



UNITED NATIONS
ALBANIA



Adolescent and Youth Abuse in Albania

In-depth analysis

November 2020



Ending
Violence
Against
Woman

ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH ABUSE IN ALBANIA

In-depth analysis

November 2020

Adolescent and Youth Abuse in Albania. In depth analysis Report was supported by the United Nations Population Fund Office in Albania (UNFPA) in the framework of the Joint United Nations Programme *End Violence Against Women and Girls in Albania*, funded by the Government of Sweden and implemented by UNDP, UN Women and UNFPA, in partnership with the Government of Albania and coordinated by *Nesmark* Foundation, an implementing partner of UNFPA. The opinions, findings and views expressed in this report are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of UNFPA, the United Nations Agencies, or the Government of Sweden.

Prepared by: Genc Burazeri, Gentiana Qirjako, Irida Agolli, Monika Kocaqi

Contributed: Elsona Agolli, Maaïke van Adrichem, Majlinda Nesturi

@ “Nesmark” Foundation and UNFPA Office in Albania

Tirana, November 2020

The sale or use of this report for profit purposes is prohibited.

Suggested citation: *Adolescent and Youth Abuse in Albania. In-depth analysis* Report, supported by UNFPA Office in Albania and funded from Government of Sweden. (November 2020).

ISBN : 978-9928-290-70-0

Printed in the publishing house “Botimet Barleti”

Coordinated by:



CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	5
ABBREVIATIONS.....	6
I. BACKGROUND	7
II. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE REPORT	9
METHODOLOGY	9
III. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROTECTION AND RESPECT OF CHILD RIGHTS IN ALBANIA.....	11
3.1. INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK.....	11
3.2. NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK.....	13
3.3. MAIN NATIONAL POLICIES	24
3.4. INSTITUTIONAL ADVISORY MECHANISMS ON THE RIGHTS AND PROTECTION OF THE CHILD	25
IV. REVIEW OF ALREADY PUBLISHED REPORTS.....	29
V. IN-DEPTH (SECONDARY) DATA ANALYSIS	41
5.1. HEALTH BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN (HBSC) 11, 13 AND 15 YEARS IN ALBANIA, 2017-18.....	41
5.2. ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACE) AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN ALBANIA, 2011-2012	57
5.3. OSCE-LED SURVEY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, 2019.....	70
5.4. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN ALBANIA, 2019	80
RECOMMENDATIONS	93
REFERENCES	97

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The *Adolescent and Youth Abuse in Albania. In-depth analysis* Report was written by four experts with a longstanding experience in public health and protection of child rights.

Professor Genc Burazeri and *Professor Gentiana Qirjako* conducted an in-depth analysis of the four studies included in the report. *MA Monika Kocaqi* summarised a desk review of the existing legal framework and national strategic documents on child and adolescent protection from all forms of violence and *Associated Professor Irida Agolli* presented the main findings of the already published reports on adolescent and youth abuse and maltreatment conducted in Albania during the last decade.

We do highly appreciate the support provided from INSTAT and OSCE who enabled us to deeply analyse the situation on adolescent and youth abuse by providing access to the full database of their national surveys respectively: “Violence Against Women and Girls in Albania”, INSTAT 2019 and Wellbeing and Safety of Women”, OSCE 2019.

Finally, the authors of this report would like to express their gratitude to UNFPA, Albania Office, for technical and financial support and particularly to *Ms Elsona Agolli* for her contribution in the report and her invaluable comments.

November 2020

ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Avdorse Childhood Experiences
ADHS	Albanian Demographic and Health Survey
AWEN	Albanian Women Empowerment Network
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CPU	Child Protection Unit
CPE	Child Protection Employee
GLM	General Linear Model
HBSC	Health Behaviour of School Aged Children
ITG	Interdisciplinary Technical Group
NCRPC	National Council for the Rights and Protection of the Child
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SARPC	State Agency for the Rights and Protection of the Child
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
VAG	Violence Against Women
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WHO	World Health Organization

I. BACKGROUND



Child and adolescent maltreatment continues to be a concerning public health problem all over the world, with not only health, but social and financial consequences as well. Preventing child maltreatment is part of several important policy agendas in the health field. Hence, *Investing in Children: The European Child Maltreatment Prevention Action Plan 2015-2020* aims to reduce child maltreatment across the European region¹ by 20 %.

Also, prevention of child maltreatment is part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) through several targets addressing the ending of violence against children (targets 5.2, 5.3, 16.1 and 16.2), while the document *Health 2020: the European policy framework on health and wellbeing* emphasizes the importance of including different disciplines (health in all policies) for preventing violence².

Deaths represent only a small fraction of the problem of child maltreatment. Every year millions of children become victims of non-fatal abuse and neglect. Child maltreatment refers to the physical and emotional mistreatment, sexual abuse, neglect and negligent treatment of children, as well as to commercial or other exploitation of children.

Child and adolescent maltreatment is recognized internationally as a serious public health, human rights, legal and social issue. The nature and the severity of both the violence itself and its consequences vary. Child maltreatment can lead to death. Most maltreatment is non-lethal and may manifest as physical injuries and/or affect child's wellbeing to result in long-term consequences on a child's neurological, cognitive and emotional development and overall health.

The information about the magnitude and determinants of child and adolescent abuse, and especially sexual abuse during childhood in Albania is scarce. After the fall of the communist regime in 1990, Albania has been undergoing a rapid political and socioeconomic transition associated

- 1 Investing in children: the European child maltreatment prevention action plan 2015–2020. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2014 (EUR/RC64/13 + UR/RC64/ Conf.Doc./5; http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/253728/64wd13e_InvestChildMaltreat_140439.pdf)
- 2 Health 2020: a European policy framework supporting action across government and society for health and well-being. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2012 (<http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/health-2020-a-european-policy-framework-supporting-action-across-government-and-society-for-health-and-well-being>, accessed 18 February 2016).

with a high level of social mobility, massive emigration and high rates of unemployment³. These socioeconomic changes are associated with increasing rates of unhealthy lifestyle/behavioural characteristics, which are reflected in an excessive morbidity and mortality indicators from non-communicable diseases³.

3 Albanian Institute of Public Health. National health report: Health status of the Albanian population. Tirana, Albania, 2014. <http://www.ishp.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Health-report-English-version.pdf> (accessed: June 11, 2015).

II.

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE REPORT



The aim of this report is to conduct an in-depth (secondary) data analysis of the existing databases pertinent to several important studies which have been conducted in Albania in the past decade in order to provide the necessary information about the characteristics of adolescent and youth abuse with a main focus on potential gender gaps, socioeconomic differences and other potential differences pertinent to vulnerable population categories.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this report consists of the following approaches:

- **Desk review:** of the existing legal framework and national strategic documents that protect children, adolescents and youth from all forms of violence and the main quantitative and qualitative studies conducted in Albania, which describes the situation of adolescent and youth abuse. Additionally, this process highlighted the challenges, barriers and gaps that institutions face today in the context of protecting adolescent and youth from violence and abuse.
- **Review of already published reports:** the already published reports of the existing studies were scrutinized in detail in order to outline the gaps and highlight the needs for further analysis.
- **In-depth (secondary) data analysis:** of the main national studies conducted in the past decade, which provide information on the situation of adolescent and youth abuse in Albania. The main studies included in the secondary analysis are:
 - o Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children 2017/18 (HBSC)
 - o Community survey on prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Albania (ACE study) 2011-12
 - o Wellbeing and Safety of women, 2019
 - o Violence Against Women and Girls in Albania, INSTAT 2018

This in-depth (secondary) data analysis mainly tackled the following issues for each study:

- o In-depth assessment and secondary analysis of the prevalence and distribution of different types of adolescent and youth maltreatment (physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, bullying)

- Assessment of the main (independent) demographic and socioeconomic determinants of adolescent and youth maltreatment in Albanian children.
- Assessment of the association of adolescent and youth maltreatment with socio-demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and behavioural/lifestyle factors.
- Assessment of the association between categories of adolescent and youth maltreatment (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, bullying)

The in-depth analysis consisted of a robust statistical analysis based on the databases pertinent to the aforementioned studies. Several statistical techniques and tests are employed for assessing the association between characteristics of adolescent and youth abuse and demographic factors, socioeconomic characteristics and other potential determinants (predictors). Binary logistic regression was the main statistical technique employed for assessing the independent determinants/predictors of characteristics of the different type of adolescent and youth abuse.

III.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROTECTION AND RESPECT OF CHILD RIGHTS IN ALBANIA



Recognition, respect and protection of child rights has been listed among the priority actions of the Government of Albania for years now, due to also the extraordinary work of civil society organizations focused in this direction. The legal framework for the protection and respect of child rights has significantly improved in recent years. Improvements are also observed in the field of policies and their implementing institutions.

However, the de-facto implementation of the legal and policy framework remains a challenge, especially when it comes to protecting girls and boys from violence and abuse. It is so sad to note that only during 2020 we have witnessed media reporting of many cases of violence against children in kindergartens, schools and families, especially sexual violence against mainly girls, both by their peers and adults, including cases of sexual abuse of female minors in family relationships. Provision of specialist support services for abused girls and boys, especially in the case of sexual violence is even more difficult. Existing services are not inclusive and do not have the sufficient capacity to cover the entire territory of the country; they lack the needed number of professionals; they are usually underfunded and they do not always operate based on the required and appropriate standards, etc.

Resorting again to the issue of legal perspective of protection and respect for the child rights in Albania, it is worth noting that the existing legal framework contains international instruments ratified by Albania and a set of improved domestic laws aligned with the international framework on child rights.

3.1. INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal system in Albania is organized in such a way that the ratified conventions are considered part of the domestic legislation and are binding for implementation. They stand above the Codes and Laws of the country. Albania has signed and ratified a number of international conventions and instruments on the protection of child rights, where among the most important instruments dealing

with the protection of children from violence and abuse, we can mention:

a) The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989)⁴, which among others, defines the basic civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of children. Established on the basis of four principles (non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to survival and development, and the participation of children), the CRC contains several articles dedicated to the protection of children from violence and abuse, including the protection of children from all forms of exploitation, such as:

- **Article 19, paragraph 1:** *“States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.” Article 19 also foreseen that the protection measures proposed in the first paragraph include, among others: “effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.”*
- **Article 34:** *“States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:(a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;(b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;(c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials”.*
- **Article 35:** *“States Parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form”.*
- **Article 36:** *“States Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child’s welfare”, etc.*

Albania has also signed and ratified the Optional Protocols to this Convention. The Optional Protocol **On the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography**⁵ is of a particular importance to mention.

b) The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention, 2007)⁶, which foreseen measures for the prevention,

4 Ratified by the Assembly of the Republic of Albania with Law no. 7531 dated 11.12.1991 *On the Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

5 Approved by virtue of the Law No.9834, dated 22.11.2007. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/opsccrc.aspx>

6 Ratified with the Law No. 10071 dated 09.02.2009.<https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/0900001680084822>

detection, investigation and punishment of all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse of children, as well as the protection and rehabilitation of children victims of sexual abuse and exploitation.

Albania is also a member and signatory of a number of other international instruments such as: The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)⁷, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1981)⁸, Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action⁹; United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two Optional Protocols, namely Protocol against the Traffic of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea and Protocol to prevent, deter and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children¹⁰, Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention, 2011)¹¹, etc.

3.2. NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Following legal obligations as a signatory state of International Conventions, and in order to regulate its legal framework, identify, guarantee and protect child rights, Albania has taken serious steps in establishing and supplementing the relevant legal framework. The legal spirit and the legal approach to such a delicate topic of protection and respect of child rights is enshrined as well in the principles of the Construction -- the fundamental law of the Republic of Albania.

a) Constitution of the Republic of Albania¹². The Constitution of the Republic of Albania uses a neutral language (including also from gender perspective¹³), interpreted as a deliberate (linguistic) use to imply that all Albanian citizens, regardless of gender, age or any other individual characteristic, enjoy same equal rights. Children are mentioned under Articles 15 and 59 of the Constitution, but specifically, with regard to abuse, there is a provision in **Article 54** providing that: “... 3. *Every child has the right to be protected from violence, maltreatment, exploitation even for the purposes of work, especially under the minimum age for child labour, which may harm his/her health, morals or endanger his/her life or normal development*”.

All the provisions in the above articles clearly show the importance and approach to the treatment children receive in the legal sense, as individual entitled to special protection from the State. The purpose of the basic law goes under the same lines – namely to formalize and place emphasis on

7 Ratified with the Law No. 8137, dated 31.07.1996 https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_eng.pdf

8 Ratified in 1993 together with its optional protocol ratified in 2003. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>

9 https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf

10 Ratified by virtue of Law no. 8920 dated 11.07.2002. <https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf>

11 Ratified on 04.02.2013. <https://rm.coe.int/168008482e>

12 <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/2/41888.pdf>

13 It should be noted that gender neutral and almost blind language permeates almost all legal and policy documents in the country and is an aspect that requires attention and improvement in the future.

the special protection legally enjoyed by certain subjects of law, which in the social and civil sense are more fragile than other subjects. Children have a special place in the entirety of legal institutes and instruments aimed at regulating, identifying, guaranteeing and observing the legal/civil rights, as long as the highest goal of the Albanian legislation is to ensure protection of child rights and their family rights.

b) Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania, as amended¹⁴, in its section IX, contains provisions on criminal offenses against children, marriage and family. However, the Criminal Code contains no clear provision of the age gap identifying an individual as a child, as we find defined in Law 18/2017 *On the rights and protection of the child*, in Article 3, paragraph 4: "Child" is any person under the age of 18."¹⁵ Article 12 of the Criminal Code foresees only that: "A person shall be held criminally liable if, at the time of committing the crime, he has reached the age of fourteen. A person committing a criminal contravention shall be held liable if he has reached the age of sixteen". Criminal Code foresees a number of criminal offenses in order to protect the rights of children, but in relation to child abuse, we can mention the following provisions:

- **Article 124/b "Maltreatment of minors"**: *Physical or psychological abuse of a minor by his parents, sister, brother, grandfather, grandmother, legal guardian or any person who is obliged to take care of the minor, shall be punished by imprisonment of three months to two years. Coercing, exploitation, encouragement, or use of a minor to work, to obtain income, to beg, or to perform actions that damage his/her mental and/or physical development, or education, shall be punishable by two to five years of imprisonment. Where from the offence is caused severe health damage or the death of the minor, it is punishable by ten to twenty years of imprisonment.*
- **Article 128/b "Trafficking of Minors"**: *Recruitment, sale, transport, transfer, hiding or reception of minors with the purpose of exploitation for prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour of service, slavery or forms similar to slavery, putting in use or transplanting organs, as well as other forms of exploitation, shall be punishable by ten to twenty years of imprisonment. Organization, management and financing of the trafficking of minors is punished with imprisonment of from ten to twenty years. When this crime is committed in collaboration or more than once, or is accompanied with the maltreatment and forcing of the victim through physical or psychological violence to commit various actions, or bring serious consequences to health, it is punished with imprisonment of no less than fifteen years. When the offence as a consequence has brought about the death of the victim it is punished with imprisonment of no less than twenty years or with life imprisonment. When the criminal offence is committed through the utilization of a state function or public service, the punishment of imprisonment is increased by one fourth of the punishment give.*

14 Amended in 2012, 2013, 2017 and lastly by virtue of Law 35/2020. https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/8235/file/Albania_CC_1995_am2017_en.pdf

15 <http://femijet.gov.al/al/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Law-No-18-2017-On-the-rights-and-protection-of-the-child.pdf>

With the legal amendments incurred in Article 130/a of the Criminal Code respectively in 2013 and in 2020, regarding domestic violence, it is noticed that the punishments for these offenses are aggravated if such offences are committed repeatedly or in the presence of children.

- **Article 130/a “Domestic Violence”:** *Beating, as well as any other act of physical, psychological violence, against the person who is a spouse, ex-spouse, cohabitant or ex-cohabitant, close gender (prenatal, postnatal, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, grandchildren, children of brothers and sisters), or close relatives (father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, stepfather, stepmother,) violation of his physical, psycho-social and economic integrity is punishable by imprisonment of up to three years. Serious threat of murder or grievous bodily harm to a person who is a spouse, ex-spouse, cohabitant or ex-cohabitant, close relative (prenatal, postnatal, siblings, uncle, mother-in-law, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and children of brothers and sisters), or close relatives (father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, stepfather, stepmother), or in a relationship or former intimate relationship with the perpetrator, thereby violating the psychic integrity, is sentenced to up to four years in prison. Intentionally inflicted injury on a person who is a spouse, ex-spouse, cohabitant or ex-cohabitant, close relative (prenatal, postnatal, siblings, uncles, cousins, grandchildren, children of siblings), or close relatives (father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, stepfather, stepmother), or in an intimate relationship with the perpetrator of the criminal offense, that has caused the inability to go to work for more than nine days, is punishable by imprisonment of up to five years. The same acts, committed repeatedly, or in the presence of children, are punishable by one to five years in prison”.*

One of the most important aspects in order to protect and respect the rights of children are the legal provisions in the field of sexual crimes. In section VI of the Criminal Code, Chapter on Sexual Crimes, contains the following most significant provisions:

- **Article 100 “Sexual or homosexual relations with minors”:** *Having sexual or homosexual relations with minor children, or with a female minor, who is not sexually matured, shall be punished from seven to fifteen years imprisonment. When sexual or homosexual intercourse was committed in complicity, more than once or by violence, or when the child victim had serious health consequences, the offence shall be punished to not less than twenty-five years of imprisonment. When that offence brought as a consequence the minor’s death or suicide, it shall be punished to not less than thirty years or life imprisonment.*
- **Article 101 “Violent sexual or homosexual intercourse with a minor who is fourteen to eighteen years old”:** *Having sexual or homosexual relations by violence with children that are fourteen to eighteen years old, who are sexually matured, shall be punished from five to fifteen years imprisonment. When the sexual or homosexual intercourse by violence was done in complicity, more than once, or when the child victim had serious health consequences; this shall be punished from ten to twenty years imprisonment. When that offence brought as a consequence the minor’s death or suicide, this is sentenced to not less than twenty years imprisonment.*

As per above, it is worth noting that: first, the definition in Article 100 “or with a female minor, who is not sexually matured” excludes the male minor who has not reached sexual maturity and may create space for gender differences in the protection offered to boys and girls; second, the distinction made by specifying “sexual intercourse” or “homosexuality” while the sentence is the same for both offenses, is an unnecessary distinction, as it may as well even reinforce stereotypes, prejudices and stigmatization of a certain group of children.

A special space is also dedicated to the **sexual or homosexual intercourse by persons in the close family circle**, or custodian of minors.

- **Article 106 “Sexual or homosexual activity with consanguine persons and persons in custody”**: *Engagement in the act of sexual or homosexual intercourse between parents and children, brother and sister, between brothers, sisters, between consanguine relatives in an ascending line or with persons in the position of custody or adoption, is sentenced by imprisonment up to seven years.*

Sexual violence, sexual harassment or acts considered shameful, when these are exercised upon minors, are dealt with separately within the Albanian articles and criminal legislation. The identification of minors under the age of fourteen and/or up to eighteen years in articles of this type clearly indicates the identification of children as a group of persons who enjoy special protection by the State. The following articles are of most relevance in this regard.

- **Article 107/a, “Sexual Violence”**: *Exercising sexual violence by performing actions of a sexual nature on the body of another person through the use of objects shall constitute a criminal offence and is punishable by imprisonment of from three to seven years. When this action is committed with accomplices, against several persons, more than once or against children fourteen to eighteen years of age, it is punishable by imprisonment of from five to fifteen years. When this action is committed against a child under fourteen years of age or a child who is not sexually matured, regardless of whether it is committed by use of violence or not, it shall be punishable with no less than twenty years of imprisonment.*
- **Article 108 “Immoral acts”**: *Commitment of immoral acts with minors under the age of fourteen are punishable by imprisonment of from three to seven years. The same offence, when committed against a minor who has not reached the age of fourteen, with whom the offender has family relations, shall be punishable by five to ten years of imprisonment. Intentional involvement as a witness, in actions of a sexual nature, of a minor who has not reached the age of fourteen, or a minor who is not sexually mature yet, shall constitute a criminal offence and is punishable with one to five years of imprisonment. The proposal made by an adult person, by any means or form, to meet with a minor who has not reached the age of fourteen or a minor who is not sexually mature yet, with the aim of committing any of the criminal offences foreseen in this Section or in Section VIII, Chapter II of this Code, shall constitute a criminal offence and is punishable with one to five years of imprisonment.*
- **Article 108/a “Sexual harassment”**: *Commitment of actions of a sexual nature which infringe the dignity of a person, by any means or form, by creating a threatening, hostile, degrading,*

humiliating or offensive environment, shall constitute a criminal offence and is punishable with one to five years of imprisonment. When this offence is committed in complicity, against several persons, more than once, or against children, it shall be punishable by three to seven years of imprisonment.

Other articles of relevance follow below:

- **Article 114 “Exploitation for prostitution”:** *Encouragement, mediation, or receipt of compensation for exercising prostitution shall be punishable by two to five years of imprisonment. When the same offence is committed with minors, against several persons, with persons who are close kin, close kin of the spouse, who have custodial relationships or availing themselves of their official relationship, or when committed in complicity or more than once, or by State and public officials, it shall be punishable by seven to fifteen years of imprisonment.*
- **Article 117 “Pornography”:** *Production, distribution, advertisement, export, import, sale, and publication of pornographic materials in environments with children, by any means or form, shall constitute criminal contravention and shall be punishable by imprisonment of up to two years. Production, import, offering, making available, distribution, broadcasting, use, or possession of child pornography, as well as the conscious creation of access in it, by any means or form, shall be punishable by three to ten years of imprisonment. Recruitment, exploitation, compulsion, or the persuasion of a child to participate in pornographic shows, as well as the participation in such shows which involve the participation of children, shall be punishable by five to ten years of imprisonment.*

With regards to **Article 113 “On Prostitution”**, which provides that: *Exercise of prostitution is punishable by a fine or up to three years of imprisonment. Giving a payment for personal benefit of prostitution shall be punished by a fine or imprisonment of up to three years*, it is worth mentioning that this article makes no difference between juveniles and adults and can, therefore lead to the risk of punishing children for the crime of prostitution, when in fact they are used for prostitution. This risk actually exists even when talking about adults exploited for prostitution: the lack of evidence of the exploitation of which puts them in the position of the ones who exercise the prostitution as a result of which instead of being treated as victims they may be treated as offenders.

The special identification of children as a subject of positive legal protection continues throughout all articles of the Criminal Code, as in: criminal offenses against humanity and life, criminal offenses against the freedom of the person, criminal offenses against morality and dignity, etc.

c) Code of Criminal Justice for Children¹⁶ provides in more detail and complies with the procedural guarantees that the juvenile must enjoy in the criminal process and not only. In this context, in order to guarantee the most efficient respect for the freedoms and rights of children, this Code contains special regulations related to the criminal responsibility of juveniles, procedural rules related to

16 Approved by virtue of the Law No. 37/ 2017. <https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/2596/file/KODI%20-%20botimi%20dhjetor%202019.pdf>

the investigation, criminal prosecution, judicial process, execution of the decision of the criminal conviction, rehabilitation or any other measure involving a juvenile in conflict with the law, as well as a juvenile victim and/or witness of the criminal offense.

Criminal justice related to children should not aim at punishment, but instead at their reintegration and prevention in order to have in the future adult individuals as far away from conflict with the law and responsible members of Albanian society and State. The purpose of this Code is to guarantee a legal framework on juvenile criminal justice in accordance with the Constitution, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international standards and norms aimed at the protection of minors. Also, through this Code, the legislator seeks and aims to promote the reintegration of juveniles in conflict with the criminal law and to ensure that juveniles play a more useful role in society, as well as to ensure re-socialization and rehabilitation of juveniles committing a criminal offense, while at the same time protecting the rights of the juvenile in cases when he or she is a witness and/or victim of a criminal offense, etc.

As the first act specifically dedicated to the relationship of juveniles with the criminal justice system, a feature of the Code is the philosophy on the application of imprisonment, as the very last punishment and in the shortest possible time. Where possible, it should be replaced by community-based rehabilitation services. Through this approach, the aim is to facilitate the process of reintegration of the juvenile, replacing the sentence with education.

Another significant progress has been made in the involvement of specialized and qualified professionals in the management of juvenile cases in conflict with the law. The specialization of persons who administer and assist the juvenile criminal justice process is another delicate issue and has a direct impact not only on the juvenile, but also on the progress of the entire process. For this reason, the Code provides for the observance of certain parameters, through which the specialization and training in the field of protection of the rights of children of all persons who administer juvenile criminal justice processes are dictated (see Chapter IV, Article 25 of this Code)

Mandatory participation of a psychologist, provided for under **Article 18** of this Code is a guarantee in and of itself in all legal proceedings involving the child. Another guarantee of this Code is the prompt and priority review of trials or any kind of procedural action related to them by anybody that recognizes and operates in the protection of children's rights or in conflict with the law. This is why there is a provision in a separate article (Article 17 "Review without delay and with priority").

d) Law No.18/2017, "For the rights and protection of the child"¹⁷ marks the best effort of the Albanian legislator in terms of protecting the child rights. As provided for in the Introduction to this law, the child is a holder of rights and these rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and progressive. The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in any action concerning the child. The best interest of the child means the right of the child to have a healthy physical, mental, moral, spiritual and social development, as well as to enjoy a family

17 Approved on 23.02.2017, and entered into force on 09.06.2017. <http://femijet.gov.al/al/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Law-No-18-2017-On-the-rights-and-protection-of-the-child.pdf>

and social life suitable for the child (See Article 6 of the Law No.18/2017, “Implementing the best interests of the child”).

The clear definition and placement of the position of the child in the conditions of a social group with special protection by law and state authorities can be seen throughout this law in the form the principle of drafting of legal norms. It is worth noting the fact that the Law No.18/2017 is significantly improved in terms of these legal provisions compared to the previous Law No.10347/2010 “For the protection of the rights of the child”.

e) Law 9669/2006 “For measures against violence in family relations”, as amended¹⁸. With the improvements made to this law in 2018 and in 2020, the protection of children from domestic violence is reflected since in its Article 1 “The aim of the Law”, paragraph 2: “*Guaranteeing the protection by legal and other necessary measures of family members who are victims of domestic violence, paying special attention to women, girls, children, the elderly and people with disabilities, subject to this law, according to its article 3*”.

While in the provisions in the **Article 10 “Protection measures against domestic violence”,** among others, several amendments are made with regard to children. Some instances follow below: *1. The Court, as a protection measure of domestic violence, immediately orders the abuser to leave the apartment for a certain period of time, when the victim and the abuser live in the same shelter. The Court, when appropriate, in imposing this measure **takes into account the special needs of the juvenile, elderly or disabled perpetrator** and in these cases the eviction order is issued only when no other measure guarantees the protection of the victim from violence. In addition to the measure of removal of the perpetrator from the apartment, protection against domestic violence, pursuant to this law, is provided in these ways:*

...d) immediately stopping the accused (male perpetrator) from approaching the home, place of work, home of the family of origin or the home of the future couple or other persons and moreover the school of the children, or the places of which are mostly frequented by the victim, except when the attendance is done for working reasons;

dh) immediately placing the victim and the minor in temporary accommodation, taking into account in each case the best interest, that of the child;

e) restricting or prohibiting the accused (male perpetrator) from meeting the victim’s child, under conditions which may be appropriate;

... h) ordering the accused (male perpetrator) to pay the rent of the victim’s permanent or temporary residence, as well as the alimony obligation for the victim, children or other dependent family members;

... j) temporarily relieving the abuser of parental responsibility or, where applicable, custody of a minor, custody of a person with a disability, or of a person whose capacity to act has been revoked or restricted. When the court decides to remove the exercise of parental responsibility from both

18 By virtue of Law 47/2018, but also recently in September 2020. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/6/30436.pdf>

parents or from the single parent, it assigns temporary custody of the children, applying the rules provided in the Family Code and the applicable procedural legislation;

...3/1 The court, mainly, in the immediate protection order and / or in the protection order, may provide protection measures for children who have suffered violence or were present when domestic violence was exercised. The court, in its assessment, may also apply the protection measures and procedures provided by the legislation in force for the rights and protection of the child, as long as the deadlines of the judicial process provided by this law are not violated.

In addition, **the Article 13/1, paragraph 2:** “In the order for immediate protection measures, according to paragraph 1 of this article, until the court issues an immediate protection order or protection order, the immediate removal of the perpetrator from the apartment is ordered, when the victim and the perpetrator live in the same shelter, **unless the violence is juvenile, elderly or disabled, and / or one or more of the following measures are defined ...**” **paragraph 4** highlights: In the same article, **paragraph 4** it is highlighted: “...4. In cases of violence against or in the presence of children, the State Police immediately protects the child and at the same time refers the case to the Child Protection Unit in the local self-government unit, according to the rules provided in the legislation in force on the rights and protection of children”

e) Law No. 121/2016 “On social care services in the Republic of Albania”¹⁹, is one of the most important legal acts for the social protection of children and families in difficult situations, including those in exploitation situations or other extreme situations. The law aims to “define the rules for the provision and ensuring of social care services, which contribute to the well-being and social inclusion of individuals and families in need of social care.” The administration of social services is based on universal principles such as: the principle of universality, social justice, social support, deinstitutionalization, non-discrimination, etc. According to Article 6 of this Law, beneficiaries of social services are “a) families and any child, as well as the child enjoying international protection ...; ... ç) pregnant girls or the single parent of a child up to the age of one year; d) juveniles / juveniles in conflict with the law, who have completed their sentence and are in need of social care services...; etc.

f) Resolution of the Albanian Parliament on the Rights of the Child, 2013²⁰. On 26 November 2013, the Assembly of Albania, after a wide discussion with the MPs and the civil society, through a Special Hearing Session, which was organized for the first time in the history of the Albanian Parliament, decided with the unanimous votes of all MPs to approve the Resolution “On the Protection and Respect of the Children’s Rights in Albania”. The resolution is an essential achievement of the broad efforts of the Assembly itself, in cooperation with civil society, to raise to a new stage the level of responsibility, but also accountability for children and their rights in Albania. Among other things, the Resolution focuses on the role of the Albanian Parliament, emphasizing the continuous

19 <https://www.vendime.al/ligj-nr-1212016-per-sherbimet-e-kujdesit-shoqeror-ne-republiken-e-shqiperise/>

20 <https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RESOLUTION%20of%20the%20Albanian%20Parliament%20on%20Protection%20and%20Respect%20of%20Rights%20of%20the%20Child%20in%20Albania.pdf>

monitoring of the Government' work to protect children, the support that should be provided for child protection services, etc.

g) Resolution “On the condemnation of violence against women and girls and increase of effectiveness of legal mechanisms for its prevention”²¹. The Assembly adopted this resolution on 4 December 2017, in implementation of which the Subcommittee “On Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence against Women” was set up under the umbrella of the Standing Committee on Labor, Social Affairs and Health. This subcommittee, working in the framework of the parliamentary control processes, requests continuous information on the implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality, reporting on the situation of domestic violence, or on issues of discrimination against women and girls, holds hearings with stakeholders and institutions, etc. In relation to this resolution, in the framework of the 16th International Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, on November 25th, 2020, the Speaker of the Assembly, Mr. Gramoz Ruçi addressed a letter to the heads of Justice and Police for the implementation of legislation against violence against women and girls. In this letter, among other things it is noted that: “ ... *Despite the positive developments, data on cases of violence against women and domestic violence show that violence is still present and manifests itself in various forms up to the most extreme, where the victims are mostly women and children. According to the GREVIO report, the biggest weaknesses affecting referral mechanisms relate to the lack of proper enforcement of protection orders and prompt enforcement orders, inadequate responses from the Court system, and insufficient involvement of health professionals, including forensic doctors. The Albanian Parliament notes that the justice system (Police, Prosecution, Courts, Social Services in the criminal justice system) has not been sufficiently effective in investigating and reviewing cases of domestic violence and proper implementation of the legal provisions of the Criminal Code for punishing perpetrators and providing services to victims. Although the holistic approach against violence against women cannot be relied on the criminal justice system alone, the Courts need to be in line with the legislator’s firm stance against violence and provide a strong response, including penalties. This would encourage further reporting of domestic violence cases. Although there is a clear improvement in the observance of deadlines for requests for the issuance of protection orders, Court hearings for their certification and issuance are still unnecessarily postponed. Speed and compliance with deadlines is an essential element of adjudication for protection orders, non-compliance with which leads to a loss of meaning of the law against domestic violence and may endanger victims. Under these circumstances, I ask you to take the necessary measures for the rigorous implementation of the provisions of the Criminal Code on domestic violence and violence against women*”²².

On 23 July 2020 the national movement: **# WEARE1. Together against violence and sexual exploitation of children in Albania** ceremony was held. This national movement # WEARE1 made public by President Meta and the Center for the Protection of Children’s Rights - CRCA / ECPAT Albania, in cooperation with BARNAHUS Albania, aims to address the challenges and gaps in protecting children from violence and sexual exploitation throughout Albania, by engaging citizens,

21 <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/rezolute/2017/12/04/212-1/776876ba-c4b3-4519-b120-cf2b5dd61cf9>

22 <https://www.parlament.al/News/Index/11497>

parents, teachers, educators, artists, public officials, civil society, youth and children themselves, to report any act of violence or sexual exploitation of children, as well as to work with the authorities to take action to protect, care for and raise awareness of children and the family from the consequences of violence. In addition, on June 2020, CRCA/ECPAT Albania submitted to the Legal Commission and the Alliance of Women MPs of the Albanian Parliament, as well as to the Ministry of Justice, the proposed amendments to the Criminal Code of Albania. The amendments seek to reinforce the definitions, law enforcement and penalties of several offenses, which have serious consequences on the lives, dignity, physical and emotional well-being of victims. The amendments include addition of new criminal offences related to online sexual violence, increase in sentences for persons who groom children to have sexual intercourse, sexting to the child for sexual purposes, etc. The proposals also call for the creation of a National Register for Sexual Crimes, which aims to prevent meetings between sexual predators and children. These proposals are in accordance with the required standards of the Council of Europe in particular the Lanzarote Convention²³. Activities in this direction have continued even further, in November 2020, with the organization of “Blue Ribbon Day”, an awareness and empowerment marathon for children, adolescents, parents and activists in the fight against sexual violence. Meanwhile, the “Protocol for the treatment of cases of sexual violence against children” is under the preparation process.

Important provisions regarding the protection and respect of children’s rights contain a number of other legal documents such as: Law No.10221/2010 for protection from discrimination, Law for the People Advocate, as amended, Family Code, etc.

Also, a series of normative acts have been recently adopted, such as Decisions of the Council of Ministers (DCM) and instructions, aimed at creating an effective system for the child protection, guaranteeing their rights and ensuring their protection from all forms of violence, in compliance with the principles of cross-sector cooperation. Among them, we can mention:

DCM Nr. 148, of 13.03.2018 “On determining the rules of cooperation between institutional mechanisms, child protection structures at the local level and non-profit organizations for the implementation of national and local policies, as well as the necessary services for child protection”. This decision defines the rules of cooperation between institutional mechanisms, child protection structures at central and local level and non-profit organizations for the implementation of national and local policies, as well as the provision of necessary services for child protection. The decision envisages the concrete commitments undertaken by the mechanisms for the rights and protection of the child at central and local level within this cooperation, as well as on the other hand non-profit organizations according to the legislation in force to realize this cooperation.

DCM Nr. 565, of 29.09.2018 “For the coordination of the activity between the advisory and coordination institutional mechanisms and structures at central and local level, for issues related to the rights and protection of the child”. This decision sets out the rules and procedures for the coordination of work between the advisory and coordination institutional mechanisms

²³ <https://www.crca.al/en/news-national-register-sexual-crimes-against-children-albania-child-protection-violence/crcaecpat-0>

and structures at the central and local level, on issues related to the rights and protection of the child. The process of coordination of work, between the mechanisms and structures defined in this decision, aims to meet the obligations arising from the legislation in force, as well as from the international obligations of the Republic of Albania, in the field of rights and protection of the child.

DCM No. 578, of 03.10.2018 “For the procedures of referral and case management, drafting of the individual protection plan content, financing its implementation costs, as well as the implementation of protection measures”. This decision is one of the most important and essential bylaws for the realization and functioning of the child protection system as it addresses processes, instruments and mechanisms, which are based on the integrated child protection system, such as referral procedures, drafting and the implementation of the Child Protection Plan, the adoption and implementation of protection measures. For the first time, this decision provides for the way of financing interventions and services for child protection.

DCM No.129, of 13.03.2019 “For procedures for identification, immediate assistance and referral of exploited children, including children in street situations”. This decision aims to establish rules and procedures for the identification, immediate assistance and referral of children exploited in the formal and informal sector, including children in street situations. It provides for roles, responsibilities, timelines and interaction between institutions responsible for the identification, immediate assistance and referral of exploited children, including children in street situations. The decision also sets out the procedures for referring children in need of protection to the necessary support services.

DCM No. 465, of 03.07.2019 “Measures to protect children from access to illegal and/or harmful Internet content”. The purpose of this decision is that the information received or obtained should be used only to determine the needs of the child and to protect him/her from harm, and in any case the privacy and identity of the child will be protected. Child protection is a shared responsibility and should include all structures and services, children and their families.

Instruction No. 556, of 29.07.2019 “On the manner of placement, in the social care institutions for the child, against whose has been taken a protection measure”. The purpose of this instruction is to guarantee the placement of the child against whose has been taken a protection measure, in social care institutions effectively and in accordance with the needs of the best interest, according to the provisions made in Law no. 18/2017 “On the Rights and Protection of the Child”.

Instruction No. 650, of 13.09.2019 “On determining the criteria and procedures for the selection of procedural representatives for children in conflict with the law, children victims and witnesses in criminal proceedings”²⁴. The purpose of this instruction is to define the criteria and procedures for the selection of procedural representatives for children in conflict with the law, children victims and witnesses in criminal proceedings.

24 Joined Instruction with Ministry of Justice Article 49, paragraph 4.

Instruction No. 651, of 13.09.2019 “For the procedures of reporting cases of children in need for protection”²⁵. The purpose of this instruction is to determine the procedures for reporting cases of children in need of protection, by any natural or legal person, public and private institutions, teachers and providers of psycho-social services in schools, local educational institutions, responsible for pre-university education, employees of health or social care institutions of the child, whether public or private, police bodies and child protection structures at the local level, as defined in Law No. 18/2017 “On the Rights and Protection of the Child”.

3.3. MAIN NATIONAL POLICIES

Provisions regarding the protection and respect of children’s rights as well as the provision of relevant services according to their age and needs, can be found in a number of important national policies, starting from the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2016 - 2020, which provides “*Overall reform of the justice system and qualifies the juvenile justice system as an important challenge*”. We can also mention the Sectorial Strategy of Social Protection 2016-2020, the National Strategy for Gender Equality and its action plan 2016-2020, the National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania 2016 - 2020, etc. But, as the most important national policies in terms of children’s protection we may highlight:

a) National Agenda for the Child Rights 2017–2020²⁶, which represents a strategic document, which expresses the priorities of state institutions in the field of children’s rights, as well as, at the same time, a unified framework for monitoring the progress of the Albanian government towards the realization of children’s rights, in all relevant sectors. This agenda contains three strategic pillars: (i) Good governance in order to promote, respect and protect the rights of children; (ii) Elimination of all forms of violence against children; and (iii) Child and adolescent-friendly systems and services: development and education, justice, health and nutrition, and social protection. The agenda is guided by the main principle of the best interest of the child and its vision is the creation of a favorable environment for the safe and healthy growth of children, the development of maximum physical and psychosocial potential of children, social inclusion and active participation in all areas that affect their lives, as well as ensuring that the progress of children’s rights is assessed in key areas of child-related public policy.

b) Justice for Children Strategy and its Action Plan 2018–2021²⁷, which aims at promote and effectively protect the rights and needs of: children in conflict with the law, children victims or witnesses of crime, children under age of criminal responsibility, whether in criminal judicial proceedings or alternatives thereof, as well as children participating in administrative or civil court

25 Joined Instruction with Ministry of Education Sports and Youths and Ministry of Interior, Article 67, paragraph 7

26 Approved by virtue of DCM no. 372, dated 26.4.2017. <https://childhub.org/en/child-protection-online-library/albanian-national-agenda-childrens-rights-2017-2020>

27 Approved by virtue of DCM no. 541 dated 19.09.2018. <https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/1496/file/National%20Justice%20for%20Children%20Strategy%20Eng.pdf>

proceedings, through the implementation of national and international standards of child rights. The strategy has an interdisciplinary approach, it ensures alignment with all other existing national documents, and contains concrete activities. Priorities in fulfilment of the strategic vision focus on the “child-friendly justice” approach. It refers to justice systems guaranteeing the respect and the effective implementation of child rights, taking into consideration the level of maturity of the child and the circumstances of the case. If further broken down, it entails an accessible, age-appropriate, fast, effective, customized and child rights- and needs-focused justice, which includes the right to a fair trial, the right to participate in and to understand the proceedings, the right to private and family life, as well as respect for the integrity and dignity of the child.

3.4. INSTITUTIONAL ADVISORY MECHANISMS ON THE RIGHTS AND PROTECTION OF THE CHILD

Law No. 18/2017, “On the Rights and Protection of the Child”, in its **Chapter III, Article 34 and onwards** also provides for institutional advisory and coordination mechanisms and structures for the rights and protection of the child, which are divided into mechanisms at central and local level.

a) National Council for the Rights and Protection of the Child (NCRPC) is the highest advisory body at the central level. It is set up by order of the Prime Minister, on the proposal of the Minister who coordinates the work on issues of rights and protection of the child. NCRPC has the main task of advising and coordinating state policies to guarantee the rights and protection of the child in all areas, especially in those of justice, social services, education, health and culture (*see Article 35 of Law No. 18/2017*). It is worth mentioning the fact that law No. 18/2017, in contrast to the previous law on protection of children’s rights No.10347/2010, has included as an integral part of this council not two but five representatives from the ranks of civil society and has brought an absolute innovation with the inclusion in this council of children with the status of observers, who are representatives of pupils governments, organizations, forums or any other group of children (*see article 34, paragraph 3 of law No. 18/2017*).

DCM No. 54, of 31.01.2018 “On the rules of operation of the National Council for the Rights and Protection of the Child” aims to determine the rules regarding the operation of NCRPC. The regulation of NCRPC provides for the manner of election of its members, the duration of their mandate, the organization and meetings of NCRPC, the tasks and functions performed by the technical secretariat at this Council, as well as determines who are participants with the status of observer in Council meetings.

b) State Agency for the Rights and Protection of the Child (SARPC) is part of the structures at the central level for the rights and protection of the child, under the ministry that coordinates the work on issues of rights and protection of the child. The Agency is responsible for coordinating and organizing the integrated child protection system, in the implementation of national child protection policies, including the implementation of interventions and measures to prevent and protect children from abuse, neglect, maltreatment and violence.

SARPC has a duty to provide direct support to child protection structures at the local level; cooperates with the responsible state structures in the process of drafting proposals and implementing integration policies in the European Union, in the field of protection of the rights of the child; builds and carries out activities for education, training, awareness of citizens, as well as employees and officials of the public administration and the justice system; coordinates or implements awareness campaigns and concrete activities to promote child participation in all areas; initiates and implements pilot projects, in cooperation with civil society and provides technical support to non-profit organizations working in the field of child rights and protection; organizes and coordinates scientific research in the field of rights and protection of the child, etc.

DCM No. 91, of 14.02.2018 “On the procedures for conducting controls and imposing sanctions by the State Agency for the Rights and Protection of the Child (SARPC)”, which sets the rules regarding the procedure of conducting controls, when it is noticed or suspected that a violation of the rights of the child has occurred, or when the relevant structures have not fulfilled the legal obligations. These rules aim to strengthen the role of SARPC in the functioning of the competencies given to it by Law No.18/2017.

DCM No. 636, of 26.10.2018 “On determining the type, manner of exchange and processing of information and statistical data required by the State Agency for the Rights and Protection of the Child at the responsible state structures, both at central and local government level”. This decision determines the type and manner of exchange and processing of information and statistical data, required by the Agency at the responsible state structures at central and local level. Indicators and statistics from various fields such as demographics, health, food, violence, migration, work, poverty, education, child justice, present an overview of the areas of rights and protection of children.

c) Local Self-Government Units (Municipalities). Municipalities are responsible for setting up their own relevant child protection structures and, through them, an integrated child protection system. According to the law, the local government is entitled to take all relevant measures in order to protect the rights of children, to reflect and respect the rights of the child in local development plans, in their programs and projects, to foreseen in the budget funds for progressive realization of the rights of the child, etc.

The focus of the law, also in line with the best interests of the child, is the organization and provision of services for children in need of protection, community-based services for the prevention of violence and child protection, family support services and alternative care services for children, as well as the establishment of rehabilitation and reintegration programs and services for children in need of protection, with a special focus on children victims of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, as well as children suspected or who have committed criminal offenses, who are under the age of criminal responsibility.

The structure responsible for social services in the Municipality is also responsible for child protection issues in general. It, in cooperation with other directorates of the municipality, local protection mechanisms and other local institutions, takes all necessary measures for the realization

and guarantee of child protection in the territory of the municipality (*see Article 47 of Law No. 18/2017*).

The Child Protection Unit (CPU) in the municipality is established and functions as a special unit within the structure responsible for social services at the municipal level and has the task, in particular, to prevent, identify, assess, protect and prosecute child cases in risk and / or in need of protection (see Article 49 of Law No. 18/2017). The CPU at the municipality compiles and adapts, once a year, the list of procedural representatives for children in conflict with the law, child victims and witnesses in the criminal process and sends it to the local structures of the State Police, the Prosecution and the Judicial District Court and appeal. The criteria and procedures for the selection of procedural representatives are determined by a joint instruction of the Minister coordinating the work on issues of rights and protection of the child and the Minister of Justice.

Child Protection Employees (CPEs) in the administrative units of the municipality are part of the needs assessment and referral unit and are expected to perform only tasks related to child protection. Every administrative unit of the municipality, which has more than 3000 children, should have at least one Child Protection Employee. The CPE performs the function of case manager for children in need of protection, from the moment of identification or referral, during the drafting and implementation of the protection measure and the Individual Protection Plan until their completion (see Article 51 and in continuity of the Law no. 18/2017). However, despite these legal provisions, in practice, the number of CPEs dedicated only to this full-time job position is extremely limited. Often the CPE performs the duty of Local Coordinator against domestic violence, Gender Equality Officer, etc.

Interdisciplinary Technical Group (ITG). In each municipality and in each municipal administrative unit, which has over 3000 children, an Ad-Hoc Interdisciplinary Technical Group is established to handle the cases of children in need of protection. The ITG supports the CPE and the case needs assessment and referral unit, for drafting of the Individual Protection Plan, facilitates its referral, as well as the implementation of interventions or actions set out in the Individual Protection Plan.

DCM No. 353, of 12.06.2018 “On the rules of operation of the Interdisciplinary Technical Group for child protection at Municipalities and Administrative Units” aims to regulate the functioning of the ITG by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of members, for a more complete and efficient addressing of cases of children in need for protection.

IV. REVIEW OF ALREADY PUBLISHED REPORTS



Sexual abuse, including sexual assault or rape, of children and adolescents is a major global public health problem, a violation of human rights, and has many social, psychological and health consequences in the short and long term. Child and adolescent sexual abuse is a subject that has received much attention in recent years. Twenty-eight to 33% of women and 12 to 18% of men were victims of childhood or adolescent sexual abuse (Long, Burnett, & Thomas, 2006). Child sexual abuse can take many forms, but is always a violation of a young person's rights, and increases the risk of many adverse physical and mental health conditions.

Childhood sexual abuse infringes on the basic rights of human beings. Children should be able to have sexual experiences at the appropriate developmental time and within their control and choice. The nature and dynamics of sexual abuse and sexually abusive relationships are often traumatic. When sexual abuse occurs in childhood it can hinder normal social growth and be a cause of many different psychosocial problems (Maltz, 2002).

In Albania, in recent years, several studies have been conducted that address issues of child abuse, especially issues of child sexual abuse.

4.1. Community survey on prevalence of adverse childhood experiences in Albania (2011-2012), WHO, 2013²⁸: this study, conducted by WHO Regional Office for Europe was conducted on a representative sample of university students in 2012 (N = 1437; 67.6% females, 32.4% males). This survey aimed to describe the magnitude of adverse childhood experiences (ACE) in the Albanian young population, to identify socio-economic characteristics, and find associations between ACE, health risk behaviour and health outcomes. Results indicated a high prevalence of child maltreatment, with physical (around 40%), emotional (around 50%) and sexual abuse (around 6%), and witnessing the mother being treated violently (around 30%). The highest rates were seen in Albania compared to the other countries that conducted ACE surveys. About 14% of the students reported at least four ACEs and almost half of them reported two or more ACEs. The prevalence of sexual abuse was significantly higher in male students compared with their female counterparts (8.8% vs. 4.7%, respectively). The rate of emotional abuse during childhood was similar in male and

28 https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/181042/e96750.pdf

female students (51%).

Boys were more neglected physically (10.1 in boys vs. 6.5 in girls) and emotionality (15.7 in boys vs. 11.2 in girls) compared to females, and these differences were statistically significant ($P < 0.001$). Overall, about 30% of the students witnessed their mother treated violently and about 40% of them were bullied and were involved in physical fights during their childhood characteristics, which were significantly more prevalent in males than females. Overall, 14% of the students reported at least four ACEs and almost half of them reported 2 or more ACEs. ACEs were positively associated with rural place of birth, parental education, father's unemployment, and inversely related to income level. Of importance the findings show that the odds of developing health risk behaviours such as smoking, alcohol, illicit drugs, multiple partners and suicide attempts increases with the ACE score, implying a causal relationship.

4.2. Health Behaviour in School Age Children (HBSC) 2017-18²⁹: Albania is part this network since 2009, where it joined the European HBSC network. This type of survey gathers data on health and wellbeing, social environment and health behaviour among boys and girls aged 11, 13 and 15 years. These data may be used for policymaking and planning purposes concerning intervention strategies for improving the health status of teenagers. In the current round, for the first time Albania included also the optional package regarding child maltreatment. Among other things, the HBSC 2017-18 provides valuable information about bullying, physical fighting and child maltreatment, in addition to sexual abuse data, which were collected for the very first time in Albania.

Overall, one in four children (about 30% of boys vs. 20% of girls) had bullied others in the past months preceding the survey. Conversely, about 22% (about 25% of boys vs 20% of girls) had been bullied in the past months by their peers. Furthermore, about 22% of the overall sample of schoolchildren included in the survey had cyber-bullied others and/or had been cyber-bullied by their peers in the past months. Regarding physical fights, about 30% of schoolchildren reported at least one episode of physical fights during past year (almost one in two boys compared with one in five girls). In addition, about 32% of schoolchildren (37% of boys vs 28% of girls) reported at least one episode of injury in the past year. Furthermore, the prevalence of lifetime physical abuse in the overall sample of schoolchildren included in the survey was about 31% (slightly higher in boys than in girls), whereas the prevalence of lifetime emotional abuse was 16% (moderately higher in boys compared to girls). Finally, lifetime physical neglect was reported by only about 2% of the children (about 4% in boys vs only 0.7% in girls), whereas emotional neglect by 14% of the children (about 9% in boys vs 19% in girls). Hence, interestingly, the prevalence of (self-reported) physical neglect was higher in boys than in girls, whereas an opposite finding was evident for emotional neglect.

Measurement of child abuse and maltreatment, restricted only to young people aged at least 15 years, included assessment of lifetime and/or past month physical abuse and emotional abuse. Overall, more than two-thirds (69%) of the young people reported not to have been ever physically hurt by their parents or other adults in their respective households. One in four young

²⁹ <http://www.hbsc.org/publications/>

people (26%) reported to have been physically abused once or twice in lifetime, whereas 6% had experienced physical abuse many times during their life span. There were no significant gender-differences in the levels of physical abuse ($P=0.501$).

Overall, the prevalence of lifetime emotional abuse was 16%, with a significant difference between boys and girls (13% vs. 18%, respectively; $P=0.007$). Similarly, only young people aged 15 years were asked about emotional neglect in their respective contexts and household circumstances. More specifically, young people were asked whether there were times when there was no adult living with them who made children felt loved. Overall, about 14% of the young people aged 15 years reported to have experienced emotional neglect during their lifetime (9% in boys vs. 19% in girls; $P<0.001$).

4.3. National Violence Against Women and Girls Survey in Albania, INSTAT 2019³⁰

The 2018 National VAWG Survey in Albania (published in March 2019) was developed to measure the nature and extent of five different types of VAWG (intimate partner domestic violence, dating violence, non-partner violence, sexual harassment and stalking) and social norms related to VAWG. The sample of the study was 3,443 households and women age 18 to 74 years.

The results of the study show that 3.1% of women aged 18-74 reported they were sexually abused during childhood (i.e., they had been sexually touched when they did not want to, or were made to do something sexual that they did not want to). Furthermore, women who experienced child sexual abuse (88.8%) were significantly more likely to 'ever' experience sexual and/or gender-based violence in their lifetime, compared to women who did not experience child sexual abuse (51.5%). In addition, women who experienced child sexual abuse (64.6%) were more likely to experience intimate partner domestic violence, compared to women who did not experience child sexual abuse (39.3%). Also, women who experienced child sexual abuse (41.9%) were two times more likely to experience non-partner violence since age 15, compared to women who did not experience child sexual abuse (17.7%). These findings demonstrate that women who were sexually abused in childhood are at significant risk of experiencing other forms of violence later in lives. Studies (Lalor & McElvaney, 2010; Humphrey & White, 2000) suggest that sexual victimization in childhood and/or adolescences significantly increases the likelihood of sexual victimization in adulthood by 2 to 13.7 times.

Domestic violence does not only affect women who are battered and abused, but also has negative effects on children who are direct and indirect victims of the domestic violence and who witness domestic violence. It is well documented that children suffer negative consequences when they are exposed to violence in the household and family. The results of the study show that 47.7% of women age 18-74 who had children age 0-17 living in their households reported 'ever' experienced domestic violence and 40.1% 'currently' experiencing domestic violence (one of the five types of intimate partner domestic violence measured). More specifically, 21.1% of women who 'ever'

30 https://www2.unwomen.org/media/field%20office%20albania/attachments/publications/2019/05/web_english_24.pdf?la=en&vs=5249

experienced physical and/or sexual violence, or both, and 11.7% were “currently” experienced physical and/or sexual violence had children age 0-17 living in their households.

Based upon the weighted data of women who had children age 0-17 living in their households and the number of children each of those women had, it was calculated that there was a total of 591,476 children age 0-17 living in the households surveyed. Results of the study shows an estimated 286,498 children age 0-17 were most likely exposed to domestic violence because their mother ‘ever’ experienced domestic violence, and 246,707 children were most likely exposed to domestic violence in the 12 months prior to the interview because their mother ‘currently’ experienced domestic violence. More specifically, 128,144 children age 0-17 were most likely exposed to physical and/or sexual violence in their families because their mother ‘ever’ experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of her husband/ partner, and 73,535 children age 0-17 were mostly likely exposed to physical and/or sexual violence in the 12 months prior to the interview because their mothers ‘currently’ experienced physical and/or sexual violence, or both.

The study shows that among women age 18-74, 18.2% “ever” and 2.4% “currently” experienced one or more of the four types of physical and/or sexual non-partner violence since the age of 15 by someone other than their husband/boyfriend. Women were more likely to experience non-partner physical violence (17.3% ever, 2.3% current) than non-partner sexual violence (1.3% ever, 0.1% current). Furthermore, the study shows that among women who ever experienced non-partner sexual violence since the age of 15, those who identified their perpetrators, have identified their classmates/schoolmates (15.1%), teachers (7.1%), friend/acquaintances (5.4%), fathers/stepfathers (5.2%), mothers/step-mothers (4.4%), and strangers (3.3%) as perpetrators. A significant proportion of women declined or refused to identify the perpetrators of non-partner sexual violence.

4.4. The Albanian Demographic and Health Survey (ADHS) 2017-18³¹: consists of a large nationwide household survey in Albania. This survey included 15,823 households and informs on a wide range of demographic and health indicators of children aged 0-5 years, as well as men and women aged 15-59 years. Comparing the two DHS rounds conducted in Albania (the first round was carried out in 2008-09); there is evidence of an improvement of the situation of children regarding the issue of abuse and maltreatment. Hence, the proportion of children who were disciplined only by non-violent approaches or “techniques” (such as removing benefits/privileges to children, or providing space for alternative activities to them, without exerting verbal or physical violence) increased from 22% to 37% between 2008-09 and 2017-18. For the same time period, the proportion of children that suffered some type of physical violence decreased from 41% to 32%, whereas the proportion of children that experienced any type of psychological or physical aggression decreased from 75% to 48%. Concerning the attitudes toward physical punishment, only 4% of male respondents and 3% of female respondents believe that physical punishment is necessary for the proper upbringing of a child, compared with 13% of respondents in the first ADHS round (conducted in 2008-09). Furthermore, the proportion of children under-5 years who reported to have been left under

31 <https://www.ishp.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ADHS-2017-18-Complete-PDF-FINAL-ilovepdf-compressed-1.pdf>

inadequate care decreased somehow (from 11% to 7%) between 2008-09 and 2017-18.

4.5. One click away: children's experiences of internet use in Albania, 2019³²: this study, conducted by UNICEF Albania & IPSOS Strategic Marketing, Tirana, is focused on a representative sample of 1000 children aged from 9 to 17 years using Internet in Albania and 1000 parents or guardians aimed to provide reliable data on children's Internet use through the following dimensions: access, user practices and skills, opportunities, risks, well-being and rights, social factors and digital ecology. The study showed that children start using Internet around the age of 9 years old, and they mainly access it through the use of smartphones. Half of the children (51%) that use Internet have permanent access to the Internet. The study explored several types of risks online for children such as getting to know new people through intent exposure to negative, harmful and sexual content, and misuse of information on the Internet.

In general, exposure to risks is more prevalent among children aged 15 to 17, especially among those children whose parents do not use the Internet. 14% of children reported that in the last year they experienced something that disturbed or upset them on the Internet, and 18% among them did never talked to anyone about these experiences. One in five children has experienced in the past year meeting someone on Internet whom they don't know. Children aged 15 to 17 years and boys in particular are more inclined to such behaviour. Also, 16% of children report that they met in person someone whom they had previously met on Internet. 9% of children had at least one unwanted sexual experience on the Internet during the past year. Most often this incident referred to the instance when someone was requesting sexual information about them, and this involved most often ex-partners, adults in families of the children and friends and acquaintances under the age of 18 that children knew personally. Every fifth child reported an experience of seeing online content about abuse or violence, while 17% of children saw content where people talked about physical harming. One in 10 children saw content where topic was how to commit suicide. 16% of children have been exposed to sexual content online: 55% saw this content because they wanted to, 71% saw it unexpectedly, 45% saw it when someone showed it to them.

4.6. National Survey on Bullying and Violent Extremism In the Education System of Albania, 2017³³, was conducted by the European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Turkey action "Fighting Bullying and Extremism in the Education System in Albania" in collaboration with Department of Social Work and Social Policy and Albanian Institute of Public Opinion Studies (ISOP). The aim of this study was to provide a comprehensive overview of the magnitude, range and nature of bullying and extremism in the education system in Albania. It included 2,377 students from 4th grade to 12th grade, in addition to 3,560 teachers and 970 parents pertinent to 144 schools in 12 districts of Albania. Salient findings from this survey indicate that 19.4% of students had been subject to bullying, or involved with this negative phenomenon at least 2 or 3 times per month, and further 29% only once or twice a month. Overall, 9.7% of the students considered themselves victims of bullying, 5.2% admitted to have bullied other students and 4.3% had experienced both,

32 <https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/2486/file/one%20click.pdf>

33 <https://rm.coe.int/albania-study-report-on-bullying-egn/1680732872>

bullying and being a victim of this phenomenon. On the whole, 60% of the teachers considered that bullying was present in their respective schools and 23% of the parents admitted that their children had been victims of bullying at various times and various degrees in their schools. About 78% of teachers confirm to “agree” and “strongly agree” that verbal bullying is the most prevalent form of bullying in their school, followed by psychological bullying with 61% of cases. Almost half of the teachers (51%) confirm that cyber bullying is the most frequent form occurring in their schools. In teacher’s perceptions, other forms of racial and sexual bullying were less known and existent.

Furthermore, boys were more involved than girls in bullying and, interestingly, they perceived themselves primarily as ‘bullies’ (68%) rather than victims’ of bullying (52%). On the contrary, 48% of the girls perceived themselves as victims of bullying, whereas 32% considered themselves as ‘bullies. Regarding the age relationship, bullying was mostly evident among children aged 15-16 years, followed by those aged 10-11 years. In addition, there was evidence of a higher prevalence of bullying among students from urban areas compared with their counterparts from rural areas (20% vs 17%, respectively). The most frequent specific locations where bullying happened involved classrooms at the times when teachers were not present (39%), followed by entertainment areas (sports and playground spaces) (38%). Additionally, and astonishingly, 13% of the students reported that bullying had occurred in the classrooms even in the presence of the teachers. As for the type of bullying, the psychological bullying was the most frequently reported form (45%), followed by verbal bullying (37%), physical bullying (33%) and virtual/cybernetic bullying (15%). Regarding the “determinants” of this phenomenon, the physical appearance (73.4%), language and speaking difficulties (67.6%) and presence of physically weaker students (62.2%) were considered by the teachers as the main driving factors of bullying in their respective schools.

The gender difference analysis shows that out of the most frequent bullying forms, there are no gender differences: however, social bullying is the most prevalent among boys with 24%, versus 15% of girls, as well as sexual bullying reported by 24 % boys and 13% of girls. Forms of bullying for girls who reported being bullied 2–3 times a month or more were psychological 54%, verbal (41%), physical (34%), sexual (18%), etc. Forms of bullying for boys who reported being bullied 2–3 times a month or more were psychological (49%), verbal (49%), physical (38%), sexual (30%), etc.

4.7. Child sexual abuse in the circle of trust research in Albania, 2015³⁴: this study, commissioned by *Terre des hommes*, aimed at identifying the characteristics of child sexual abuse in the circle of trust in Albania and their social norms, as well as the response of the system related to the sexual abuse of children in the existing practice. Findings from this study indicated that child sexual abuse in Albania usually occurs within their circle of trust, which is a very serious issue requiring special attention. In addition, according to the study findings, victims of abuse are prejudiced and stigmatized by the Albanian society. Social norms and generally tolerant attitudes towards violence, maintaining family secrecy that values family privacy as sacred, nurturing secrecy and silence, and stigmatizing

34 https://childhub.org/en/system/tfdf/library/attachments/raporti_csa_alb_mail_2015-15-24.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=13542

child victims of sexual abuse in society make professionals, parents, and children reluctant to report it. As for the system response, the study reported deficiencies in the Albanian child protection system, including limited human resources, lack of professional knowledge, uncertainties about roles and job descriptions, problems in case management, lack of inter-institutional collaboration, scarce preventive interventions, underreporting by professionals and an unmet need for long-term rehabilitation. The study showed that in general, there is a lack of systematic and coherent data regarding the cases of sexually abused children and in particular those within the circle of trust. Furthermore, there is evidence of infringement of ethics by the media and a lack of monitoring and punishment mechanisms. The study documented several social norms, which contribute to the invisibility of child abuse in Albania, particularly the culture of violence and tolerance towards violence, stigmatization and discrimination of victims and gender discrimination.

4.8. Study on Child Online Safety in Albania, 2014³⁵- this study, conducted by the World Vision in Albania, including 821 children aged 13-17 years, described the extent to which Albanian children access the Internet and the risks currently posed to them accessing the Internet. Among children who responded in this survey, 44% of them reported that they used the Internet on a daily basis for watching pornographic material, whereas further 62% of the children admitted they had friends who visited similar websites. Bullying, password theft, and unintentional porn viewings almost every day were reported by 45% of respondents. In addition, 47% of younger participants had been contacted online by a stranger within the last year who, in 40% of the cases, was a foreigner (i.e., not Albanian). Other important findings from this survey concern the most problematic messages that children had received online, including provocative materials (26%), bullying messages (22%) and violent or aggressive materials (11%). Overall, this report emphasized explicitly the need for strengthening and substantially improving the online safety and security for Albanian children, who are considerably exposed to different risks involving the use of Internet.

4.9. Well-being and safety of women, OSCE 2019³⁶

This study was the first such representative survey conducted in Eastern Europe to provide comparable data across the region, encompasses gender attitudes and the experiences of women from minority groups. Its aim was to provide robust data in order to develop more comprehensive and evidence-based policies, strategies, programmes and activities to prevent and combat VAW. The study applied both quantitative and qualitative methodology. A representative sample of 1,858 women aged 18-74 years old were involved in the study. Results of the study shows that 34% of women indicate experiencing at least one form of sexual harassment since they were 15 years old. Younger women indicate more often that they have experienced sexual harassment: 54 % of 18–29-year-olds have had one or more such experience since the age of 15 compared with 27% of 40–49-year-olds, 25% of 50–59-year-olds and 18% of those over 60. Sexual harassment covers a wide range of experiences. The most common form indicated by women since they were 15 years old is intimidation through staring or leering, which is mentioned by 21% of women, followed by

35 <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Internet%20Safety%20OK.pdf>

36 https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/8/434849_1.pdf

intrusive questions about their private life (13%).

The average proportion of women in the EU who stated that they had experienced sexual harassment is 55%, ranging from 24% in Bulgaria to 81% in Sweden. The figure for Albania is lower than the EU average and also lower than the figure for Croatia (41%). Countries with longer traditions of gender-equality policies and awareness-raising campaigns (the Nordic countries and Western Europe) also have higher rates of women sharing their experiences of sexual harassment.

According to the survey results overall, 11% indicate either physical and/or sexual violence by a non-partner since the age of 15 years old (2% in the 12 months prior to the survey), while 1% say they have been subjected to forms of sexual violence (0.2% in the 12 months prior to the survey). Twenty-six per cent of women say they experienced a form of physical violence at the hands of an adult before they were 15 years old, which is similar to the average prevalence in the EU (27%). The prevalence of psychological violence in childhood was much lower (4%). Sexual violence at this age is even less common, with less than 1% of women stating experiences. This is much lower than the EU average of 12%. Countries where women feel that domestic violence is a private issue and where there is a culture of silence tend to have lower rates of women indicating that they have had experiences than countries with a longer tradition of raising awareness of violence against women. Women who experienced some form of childhood violence are more likely to say they have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of both non-partners and partners: 24% of women who experienced childhood violence say they have experienced non-partner physical and/or sexual violence, compared with 7% of those who did not experience childhood violence. For intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence, the respective figures are 35% and 14%.

4.10. Mapping of sexual violence services in the Western Balkans & Turkey, WAVE 2019³⁷

This brief research was conducted between July – September 2019, and it involved desk research and conducting interviews with 43 participants in six different municipalities in Albania (Durrës, Shkodra, Vlora, Korca, Saranda and Elbasani). The interviewees worked for the state directorate police, social services run by the state and municipalities, regional hospitals, and women’s NGOs. The aim was to provide an overview of the number of support services for victims of sexual violence currently available in the project’s partner countries.

All interviewees (100%) recognized rape and child sexual abuse as forms of sexual violence, while 41 out of 43 respondents recognized sexual assault as a form of sexual violence. A considerable number of interviewees have significantly less information about services available. 72% of respondents did not have any information about the existence of any services exclusively supporting victims of sexual violence, while 11% were knowledgeable about local helplines.

All participants interviewed reported that women’s specialist support services generally support victims of sexual violence in Albania. Among the services most frequently offered by women’s NGOs to victims of sexual violence are social and psychological support, medical assistance, legal

³⁷ https://www2.unwomen.org/media/field%20office%20eca/attachments/publications/2019/11/wave_report191119_web.pdf?la=en&vs=2900

support, economic assistance, housing, emergency housing, and accommodation. The main sources of funding for women's support services come from donors, followed by the national government and local government.

4.11. Sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence against in urban public spaces in Albania, IDRA 2018 and 2019³⁸

This study was conducted by the IDRA Research & Consulting with the support of UN Women in different municipalities of the country, in some years. The 2019 report contains information from the two municipalities of Shkodra and Korça. The 2018 survey was conducted in three Albanian municipalities Tirana, Durrës and Fier.

While UN Women in cooperation with the Municipality of Tirana and the Observatory for Children's Rights organization conducted in 2016 the first pilot study "On Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Urban Spaces" in three neighbourhoods of Tirana. The Key findings stemming from the 2016 study which have led to the decision of repeating the study in three municipalities in 2018 were the following: (1) As a widespread perception, none of the three selected areas of the 2016 study in Tirana were perceived as safe places free from the threat of violence against women and girls (2) The neighbourhood maintenance (street lights, limited space between buildings, close-by transportation, cleaning and maintenance) is not considered satisfactory. (3) Women, girls, men and boys interviewed have declared that key public institutions such as police stations, health care centre/hospital and municipality are within reach. Despite this, they are not familiar with the support they provide. (4) Incidents of sexual harassment (in the form of verbal harassment or unwanted touching) and of sexual violence (assault and abuse) are confirmed to have happened in the three selected neighbourhoods of Tirana. 34% of the total number of respondents (or 32% of the total female respondents and 40% of the total male respondents) think that sexual harassment happens everywhere. Incidence frequency for sexual harassment is classified as "often" for 18% of the total number of respondents.

In the survey of the year 2018 conducted from IDRA Research and Consulting with UN Women support, the methodology used was *a combination of desk review with empirical study* for primary data collection (*semi structured interviews* conducted with stakeholders, *on-site quantitative survey*), in total 750 survey interviews conducted with women and girls of 16+years old. This study looks at the different dimensions of sexual harassment and other forms of gender based violence against Albanian women and girls in urban public spaces particularly, focusing primarily on women and girl's perceptions of safety and the impact this issue has on their lives, as well as the forms of violence they experience, what strategies they have at their disposal to cope with the violence. The results of the study show that nearly half of the respondents (44%), have a friend or family member who has been subject to sexual harassment or sexual violence. Overall findings reveal an equally alarming situation where 38 percent out of 750 respondents reported to have been at risk of or exposed to sexual harassment or violence before or after the age of 15 (some have experienced

38 https://www2.unwomen.org//media/field%20office%20albania/attachments/publications/2019/05/english_web.pdf?la=en&vs=355

both). The overall quantitative and qualitative data shows that the culture of reporting violence, especially sexual harassment and sexual violence continues to be low. There are various reasons that stand behind this phenomenon, mostly related with patriarchal harmful traditions and gender stereotypes or myths, lack of information on where to report and ask for help especially for specific forms of violence such as sexual violence, lack of trust in the responsible authorities and the fear of being labelled or judged. From 286 reported cases, only 16 percent asked for help and assistance, most of them by requesting help from their relatives and friends.

The 2019 survey used the same methodology as the one in 2018. The methodology used the combination of desk review with 6 semi-structured interviews, 6 structured observations, 500 survey interviews conducted with women and girls of 16+ years old, who live in, or frequent the public spaces, of selected areas in two Albanian municipalities (250 in Shkodra Municipality and 250 in Korça Municipality), two focused group discussions and two safety audits. The results show that the main factors affecting the safety perception are the following: being a woman, walking alone and the choice of clothing. Being of a certain ethnicity or religion, coming from a different geographical area or the sexual orientation of a person are not perceived as influencing factors by the great majority of respondents in both municipalities. Other factors which are mentioned by women and girls of both municipalities that influence their safety are the lack of effective and visible police, men dealing with drugs or taking drugs/alcohol and groups of men hanging around on the streets. When witnessing an incident, which may happen to a woman or girl in the selected neighbourhoods, the majority (70 per cent) believes that witnesses would call for help e.g. call the Police. It should be however noted that 15 per cent of Korça respondents and 1 in 3 respondents of the Shkodra Centre, as well as 14 per cent (14%) from Kiras, Shkodra, believe that people would notice, but not react. In both Shkodra and Korça, verbal harassment appears to be far more frequent than any type of physical harassment or violence. Verbal harassment seems to be common in both municipalities (e.g. whistling after a woman, sexual comments or staring). In regard to the likelihood of experiencing physical sexual harassment or violence, some of the study areas stand out despite the overall low perception of likelihood of physical incidents; 21 per cent of the respondents of Mar Lula, Shkodra rate the likelihood of “deliberately blocking a woman’s path” with 4 to 5 out of 5 points (1=not likely at all and 5=very likely). Mar Lula also stands out in regard to “physical attacks” and “threats to harm a woman” with 11 and 12 per cent respectively rating the likelihood with 3 out of 5 points. In Korça 19 per cent of the respondents of Zone 17 rate the likelihood of “deliberately blocking the path of a woman” with 3 out of 5 points. Zone 17 also stands out with 17 per cent perceiving it as somewhat likely that someone could attack a woman or girl physically (3 out of 5). In the other areas of both municipalities those numbers are significantly lower. Outdated mentalities and the phenomenon of victim blaming is a prevalent issue in Shkodra as well as in Korça. Out of all respondents, 40 per cent strongly or partly agree that “Girls/women who are sexually harassed or sexually abused provoke it themselves.” What stands out is also that nearly 1 in 3 of Mar Lula, Shkodra’ respondents also partly agree that “Violent episodes are to be kept private. What happens at home, stays at home.” (32%). Furthermore, twenty percent (20%) in the Centre of Korça either strongly or partly agree that “a woman should put up with violence in order to keep her family together.” Data show that sexual harassment is more common after the age of 15, with 13 per

cent of women and girls from Shkodra and 16 per cent in Korça, who have experienced it. Women and girls from the Centre areas seem more exposed to this type of violence in both municipalities. In Korça four per cent report to have experienced sexual harassment before the age of 15, while in Shkodra only two per cent have. The number of respondents who experienced sexual violence before 15 is low (1 per cent in both municipalities). Zone 4 in Korça stands out with five per cent of women and girls who have experienced sexual violence after the age of 15. What however should be taken into consideration is that many women and girls living in both municipalities are not aware on different types of actions, which constitute sexual harassment and sexual violence.

4.12. Intimate partner violence in adolescence in Albania, AWEN 2019³⁹

The research study “Intimate partner violence in adolescence in Albania” is conducted by the Albanian Women Empowerment Network (AWEN) in the framework of the programme “Protection and Promotion of Women Rights in Albania”, with the financial support of the Swedish Government. The participants of this study were 1036 young people aged between 16-19. The main purpose was to present an overview of the intimate partner violence in adolescence, by providing a comprehensive analysis of the appearance of the phenomenon and characteristics of intimate partner violence. The study found that 22% of the boys and girls interviewed have experienced one form of violence from their partner, with intimate partner violence higher among girls than boys; additionally, pressuring or forcing a partner to have a sexual relationship is considered acceptable by 1 out of 10 adolescents. The type of violence inflicted also varies depending on the gender. Girls are threatened, humiliated (20 percent versus 8 percent) or physically abused (18 percent versus 6 percent) by their partners almost 3 times more than boys by their partners. Whereas sexual violence exercised by partners, as seen through either forced touching of intimate parts of the body, or coerced sex, is reported almost at the same rate by girls as by boys (13 percent versus 10 percent, a statistically insignificant difference). Furthermore, Young people who have been victims of domestic violence are three times more likely to also be victims of intimate partner violence. The data in this study suggested that 43 percent of the young people who have suffered domestic violence are also victims of intimate partner violence. Young people who have not suffered domestic violence are three times less victimized. About half of the young people report being little or no likely to tell someone if they are the victim of a psychological, physical or sexual violence.

4.13. Country Overview Albania: A report on the scale, scope and context of the sexual exploitation of children”, 2020⁴⁰

This report is prepared by ECPAT International in collaboration with CRCA/ ECPAT Albania, with the financial assistance of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Hilton Prize Coalition, Ignite Philanthropy and the Oak Foundation. The report presents all the existing, publicly available information, and a detailed analysis of the legal framework for sexual

39 <http://awenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Research-report-in-English-INTIMATE-PARTNER-VIOLENCE-IN-ADOLESCENCE-IN-ALBANIA.pdf>

40 <https://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ECPAT-Country-Overview-Report-Sexual-Exploitation-of-Children-Albania-August-2020-ENGLISH.pdf>

exploitation of children (SEC) in Albania. It provides an assessment of achievements and challenges in implementation, counteractions to eliminate SEC and suggests concrete priority actions to advance the national fight against SEC. The report presents the scale, forms and context of child exploitation in Albania and the factors that promote or keep alive the exploitation of children. It shows that Albania needs to have a completely new approach to the phenomena that promote sexual exploitation or child trafficking. Children in Albania are extremely vulnerable to being sold or trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Internationally, Albanian children are commonly identified as victims of trafficking in neighbouring Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Greece, Italy and the UK. For example, in Italy, 19 Albanian child victims of trafficking were entered into child protection systems in 2018. These formal figures are likely only the tip of the iceberg of Albanian children trafficked into Italy, especially when considering that in 2019 Albania was the number one source for unaccompanied minors in Italy, with the most recent estimates indicating that there were 1393 unaccompanied Albanian minors in the country.

The report also draws attention to the situation of Roma children, who are particularly vulnerable to trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation due to their over-representation in street child populations. Early or forced child marriages also support a problem that exposes girls to sexual exploitation, and trafficking. Pressure can also arise from the community and extended family around girls that encourages early marriage, with one participant in the study mentioned above stating “if their neighbour’s daughter got married, they have to find a husband for their daughter as well.” The study also highlighted conservative attitudes in some segregated Roma communities emphasized the importance of protecting girls ‘honour’ being used to justify marrying girls at a very young age, even though it was known to be harmful to the child. Regarding the online child sexual exploitation, analysis of reports received by iSIGURT.al, the main reporting platform for online child safety issues in Albania run by ECPAT Albania, shows that of the total 6129 reports to ISIGURT.al in the first half of 2020, 6054 were pages, videos or profiles that contained child sexual abuse material. Despite widespread Internet usage throughout the country and data indicating that children in Albania may be vulnerable to online sexual exploitation, gaps persist in the Albanian legislative response. Under Albanian law, there is no definition of ‘child sexual abuse materials’ and offences such as grooming and sexual extortion are not criminalized. Albania does not have a national action plan specifically dedicated to the sexual exploitation of children, despite ongoing lobbying from civil society organizations. However, the National Justice for Children Strategy 2017-2020 contains an objective to develop “specific treatment and rehabilitation programmes for child victims of torture, human trafficking, sexual violence and domestic violence”. Further, some national action plans exist on online child safety and human trafficking. However, these plans are not adequately funded, nor do they address child, early and forced marriage, the exploitation of children in prostitution, or the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. Engagement of the Albanian travel and tourism sector in tackling child sexual exploitation is weak, and no data exists on children exploited in this context. Furthermore, there are zero Albanian travel and tourism companies who have committed to the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (The Code), although seven international companies who have Albanian operations are members

V. IN-DEPTH (SECONDARY) DATA ANALYSIS



5.1. HEALTH BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN (HBSC) 11, 13 AND 15 YEARS IN ALBANIA, 2017-18

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF HBSC STUDY CONDUCTED IN ALBANIA IN 2017-18

The study *Assessment of Health-Related Behaviors in School-Age Children of 11, 13 and 15 Years* (HBSC) is the only international study of the WHO Regional Office for Europe that goes beyond its geographical boundaries.

This study focuses on adolescent health-related behaviors in a large number of countries by using of an international-prototype questionnaire, unique to all member countries, with minor adjustments to the health-educational specificities of our country.

The main areas of HBSC survey include the following:

- Body image
- Bullying and fighting
- Eating behaviours
- Health complaints
- Injuries
- Life satisfaction
- Obesity
- Oral health
- Physical activity
- Relationships: Family and Peers
- School environment
- Self-rated health
- Sexual behaviour
- Socioeconomic environment
- Substance use: Alcohol, Tobacco and Cannabis

The HBSC survey is conducted periodically (every 4 years) and is an invaluable tool for public health professionals, health promotion specialists, as well as decision-makers and policymakers at different levels. From this perspective, the information generated from the periodic HBSC surveys provides useful clues for assessing the current situation of children regarding health status and a wide range of behavioral/lifestyle characteristics, in addition to school environment profile, peer relationships and family support. All in all, the HBSC information aims at supporting positive developments in the field of health and healthy lifestyle/behavior among children.

The current round of HBSC in Albania was carried out during the period May-June 2018. More specifically, a cross-sectional study was conducted in all regions of the country (12 prefectures) including a nationwide representative sample of 4833 Albanian schoolchildren aged 11, 13 and 15 years. These three age groups of children were sampled according to the standard HBSC methodology which has set these time periods representing the onset of adolescence (age 11 years); the challenge of physical and emotional change age 13 years); and the years when very important life and career decisions are beginning to be made (age 15 years).

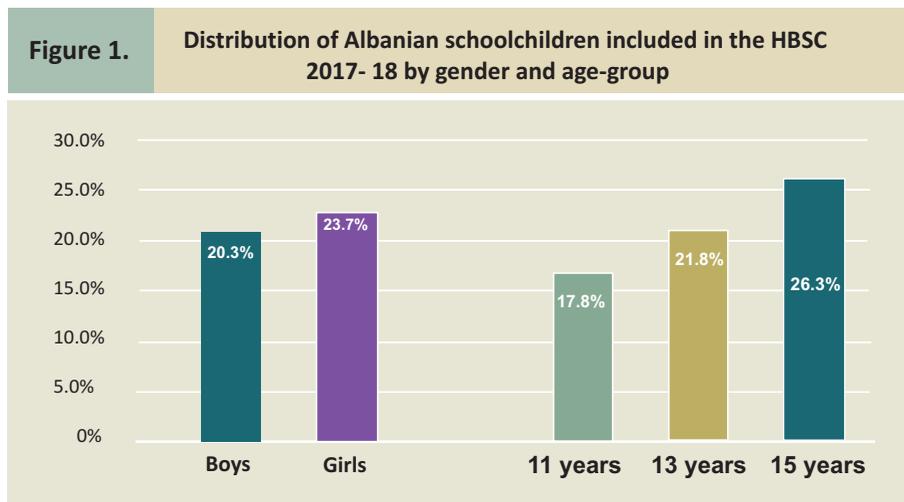
Of 4833 schoolchildren included in the survey, 2328 (48.2%) were boys and 2505 (51.8%) were girls. Regarding the age distribution, overall, there were 1561 (32.3%) children aged 11 years, further 1564 (32.4%) children aged 13 years, and 1708 (35.3%) children aged 15 years (HBSC report 2017-18).

The distribution of children included in the HBSC 2017-18 survey by prefecture (region) is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of children included in the HBSC survey 2017-18

No.	REGION	Number of secondary and high schools in rural areas	Number of secondary and high schools in urban areas	Number of schools	Number of classes	Number of children
1	Berat	5	4	9	30	252
2	Dibër	6	4	10	29	222
3	Durrës	9	7	16	52	448
4	Elbasan	11	8	19	54	554
5	Fier	10	8	18	52	405
6	Gjirokastër	2	2	4	12	139
7	Korçë	7	6	13	37	353
8	Kukës	4	4	8	24	190
9	Lezhë	6	4	10	30	274
10	Shkodër	8	6	14	42	406
11	Tiranë	27	20	47	145	1157
12	Vlorë	6	4	10	30	433
	Total	101	77	178	537	4833

On the other hand, the distribution of schoolchildren included in the HBSC 2017-18 survey by gender (boys vs. girls) and age-group is presented in Figure 1.



PURPOSE OF THE CURRENT SECONDARY (IN-DEPTH) HBSC DATA ANALYSIS

The main aim of the current secondary (in-depth) analysis is to provide a detailed report about the issues related to *abuse* and *maltreatment* and their relationships with the health status and behavioral characteristics of Albanian schoolchildren aged 15 years and above enrolled in the HBSC survey conducted in Albania in 2017-18.

The main focus of this secondary data analysis is on the identification of the main demographic and socioeconomic determinants (predictors) of abuse and maltreatment among Albanian schoolchildren.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of this secondary analysis of the HBSC database include the following:

- To assess the prevalence of abuse, maltreatment and injuries among schoolchildren aged 15 years;
- To assess the association between health-related behaviors such as smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use and early commencement of sexual relations with child abuse and maltreatment;
- To assess the association between early commencement of sexual relations with child sexual abuse.
- To assess the association between early commencement of sexual relations with child emotional abuse.
- To assess the association between early commencement of sexual relations with child domestic violence.

- To assess the association between physical fights and maltreatment of schoolchildren.
- To assess the association between health problems and child maltreatment.
- To assess the association between child maltreatment and parental employment status.

METHODOLOGY

The current in-depth analysis consists of the following statistical techniques and tests:

- Binary Logistic Regression is used to assess the association between the main outcome variables (health status, and health behaviour/lifestyle characteristics of the children) and predictors (determinants) of interest namely child abuse and maltreatment, controlling for socio-demographic characteristics of the children and their parents. Odds ratios (ORs), their 95% confidence intervals (95%CIs) and p-values are calculated and reported. Initial models include calculation of crude (unadjusted) ORs, 95%CIs and p-values. Subsequently, multivariable-adjusted models present the independent (adjusted) estimates (ORs, 95%CIs and p-values). In all multivariable-adjusted models, the Hosmer-Lemeshow test is used to assess the overall fit of the model (goodness-of-fit test).
- General Linear Model is used to calculate mean values of selected health behavioural characteristics (expressed as numerical variables/terms) by different socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the children and their parents/caregivers or families. Mean values, their respective 95%CIs and p-values are reported for both the crude (unadjusted) models, as well as the multivariable-adjusted models (hence, addressing the independent effect/influence of each factor on the main outcomes of interest).

RESULTS

The main findings of the current secondary analysis are presented in the sections below.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

- Child abuse and maltreatment

Measurement of child abuse and maltreatment, restricted only to children aged 15+ years, included assessment of lifetime and/or past month physical abuse and emotional abuse (Table 1)

Initially, children were asked whether a parent or other adult in the household had ever hit, beaten, kicked or physically tried to hurt them in any way. Overall, more than two-thirds (69%) of the children reported not to have been ever physically hurt by their parents or other adults in their respective households. One in four children (26%) reported to have been physically abused once or twice in lifetime, whereas 6% had experienced physical abuse many times during their life span. There were no significant gender-differences in the prevalence of physical abuse ($P=0.504$).

Same question for physical abuse was asked about the frequency of occurrence in the past 12 months preceding the survey. About 11% of the children reported to have been physically hurt by

their parents or other adults in their households during the past 12 months, with no evidence of gender-differences ($P=0.154$).

Subsequently, children were asked whether a parent or other adult in the household had ever sworn at them, insulted them, humiliated them, threatened them or made the children felt unwanted (referred to as emotional abuse). The prevalence of lifetime emotional abuse was 16%, which was significantly higher in boys compared to girls (13% vs. 18%, respectively; $P=0.007$).

Same question for emotional abuse was asked about the frequency of occurrence in the past 12 months before the survey. The overall prevalence of past year emotional abuse was about 9%, without evidence of any significant difference between boys and girls (about 8% vs. 9%, respectively; $P=0.227$).

Table 1. Child abuse (physical and/or emotional) by gender of the children

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE	GENDER		TOTAL
	Boys	Girls	
Lifetime physical abuse:			
Never	520 (69.7%)	602 (67.6%)	1122 (68.5%)
Once or twice	183 (24.5%)	241 (27.0%)	424 (25.9%)
Many times	43 (5.8%)	48 (5.4%)	91 (5.6%)
<i>Total</i>	746 (100.0%)	891 (100.0%)	1637 (100.0%)
Last 12 months' physical abuse:			
Never	615 (88.4%)	754 (90.2%)	1369 (89.4%)
Once or twice	73 (10.5%)	67 (8.0%)	140 (9.1%)
Many times	8 (1.1%)	15 (1.8%)	23 (1.5%)
<i>Total</i>	696 (100.0%)	836 (100.0%)	1532 (100.0%)
Lifetime emotional abuse:			
Never	644 (86.4%)	729 (81.8%)	1373 (83.9%)
Once or twice	88 (11.8%)	126 (14.1%)	214 (13.1%)
Many times	13 (1.7%)	36 (4.0%)	49 (3.0%)
<i>Total</i>	745 (100.0%)	891 (100.0%)	1636 (100.0%)
Last 12 months' emotional abuse:			
Never	646 (92.3%)	754 (90.8%)	1400 (91.5%)
Once or twice	46 (6.6%)	57 (6.9%)	103 (6.7%)
Many times	8 (1.1%)	19 (2.3%)	27 (1.8%)
<i>Total</i>	700 (100.0%)	830 (100.0%)	1530 (100.0%)

- Child emotional neglect

Children aged 15+ years were further asked about emotional neglect in their respective contexts and household circumstances. More specifically, children were asked whether there were times when there were adults living with them who made children felt loved (Table 2).

About 14% of the children reported to have experienced emotional neglect during their lifetime (9% in boys vs. 19% in girls; $P < 0.001$). On the other hand, the prevalence of emotional neglect in the past 12 months was 8% (5% in boys vs. 10% in girls; $P = 0.005$).

Table 2. Emotional neglect by gender of the children

EMOTIONAL NEGLECT	GENDER		TOTAL
	Boys	Girls	
Lifetime:			
Never	669 (91.0)	716 (81.4)	1385 (85.8)
Once or twice	60 (8.2)	140 (15.9)	200 (12.4)
Many times	6 (0.8)	24 (2.7)	30 (1.9)
<i>Total</i>	735 (100.0)	880 (100.0)	1615 (100.0)
In the last 12 months:			
Never	657 (94.5)	741 (90.0)	1398 (92.1)
Once or twice	28 (4.0)	61 (7.4)	89 (5.9)
Many times	10 (1.4)	21 (2.6)	31 (2.0)
<i>Total</i>	695 (100.0)	823 (100.0)	1518 (100.0)

- Sexual abuse

Children aged 15+ years were subsequently asked about sexual abuse in their respective contexts and household circumstances. More specifically, children were asked whether someone at least five years older and/or an adult had touched or fondled them or whether children had touched their body in a sexual way. Furthermore, children were asked whether someone at least five years older and/or an adult had attempted or actually had oral, anal or vaginal intercourse with them (Table 3).

Overall, about 8% of the children reported to have been touched/fondled during their lifetime and/or in the past 12 months preceding the survey, a finding which was significantly more prevalent in boys than in girls (lifetime: 13% vs. 4%, respectively, $P < 0.001$; last 12 months: 13% vs. 3%, respectively, $P < 0.001$).

The overall prevalence of sexual intercourse (attempted and/or actually experienced) was about 3% during children’ lifetime and/or in the past 12 months preceding the survey, a finding which was significantly more prevalent in boys than in girls (lifetime: 6.5% vs. 0.8%, respectively, $P < 0.001$; last 12 months: 6.7% vs. 0.6%, respectively, $P < 0.001$). Of note, the number of valid cases is different for the lifetime and past 12 months’ questions and, therefore, the prevalence estimate of the “past 12 months” is not complementary to the “lifetime” estimate (i.e., the respective estimates are pertinent to different denominators, which was contingent on children’s valid responses to each of these two questions).

Table 3. Sexual abuse by gender of the children

SEXUAL ABUSE	GENDER		TOTAL
	Boys	Girls	
Lifetime touched and/or fondled:			
Never	626 (87.3)	795 (96.0)	1421 (92.0)
Once or twice	46 (6.4)	27 (3.3)	73 (4.7)
Many times	45 (6.3)	6 (0.7)	51 (3.3)
<i>Total</i>	717 (100.0)	828 (100.0)	1545 (100.0)
Last 12 months' touched and/or fondled:			
Never	594 (87.2)	755 (96.9)	1349 (92.4)
Once or twice	53 (7.8)	18 (2.3)	71 (4.9)
Many times	34 (5.0)	6 (0.8)	40 (2.7)
<i>Total</i>	681 (100.0)	779 (100.0)	1460 (100.0)
Lifetime sexual intercourse:			
Never	662 (93.5)	827 (99.2)	1489 (96.6)
Once or twice	29 (4.1)	6 (0.7)	35 (2.3)
Many times	17 (2.4)	1 (0.1)	18 (1.2)
<i>Total</i>	708 (100.0)	834 (100.0)	1542 (100.0)
Last 12 months' sexual intercourse:			
Never	626 (93.3)	771 (99.4)	1397 (96.5)
Once or twice	32 (4.8)	4 (0.5)	36 (2.5)
Many times	13 (1.9)	1 (0.1)	14 (1.0)
<i>Total</i>	671 (100.0)	776 (100.0)	1447 (100.0)

- Witnessing of family violence

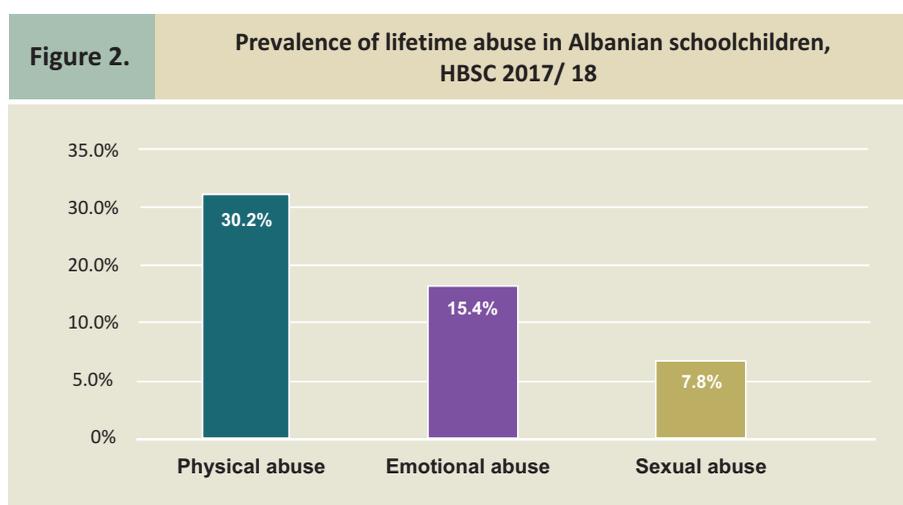
Children aged 15+ years were additionally asked about witnessing of family violence in their respective contexts and household circumstances. More specifically, children were asked whether they had seen or heard one of their parents/carers being slapped, kicked, punched, beaten or deliberately hurt by a partner or ex-partner in their homes (Table 4).

Overall, only 5% of the children aged 15 years reported to have witnessed family violence during their lifetime, without evidence of any gender differences ($P=0.101$). On the other hand, the prevalence of witnessed family violence in the past 12 months was significantly higher in boys than in girls (4.0% vs. 1.4%, respectively; $P=0.004$).

Table 4. Witnessing of family violence by gender of the children

WITNESSED FAMILY VIOLENCE	GENDER		TOTAL
	Boys	Girls	
Lifetime:			
Never	695 (94.6)	838 (95.1)	1533 (94.9)
Once or twice	28 (3.8)	38 (4.3)	66 (4.1)
Many times	12 (1.6)	5 (0.6)	17 (1.1)
<i>Total</i>	735 (100.0)	881 (100.0)	1616 (100.0)
In the last 12 months:			
Never	667 (96.0)	812 (98.7)	1479 (97.4)
Once or twice	23 (3.3)	8 (1.0)	31 (2.0)
Many times	5 (0.7)	3 (0.4)	8 (0.5)
<i>Total</i>	695 (100.0)	823 (100.0)	1518 (100.0)

Figure 2 presents a summary of selected types of abuse during the lifetime of schoolchildren included in the HBSC 2017-18 survey.



CORRELATES OF CHILD ABUSE

- Lifetime physical abuse

Findings from the univariate binary logistic regression analysis are presented in Table 5. There was no evidence of any significant association between child physical abuse and socio-demographic characteristics of the children (gender), their parents (father’s and/or mother’s employment status), or of family income.

On the other hand, there was evidence of a strong relationship between child physical abuse and lifetime smoking: the odds of smoking were 2.4 times higher in children who reported lifetime physical abuse compared to those who did not report physical abuse (OR=2.4, 95%CI=1.9-3.1).

Similarly, the odds of lifetime alcohol consumption were 2.3 times higher in children who reported physical abuse compared with their counterparts who did not report physical abuse (OR=2.3, 95%CI=1.8-2.8).

Lifetime cannabis use was also significantly related to physical abuse among children (OR=1.8, 95%CI=1.1-2.8).

Lifetime sexual relationships and/or early commencement of sexual intercourse were not significantly associated with physical abuse in schoolchildren.

Table 5. Correlates of lifetime physical abuse in schoolchildren in Albania, HBSC 2017-18 (univariate analysis)

	FACTOR	OR	95%CI	P
Socio-demographic factors	Gender:			
	Girls	1.11	0.90-1.36	0.353
	Boys	1.00	Reference	
	Father's employment:			
	No	1.06	0.77-1.45	0.735
	Yes	1.00	Reference	
	Mother's employment:			
	No	0.93	0.75-1.15	0.479
	Yes	1.00	Reference	
	Family income:			
Poor	1.07	0.82-1.38	0.626	
Not poor	1.00	Reference		
Lifestyle factors	Smoking:			
	Yes	2.41	1.87-3.11	<0.001
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Alcohol consumption:			
	Yes	2.25	1.81-2.79	<0.001
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Cannabis use:			
	Yes	1.75	1.11-2.76	0.016
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Sexual relationship:			
Yes	1.15	0.89-1.49	0.299	
No	1.00	Reference		
Commencement of sex:				
<15 years	0.99	0.62-1.57	0.954	
≥15 years	1.00	Reference		
Witnessed violence	Witnessed violence:			
	Yes	4.85	3.02-7.79	<0.001
	No	1.00	Reference	

Multivariate analysis

Findings from the multivariate binary logistic regression analysis are presented in Table 6. Upon simultaneous adjustment for all socio-demographic characteristics and lifestyle factors, there was a significant association between lifetime physical abuse and female gender (OR=1.4, 95%CI=1.1-1.8). Conversely, parental employment status and/or family income were not significantly related to child physical abuse.

On the other hand, lifetime smoking and lifetime alcohol consumption were strongly associated with child physical abuse (OR=1.6, 95%CI=1.2-2.2 and OR=1.9, 95%CI=1.4-2.5, respectively).

Cannabis use and/or sexual relationships were not associated with lifetime child physical abuse.

Witnessed domestic violence was a very strong determinant of lifetime physical abuse in schoolchildren (OR=4.3, 95%CI=2.5-7.2).

Table 6. Independent correlates of lifetime physical abuse in schoolchildren in Albania, HBSC 2017-18 (multivariate analysis)

	FACTOR	OR	95%CI	P
Socio-demographic factors	Gender:			
	Girls	1.41	1.09-1.83	0.009
	Boys	1.00	Reference	
	Father's employment:			
	No	1.14	0.79-1.64	0.492
	Yes	1.00	Reference	
	Mother's employment:			
	No	0.99	0.78-1.26	0.955
	Yes	1.00	Reference	
	Family income:			
Poor	1.04	0.76-1.40	0.825	
Not poor	1.00	Reference		
Lifestyle factors	Smoking:			
	Yes	1.60	1.15-2.23	0.006
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Alcohol consumption:			
	Yes	1.87	1.43-2.45	<0.001
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Cannabis use:			
	Yes	1.19	0.68-2.09	0.547
No	1.00	Reference		
Witnessed violence	Sexual relationship:			
	Yes	0.99	0.71-1.37	0.939
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Witnessed violence:			
Yes	4.27	2.51-7.24	<0.001	
No	1.00	Reference		

- Lifetime emotional abuse

Findings from the univariate binary logistic regression analysis are presented in Table 7.

In crude binary logistic regression models, there was evidence of a significant association between child emotional abuse during lifetime and female gender (OR=1.4, 95%CI=1.1-1.9).

On the other hand, there were no significant associations with parental employment status or family income.

Conversely, there was a strong and significant relationship with lifetime smoking (OR=2.4, 95%CI=1.8-3.3) and alcohol consumption (OR=2.2, 95%CI=1.6-2.8).

However, no associations were evident for cannabis use, lifetime sexual relationships, or early commencement of sexual intercourse.

There was a remarkably strong and highly significant association between lifetime emotional abuse and witnessed violence (OR=9.4, 95%CI=5.9-14.9).

Table 7. Correlates of lifetime emotional abuse in schoolchildren in Albania, HBSC 2017-18 (univariate analysis)

	FACTOR	OR	95%CI	P
Socio-demographic factors	Gender:			
	Girls	1.42	1.08-1.86	0.011
	Boys	1.00	Reference	
	Father's employment:			
	No	1.29	0.89-1.89	0.183
	Yes	1.00	Reference	
	Mother's employment:			
	No	1.04	0.80-1.36	0.771
	Yes	1.00	Reference	
	Family income:			
Poor	1.16	0.84-1.60	0.354	
Not poor	1.00	Reference		
Lifestyle factors	Smoking:			
	Yes	2.42	1.80-3.25	<0.001
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Alcohol consumption:			
	Yes	2.15	1.64-2.81	<0.001
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Cannabis use:			
	Yes	1.33	0.76-2.34	0.322
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Sexual relationship:			
Yes	1.01	0.73-1.41	0.948	
No	1.00	Reference		

	Commencement of sex:			
	<15 years	1.45	0.79-2.64	0.230
	≥15 years	1.00	Reference	
Witnessed violence	Witnessed violence:			
	Yes	9.35	5.87-14.89	<0.001
	No	1.00	Reference	

Multivariate analysis

Findings from the multivariate binary logistic regression analysis are presented in Table 8.

Upon simultaneous adjustment for all covariates, the association of lifetime emotional abuse with female gender was accentuated (OR=1.7, 95%CI=1.2-2.4).

On the other hand, no significant associations were evident for the other socio-demographic factors.

The association with smoking and alcohol consumption was attenuated (OR=1.8, 95%CI=1.2-2.7 and OR=1.9, 95%CI=1.3-2.7, respectively).

Conversely, no significant relationships were found for cannabis use, or lifetime sexual relationships.

The association of lifetime emotional abuse with witnessed violence remained very strong even after adjustment for socio-demographic factors and lifestyle characteristics (OR=9.4, 95%CI=5.5-15.9).

Table 8. Independent correlates of lifetime emotional abuse in schoolchildren in Albania, HBSC 2017-18 (multivariate analysis)

	FACTOR	OR	95%CI	P
Socio-demographic factors	Gender:			
	Girls	1.71	1.22-2.41	0.002
	Boys	1.00	Reference	
	Father's employment:			
	No	1.20	0.76-1.90	0.428
	Yes	1.00	Reference	
	Mother's employment:			
	No	1.03	0.75-1.40	0.860
	Yes	1.00	Reference	
	Family income:			
Poor	1.19	0.81-1.73	0.380	
Not poor	1.00	Reference		
Smoking:	Smoking:			
	Yes	1.82	1.21-2.74	0.004
	No	1.00	Reference	

Lifestyle factors	Alcohol consumption:			
	Yes	1.88	1.33-2.67	<0.001
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Cannabis use:			
	Yes	0.52	0.24-1.14	0.104
	No	1.00	Reference	
Witnessed violence	Sexual relationship:			
	Yes	0.86	0.55-1.33	0.489
	No	1.00	Reference	
Witnessed violence	Witnessed violence:			
	Yes	9.35	5.49-15.91	<0.001
	No	1.00	Reference	

- Lifetime sexual abuse

Findings from the univariate binary logistic regression analysis are presented in Table 9.

Lifetime sexual abuse was significantly lower in girls compared to boys (OR=0.3, 95%CI=0.2-0.4).

Furthermore, there was a borderline statistically significant association with mother’s unemployment (OR=1.4, 95%CI=1.0-1.9), but not with father’s employment status or family income.

Lifetime sexual abuse was strongly and significantly related to lifetime smoking (OR=3.5, 95%CI=2.4-5.0), lifetime alcohol consumption (OR=2.9, 95%CI=2.0-4.1) and especially lifetime cannabis use (OR=4.7, 95%CI=2.7-8.2).

In addition, lifetime sexual abuse was very strongly associated with sexual relationships (OR=10.4, 95%CI=7.1-15.2) and, to a far lesser degree, with early commencement of sexual intercourse (OR=1.8, 95%CI=1.1-3.0).

Similar to physical and emotional abuse, lifetime sexual abuse was strongly related to witnessed violence (OR=3.9, 95%CI=2.2-6.7).

Table 9. Correlates of lifetime sexual abuse in schoolchildren in Albania, HBSC 2017-18 (univariate analysis)

	FACTOR	OR	95%CI	P
Socio-demographic factors	Gender:			
	Girls	0.27	0.18-0.41	<0.001
	Boys	1.00	Reference	
	Father’s employment:			
	No	0.76	0.42-1.38	0.372
	Yes	1.00	Reference	
	Mother’s employment:			
	No	1.35	0.95-1.94	0.097
Yes	1.00	Reference		

	Family income:			
	Poor	0.77	0.48-1.21	0.269
	Not poor	1.00	Reference	
Lifestyle factors	Smoking:			
	Yes	3.46	2.38-5.03	<0.001
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Alcohol consumption:			
	Yes	2.86	1.98-4.12	<0.001
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Cannabis use:			
	Yes	4.71	2.71-8.18	<0.001
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Sexual relationship:			
	Yes	10.39	7.06-15.31	<0.001
No	1.00	Reference		
Witnessed violence	Commencement of sex:			
	<15 years	1.81	1.09-3.03	0.022
	≥15 years	1.00	Reference	
	Witnessed violence:			
	Yes	3.86	2.21-6.70	<0.001
	No	1.00	Reference	

Multivariate analysis

Findings from the multivariate binary logistic regression analysis are presented in Table 10.

Upon adjustment for all covariates, the association with gender disappeared. There was no evidence of association with father's employment status or family income, but a positive relationship of lifetime sexual abuse with mother's unemployment (OR=1.5, 95%CI=1.0-2.3).

Lifetime smoking and alcohol consumption remained significant correlates of lifetime sexual abuse in multivariable-adjusted regression models (OR=1.8, 95%CI=1.1-3.0 and OR=1.6, 95%CI=1.0-2.5, respectively), whereas this was not the case for cannabis use.

In addition, lifetime sexual abuse was very strongly associated with sexual relationships (OR=6.6, 95%CI=4.1-10.6) and, to a lesser degree, with witnessed violence (OR=3.0, 95%CI=1.6-5.7).

Table 10. Independent correlates of lifetime sexual abuse in schoolchildren in Albania, HBSC 2017-18 (multivariate analysis)

	FACTOR	OR	95%CI	P
Socio-demographic factors	Gender:			
	Girls	0.73	0.44-1.20	0.217
	Boys	1.00	Reference	
	Father's employment:			
	No	0.75	0.38-1.50	0.417
	Yes	1.00	Reference	
	Mother's employment:			
	No	1.52	1.01-2.29	0.049
	Yes	1.00	Reference	
	Family income:			
Poor	1.27	0.73-2.21	0.406	
Not poor	1.00	Reference		
Lifestyle factors	Smoking:			
	Yes	1.80	1.09-2.99	0.022
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Alcohol consumption:			
	Yes	1.59	1.01-2.53	0.048
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Cannabis use:			
	Yes	1.16	0.57-2.36	0.679
	No	1.00	Reference	
	Sexual relationship:			
Yes	6.58	4.09-10.58	<0.001	
No	1.00	Reference		
Witnessed violence	Witnessed violence:			
	Yes	2.98	1.55-5.73	0.001
	No	1.00	Reference	

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS – HBSC SURVEY CONDUCTED IN ALBANIA IN 2017-18

The main findings of the current in-depth analysis of the HBSC study conducted in Albania in 2017-18 are summarized below:

- Almost one in three children (32%) reported to have been physically hurt by their parents or other adults in their respective households.
- The prevalence of lifetime emotional abuse was 16% (13% in boys vs. 18% in girls).
- About 8% of the children reported to have been touched/fondled during their lifetime, whereas the prevalence of lifetime sexual intercourse (attempted and/or actually experienced) was about 3%.

- Only 5% of the children aged 15 years reported to have witnessed family violence during their lifetime.
- Strong and significant correlates of lifetime physical abuse were female gender, lifetime smoking and alcohol consumption, as well as witnessed domestic violence.
- Similarly, significant correlates of lifetime emotional abuse were female gender, lifetime smoking and alcohol consumption, and especially the witnessed violence.
- Significant correlates of lifetime sexual abuse were mother's unemployment, lifetime smoking and alcohol consumption, lifetime sexual relationships, as well as witnessed domestic violence.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The HBSC study conducted in Albania in 2017-18 indicates that the demographic characteristics of the children and, in particular, the socioeconomic status of the families, the school environment, and peer relationships play an important role in promoting children's health and well-being.

In particular, the current secondary data analysis highlights important correlates of different types of child abuse including physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse.

Teachers and school authorities have a unique role to play along with the family environment regarding the comprehensive education of schoolchildren. Efforts should be made to reach and inform adolescents in an effective manner about different types of abuse and neglect. Similarly, adolescents should learn about with health education, what leads to a healthy lifestyle, including reproductive health topics.

The same information content should be provided to in-school and out-of school adolescents, acknowledging that there are challenges to delivering curriculum-based approaches out of schools.

As the WHO recommends, comprehensive education for teens should be complemented by other interventions, including activities aiming at engaging parents, teachers and other key actors.

Teachers often lack good quality training and support on comprehensive education content and on strategies for participatory facilitation and non-judgemental, positive approaches. Therefore, combined efforts should be made to ensure that both teachers and schools have ample support to deliver comprehensive education effectively, and to engage parents and families in this process.

Adolescents need to be provided with various types of services, such as health, education and social services. The right of adolescents below the age of 18 years to reproductive health services, for instance, is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

However, in many places, neither the providers of these services nor the systems in which they operate are geared towards meeting the needs and fulfilling the rights of adolescents (WHO, 2018). To address this widely-acknowledged gap, efforts should be made to build competence and empathy in teachers, health-care workers, social workers and other actors.

As WHO recommends, training and supporting teachers and service providers and re-orienting the systems they are part of, are crucial to delivering the many effective preventive and curative interventions available.

These efforts should go beyond the top-down approaches to involving adolescents, parents, teachers, community members, service providers and managers to identify the factors contributing to the poor quality and reach of these services and to define and implement evidence-based approaches that are tailored to the local context.

The meaningful involvement of adolescents should be emphasized in all proposed interventions and actions (WHO, 2018).

5.2. ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACE) AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN ALBANIA, 2011-2012

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF ACE SURVEY CONDUCTED IN ALBANIA IN 2011-2012

The survey on the “Prevalence of adverse childhood experiences” (ACE) was conducted in Albania in 2011-2012 to identify socioeconomic characteristics (parental education and employment, and income level), behavioral (lifestyle) risk factors (smoking, alcohol consumption, and drug use) and burden of adverse childhood experiences (sexual intercourse, number of sexual partners, witnessed violence, experienced violence, and bullying) in the young population of Albania.

The ACE survey was conducted in line with the methods described in *“Preventing Child Maltreatment: A guide to taking action and generating evidence”* (WHO 2006) and the sampling methodology of Health Behavior in School-Aged Children Study.

The survey was conducted in Tirana, Vlorë, Shkodra and Elbasan, in order to cover the main geographical areas of Albania, focusing on universities in these regions.

Overall, the number of participants (university students) in this survey was 1437 students from public universities in Tirana, Vlorë, Shkodra and Elbasan. The overall response rate was 96%.

The distribution of survey participants in each of the four districts included in the survey is presented in Figure 1.

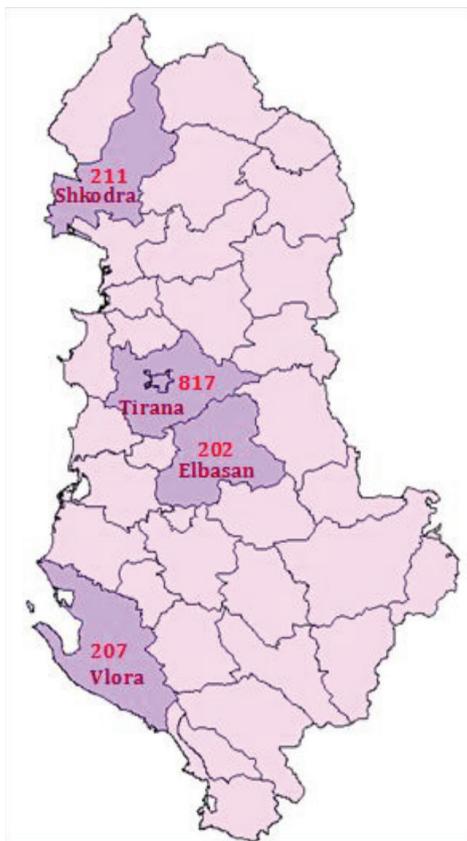


Figure 1. Distribution of ACE participants conducted in Albania in 2011-2012 by district

Of 1437 students included in the ACE survey, 971 (67.6%) were females and 466 (32.4%) were males. On the whole, mean age of survey participants was 21.2 ± 2.3 years.

The data collection of the ACE survey consists of an anonymous and self-administered structured questionnaire (*The Family Health History* and the *Physical Health Appraisal* instruments), which consists of 68 questions examining various types of child maltreatment, childhood adversities rooted in household dysfunction, and risk factors.

In the ACE survey conducted in Albania, the only questionnaire used was *The Family Health History* one, since the target population was adolescents and young adults, who, on the whole, constitute a healthy population group regarding physical health.

PURPOSE OF THE CURRENT SECONDARY (IN-DEPTH) ACE DATA ANALYSIS

The main aim of the current secondary (in-depth) analysis is to provide a detailed report about the issues related to *adverse childhood experiences* and their relationships with the behavioral characteristics (lifestyle factors) controlling for socioeconomic factors among Albanian university students included in the 2011-2012 ACE survey.

The main focus of this secondary data analysis is the identification of the main adverse childhood experiences which determine (predict) engagement in unhealthy lifestyle (behavioral) practices among younger adults in transitional Albania.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of this secondary analysis of the ACE database include the following:

- To describe the prevalence of ACEs among university students by selected *socioeconomic characteristics*;
- To assess the association between ACEs and *smoking* controlling for all the other lifestyle characteristics and socioeconomic factors;
- To assess the association between ACEs and *alcohol* consumption controlling for all the other lifestyle characteristics and socioeconomic factors;
- To assess the association between ACEs and *drug* use controlling for all the other lifestyle characteristics and socioeconomic factors;
- To assess the association between ACEs and early commencement of *sexual relations* controlling for all the other lifestyle characteristics and socioeconomic factors;
- To identify the most important ACEs which explain (predict) unhealthy behaviors (unhealthy lifestyle characteristics) among university students in Albania.

METHODOLOGY

The current in-depth analysis consists of the following statistical techniques and tests:

- Binary Logistic Regression is used to assess the association between the main outcome variables (health behaviour/lifestyle characteristics of the young adults including smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use, early commencement of sexual intercourse) and predictors (determinants) of interest that is ACEs, controlling for socioeconomic characteristics of the students and their parents. Odds ratios (ORs), their 95% confidence intervals (95%CI) and p-values are calculated and reported. Multivariable-adjusted models present the independent (adjusted) estimates (ORs, 95%CI and p-values) of each lifestyle factor (smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use, early commencement of sexual intercourse) with ACEs. In all multivariable-adjusted models, the Hosmer-Lemeshow test is used to assess the overall fit of the model (goodness-of-fit test).
- The General Linear Model is used to calculate mean number of ACEs (expressed as numerical variables/terms) by different socioeconomic categories and for selected health behavioural characteristics of participants included in the ACE 2011-12 survey. Mean values, their respective 95%CI, and p-values are reported for the multivariable-adjusted models (thereby, addressing the independent effect/influence of each factor on the main outcomes of interest).

RESULTS

This section initially summarizes the extent (magnitude) of ACEs and their distribution by selected socioeconomic characteristics and lifestyle (behavioral) factors among university students and subsequently analyses the main ACE independent predictors (determinants) of unhealthy behavioral practices (including smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use, and early commencement of sexual relationships).

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREVALENCE OF ACE AND LIFESTYLE FACTORS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN ALBANIA

Figure 1 presents the prevalence of selected unhealthy lifestyle characteristics by gender of young adults included in the ACE survey conducted in Albania in 2011-12.

The prevalence of current smoking was significantly higher in male students than their female counterparts (about 28% vs. 19%, $P < 0.01$).

Similarly, the prevalence of problematic alcohol drinking was significantly higher in male students rather than female ones (about 15% vs. 11%, $P = 0.04$).

On the other hand, only 3.4% of males and 3.1% of females had ever had a problem with use of street drugs, with no evidence of significant gender differences.

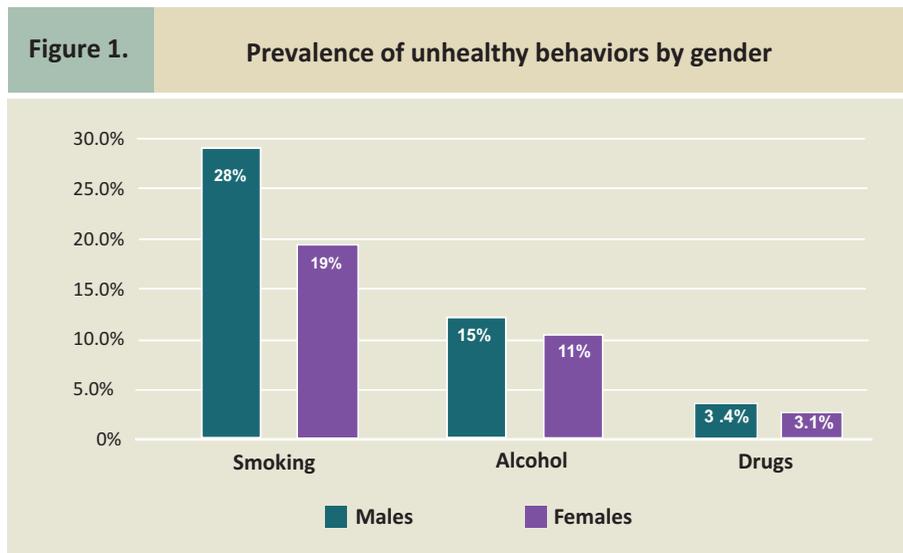
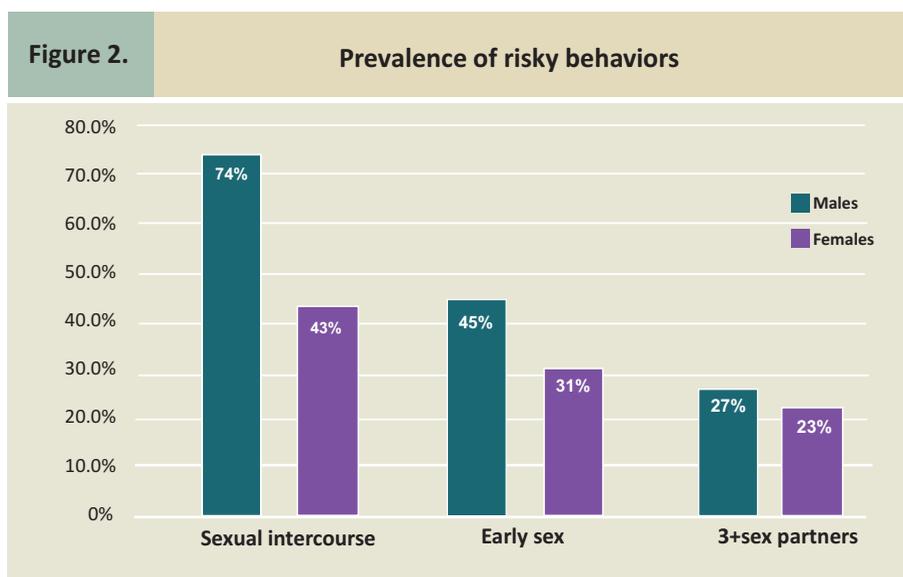


Figure 2 presents the distribution of selected characteristics regarding sexual relationships among university students by gender.

The prevalence of lifetime sexual intercourse was significantly higher in males compared to females (about 74% vs. 43%, respectively, $P < 0.01$).

Among students who reported to have had sexual relations, the proportion of boys who had initiated sexual intercourse before or up to the age of 16 years was significantly higher than the girls' (about 45% vs. 31%, respectively, $P = 0.05$).

There was no significant difference in males vs. females with regard to more than 3 sexual partners (about 27% vs. 23%, respectively, $P = 0.31$).



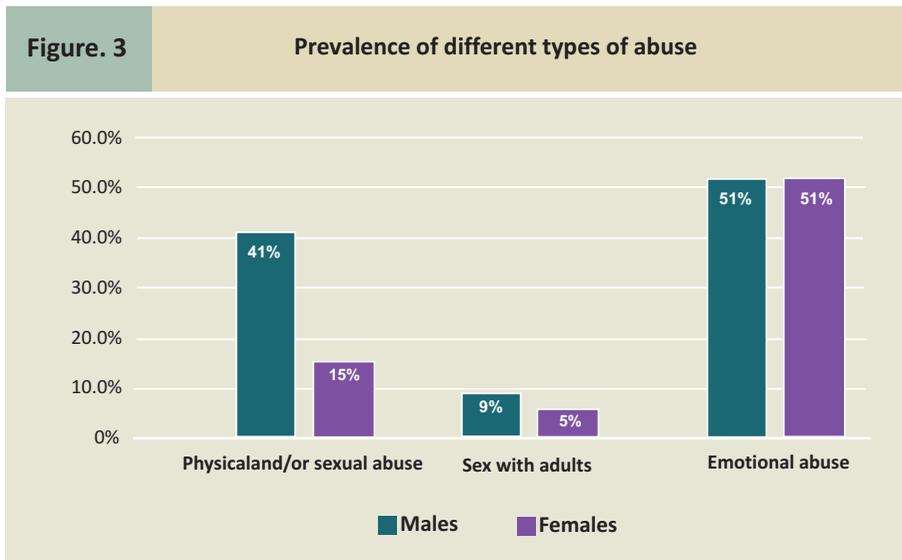


Figure 3 presents the prevalence of selected ACES by gender of young adults included in the ACE survey conducted in Albania in 2011-2012.

Overall, the prevalence of physical and sexual abuse during the first 18 years of life (referred to as *childhood*) was 41.5% in males and 14.7% in females. About 8.8% of males and 4.7% of females had had sex with an adult during their childhood. The prevalence of emotional abuse during childhood was similar in male and female students (51%).

On the whole, about 30% of students witnessed the maltreatment of their mother, and about 40% were bullied and were involved in physical fights during their childhood; these characteristics were significantly more prevalent in males rather than females.

At least one episode of attempted suicide was reported in 2.4% of males and 4.5% of females. About 8% of females reported at least one episode of unwanted pregnancy.



Figure 4 presents the prevalence of witnessed violence by gender of the students included in the ACE survey in Albania in 2011-2012.

There was no difference in males vs. females with regard to the violence they had witnessed in their first 18 years of life (about 31% vs. 30%, respectively, $P=0.34$).

During this time, about 3% of male students had lived with someone who has been in prison as opposed to 4% of female students ($P=0.14$).

On the other hand, about 8% of male students had experience parental separation compared to 6% of female students ($P=0.11$).

In summary, the most common adverse childhood abuse events reported in the ACE 2011-2012 survey were psychological/emotional abuse (51%) and physical abuse (42%). Boys were more neglected physically and emotionally compared to females, and these differences were statistically significant ($P<0.01$). Importantly, about 19.3% of males and 14.5% females reported at least four ACEs.

IN-DEPTH (SECONDARY) DATA ANALYSIS

The main findings of the current secondary analysis are presented in the sections below. Each of the subsections presents the independent associations of selected adverse childhood experiences with socio-demographic characteristics and behavioral (lifestyle) factors of the students.

Witnessed violence, socioeconomic characteristics and lifestyle (behavioral) risk factors

Table 1 presents the independent association of students' witnessed violence in the first 18 years of their life (outcome variable) with demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and lifestyle/behavioural factors. All variables (socio-demographic factors and lifestyle characteristics) presented in Table 1 were entered simultaneously in binary logistic regression models. Therefore, the estimates represent the independent contribution (role) of each factor in relation to the level of students' witnessed violence during childhood.

Regarding the relationship of students' witnessed violence with socio-demographic characteristics of the students and their parents, the following findings are of relevance:

- There was no significant sex-difference and/or age-difference in the self-reported levels of witnessed violence (both p -values: $P>0.05$).
- On the other hand, rural residence and place of birth were both independent correlates of students' witnessed violence (OR=2.5, 95%CI=1.6-3.2 and OR=2.3, 95%CI=1.7-3.0, respectively).
- Parental education was strongly, inversely, and linearly associated with witnessed violence (for both mother's and father's: $P<0.001$).
- Father's unemployment was strongly associated with witnessed violence (OR=4.6, 95%CI=3.9-6.1), which was not the case in mother's employment status.

- Low income was a significant and independent correlate of witnessed violence among students (OR=2.8, 95%CI=1.9-3.9), whereas an average income was not.

Regarding the relationship of students' witnessed violence with their lifestyle/behavioural characteristics, the following key facts were evidenced:

- There was a positive and significant association of witnessed violence with current smoking status of the students (OR=1.9, 95%CI=1.2-2.4).
- Similarly, witnessed violence was significantly and independently related to alcohol problems among students (OR=1.5, 95%CI=1.1-2.2).
- Likewise, witnessed violence was independently associated with the use of street drugs (OR=1.5, 95%CI=1.0-2.7), a finding which was borderline statistically significant (P=0.06).
- Furthermore, lifetime sexual intercourse was a significant and independent correlate of witnessed violence among students (OR=1.9, 95%CI=1.7-3.0).
- In turn, early commencement of sexual relationships and/or the number of lifetime sex partners were not significantly related to witnessed violence among students.

Table 1. Independent association of witnessed violence with socio-demographic factors and behavioural factors of the students; multivariable-adjusted logistic regression models

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND LIFESTYLE FACTORS	OR*	95%CI*	P*
Sex:			
Male	1.04	0.79-1.41	0.714
Female	1.00	Reference	
Age-group:			0.238 (3)[†]
18-19 years	0.71	0.49-1.19	0.194
20-21 years	0.69	0.46-1.21	0.138
22-23 years	0.63	0.42-1.17	0.165
≥24 years	1.00	Reference	-
Place of birth:			
Rural area	2.31	1.72-2.97	<0.001
Urban area	1.00	Reference	
Place of residence:			
Rural area	2.47	1.59-3.23	<0.001
Urban area	1.00	Reference	
Father's education:			<0.001 (2)
Low (0-8 years)	4.38	3.29-7.62	<0.001
Middle (9-12 years)	2.31	1.82-3.87	<0.001
High (>12 years)	1.00	Reference	-
Mother's education:			<0.001 (2)
Low (0-8 years)	4.79	2.93-6.89	<0.001
Middle (9-12 years)	1.69	1.23-2.17	0.002
High (>12 years)	1.00	Reference	-

Father's employment status:			
Unemployed	4.61	3.84-6.12	<0.001
Rest	1.00	Reference	
Mother's employment status:			
Employed	1.08	0.68-1.24	0.412
Rest	1.00	Reference	
Income level:			
Low	2.75	1.93-3.87	<0.001
Middle	1.09	0.76-2.14	0.538
High	1.00	Reference	-
Current smoking:			
Yes	1.92	1.19-2.37	<0.001
No	1.00	Reference	
Problems with alcohol:			
Yes	1.49	1.09-2.23	0.031
No	1.00	Reference	
Use of street drugs:			
Yes	1.54	1.03-2.72	0.059
No	1.00	Reference	
Lifetime sexual intercourse:			
Yes	1.93	1.68-2.97	<0.001
No	1.00	Reference	
Early sex			
<16 years	1.07	0.59-1.37	0.635
>16 years	Reference	-	
Number of lifetime sexual partners			
>3 partners	1.09	0.68-1.52	0.821
<3 partners	Reference	-	

*Odds ratios (OR: witnessed violence vs. not witnessed violence), 95% confidence intervals (95%CI) and p-values from multivariable-adjusted binary logistic regression models. All variables presented in the table were entered simultaneously into the logistic regression models.

† Overall p-value and degrees of freedom (in parenthesis).

Physical abuse, socio-demographic characteristics and lifestyle/behavioural factors

Table 2 presents the association of students' physical abuse during the first 18 years of life (outcome variable) with demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and lifestyle/behavioural factors. All variables (socio-demographic factors and lifestyle characteristics) presented in Table 2 were entered simultaneously in binary logistic regression models. Therefore, the estimates represent the independent contribution (role) of each factor in relation to the extent of physical abuse experienced by students during childhood.

Based on this analysis, regarding the relationship of the experienced physical abuse during childhood with socio-demographic characteristics of the students and their parents, the following findings were relevant:

- There was a statistically significant gender difference in self-reported levels of physical abuse, with males reporting a higher prevalence of physical abuse than females (OR=1.3, 95%CI=1.1-1.7).
- On the other hand, there was no association of physical abuse with the age-group of the students.
- Both rural birthplace and rural residence were positively associated with students' experienced physical violence (OR=1.4, 95%CI=1.0-2.0 and OR=1.6, 95%CI=1.1-2.1, respectively).
- Both father's and mother's low educational attainment were positively associated with experienced physical abuse among students (OR=2.1, 95%CI=1.4-2.9 and OR=1.9, 95%CI=1.5-2.9, respectively).
- Father's unemployment was positively associated with students' physical abuse (OR=1.7, 95%CI=1.2-2.3), a finding which was not evident in mother's employment status.
- Furthermore, a lower income was a significant predictor of physical abuse among students (OR=1.6, 95%CI=1.2-2.6).
- In addition, there was a strong positive association of students' physical abuse with the violence they witnessed during childhood (OR=2.7, 95%CI=2.3-3.5).

On the other hand, regarding the relationship of the experienced physical abuse during childhood with lifestyle/behavioural factors of the students, the following key findings were significant:

- There was a strong positive association between physical abuse and smoking at the time of the survey (OR=3.2, 95%CI=2.8-4.6).
- In addition, there was evidence of a very strong association with alcohol problems (OR=4.2, 95%CI=2.9-6.2).
- Use of street drugs was also significantly related to the students' experienced physical abuse during their childhood (OR=1.9, 95%CI=1.2-3.1).
- The association of students' physical abuse with lifetime sexual intercourse was considerably strong (OR=14.6, 95%CI=10.6-17.3).
- Early commencement of sexual relationships was also positively related to physical abuse among students (OR=1.8, 95%CI=1.1-2.3).
- Furthermore, having more than 3 sexual partners was significantly associated with students' physical abuse (OR=1.6, 95%CI=1.2-2.7).

Table 2. Independent association of physical abuse with socio-demographic factors and behavioural factors of the students; multivariable-adjusted logistic regression models

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND LIFESTYLE FACTORS	OR*	95%CI*	P*
Sex:			
Male	1.34	1.09-1.72	0.041
Female	1.00	Reference	
Age-group:			0.571 (3)[†]
18-19 years	0.89	0.57-1.63	0.734
20-21 years	1.17	0.69-1.72	0.462
22-23 years	1.04	0.37-1.92	0.894
≥24 years	1.00	Reference	-
Place of birth:			
Rural area	1.41	1.03-1.96	0.042
Urban area	1.00	Reference	
Place of residence:			
Rural area	1.62	1.12-2.06	0.028
Urban area	1.00	Reference	
Father's education:			<0.001 (2)
Low (0-8 years)	2.14	1.37-2.93	0.001
Middle (9-12 years)	1.37	0.94-1.63	0.087
High (>12 years)	1.00	Reference	-
Mother's education:			<0.001 (2)
Low (0-8 years)	1.94	1.47-2.91	<0.001
Middle (9-12 years)	1.12	0.77-1.49	0.538
High (>12 years)	1.00	Reference	-
Father's employment status:			
Unemployed	1.72	1.23-2.26	<0.001
Rest	1.00	Reference	
Mother's employment status:			
Employed	1.14	0.82-1.93	0.341
Rest	1.00	Reference	
Income level:			0.001 (2)
Low	1.62	1.18-2.63	<0.001
Middle	1.04	0.79-1.82	0.640
High	1.00	Reference	-
Witnessed violence during the first 18 years:			
Yes	2.74	2.31-3.47	<0.001
No	1.00	Reference	
Current smoking:			
Yes	3.21	2.78-4.57	<0.001
No	1.00	Reference	

Problems with alcohol:			
Yes	4.19	2.94-6.16	<0.001
No	1.00	Reference	
Use of street drugs:			
Yes	1.94	1.22-3.05	0.003
No	1.00	Reference	
Lifetime sexual intercourse:			
Yes	14.61	10.63-17.28	<0.001
No	1.00	Reference	
Early sex			
>16 years	1.75	1.06-2.32	0.002
<16 years	Reference	-	
Number of lifetime sexual partners			
>3 partners	1.63	1.19-2.67	0.001
<3 partners	Reference	-	

*Odds ratios (OR: experienced violence vs. no experienced violence), 95% confidence intervals (95%CI) and p-values from multivariable-adjusted binary logistic regression. All variables presented in the table were entered simultaneously into the logistic regression models.

† Overall p-value and degrees of freedom (in parenthesis).

Independent mean values of Adverse Childhood Events (ACE) by socioeconomic characteristics and behavioural factors – findings from multivariable-adjusted General Linear Models (GLM)

Table 3 presents the multivariable-adjusted mean values of Adverse Childhood Events (ACE) by socio-demographic characteristics and behavioral factors of the students. All variables presented in Table 3 were entered simultaneously into the General Linear Model (GLM). Therefore, estimates shown in Table 3 represent the independent contribution (role) of each factor in relation to the mean number of ACEs experienced by students during their childhood.

Regarding the relationship of the number of ACEs experienced during students' childhood with sociodemographic characteristics of the students and their parents, the following findings were significant:

- The mean ACE score was significantly higher in male rather than female students (2.29 vs. 1.73, respectively, $P < 0.01$).
- Conversely, the mean ACE score was not significantly related to the age-group of the students, notwithstanding a higher male ACE score among students aged 24 years or above.
- Students born in rural areas and particularly those residing in rural areas displayed higher mean ACE scores compared to their counterparts residing in urban areas (both $P < 0.01$).
- The mean ACE score was significantly higher among students who reported low parental education (both for father's and mother's educational attainment) compared to those who reported middle and especially higher parental education (both $P < 0.01$).
- The mean ACE score was substantially higher among students whose fathers were out of

work compared to those whose fathers were in employment (2.63 vs. 1.71, respectively, $P<0.01$).

- Also, the mean ACE score was considerably higher among students from low-income families compared to those from high-income families (2.64 vs. 1.67, respectively, $P<0.01$).

On the other hand, concerning the relationship of the number of ACEs experienced during students' childhood with lifestyle (behavioural) characteristics of the students, the following key findings were evidenced:

- The mean ACE score was considerably and significantly higher among students who were smokers compared to those who did not smoke (3.04 vs. 1.59, respectively, $P<0.01$).
- The association with alcohol was even stronger: mean ACE score was considerably higher among students who reported problems with alcohol compared to those who did not report any problems with alcohol consumption (4.16 vs. 1.57, respectively, $P<0.01$).
- The relationship with the use of street drugs was even stronger: mean ACE score was substantially higher among students who consumed drugs compared to those who did not (5.09 vs. 1.67, respectively, $P<0.01$).
- Furthermore, the mean ACE score was significantly higher among students who reported lifetime sexual experiences compared to their peers who had never have sex (2.93 vs. 0.91, respectively, $P<0.01$).
- Mean ACE score was also significantly higher among students who reported early sexual engagement (before the age of 16) compared to those who engaged in sexual intercourse after the age of 16 (3.27 vs. 2.63, respectively, $P<0.01$).
- In addition, mean ACE score was higher among students who reported more than 3 sex partners compared to those who reported fewer sexual partners (3.39 vs. 2.27, respectively, $P<0.01$).

Table 3. Mean values (from the multivariable-adjusted General Linear Models) of Adverse Childhood Events (ACE) by socio-demographic characteristics and behavioural factors

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND LIFESTYLE FACTORS	MEAN *	95%CI *	P *
Sex:			
Male	2.29	1.98-2.87	0.002
Female	1.73	1.68-2.09	
Age-group:			0.642[†]
18-19 years	1.77	1.62-1.95	0.096
20-21 years	1.89	1.68-2.18	0.245
22-23 years	1.93	1.80-2.21	0.413
≥24 years	2.27	1.91-2.73	-
Place of birth:			
Rural area	2.37	2.09-2.81	0.002
Urban area	1.78	1.63-2.03	

Place of residence:			
Rural area	2.69	2.23-3.04	0.001
Urban area	1.86	1.71-2.19	
Father's education:			<0.001
Low (0-8 years)	2.39	2.28-2.81	<0.001
Middle (9-12 years)	1.84	1.81-2.08	0.087
High (>12 years)	1.68	1.54-1.87	-
Mother's education:			<0.001
Low (0-8 years)	2.49	2.28-2.92	<0.001
Middle (9-12 years)	1.91	1.71-2.18	0.657
High (>12 years)	1.79	1.65-1.97	-
Father's employment status:			
Unemployed	2.63	2.36-2.81	<0.001
Rest	1.71	1.59-1.79	
Mother's employment status:			
Employed	1.82	1.72-2.13	0.425
Rest	1.94	1.75-2.19	
Income level:			<0.001
Low	2.64	2.31-2.93	<0.001
Middle	1.92	1.79-2.09	0.083
High	1.67	1.44-1.89	-
Current smoking:			
No	1.59	1.34-1.66	<0.001
Yes	3.04	2.88-3.21	
Problems with alcohol:			
No	1.57	1.48-1.67	<0.001
Yes	4.16	3.29-4.39	
Use of street drugs:			
No	1.67	1.61-1.79	<0.001
Yes	5.09	4.86-5.67	
Lifetime sexual intercourse:			
No	0.91	0.73-0.99	<0.001
Yes	2.93	2.76-3.29	
Early sex			
<16 years	3.27	2.91-3.19	0.007
>16 years	2.63	2.57-3.05	
Number of lifetime sexual partners			
<3 partners	2.27	2.19-2.76	0.001
>3 partners	3.39	2.97-3.64	

*Mean values (range of the ACE summary score was from 0 [none] to 8 [eight adverse events]), 95% confidence intervals (95%CI) and p-values from the multivariable-adjusted General Linear Model (GLM). All variables presented in the table were entered simultaneously into the GLM models.

† Overall p-value.

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE SECONDARY (IN-DEPTH) DATA ANALYSIS OF ACE SURVEY 2011-2012

The main findings of the current in-depth analysis of the ACE survey conducted in Albania in 2011-2012 are summarized below:

- Overall, the prevalence of physical and sexual abuse in one's first 18 years of life (childhood) was 41.5% and 14.7%, respectively.
- About 30% of students witnessed violence during their first 18 years of life.
- Significant independent correlates of witnessed violence during childhood among students included in this analysis consisted of: rural origin and/or residence, a lower-than-average parental education, father's unemployment, a lower family income, current smoking, problems with alcohol, use of street drugs, and lifetime sexual relationships.
- On the other hand, independent correlates of experienced physical abuse among students included male gender, rural birthplace and rural residence, a lower-than-average parental education, father's unemployment, a lower family income, witnessed violence during childhood, current smoking, problems with alcohol, use of street drugs, lifetime sexual relationships, early commencement of sex, and a large number of sexual partners.
- Similarly, positive correlates of the mean number of ACE events included male gender, rural birthplace and rural residence, a lower-than-average parental education, father's unemployment, a lower family income, witnessed violence during childhood, current smoking, problems with alcohol, use of street drugs, lifetime sexual relationships, early commencement of sex, and a large number of sexual partners.

5.3. OSCE-LED SURVEY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, 2019

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE OSCE-LED SURVEY ON WOMEN'S WELL-BEING AND SAFETY CONDUCTED IN ALBANIA IN 2019

The survey on the *Wellbeing and Safety of Women* was conducted in Albania in 2018 and published in 2019, including a quantitative component (cross-sectional study), as well as a qualitative component (key informant interviews, in-depth interviews with women, and focus-group discussions).

The cross-sectional study (the quantitative component of the survey) included a representative sample of 1,858 Albanian women aged 18-74 years. The aim of this cross-sectional study was to assess the prevalence and consequences of violence using a multistage, stratified, random probability sample design.

Some salient (descriptive) findings of this cross-sectional study are summarized below (source: OSCE, 2019)⁴¹:

41 OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Well-being and safety of women. Albania, 2019. ISBN: 978-3-903128-20-0. https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/8/434849_1.pdf.

- The self-reported prevalence of any form of violence against women experienced since the age of 15 years was 67%, whereas the experienced violence during the past 12 months preceding the survey was 39%.
- The self-reported prevalence of intimate partner psychological violence experienced by women since the age of 15 years was 62%, and 29% for the past 12 months preceding the survey.
- The self-reported prevalence of sexual harassment experienced by women since the age of 15 years was 34%, and 17% for the past 12 months preceding the survey.
- The self-reported prevalence of intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence experienced by women since the age of 15 years was 22%, and 8% for the past 12 months preceding the survey.
- The self-reported prevalence of stalking experienced by women since the age of 15 years was 13%, and 4% for the past 12 months preceding the survey.
- The self-reported prevalence of non-partner physical and/or sexual violence experienced by women since the age of 15 years was 11%, and 3% for the past 12 months preceding the survey.
- The intimate partner psychological violence was the most widespread form of violence reported by women included in the study. Blackmail with/abuse of children constitutes 11%, economic violence 22%, abusive behaviour 41%, and controlling behaviour 50%.
- The self-reported prevalence of intimate partner physical violence only experienced by women since the age of 15 years was 19%. Hence, one in five interviewed women reported having experienced physical violence by their intimate partners.
- The self-reported prevalence of intimate partner sexual violence only experienced by women since the age of 15 years was 4%.

PURPOSE OF THE CURRENT SECONDARY (IN-DEPTH) OSCE-led SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS

The main aim of the current secondary (in-depth) analysis is to assess the main independent correlates of selected forms of violence against women according to the self-reported information pertinent to the OSCE-led survey on the well-being and safety of women, which was carried out in Albania in 2018.

The main focus of this secondary data analysis is the identification of selected independent factors which are associated with different forms of violence against women in Albania.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of this secondary analysis of the database pertinent to the OSCE-led survey on violence against women include the following:

- To assess the independent correlates of any form of violence experienced by Albanian women since the age of 15 years;

- To assess the independent correlates of any form of violence experienced by Albanian women in the past 12 months preceding the OSCE-led survey;
- To assess the independent correlates of physical violence experienced by Albanian women since the age of 15 years;
- To assess the independent correlates of physical violence experienced by Albanian women in the past 12 months preceding the OSCE-led survey.

METHODOLOGY

The current in-depth analysis consists of the following statistical technique:

- Binary Logistic Regression is used to assess the association between the main outcome variables (any form of violence against women; physical violence) and selected correlates (independent variables) of interest including demographic factors and socioeconomic characteristics of women who participated in the OSCE-led survey conducted in 2018. Odds ratios (ORs), their 95% confidence intervals (95% CIs) and p-values are calculated and reported. Multivariable-adjusted models present the independent (adjusted) estimates (ORs, 95% CIs and p-values) of each correlate (demographic factors and socioeconomic characteristics) with different forms of violence against women. In all multivariable-adjusted models, the Hosmer-Lemeshow test is used to assess the overall fit of the model (goodness-of-fit test).

RESULTS

This section analyses the main correlates of different forms of violence against women in Albania.

INDEPENDENT CORRELATES OF ANY FORM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SINCE THE AGE OF 15 YEARS

Overall, 1231 women (weighted proportion: 67%) reported to have experienced any form of violence (by a partner or non-partner) since the age of 15 years.

The association of any form of violence against women since the age of 15 years with demographic factors and socioeconomic characteristics of the women interviewed is presented in Table 1.

In multivariable adjusted binary logistic regression models (outcome variable: any form of violence against women since the age of 15 years), independent correlates were the following:

- Upon simultaneous adjustment for the other socio-demographic characteristics, the odds of residing in the central areas as opposed to the southern areas of Albania were significantly higher among women who reported any form of violence since the age of 15 years (OR=1.3, 95%CI=1.0-1.6). On the other hand, there was no significant difference between northern and southern areas of the country.

- Place of residence was a borderline statistically significant correlate: the odds of residing in urban areas were about 30% higher among women who reported any form of violence since the age of 15 years compared with their counterparts who did not experience violence (OR=1.2, 95%CI=1.0-1.5).
- Conversely, there was evidence of a strong inverse and consistent relationship with the age-group of women: the odds of being younger were 2.5 times higher among women reporting any form of violence since the age of 15 years, a finding which was highly statistically significant (OR[18-29 years vs. 60-74 years]=2.5, 95%CI=1.8-3.5).
- Poverty was a strong and significant predictor of the experienced violence: the odds of being very seriously economically deprived as opposed to no income deprivation were 2.2 times higher among women who reported any form of violence since the age of 15 years (OR=2.2, 95%CI=1.6-3.0). Of note, the positive association with income deprivation was graded and consistent.
- In addition, the odds of being currently married or in a civic partnership were about 80% higher among women who reported any form of violence since the age of 15 years (OR=1.8, 95%CI=1.4-2.4).
- Surprisingly, the odds of not being unemployed (including the following categories: employed, student, or retired) were about 30% higher among women who reported any form of violence since the age of 15 years (OR=1.3, 95%CI=1.1-1.7), indicating that the experienced violence may be higher among the more empowered women in terms of employment opportunities.
- On the other hand, upon simultaneous adjustment for all covariates, there was no significant association with the women’s education attainment (OR=1.1, 95%CI=0.8-1.4).

Table 1. Independent association of any form of violence against women since the age of 15 years with socio-demographic factors; multivariable-adjusted logistic regression models

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WOMEN (N=1858)	OR*	95%CI*	P*
Region:			0.129 (2)[†]
North (n=568)	1.12	0.87-1.43	0.390
Central (n=716)	1.29	1.01-1.65	0.044
South (n=574)	1.00	Reference	-
Place of residence:			
Urban area (n=1006)	1.21	0.98-1.49	0.078
Rural area (n=852)	1.00	Reference	
Age-group:			<0.001 (4)[†]
18-29 years (n=362)	2.53	1.82-3.54	<0.001
30-39 years (n=282)	2.07	1.47-2.91	<0.001
40-49 years (n=391)	1.40	1.04-1.88	0.027
50-59 years (n=350)	1.21	1.04-1.93	0.026
60-74 years (n=473)	1.00	Reference	-

Poverty:			<0.001 (3)[†]
Very serious income deprivation (n=540)	2.20	1.60-3.03	<0.001
Serious income deprivation (n=390)	2.11	1.49-2.98	<0.001
Income deprivation (n=640)	1.03	0.77-1.38	0.846
No income deprivation (n=286)	1.00	Reference	-
Currently married or in partnership:			
Yes (n=1419)	1.84	1.42-2.38	<0.001
No (n=438)	1.00	Reference	
Unemployed:			
No (n=1375)	1.34	1.06-1.70	0.015
Yes (n=483)	1.00	Reference	
Educational attainment:			
Lower secondary or more (n=1351)	1.08	0.85-1.37	0.535
Primary or less (n=507)	1.00	Reference	

**Odds ratios (OR: experienced any form of violence since the age of 15 years vs. no experienced violence), 95% confidence intervals (95%CI) and p-values from multivariable-adjusted binary logistic regression models. All variables presented in the table were entered simultaneously into the logistic regression models.*

[†] Overall p-value and degrees of freedom (in parenthesis).

INDEPENDENT CORRELATES OF ANY FORM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE PAST YEAR

Overall, 709 women (weighted proportion: 39%) reported to have experienced any form of violence (by a partner or non-partner) in the past 12 months preceding the survey.

The association of any form of violence against women in the past 12 months with demographic factors and socioeconomic characteristics of the women is presented in Table 2.

In multivariable adjusted binary logistic regression models (outcome variable: any form of violence against women in the past 12 months), independent correlates were the following:

- Upon simultaneous adjustment for the other socio-demographic characteristics, there was no significant association between region and any form of violence experienced by women in the past 12 months preceding the OSCE-led survey (overall p-value: P=0.64).
- On the other hand, place of residence was a significant independent correlate: the odds of residing in urban areas were 28% higher among women who reported to have experienced any form of violence in the past 12 months (OR=1.3, 95%CI=1.0-1.6).
- In addition, there was evidence of a graded inverse and strong relationship with age-group: the odds of being younger were 4.4 times higher among women reporting any form of violence in the past 12 months (OR_[18-29 years vs. 60-74 years]=4.4, 95%CI=3.1-6.1).
- Furthermore, poverty was another important correlate: the odds of being seriously economically deprived compared with no income deprivation were at least two times higher among women who reported having experienced any form of violence in the past 12 months (OR=2.1, 95%CI=1.5-2.8).

- Also, there was evidence of a significant relationship with marital status: the odds of being currently married or in a civic partnership were 2.4 times higher among women who reported having experienced any type of violence in the past year (OR=2.4, 95%CI=1.8-3.2).
- Employment status was also significantly associated with the outcome of interest: the odds of not being unemployed were 54% higher among women who reported having experienced any type of violence in the past 12 months (OR=1.5, 95%CI=1.2-1.9).
- On the other hand, there was no evidence of a significant relationship with educational attainment (P=0.1).

Table 2. Independent association of any form of violence against women in the past 12 months with socio-demographic factors; multivariable-adjusted logistic regression models

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WOMEN (N=1858)	OR*	95%CI*	P*
Region:			0.639 (2)[†]
North (n=568)	1.07	0.83-1.38	0.603
Central (n=716)	1.12	0.88-1.43	0.344
South (n=574)	1.00	Reference	-
Place of residence:			
Urban area (n=1006)	1.28	1.04-1.58	0.019
Rural area (n=852)	1.00	Reference	
Age-group:			<0.001 (4)[†]
18-29 years (n=362)	4.36	3.12-6.10	<0.001
30-39 years (n=282)	2.63	1.90-3.64	<0.001
40-49 years (n=391)	1.51	1.12-2.03	0.008
50-59 years (n=350)	1.32	0.96-1.81	0.084
60-74 years (n=473)	1.00	Reference	-
Poverty:			<0.001 (3)[†]
Very serious income deprivation (n=540)	2.06	1.50-2.83	<0.001
Serious income deprivation (n=390)	1.73	1.22-2.44	0.002
Income deprivation (n=640)	1.28	0.94-1.74	0.115
No income deprivation (n=286)	1.00	Reference	-
Currently married or in partnership:			
Yes (n=1419)	2.42	1.83-3.20	<0.001
No (n=438)	1.00	Reference	
Unemployed:			
No (n=1375)	1.54	1.22-1.95	<0.001
Yes (n=483)	1.00	Reference	
Educational attainment:			
Lower secondary or more (n=1351)	0.82	0.65-1.04	0.096
Primary or less (n=507)	1.00	Reference	

*Odds ratios (OR: experienced any form of violence in the past 12 months vs. no experienced violence), 95% confidence intervals (95%CI) and p-values from multivariable-adjusted binary logistic regression models. All variables presented in the table were entered simultaneously into the logistic regression models.

[†] Overall p-value and degrees of freedom (in parenthesis).

INDEPENDENT CORRELATES OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SINCE THE AGE OF 15 YEARS

The association of physical violence against women since the age of 15 years with demographic factors and socioeconomic characteristics of the women is presented in Table 3.

In multivariable adjusted binary logistic regression models (outcome variable: physical violence against women since the age of 15 years), independent correlates were the following:

- Upon simultaneous adjustment for the other socio-demographic characteristics, there was no significant difference in the prevalence of reported physical violence since the age of 15 years between the northern, central, or southern areas of the country (overall $P=0.76$).
- Similarly, place of residence was not significantly associated with the reported physical violence since the age of 15 years ($P=0.33$).
- Conversely, there was evidence of an inverse relationship with the age-group of women: the odds of being 30-39 years were about 90% higher among women reporting physical violence since the age of 15 years, a finding which was statistically significant ($OR_{[30-39 \text{ years vs. } 60-74 \text{ years}]}=1.9, 95\%CI=1.3-2.7$).
- Poverty was a strong and significant predictor of the experienced physical violence: the odds of being very seriously economically deprived as opposed to no income deprivation were 2.3 times higher among women who reported physical violence since the age of 15 years ($OR=2.2, 95\%CI=1.6-3.0$). The positive association with income deprivation was graded and consistent.
- Upon multivariable adjustment for all covariates, there was no significant relationship with marital status of study participants ($P=0.62$).
- Conversely, the odds of not being unemployed (including the following categories: employed, student, or retired) were about 50% higher among women who reported physical violence since the age of 15 years ($OR=1.5, 95\%CI=1.1-1.9$), indicating that the experienced physical violence may be higher among the more empowered women in terms of employment opportunities (a finding similar to any form of violence).
- On the other hand, upon simultaneous adjustment for all covariates, there was no significant association with the women's educational attainment/level of education ($OR=0.9, 95\%CI=0.7-1.2$).

Table 3. Independent association of physical violence against women since the age of 15 years with socio-demographic factors; multivariable-adjusted logistic regression models

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WOMEN (N=1858)	OR [*]	95%CI [*]	P [*]
Region:			0.760 (2)[†]
North (n=568)	1.11	0.83-1.48	0.479
Central (n=716)	1.03	0.78-1.36	0.851
South (n=574)	1.00	Reference	-
Place of residence:			
Urban area (n=1006)	1.13	0.89-1.43	0.328
Rural area (n=852)	1.00	Reference	
Age-group:			0.021 (4)[†]
18-29 years (n=362)	1.40	0.96-2.06	0.082
30-39 years (n=282)	1.89	1.30-2.73	0.001
40-49 years (n=391)	1.43	1.01-2.03	0.042
50-59 years (n=350)	1.38	0.96-1.99	0.079
60-74 years (n=473)	1.00	Reference	-
Poverty:			<0.001 (3)[†]
Very serious income deprivation (n=540)	2.33	1.60-3.40	<0.001
Serious income deprivation (n=390)	1.78	1.18-2.68	0.006
Income deprivation (n=640)	1.08	0.74-1.58	0.692
No income deprivation (n=286)	1.00	Reference	-
Currently married or in partnership:			
Yes (n=1419)	1.08	0.80-1.46	0.619
No (n=438)	1.00	Reference	
Unemployed:			
No (n=1375)	1.46	1.11-1.93	0.007
Yes (n=483)	1.00	Reference	
Educational attainment:			
Lower secondary or more (n=1351)	0.95	0.72-1.24	0.687
Primary or less (n=507)	1.00	Reference	

**Odds ratios (OR: experienced physical violence since the age of 15 years vs. no experienced violence), 95% confidence intervals (95%CI) and p-values from multivariable-adjusted binary logistic regression models. All variables presented in the table were entered simultaneously into the logistic regression models.*

† Overall p-value and degrees of freedom (in parenthesis).

INDEPENDENT CORRELATES OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE PAST YEAR

The association of physical violence against women in the past 12 months with demographic factors and socioeconomic characteristics of the women is presented in Table 4.

In multivariable adjusted binary logistic regression models (outcome variable: physical violence against women in the past 12 months), independent correlates were the following:

- Upon simultaneous adjustment for the other socio-demographic characteristics, the odds of residing in the northern areas compared to the southern areas of Albania were at least two times higher among women who reported physical violence in the past 12 months preceding the survey (OR=2.1, 95%CI=1.3-3.2). However, there was no significant difference with the central areas of the country.
- On the other hand, place of residence (urban vs. rural areas) was not significantly associated with the reported physical violence in the past 12 months (P=0.41).
- Conversely, there was evidence of a strong inverse and graded relationship with the age-group of women: the odds of being younger were more than four times higher among women reporting physical violence in the past 12 months, a finding which was highly statistically significant (OR_[18-29 years vs. 60-74 years]=4.2, 95%CI=2.3-7.7).
- Furthermore, poverty was a very strong and significant predictor of the experienced physical violence: the odds of being very seriously economically deprived as opposed to no income deprivation were 3.8 times higher among women who reported physical violence in the past 12 months (OR=3.8, 95%CI=1.9-7.5). The positive association with income deprivation was graded and consistent.
- Upon multivariable adjustment for all covariates, the odds of being married or in a civic partnership were more than two times higher among women who reported to have experienced physical violence in the past 12 months preceding the survey (OR=2.2, 95%CI=1.3-3.8).
- Conversely, the odds of not being unemployed (including the following categories: employed, student, or retired) were 74% higher among women who reported physical violence in the past 12 months (OR=1.7, 95%CI=1.1-2.7), indicating that the experienced physical violence may be higher among the more empowered women in terms of employment opportunities (a finding which was similar to “any form of violence”).
- Additionally, upon simultaneous adjustment for all covariates, the odds of having a higher educational level were about 40% lower among women who reported physical violence in the past year (OR=0.6, 95%CI=0.4-0.9), which is another indication of the possibility of excessive physical violence experienced by the more socioeconomically empowered women.

Table 4. Independent association of physical violence against women in the past 12 months with socio-demographic factors; multivariable-adjusted logistic regression models

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WOMEN (N=1858)	OR*	95%CI*	P*
Region:			<0.001 (2)[†]
North (n=568)	2.09	1.35-3.22	0.001
Central (n=716)	0.70	0.43-1.16	0.165
South (n=574)	1.00	Reference	-
Place of residence:			
Urban area (n=1006)	1.17	0.80-1.70	0.413
Rural area (n=852)	1.00	Reference	
Age-group:			<0.001 (4)[†]
18-29 years (n=362)	4.23	2.32-7.73	<0.001
30-39 years (n=282)	2.90	1.60-5.26	<0.001
40-49 years (n=391)	1.89	1.06-3.40	0.032
50-59 years (n=350)	1.35	0.71-2.59	0.364
60-74 years (n=473)	1.00	Reference	-
Poverty:			<0.001 (3)[†]
Very serious income deprivation (n=540)	3.80	1.92-7.51	<0.001
Serious income deprivation (n=390)	2.36	1.10-5.04	0.027
Income deprivation (n=640)	1.80	0.90-3.64	0.099
No income deprivation (n=286)	1.00	Reference	-
Currently married or in partnership:			
Yes (n=1419)	2.19	1.28-3.78	0.005
No (n=438)	1.00	Reference	
Unemployed:			
No (n=1375)	1.74	1.12-2.72	0.015
Yes (n=483)	1.00	Reference	
Educational attainment:			
Lower secondary or more (n=1351)	0.57	0.38-0.85	0.006
Primary or less (n=507)	1.00	Reference	

*Odds ratios (OR: experienced physical violence in the past 12 months vs. no experienced violence), 95% confidence intervals (95%CI) and p-values from multivariable-adjusted binary logistic regression models. All variables presented in the table were entered simultaneously into the logistic regression models.

[†] Overall p-value and degrees of freedom (in parenthesis).

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS OF THE OSCE-LED SURVEY ON WOMEN'S WELL-BEING AND SAFETY, 2018

The main findings of the current in-depth analysis of the survey on women's well-being and safety conducted in Albania in 2018 are summarized below:

- The main independent correlates of any form of violence experienced by Albanian women since the age of 15 years are the following:

- Residing in central areas of the country; urban residence; younger age; poverty; being married or in a civic partnership; and being empowered in terms of employment opportunities.
- *The main independent correlates of any form of violence experienced by Albanian women in the past 12 months preceding the OSCE-led survey are the following:*
 - Urban residence; younger age; poverty; being married or in a civic partnership; and being empowered in terms of employment opportunities.
- *The main independent correlates of physical violence experienced by Albanian women since the age of 15 years are the following:*
 - Age 30-39 years of women; poverty; and being empowered in terms of employment opportunities.
- *The main independent correlates of physical violence experienced by Albanian women in the past 12 months preceding the OSCE-led survey are the following:*
 - Residing in northern areas of the country; younger age; poverty; being married or in a civic partnership; and being empowered in terms of employment opportunities and/or educational attainment.

Essentially, most forms of violence experienced by Albanian women are seemingly more prevalent among those who are younger, those who are currently in a partnership/marriage, those who are poor and, other things being equal, among women who are more empowered regarding employment opportunities and educational attainment.

These findings bear important implications for policymakers and decision-makers in Albania who should be aware of the significant deleterious health effects, but also negative socioeconomic consequences of violence against women.

5.4. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN ALBANIA, 2019

NATIONAL POPULATION SURVEY (VAWG), INSTAT 2019

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL SURVEY ON VAWG CONDUCTED IN ALBANIA IN 2018 (and published in 2019)

The 2018 National Survey on Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Albania was conducted to measure the nature and extent of five different types of VAWG:

- intimate partner domestic violence,
- dating violence,
- non-partner violence,
- sexual harassment,
- stalking,

- **some social norms related to VAWG.**

Since 2007, Albania's Institute for Statistics has conducted two National Domestic Violence Surveys (NDVS), respectively in 2007 (the first NDVS) and in 2013 (second NDVS).

The current survey was carried out in October-November 2018. It consisted of a national population-based household survey conducted across each of the 12 prefectures of Albania. A stratified sample design was used for the selection of women for sampling purposes. The goal was to generate a sample of women of 18-74 years of age that would allow for the production of statistically reliable national estimates of the prevalence of VAWG. The final sample of women included 3,443 households and women age 18 to 74 years. The sample was not equally distributed across prefectures as more women were sampled in Tirana (27.1%), the capital, since it has a much larger population than other areas, in Fier (11.5%) and Elbasan (10.6%), compared to Kukes (3.0%) and Gjirokaster (2.6%) where far fewer women were sampled.

There was a fairly equal distribution of women sampled across each of the age groups. Women ranged in age from 18 to 74 years with an average age of 43.6 years. In terms of education, 42.4% of women had lower secondary education (8-9 years), 27.8% had completed upper secondary education, and 19.7% had a university degree. Only 7.7% of women had attended primary education alone (or not even all of it). The majority of women sampled (73.3%) were currently married and/or living with a male partner. 20.3% were not married or living with a male partner. Only 4.1% were widowed, 1.2% were divorced, and 0.2% were separated or had broken up with their husband/boyfriend. The age in which most women either first married or lived with a male partner was between 18 and 24 years.

In terms of women's employment, 38.2% of women worked, 29.5% were looking for work but were currently unemployed, and 18.2% were retired. Only 4.5% were studying, and 1.4% were disabled or had a long-term illness.

The distribution of demographic and socio-economic characteristics of women and girls included in the survey is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of women and girls included in the survey

Prefectures	Sample of women by prefecture (unweighted data: N= 3443)
Berat	163
Dibër	166
Durrës	323
Elbasan	364
Fier	396
Gjirokastër	88
Korçë	264
Kukës	104
Lezhë	168
Shkodër	264
Tiranë	932
Vlorë	211
Age-group	Total (%)
18-24 years	16.1%
25-34 years	19.6%
35-44 years	16%
45-54 years	18.6%
55-64 years	18.4%
65-74 years	11.2%
Level of education	Total (%)
Less than primary education	0.6%
Primary education	7.1%
Lower secondary, 8-9 years	42.4%
Upper secondary	27.8%
Post-secondary, non-tertiary	2.4%
University	19.7%
Marital status	Total (%)
Currently married, living together with a male partner	73.3%
Not married or living with a male partner	20.3%
Widow/partner died	4.1%
Divorce	1.2 %
Separated/broken up	0.2%
Employment status	Total (%)
Work	38.2%
Looking for a job / unemployed	29.5%
Retired	18.2%
Student/pursuing studies	4.5%
Disabled / ill for a long time	1.4%
Other	8%

PURPOSE OF THE CURRENT SECONDARY (IN-DEPTH) VAWG DATA ANALYSIS

The main aim of the current secondary (in-depth) analysis is to assess the main independent correlates of selected forms of violence against women and girls according to the self-reported information pertinent to the INSTAT-led survey on violence against women and girls, which was carried out in Albania in 2018.

The main focus of this secondary data analysis is the identification of selected independent factors which are associated with different forms of violence against women and girls in Albania.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of this secondary analysis of the database pertinent to the INSTAT-led survey on violence against women and girls include the following:

- To assess the independent correlates of physical violence experienced by Albanian women and girls since the age of 15 years;
- To assess the independent correlates of lifetime sexual violence experienced by Albanian women and girls.

METHODOLOGY

The current in-depth analysis consists of the following statistical technique:

- Binary Logistic Regression is used to assess the association between the main outcome variables (physical violence and sexual abuse) and selected correlates (independent variables) of interest including demographic factors and socioeconomic characteristics of women who participated in the INSTAT-led survey conducted in 2018. Odds ratios (ORs), their 95% confidence intervals (95% CIs) and p-values are calculated and reported. Initial models include calculation of crude (unadjusted) ORs, 95% CIs and p-values. Subsequently, multivariable-adjusted models present the independent (adjusted) estimates (ORs, 95% CIs and p-values) of each correlate (demographic factors and socioeconomic characteristics) with different forms of violence against women. In all multivariable-adjusted models, the Hosmer-Lemeshow test is used to assess the overall fit of the model (goodness-of-fit test).

RESULTS

The main findings of the current secondary analysis are presented in the sections below.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

- **Physical abuse since the age of 15 years**

Women and girls were asked whether since the age of 15 years a non-partner had hit, slapped, kicked

or done something else to physically hurt them. Overall, only 17.3% of women and girls reported being physically abused since the age of 15 by someone other than their husband/boyfriend. In 13.9% of cases this happened before the age of 18.

Women and girls reported that the main perpetrators of non-partner physical violence before the age of 18 were parents (mother 32.7% and father 25%), followed by teachers (15.3%) and siblings (12%).

- Sexual abuse during childhood

Women were asked if they experienced sexual violence during childhood (0-17 years of age). Overall, only 3.1% of women aged 18-74 reported that they had been sexually abused during childhood (i.e., they had been touched sexually when they did not want to or were made to do something sexual that they did not want to).

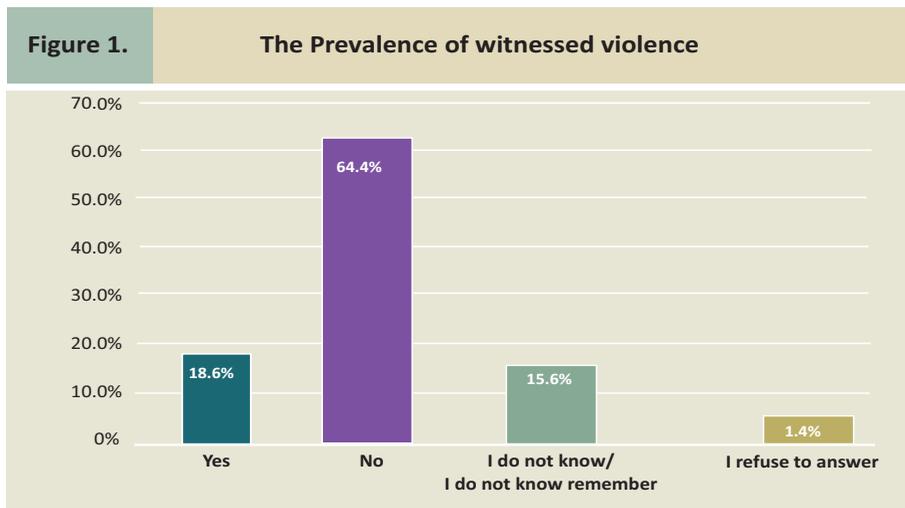
Table 2 presents the main types of violence during childhood.

Table 2: Distribution of the main types of violence during childhood

Physical abuse since the age of 15 years	Total (%)
Yes	17.3%
No	82.3%
I don't know	0.4%
Age of the experienced physical abuse	Total (%)
< 18	13.9%
>18	1.6%
Before and after the age of 18 years	1.6%
I do not remember	0.1%
Perpetrators of non-partner physical violence during childhood	Total (%)
Mother/stepmother	32.7%
Father/stepfather	25%
Sister/Brother	12%
Teacher	15.3%
School friends	4.8%
Others (non-family)	3.1%
Others (non-family)	7.1%
Child sexual abuse (during childhood - 0-17 years)	Total (%)
Yes	3.1%
No	95.9%
I don't know	1%

- Witnessed violence

The women and girls who participated in the survey were asked if, to their knowledge, the father had ever beaten or hit their mother. In total, 18.6% of women and girls reported being aware that their father had physically abused their mother (Figure 1).



CORRELATES OF CHILD ABUSE

Physical abuse since the age of 15 years

Findings from the univariate binary logistic regression analysis are presented in Table 3.

- There was evidence of a strong and inverse relationship with the age-group of women: the odds of being 25-34 years were 3 times higher among women who reported physical abuse since the age of 15 years, a finding which was highly statistically significant ($OR_{[25-34 \text{ years vs. } 65-74 \text{ years}]}=3.1, 95\%CI=3.0-3.3$).
- Women's education was strongly, inversely, and linearly associated with physical abuse since the age of 15 years. Women's low educational attainment was positively associated with experienced physical abuse since the age of 15 ($OR=1.4, 95\%CI=1.3-1.6$)
- On the other hand, there was a positive relationship with the women's marital status. The odds of being married were higher among women who reported physical abuse since the age of 15 years, a finding which was highly statistically significant ($OR=1.1, 95\%CI=1.1-1.2$)
- Conversely, there was evidence of an inverse relationship with income. The odds of having a lower income were about 10% lower among women who reported physical violence since the age of 15 years ($OR=0.9, 95\%CI=0.8-0.9$), indicating that the experienced physical violence may be higher among the more empowered women in terms of income level.
- Furthermore, unemployment was a significant predictor of experienced physical abuse since the age of 15 years. The odds of being employed were about 20% lower among women who reported physical violence since the age of 15 years ($OR=0.8, 95\%CI=0.84-0.88$).
- In addition, there was a strong positive association of experienced physical abuse since the age of 15 years of the women with their witnessed violence during childhood ($OR=6.6, 95\%CI=6.4-6.7$).

Table 3. Correlates of women’s physical abuse since the age of 15 years, VAWG survey, 2019 (univariate analysis)

FACTOR	OR	95%CI	P
Age group			<0.001 (5)*
18-24	3.079	2.951-3.212	<0.001
25-34	3.196	3.088-3.308	<0.001
35-44	1.954	1.890-2.019	<0.001
45-54	1.391	1.348-1.435	<0.001
55-64	1.623	1.576-1.670	<0.001
65-74	1.000	Reference	-
Education			<0.001 (2)
Low education	1.482	1.371-1.602	<0.001
Secondary education	1.237	1.202-1.273	<0.001
University	1.000	Reference	-
Current marital status			
Married /living together with a male partner	1.181	1.122-1.244	<0.001
Not married /not living together with a male partner	1.000	Reference	-
Employment			
Work	0.863	0.846-0.881	<0.001
Other (unemployed; retired)	1.000	Reference	-
Income			<0.001 (2)
<26,000 lekë	0.911	0.884-0.940	<0.001
26,000 – 60,000 lekë	0.816	0.794-0.838	<0.001
>60,000 lekë	1.000	Reference	-
Witnessed violence			
Yes	6.623	6.493-6.757	<0.001
No	1.000	Reference	-

*Overall P-value and degrees of freedom (in parenthesis).

Multivariate analysis

The association of experienced physical violence since the age of 15 years with demographic factors and socioeconomic characteristics of the women is presented in Table 4.

In multivariable adjusted binary logistic regression models (outcome variable: physical violence since the age of 15 years), independent correlates were the following:

- There was evidence of an inverse almost graded relationship between experienced physical violence since the age of 15 years and the age of participants: the odds of experienced violence were lower among older women compared with their younger counterparts (OR_[65-74 vs. 18-24 years])=0.32, 95%CI=0.31-0.34).
- Low levels of educational attainment were a significant predictor of the experienced physical violence since the age of 15 years: the odds of having little education were 60%

higher among women who reported physical violence since the age of 15 years (OR=1.6, 95%CI=1.5-1.7).

- On the other hand, the odds of being married were more than two times higher among women who reported physical violence since the age of 15 years (OR=2.1, 95%CI=2.0-2.2).
- Furthermore, the odds of being employed were higher among women who reported physical violence since the age of 15 years (OR=1.1, 95%CI=1.13-1.18), indicating that experienced physical violence may be higher among the more empowered women in terms of employment opportunities.
- There was evidence of an inconsistent relationship with income: the odds of experiencing physical violence were the highest among middle-income women and the lowest in those with a higher income (OR=1.23, 95%CI=1.19-1.26).
- In addition, witnessed violence was a very strong and significant predictor of the experienced physical violence since the age of 15 years: the odds of witnessing domestic violence were 6 times higher among women who reported physical violence since the age of 15 years (OR=6.6, 95%CI=6.5-6.7).

Table 4: Independent correlates of women’s physical abuse since the age of 15 years (multivariate analysis)

FACTOR	OR	95%CI	P
Age-group			<0.001 (5)*
18-24	0.325	0.311-0.339	<0.001
25-34	0.313	0.302-0.324	<0.001
35-44	0.512	0.495-0.529	<0.001
45-54	0.719	0.697-0.742	<0.001
55-64	0.616	0.599-0.634	<0.001
65-74	1.000	Reference	-
Education			<0.001 (2)
Low education	1.651	1.587-1.717	<0.001
Secondary education	1.286	1.250-1.322	<0.001
University	1.000	Reference	-
Current marital status			
Married /living together with a male partner	2.154	2.070-2.242	<0.001
Not married /not living together with a male partner	1.000	Reference	
Employment			
Work	1.158	1.135-1.182	<0.001
Other (unemployed; retired)	1.000	Reference	
Income			<0.001 (2)
<26,000 lekë	1.097	1.064-1.131	<0.001
26,000 – 60,000 lekë	1.226	1.194-1.259	<0.001
>60,000 lekë	1.000	Reference	-
Witnessed violence			
Yes	6.633	6.512-6.756	<0.001
No	1.000	Reference	

*Overall P-value and degrees of freedom (in parenthesis).

- **Lifetime sexual abuse during childhood**

Findings from the univariate binary logistic regression analysis are presented in Table 5.

- The odds of being 18-24 years, 35-44 years and 55-64 years were almost 60% lower among women who reported sexual abuse during childhood (OR_[18-24 years vs. 65-74 years] =0.4, 95%CI=0.40-0.49; OR_[25-34 years vs. 65-74 years] =0.4, 95%CI=0.42-0.50 and OR_[55-64 years vs. 65-74 years] =0.4, 95%CI=0.42-0.49 respectively).
- Women’s education was strongly, inversely, and linearly associated with sexual abuse during childhood. Low levels of educational attainment were positively associated with sexual abuse during childhood (OR=1.5, 95%CI=1.3-1.8)
- On the other hand, there was a positive relationship with women who were married. The odds of being married were higher among women who reported sexual abuse during childhood, a finding which was highly statistically significant (OR=1.8, 95%CI=1.7-1.9)
- Conversely, there was evidence of an inverse relationship with income. The odds of having a lower income were about 80% lower among women who reported sexual abuse during childhood (OR=0.2, 95%CI=0.1-0.2), indicating that sexual abuse may be higher among the more empowered women in terms of income.
- Furthermore, employment was a significant predictor of experienced physical abuse since the age of 15 years. The odds of being employed were about 60% higher among women who reported sexual abuse during childhood (OR=1.6, 95%CI=1.5-1.6).
- In addition, there was a strong positive association of sexual abuse during childhood with the violence witnessed during childhood (OR=1.98, 95%CI=1.91-2.0).

Table 5. Correlates of lifetime sexual abuse during childhood in women/girls (univariate analysis)

FACTOR	OR	95%CI	P
Age-group			<0.001 (5)*
18-24	0.448	0.409-0.491	<0.001
25-34	0.139	0.128-0.150	<0.001
35-44	0.464	0.426-0.505	<0.001
45-54	0.334	0.309-0.361	<0.001
55-64	0.458	0.424-0.494	<0.001
65-74	1.000	Reference	-
Education			<0.001 (2)
Low education	1.569	1.344-1.832	<0.001
Secondary education	0.804	0.754-0.857	<0.001
University	1.000	Reference	-
Current marital status			
Married /living together with a male partner	1.838	1.713-1.973	<0.001
Not married /not living together with a male partner	1.000	Reference	

Employment			
Work	1.590	1.530-1.652	<0.001
Other (unemployed; retired)	1.000	Reference	
Income			<0.001 (2)
<26,000 lekë	0.209	0.191-0.230	<0.001
26,000 – 60,000 lekë	0.262	0.240-0.287	<0.001
>60,000 lekë	1.000	Reference	-
Witnessed violence			
Yes	1.988	1.916-2.062	<0.001
No	1.000	Reference	

*Overall P value and degrees of freedom (in parenthesis).

Multivariate analysis

The association of sexual abuse during childhood with the women’s demographic factors and socioeconomic characteristics is presented in Table 6.

In multivariable adjusted binary logistic regression models (outcome variable: sexual abuse during childhood), independent correlates were the following:

- There was evidence of a strong relationship with the age-group of women: the odds of being 25-34 years were 7 times higher among women who reported sexual abuse during childhood, a finding which was highly statistically significant (OR_[25-34 years vs. 65-74 years] =7.2, 95%CI=6.6-7.7).
- Completion of secondary education was a significant predictor of sexual abuse during childhood: the odds of having completed secondary education were about 50% higher among women who reported sexual abuse during childhood (OR=1.4, 95%CI=1.3-1.5).
- On the other hand, the odds of being married were more than 30% higher among women who reported sexual abuse during childhood (OR=1.3, 95%CI=1.2-1.4).
- Furthermore, unemployment was a significant predictor of sexual abuse during childhood. The odds of being employed were about 40% lower among women who reported sexual abuse during childhood (OR=0.62, 95%CI=0.60-0.64).
- Poverty was a strong and significant predictor of sexual abuse during childhood: the odds of having a lower income as opposed to a higher one were 4.7 times higher among women who reported sexual abuse during childhood (OR=4.7, 95%CI=4.3-5.2). The positive association with low income was graded and consistent.
- In addition, witnessed violence was a strong and significant predictor of sexual abuse during childhood: the odds of witnessing domestic violence were almost two times higher among women who reported sexual abuse during childhood (OR=1.98, 95%CI=1.91-2.0).

Table 6: Independent correlates of lifetime sexual abuse during childhood in women/girls (multivariate analysis)

FACTOR	OR	95%CI	P
Age-group			<0.001 (5)*
18-24	2.231	2.037-2.444	<0.001
25-34	7.205	6.668-7.784	<0.001
35-44	2.154	1.978-2.346	<0.001
45-54	2.995	2.768-3.240	<0.001
55-64	2.184	2.023-2.358	<0.001
65-74	1.000	Reference	-
Education			<0.001 (2)
Low education	1.244	1.166-1.326	<0.001
Secondary education	1.466	1.373-1.565	<0.001
University	1.000	Reference	-
Current marital status			
Married /living together with a male partner	1.349	1.240-1.467	<0.001
Not married /not living together with a male partner	1.000	Reference	-
Employment			
Work	0.629	0.605-0.654	<0.001
Other (unemployed; retired)	1.000	Reference	-
Income			<0.001 (2)
<26,000 lekë	4.777	4.347-5.249	<0.001
26,000 – 60,000 lekë	3.814	3.484-4.175	<0.001
>60,000 lekë	1.000	Reference	-
Witnessed violence			
Yes	1.988	1.915-2.063	<0.001
No	1.000	Reference	-

**Overall P value and degrees of freedom (in parenthesis).*

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE SECONDARY (IN-DEPTH) DATA ANALYSIS OF VAWG SURVEY 2019

The main findings of the current in-depth analysis of the VAWG survey conducted in Albania in 2018 are summarized below:

- Overall, the prevalence of physical abuse since the age of 15 years was 17.3%, while the prevalence of sexual abuse during childhood was 3.1%.
- About 19% of the women and girls interviewed witnessed violence in the first 18 years of their life.
- The main perpetrators of non-partner physical violence before the age of 18 were parents (mother 32.7% and father 25%), followed by teachers (15.3%) and siblings (12%).
- Significant independent correlates of experienced physical abuse since the age of 15

years among women and girls included: young age of female participants, a lower level of educational attainment, unemployment, marital status, high income, and witnessed violence during childhood.

- Similarly, positive correlates of sexual abuse during childhood included: a lower level of educational attainment, unemployment, marital status, lower income, and witnessed violence during childhood.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS



The in-depth analysis report of several studies on violence against adolescents and youth sheds light once again on all those determinants related to physical, emotional and sexual abuse of them. It also presents a detailed analysis of the legal framework and emphasizes the importance of taking appropriate measures in the fight against violence against adolescents and youth.

The main recommendations of this report are detailed below, and are based on the findings of the in-depth analysis of four national studies conducted over the last decade.

- The entire legal and policy framework for the protection of the rights of girls and boys in Albania needs to be reviewed in order to contain gender-sensitive language (and not neutral or blind). Addressing the entire group as simply “children”, “minors”, or “injured parties” distracts from the attention that should be paid to girls who are minors or injured. In addition, identifying girls in a few cases only (e.g. “unless they have reached sexual maturity”) and leaving boys aside can lead to differentiated treatment in the way protection is provided in the event of their abuse. The revision of the legislation and the use of gender-sensitive language is in fact a recommendation that should be considered for the legislation as a whole, starting with the Constitution of the Republic of Albania.
- Despite improvements in the country’s legal framework and its harmonisation with ratified international instruments, there is still a need for improvements and clarifications that should pay more attention to the protection of children, girls and boys at risk of being exploited for prostitution, internal trafficking, protection of children from violence, online bullying, etc. In particular, there is a need to proceed as soon as possible with: the amendment of article 100 of the Criminal Code so as to provide equal protection to boys and girls and to remove the distinction between sexual and homosexual relations; amendment of the legal provisions on prostitution to explicitly criminalise the purchasing of sexual services from children and to provide that no child exploited in prostitution will be treated as an offender; amendment of a formal definition of child sexual abuse material and criminalise other forms of online child sexual exploitation such as online grooming and sexual extortion; amendment of article 128 (b) of the Criminal Code to explicitly criminalise the internal trafficking of children; adoption of specific legal provisions to criminalise the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism; making the minimum legal age to enter into a marriage 18 years with no exceptions whatsoever, etc.

- The Government of Albania should ensure the correct and de-facto implementation of the legal and policy framework, and should provide girls and boys with the protection from violence and abuse that they need.
- It is urgent that measures are taken at once to provide the much-needed adequate and accessible specialist support services to abused girls and boys, in particular in case of sexual violence. These services must have sufficient capacities to cover the entire territory of the country, and the necessary number of professionals. In addition, they must be fully budgeted for and should always operate based on the appropriate standards. Whilst donors and national or international organisations may provide support in this regard, the main responsibility rests with state authorities both at central and local level.
- Municipalities must strengthen their Child Protection Units, and establish Need Assessment Referral Units (NARUs) with a sufficient number of social workers, for the aim of creating an enabling environment for the identification of neglected and/or abused children and their immediate referral to CPUs. The approved Social Plans with their specific objectives and the use of gender responsive budgeting as a tool to plan the needed resources may prove to be very helpful indeed.
- The new National Strategies and Action Plans that are being prepared (focusing on gender equality, violence against women, children's rights, education and health), must be well coordinated so as to ensure the gender component mainstreamed in all of them, to avoid overlapping and to ensure they provide all actions that will address the issues of child neglect, abuse and violence of all forms appropriately.
- Government institutions should monitor adolescents and youth abuse cases, in particular the sexual abuse of them, cases of neglect, along with the harm they cause. Work may consist in collecting case reports, evaluating the services that are provided by social workers, preparing surveys or using any other methods necessary. In doing so, government institutions may enlist the help of academic institutions, health care professionals and non-government organizations.
- State institutions must also ensure the quality and availability of social services, and a youth-friendly system that responds appropriately to child abuse and neglect in general. Identification, social and medical assessments, case management, family interventions and legal services need to be completely safe for both the adolescents and their families.
- Service standards, case management and Standard Operating Procedures for a multi-disciplinary coordinated approach, including new ones which are being drafted (such as managing cases of sexually-abused children) must be disseminated throughout the country, and followed by adequate training for all members of staff in general and new ones in particular.
- National and local campaigns must continue at an intensive pace to raise the awareness of the community and increase knowledge on adolescents and youth sexual abuse, to change attitudes for this type of abuse and encourage prevention initiatives, and services where

information may be obtained and help sought. In addition, the public should no longer justify violence, and join forces for zero tolerance against violence. The victims/survivors must be heard, trusted and supported every time, without prejudice and judgment. They are not guilty of the violence that was perpetrated on them. Instead, the perpetrators must take the responsibility and punishment for what they did.

- Organise prevention activities that are delivered in pre-school, school and other community settings (community centre/school) with the aim of increasing adolescent's knowledge of sexual abuse and acquire practical self-defence skills.
- Increase knowledge and educate parents on child sexual abuse and its repercussions, and strengthen skills that will help reduce the risks of child sexual abuse.
- Capacity building for all professionals providing specialized services (social workers, police, prosecutors, judges, doctors, psychologists and teachers) on how to handle cases of sexual abuse is very important to improving performance and strengthening institutional cooperation.
- Strengthening the capacities of media professionals on adolescents and youth abuse issues, focusing on sexual abuse cases in order to raise awareness, knowledge and their competences that will lead to a more responsible and empathetic treatment of adolescent sexual abuse by media outlets.
- Drafting manuals and guidelines for all professionals coming from different sectors and agencies on what to do in cases of adolescent sexual abuse.
- Inclusion of Health Education subject (which also includes child abuse issues) in the compulsory curriculum for children between the age of 14-18 years.
- Teachers and school authorities have a unique role to play along with the family environment regarding the comprehensive education of schoolchildren. Efforts should be made to reach and inform adolescents in an effective manner about different types of abuse and neglect. Similarly, adolescents should learn about with health education, what leads to a healthy lifestyle, including reproductive health topics. The same information content should be provided to in-school and out-of school adolescents, acknowledging that there are challenges to delivering curriculum-based approaches out of schools. As the WHO recommends, comprehensive education for teens should be complemented by other interventions, including activities aiming at engaging parents, teachers and other key actors.
- Teachers often lack good quality training and support on comprehensive education content and on strategies for participatory facilitation and non-judgemental, positive approaches. Therefore, combined efforts should be made to ensure that both teachers and schools have ample support to deliver comprehensive education effectively, and to engage parents and families in this process.
- Adolescents need to be provided with various types of services, such as health, education and social services. The right of adolescents below the age of 18 years to reproductive health services, for instance, is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, in

many places, neither the providers of these services nor the systems in which they operate are geared towards meeting the needs and fulfilling the rights of adolescents (WHO, 2018). To address this widely-acknowledged gap, efforts should be made to build competence and empathy in teachers, health-care workers, social workers and other actors.

- As WHO recommends, training and supporting teachers and service providers and re-orienting the systems they are part of, are crucial to delivering the many effective preventive and curative interventions available. These efforts should go beyond the top-down approaches to involving adolescents, parents, teachers, community members, service providers and managers to identify the factors contributing to the poor quality and reach of these services and to define and implement evidence-based approaches that are tailored to the local context.
- The meaningful involvement of adolescents should be emphasized in all proposed interventions and actions (WHO, 2018).
- Communication is key if we want to build healthy and equal relations in family and society. Parents must learn to communicate with each-other and they must also learn to communicate with their children since the first day they are borne (ideally this communication starts since the first day of the mother's pregnancy). Children girls and boys must learn to express themselves and their needs, to discuss their concerns and issues related to their body and how to be protected at every stage of their development.
- Disruptions to health care, nutrition, education, social and child protection services due to COVID-19 have been overwhelming for children and young people. The impact of the pandemic will affect children's lives for years to come. As such, how the Albanian Government responds now to the thousands of risks that the pandemic poses to children and adolescents will determine their future.
- Findings from all existing surveys must be used as guidelines for all interventions, such as campaigns, new strategies and action plans, and establishing new specialist support services or extending existing ones.

REFERENCES



- National Justice for Children Strategy and its Action Plan 2018-2021. See: <https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/1496/file/National%20Justice%20for%20Children%20Strategy%20Eng.pdf>
- National Agenda for the Rights of the Child 2017-2020. See: <https://childhub.org/en/child-protection-online-library/albanian-national-agenda-childrens-rights-2017-2020>
- Law No. 37/2017 “Criminal Justice for Children Code”.
- <https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/2596/file/KODI%20-%20botimi%20dhjetor%202019.pdf>
- Instruction: The Assembly of Albania and the protection of children’s rights. See: <https://www.parlament.al/Files/sKuvendi/Femijet/Guida-e-Parlamentareve-2016-FINALE-version-botimi.pdf>
- Law No. 9669, of 18.12.2006 “For measures against violence in family relations” amended. See: <https://www.parlament.al/Files/ProjektLigje/20200207110616Ligji%20per%20masat%20ndaj%20dhunes%20ne%20marredheniet%20familjare.pdf>
- <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/opscrcr.aspx>
- <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/0900001680084822>
- https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_eng.pdf
- <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>
- https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf
- <https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf>
- <https://rm.coe.int/168008482e>
- <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/2/41888.pdf>
- https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/8235/file/Albania_CC_1995_am2017_en.pdf
- <http://femijet.gov.al/al/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Law-No-18-2017-On-the-rights-and-protection-of-the-child.pdf>
- <https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/2596/file/KODI%20-%20botimi%20dhjetor%202019.pdf>
- <http://femijet.gov.al/al/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Law-No-18-2017-On-the-rights-and-protection-of-the-child.pdf>

- <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/6/30436.pdf>
- <https://www.vendime.al/ligj-nr-1212016-per-sherbimet-e-kujdesit-shoqeror-ne-republiken-e-shqiperise/>
- <https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RESOLUTION%20of%20the%20Albanian%20Parliament%20on%20Protection%20and%20Respect%20of%20Rights%20of%20the%20Child%20in%20Albania.pdf>
- <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/rezolute/2017/12/04/212-1/776876ba-c4b3-4519-b120-cf2b5dd61cf9>
- <https://www.parlament.al/News/Index/11497>
- <https://www.crca.al/en/news-national-register-sexual-crimes-against-children-albania-child-protection-violence/crcaecpat-0>
- <https://childhub.org/en/child-protection-online-library/albanian-national-agenda-childrens-rights-2017-2020>
- <https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/1496/file/National%20Justice%20for%20Children%20Strategy%20Eng.pdf>
- https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/181042/e96750.pdf
- <http://www.hbsc.org/publications/>
- https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20albania/attachments/publications/2019/05/web_english_24.pdf?la=en&vs=5249
- <https://www.ishp.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ADHS-2017-18-Complete-PDF-FINAL-ilovepdf-compressed-1.pdf>
- <https://rm.coe.int/albania-study-report-on-bullying-egn/1680732872>
- https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eca/attachments/publications/2019/11/wave_svreport191119_web.pdf?la=en&vs=2900
- https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20albania/attachments/publications/2019/05/english_web.pdf?la=en&vs=355
- Maltz, W. (2002). Treating the sexual intimacy concerns of sexual abuse survivors. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 17(4), 321-327.
- Long, L.L., Burnett, J.A., & Thomas, R.V. (2006). *Sexuality counselling: An integrative approach*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Qirjako, G., Burazeri, G., Sethi, D., & Miho, V. (2013). Community survey on prevalence of adverse childhood experiences in Albania (2011-2012), WHO.
- Qirjako, G., Burazeri, Agolli, E., & Tocaj, D. (2019). Health Behaviour in School Age Children (HBSC) 2017-18
- World Vision in Albania. A Study on Child Online Safety in Albania, 2014. <https://www.wvi.org/albania/publication/study-child-online-safety-albania>
- Dragoti E., Ismaili E. National Survey on Bullying and Violent Extremism In the Education System of

Albania, 2017

- Burazeri G., Qirjako G., Tahsini I. Child sexual abuse in the circle of trust, 2015.
- <http://femijet.gov.al/al/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Studimi-mbi-Abuzimin-Seksual-t%C3%AB-F%C3%ABmij%C3%ABve-Brenda-Rrethit-t%C3%AB-Besimit.pdf>
- Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18. <http://www.ishp.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ADHS-2017-18-Complete-PDF-FINAL-ilovepdf-compressed-1.pdf>.
- Lalor, K. & R. McElvaney (2010). Child Sexual Abuse, Links to Later Sexual Exploitation/High-Risk Sexual Behaviour and Prevention/Treatment Programs. *Trauma, Violence and Abuse* (11), pp. 159-177.
- Humphrey, J.A. & J.W. White (2000). Women's Vulnerability to Sexual Assault from Adolescent to Young Adulthood. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Vol. 27, No. 6, pp. 419-424
- Dunja A, Gjergji O, Gvineria D, Hallkaj E, and Verzivoli I. 2019 One Click Away: Children's Experience of Internet Use in Albania. UNICEF in Albania & IPSOS Strategic Marketing, Tirana.
- OSCE, (2019). Well-being and safety of women
- WAVE, (2019). Mapping of sexual violence services in the Western Balkans & Turkey
- Arqimandriti, M., Bulku, A., Lena O.2019. Intimate Partner Violence in Albania. Albanian Women Empowerment Network (AWEN) publications. <https://awenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Research-report-in-English-INTIMATE-PARTNER-VIOLENCE-IN-ADOLESCENCE-IN-ALBANIA.pdf>
- Health Behaviour in School Aged Children Study. National Report from 2017/18 survey. Albania, 2018.
- Inchley J., et al. Growing up unequal: gender and socioeconomic differences in young people's health and well-being. Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study: International Report from the 2013/2014 survey.
- Investing in children: the European Child and Adolescent Health Strategy 2015–2020. http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/253729/64wd12e_InvestCAHstrategy_140440.pdf?ua=1.
- Inchley J et al. Growing up unequal: gender and socioeconomic differences in young people's health and well-being. Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study: International report from the 2013/2014 survey.
- Hallstrom L et al. Breakfast habits and factors influencing food choices at breakfast in relation to socio-demographic and family factors among European adolescents. The HELENA study. *Appetite*, 2011, 56(3):649–657.
- Biddle SJ et al. Physical activity and sedentary behaviours in youth: issues and controversies. *The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 2004, 124(1):29–33.
- Johnston LD, O'Malley PM, Miech RA, Bachman JG, Schulenberg JE. Monitoring the future. National survey results on drug use, 1975–2014: overview, key findings on adolescent drug use. *Ann Arbor (MI):*

Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan; 2015. <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/mtf-overview2014.pdf> (accessed 24 August 2015).

- Engels RCME, terBogt T. Influences of risk behaviours on the quality of peer relations in adolescence. *J Youth Adolesc.* 2001;30(6):675–95.
- Boden JM, Fergusson DM. The short- and long-term consequences of adolescent alcohol use. In: Saunders J, Rey JM, editors. *Young people and alcohol: impact, policy, prevention and treatment.* Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell; 2011:32–46.
- Kunst A, Giskes K, Mackenbach J. Socioeconomic inequalities in smoking in the European Union. Applying an equity lens to tobacco control policies. Rotterdam: Department of Public Health, Erasmus Medical Centre; 2004 (http://old.ensp.org/files/ensp_socioeconomic_inequalities_in_smoking_in_eu.pdf, accessed 24 August 2015).
- Hiscock R, Bauld L, Amos A, Fidler JA, Munafo M. Socioeconomic status and smoking: a review. *Ann NY Acad Sci.* 2012;1248:107–23.
- Preventing tobacco use among youth and young adults: a report of the Surgeon General. Rockville (MD): US Department of Health and Human Services; 2012 (<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/preventing-youth-tobacco-use/full-report.pdf>, accessed 24 August 2015).
- Anderson P, Baumberg B. *Alcohol in Europe. A public health perspective.* Brussels: European Commission; 2006.
- http://ec.europa.eu/health/archive/ph_determinants/life_style/alcohol/documents/alcohol_europe_en.pdf (accessed 24 August 2015).

CIP Katalogimi në botim BK Tiranë

Adolescent and Youth Abuse in Albania : in-depth analysis / Genc Burazeri, Gentiana Qirjako,
Irida Agolli, Monika Kocaqi. – Tiranë : Barleti, 2020
102 f. ;20 x 28 cm.
Bibliogr.

ISBN 978-9928-290-70-0

1.Të drejtat e njeriut 2.Fëmijët dhe dhuna 3.Probleme sociale
4.Raporte 5.Shqipëri

316.485.2 -052.3/.5 (048.83)

342.726 .052.3/.5 (048.83)

ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH ABUSE IN ALBANIA

In-depth analysis

