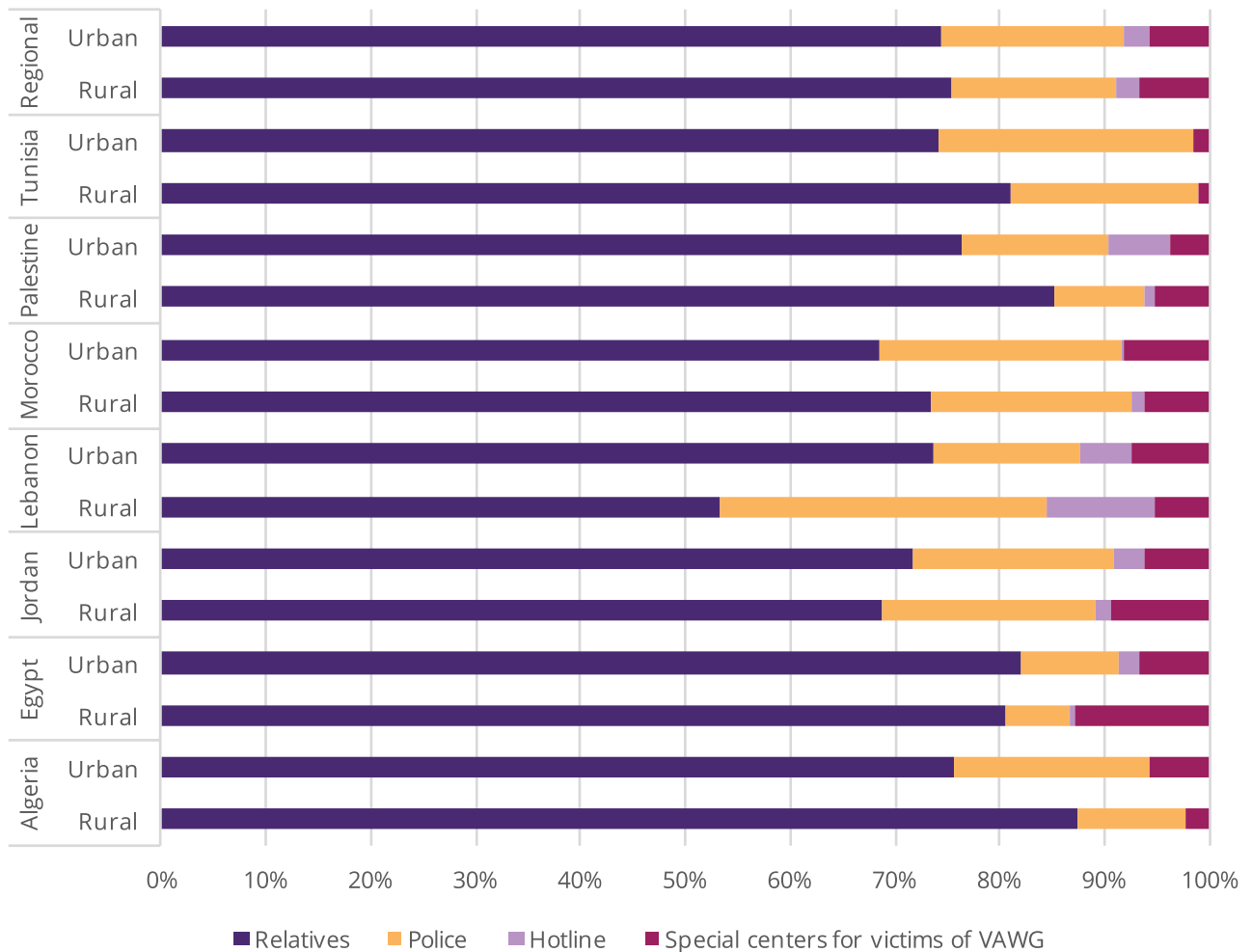


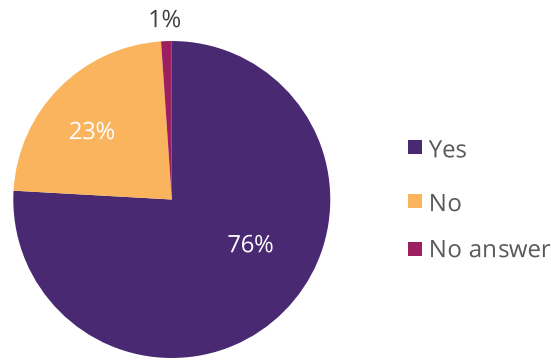
Figure 27: Where victims of VAWG first seek help, by country



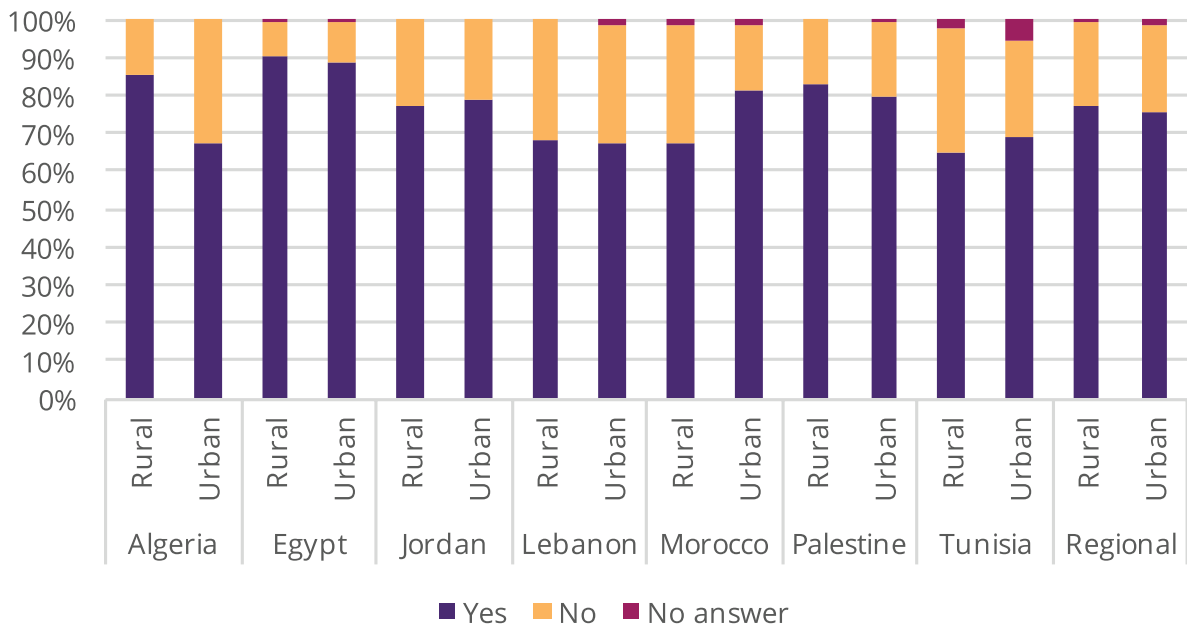
### Witnessing VAWG

76% of respondents report that they have witnessed VAWG in their local community in the last six months, with no significant discrepancy between individual countries or rural vs urban areas.

**Figure 28: Respondents who have witnessed VAWG in the community in the last six months, all countries**



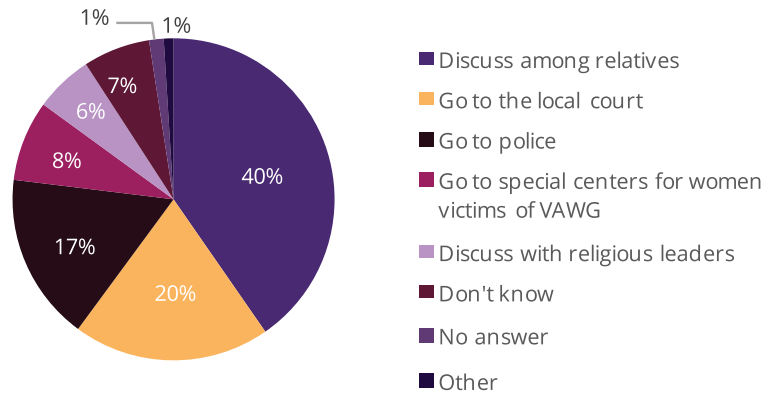
**Figure 29: Respondents who have witnessed VAWG in the community in the last six months, by country**



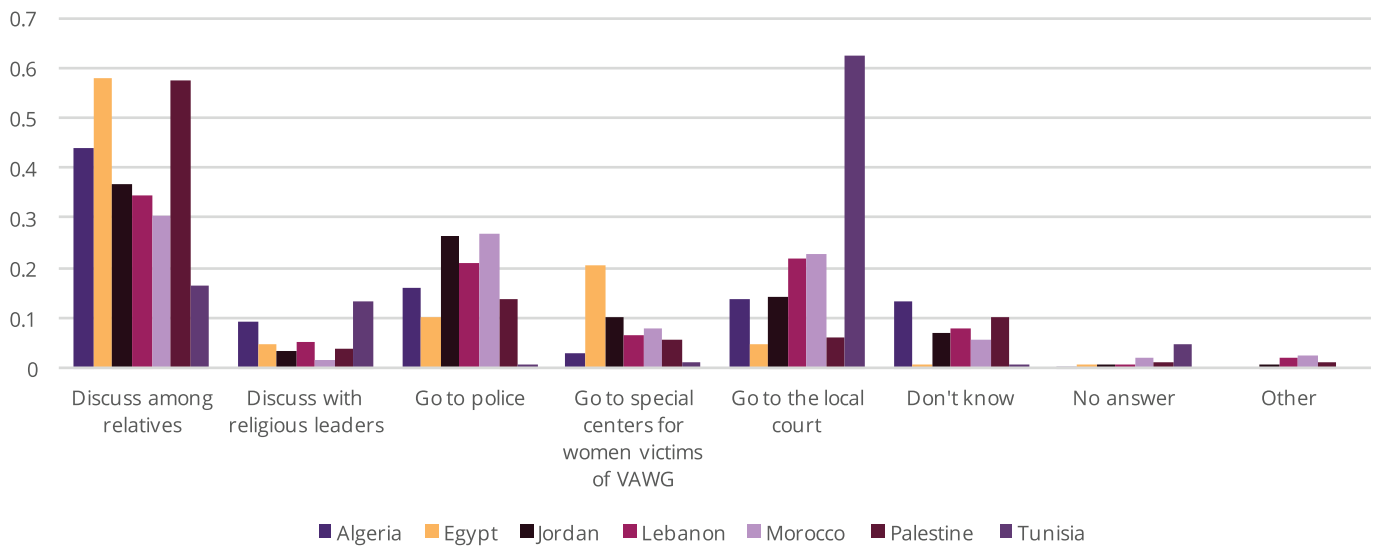
### Community response to VAWG

Likewise, the most common community response when VAWG occurs was to “discuss among relatives” (40%), “go to the local court” (20%), “go to the police” (17%), and “go to special centres for women victims of VAWG” (8%). In Tunisia go to the court” was the most frequently selected (62%), in Morocco and Jordan it was “go to the police” (both 27%).

**Figure 30: Most common community response when VAWG occurs, all countries**



**Figure 31: Most common community response when VAWG occurs, by country**



### Sources of information on VAWG

Survey respondents mentioned frequently that they were most likely to find information about VAWG through the media (60%), followed by through relatives and friends (44%) and also CSOs (23%). Relatives and friends were mentioned most frequently in Algeria (43%). In Egypt, respondents mentioned CSOs and CBOs more frequently than in any other country (33%), and respondents in Tunisia more frequently said the government (50%). Other sources like neighbours, the internet or social media, organisations, schools, books and police were also mentioned (2.5%).

Figure 32: Sources of information on VAWG

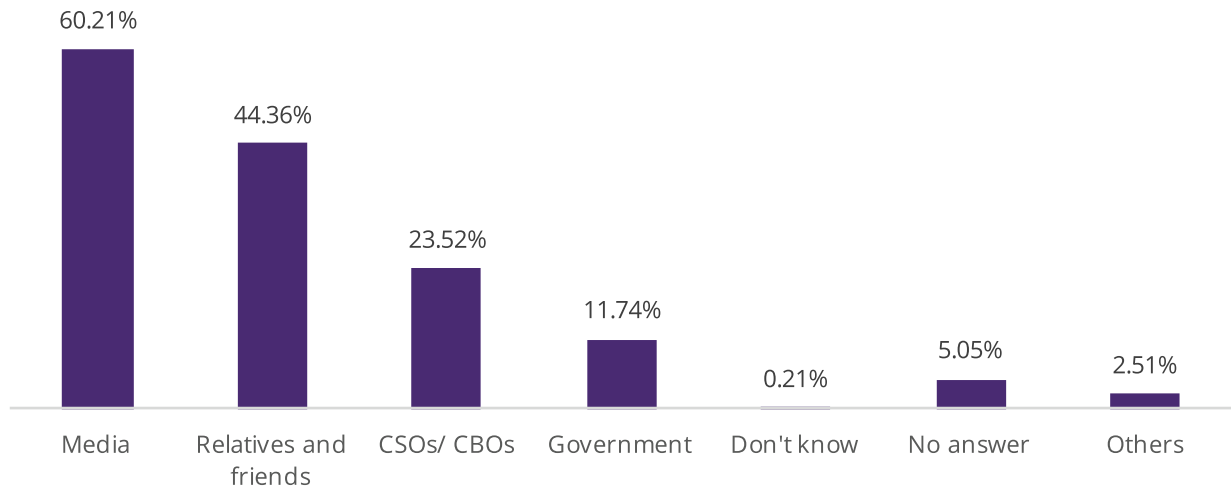
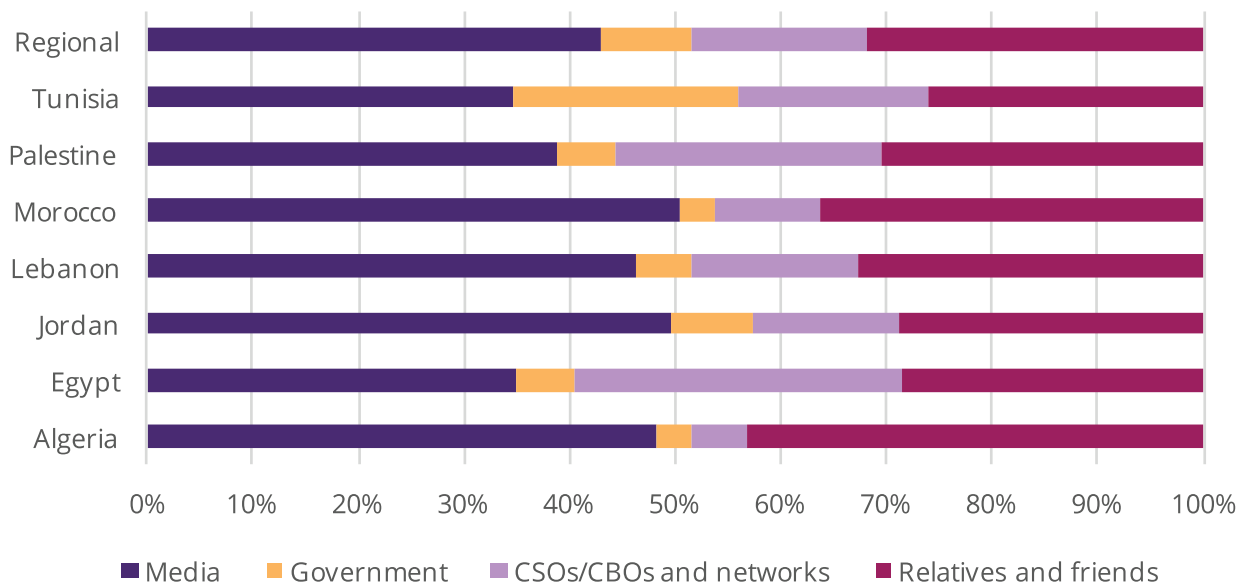


Figure 33: Sources of information on VAWG, by country



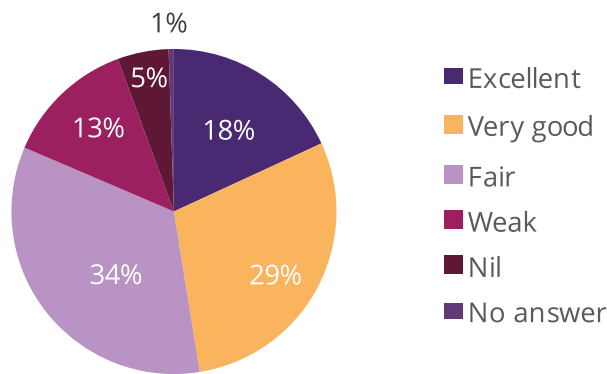
**Level of information on VAWG**

Across all countries, 47% of respondents stated that their general level of information about VAWG was either “excellent” (18%) or “good” (29%), while 34% considered it “fair” and 13% “weak”.

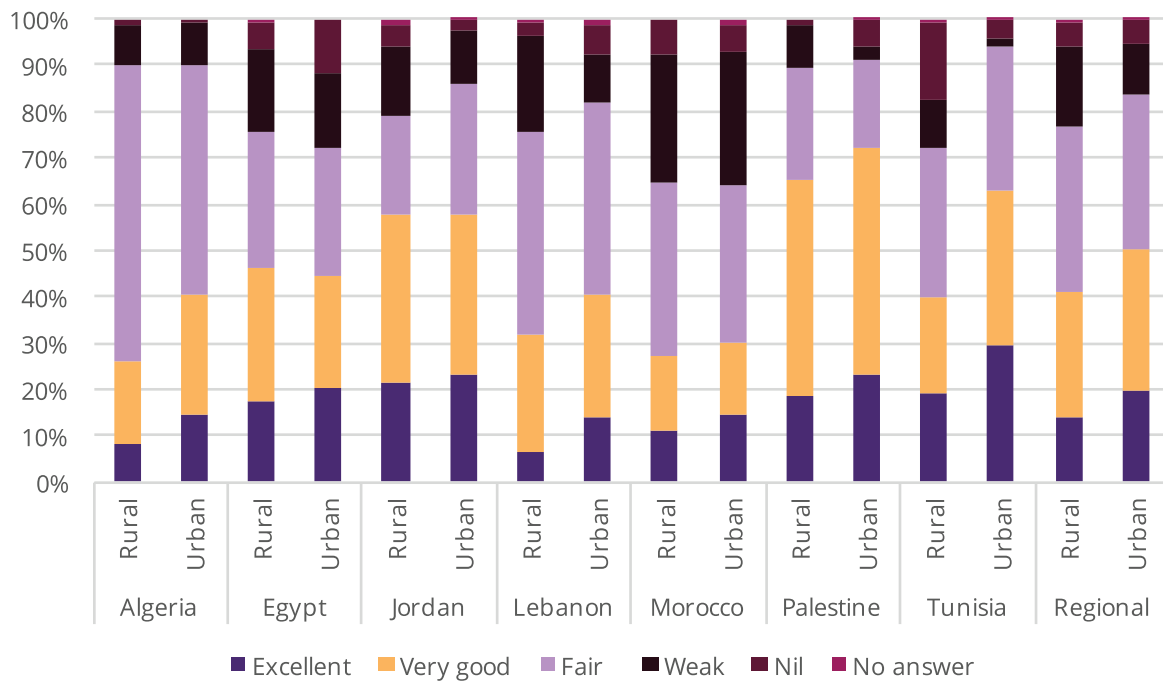
This result varies significantly between countries. More than half of respondents evaluated the level of information either “very good” or “excellent” in both rural and urban areas of Jordan (58%), in both rural and urban regions of Palestine (70%), and in urban parts of Tunisia (62%).

At the other end of the scale, 25% of respondents in rural areas of Algeria said that the level of information about VAWG they had received was “excellent” or “good”, 27% in both rural and urban areas of Morocco and 31% in rural areas of Lebanon.

**Figure 34: Respondents’ level of information about VAWG, all countries**



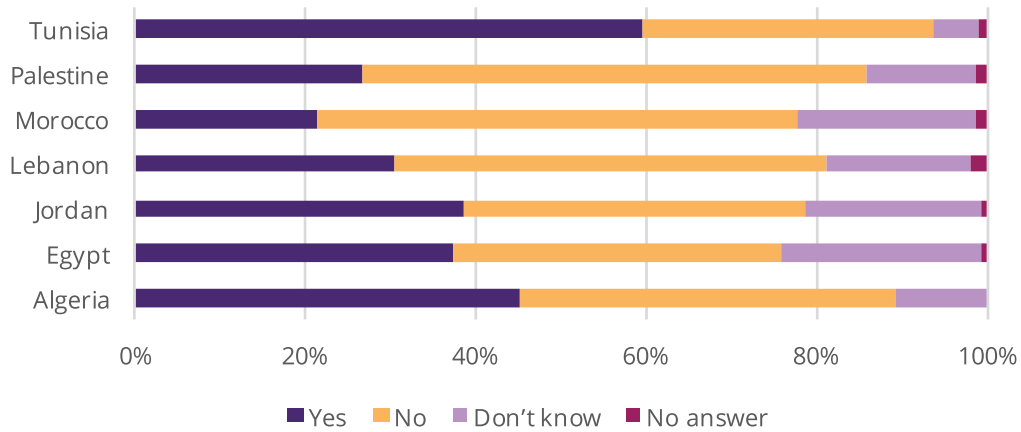
**Figure 35: Respondents’ level of information about VAWG, by country**



## VAWG and the Media

Only 36% of respondents said that information about VAWG is sufficiently reflected in the media. This view varies between countries, however. For instance, in Tunisia over half (58%) and in Algeria 45% believe the media sufficiently covers information about VAWG.

Figure 36: Information about VAWG reflected in the media

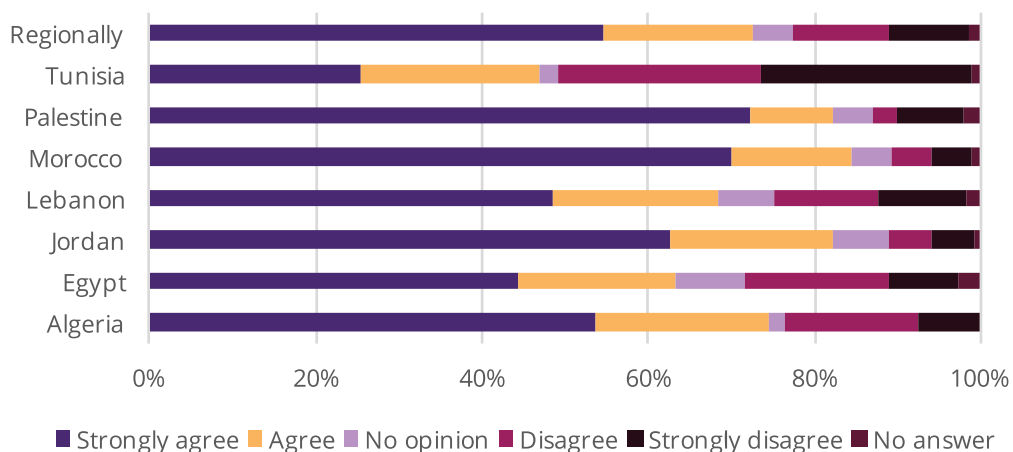


## 3. Attitudes and values towards VAWG

### The issue of rape: a matter of social debate

Around 73% of respondents said they “strongly agree” or “agree” that rape is unacceptable, regardless of a woman’s clothing. The highest proportion of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed were in Tunisia (50%). This may seem paradoxical, as Tunisia has the most developed legislation on VAWG in the region. But it highlights the fact that perceptions and attitudes may be resistant to change, including among women, despite legal advancements. It can also indicate that more awareness and information about the law needs to be regularly spread.

Figure 37: Respondents’ views on whether rape is unacceptable regardless of women’s clothing



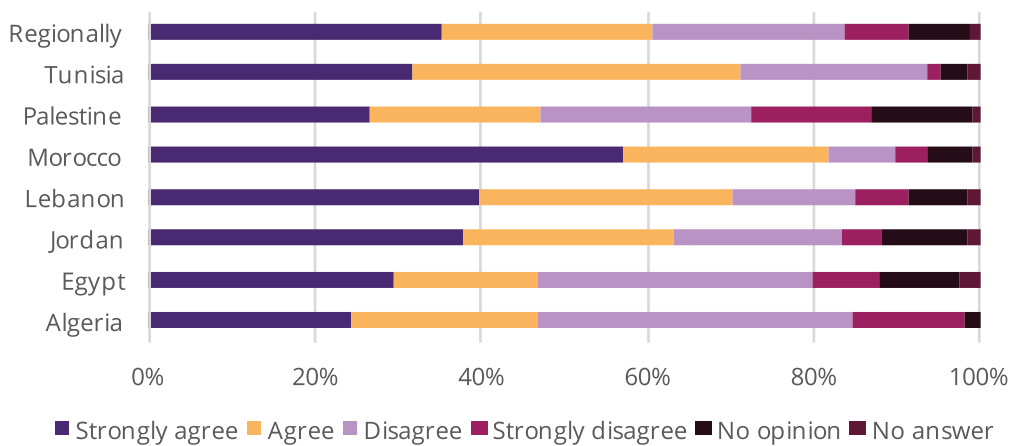
## Reporting perpetrator to the police

Across all countries, 61% of respondents said they “strongly agree” or “agree” that women who experience physical violence in their marriage should report their husbands to the police. In comparison, 31% said they “disagree” or “strongly disagree”. The remainder said that they have no opinion or did not answer.

Such a high proportion of respondents who disagree may be attributed to various factors. Firstly, women often fear that if the husband is punished, they could lose their primary source of household income. Another explanation is the persistence of the view that domestic violence is a private matter that should be solved within the family circle. Also, protection systems in most countries in the South Mediterranean are not robust, and women fear reprisals.

The percentage of women who “agree” or “strongly agree” that women who are beaten by their husband should report to the police is higher in Morocco (82%), Tunisia (70%), Lebanon (70%) and Jordan (63%) compared to Palestine (46%), Egypt (47%) and Algeria (47%).

**Figure 38: Respondents’ views on whether women who have been beaten by their husbands should report them to the police**



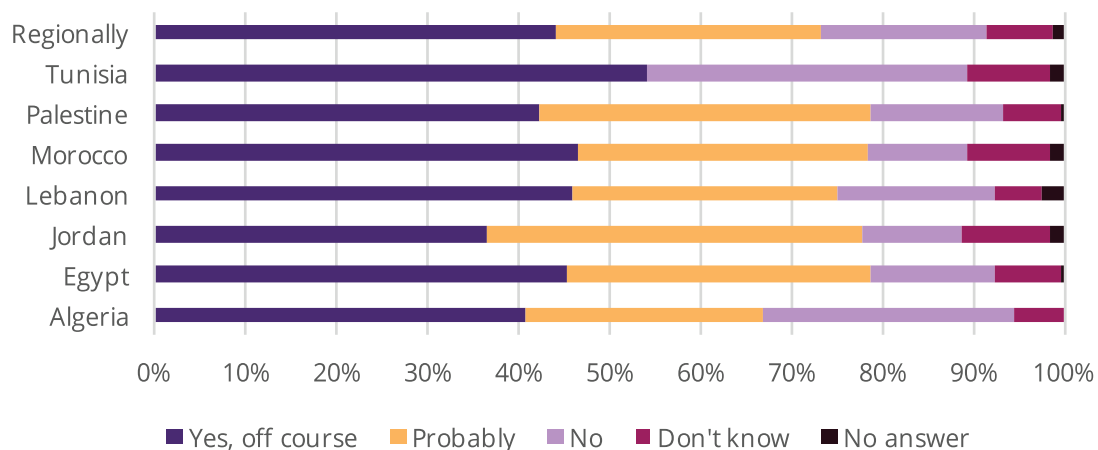
## Reporting witnessing VAWG

44% of respondents said that if they witnessed an incident of VAWG, they would report it to the police or provide assistance, and 29% that they would probably report it, or try to help.

The relatively high proportion of respondents who could not say with certainty that they would report the incident is notable. Reporting VAWG depends on a range of factors, such as the risk involved for the witness and the victim, the witness’s relationship to the victim and perpetrator, the level of confidence in law enforcement, the severity of the incident, etc.

Paradoxically, Tunisia has both a high proportion of respondents who say they would report an incident (54%) and who say that they would not (35%). In Algeria too, a high proportion of respondents (28%) said that they would not report the incident.

**Figure 39: Respondents’ perception of reporting on witnessed VAWG**



## Social acceptance of domestic physical violence

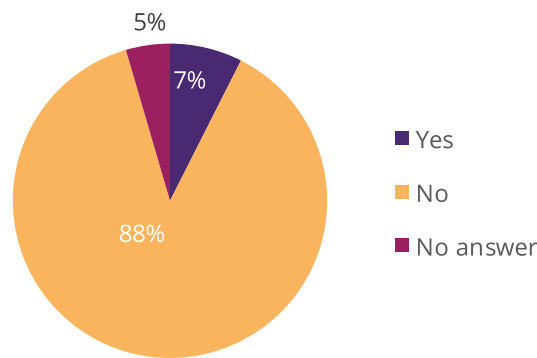
Most respondents (83%) stated that it is unacceptable for a husband to hit his wife regardless of the reasons. However, 20% said that they think it is acceptable if she leaves home without telling him, 11% if she refuses to have sex, and 7% if she argues with him. Algeria and Egypt show a higher proportion of women justifying physical violence by husbands against their wives. In both countries, 34% said violence was justified if a woman went out without telling her husband.

It's worth noting that these percentages reflect respondents' values (i.e. whether women believe there can be any justification for violence perpetrated by her husband) rather than describing real situations.

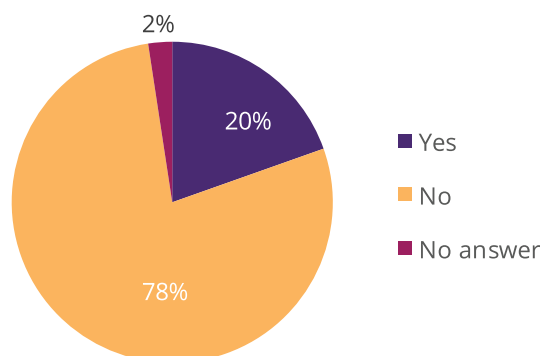
The values and beliefs that lead some women to justify VAWG (including possibly against themselves) stem from social norms and interpretations of religious beliefs that say that a wife must not leave the house without her husband's permission or refuse sex when asked by her husband.

The absence of legislation criminalising marital rape is also responsible for this social norm which is reinforced by the patriarchal society where men are superior and dominant.

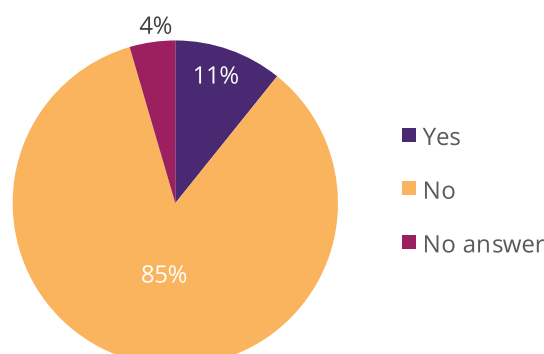
**Figure 40: Respondents' views on whether it is acceptable for husbands to beat their wives if they argue with them, all countries**



**Figure 41: Respondents' views on whether it is acceptable for husbands to beat their wives if they go out without telling them, all countries**

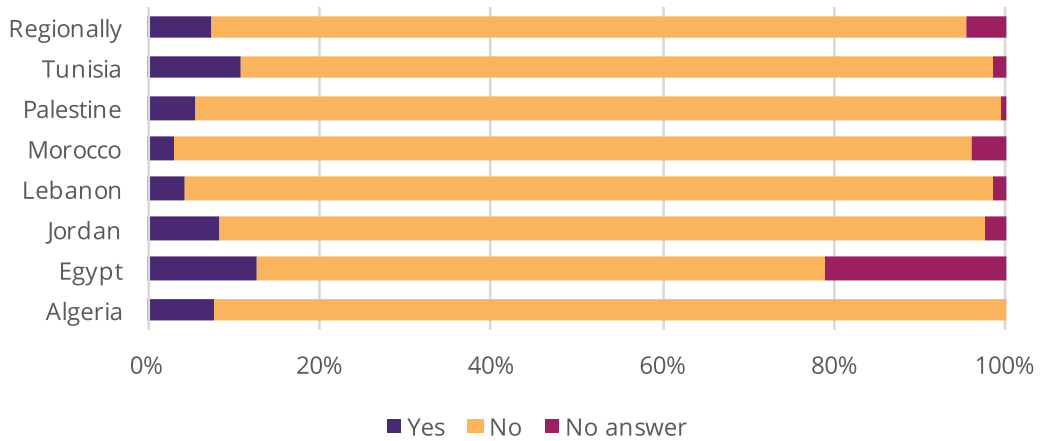


**Figure 42: Respondents' views on whether it is acceptable for husbands to beat their wives if they refuse sex, all countries**

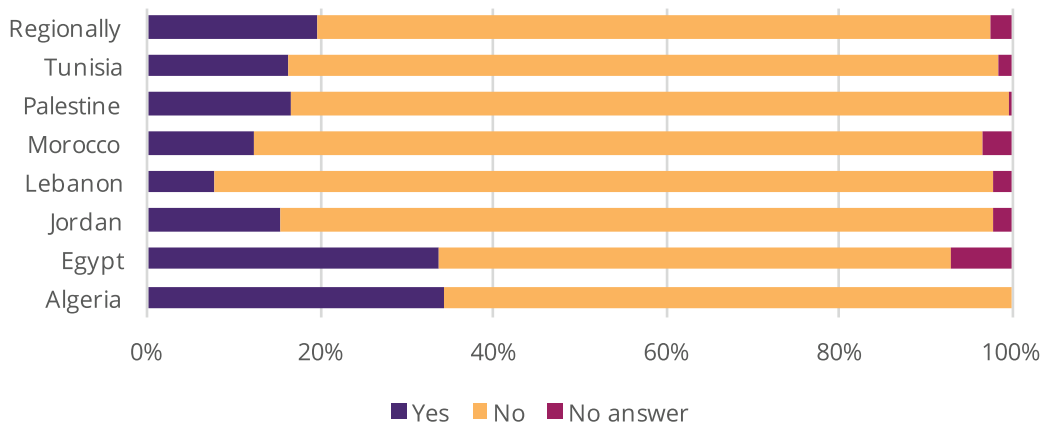




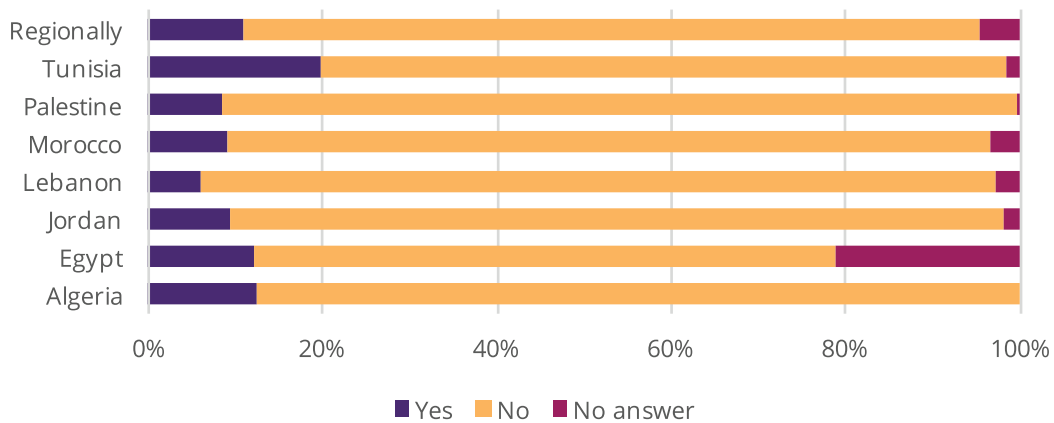
**Figure 43: Respondents' views on whether it is acceptable for husbands to beat their wives if they argue with them, by country**



**Figure 44: Respondents' views on whether it is acceptable for husbands to beat their wives if they go out without telling them, by country**



**Figure 45: Respondents' views on whether it is acceptable for husbands to beat their wives if they refuse sex, by country**

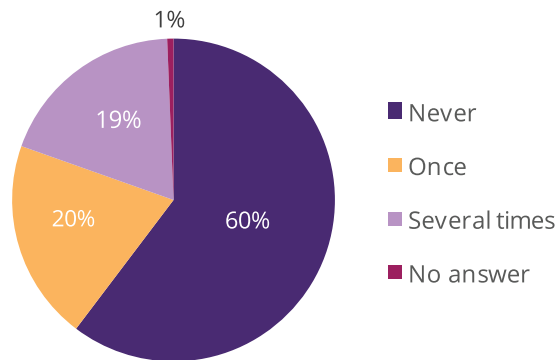


## 4. Personal experience of VAWG

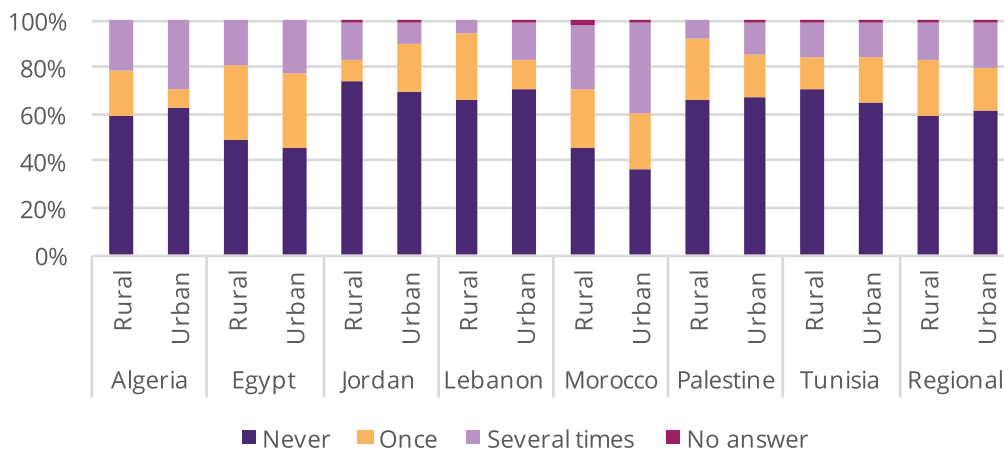
### Verbal assaults in public

Across the whole region, 39% of respondents said they had been insulted in public at least once in the last 12 months. The highest percentages were in Morocco and Egypt where the proportion was more than half, 57% and 53% respectively.

**Figure 46: Respondents who have been insulted in the street, on public transport or in public spaces in the last 12 months, all countries**



**Figure 47: Respondents who have been insulted in the street, on public transport or in public spaces in the last 12 months, by country**

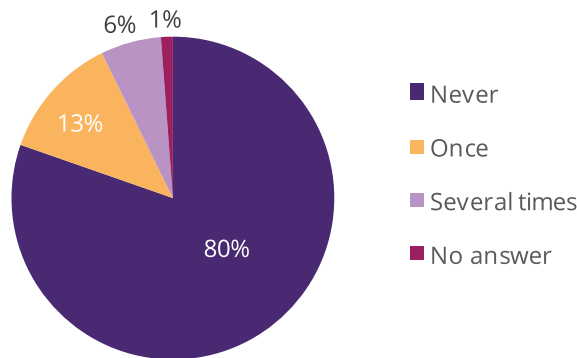


**Sexual assaults**

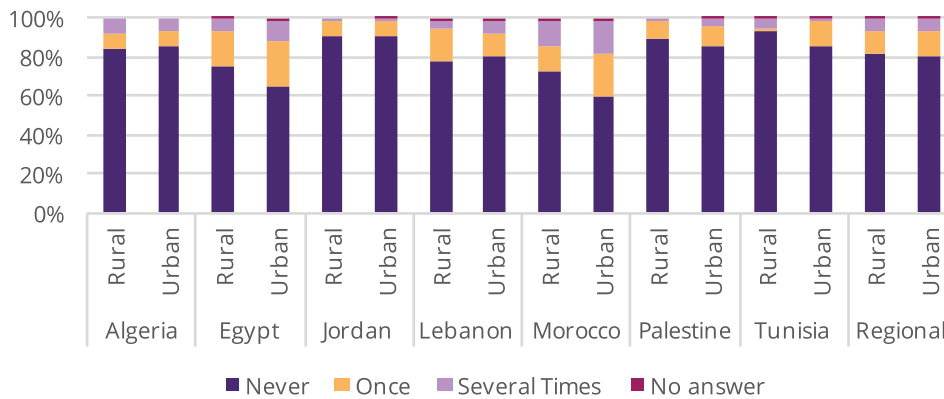
One in five women, (19%) reported that someone had forced or attempted to force them into sexual contact against their will at least once in the last 12 months. The highest percentage was in Egypt, where 29% had experienced this, almost one in three women.

These figures represent the rates for unwanted sexual contact. To be noted that, according to a 2013 UN study, almost all Egyptian women have been victims of sexual harassment: 99.3 % of women in the study reported having been sexually harassed over their lifetime.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 48: Someone has forced or attempted to force respondents to undergo sexual contact or perform sexual acts against their will, all countries**



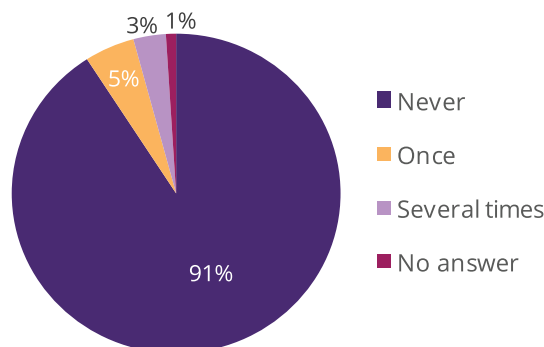
**Figure 49: Someone has forced or attempted to force respondents to undergo sexual contact or perform sexual acts against their will, by country**



Across all countries, 8% of respondents reported that someone had forced or attempt to force them to have sexual intercourse against their will at least once. The highest proportion of women who had experienced this (9%) were in Egypt.

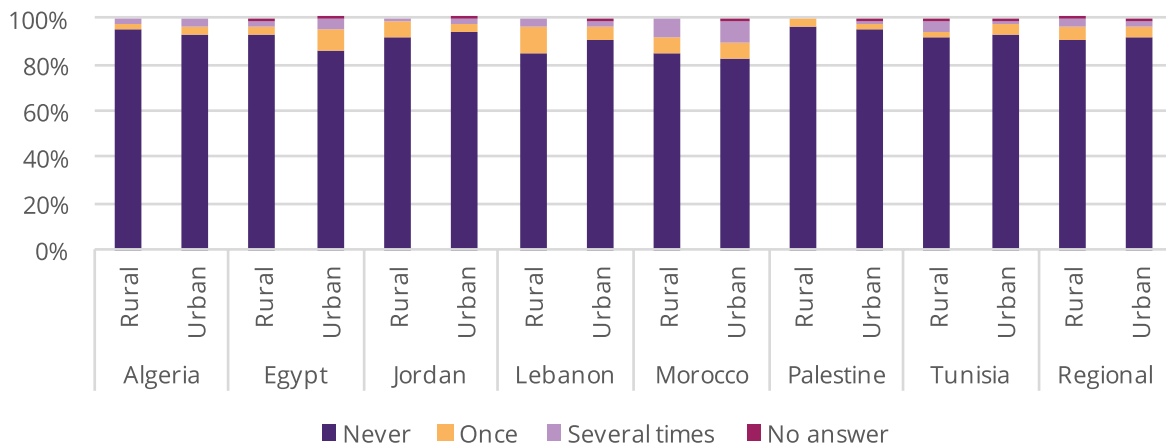
These results may under-evaluate the reality, in contexts where the need for consent for sexual intercourse in intimate partner relationships is not recognised in law.

**Figure 50: Someone forced or attempted to force the respondent to have sexual intercourse against their will, all countries**



18 FIDH, Nazra for Feminist Studies, New Women Foundation and Uprising of Women in the Arab World, Egypt: keeping women out, sexual violence against women in the public sphere, P4, at: [https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/egypt\\_women\\_final\\_english.pdf](https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/egypt_women_final_english.pdf)

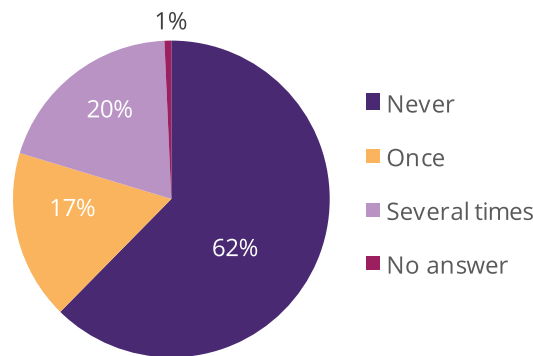
**Figure 51: Someone forced or attempted to force the respondent to have sexual intercourse against their will, by country**



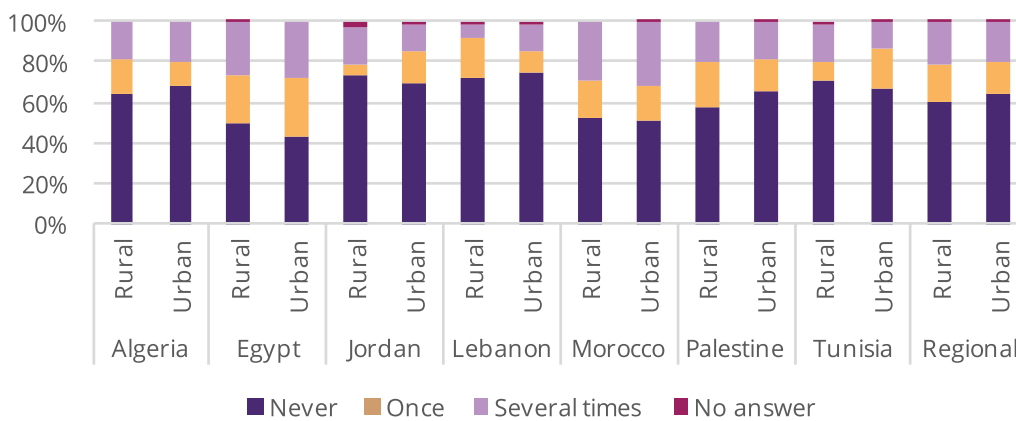
**Controlling women’s familial and social interactions**

37% of respondents reported that their husband or relatives had prevented them from meeting or talking to friends or family members at least once in the last 12 months. Egypt and Morocco had the highest rates of respondents reporting this experience, 54% and 49% respectively, and the lowest percentage was in Lebanon (23%).

**Figure 52: Respondents were prevented from meeting or talking to friends or family members by husbands/family members in the last 12 months, all countries**



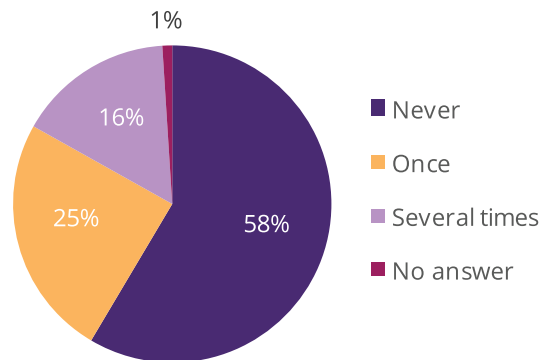
**Figure 53: Respondents were prevented from meeting or talking to friends or family members by husbands/family members in the last 12 months, by country**



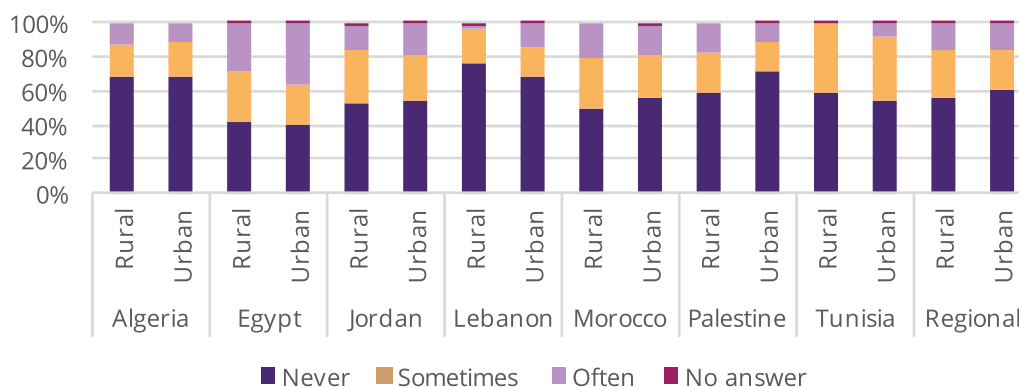
## Controlling women's appearance and behaviour

41% of women respondents reported that their husbands or family members had imposed a style of dress, a type of hairstyle or rules for behaving in public on at least one occasion in the last 12 months. There are significant disparities between countries, e.g. in Egypt, 57% experienced this, in Lebanon 28%.

**Figure 54: Respondent's husband or family members imposed a style of dress, a type of hairstyle or rules for how to behave in public on at least one occasion in the last 12 months, all countries**



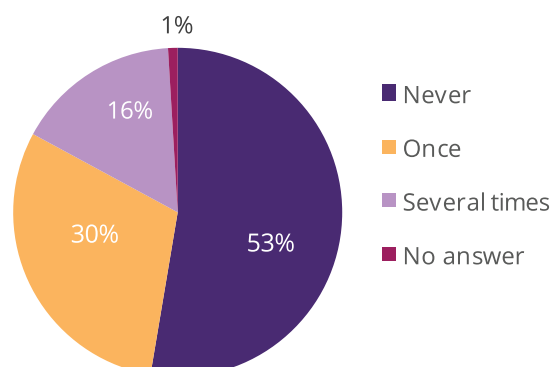
**Figure 55: Respondent's husband or family members imposed a style of dress, a type of hairstyle or rules for how to behave in public on at least one occasion in the last 12 months, by country**



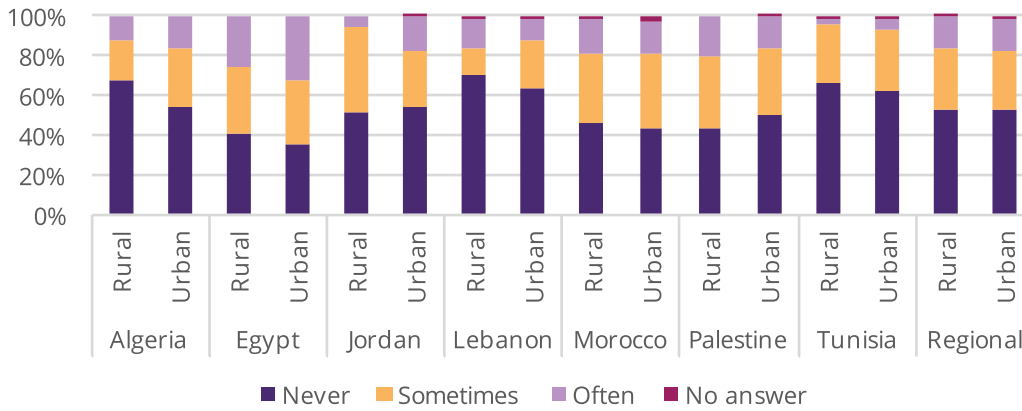
## Discounting women's opinions

Across all countries, almost half (46%) of women respondents reported that over the last 12 months their husband, partner or family members had refused to consider their opinion, ridiculed them or attempted to tell them what they should think "sometimes" (30%) or "often" (16%). Once more, disparities were found between countries such as Egypt (62%), Lebanon (31%), and Tunisia (35%).

**Figure 56: Respondent's husband/spouse or family members refused to take their opinions into consideration, ridiculed them or attempted to tell them what they should think at least once in the last 12 months, all countries**



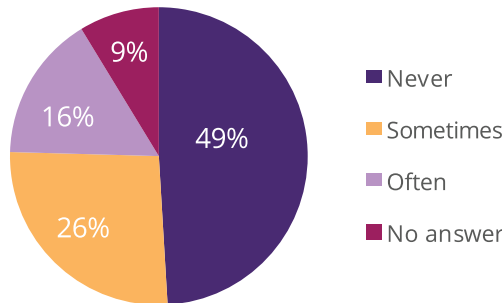
**Figure 57: Respondents' husband/spouse or family members refused to take their opinions into consideration, ridicule them or attempted to tell them what they should think during the last 12 months**



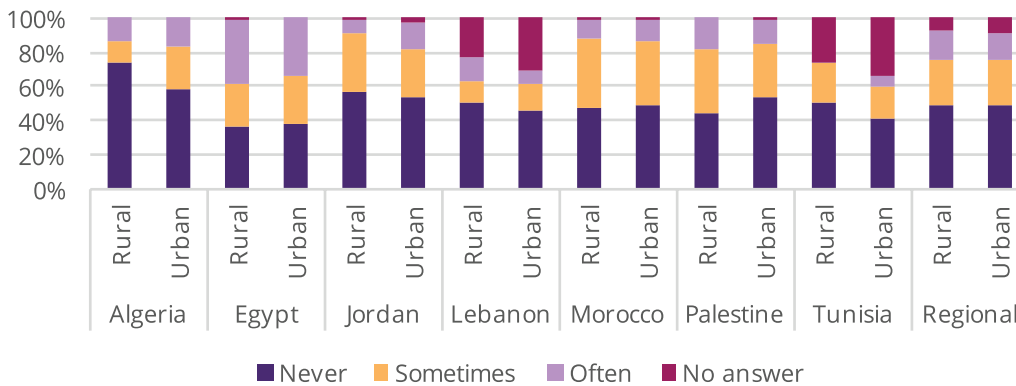
**Exclusion of women from decision making within the household and control over money**

At the regional level, 42% of respondents said they had been excluded from decision making within the household. The same proportion said they had been excluded from control over household expenditure or income. Lebanon and Tunisia had the highest percentages of women who selected “No answer”.

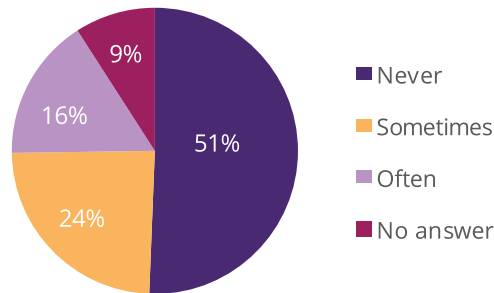
**Figure 58: Respondent has been excluded from decision making within the household, all countries**



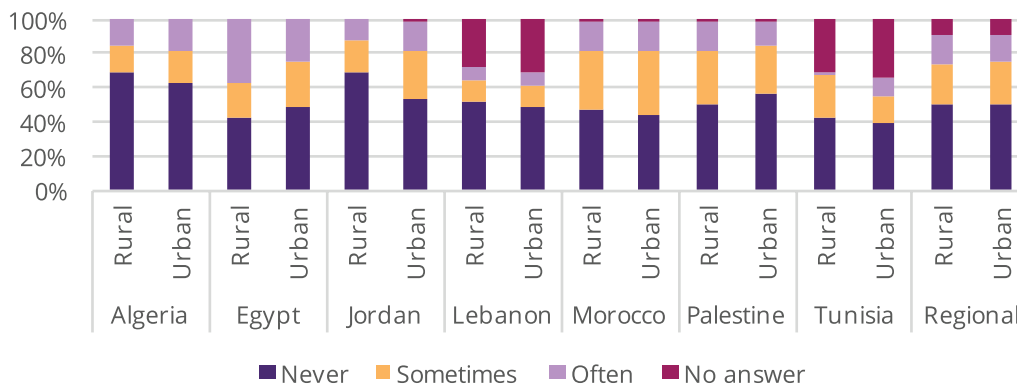
**Figure 59: Respondent has been excluded from decision making within the household, by country**



**Figure 60: Respondent has been prevented from controlling household expenditure or income, all countries**



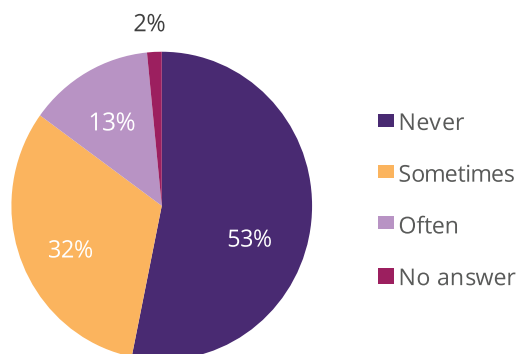
**Figure 61: Respondent has been prevented from controlling household expenditure or income, by country**



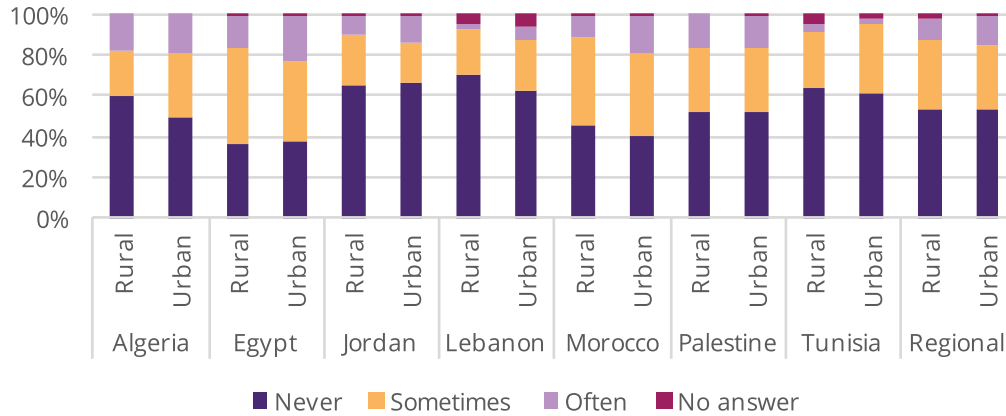
**Domestic insults**

45% of survey respondents reported that they had been insulted “sometimes” or “often” by their spouse or family members.

**Figure 62: Respondent has been insulted by husband/spouse or family members, all countries**



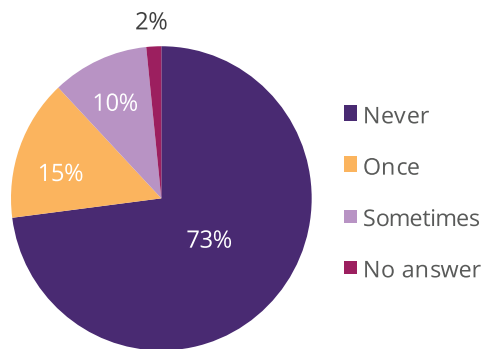
**Figure 63: Respondent has been insulted by husband/spouse or family members, by country**



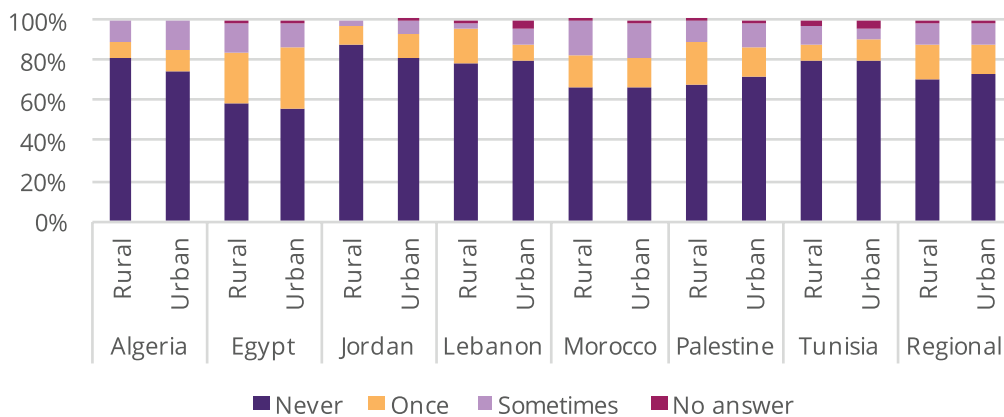
**Domestic physical violence**

A quarter (25%) of respondents reported that they had been slapped or otherwise injured by their husband or family members at least once in the last 12 months. Of the women who said they had experienced domestic physical violence, 27% included the number of times it had occurred in this period, which ranged from twice to 100 times.

**Figure 64: Respondent’s husband/spouse or family members slapped them or inflicted other physical abuse at least once in the last 12 months, all countries**



**Figure 65: Respondent’s husband/spouse or family members slapped them or inflicted other physical abuse at least once in the last 12 months, by country**





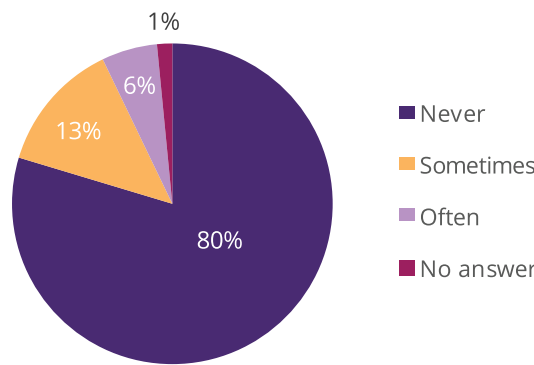
**Domestic death threats**

One in 5 women (19%) reported that their husbands, spouses, or family members had threatened them with death during the last 12 months, 13% on one occasion and 6% several times. Over two thirds (68%) of those who received a death threat said that they did not complain to the authorities, only 29% said they did, and 3% did not answer the question. Of those who filed a complaint, 79% said they were treated well upon arrival at the complaints centre, and 21% said they were treated badly.

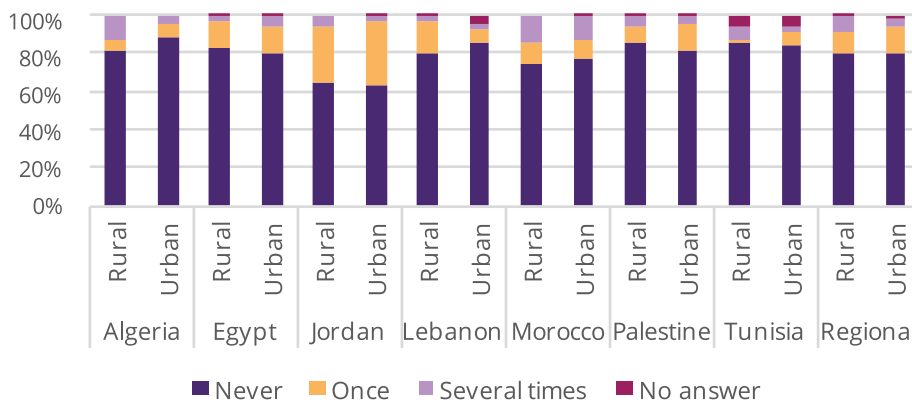
Only about one third of respondents reported the death threats to the police. Given how serious a domestic death threat is, as it signals that the woman’s life is in danger and causes a very high level of stress and anxiety with possible long-term effects, the low percentage of women reporting this kind of violence is highly significant of the social prevalence of male violence.

A critical factor which inhibits women from reporting a death threat made by their spouse is the difficulty of providing evidence for the police and courts. Also, there is generally a fear that if her husband is prosecuted, the woman and her household will suffer economically. Besides, in many instances, the police, health and legal services do not encourage women to report domestic violence. They do not provide a safe and supportive environment for victims to report the incident.

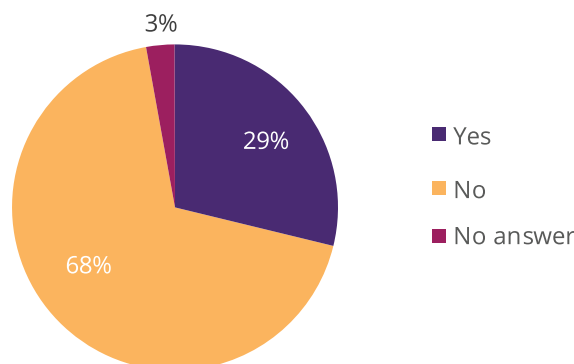
**Figure 66: Respondent’s husband /spouse or family members have uttered a death threat against them at least once in the last 12 months, all countries**



**Figure 67: Respondent’s husband /spouse or family members have uttered a death threat against them at least once in the last 12 months, by country**



**Figure 68: Percentage of women who report a death threat to Police**



## 5. Level of awareness of services for victims

### Legal aid, police, education and health

Across all countries surveyed, a high proportion of respondents said that legal aid (60%) and the police (57%) are the most difficult services to access. For many, education (28%) and health care (33%) are also difficult to access. This is the case in almost all the countries, with some variations.

Poor and vulnerable women cannot afford legal fees. There are not enough administrative institutions or CSOs that can offer financial assistance in covering legal representation and hearings costs. Most countries in the South Mediterranean have progressive legal provisions and by-laws that state that any citizen may apply for legal aid if they are unable to cover the costs of the proceedings. Except for Morocco and Tunisia, which have comprehensive laws addressing VAWG, the other States in the region offer legal assistance for those without means, but not specifically for women survivors of violence. In Morocco, the law on Combating Violence against Women clearly defines the government's role in providing legal advice and services to victims of VAWG. In Tunisia, Article 13 of the law on eliminating violence against women states that victims of VAWG must be provided with legal aid.

A gap between legislation and implementation persists. Women are not always able to claim their rights because they are not familiar with the legal system and because the patriarchal culture discourages women from asserting their rights in the same way as men. The proportion of respondents who said they found it difficult to access legal aid and police services is exceptionally high in Morocco (77% and 70% respectively), Egypt (60% and 67% respectively) and Palestine (69% and 63% respectively).

Concerning education and health care, 28% and 33% of the respondents respectively report that access for each is difficult. Women's access to education and health care in South Mediterranean countries has improved considerably in recent years as these countries have provided access to health care and free education for most of their citizens. However, many women still face significant obstacles to accessing education. For example, lack of transport and infrastructure may have a greater impact on women's access to health and education than on men's access.

The situation varies between countries. In Morocco, 48% and 69% of respondents respectively said they find access to education and health services difficult, 40% and 45% in Lebanon, 36% and 40% in Egypt. In contrast, for 11% of respondents in Algeria, and 19% in Jordan, access to education is difficult. In Tunisia, 88% of respondents reported that access to health is easy. Tunisia has introduced many improvements to the health sector, including free access to health care for all and legal abortion.

Figure 69: Women's perceptions of accessing legal aid services in the community, all countries

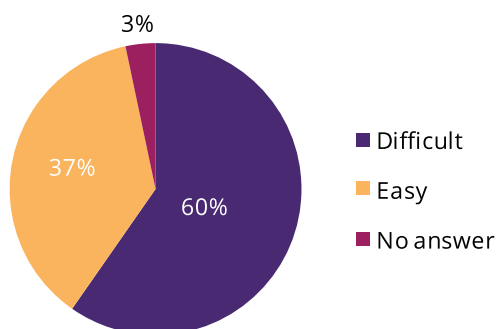


Figure 70: Women's perceptions of accessing health care services in the community, all countries

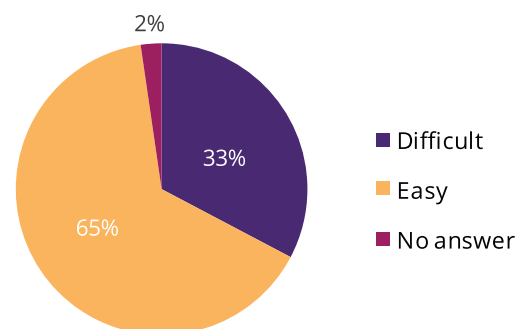


Figure 71: Women's perceptions of accessing police services in the community, all countries

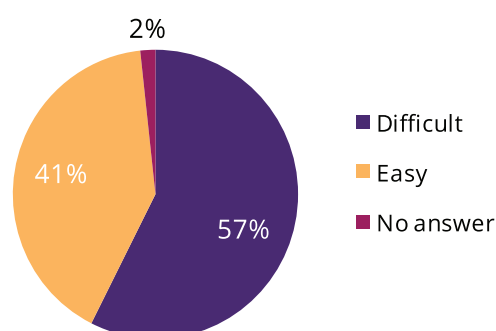
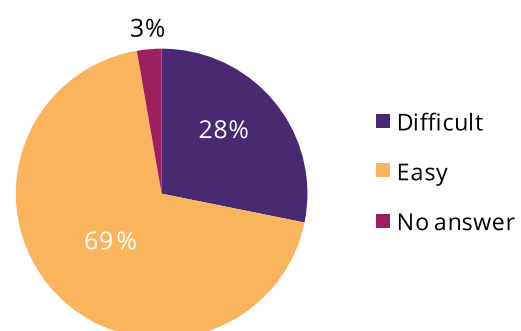
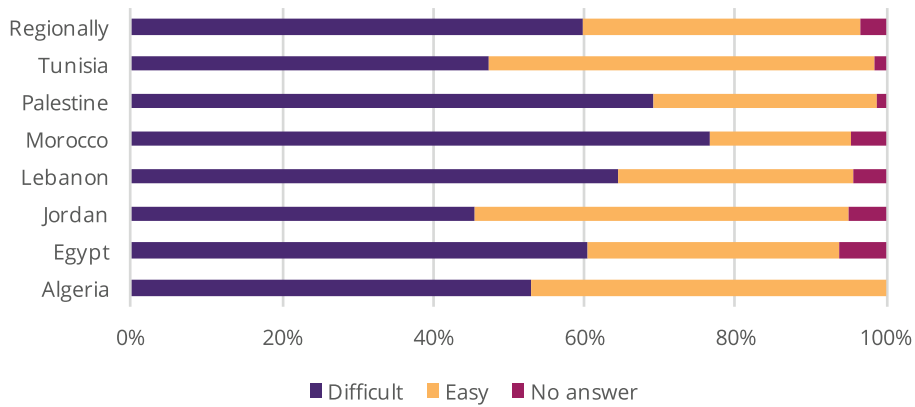
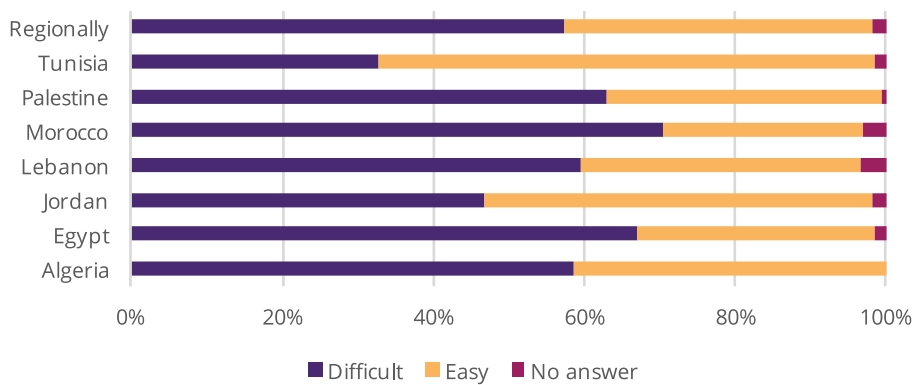
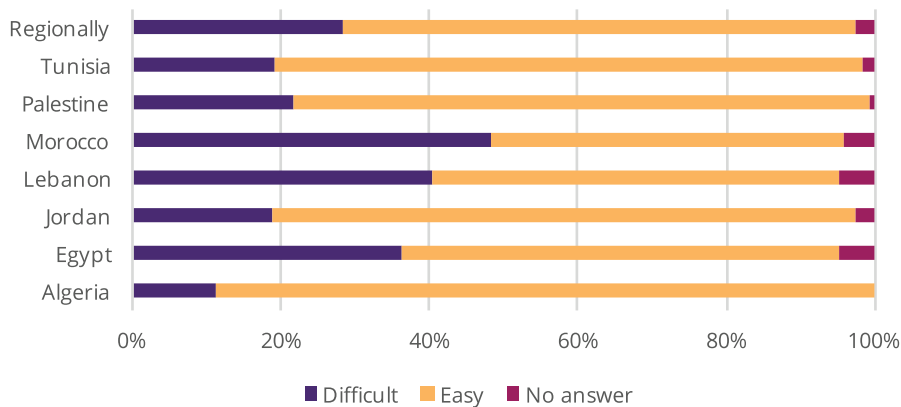
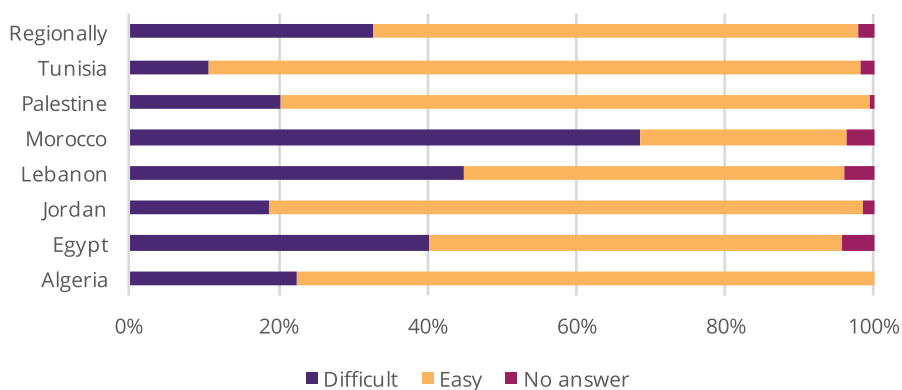


Figure 72: Women's perceptions of accessing education services in the community, all countries



**Figure 73: Women's perceptions of accessing legal aid services in the community, by country****Figure 74: Women's perceptions of accessing police services in the community, by country****Figure 75: Women's perceptions of accessing education services in the community, by country****Figure 76: Women's perceptions of accessing health care services in the community, by country**

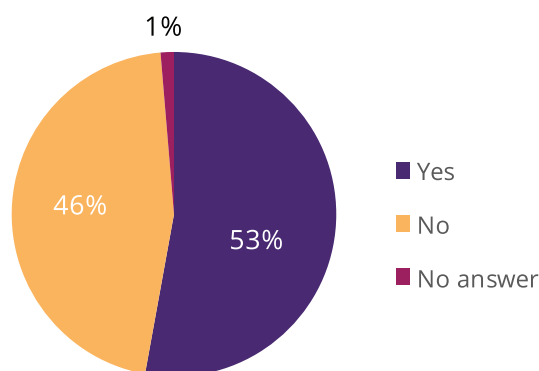
## Government and community support institutions addressing VAWG

Around half (53%) of respondents said they were aware of government institutions that address VAWG, while 46% of them said they were not. Jordan showed the highest level of awareness at 76%, and Lebanon showed the lowest, at only 43%. This could be attributed to the fact that Lebanon has no governmental institutions that directly provide services for VAWG victims, such as shelters. In Jordan, the Family Protection Department under the Public Security Directorate deals with women's domestic violence complaints. This Department is well known among Jordanian women and has a hotline and well established referral system connected to ministries and police departments in the governorates.

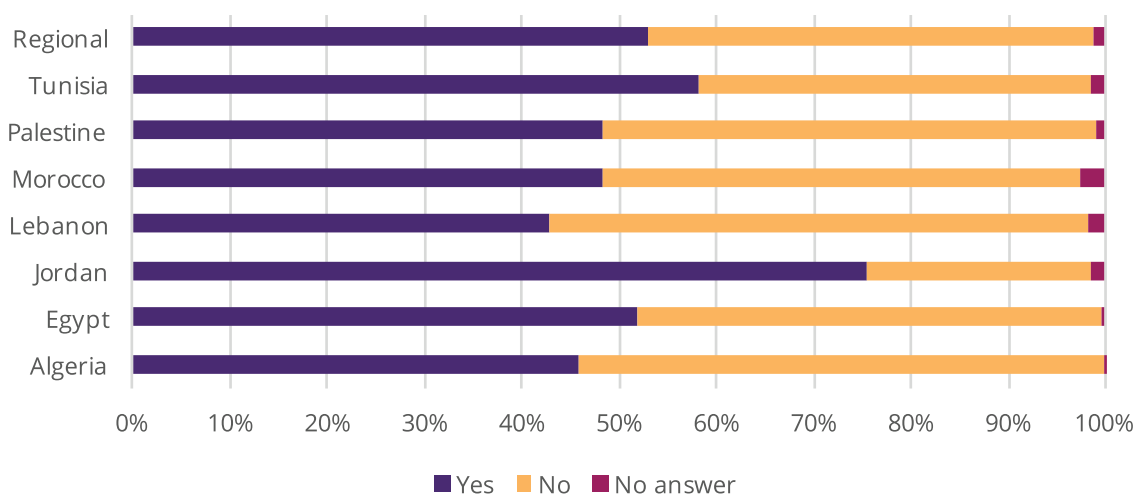
Almost three in five (59%) of respondents reported that they are aware of community institutions, just slightly more than the 53% of respondents who reported the same about government institutions.

This reflects the importance of community institutions in filling in the gaps left by government bodies, although the State is ultimately responsible for protecting all its citizens' rights and therefore addressing adequately VAWG. In both Lebanon and Tunisia, the proportion of respondents who said they were aware of community institutions addressing VAWG was significantly lower in rural areas (32% and 39% respectively) than urban areas (69% and 58%). For awareness of government services, there were no major differences.

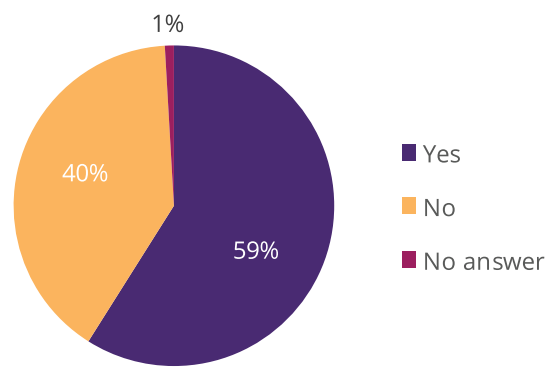
**Figure 77: Respondents' awareness of the existence of government institutions that address VAWG, all countries**



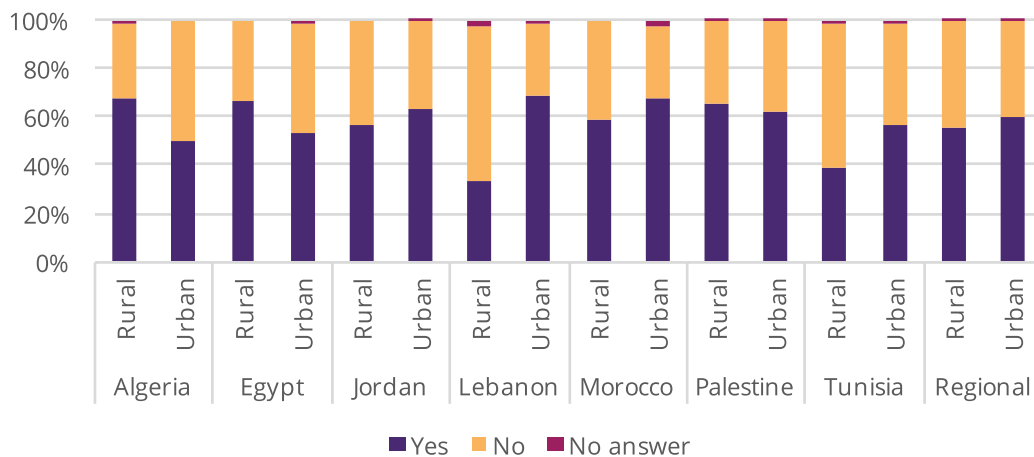
**Figure 78: Respondents' awareness of the existence of government institutions that address VAWG, by country**



**Figure 79: Respondents' awareness of community support networks or institutions that address VAWG, all countries**



**Figure 80: Respondents' awareness of community support networks or institutions that address VAWG, by country**



## 6. Analysis of open-ended questions

### The main causes of VAWG

Survey respondents mentioned a mix of structural and individual causes of VAWG, including poverty, ignorance, women's lack of awareness about their rights, women's fear of men, misinterpretation of the religion, individual upbringing, customs and traditions. Respondents from rural areas often referred to women wearing "immodest clothing", while respondents from urban areas more frequently mentioned women's economic dependence on men. The following were also mentioned to a lesser degree: leaving the house without informing the husband, low levels of education for both men and women, difference in social class between spouses, and police failing to protect women. In Morocco and Tunisia drug abuse and alcohol addiction were given as causes of VAWG, as well as "excessive religiosity" in rural Tunisia. In Palestine, the occupation appears to be a major violence in itself and a factor of aggravation of all forms of VAWG.

These answers are closer to the mainstream social norms and culture than those given by privileged observers. Most of the experts interviewed cited the instrumentalization of religion as one of the main factors sustaining men's patriarchal control over women. In contrast, women survey respondents, whether in rural or urban areas and across all countries, did not mention religion as a key factor in strengthening patriarchal power. Numerous respondents mentioned a lack of religious faith or observance, or a misinterpretation of religion, as a major cause of violence, and felt that religion ought to act as a deterrent from violence. Few respondents cited strictness in religious faith or observance as a cause of VAWG.

The absence of laws prohibiting VAWG was not widely mentioned as a contributing factor, signalling a lack of awareness of the importance of legislation in combating VAWG. Responses to this question indicate varying levels of understanding about VAWG among women themselves, some of whom indirectly justified VAWG by linking it to women's behaviour e.g. what a woman wears, whether she obeys her husband, whether she fulfils her perceived marital duties.

## Impact of physical and psychological abuse on women

Survey respondents were fully aware of the impact of VAWG on individuals, many through direct experience, offering evidence of the prevalence of violence in their communities. There was no significant difference between rural and urban areas in the answers to this question.

Women described physical and psychological effects of violence, including fractures, burns, and bruises, depression, suicide, lack of self-confidence as well as its social consequences as divorce, isolation, and family disintegration. The possibility that a woman who had experienced physical violence might harm her children was also mentioned, however less frequently.

To be noted that many respondents specifically mentioned suicide as one of the effects of VAWG even if cases of suicide as a result of VAWG are not common in the South Mediterranean. The discrepancy can likely be attributed to the heavy consequences VAWG has for women on psychological level.

### What should be done to stop VAWG in your region?

Suggestions included conducting awareness-raising seminars, increasing the number of groups working to combat VAWG, enhancing security, informing women's families about domestic violence, educating men about the effects of violence, enabling women's participation in civic and social groups, encouraging families to report incidents of violence and seek justice.

Respondents in rural areas mentioned solutions involving women's families more often than those in urban areas, reflecting norms around family cohesion in rural areas.

Some women also suggested amending laws, but none mentioned a specific law, articles, or international agreements, again indicating limited awareness about legislation.

### How should women respond to VAWG?

Most women stated that the best response to VAWG is to file a complaint and make full use of the justice system. Other suggestions included informing relatives, reporting the incident to family protection services, rejecting and confronting violence in every possible way, breaking the silence, speaking to the husband's family and reporting the violence to community leaders such as the Mukhtar or village mayor, especially in Lebanon and Palestine.

A few respondents mentioned making use of the media, and some took an extreme position, calling for reciprocity and "killing men who abuse women".

Many respondents suggest divorce as a mean to end VAWG. Only a few said that women victims of domestic violence should remain silent, be patient and endure the hardships of marital life as a means to end violence.

### Including men and boys in combating VAWG

The importance or usefulness of including men in actions to end VAWG is a controversial issue: if many women recognise it, many others doubt of its potential benefits.

Advantages that respondents suggested included educating men and boys about women's rights, raising their awareness of the impact of violence, changing culture and customs, altering men's perceptions of women so that they recognise women's value, and ultimately encouraging men to become allies instead of opponents and perpetrators of VAWG.

Some women said it is very important for men to understand the law and that there are penalties when they are violent towards women.

### The relationship between militarism, occupation, conflict and VAWG

This question was only asked in Jordan, Palestine, and Morocco due to the geo-political context of these three countries.

In Palestine, 80% of women reported that there is a relationship between occupation and VAWG, compared to 33% in Morocco. In Jordan, 25% (out of which 57% are Jordanian, 41% Syrian, 2% Egyptian) said that there is a relationship between occupation and VAWG.

Many respondents made the point that armed conflict affects women physically and psychologically, as women frequently experience sexual violence, imprisonment, harassment, verbal abuse and humiliation during war.

# QUALITATIVE PHASE: ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS

## A. Overview of VAWG

### 1. Violence against women and girls and gender power structures

Most interviewees defined VAWG as a violation of women's rights that infringes on women's dignity and takes different forms ranging from representation of women, to verbal expression and physical action.

According to interviewees, the definition is determined by the cultural context where it occurs. However, they also point out that VAWG is present in all societies and mostly affects women and girls. Some take discrimination in law as the starting point in their definition of violence, emphasising that legislation should form the basis for protection and stating that the implementation of discriminatory laws is itself a form of violence.

Some interviewees referred to a definition used in national legislation. For example, in Tunisia, most interviewees referred to the definition in the Law on Eliminating Violence Against Women enacted in 2017.

According to most interviewees, VAWG is widely understood as physical injury and psychological agony that women and girls face in various forms such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, FGM, and early marriage. Discriminatory social norms, customs and traditions were also mentioned as forms of violence, as well as weak legal protection. Some observers underlined the significance of male domination and the strength of cultural stereotypes as the main root cause of VAWG

"Contrary to men, women are obligated to stick to specific behaviours. Only because they are women, they must do specific things and act in a certain manner."

"In the work frame, men are more promoted than women, notably because women take more leave; it is gender discrimination. In marital relationships, a husband would beat his wife and deprive her of her right to education and work. If she works, he will get her money. In households, sisters serve their brother while he does nothing."

Interviewees drew a clear link between violence and patriarchal power structures, reinforced by upbringing, education and a social culture that demeans women and keeps them under male domination.

#### Discrimination

All interviewees strongly agreed that discrimination is both a form of violence and one of its major sources. Discrimination is symbolic violence practised against someone because of difference. Discrimination entrenches inequality based on factors beyond the control of the victims, such as their gender.

In a patriarchal society, it is based on the perception that women are minors and unable to make their own decisions. The common idea that 'women lack wisdom and faith' was viewed as violence, distinct from but related to State violence in the form of discriminatory laws, policies, and practices.

Some described violence as a mechanism used to 'discipline' women and reinforce discrimination, preventing them from realising their rights, accessing decision-making positions, or benefiting from services.

"Women are excluded. Women work more, but they do not have equal access to resources."

Discrimination in the legal, economic, and political system creates a gender gap that gives men responsibility for making decisions and women for obeying them. Some interviewees argued that discrimination is more than violence, as it has to do with power, coercion, and militarisation. They explained that discrimination can manifest in its various forms in the labour market, in education, in some sports practices and elsewhere, exerting a strong influence on the family and on the upbringing of children.

Many interviewees pointed out that gender discrimination is practised from infancy, as the birth of a boy is often met with greater happiness and pride than the birth of a girl. This discrimination against female infants feeds greater violence later in life and is not practised solely by men. Women may have absorbed the values of the patriarchal society they live in, knowing that being themselves victims of violence they may have no choice but to endorse dominant values.

## 2. Structural causes of violence and discrimination against women and girls

Interviewees highlighted different causes of VAWG, and discrimination shared at the global level:

- **Traditional patriarchal culture:** An unequal balance of power is embedded in many societies by a patriarchal mindset which views women as inferior to men and men as dominant by nature. Women and men are cast in different social and economic roles, supported by male domination in the family and community.
- **Economic system:** When the economic system is characterised by competition and exploitation of the most vulnerable parts of the society, women are the most exposed and affected.
- **Instrumentalization of religion in social and political life:** Patriarchal culture uses religion as a tool and instrumentalises it to secure and advance practices such as men's guardianship over women and punishment for women's disobedience or transgression (for example, wearing 'immodest' clothes) which legitimise VAWG. The lack of awareness among women about their rights helps to reproduce this social order.
- **Education:** Textbooks and curricula spread harmful gender stereotypes and embed discriminatory attitudes towards women. Women's low level of education and knowledge about their rights reinforces patriarchal control.
- **Lack of accountability:** States are not held accountable for VAWG and for discrimination in policies and legislation. There are no genuine accountability systems. At most, some mechanisms point out the existence of discrimination in legislation, but without accountability, change is difficult to achieve.
- **Instability and conflict:** Conflicts in the Arab world created a crisis both in internal politics and national security in Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Yemen. Women are affected by internal and external displacement, food insecurity and State resources and priorities diverted towards security and the military.
- **Cross-cutting issues:** Economic, social and political crises are reflected in rising rates of poverty, exclusion from education, unemployment, substance abuse, and low levels of knowledge and awareness about violence or human rights. All these factors lead to increased rates of VAWG, especially in an environment in which violent behaviour is normalised.
- Interviewees identified many of the factors listed above as causes of VAWG at the national level, although their degree of influence varies from country to country.



### Algeria

- **Social culture:** Framed by customs and traditions, social norms and culture are a major source of gender discrimination and VAWG and include regional and tribal violence: "One tribe is considered better than the other, and a family more honoured than the other."
- **Instrumentalisation of religion:** Within patriarchal society religion is exploited to maintain male dominance.
- **Legislation:** Both the failure to implement laws that combat VAWG and the legal system itself which is "based on the disrespect of women's rights".
- **Economic context:** Widespread poverty and unemployment also contribute to VAWG, and women's participation in the job market is viewed by many as competition for men.



### Egypt

- **Social culture:** The patriarchal mindset, which is based on discrimination between women and men, prevails in all areas of life. Violence often commences at a young age due to the widespread practice of FGM and early marriage. Several interviewees connected harassment to "socialisation" which prevents women from addressing it, to maintain family 'honour'.
- **Instrumentalisation of religion:** Men refer to religious texts which support their views and condone their behaviour, for example when it comes to inheritance, guardianship, or VAWG.
- **Legislation:** There are gaps in legislation – in alimony law, for example – and a general lack of interest and political will to adopt laws that prevent VAWG.
- **Economic context:** Some interviewees mentioned poverty and unemployment as causes of violence.
- **Lack of education:** Poor education and low literacy are also mentioned as causes of violence in the interviews.





## Jordan

- **Legislation:** There are legislative gaps and a legal framework that tolerates and indirectly supports VAWG through lack of strong deterrent and enforcement. Jordan is still at the stage of responding to VAWG and has not yet reached the stage of preventing it. There are shortcomings in the laws, and above all, in the constitution (especially the second paragraph of Article 6<sup>19</sup>) which does not directly guarantee equality based on gender. The Nationality Law deprives women of their full rights, and the Personal Status Law does not ensure the same rights for men and women in inheritance, guardianship and early marriage.
- **Socialization:** VAWG is linked to the way people are brought up. For instance, boys are educated to respond to violence with more violence.
- **Traditional culture and customs:** Jordan's traditional culture emphasises domination over dialogue, and customs and traditions are used in a way that supports VAWG. It was noted that customs and traditions are something to be cherished, but they should be changed if they are used to justify VAWG.
- **Patriarchal culture:** An authoritarian, patriarchal culture deprives women of full and equal citizenship and gives men social privileges. Men ultimately use violence to preserve such privileges.
- **Economic context:** Jordan has been experiencing acute economic crisis since 1989 and continues to struggle today. The crisis has created severe disparities in financial situation and living conditions. Poverty is seen as one of the reasons for the occurrence of domestic violence. "Women do not get equal opportunities. Women in Jordan have one of the lowest rates of economic participation in the world." Women do not have equal access to the labour market due to the lack of childcare and long working hours that clash with the heavy burden of housework for which women are held responsible. Women in the private sector are also paid lower wages than men.
- **Education and the media:** The media is relatively silent on issues related to VAWG, although there are some programmes that incite it. Educational curricula and religious texts interpreted to support the interests of men are also contributing factors to VAWG.



## Lebanon

- **Patriarchal social structures:** Patriarchal social structures generate and sustain norms and values that perpetuate VAWG.
- **Lack of accountability:** Most perpetrators of VAWG go unpunished, due to tolerant laws and social norms.
- **Religious interference:** Religious interference in both the public sphere and in private life contributes to the patriarchal mindset, exacerbating gender discrimination and VAWG.
- **Conservative mindset and culture:** Violence is more widespread in rural areas where women's roles are more often confined to raising children, cooking, housekeeping, and contributing to agricultural work. They are rarely allowed to participate in public social life, and where they are, their participation is minimal.



## Morocco

- **Rise of religious fundamentalism:** The spread of religious extremism has led to increasing rates of VAWG.
- **Cultural norms and customs:** Morocco's social culture was characterised by many interviewees as demeaning to women. Customs and traditions lead to harmful practices such as early marriage.
- **Economic context:** Poverty affects women the most, making them even more dependent on men and increasing their suffering. Financial independence limits violence.
- **Legislation:** Although the law is not the only way to counteract VAWG, it is one of the most effective tools that can provide women with protection and raise awareness.
- **Limited institutional capacity:** Institutions such as the police and the judiciary lack capacity to respond adequately to cases of VAWG. Educated about VAWG is not institutionalised and staff do not know how to deal with victims appropriately.
- To a lesser degree, some interviewees mentioned additional factors such as low literacy and the influence of social media.

<sup>19</sup> Article 6 of the Jordan's constitution says, "Jordanians shall be equal before the law with no discrimination between them in rights and duties even if they differ in race, language or religion".at: [https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/egypt\\_women\\_final\\_english.pdf](https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/egypt_women_final_english.pdf)



## Palestine

- **Israeli occupation:** The occupation contributes to rates of VAWG through its division of Palestinian territories, and discriminatory procedures, rules and laws, which produce violence in the wider population and in return increase VAWG. The occupation strengthens the patriarchal social structure, exacerbating the exploitation and violence that women have traditionally faced.
- **Religion:** Religion reproduces gender inequality and discriminates against women through inheritance and guardianship rules among other issues. Whatever her level of education, a woman has a male guardian who controls her life. According to many interviewees, religion is the primary cause of VAWG in Palestinian society.
- **Traditional patriarchal social system:** All interviewees describe customs and traditions as significant causes of VAWG.
- **Economic context:** Economic policies neglect the needs of women. "Most women work in the informal and unregistered sectors – mainly agriculture, kindergartens and the textile industry – and therefore do not have protection and are exposed to all forms of discrimination and oppression." Some interviewees mentioned the high level of unemployment and poverty.
- **New technologies:** Sudden global exposure to technology without guidance or regulation has generated harassment, threats and blackmail against women.
- **Legislation:** The legal framework does not protect women from discrimination, and there is no specific law that prohibits VAWG.
- **Education:** A few interviewees also mentioned the weakness of education as an underlying factor contributing to VAWG. Despite progress made in this area, the persistent spread of discriminatory ideas and stereotypes through curricula perpetuates gender inequality.



## Tunisia

- **Instrumentalization of Religion:** The use of religious texts to justify male dominance was viewed as an important contributing factor to VAWG.
- **Socialisation:** Social culture of male domination affects the whole society and reinforces the widespread view that women are inferior. Some interviewees described the prevailing patriarchal mentality in which women are seen as submissive as the most critical underlying cause of VAWG.
- **Education:** The national education system is not able to change persistent social norms and does not act towards this goal.
- **Legislation:** Tunisia recently adopted a specific law aiming to combat VAWG. However, implementation is still weak.
- **Media:** Media outlets reproduce cultural and social stereotypes that support justification of VAWG.

### 3. Who are the victims?

In the current social, legal, and economic context of the South Mediterranean, all women are vulnerable to violence. There is no group of women and girls that is immune.

Most interviewees agreed that all women and girls are subject to violence regardless of region, age, or social situation. They highlighted violence perpetrated against women with disabilities and from low-income families as they often face additional discrimination. Refugee and migrant women are frequently exploited and subjected to economic violence, especially in Tunisia and Lebanon. Interviewees also mentioned that girls and less educated and illiterate women were more vulnerable to VAWG.



## Algeria

Interviewees unanimously agreed that women from all sections of society suffer from VAWG, whatever their level of education, social or economic situation. However, they highlighted several groups of women who were most at risk, such as women who live below the poverty line, women with disabilities – especially physical disabilities, unemployed, and women living in

remote areas. These groups were viewed as less able to defend themselves and subject to stronger patriarchal dominance. Women in prostitution and refugee women were also seen as more vulnerable to sexual violence, exploitation and harassment.



## Egypt

Interviewees described women living in poverty as being the most vulnerable to violence. Among them are young girls, uneducated women, unemployed women, women from religious minorities, and rural women,

who are subject to stronger patriarchal control. Refugee women are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and harassment. A few also mentioned women with disabilities, divorced women, and widows.



## Jordan

All women and girls are exposed to VAWG, whether they live in urban, rural or desert areas. Interviewees mentioned several groups of women and girls seen as more at risk, most frequently mentioning less educated women. Other groups are women with disabilities, older women, girls and adolescents, unemployed and unskilled women with limited access to the labour market, women in conservative cultural and social environments (e.g. married women subject to pressure from their household), women working in the agricultural and industrial sectors.

Almost half of the interviewees did not mention refugee women among the groups most exposed to violence. Some of them pointed out that there is no single group most affected, as there are many interlinked causes of VAWG.

“There is no category. There are causes, such as poverty and education... It has nothing to do with just one aspect. I think ignorance is a major cause, poverty-stricken areas, conservative communities and religion.”



## Lebanon

While all interviewees agreed that every woman or girl is at risk, there was no doubt that refugee women are more exposed to VAWG and discrimination. Most interviewees identified female refugees and rural women as the most vulnerable to violence, followed by girls and adolescents who are victims of early marriage and domestic workers who are subject to all forms of violence.

Refugee women are more vulnerable because of the precarity of their situation and their limited resources. They are also exposed to violence in work as their financial allowance is very small, and their employers often exploit them.

Lebanon is one of the countries in the region that hosts the largest number of refugees relative to its population. According to the estimation of the Lebanese government, there are 12 Palestinian refugee camps<sup>20</sup> and about 1.5 million Syrian refugees in the country.



## Morocco

Interviewees unanimously agreed that all women are vulnerable to VAWG regardless of their social class and education. However, the most affected groups include less educated and illiterate women, minors and adolescents, especially in conservative environments, women with disabilities, especially in rural areas, women with limited access to the labour market and lack of skills or capacity to work, unemployed women and elderly women.

Migrant women from neighbouring African countries were also identified as a vulnerable group at a high risk of exploitation, human trafficking, slavery and forced labour. The passports of women migrants are confiscated, and they often face difficulties in proving the lineage of their children because they lack a documented marriage contract.

Other groups identified as being most affected by VAWG were refugee women, lesbian women, domestic workers, women working in the agricultural and industrial sectors, women in prostitution.



## Palestine

Interviewees mentioned several at-risk groups. Women living in refugee camps are especially exposed to VAWG due to the camp environment where many family members live together in inadequate housing. Harassment in the camps is widespread and has many forms. Women refugees suffer from double persecution, exploitation, and violence because of their asylum-seeker status.

According to interviewees, the poverty line in Palestinian society is \$696 per month. However, thousands of women are still working for less than the minimum wage of \$420 per month as stipulated by the Palestinian Labour Law. Poor women are the most vulnerable to violence, as limited job opportunities and resources put them at greater risk and generate more violence.

Women living in the city were typically seen as ‘bolder’, having more options and opportunities to counter violence. Conversely, harassment in public places is less common in rural settings than in urban ones. According to interviewees, social cohesion in a village community protects women from harassment to some extent.

Most interviewees also mentioned that among the primary victims of VAWG are women living in places under occupation. Women in Jerusalem, the Valley and Gaza are more vulnerable to violence due to the occupation.

## Tunisia

Revolutions across the Arab world have increased the number of people seeking asylum in Tunisia. Female refugees and migrants are especially vulnerable to exploitation and economic violence because they are considered 'second class residents'. As refugee women do not hold Tunisian nationality, they are not covered by any medical insurance, so they have no access to medical care.

Interviewees also mentioned women on public transport, in school and university as groups at risk of verbal and sexual violence. Girls with low literacy and women with disabilities are more vulnerable to domestic violence and encounter increased discrimination. Some interviewees said that well-educated and successful women, perceived by their communities as role models, may be reluctant to call for help or speak out if they experience violence, due to the culture of shame.

## 4. The most common forms of VAWG

Multiple forms of VAWG are prevalent in the South Mediterranean region: notably sexual, verbal, physical and psychological violence. Interviewees emphasised psychological violence, including insulting, belittling, and undermining women.

Except for Morocco, most interviewees did not mention marital rape as a widespread form of VAWG, although all highlighted domestic violence as one of the most common forms of violence. In Egypt, a focus is laid on combatting FGM and verbal harassment in public spaces. In Jordan and Algeria, physical and verbal violence perpetrated especially by relatives (which also leads to psychological violence) is the most common forms of VAWG. Psychological violence was described as common in Lebanon and Palestine.

## Algeria

For the most part, interviewees identified verbal and physical violence as the most common forms of VAWG in their society. Some also pointed to sexual violence, mentioning the associated psychological impact, such mental health problems including depression.

Economic violence was also mentioned as a relatively common form of VAWG with a serious secondary impact of limiting women's ability to contribute to private and public life.

## Egypt

FGM and harassment in various settings (for example in the market, in school, at university, in the workplace, on social media) are the most widespread forms of violence in Egyptian society. Women cannot report such cases due to prevailing social norms. Verbal violence is widely spread form of harassment of women.

Psychological violence is also one of the prevalent forms of VAWG through insults, bullying, mockery, threats, minimising women's roles and making them feel inferior.

Some mentioned domestic violence, including withholding money, and inflicting physical violence and abuse, which may lead to permanent or temporary injury and a severely negative impact on mental health.

A few interviewees also mentioned early marriage, especially to foreigners, and the obligation for women to give up most of their rights or *khul*<sup>21</sup> to obtain a divorce.

## Jordan

Physical and verbal violence are the main forms of VAWG in Jordan, often perpetrated by close male relatives, whether father, brother or husband.

Almost all women experience harassment, including in online spaces such as social media, for which the woman is most often blamed.

"Women are asked: 'What is the photo you have posted?' or 'What are you wearing, and why did you go out at night?' Whereas men are not questioned when they do the same."

A few interviewees explained that economic violence has also become widespread. Women struggle to control their own income, access decent work opportunities, and own land or property. Men do not view work which is typically done by women at home – such as caring for children and elderly family members, teaching and housekeeping – as having financial value, and so a substantial part women's economic contribution remains invisible.

<sup>21</sup> *Khul* is a process through which a woman can divorce her husband in Islam, by returning the dowry or anything she received from her husband.



## Lebanon

Interviewees underlined the lack of detailed statistics on VAWG. The most common and most visible form of this violence is physical violence. However, psychological, verbal abuse and humiliation, followed by sexual violence, are also widespread. A key legal problem

highlighted by interviewees is marital rape, since there is no comprehensive definition of sexual violence in Lebanese legislation, especially between husband and wife. Among more recently identified forms of domestic violence, interviewees mentioned forced pregnancy.



## Morocco

Domestic violence is the most widespread manifestation of VAWG.

"It can be committed during the marriage, and it can also be practised during the dissolution of the marriage contract."

One interviewee quoted a report issued by the Ministry of Solidarity, Social Development, Equality and Family in 2016 which states physical violence in marriage represents 38% of the total number of cases of physical VAWG. Interviewees explained that domestic violence

takes many different forms: insults, humiliation, belittling, slander, denial of education, denial of work, deprivation of inheritance, marital rape, incest, sexual harassment, beatings, injury and murder.

Some interviewees pointed out that psychological violence is also widespread in the country. They described it as "a poison for the victim," meaning that it affects the emotions, the psychological health and the personality of women who are facing it.



## Palestine

About half of interviewees identified psychological violence as the most common form of violence in Palestine: insulting, belittling and undermining women. They quoted a 2019 survey on GBV which revealed that rates of psychological violence were rising in the country.

Psychological violence distorts women's sense of reality "at home, in their neighbourhood, at school, at work...".

Psychological and physical violence are interconnected in most cases, as physical violence and especially sexual violence can cause severe psychological damage. In many cases physical violence is fatal: 19 cases of femicide were recorded in 2019 according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Cyber violence and blackmail against women are also widespread and increasing.



## Tunisia

Physical violence, especially at home, is one of the most common forms of VAWG in Tunisia. Interviewees also mentioned harassment that women face on public transport, in schools, and in universities. Discrimination against illiterate girls and women, and against girls and

women with disabilities is also common. Interviewees did not mention early marriage, as the practice occurs at relatively low levels compared to other countries in the region.

## 5. Domestic violence is not a private issue

Domestic violence is still considered by most people to be a private matter, and external interference in 'family affairs' is unwelcome. Virtually all interviewees disagreed with this view and called for State intervention to prevent violence and protect victims. Justice systems must shift their focus away from family interests to individual rights, and protection from domestic violence should be guaranteed everywhere.

Most interviewees believed that society should not remain silent about the issue any longer, and citizens should be encouraged to report cases of domestic violence through awareness programmes and legislation.

One interviewee offered a positive example: "in Morocco domestic violence was considered taboo until 1995, but listening sessions arranged by women's rights CSOs helped to spark a national conversation, after which it became possible to talk about domestic violence openly."

All interviewees mentioned the importance of establishing a culture of respect and a safe environment conducive to speaking up. Some specifically stressed that the privacy of women who report violence at a police station should be respected, as this would help reduce the fear of negative consequences and encourage women to file complaints. Even though rates of reporting domestic violence are increasing, the number of cases referred to the judiciary is still very small, as most victims drop their claim under intense social pressure and fear of consequences. Greater support for women as they go through the process would reduce the number of dropped cases. Awareness-raising programmes could help change the social culture which pressures victims to waive their rights in the interests of their family.

“Unfortunately, in our world, we have misconceptions about rights. There is a focus on the rights of the family, tribe, clan or society. A prevalent idea in our culture is ‘if a dilemma hits you, conceal it’ and it applies to the family too. Cover-up is part of the view that the individual is not important, and society and family rights prevail over one’s right.”

Only a few interviewees said that they view marriage as a private affair and supported the idea of non-interference in cases of domestic violence.

“There is no need to interfere in the affairs of the spouses. They are free in their lives, whether their relationship is good or not, because no one has authority or interference over their affairs.”

## 6. Exclusion of women from economic and political spheres

Interviewees linked low levels of political and economic participation to women’s lack of access to resources, an unwelcoming work environment, an unsupportive legal framework, and a strongly patriarchal culture that defines roles in terms of gender stereotypes.

Representation of women in political positions is very limited in all countries except Tunisia, to some extent. Political life should be reorganised through legislation to better support women’s participation and representation, for example by allocating additional quotas for women. Governments and CSOs should work to raise awareness of the importance of women’s voices in politics.

At the economic level, lack of access to resources leads to unequal opportunities, which in turn leads to economic dependence. Improving the work environment for women and changing social attitudes that resist women’s work outside the home are essential for enhancing women’s economic participation and financial independence.



### Algeria

Views were divided. Some reported that the political and economic participation of women is limited and continues to stagnate. Others said that there has been some improvement, signified by better representation of women in parliament and the government. However, two main obstacles were commonly identified: the country’s political and economic crisis, and the patriarchal culture that stigmatises women who are active in public life. Most people deny these freedoms to women, but welcome men’s participation and contribution.

Most interviewees said there had been some progress in the sense that Algerian women have become more aware of their rights. A few felt that women are able to participate in the political and economic sphere because Algerian laws now enshrine equality in principle.

They emphasised the increased presence of women engaging in parliament and ministries and leading large companies in Algeria.

Others reported that women’s political participation remains low. Until now, there have been no adequate measures to enhance women’s participation, even though the Constitution provides for a quota system in parliament and the municipalities. At the government level, women’s representation is low, and they do not have access to the most influential ministries such as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Health and Education.

According to one interviewee, the rate of women’s economic participation does not exceed 17%.



### Egypt

Women’s economic participation was viewed as weak. Most interviewees said that existing laws do not support women’s employment. Women must overcome hurdles to access the labour market, and once in the workplace there are no regulations to protect them from exploitation, discrimination or gender-based harassment.

However, several interviewees pointed out that the State is making determined efforts to enhance women’s economic participation. For example, the government has developed vocational and technical training centres and anti-poverty programmes for women with low incomes to equip them with skills to become self-reliant.

Measures have also been adopted to support women developing small and micro projects and businesses, such as encouraging municipalities to grant licenses. The government has also planned to provide a social security safety net for women working in the informal sector.

Interviewees agreed unanimously that women’s political participation is still at a low level. So far, no adequate measures have been put in place to improve the situation. Some interviewees pointed out that there are several women ministers and women’s quotas have been included in the Constitution to increase representation of women in parliament and municipalities. However, most women ministers do not

hold key ministries like Foreign Affairs, Interior, Health and Education, and are not strongly represented in municipal work.

“The absence of municipalities lasted for ten years, and therefore this contributed to the denial of women to work on the ground and to participate in their community.”

## Jordan

The economic and political participation of women in Jordan is one of the lowest in the region and internationally. This is due to several challenges that prevent women’s full participation in public life, including the national focus on maintaining stability and internal security.

“A country that relies on loans and aid cannot undergo normal conditions. Consequently, the adopted financial policies largely marginalise big segments of our society, including women and girls.”

Some interviewees underlined the link between the economy and politics.

“It is impossible to speak about political empowerment in the absence of economic empowerment.”

Some interviewees said that the low level of women’s economic participation is due to a non-supportive work environment for women, stemming from discriminatory legislation. Challenges include a lack of job opportunities, transport difficulties, inadequate childcare provision through nurseries and day-care centres, and lack of insurance. Women also lack the right to control their income and property.

Other interviewees pointed out that women’s economic participation rates have been the same for years, despite high education levels. In their view, women’s greater access to education has not been translated positively into greater participation in the labour market, with a rate of only 15% in 2017, compared to 68% for men, according to the 2017 Gender Gap Index<sup>22</sup>. Many women who do paid work are in the informal sector, making it difficult to integrate their work, value, and role in the national economy and society.

Women are often forced to accept jobs for which they are overqualified to achieve financial independence. Some interviewees said that employers prefer to employ men for reasons related to daily working hours, night work, travel between provinces, and to avoid covering women’s maternity leave or childcare.

Some interviewees believed that there has been tangible progress in this field compared to previous years. In 2015 the newly elected parliament included the highest number of women in Egypt’s parliamentary history - their representation reached 15% of the total parliamentary seats.

There is some progress in political participation but at a very slow pace. Indicators and figures show women’s presence in ministries and political spaces such as the Parliament and the Senate but at a very modest level. A woman has never headed key, sovereign Ministries such as the Ministry of Interior or Justice. Women’s absence at the table is reflected in government agendas, strategies, and budgets, where the share for women’s participation is minimal to non-existent.

Some interviewees attributed this situation to a lack of awareness and social culture that does not support women to participate in the political sphere. Despite the small amount of progress made in the legislative system, especially quotas that increase women’s opportunity to be represented in Parliament, men and women should be educated about the importance of women’s political participation. Women often vote for men and not for women in parliamentary elections, influenced by cultural norms which dictate that a strong female presence in a public space is unacceptable.

The numbers of women in leadership positions in the chambers of industry and commerce, trade unions and political parties are very modest. Some boards of directors of trade unions have no women members at all.

“There is not a single woman on the board of teachers union while the percentage of female teachers is 75% in the public authority! For example, there are fourteen professional unions in Jordan. Still, the number of unions with female representation on the board of directors does not exceed three unions and in a very tiny proportion.”

Women are also absent from the leadership of some significant political bodies. This leaves space for men to enact laws and establish policies and programmes that neglect women’s needs and rights.

“We also have a problem in Jordan, which is the absence of women from senior positions in bodies such as the Constitutional Court, the Anti-Corruption Commission and other important senior positions in the country.”



## Lebanon

Women's participation in economic and political life is improving, but slowly. Today many women hold positions in the justice system, previously reserved for men. The patriarchal social system is one of the main obstacles hindering women's progress in both the economic and the political sphere. Patriarchal society does not believe that women are capable of holding positions of power and responsibility.

There has been some progress towards women's full economic participation, and women's participation in the workforce is rising, but it remains at a low level and much is concentrated in the informal sector such as crafts and agricultural labour. Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon in particular have limited access to the labour market, although they excel in crafts, agriculture, cosmetics, nursing and education.

Significant efforts have been made to amend laws and enhance women's participation in parliamentary life and municipal work, unions and political parties. However, women's participation has fallen below the expected level. According to some interviewees, women's participation is linked to changes in the social and political system: fluctuations and conflicts in Lebanon's power structures make the political system unstable and impact negatively on women's political participation.

"The obstacle that prevents women from reaching high positions in political and economic life is that the patriarchal society does not believe in their capabilities and considers them second-class citizens who lack the sufficient qualifications to hold high positions. On the other hand, women lack self-confidence, and they believe that politics do not belong to them because they grew up hearing that politics is for men and that women have other interests."



## Morocco

Women's participation in economic and political life is at a low level. Interviewees listed the leading obstacles faced by women in Morocco that limit their public participation: absence of full equality between women and men, prevalence of discrimination against women, persistence of stereotypical roles within society, lack of financial independence for most women, wage inequality, high rate of illiteracy, girls leaving school earlier than boys, early marriage, absence of a structure specifically dedicated to women's issues and gender equality in all ministries, discrimination in inheritance rights.

According to some interviewees, statistics show that the breadwinner in many Moroccan families is a woman, but they typically work in the informal sectors, including housekeeping and selling market goods. Some women's cooperatives have also appeared, especially in rural areas, through which women engage in economic activities although without social security and health insurance.

"90% of women who come to our [listening] centres do not have any social protection. Of course, there are women entrepreneurs, but they are few."

The economic reality is that women do not have access to wealth and resources, including land. Women own a tiny percentage of land in rural areas and properties in cities. Many interviewees said that the government does not work to ensure women's equal participation in the labour market, under the pretext that there are more men qualified than women.

Most interviewees reported that there had been progress since the beginning of the current century in the level of representation in parliament, government, or national institutions. However, this progress remains limited, and women face multiple challenges. Most interviewees pointed out that the government supervises appointments for decision-making positions, but a need for gender balance does not inform their selections.

According to interviewees, women face a patriarchal mentality that locks them in the home. Women who have reached decision-making positions are challenged because the oppression of women is a powerful social norm. Although girls have higher academic achievement rates than their male peers, this has not translated into better representation in decision-making positions.





## Palestine

The participation of women in both economic and political life is still marginal. Measures adopted by Palestinian authorities are insufficient.

According to interviewees, women's participation in the workforce increased from 13% in 2000 to only 20% in 2019, and less in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. The education rate is higher among women, but their representation in the labour market remains low, even compared to other Arab countries. The Ministry of National Economy provides women with loans at a very low interest rate to support them in starting up businesses, but this support is inadequate.

Lack of respect for equality in the workplace was highlighted as a major obstacle to women's economic participation. There is no legal or social support for women in employment and nothing to protect them from exploitation, discrimination, or harassment. Laws are not supportive of women's employment. There is no guarantee for maternity leave, and employers are not held accountable for the low salaries they offer to women. Since there is no dedicated government oversight for informal work and employment, there are no safeguards or insurance, so women withdraw from the labour market.

According to interviewees, the Israeli occupation also hinders economic growth. Generally, there is little work available or opportunities for economic rehabilitation for women in Palestine, because checkpoints and military occupation affects women's mobility more than men's, so men can access jobs and opportunities more quickly.

Interviewees pointed out that the quota system alone does not deliver equality nor enhance women's political participation. Women make up only 12% of the Palestinian National Council (the legislative body). The Executive Committee includes only one woman, and women make up only 10% of the Revolutionary Council. There are only three female Ministers out of 22.

Despite the adoption of secular principles by most political parties, and legislation that calls for justice and equality between women and men, this is not reflected on the ground. Interviewees pointed to political interests and a desire to preserve the status quo as the main obstacles which hinder women's political participation. Most parties, whether right, centre or left, have significant concerns regarding the representation of women and resist women reaching leadership positions.



## Tunisia

Even if women's participation in Tunisia's public sector workforce is higher than in other countries in the region, the pressures of Tunisia's patriarchal society prevent women from reaching leadership positions and restrict their economic participation.

Multiple barriers that limit women's economic participation were described by the interviewees. The most significant obstacles were linked to the household, where women are left with the tasks of domestic work and childcare. This translates into a lack of tax recognition, pension, social security and health insurance for women who aren't in paid employment.

Other obstacles are linked to social culture and norms, which means many women are reluctant to work outside their homes. In the workplace, women are unfairly excluded from career development and promotions. They also face legal discrimination through inequality in inheritance, which mostly impacts women working in agriculture, especially in rural areas where land inheritance is considered men's right. Furthermore, women are not incentivised by the State nor by the banks. Loans are not offered to women as readily as to men.

Interviewees explained that in political parties, men's interests are always the priority. When a woman wants to advance in her political career, she is caricatured as "unfeminine". One recent positive development is the adoption of an electoral law based on proportionality (June 2016), which includes horizontal and vertical gender parity. Horizontal parity requires municipal election lists across Tunisia to have an equal number of men and women, while vertical parity requires that men and women be alternated within each list.

Some interviewees suggested that the problem lies in the difficulties women face once they reach political positions, which are often worse than what they have experienced in their professional lives. Once they get to senior positions, patriarchal societal pressure intensifies, leading many women to withdraw and give up. Women are represented only in the Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood, and the Elderly, but not in the most influential Ministries like the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Health and Education.

## 7. VAWG during military conflicts

A significant relationship between military violence, occupation and VAWG was identified, particularly in Palestine. Interviewees explained how military violence is related to VAWG and argued that women's participation in management of conflicts and peace negotiations is vital for society security and peace.

Interviewees mentioned patriarchal culture, gender stereotypes and the system of promotion of military solutions to conflicts as obstacles to the full participation of women in peace and security efforts.

To be noted that on this topic, minimally substantial responses to be exploited could be only gathered from Jordan and Palestine.

### Jordan

All interviewees agreed that there is a connection between military violence, occupation and VAWG. Women and girls are among the most vulnerable to violence and displacement in conflict and must be given special attention in these contexts. Following an influx of refugees from the current conflict in Syria, VAWG has increased among refugees and the wider community, including rape, early marriage, and prostitution.

Most interviewees mentioned that Jordan had developed a national action plan (NAP) for implementing UNSCR 1325, the second Arab country after Iraq to do so, and viewed Jordanian women's participation in the armed forces, national security and peace missions as tangible and realistic compared to other countries. Some argued that this participation must continue to increase, and women should hold administrative and leadership positions in this field.

One interviewee who was remarkably familiar with the UfM Ministerial Declaration's recommendations

expressed the importance of referring to this Declaration, which includes guidelines related to women's role and their involvement in security and peace issues. Their roles must be adequately resourced through funding allocations. When women are fully supported to participate in the formulation of policies and negotiating positions, it ensures the development of real solutions that protect the rights of women victims of war and armed conflict.

"The UFM Ministerial Declaration contains ten guidelines related to the role of women in engaging in security and peace issues and provides financial allocations for the integration of women not to employ them only. They should participate in policy formulation."

Several interviewees pointed out that there is a long journey ahead to reach a level of effective participation for women in the peace and security sectors due to patriarchal society and the military system favouring men and military solutions.

### Palestine

The interviewees pointed out that the violence of occupation is deeply gender-based, and it is impossible to separate the two. The rhetoric and violence of the occupier are directed at women and affect them more than men.

In their view, the relationship between the violence of the occupation and VAWG is historical. Colonisers have always practised intentional, systematic VAWG and Palestine's case is no exception. Other aspects of military violence do not explicitly target women but directly impact them—for instance, eviction and destruction of homes. When people are displaced, women are affected first. They pay a double price in all cases.

Palestinian women experience 'compound violence', meaning that the violence resulting from occupation increases violence in the home and the community.

"Without a doubt, the occupation in the West Bank exposes women to 'compound violence'; the violence from occupation as well as the violence from men in

the family, which is due to the violence that men are subjected to by occupation."

Government representatives said that women must be included in security roles. Some reported that, eleven years ago, there was not a single female police officer. Today there has been some progress, and women are better represented in security services. Successful police and security service models have encouraged decision makers to open up opportunities for other women to work in these fields.

Interviewees representing CSOs pointed out that, despite the NAP for UNSCR 1325 (2017-2019), women's participation in the peace and security sector remains limited to the lower and middle levels at best. Women are still unable to reach higher levels of influence in decision making. In their view, the laws and systems governing employees in the security services, such as the law of Military Retirement and various promotions and benefits, all discriminate against women.

## 8. VAWG main trends and recent developments

Government procedures and services provided for women victims of VAWG have improved. However, cases of violence are increasing, and current services are inadequate. There is still a long way to go.

### Algeria

Opinions about the changing prevalence of VAWG can be grouped into three main categories of equal proportions:

- VAWG has increased significantly, especially verbal violence.
- VAWG is decreasing as Algerian women have become more capable of defending themselves and claiming their rights.
- We cannot know because of a lack of accurate statistics.

Most interviewees reported that government procedures are weak and do not provide adequate support to women. Laws are enacted but are neither implemented nor applied on the ground.

For example, the Family Law was amended in 2019, enabling a wife to file a complaint against her husband and penalties for VAWG have been intensified in the penal code, but these improvements have not been followed up by the commitment or resources to allow for full implementation and enforcement.

One interviewee recommended investing in more preventive measures that would protect women from violence, such as awareness-raising campaigns.

“Besides, the State should urge CSOs to sensitise people about (VAWG). This could be done through cultural and sports programmes at school and university, etc.”

### Egypt

VAWG has increased significantly, despite better awareness among women and some government initiatives. However, it is not possible to know for sure if VAWG is increasing or decreasing due to the absence of recent data, and variation by geographical area.

“In some regions, violence has decreased as a result of awareness-raising. Several associations are conducting activities, initiatives and projects to combat VAWG. These associations have largely communicated with the surrounding community in their geographical scope. This action has contributed to raising awareness at a substantial level and reducing violence”.

The trend in terms of legal and public policy reforms is positive, but limited, slow, and weak. Further development and oversight are required. Some interviewees asserted that laws and public policies are only formalities, in reality they are ineffective, and precarious.

Some positive examples of government progress and increased awareness were reported. At the constitutional level, the principle of non-discrimination between men and women has been endorsed. A draft law on combating VAWG has been developed to criminalise

all forms of violence, including sexual harassment, but the law has not yet been voted on in parliament.

A national strategy to combat VAWG has been launched, and Equal Opportunity Units subsidiary to the Cabinet (the chief executive body in Egypt) have been established under the Ministry of Manpower and Emigration. Their function is to promote gender equality in the workplace, address discriminatory practices, raise awareness of women's work rights and support women to access training and promotion.

A 'psychological counselling room' has been established recently at the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood. The Ministry of Interior also established the Combating Violence Crimes Against Women Unit in 2013. A medical protocol to support victims of GBV was established in 2013 and adopted in all hospitals and health facilities, training for staff and service providers was delivered in all public hospitals in Greater Cairo, Assiut and Suhag.

Academics at Cairo University have established an 'anti-harassment' unit to raise awareness among students, train university staff and build a culture of gender equality.

### Jordan

All interviewees reported that violence is increasing. Improvements in monitoring and documentation have revealed a higher rate of violence despite the work on combating VAWG.

Positive steps were noted, such as the creation of a judicial body to follow up on cases of VAWG, and the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee for women's empowerment. Some discriminatory laws have been amended, for example Article 308 of the penal code was abolished, so that a rapist is no longer protected from punishment if he marries the victim.

“Jordan has accomplished good steps at the level of laws and legislation, but there is still a problem. Work must be done to maximize coordination and implementation of laws.”

The increase in reported cases of violence and numbers of women seeking assistance is attributed to successful awareness-raising and education campaigns, and the creation of specialised services including the Family Protection Department, shelters such as “Dar Aminah” as well as counselling services. New laws have also been adopted, such as the 2017 Law on Protection from Domestic Violence.

It is difficult to have a full picture of the situation because existing statistics about VAWG are not comprehensive.

“We have some statistics, but, so far, we do not have a comprehensive national statistic for all segments, patterns, and circumstances of violence. For instance, the population census only surveyed the category of married women. So, what about the older sister who serves the house?”

Much still needs to be done. Services are much more accessible in the city than in the countryside, which together with higher levels of awareness, greater anonymity, and a typically better financial situation explains the higher number of cases reported in urban areas.

“The issue is not easy because the reporting is higher in the cities, and this does not give us clear evidence. Hence, we should reconsider the figures within a broader framework...”

Some said that responsibility of eradicating VAWG does not lie solely with the government. The government, CSOs and the private sector should work together and coordinate their efforts.

Social culture was also mentioned, as gender stereotypes are present in official institutions and the public sector, which slows down progress in eliminating VAWG. Progressive international agreements related to women’s rights, legal reforms and feminist ideas clash with the prevalent patriarchal culture.



## Lebanon

VAWG is deeply rooted in Lebanese society, but no accurate statistics are available to indicate the extent of the problem. Interviewees reported that VAWG in all its forms has been rampant throughout the country for a long time. Their view that the number of cases has increased as a result of the influx of Syrian refugees is confirmed by surveys conducted in 2007 and 2009 in which refugee women reported high rates of sexual violence in the informal settlements.

The Law on Protection of Women and Family Members from Domestic Violence was described as a positive achievement at the national level, but it is not comprehensive and does not protect women from all forms of VAWG. As with other legal reforms, such as the abolition of Article 522 of the Penal Code which protected the rapist from punishment if he married the victim, implementation is key.



## Morocco

Most interviewees reported that VAWG is increasing, and quoted national reports and research issued by the Higher Planning Commission and the Ministry of Solidarity, Social Development, Equality and Family. More cases of VAWG are reported in urban areas than in rural areas, which can be attributed to a higher level of awareness among urban women of their right to be protected from violence and to report VAWG.

Government procedures currently in place are slow and ineffective, but there has been noticeable progress in several areas. In 2002 the government launched a national strategy and executive plan to combat VAWG, this was followed by the ‘National Plan for Equality – IKRAM1’ (2012-2016) and ‘IKRAM 2’ (2017-2021). However, there has been no adequate follow-up or evaluation of how these plans have been implemented. Some interviewees stressed that CSOs had an important role to play in monitoring the implementation of these policies.

The Domestic Workers Law was passed in 2016, giving women greater access to justice, and a new law aiming to combat VAWG was passed in 2018. However, it

doesn’t criminalise marital rape.

In some ministries, specialist units have been formed to work on gender issues and local committees have been formed to support victims of VAWG. Listening centres have been widely adopted and the use of listening units in court have helped to expose violence. Women’s and human rights CSOs have also conducted several awareness-raising campaigns.

While these developments represent some progress, the measures are not comprehensive nor fully implemented.

Measures to combat VAWG should be informed by perspectives beyond the law and politics, for example from the fields of sociology, psychology and anthropology. A permanent media campaigns and new educational curricula are among the steps towards ending VAWG.

“Social phenomena cannot be addressed from a single angle, because societies are complex, and laws, for example, are inadequate to address a phenomenon.”



## Palestine

There is a general positive trend, but progress is very slow. Women's rights CSOs are becoming more numerous and gaining power. The voices of women are rising, and they are becoming stronger. There is greater awareness that GBV can no longer be tolerated.

Some laws related to conflict and separation between spouses have been amended, a woman can now file for divorce, and an alimony fund has been created. The presence of female police officers and the creation of Family Protection Police are examples of this shift. Some shelters for victims of VAWG are available but there is a lack of capacity that limits further progress.

A plan to combat VAWG was launched a decade ago (the Strategic Plan to Combat Violence against Women, 2011-2019) and according to interviewees it was one of the best in the region because it was developed in consultation with CSOs. It included a national referral system, specialist gender units, training, shelters and other measures. Unfortunately, implementation has been very limited, which is a problem affecting other laws and policies.



## Tunisia

More than half of interviewees stated that VAWG is increasing, while the remainder were unaware of any change. A recent National Board for Family and Population survey highlighted an increase of violence, and according to the Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood, and the Elderly 44,186 cases of VAWG were reported between February and November 2018, around one year after the law on combating VAWG came into force. Most of these cases were related to domestic violence.

Several interviewees linked the increase of violence to the Tunisian revolution and economic crisis, suggesting that anger at injustice sparked violence towards others.

Others highlighted positive developments, of which the most significant was the enactment of Law 58 on Combating Violence against Women (2017) which enshrined in law a specific definition of VAWG encompassing any harm to women, whether physical, psychological, sexual or economic. This law created a

legal framework for women victims to claim their rights and ensure maximum penalties for the perpetrators. However, some observers added that it does not explicitly criminalise marital rape.

Further examples of progress include the establishment of the National Observatory on Violence against Women, the provision of free medical reports for women victims, and new specialist police units.

Many of these measures and reforms are yet to be implemented. For example, no funding for this work has been allocated in recent years. The Ministry of Health has not made a commitment to providing free examinations and treatment for victims, and the media does not accept its legal obligation to work towards preventing violence and avoid reproducing harmful gender stereotypes. Finally, women do not have easy access to information about VAWG; they are unaware of the free green hotline dedicated to reporting cases of violence, and of the law that protects them.

## B. National legislation and international women's rights mechanisms

### 1. The challenge of compliance of national legislation with international conventions

Interviewees reported that governments have made strides towards harmonising laws with international agreements. However, all seven countries included in the study still have laws that need to be amended to be harmonised. There is still a gap between legislation and implementation. Patriarchal power structures oppose amendments of legislation towards compliance with women's rights and stand against the actual implementation of the laws once they are amended. Sufficient political will is lacking to speed up the process.



## Algeria

Algeria has ratified many international agreements. However, not all national laws are aligned with them. According to all interviewees, the problem lies in the fact that these agreements have not been applied in practice, and there are no real procedures in place to implement them.

Obstacles mentioned include the lack of legal oversight, patriarchal customs, traditions and ideology, weak laws related to combating VAWG, negative images of women in the media and the influence of religion in the public sphere.



## Egypt

A number of laws are not fully harmonised with international agreements and treaties, even though the Egyptian Constitution endorses gender equality. According to many interviewees, signing those agreements was only a matter of formality, without concrete implementation.

None of the articles of international agreements have been activated or executed. Egypt made three reservations to CEDAW, of which the most important is Article 16, which relates to domestic violence and personal status.

Some of the obstacles mentioned by the interviewees in this regard are the absence of legal supervision which, together with widespread customs and traditions, prevents the full acceptance and implementation of international agreements.

Only a few interviewees believed that Egypt's national laws and policies to eliminate VAWG were aligned with international obligations.



## Jordan

Most Jordanian laws are in line with international obligations. According to several interviewees, clear progress has been made, such as an amendment to the labour law, the ratification of CEDAW and several other international agreements and treaties. One interviewee suggested that these legislative achievements are more the result of external pressure than national conviction.

There is still a need to harmonise some laws that play a critical role in combating VAWG, like the Nationality law and Penal Code and Labour Law. Challenges to legal reform are linked to issues such as guardianship, the marriage of minors and nationality. need careful attention to ensure that real gender equality is achieved.

Obstacles include the dominant social culture, which serves the authoritarian and patriarchal system and lack of political will. The government ratifies and celebrates the agreements but does not apply them as required, underlining the need for a national dialogue to implement these agreements, amend local laws, and introduce more severe penalties to hold perpetrators accountable of VAWG and not protected.

The amendment process is often faced with opposition, such as religious fatwas that oppose CEDAW. Harmful customs and traditions create additional difficulty. Furthermore, there is no adequate funding to provide services for women victims of VAWG at the governorate level.



## Lebanon

Some interviewees believed that the country had made great strides towards amending its laws and procedures and has successfully developed strategies, plans, programmes, interventions and reports in line with its international obligations. The Beijing Conference, CEDAW and UNSC Resolution 1325 involve mandatory international commitments, and all Lebanese laws comply with them.

Others believed the opposite because Lebanon has reservations to the basic provisions of CEDAW, such as in the Personal Status Law, the right of women to pass on citizenship to their children and the protection of the child from harmful practices.

Civil society aims to hold the State accountable to international agreements. However, interviewees confirmed that there are also forces supported by the patriarchal system and sectarian politics that stand against progress in this area.



## Morocco

National laws and policies are not in line with international agreements and obligations, although Morocco has ratified various international agreements and treaties.

Legislation and policies adopted about eliminating VAWG are typically managed with a dual reference. On the one hand, there are attempts to make them consistent with international obligations and standards. On the other hand, religious fundamentalist authorities resist the change, claiming that society's general trend is conservative. This represents a challenge to progress in eliminating VAWG.

Patriarchal mindset and reluctance to change is among the main obstacles. Some decision makers and judiciary share a patriarchal mindset, endorsing a view of women as inferior, which impedes legal reforms. Religion is also instrumentalized. The government upholds Islamic

laws and invokes the fact that society is conservative, so it cannot change laws without changing attitudes. The religious framework makes the laws non-compliant with international conventions. For example, marital rape, which is considered violence in international agreements, is not prohibited by Moroccan law, because it defers to Islamic law.

Some interviewees highlighted examples of progress, such as gender mainstreaming in some institutions, and efforts aimed at criminalising sexual harassment in the workplace.

A few interviewees pointed out that although Morocco has ratified CEDAW, and in June 2015 signed the optional protocol, but it does not recognise the need to eliminate discrimination against women when the terms of the agreement contradict Islamic law.



## Palestine

Many laws contain provisions that are not compliant with international treaties. However, in the first paragraph of Article 10, the Palestinian Constitution states that human rights must be respected and fulfilled. The second paragraph of the same article calls on the Palestinian Authority to respect and enforce all human rights agreements.

According to many interviewees, CEDAW was signed only for political gain. For example, CEDAW was signed and published in the Official Gazette in 2009, but the government has not amended its national laws. The Personal Status Law does not align with international agreements, and there is a need for a new law based on full equality of rights. Likewise, the penal code is in contradiction with the agreements.

Article 101 of Palestinian Basic Law states that personal status issues and women's issues shall be referred to religious and Islamic law. This effectively empties Articles 7, 8, 9 of CEDAW of their content. The law on protection from domestic violence, for example, was drawn up based on this international framework, but, as many interviewees said, the law was discussed several times without being enacted due to the refusal of religious authorities.

Among the reasons for the slow process of harmonisation is that many agreements were signed in a short period, while it takes a long time to amend national laws.

In the context of the Israeli occupation and related policies, more than 60% of the West Bank is subject to administrative and security policies under Israeli control. Important obstacles for change are the lack of legislative unity between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, the current patchwork of British, Jordanian, and Egyptian laws presents significant challenges to alignment.

In this context, the first and foremost internal obstacle to change is lack of political will because those responsible for changing the laws draw their strength from the current system, restricting change. The absence of a legislative council that monitors the harmonisation process and the absence of a legislative body whose primary task is to amend laws and enact them slows also the process. Furthermore, limited organisational resources as lack of human resources, facilities and procedures to enable compliance stands on the way. Gender auditing and monitoring are insufficient to exert pressure on official bodies or confront religious discourse related to violations of women's rights and there is a lack of robust CSOs that monitor government actions.



## Tunisia

According to the interviewees, Tunisian national laws comply with international agreements and treaties. Tunisia has agreed and signed the major agreements relating to women's rights and women's protection. There is a well noted progress in Tunisia compared to the other Arab countries.

The challenges lie with the inadequate implementation of laws and low community awareness of these agreements. Furthermore, there is not enough scrutiny of the relevance of general policies and legislation and their compliance with international obligations.

## 2. The role of CEDAW as a reference for CSOs and a support to political decision making in combating VAWG

International agreements are an important reference point and advocacy tool for CSOs. Using these agreements, CSOs can pressure governments to enhance women's rights by harmonising laws and then follow these agreements as a blueprint for public policies and strategies. Because of this, almost all interviewees emphasised the critical role of CSOs in monitoring the implementation of ratified agreements and submitting shadow or alternative reports on women's rights.

In all countries, CEDAW supersedes national laws but has a lower status than the Constitution.



## Algeria

According to most observers, international agreements constitute an essential supportive framework for developing human rights legislation and urging the State to achieve equality and end discrimination. CEDAW is a fundamental reference and a means of leverage for CSOs.

A few interviewees expressed an opposing view, saying that these agreements are foreign to Algerian society and could even do more harm than good.



## Egypt

According to most interviewees the international agreements constitute a useful and important framework for the development of national legislation that urges the State to achieve equality and end discrimination. Those representing CSOs saw them as reliable references for their work.

Many interviewees made it clear that if CEDAW was highlighted and if society and decision makers became acquainted with it, it would play a significant role in reducing VAWG, as it represents a lever for States to activate laws and legislation.



## Jordan

In general, international agreements were described as a beneficial framework for the development of national policies and legislation and an essential reference for all efforts in the field of human rights and women's rights. Following the Court of Cassation's decision, the international agreements ratified by Jordan and published in the Official Gazette have a lower status than the Constitution in the Jordanian legislative pyramid but stand higher than the national law.

CEDAW should be considered a primary guiding reference because there is no clear and explicit text regarding discrimination against women in the Constitution. Some believed it was important to maintain each country's particularity when CEDAW was applied in national laws.

Jordan has reservations to CEDAW linked to Islamic law. Most interviewees mentioned that they are against these reservations and the religious justifications provided by the State. However, the problem also lies

in people's perception of CEDAW, as many still believe it is against religion. CSOs may need to find new ways of advocating for CEDAW in Jordan.

Other interviewees said that CEDAW is not the only essential reference or instrument for women's rights that should be adopted. There are others, such as the Arab Charter for Human Rights and outputs from conferences for women such as the Mexico Conference 1975, the Copenhagen Conference 1980 and the Beijing Conference 1995.

CSOs play a key role in monitoring the implementation of ratified agreements by submitting shadow reports on the status of human rights in general and women's rights specifically. International agreements are an essential reference and tool for these CSOs, through which they can claim rights that have not been considered or fully realised.



## Lebanon

CEDAW was seen as vital for building and advancing the feminist movement and keeping it mobilised to reduce VAWG. Interviewees explained that international agreements had motivated the State to make decisions

because they are a lever for CSOs. The government should rely on CSOs to monitor developments, reports, policies and procedures because it lacks this competency.



## Morocco

Interviewees agreed unanimously that international agreements and charters are the primary reference point for CSOs to advocate for political decisions in different areas, notably fighting discrimination and combating VAWG. The Constitution gives the international covenants and agreements superiority over national laws. CEDAW and its protocols are a useful framework and essential support system for achieving policy gains in women's rights.

CEDAW also constitutes a primary reference for all parties that work on women's issues, especially those working on combating VAWG. However, awareness

raising strategies must be considered, as finding effective ways to change attitudes and values should be informed by the local social and cultural context. If the ideas and actions are not contextualised, CSOs will clash with society. A gradual approach to changing value systems is best. It is a slow process, but it can ultimately change cultural norms and attitudes, in parallel with developing a new legal arsenal.

International agreements can be very powerful if applied by the government, as they will strengthen women's rights, including the right to a life free from violence.



## Palestine

Most interviewees viewed CEDAW as a binding reference that urges the State to achieve equality and end discrimination. It supersedes all national laws and constitutes a standard against which States can measure progress or regression and to which laws can be aligned and enforced.

Interviewees representing CSOs considered CEDAW a vital reference point and were keen to cite it in their

statements and advocacy campaigns. Government representatives emphasised this too and mentioned how CSOs use CEDAW to monitor the government and submit shadow reports based on its criteria. They said that CEDAW also encourages CSOs to focus on national priorities instead of following international donors' agendas.





## Tunisia

Interviewees said CEDAW is a useful tool for eliminating all forms of VAWG. It is also a means to stimulate political will. The first legislative pillar in Tunisia is the Constitution, followed by the international agreements to which women's and human rights CSOs refer. These agreements were referred to in the first stage of writing the Constitution and again when aligning the national legislation with the Constitution's requirements.

Although international agreements mostly transcend national laws, unfortunately Tunisia's national laws themselves are often not applied in practice.

CEDAW can also create a unified vision among the leading CSOs that work on women's issues. However, that is not the case currently, and efforts are scattered.

### 3. Knowledge and implementation of the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, (2017, Cairo)

Most interviewees were not aware of government commitments made during the UfM Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society (2017, Cairo). Most of those who did know about the Declaration are from Jordan and Palestine. All who knew about the Ministerial Declaration underlined its importance and the need for its implementation. Some recommended monitoring of its implementation and a stronger advocacy by the CSOs.



## Algeria

Only one interviewee knew about the contents of the UfM Ministerial Declaration.



## Egypt

One interviewee knew a little about the contents of the UfM Ministerial Declaration.



## Jordan

A third of interviewees knew the content of the Cairo Ministerial Declaration and related government commitments, while the rest lacked consistent knowledge about the process and its results.

Those who knew about the Declaration said it is one of the most important declarations and represents a big step forward. Jordan played a significant part in formulating the Declaration, due to its role as co-chair of the UfM.

"The Declaration is very important and gives legal coverage. Jordan has a coordinating role, as well as a supportive and leading regional role in this field."

Some interviewees pointed out that there is a commitment to the conference's recommendations, but non-compliance mechanisms are lacking. It is important to focus on implementation and accountability.

"What happens if implementation and application are not fulfilled? The main challenge at the level of regional cooperation, the level of neighbourhood policy – Euro-Mediterranean, or international and national – is the problem of implementation. Also, there are no consequences resulting from non-compliance."

Some wished that the Declaration was shared more widely, especially with workers and professionals, and explain its relevance to service providers. One expert declared that CSOs should play a central role as mediator between society and government to raise awareness among the general public and civil society activists about the Declaration, through advocacy and media campaigns.



## Lebanon

A tiny minority of interviewees knew about the Ministerial Declaration, though one praised its importance.

"There has been no progress at the level of recommendations. None of the government obligations have been activated. The Cairo document is good and

comprehensive, but we do not have the political will to implement it, to comply with what the international community demands or, to adhere to the basic principles of eliminating VAWG because the Lebanese government does not consider the rights of women a priority."



## Morocco

A small minority was aware of the contents of the Declaration, stating that it had not been fully applied, and not to the level required. One of the interviewees explained that the text adopted at the conference focused on four priority areas: increasing women's

participation in public life and decision making, improving women's economic participation, combating all forms of VAWG and addressing gender stereotypes. However, there has been no implementation of these recommendations.



## Palestine

Most interviewees knew about the Declaration. All recognised that these conferences are important and constitute the Palestinian Authority's commitment to promoting women's rights. According to many interviewees, this commitment has not been translated into action. Their impact is limited to participation at the conferences, without a tangible effect on the government and official policies. Gaza is also seen as a separate context in which these declarations don't apply.

One recommendation was to follow the Declaration and monitor how far participating governments deliver on their commitments. Representatives of government agencies mentioned that there is difficulty in monitoring the qualitative impact of policies. Some suggested conducting workshops to keep recommendations alive and visible in the media and to hold governments accountable for their implementation.



## Tunisia

Only a tiny minority had heard about the Ministerial Declaration, and they were not familiar with its content and even less the extent of its implementation.

### C. Effectiveness of public services for women victims of VAWG

Governments are improving and developing diverse services for victims of VAWG, which include housing, psychological support, social support, and financial assistance. However, according to interviewees from all countries, these services are not enough, and they cannot respond to the increasing needs. There is also a lack of expertise and resources, as well as a weak cooperation between the sectors.



## Algeria

Most interviewees highlighted the deficiencies and slowness of government procedures, highlighting the need for improvement. Government services currently in place include shelters for women victims of VAWG (called Diyar Al-Rahmah). Other shelters were

mentioned as well, although according to interviewees, "they are similar to prisons and accept women but without their children". Other services include the Directorate of Social Solidarity, Psychological support centres, a telephone hotline.



## Egypt

The procedures involved in developing government services are prolonged and need continued development, improvement and support. There are several shelters for women victims of VAWG. However, they are limited in number and capacity. There are also women's protection centres. One of the most important tasks of a women's protection centre is sheltering women victims of VAWG. These institutions are all government, but they benefit from CSO projects that provide support for them.

tests must be conducted on providers of psychological support because many of them are not qualified to do this job, and they have no credibility in dealing or even in helping to solve the problem. Indeed, workers in this field must obtain a professional certificate or attend courses."

There are several health services sensitive to the needs of women, especially concerning sexual violence. There are several psychological support centres for survivors. However, one observer indicates that: "Psychological

Several awareness centres for women who are about to get married were also mentioned. Services are also provided by mobile medical teams who reach remote locations accompanied by personnel from the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the Ministry of Health and Population. Women's protection committees have been established to safeguard girls and women in the health sector.



## Jordan

Interviewees agreed unanimously that the government is heading in the right direction with its services, but they aren't enough to reach every woman facing violence. Some said that current service provision is merely symbolic and doesn't address the fundamental problems.

said that the government is withdrawing from service provision because of privatisation, reducing coverage even further.

The government currently uses a dual approach, working towards prevention through awareness raising and psychosocial services, and offering protection and support in actual cases of VAWG through psychosocial services and shelters. However, protection services do not cover all areas of the country. One interviewee

Most interviewees referred to problems in the delivery of services too, including lack of expertise and resources. Some explained that different cases need specialised care and staff do not have the knowledge to provide. This is especially true for women from marginalised groups such as homeless women, single mothers, women married to someone of a different religion, and survivors of 'honour' crimes.



## Lebanon

Interviewees mentioned several services and service providers such as the Ministry of Social Affairs, hospitals, a reproductive health programme and primary health care centres. However, some institutions such as public prosecution, general family attorneys, and the judicial police urgently need to develop specialist understanding and expertise through specialised courses and awareness raising.

Among best practices mentioned by interviewees was a hotline established by the Security Directorate to

report violence. An advertisement was developed and published by the National Authority to publicise the hotline. Security forces also received training on how to deal with cases of VAWG.

However, some believed that these services are ineffective because the government does not provide public shelters. Shelters managed by CSOs are doing what they can, but they cannot fully address these issues. They need the support of the State through integrated public services.



## Morocco

According to interviewees, there has been a noticeable improvement of government services for victims of VAWG in terms of variety and quality and the number of shelters for women victims of VAWG has increased. Among the most critical government measures mentioned by interviewees are the listening units established by the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Health and Public Prosecution in courts, hospitals, and police departments. These are very positive changes, although the space and means allocated to them need

development. The National Observatory of Violence against Women was also established.

However, these services are not meeting the increasing need for protection from VAWG or support for its effects. They have minimal financial capacity and geographical coverage.

"60% of women victims of VAWG do not inform the competent bodies, and this is an indication of the ineffectiveness of these services provided."



## Palestine

There has been a noticeable improvement despite the need for more services and procedures. The national referral system is sound but needs more development. Family Protection Units are an important achievement initiated in 2008 and are now present in all provinces. The Family Protection Prosecution is another important asset, although it needs implementation and more commitment from institutions.

Free medical services are now provided to victims of VAWG. Previously, victims paid \$52 for medical reports from the hospital. Emergency services for victims of VAWG are also free of charge. These policies were developed by the Ministry of Health. Health and psychosocial services are available to support women and help them reconnect to their families.

The Ministry of Social Development also assists women victims of violence.

However, interviewees also described several challenges including lack of shelters, meaning that women are forced to return to their family home. Existing shelters do not receive women with mental health issues; they do not address prostitution cases, nor drug issues.

Government staff working with victims of VAWG are in need for continuous training. There is lack of coordination and the procedures for referrals between stakeholders are still weak. The Family Protection Units

lack evaluation process which makes it difficult to assess their effectiveness.

Ministry of Social Development assistance applies more charity approach rather than economic empowerment, failing to develop women's skills or providing a sustainable source of work and income.

Furthermore, it is difficult for government agencies and CSOs to intervene in cases of sexual assault within families, due to a provision in the Penal Code that states that only a first-degree family member can file a complaint, i.e. father, mother, brother and sister. When reporting rape and family assault cases, the public prosecutor will not transfer cases to the court if there is no 'legitimate' complaint, so courts will not accept cases unless a complaint is filed from a close family member.

In Gaza, there is a lack of services. Some interviewees said that the international community does not provide enough support in Gaza and significant interventions to protect women are lacking.

Due to Israeli occupation barriers, service staff are sometimes unable to transport a woman to where the shelter is located, e.g. from Jenin to Bethlehem. The occupation makes coordination, transportation and protection of women during transfers and referrals more difficult.

## Tunisia

Interviewees mentioned a number of services, most of which are provided by CSOs. These include listening centres, shelters for victims of violence, psychological care centres. There are also other services as “Green Line” services, forensic medical assistance in sexual violence cases, safe spaces in court for victims of physical violence, legal aid to provide women with legal representation and information, health services e.g. examination and treatment, first aid, psychological support. Several programs have also been implemented as a pilot programme named ‘Protect Me’ for social security coverage for women in rural areas, economic empowerment programmes, a family environment programme, a programme for the rehabilitation of women prisoners.

However, interviewees also mentioned challenges. The number and capacities of existing shelters and listening centres are not enough to meet the need, which leaves many victims without support and assistance. Lack of awareness among service providers is also a challenge. Although victims are entitled to a medical certificate free of charge, at first many health care providers were unaware of this and victims were asked to pay for the certificate. The law stipulates allocation of a budget for combating VAWG within the Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood and the Elderly, but the level of funding is not clear yet, which makes the work unstable.

### D. Institutional capacities and cooperation between government and CSOs

#### 1. Existence of sufficient human and financial resources in the CSOs and government institutions to deal effectively with VAWG

Interviewees from all countries highlighted the lack of sufficient human and financial resources to provide an immediate response to victims and cases of VAWG. Many argued that the international community and governments should increase funding for women’s CSOs, and the private sector should also contribute with funds.

## Algeria

Interviewees unanimously agreed that there is a lack of human and financial resources at government and CSO levels. Even if human resources are sufficient in some

institutions, lack of training prevents programmes being fully effective.

## Egypt

Interviewees indicated that they have sufficient human resources but most lack skills and training to effectively implement programmes. There was consensus about lack of funds, which prevents CSOs and government

institutions from doing more. There are important projects and ideas in this area, but the lack of funding leads to gaps in implementation.

## Jordan

Some government interviewees said that human and financial resources are sufficient, but there is a need for sustainable sources of funding and training.

“The resources are currently sufficient, but unfortunately they are dependent on funding and therefore there is lack sustainability. The partnership between the private sector and the government must be activated to ensure the sustainability of these policies.”

Interviewees representing CSOs emphasised their limited human and financial resources. Monitoring

and documentation also need to be improved, but one stated that the international community has no interest in supporting projects that monitor violations of VAWG. Others highlighted a great need for trained specialized human resources to work in the field. Lack of adequate qualifications hinders the work of CSOs in their attempts to cover the entire country.

“There is a great need, and it is unfair that the number of agencies and people working in the field is limited. We need qualified and experienced cadres, as in many cases, I have to do the administrative tasks by myself.”

## Lebanon

Some interviewees said that financial resources are acceptable, but human resources are insufficient. Even if some CSOs have specialist human resources that deal effectively with VAWG and have the necessary knowledge and skills, more staff are needed everywhere

to provide fast responses to VAWG cases. Others felt that existing human resources are sufficient, but substantial financial resources are required to provide full follow up and cover legal expenses.

## Morocco

Everyone underlined the shortage of human and financial resources. Aid and external support are relied upon in projects dealing with VAWG. To compensate for the lack of funds, most CSOs rely on volunteers instead of recruiting health and psychological care professionals, lawyers and others. This is not sustainable.

“Of course, volunteering is not the proper way to respond to all the increasing needs resulting from the phenomenon of violence.”

## Palestine

In terms of human resources, several interviewees representing CSOs and government institutions explained that they have specialised teams who benefit from training and attend seminars that raise their efficiency in dealing with cases of VAWG.

For example, the Family Protection Unit witnessed a significant institutional development.

“Since the establishment of the unit eleven years ago, we started from scratch with only three officers. Currently,

we have 110 officers. We were only in Bethlehem, but now we are in all eleven governorates of the West Bank. Each officer has received initial and in-depth training courses on special topics, including conducting a video interview, dealing with people with disabilities and dealing with the elderly. However, we are still facing obstacles related to human and logistic capabilities.”

The main obstacles are linked to dependence on foreign financing.

## Tunisia

Most representatives of CSOs said that there is a lack of capacity, whether human or financial.

“Concerning human resources; it is inadequate if compared to the number of women victims of violence who approach us. Due to the efficient services, we provide, women are referred specifically to us. However, we do not have enough human capacity to

receive fifteen women a day, some of whom are sent by the ministry. Besides, we do not have the financial resources for that. There should be a way to support us with financial and human resources.”

Some interviewees, from both government and CSOs, refused to answer this question and didn't explain their reasons.

## 2. Coordination between governmental institutions and CSOs in addressing VAWG

Effective coordination between CSOs and government institutions is essential for combating VAWG. It leads to dynamic, efficient and effective policies. Interviewees were divided in their views about the level of cooperation between CSOs and government, in policy, planning and implementation.

It is achieved using different methods such as parallel or complementary programmes and projects, dialogue and partnership between CSOs and government, consultations, and memoranda of understanding. In most countries, coordination is overviewed by women's ministries. Some interviewees suggested that the space in which CSOs can operate is shrinking, and governments do not prioritise establishing sustainable partnerships.

## Algeria

Coordination between government institutions and CSOs is limited, superficial, and often just a formality. “There is a kind of disregard from each side toward the other. Most of the times, the collective movement is not waiting for anything from the State, and the State sometimes refuses to deal with associations. There is a kind of marginalisation practised by the government over these organisations.”

Two interviewees affirmed that cooperation does exist, and a few said that they don't know the extent of coordination related to VAWG.

“There are CSOs that organise activities for women, but they are affiliated with the government. This is a satisfying coordination.”



## Egypt

The views were contradictory. Some interviewees representing CSOs explained that there is coordination between the government and CSOs on programmes and projects that combat VAWG through legislation and policy.

Others highlighted a severe lack of cooperation in this field and mentioned a significant crisis in terms of CSOs building partnerships with the government,

reservations from the government about civil society, and increasing animosity and competition between government institutions and women's and human rights CSOs.

"There is an underestimation of the importance of partnerships with CSOs at the policy-making level, especially with human rights-based organisations that do not provide direct humanitarian services."



## Jordan

Coordination between CSOs and the government is yet to be institutionalised. Despite holding many consultative sessions on human rights issues and VAWG, recommendations from CSOs are not always considered.

There are increasing restrictions on the work of CSOs and a shrinking space for them to take effective action in terms of freedoms, procedures, transactions, working with security forces, and funding.

Some interviewees reported that coordination is minimal, and the relationship between government and CSOs is competitive rather than participatory. Others stated that coordination tends to be ad hoc, in the moment and often takes place after a problem occurs instead of working together to prevent it.

A few interviewees said that coordination had improved following the creation of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Women Empowerment. This committee is a welcome presence because it maintains and further develop support for women's rights in the ministries:

"There is an improvement in coordination - especially after the formation of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Empowerment of Women. It is necessary to support and institutionalise this committee to become permanent and to continue its work regardless of the change of the ministry's staff."

Interviewees representing CSOs called on the government to trust CSOs and to believe that they are helping the government in community work.



## Lebanon

According to most interviewees, there is coordination between government and CSOs at the policymaking and mapping level. But when it comes to implementing activities, there is repetition and duplication of some matters and activities due to a lack of synergies between government institutions and CSOs.

"There is minimal coordination, at least. When activities are announced on International Women's Day, we see associations compete to announce campaigns and

activities without coordinating the dates, and their work usually overlaps. In the area of campaigns and projects, there is minimal coordination."

Some pointed out the successful cooperation between CSOs and Internal Security Forces. Cases of VAWG are reported in coordination with the security forces and the police. Mechanisms have been developed and training courses conducted for members of the security forces about how to handle VAWG cases.



## Morocco

Opinions varied. Representatives of government agencies stated that they have an adequate level of coordination with CSOs in addressing VAWG. Interviewees said that victims of VAWG are supported in partnership. Feminist CSOs also support public policies by providing data and proposals, which the government reviews and works to enact.

However, interviewees who were representatives of CSOs stated that coordination is minimal and unstructured and has not yet been embedded in planning. Women's rights movements and CSOs are not involved in genuine cooperation with the government. However, they are proactive in this field, whether

through consultations, offering direct support to women victims or advocacy to develop legislation and public policies to eliminate VAWG.

Some interviewees said that recently there had been a significant disagreement between the government and CSOs on addressing VAWG. One reported that coordination is purely formal and does not offer CSOs any real opportunities for discussion or influence over policy content.

"The government did not engage the women's movement when it devoted itself to envisioning the enactment of the Law on Combating VAWG."



## Palestine

Most interviewees said that there was coordination between the government and CSOs, although their goals are different when it comes to VAWG.

Government representatives explained that they have signed agreements and memoranda of understanding with many CSOs, such as the Health Work Committees, the Palestinian Counselling Centre, the Legal Counselling centre and the Psychological and Social Counselling Centre. There is also coordination in facilitating visits and monitoring for torture and ill-treatment in prisons and detention centres.

According to CSO representatives, the government works with CSOs to close the gaps in its services, including responding to cases of VAWG. For example,

CSOs were widely involved in the anti-violence strategy developed in 2010. Still, as always, the problem lies in the implementation, follow up, and monitoring. For this reason, temporary projects tend to focus on implementing activities rather than paying attention to achieving results and impact.

Some interviewees representing CSOs reported that the relationship with government has not yet turned into a true partnership and daily cooperation and integration, and there is a lack of real will to create change on the government's side. Others suggested that CSOs have turned a blind eye to monitoring government performance and have instead become more interested in funding opportunities and influence linked to their organisation's political affiliation.



## Tunisia

There is coordination, but it is not sufficient, although the Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood and the Elderly has a primary role. Obstacles to cooperation include the absence of political will, weak capabilities, and the limited State budget: the Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood, and the Elderly receives only a 0.5% share of the whole public budget.

Most programmes are dependent on international cooperation and last only for a specific period. Even

where intention exists, there is no unified structure that binds all the different parties to cooperate or serves as a platform for coordination.

Several interviewees also pointed out that coordination with CSOs is not a focus of attention for the State. They argued that civil society ought to keep drawing attention to VAWG since it is not a priority issue for the government. Participation is often limited to attending meetings simply to be seen to be attending.

## E. The role of the media and education in preventing VAWG

The media and education system play a critical role in shaping attitudes and expectations by broadcasting social values to the community. They are a double-edged sword, often transmitting harmful ideas, but with enormous potential to positively influence opinions and behaviour.

Work is needed at two levels. First, it is necessary to improve media content and education curricula to adopt gender equality principles and eliminate gender stereotypes. Second, media professionals and teachers must be trained to better understand how to deal with VAWG and discuss gender.

In all countries, interviewees reported that the media do not have their own plans or guidance to follow about how to address VAWG. Media programmes and publications contain a lot of content that encourages VAWG and reproduces damaging gender stereotypes.

The situation is similar concerning education, where interviewees flagged two main issues that need to be tackled. First, educational curricula are inconsistent with gender equality and use discriminatory language. They need to be revised and updated. Second, teachers need training and capacity building in this area.



## Algeria

Currently, the media contribute to increasing VAWG because all media platforms – written or visual – express violent, stereotypical, conservative discourse directed against women, and do not address the violence that women face.

Media platforms and especially social media are used as a tool to spread VAWG and abuse to bolster masculine privilege. However, some interviewees said that the media plays an active role in eliminating VAWG through

awareness-raising programmes using visual media and social media.

Interviewees agreed unanimously that education in Algeria contributes to VAWG, as the school system itself encourages gender discrimination. Curricula and teaching materials fail to address topics connected to inequality and instead contribute to spreading cultural values which perpetuate VAWG.



## Egypt

Almost all interviewees agreed that the media plays a negative role in combating VAWG, as media platforms (whether visual or written) frequently use stereotypes and broadcast violent speech against women.

Most media content does not convey a balanced perspective about the roles, responsibilities and rights of women, children and men within a family. Instead, they ignore men's duties and responsibilities and focus solely on the stereotypical duties of women. Drama and propaganda programmes encourage violence, and media institutions work to silence debate about equality. Media policies are selective and prejudiced against women.

A few interviewees said that the media has an active role in eliminating VAWG by broadcasting awareness-raising programmes and campaigns that address large sections of the community. Targeted programmes could be used to present marital problems and discuss safe and respectful solutions.

Interviewees suggested that the media should adopt a detailed plan with an informed approach regarding women's issues to reach many different social groups and change the dominant culture. They also recommended producing a practical guide for media professionals on how to cover issues related to VAWG.

Education in Egypt also contributes to increasing VAWG, as the education system itself encourages gender discrimination and perpetuates VAWG.



## Jordan

According to most interviewees, the media can play a significant role in raising awareness and challenging stereotypical images about women, which would help to reduce VAWG. But it doesn't play this role consistently and sometimes broadcasts programmes that encourage VAWG.

Others said that the media plays a largely negative role. Civil society struggle to access media platforms, almost all of which are controlled by men. Discriminatory speech in the media has not been criminalised, and there is no monitoring or regulation of media content regarding women's rights.

Interviewees also pointed out that national media in Jordan is increasingly privately owned, and tends to focus on topics that materially benefit the owners, with no accountability.

"Within the media, the discourse must be modified, and the journalists trained. On a national level, private media has greatly spread, and it covers subjects that attract finance and profit and achieve personal interest without being questioned."

Several interviewees suggested developing guidelines for media platforms about how to cover VAWG topics, discrimination, and stereotypes, whether by sharing success stories or emphasising the challenges that women face. Some also believed there is a need for

development and modernisation, including sensitisation training for journalists and media network staff.

Education plays a significant part in raising awareness through the school curriculum, and should teach core values e.g. violence is wrong and has severe consequences.

Some interviewees highlighted the importance of looking at the process through which curricula are developed. In their view, amending school curricula is a fundamental matter that is often taken too lightly, and the bodies that design curricula are often in a state of intellectual contradiction. One lamented that Salafists controlled the curricula for an extended period so that women only appeared in kitchens, and in dependent roles.

The content of the primary school curriculum (1st grade to 4th grade) does not portray women as active citizens or in leadership positions. Men are framed as active and women as passive even at the language level as static verbs are generally related to women, while animated verbs are associated with men.

Some interviewees focused on the convictions, attitudes and behaviours of teachers, as they are role models who will influence the mindset and values of the new generation.



## Lebanon

Women are represented by the media in a manner that victimises them. Media professionals must be trained to understand better how to deal with the issue of VAWG. The media could contribute to eliminating VAWG by breaking down stereotypes and prejudice. But currently, the media's role is harmful, whether through TV shows, movies, or political programmes.

As for education, interviewees say that it does not work towards eliminating VAWG, as school curricula are still very conventional. Curricula were last updated in 1997 and urgently need to be reviewed, especially concerning discrimination fed by stereotypes. Some topics ought to be retired completely and new subjects brought in, such as civic education.



## ★ Morocco

The media, social networks and educational institutions could play an essential role in educating people about women's rights and spreading values supporting gender equality throughout society. Unfortunately, the media and education system do not currently uphold this responsibility. According to interviewees, part of the reason behind this is a misconception that realising women's rights means adopting a completely modern mindset and losing traditions and cultural identity.

Some interviewees said that the official media does not fulfil its primary role as a public instrument, whether by spreading a culture of zero tolerance for VAWG, educating people about women's rights, or combating stereotypes.

The Moroccan media have no specific standards concerning VAWG or women's rights in general. VAWG is mentioned on some talk shows, but the general view

among interviewees was that VAWG is not given enough attention in the media.

Instead, many programmes mock and dehumanise women. According to interviewees, private stations are at the forefront of the culture of discrimination and reinforce the idea that women are inferior. The same applies to many TV series, which portray the same old stereotypical images of Moroccan women.

All interviewees agreed that education has a fundamental role to play and that curricula and syllabuses can be a powerful means to change attitudes and encourage people to embrace human rights. Unfortunately, many materials currently contain stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination against women. Most interviewees spoke about the importance of reviewing syllabuses and school curricula and modifying them to support human rights.

## 🇵🇸 Palestine

Almost all interviewees stated that the role of media is very limited in terms of combating VAWG as the issue of VAWG is not a priority for them. Some media outlets try to prevent discussions about equality. They broadcast discriminatory and stereotypical images of women and girls and intentionally or unintentionally encourage violence through their materials.

According to interviewees, the media should shed light on VAWG through serious coverage rather than producing frivolous programmes. They should take up their responsibility and adopt a detailed plan to promote women's rights.

Educational curricula are currently inconsistent with gender equality. They contain discriminatory speech and should be revised to promote equality, inclusion, justice and citizenship, civic values, and the importance of eliminating gender discrimination. Most education staff need training to teach these subjects.

Some interviewees acknowledged that there have been some positive changes in education, as current curricula are better than previous ones. They contain more inclusive career images, for example. The government has formed committees in partnership with CSOs to review curricula in terms of gender equality.

## 🇹🇳 Tunisia

Media programmes contain a lot of violence and even encourage it in the way that they cover certain topics and the gender stereotypes that they use. One interviewee, a journalist, stated that the media could have a significant role in combating violence, but they do not live up to this responsibility.

"The media are passing through a bad period, which has worsened, as they are governed by certain interests." According to interviewees, media producers themselves should be supportive of what the State is doing concerning VAWG. They could shed light on VAWG cases,

promote public awareness campaigns and broadcast content about the importance of eliminating all forms of VAWG.

Current education curricula are not helping to advance gender equality. Materials and syllabuses should be updated to promote equality, respect and tolerance and explicitly reject violence. There are surely teachers and educators that believe in these ideas who will instil them in the students. Some interviewees suggested holding information sessions about VAWG and relevant legislation in universities.

## General conclusion and recommendations

### Experience, perception, and awareness of VAWG

All countries are making proactive efforts to end VAWG. However, a lot remains to be done to prevent it, enhance legislation, raise awareness, and provide efficient services to all victims.

The study is highlighting a strong prevalence of VAWG across the whole region and alerting that it is on the rise. The most predominant forms of VAWG take place in the family, with one in five women having received a death threat from a relative or spouse during the last 12 months.

Domestic violence is multifaceted and may include physical, economic, psychological, or sexual abuse. Women's level of awareness of these different aspects varies across the region. Even if psychological violence, including insulting, belittling and undermining women, is particularly common and has severe consequences, ranging from depression to suicide, physical and psychological violence are tightly interconnected. In terms of consequences, physical harm may lead to a permanent or temporary injury and, in most cases, psychological violence causes long-term mental health problems.

Social tolerance towards VAWG persists, including among women, even when they have experienced violence themselves: one in five believe that physical violence is "justified under some circumstances".

There is varying awareness of marital rape as a form of VAWG. Legislations do not recognise it as a crime, and national policies and law enforcement agencies fail to address it adequately.

Since the ground-breaking UNSCR 1325, the correlation between armed conflicts and VAWG is recognized. When women are fully supported to participate in the formulation of policies and negotiating positions, it ensures the development of real solutions that protect the rights of women who are the first victims of war, armed conflict and occupation and must be given special attention in these contexts. Following an influx of refugees from the current conflict in Syria, VAWG has increased among refugees and the wider community, including rape, early marriage, and prostitution.

Despite some positive progress made in combating VAWG, including the introduction of new laws, the development of new services and new governmental bodies set up to combat VAWG, the level of implementation remains limited due to a lack of sufficient political will, financial and human resources. Governmental procedures are also insufficient and need improving and developing. This contributes to the reluctance of women to report VAWG with one in three saying that "fear of consequences" but also a feeling that "nothing can be done" are stopping women from speaking out. The underreporting of cases leads to gaps in existing VAWG data and statistics. Underreporting of cases contributes to gaps in VAWG data and statistics, which keeps VAWG off political agendas and out of public debates, and further pressures women to remain silent.

Services for women victims of violence are still very few and cannot respond to the increasing needs. Furthermore, most of these services are based in the big cities and their availability in governorates and countryside remains limited.

The level of violence is tightly linked to the status of women in society, their economic and political participation. Beyond national differences, all States face common pattern of exclusion of women in decision-making in social, familial, economic, and political spheres. Women access to resources and political decision making are hindered by the persistence of the patriarchal gender power structures, be these discriminatory laws, economic policies, unequal distribution of tasks at home, gender stereotypes.

## Alignment with international agreements

The findings show that combating VAWG needs the adoption of policy reforms, notably comprehensive laws on VAWG, reforming penal codes and engendering the constitutions. Only Morocco and Tunisia have adopted specific laws on combating and eliminating VAWG. CEDAW is an important reference and a major tool for civil society to advocate for women's rights and monitor national laws to achieve gender equality. However, the internationally ratified agreements are not always, despite their ratification, enforced on the ground, mainly due to an absence of legal control, lack of political will, influence of patriarchal culture and tradition and instrumentalization of religion. Furthermore, implementation is hampered by reservations and declarations on key elements of CEDAW, including the steps to be taken to eliminate discrimination, particularly article 2, and the primacy of the existing family laws and personal status laws, particularly the articles 9, 15 and 16. By entering these reservations or declarations, the States indicate that they would not commit to equality between women and men and would not change discriminative laws and policies on substantive issues for women, such as nationality (article 9), domicile (article 15(4)), and equality in marriage and dissolution (article 16).

Despite the importance of the 4th UfM Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, most people interviewed are not aware of it, except in Jordan and Palestine. All who are knowledgeable on the Declaration underlined the importance of its implementation.

## The role of media and education in preventing VAWG

Within the patriarchal structures of power, women and men are given different roles and allowed to enjoy different rights. Traditional mentalities and stereotypes are reproduced by both men and women. The media and educational systems play a significant role in increasing levels of knowledge and awareness of VAWG. They can reach many different social groups, therefore influencing the dominant culture. Consequently, in many cases, media broadcast programmes encourage VAWG, and drama and talk shows reproduce stereotypical images of women, instead of exposing and questioning them.

Norms, values, and behaviours are also reproduced in schools' curricula. Gender equality is not embedded in students' learning yet. Instead, the curricula contain gender stereotypical discriminatory norms and models that feed discrimination and VAWG. Young people are not taught that violence is unacceptable, and educators lack trainings on VAWG, on the consequences for women and then on the whole of society.

### Cooperation between women's rights CSOs and governments in combating VAWG

Coordination between governments and CSOs is yet to be institutionalised. Despite progress made, there are increasing restrictions on the work of CSOs. There is no systematic dialogue between them on VAWG and gender equality issues, rather ad hoc consultations, and activities, often to respond to a VAWG cases, rather than to act together to prevent VAWG. CSOs analysis and recommendations are not always taken into consideration on policy making level.

## Overarching recommendations

To make their efforts to end VAWG effective, countries must reform existing penal codes, adopt comprehensive policy reforms, including a specific and comprehensive legislation on combating VAWG, and include gender equality in their constitution. A commitment to the full implementation of the international instruments, including the 4th UfM Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society and full compliance with CEDAW, is a basic prerequisite to improve women's lives and security across the region.

Domestic violence should be framed as a social problem and human rights issue, and not as a private 'family affair', and governments and civil society must work together and develop both preventative and protective interventions. Victims of violence should be supported to speak out, to report their experiences of VAWG and to claim their rights safely.

A real change that enables women equal participation and access to power, and thus their autonomy, requires structural transformations of both economic systems, based on the need of human development that benefit women and men equally, and of the political system, in order to promote equal participation of women in the decision-making spheres. To this end, both the private sphere of reproduction and the public sphere of production must be addressed.

The media should be used to increase knowledge and awareness of VAWG among many different social groups, positively influencing dominant views rather than encouraging VAWG and reproducing gender stereotypes as they often do currently.

Damaging norms, values and behaviours are also reproduced in school curricula, which should be modified to teach young people that violence is unacceptable and has serious consequences for women and the whole of society. Gender equality must be embedded in students' learning, and educators trained about VAWG to support this. Coordination between government and CSOs must be enhanced. Women's rights organizations must be structurally involved at any stage of policy making process on combating and preventing VAWG, from the preparation to the follow up and monitoring of the implementation.

## Specific recommendations

### Governments

- Lift all reservations and declarations made on articles of CEDAW.
- Align constitutional and national legislations with international agreements, especially CEDAW and enhance mechanisms for their implementation. Despite ratifying CEDAW, many laws are in conflict with international agreements.
- Increase governmental and CSOs knowledge of the 4th UfM Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society and ensure its implementation.
- Adopt and enact specific and comprehensive laws on VAWG that define and address all forms of violence.
- Criminalise marital rape.
- Dedicate sufficient financial and human resources to combat effectively VAWG.
- Enhance the provision of and increase the number and access to comprehensive government services for victims of VAWG. This includes reinforcing referral pathways, data collection and reporting systems, and distributing information about their existence at the grass roots level.
- Widen the service provision and shelter system to all the country, including rural areas.
- Enhance and systematize coordination and partnership with CSOs to develop, implement and monitor policies that combat VAWG.
- Provide systematically training about VAWG for first responders, especially the police who are often the first people to deal directly with victims of VAWG. Training programmes should be fully embedded in institutions.
- Organize national campaigns to raise social awareness of the root causes of VAWG, in partnership with CSOs.
- Improve the availability and accessibility of information about existing government institutions that address VAWG.
- Design and conduct comprehensive research studies and publish statistics about VAWG at the national level.
- Develop and implement existing national action plans for implementation of UNSCR 1325 to include women's rights defenders in formal peace negotiations in the region, so that issues related to equality between women and men and VAWG are present in on-going peace processes.

### CSOs and research centres

- Submit alternative reports on women's rights to monitor the implementation of national laws and their alignment with international agreements.
- Improve women's and men's knowledge of the root causes and consequences of VAWG, from a human rights perspective. Conduct campaigns to tackle social tolerance of VAWG and promote women's rights.
- Raise awareness among women and their communities of existing services and CSOs that address VAWG.
- Increase knowledge about the 4th UfM Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society among political decision makers, CSOs, human rights activists and academics.
- Strengthen cooperation with service providers and offer continuous training on women's rights and VAWG to all stakeholders.
- Education institutions
- Update school curricula, teaching methods and educational materials to include gender equality principles.
- Develop and embed training programmes for educators on gender equality and combating VAWG.

### Media institutions

- Develop better standards of representation in the media by sensitising and training media professionals about how to report on VAWG and gender equality.
- Raise awareness of and provide training to journalists about the importance of combating VAWG and challenging gender stereotypes in the media.

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## Annexes

### Annex 1 Questionnaire

The Regional Civil Society Observatory (RCSO) on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is undertaking a population-based survey within the frame of the programme "Combating Violence Against Women and Girls in the Southern Mediterranean", funded by EU. The objective of the survey is to assess the level of awareness of women towards the laws and services provided for victims of VAWG, in addition to know the personal perception and experience related to VAWG.

Mention should be made that the observatory is hosted by the EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) in the regional office in Amman.

All information filled by you will be kept confidential and will be used only for the purpose of this study. Your participation in this questionnaire is very important and will contribute to improve the situation of women and girls in the country.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Highest level of Education:

Non-Formal education  Primary Education  Secondary or high school education  Higher Education  
(college, University or equivalent)

Place of residence: \_\_\_\_\_

Province/governorate: \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

Age range:

18-25  26- 40  40-60  above 60

#### 1. Legal framework

Please, check the cross on the choice that correspond your opinion.

101. Are women's rights and equal participation recognized by the law in the same way as men?

Yes  No

102. Do women have the rights to moving in the public space in the same way as men?

Yes  No

103. Can women apply for a passport or any identification papers for her or her children in the same way as men?

Yes  No

#### 2. Awareness and perception assessment:

301. Your level of information about VAWG is:

Excellent  Very good  Faire  Weak  Nil

302. Is there legislation specifically addressing violence against women and domestic violence?

Yes  No  Don't know

303. Is there any legislation addressing sexual harassment and harassment including in the work place?

Yes  No  Don't know

304. Is there legislation that specifically guarantees full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, and related awareness raising information?

Yes  No  Don't know

305. Have you witnessed VAWG in the community in the last 6 months?

Yes  No

306. In your view, the level of prevalence of VAWG in your community is:
- Very common       Common       Not common       Don't know
307. In your opinion, VAWG is:
- Increasing       Decreasing       Staying at the same       Don't know
308. What does VAWG mean to you? Note: you can check more than one choice.
- Rape       Sexual assault       Physical assault       Psychological assault  
 Forced marriage       Child marriage       Exclusion of resources and exclusion of power
309. In the past 6 months, have you witnessed VAWG?
- Yes       No
310. If yes, what type of VAWG have you witnessed? Note: you can put cross on more than one choice.
- Sexual assault       Physical assault       Forced marriage       Psychological abuse  
 Exclusion from education, health, inheritance
311. What forms of VAWG are most frequently spread in your community?
- Sexual assault       Physical assault       Forced marriage       Psychological abuse  
 Exclusion from education, health, inheritance
312. Do women who experience violence look for help?
- Yes       No       Don't know
313. What are in your opinion the barriers that hinder women from reporting violence? Note: you can put cross on more than one choice.
- Shame  
 Rejection or being ostracized by family and friends  
 don't not trust anyone.  
 Fear of consequences and the threats of perpetrator.  
 Nothing can be done  
 Other, specify\_\_\_\_\_
314. In your view, what kind of help victims of VAWG seek for first:
- Relatives       Police       Hotline       Special centres for victims of VAWG  
 Court       I don't know
- Other, specify\_\_\_\_\_
315. In your view, the most common community response when VAWG occurs?
- Go to police       Go to the local court       Discuss among relatives  
 Discuss with religious leaders       Go to special centres for women victims of VAWG  
 I don't know
- Other, specify\_\_\_\_\_
316. What are your sources of information on VAWG?
- Media       Government       CSOs/CBOs and networks       Relatives and friends
- Other, specify\_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Attitude and values towards VAWG:

Please, check the box that correspond your opinion

401. According to your opinion, is information about VAWG sufficiently reflected in the media?  
 Yes     No     Don't know
402. If you witnessed or heard about a case of VAWG occurring in your community, would you report the perpetrators to the police or provide assistance?  
 Yes, off course     No     Probably     Don't know
403. Rape shouldn't be tolerable regardless of women dress and clothing  
 Strongly agree     Agree     Disagree     Strongly disagree     No opinion
404. When beaten by her husband, the wife should report him to the police?  
 Strongly agree     Agree     Disagree     Strongly disagree     Don't Know
405. Is it acceptable for the husband to hit his wife in the following cases?  
 If she neglects children:  
 Yes     No  
 If she argues with him:  
 Yes     No  
 If she goes out home without telling him:  
 Yes     No  
 If she refuses sex:  
 Yes     No

### 1. Personal experiences of VAWG

201. During the last twelve months, have you been insulted in the street, public transport vehicle or public spaces?  
 Never     Once     Several times
202. Did anyone attempt or force you or to undergo or perform any sexual contact/acts against your will?  
 Never     Once     Several times
203. Did anyone try or managed to have sexual intercourse with you against your will?  
 Never     Once     Several times
204. During the last 12 months, has your husband/family members prevented you from meeting or talking to friends or family members?  
 Never     Once     Several times
205. During the last 12 months, did your husband or family members impose dressing styles, type of hairstyle on you, or how you were to behave in public?  
 Never     Sometimes     Often
206. During the last 12 months, did your husband/spouse or family members refuse to take your opinions into consideration, ridicule them or attempted to tell you what you should think.  
 Never     Sometimes     Often
207. Do you encounter exclusion form decision making within the household?  
 Never     Sometimes     Often
208. Do you encounter exclusion from control over expenses or income?  
 Never     Sometimes     Often
209. Do your husband/spouse or family members insult you or abuse you?  
 Never     Sometimes     Often
210. During the last 12 months, did your husband/family members slap you or inflict other physical abuse on you? If yes, how many times?  
 Never     Once     Sometimes
211. During the last 12 months, did your husband/spouse or family members utter death threats against you?  
 Never     Once     Several times
212. If it happened, after this incident, did you lodge a complaint?  
 Yes     No



## 5. Level of awareness of services for victims of violence and their access:

Please, check the box that correspond your choice

501. Is it difficult or easy for women to utilize the following services in the community? Please check.

- Police             Difficult         Easy
- Health Care     Difficult         Easy
- Legal aid         Difficult         Easy
- Education       Difficult         Easy

502. Are you aware of existence of government institutions that address VAWG?

- Yes             No

503. Are you aware of community support networks or institutions that address VAWG?

- Yes             No

## 6. Open Questions:

601. In your view, can you mention the main causes or roots of VAWG?

602. What are the main impacts of the abuses perpetrated on the women (physical, mental, psychological)?

603. What should be done to stop the VAWG in your region?

604. In your opinion, what is the best reaction that women should have towards VAWG?

605. In your opinion, what is the importance of including men and boys in the activities related to combating VAWG?

606. In your view, is there a relationship between the military violence of the occupation, armed conflict or occupation and VAWG?

607. Have you been subjected to this kind of violence? If yes, once or several times?

## Annex 2 Interview guide

The EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) with a consortium of 9 women's rights organizations in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia is implementing a three-year regional project entitled "Combating Violence against Women in the Southern Mediterranean", funded by the European Union. The overall objective of the project is to contribute to the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the Southern Neighbourhood States, which entails strengthening the social environment in which civil society is widely involved in combating violence against women and girls, shaping public opinion and building the political will to address it as a political priority and thus contribute to improving the status of gender equality in the southern Mediterranean region.

Within this context, the Observatory is conducting its first study on national policies on VAWG, their development, and government commitments in this field.

The study aims to assess the perceptions of main causes of VAWG, of the situation of victims, of the efficiency of national policies, as well as on role of women in peace and security in your country.

Thank you for your participation. This interview will be anonymous and confidential. Only public results will be published. However, if you agree, we will be happy to mention your name as a contributor to this work.

### The duration of the interview: 1 hour to 1 hour and a half

What comes to your mind when we talk about violence VAWG?  
(if already not done) How would you define it in few words?)

*For all questions please relaunch to get more speech with the same words than the interviewee (example, if the answer is: It is intolerable, the resumption of dialogue would be: "Violence against women and girls is intolerable. Could you tell me more, or could you explain?"*

(if not mentioned before) Is discrimination a form of VAWG for you?  
(wait for the answer before resuming the dialogue)  
*Important note:* Don't be embarrassed by silence

What do you think are the main causes of VAWG and discrimination against women and girls?

- Globally...
- More specifically in your country...

What are the most common manifestations of VAWG in your country?

Do you think domestic violence is a private issue in which we have not to interfere? To which extent?

*(only if they did not answer to this in a way or another before)*

Do you have an idea of the scale of this VAWG in your country?

What about the changes that have occurred in relation to VAWG?

- *Relaunch if needed:* Is this violence increasing or decreasing in your opinion?
- What about government action regarding this issue?
- What do you think are the most important of these actions? (If no answer, no problem)

How can you describe women's participation in economic and political life in your country?

*(Only if they are silent):* Are women facing some obstacles to have access to these spheres?

If yes, what are the main reasons behind this?

In your opinion, what categories of women and girls are the main victims of VAWG?

*If refugees are not mentioned:* what about *refugee* women?

What do you think of the following expressions used by studies and research related to VAWG?

- Patriarchal violence against women and girls?
- Gender Based Violence?

In your opinion, to what extent are national laws and public policies for the elimination of violence against women and girls are in line with international obligations?

- What are the obstacles? And what kind?

Do you think that CEDAW and international conventions are a useful and supportive framework for political decision-making in the area of VAWG and discrimination against women and girls?

- Re-appeal: Are these agreements a reference for CSOs
- Re-appeal: What about their work in this area?

Do you know about government services provided to women victims of VAWG? Do you think they are efficient?

*If not: What is needed most?*

*(If interviewee is a CSO or institution representative)* Do you think your organization has sufficient human and financial resources to deal efficiently with violence against women and girls?

Appeal: Do these human resources have the knowledge and skills to implement policies and measures related to the elimination of VAWG?

According to you, is there any coordination between government institutions and between government and civil society to address VAWG? *If yes: Can you tell us more about it*

Do the media and education have a role to play (in principle) in reducing VAWG? *If yes: Do, they fulfil it?*

*The following question (15) for Palestine only:* In your opinion, is there a relationship between the military violence and gender-based violence in Palestinian society?

How do you see women's participation in peace and security field/sector in your country?

I would like to ask you a final question, in your opinion, what kind of violence should be urgently addressed in your country? *Resume: Can you explain that?*

And what form of discrimination should be addressed in priority? *Re-resume: Can you explain it*

## Annex 3 Sampling per countries and governorates according to the population of rural and urban areas

### ★ Morocco

Governorate	Total population N	Urban N	Rural N	Total No. Questionnaires (n)	No. questionnaires - Urban (n)	No. questionnaires - Rural (n)
Rabat-Sale-Kenitra	4,580,866	3,198,712	1,382,154	130	91	39
Fes-Meknes	4,236,892	2,564,220	1,672,672	119	72	47
Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima	3,556,729	2,131,725	1,425,004	98	58	39
Souss-Massa	2,676,847	1,505,896	1,170,951	75	42	33

### 🇪🇬 Egypt

Governorate	Total population N	Urban N	Rural N	Total No. Questionnaires (n)	No. questionnaires - Urban (n)	No. questionnaires - Rural (n)
Al Giza	5,759,000	5,332,000	3,428,000	109	66	43
Al-Minia	5,609,000	1,012,000	3,595,000	106	19	87
Al-Qalyubia	5,703,000	2,437,000	3,620,000	107	46	61
Alexandria	5,226,000	5,148,000	78,000	100	98	2

### 🇹🇳 Tunisia

Governorate	Total population N	Urban N	Rural N	Total No. Questionnaires (n)	No. questionnaires - Urban (n)	No. questionnaires - Rural (n)
Ben Arous	631,800	50,544	581,256	121	110	11
El-Kef	243,200	105,792	137,408	47	26	21
Sfax	955,400	359,230	596,169	182	113	68
Gabes	374,300	111,541	262,759	72	50	22

 Jordan

Governorate	Total population N	Urban N	Rural N	Total No. Questionnaires (n)	No. questionnaires - Urban (n)	No. questionnaires - Rural (n)
Irbid	1911600	1765400	146200	253	233	20
Al-Balqa	531000	435900	95100	72	59	13
Tafilah	104000	81100	22900	16	12	4
Al-Mafraq	593900	413700	180200	81	56	25

 Palestine

Governorate	Total population N	Urban N	Rural N	Total No. Questionnaires (n)	No. questionnaires - Urban (n)	No. questionnaires - Rural (n)
Rafah	180,354	137616	42,738	211	161	50
Tulkarm	97391	59801	37590	114	70	44
Tubas	40678	12452	28226	49	15	34
Jericho	39500	25432	14068	48	30	18

 Lebanon

Governorate	Total population N	Urban N	Rural N	Total No. Questionnaires (n)	No. questionnaires - Urban (n)	No. questionnaires - Rural (n)
Beirut	2,200,000	1,831,285	368,715	179	149	30
Mount Lebanon	1,597,765	1,081,564	516,201	130	88	42
Beqaa Valley	1,265,921	344,134	921,787	103	28	75
Nabatieh	122,905	122,905	0	10	9	1

 Algeria

Governorate	Total population N	Urban N	Rural N	Total No. Questionnaires (n)	No. questionnaires - Urban (n)	No. questionnaires - Rural (n)
Oran	1751341	1618589	132752	182	168	14
Constantine	1086923	969317	117605	114	102	12
El Bayadh	309689	195940	113749	32	20	12
Aïn Defla	887181	426467	460713	92	44	48

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The Regional Civil Society Observatory  
المركز الإقليمي للمؤسسات المجتمعية المدني



EuroMed Feminist Initiative  
المبادرة النسوية الأورومتوسطية  
Initiative Féministe EuroMed

## About The Regional Civil Society Observatory on VAWG:

The Regional Civil Society Observatory (RCSO) is an independent civil society mechanism that follows up on measures and actions to combat VAWG, in particular the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration of the 4th UfM Ministerial Conference on women's rights (November 27th 2017, Cairo) in the area of combatting all forms of VAWG, Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE).

The RCSO is hosted by the EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) in Amman, Jordan. It aims to develop regional tools to follow up on the implementation of the 4th UfM Ministerial Declaration. These include evaluating and highlighting gaps between international women's rights mechanisms and national legislations, providing evidence-based recommendations to policymakers aiming to improve the efficiency of policies and measures in this field and preparing guidelines for developing WPSA, and support the adoption and implementation of further instruments on UNSCR 1325.

## About The EuroMed Feminist Initiative EFI:

EuroMed Feminist Initiative is a policy network encompassing women's rights organization from both shores of the Mediterranean and advocates for gender equality and women's rights as inseparable from democracy building and citizenship, political solutions to all conflicts, and for the right of people to self-determination. EuroMed Feminist Initiative seeks to improve and promote women's rights as universal human rights, the value of gender equality, and the use of non-violent means to solve conflicts. Our criterion and position align with the international resolutions and conventions and regional instruments promoting the universality of women's rights and strengthening women's impact and voices in conflict resolution.



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