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# COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Conducted in Anbar and Diyala Governorates

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July 2021

naseej نسيج

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# Executive Summary

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During July, August, and September 2020, Oxfam in Iraq collected data in Diyala and Anbar to further understand the overall situation on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and the perceptions of local communities as well as provide base information against which to monitor and measure the progress and effectiveness of the project titled **“Naseej Connecting Voices and Action to End Violence Against Women and Girls in the MENA Region.”** The methodology comprised secondary data analysis and primary data collection. Quantitative data were collected using a household survey questionnaire administered to 774 individuals. Qualitative data were gathered through 16 key informant interviews (KIIs) and 8 focus group discussions (FGDs). Validation workshops were organized with the Oxfam in Iraq staff members and partners to further analyze the findings.

A long history of colonial rule, foreign interventions, successive conflicts (most recently with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria [ISIS]), and a volatile socio-economic context have fostered the pronounced gender disparities and social norms that perpetrate SGBV in Iraq. This study found that SGBV is widespread in the Diyala and Anbar Governorates and that communities perceive it to be mostly perpetrated by men.

Evidence suggests not all women and girls are perceived to be at the same risk of SGBV. Rural areas, female-headed households (HHs), ISIS-affected zones, and unemployment intersect, creating overlapping vulnerabilities.

The baseline study found that girls in the target locations were almost three times more likely to be married at or even before reaching 17. Findings suggest early marriage is imposed on girls as a way to ‘preserve’ their honor, while also relieving the family from the burden to provide for them.

Across governorates, the most prevalent perception is that when men practice violence, they do it with confidence that they will not be punished. This is largely due to limited intervention, or lack thereof, when SGBV takes place, reinforcing a culture of impunity. Moreover, these interventions of informal “justice” seem to be male dominated, as Sheikhs, heads of HH, and tribe leaders (those who usually intervene) are likely to be men. Other main factors are the (in)existence of laws punishing men who commit SGBV (there is to date no anti-domestic violence law at the federal level) and, most importantly, the limited access to justice women have in the target locations.

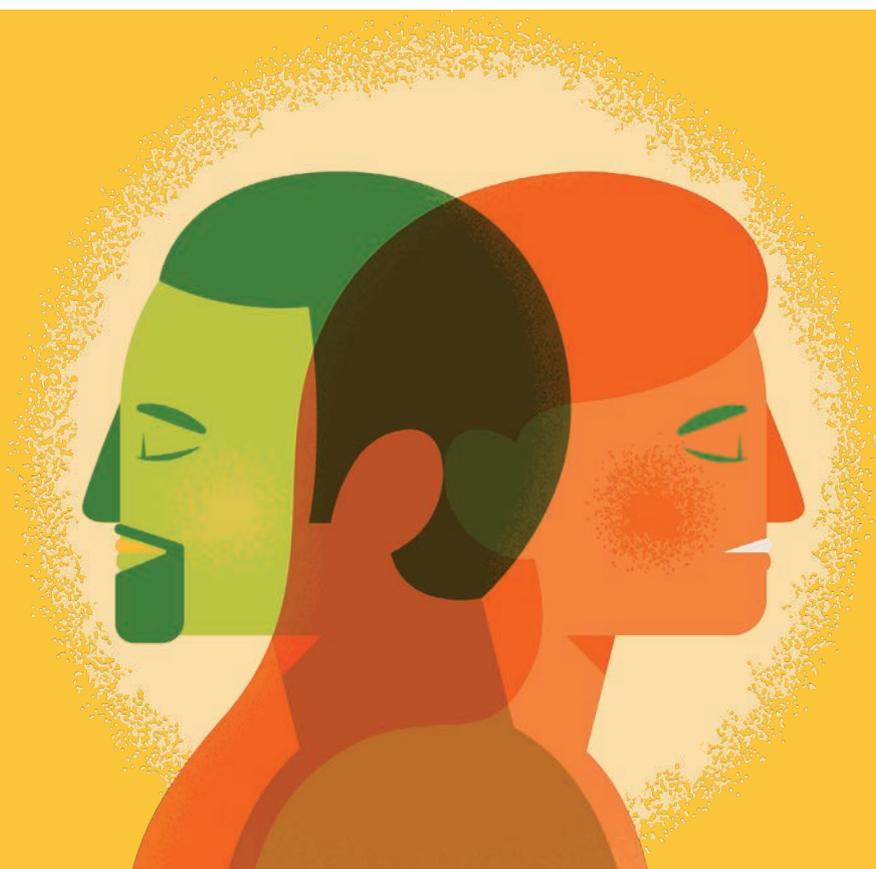
Despite the overall perception of men and women having unequal rights in the target communities, men were more likely to believe that gender equality has been achieved compared to their female counterparts. In terms of decision-making power, this study suggests that the space wherein women can make their own decisions within the HH is largely limited to the upbringing of the children, with women in Anbar reporting more restrictions than those in Diyala.

Sexual gender-based violence is still justified within the target communities. In Diyala, more people believe there is no justification compared to Anbar. Moreover, there seems to be an overall lack of/ accessibility to services for SGBV survivors in both governorates, with Anbar scoring the poorest in this regard. The data presented in this report show that men are likely to use SGBV as a coping mechanism when struggling to meet their gender expectations of being the “bread winners.”

This study also found that the majority of SGBV survivors do not seek assistance from women’s rights organizations (WROs) and that accessibility to services is extremely challenging. This is due to a combination of societal barriers that limit SGBV to being dealt with within the family while shaming survivors for seeking support alongside a lack of capacity of the system to guarantee the safety of the survivors of violence reaching out to WROs. Another major influencing element is the lack of awareness that such organizations or services exist.

The data explained suggest high interest in and needs rates for awareness-raising sessions, which could be a great entry point in communities through which to tackle SGBV, especially within the male population.

Finally, it was found that most respondents believed that ending SGBV is a priority and a shared responsibility of the government, WROs, men, women and girls, and the extended family.



# 1. Project Overview

## 1.1 Introduction

Project Naseej “Connecting Voices and Action to End Violence Against Women and Girls in the MENA Region” provides a regional response to one of the most critical issues affecting the realization of women’s empowerment in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region: sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in conflict and fragile settings. Such violence not only violates women’s and girls’ human rights but also limits progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals by hindering women’s and girls’ outcomes in health, education, and participation in public life as well as negatively affecting peace, stability, and economic prosperity. Naseej targets the fragile and conflict-affected countries of Yemen (North and South, specifically in Sana’a, Lahj, Aden, and Taiz), Iraq (retaken governorates of Diyala and Anbar), and Palestine (occupied territories of West Bank, particularly Area C, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip). These countries and locations have been chosen due to the scale of SGBV there as well as Oxfam and our partners’ presence and experience on the ground.

The project builds on a strong capacity-building component to support women’s rights civil society organizations (WROs) through a sub-granting scheme to become more autonomous and implement activities on three streams of work:

- **Strengthening support and referral services and reporting systems for women and girl survivors of SGBV**
- **Transforming the social norms that perpetuate SGBV**
- **Strengthening the development and implementation of national SGBV legislation**

Oxfam understands that supporting WROs to build their capacity and become more autonomous while assisting them in the implementation of activities will sustainably contribute to creating a more gender-equitable society in Iraq. While working at these levels, the project aims to achieve the following result chain:

### **Overall Objective: Impact**

To contribute to more gender-equitable societies in Iraq in which women and girls live free from violence across all spheres of life

### **Intermediate Outcome**

To support WROs in the target countries to effectively prevent and respond to SGBV during conflict

### **Immediate Outcome**

Partner WROs show improved organizational capacity to function more independently and effectively to deliver prevention, response, and advocacy programs/initiatives on ending SGBV

### **Immediate Outcome**

SGBV is less socially acceptable in the targeted communities, including among men and boys

### **Immediate Outcome**

Oxfam and WRO partners more effectively influence national and international policy- and decision-makers on SGBV policy and legislation and international humanitarian law obligations

## 1.2 Study purpose and objectives

The purpose of this baseline study was to provide base information against which to monitor and measure the project's progress and effectiveness during its implementation and evaluation (upon project finalization). There were two main objectives of this study:

- **To establish a pre-snapshot of the project against the mentioned outcomes**

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- **To further understand the overall situation on SGBV and the perceptions of local communities to issue recommendations to guide project implementation**

The following indicators guided the process of data collection:

- **Percentage of women and girls who report improved safety and security from SGBV**

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- **Reduced percentage of girls and women who experienced physical or sexual violence in the last 12 months**

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- **Percentage improvement in women's and girls' confidence in WROs' capacity to prevent and/or address SGBV**

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- **Increase in the level of satisfaction on quality of WROs' SGBV services among women and girl SGBV survivors**

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- **Increase in the level of satisfaction on accessibility of WROs' SGBV services among women and girl SGBV survivors**

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- **Percentage of the targeted community members support the existence and work of SGBV services**

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- **Increase in the number of people among the targeted population who believe that SGBV cannot be justified**

## 1.3 Baseline methodology

The team used a mixed methods approach via conducting a literature review of the existing resources and collecting primary qualitative (via key informant interviews [KIs] & focus group discussions [FGDs]) and quantitative (through household [HH] surveys) data in Anbar and Diyala.

### a. Literature review

The literature review focused on the following:

- **Limited available data on SGBV in Iraq**

- **Review of the legislation relevant to SGBV**

- **Access to and satisfaction with SGBV services**

- **Barriers to reporting SGBV cases**



The data collection was done during August and September 2020. The tools for the HH surveys, KIIs, and FGDs were designed at the regional level for the three implementing countries (Iraq, Yemen, and Palestine) considering the requirements of the baseline study. The tools were further tailored to the Iraqi context to ensure the questions were culturally sensitive and tackled the most pressing issues of SGBV in the target locations. The data collection methods were as follows:

- **Household Surveys** with a representative sample of 774 respondents from Diyala (236) and Anbar (538). The method used was random representative sampling with 95% confidence. Of the respondents, 532 were women (69%) and 242 were men (31%). Overrepresentation of women was preferred, as they were the main target group of this project and their voices were less likely to be echoed in the context of the patriarchal structures that also affect the academic and humanitarian communities. Moreover, women’s perceptions on SGBV are essential, as data show they are among those most exposed to this type of violence.

The data were collected across 13 locations in five districts in two governorates. In Anbar, the research was conducted in six locations

across the districts of Qaim, Ana, and Ramadi. In Diyala, the data collection was completed in seven locations across the districts of Khanaqin and Mouqdadiya.

- **Focus Group Discussions** with community members. A total of eight discussions were held, four in Anbar and four in Diyala. Four FGDs were conducted with men and four with women. The FGDs were conducted separating male from female participants in places and scheduling times when it was easier for women to attend. The venues selected were in the proximity of the attendees’ homes. The attendees were recruited through liaising with community leaders and the existing Oxfam networks in the target locations.

- **Key Informant Interviews** with a variety of participants, ranging from SGBV and health service providers to religious leaders and community authorities. A total of 16 KIIs were conducted, eight in Diyala and eight in Anbar. Of these, 11 were conducted with women and five of them with men. The KIIs were done by phone in the wake of the limited movement and access per SARS-CoV-2 virus (COVID-19) measures and the volatile security landscape, especially in Saadiya and Qaim. All data collection participants were adults (over 18 years old).

#### Summary of data collection methods with sex disaggregation:

Methods used in data collection	Anbar	Diyala	Female	Male	Total
HH survey	538	236	532	242	774
KII	8	8	11	5	16
FGD	4	4	4	4	8

## 1.4 Data collection tools and analysis

The quantitative data were processed and analyzed through Microsoft Excel and Mobenzi. They were reviewed on a daily basis, and feedback was provided to the enumerators to ensure a high quality of the data. At the end of the quantitative data collection, validation workshops were conducted with the enumerator teams to further understand the nuances and gather informal pieces of information during the data collection process. The qualitative data were transcribed and compiled into matrixes. All primary data were triangulated to draw commonalities, differences, and conclusions.

## 1.5 Ethical considerations

All activities involved in this study took research ethics into consideration. A detailed description of the main study objectives was provided, and informed consent was sought from all respondents involved in the primary data collection. The respondents were informed that they were entitled to stop responding or participating in the study at any time they wished.

The participants were invited to renew their consent before answering questions related to SGBV at the end of the survey. Additionally, all enumerators engaged in data collection received a five-day training on SGBV, gender relations, prevention of sexual exploitation and harassment, confidentiality, and Mobenzi. Personal protective equipment for COVID-19 was provided for all participants, and two-meter social distancing was maintained throughout all data collection activities.

## 1.6 Limitations

- **General sensitivity about sexuality and gender in Iraq increased the difficulty of further deepening some of the topics approached in this study.**
- **The local context, resources available, and indicators guiding this baseline study led, at least to a limited extent, to a heteronormative and binary approach to gender in the data collection.**
- **Data collection on SGBV is, across all cultures, difficult to measure. Although necessary, avoiding asking questions leading to re-victimization is likely to increase the underreporting of SGBV cases and related forms of violence. Specifically, the in-country team decided not to directly ask participants if they had suffered SGBV themselves during the HH surveys. The question was reframed to understand if they had heard of relatives/ neighbors having gone through SGBV.**
- **The understanding of SGBV was likely to vary across the respondents and, as such, affect the reliability of the data.**
- **When drafting the data collection tools, the term “violence against women” was used, as it was easier to understand within the specific context of the target locations. However, for the purpose of this paper, “SGBV” is used.**

*This baseline study was not intended to be a sociological analysis of SGBV in the target locations or Iraq; rather, it aimed at understanding the perceptions of the target communities to measure project indicators.*

*When echoing the voices of respondents who mentioned “culture,” these lines do not suggest that the culture is natural. As with gender and sexuality, “culture” is socially constructed in the context of a heteropatriarchal hegemony. Exploring how this hegemony has taken shape in Iraq, and much of the Global South, requires a sociological and multidimensional analysis of its years under colonialism, occupation, Orientalization, economic sanctions, enforcement of white feminism, and beyond.*

*Authors such as Chandra Mohanty, Edward Said, Leila Ahmed, Zahra Ali, Joseph Massad, and Lohana Berkins among many others have provided much better insights with which to analyze gender, heteropatriarchy, and, therefore, SGBV from a multidimensional perspective.*



## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction: definitions and statistics

The term “gender” refers to a social category imposed upon “sexed bodies.” It is a series of beliefs, expectations, attitudes, and roles usually associated with what society understands to be male or female appearances. Although defining gender has become a matter of endless academic discussion, so has SGBV. For the purpose of this study, the following definition will be used: *Gender-based violence refers to “harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms.”*

Globally, one in three women experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime, mostly by an intimate partner (WHO, 2017). In 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) published a report titled “Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women.” The report findings on the lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence (physical and/or sexual), non-partner violence, or both among all women (15 years and older) for each WHO region are the following: Overall, 45.6% in Africa, 36.1% in the Americas, 36.4% in the Eastern Mediterranean, 27.2% in Europe, 40.2% in Southeast Asia, and around 45% in



the Western Pacific experience any of the above. In 2019, one in five women aged 20–24 years had married before the age of 18 (UN Women, Facts and Figures). In MENA, 40%–60% of women have experienced street-based sexual harassment. In the multi-country study, women said the harassment was mainly sexual comments, stalking or following, and staring or ogling. Between 31% and 64% of men said they had carried out such acts. Younger men, men with more education, and men who had experienced violence as children were more likely to engage in street sexual harassment (Promundo & UN Women, 2017).

Less than 40% of women who experience violence seek help of any sort. In the majority of countries with available data on this issue, among the women who do seek help, most look to family and friends, and very few look to formal institutions, such as police and health services (UN Women, Facts and Figures). Less than 10% of those seeking help appeal to the police (DESA, 2015).

## 2.2 SGBV in Iraq

Iraq has had a historical tradition of social movements pushing for women's rights from as early as the 1920s. The first Iraqi women's magazine, *Layla*, was launched in 1923, and the Iraqi League for the Defense of Women's Rights was founded in 1952 by Naziha al-Dulaimi.<sup>vi</sup> However, a long history of colonial rule, foreign interventions, successive conflicts, and a volatile socio-economic context have fostered pronounced gender disparities and social norms that perpetuate SGBV.

In December 2017, Iraq officially declared military victory over the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), leaving behind millions of internally displaced people (IDPs). Although efforts to rebuild the country and guarantee the rule of law are ongoing, there are still multiple militias and ISIS insurgents operating in different parts of the country, including Diyala and Anbar Governorates.

Amid ongoing discussions on Iraq transitioning from humanitarian/post-conflict/development paradigms, smaller-scale military operations and camp closures are resulting in new displacements and impacting the safe return of IDPs.

According to the November 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview, SGBV in Iraq is widespread and has been reported in both in-camp and off-camp settings. The SGBV Sub-Cluster Rapid Assessment on the Impact of COVID-19 Outbreak on Gender-Based Violence in Iraq concluded that SGBV levels have recently increased.

In an environment of armed violence, rising poverty, widespread human rights violations, and "disruption of traditional social networks and protection mechanisms, women and girls become specifically vulnerable to SGBV which

operates within already existing patriarchal social structures and practices." In this context, "honor killings," early and forced marriage, and limitation of women's decision-making power and participation in the labor market are widespread across the country.

**The longstanding humanitarian crisis in Iraq is increasing women's and girls' risk of experiencing SGBV (UNFPA, 2016). According to Iraq SGBV Information Management System data, 98% of SGBV survivors who report SGBV are women or girls.**

It is worth noting that given the "high underreporting of SGBV, inefficient data collection and management, and inadequate service provision for survivors make it impossible to obtain precise information on the prevalence of the crime" (IRC, 2012). Although the IRC study took place in Iraqi Kurdistan, this limitation also applies to overall federal Iraq.

## 2.3 Review of the legislation relevant to gender and SGBV in Iraq

As summarized by the 2018 United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) report “Iraq, Gender Justice & the Law,” the Iraqi constitution has several articles that, a priori, are relevant to protection from SGBV:

- **Article 14 expresses that “Iraqis are equal before the law without discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, origin, color, religion, creed, belief or opinion, or economic and social status.”**
- **Article 15 provides that “every individual has the right to enjoy life, security and liberty. Deprivation or restriction of these rights is prohibited except in accordance with the law and based on a decision issued by a competent judicial authority.”**
- **Article 29 declares that “the State guarantees the protection of motherhood, childhood and old age and shall care for children and youth and provides them with the appropriate conditions to further their talents and abilities.”**

However, these principles of equality and justice are not integrated into Iraqi legislation, which still has discriminatory elements reinforcing gender assumptions and harming women and girls, especially when it comes to the reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Personal Status Law, and Penal Code, as shown below.

### The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

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Iraq has been a signatory state of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) since 1986; however, it has introduced several reservations based on

Article 2 of its constitution, e.g., “Islam is the official religion of the State, is a fundamental source of legislation, and [...] no law can contradict the established provisions of Islam.” These reservations specifically address Article 2(g) of CEDAW on policy measures and modifications of laws that discriminate against women, Article 9 on equal rights to pass on nationality, Article 16 in regard to marriage equality, and Article 29 on the administration of the convention and arbitration of disputes. Moreover, Article 41 of the constitution expresses that “Iraqi citizens are free to determine their personal status according to their religion.” This raises concerns as women can be “disadvantaged if personal status issues revert to the control of religious authorities and tribal customs,” as expressed in the 2018 UNFPA report. There were attempts to pass more conservative personal status laws for the Shi’a community in 2014, for which the CEDAW Committee expressed concern.

### The Personal Status Law

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Iraq has overlapping legal systems, with the civil and religious/sectarian laws and courts coexisting. Family affairs usually fall under the jurisdiction of religious laws and courts. Often, some of the crimes stipulated in civil laws may not be classified as crimes in Islamic law and vice versa; for example, religious laws permit violence, discipline of wives, the right to sexual pleasure for men, and the wife’s obedience to her husband, while these are not protected and are in some cases even criminalized under positive law.

Law No. 188 of 1959, commonly known as the Personal Status Law, regulates the overall marriage institution (contracting, effects of the union and the eventual divorce); it is applicable to the Muslim population and usually applied by Sharia courts.

# The Personal Status Law reproduces gender stereotypes, namely the woman as a figure reduced to “caregiver” and the man as “breadwinner.”

In this sense, “the wife shall be provided with maintenance by the husband,” and in return, she will obey, except for “any matter that conflicts with the rulings of the Shari’a.” Moreover, the faculties to divorce are unequal, with the husband having a greater scope of freedom. Articles 40 and 41 provide a set of reasons for which both spouses can file for divorce, and Article 43 foresees circumstances under which the wife can ask for the separation. However, Article 37 only grants the husband the right to unilateral divorce by “pronouncing three repudiations.” Another topic that exposes women to violence and devaluation is that of dowry and maintenance, as the law stipulates that if separation takes place after consummation and the wife is the one responsible for the dereliction, the deferred dowry ceases to be effective, whether she is the plaintiff or defendant. And if she has collected the entire dowry by then, she would be bound to retribute no more than half of it.

Therefore, **the woman, expected to remain a caregiver without her own livelihood opportunities, can be stripped of her financial rights if she is found “guilty” for the divorce.** Lastly, if a woman wants to divorce outside the set of reasons stipulated by the law (khul’a divorce), she can only proceed by forgoing her financial rights.

## Criminal Code

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The Iraqi Criminal Code, applicable in federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), raises many concerns in regard to protection from SGBV, especially for women and girls.

### Physical violence

Although, as mentioned above, the constitution bans all forms of violence and abuse in the family, Article 41 of the criminal code allows the husband to “punish his wife, and parents to discipline their children within the limits prescribed by law or custom.” What those limits entail is not clear and allows for interpretations that hinder the rights of women, girls, and boys.

### Sexual violence

Although sexual assault (including rape) are crimes under Articles 393 and 396, marital rape is not recognized as such.

“Article 393 - (1) Any person who has sexual intercourse with a female without her consent or commits buggery with any person without their consent is punishable by a term of imprisonment not exceeding 15 years.”

Article 393 poses concerns, as **“sexual intercourse” suggests only penile–vaginal sexual relations and does not clearly include other forms of sexual penetration, such as oral or object penetration. Other acts of sexual violence against men and boys outside of “buggery” are not included in the law.**

It is worth noting that words such as “buggery” or “sodomy” have been commonly used to refer to anal sex and criminalize consented homosexual acts between cis-gender men. Focus on anal penetration can lead to inhumane treatment of survivors, who might be exposed to anal examinations. Lastly, one of the aggravating circumstances for the offender is when a female survivor was a virgin, exposing her to the risk of possible “hymen testing.”

Article 396 - (1) Any person who sexually assaults a man or woman or attempts to do so without his or her consent and with the use of force, menaces, deception or other means is punishable by a term of imprisonment not exceeding seven years or by detention. Article 396 is not clear on what sexual assault and consent mean nor on how consent is given and when it stops.

Another pressing concern included in the criminal code is that of the perpetrator being able to marry a cis-female survivor to escape punishment:

Article 398: If the offender mentioned in this Section then lawfully marries the victim, any action becomes void and any investigation or other procedure is discontinued and, if a sentence has already been passed in respect of such action, then the sentence will be quashed.

However, the code criminalizes some forms of sexual harassment. For instance, it is an offense to commit “immodest acts” with a person without consent, and it is punishable to assail a woman in public in an immodest manner with words, actions, or signs.

### **Honor killings**

Defense of so-called “honor” can be used as reason to lower a penalty or discharge a person who commits femicide. As portrayed by the 2018 UNFPA report, the criminal code

grants this privilege to any person who surprises his wife in the act of adultery or finds his female relative (mother, sister, daughter, etc.) in bed with her lover and kills one or both of them immediately or assaults one of them so that he or she dies or is left permanently disabled is punishable by a period of detention not exceeding three years. The latter is a lower penalty that otherwise would apply.

### **Adultery and sex outside marriage**

Articles 25, 377, and 378 of the code criminalize adultery, but the treatment and punishment vary based on gender. When adultery happens between a married woman and a man, both individuals can be prosecuted. However, when it takes place between a married man and a non-married woman, the man will only be punished if adultery takes place in the conjugal home. Criminalization of adultery might deter women from reporting cases of sexual violence. Moreover, although consensual sex outside marriage is not strictly prohibited, laws regulating moral acts can be used to criminalize it. This is especially challenging for LGBTQI+ individuals, who are not entitled to freely choose spouses and, as such, “morally accepted sexual partners.”

### **Abortion**

Article 417 prohibits abortion, for which the person deciding to interrupt the pregnancy as well as those who assist in the operation can be punished. As per the law, “[i]f a woman, having become pregnant through fornication, procures her own miscarriage out of shame, it is considered to be a legally mitigating circumstance.”

### **Female genital mutilation**

There is no national law at the federal level prohibiting female genital mutilation.

## Anti-Domestic Violence Law

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To date, there is no anti-domestic violence law at the national level; KRI is the only territory that has one. Despite growing efforts since 2013 to push for the passing of such a law in the Iraqi parliament and the amendment of a draft in 2016, the project stalled during 2019 and 2020.

As expressed by Wahda Jumaili, a member of the parliament's Human Rights Committee, in a 2020 interview with Human Rights Watch, **"some members blocked the law because they do not believe the state should punish honor killings or partners' corporal punishment of their children."**<sup>xix</sup> In the same Human Rights Watch article, Shatha Naji, head of the Women for Peace Organization, stated that a parliament member told her, "Do you really want to make our society like a Western one, where I cannot even punish my son if he comes home late?"

Although much needed, the draft of the law is far from perfect. As explained in a 2017 Human Rights Watch article, the law puts priority on "reconciliation over protection and justice for abused victims." Article 19 of the draft expresses that "the judge should refer the parties to the Department of Social Research for reconciliation, and where reconciliation fails, the court shall take legal actions." This is seen as problematic since domestic violence "is considered a private matter in Iraq and women are often under tremendous social and economic pressure to prioritize the family unit over their protection from violence," leading survivors to have less bargaining power in a reconciliation process.

## 2.4 Limited services for SGBV survivors and reporting

As per the findings of the UNFPA Assessment of the Needs of and Services Provided to SGBV Survivors in Iraq (2018), there are still limited services available for survivors, and the existing ones present many challenges. According to survivors, the following are the main reasons for the limited access to services:

- **For IDPs: a) fear of revenge and punishment, b) fear of social stigma, and c) lack of faith in the police as well as lack of awareness about available services.**
- **For refugees: a) fear of social stigma, b) fear of revenge and punishment, and c) concerns about breaches of confidentiality as well as lack of awareness about available services.**
- **For the returnees: a) lack of awareness about available services, b) fear of revenge and punishment, and c) fear of social stigma.**
- **For host communities: a) lack of awareness about available services, b) fear of social stigma, revenge, and punishment and breach of confidentiality, and c) lack of faith in the police.**

The reasons for not reaching out to SGBV services overlap with those preventing survivors from reporting, e.g., “women do not report violence by family members, because they are ashamed, scared of repercussions or are concerned with protecting husbands or family members.” In many cases survivors fear that reporting SGBV perpetrated by family members might lead to loss of custody of their children or other resources (UNFPA, 2018).

Moreover, **patriarchal judiciary and police systems pose threats to survivors willing to report violence**, and “in some cases, charges are brought against the victim, including adultery and rape. Female victims of SGBV are often incarcerated for their own protection even if they are not charged.” Moreover, in cases related to sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse, reporting is shaped by “factors such as reputation (‘ard), honour (sharaf), women’s reputation based on sexual conduct (‘ird), the importance of shame, and how rumours and gossip are seen in society in Iraq.”



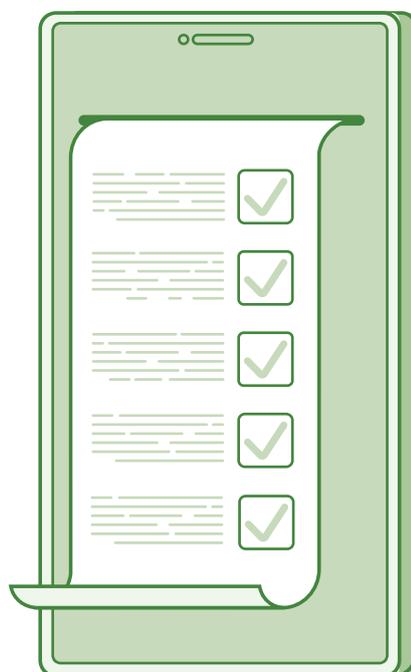
# 3. Main Findings of Community Survey and FGDs

## 3.1 Introduction

To understand how SGBV operates in the target locations, the perceptions of female and male Iraqis were essential. To represent the diversity in Anbar and Diyala, the quantitative survey targeted 774 respondents (532 women and 242 men) from 13 locations in five districts in both governorates. This was a random representative sample with 95% confidence.

The following table shows the sample distribution by governorate and district:

Governorate	District	Total
Anbar	Al Qaim	477
	Anna	45
	Ramadi	15
Diyala	Khanaqin	122
	Muqdadiya	114



The survey covered the following topics within the scope of SGBV: social norms and attitudes, forms of violence against women, legal and security measures, support for women and girl survivors of SGBV (including those with disabilities), engagement in awareness-raising activities, and human rights-based perspectives.

To better understand the nuances of the responses to the HH surveys, a total of eight FGDs were held with community members, four with females and four with males, across the targeted locations. Each session had six to ten participants.

The findings of the HH surveys and FGDs presented below portray an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of Iraqi communities regarding SGBV in Anbar and Diyala. As such, the conclusions and recommendations provided in this study address the existing viewpoints and current issues on the ground.



## 3.2 Social norms and behaviors

### Men and women have equal rights

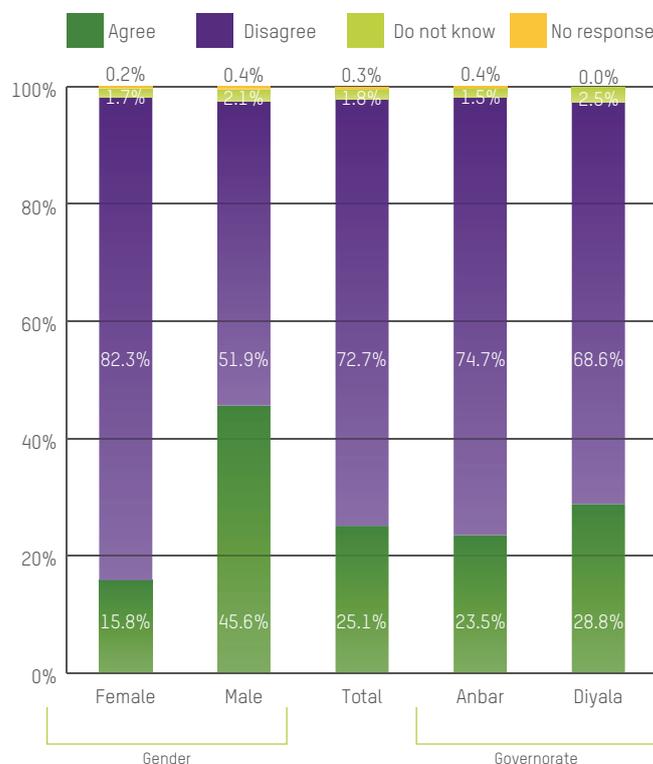


Figure 1 “Women and men have equal rights in your community.”

Figure 1 shows that despite the overall perception that men and women have unequal rights in the target communities, the men surveyed were more likely to believe that equality between the two genders has been achieved.

In Diyala, when asked if men and women enjoy equal rights in the communities, 68.6% of respondents disagreed. Upon disaggregating the data by sex, male interviewees were almost twice as likely (39.7%) to agree with the statement compared to females (23.9%). In Anbar, close to three in four participants (74.5%) expressed that women and men do not have the same rights. The male respondents were over three times (48.2%) more likely to agree with the statement than females (12.2%).

The perceptions of women from the HH surveys were mostly reinforced by the FGDs, while men reported more diverse positions in this regard.

The female FGD participants expressed that men are prioritized in many aspects of life, such as education, the right to choose a partner, and inheritance. As portrayed by one participant, there is a belief that “men have absolute freedom” (at least compared to women) and that “most men believe they can dictate the decisions affecting a woman’s life.” Overall, the participants agreed that gender inequality is rooted in cultural and religious norms and practices and that not all women enjoy the same rights. The extent of the inequality ultimately depends on the beliefs of each family and the male head of HH, whether they live in a big city or rural area, and/or their civil and employment status. In this sense, there seemed to be a consensus that while married and employed women are the “most free,” single, widowed, unemployed, and divorced women face more restrictions of their rights.

While a number of male respondents expressed that all women have the right to access education, choose their partner, raise their children, and even work, many of them did not agree, insisting that “women in our community have always been denied education and inheritance.” Similar to the female attendees, some men reported that males “have the freedom to do as they please and go wherever they want” and that **the extent of a woman’s freedom depends on the male head of HH as “he is the one who mainly determines the extent of rights a woman enjoys.”**<sup>xxvii</sup> It is worth mentioning that several male participants, while agreeing there is no equality, viewed this as necessary: “[T]he man is the only one to take leadership roles.” Lastly, some opinions linked gender equality to foreign ideas, with one participant explaining that “[they] are not like Europeans.” It is interesting to note that this argument of gender justice being inherently “foreign” and “European” is one of the reasons used to push against the anti-domestic violence law mentioned above.

## Women and girls have the right to make their own decisions at home

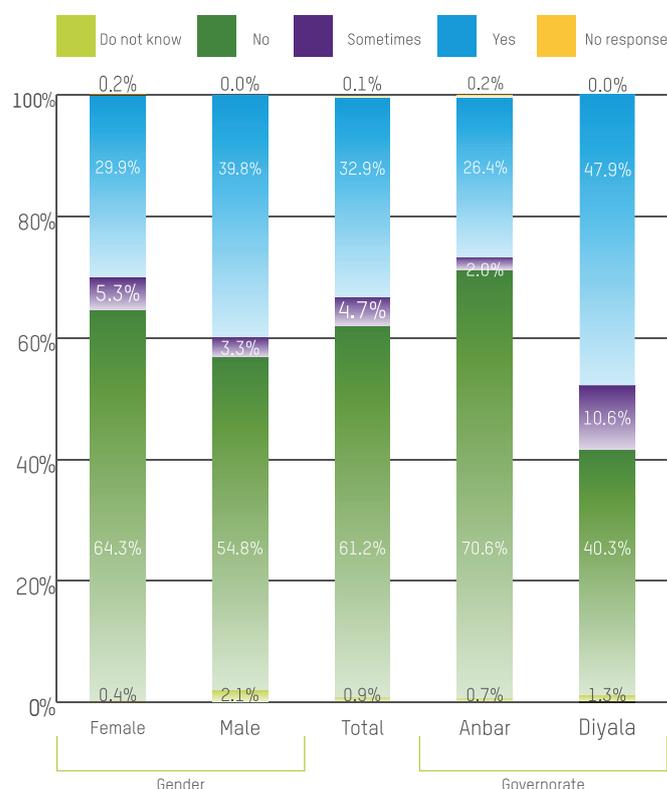
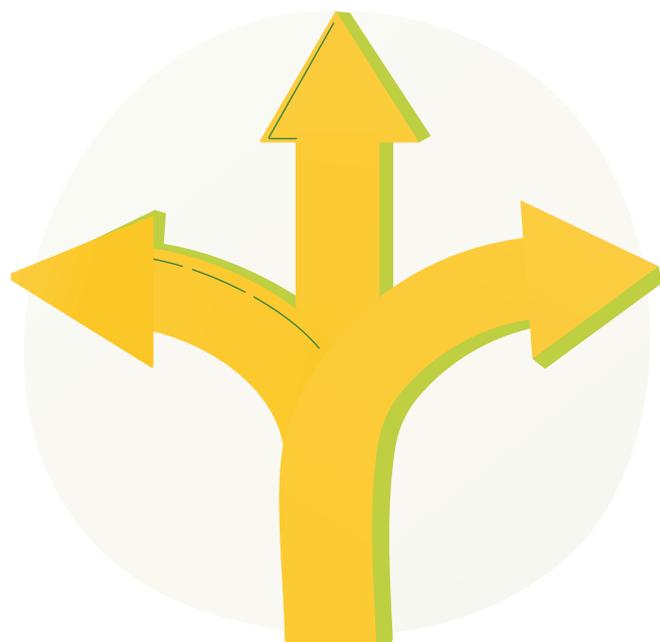


Figure 2 “Women and girls have the right to make their own decisions at the household level.”



## Decisions made at home - type

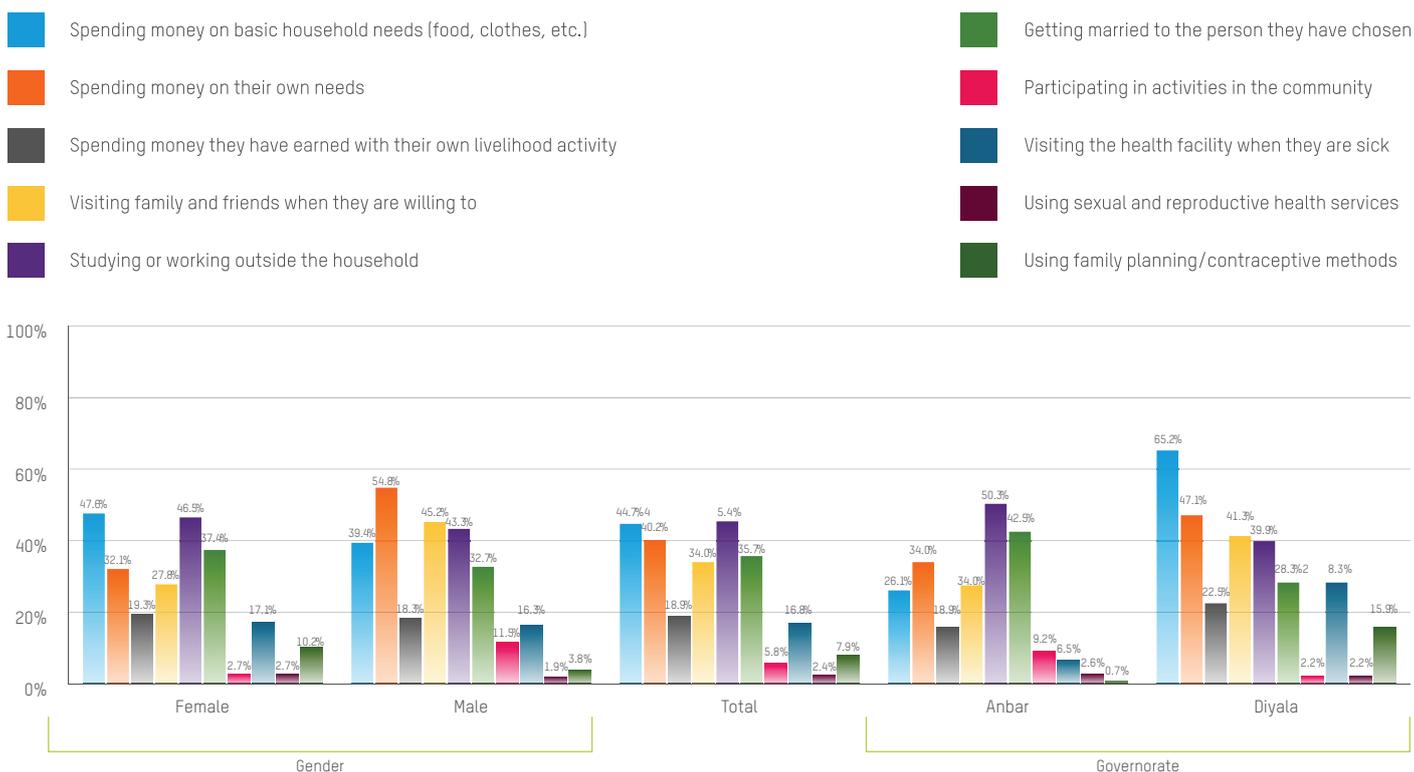


Figure 3 "Type of decision made."

Diverse responses were reported regarding the right of women to make decisions at the HH level, dependent on the participants' governorate and gender.

A total of four in ten (40.3%) respondents in Diyala and seven in ten (70.4%) in Anbar expressed that women do not have the right to make their own decisions in their HH. Overall, women were more likely to consider that they can do so (61.2%) than their male counterparts (32.9%).

The participants were also asked about the types of decisions women can make in the HH, as portrayed in Figure 3.

In Diyala and Anbar, there seemed to be a consensus among the genders that women can make decisions regarding the education and health of their children but that they

cannot decide by themselves whether to participate in community activities or use sexual and reproductive health services. As for the rest of the options pertaining to the HH rights of women, the results proved to be highly gendered. In Diyala:

- **Seven in ten men (71%) and six in ten women (63.6%) declared women and girls can spend money for basic HH needs on their own.**
- **Nine in ten men (90.3%) and seven in ten women (73.8%) expressed women and girls do not have the right to decide for themselves how to spend the money earned from their livelihood opportunities.**
- **Almost nine in ten men (87.1%) and five in ten women (47.7%) declared women and girls do not have the right to study or work outside the HH.**

- **Over nine in ten men (93.5%) and six in ten women (65.4%) declared women and girls do not have the right to marry the person they choose.**

- **Four in ten men and two in ten women expressed women and girls do not have the right to decide for themselves to visit health facilities when sick.**

- **Close to two in ten women (17.8%) and one in ten men (9.7%) believed women and girls have the right to use family planning/ contraceptive methods.**

In Anbar, women seemed to face more restrictions, as the data showed the main perception was that women and girls cannot decide for themselves to visit health facilities when sick or to spend money on HH needs, which are types of decisions women can make in Diyala.

As for the rest of the options pertaining to women's HH rights, the results again proved to be highly gendered. In Anbar:

- **Nine in ten women (90%) and eight in ten men (79.1%) declared women and girls cannot decide how to spend the money earned from their own livelihood opportunities.**

- **Eight in ten women (82.5%) and six in ten men (61.6%) expressed women and girls cannot willfully visit family and friends.**

- **Over five in ten women (55%) and four in ten men (43.8%) declared women and girls do not have the right to decide to study or work outside the HH.**

- **Almost six in ten women (58.8%) and six in ten men (56.2%) expressed women and girls have the right to marry the person they choose.**

The data above suggested that the space wherein women can make their own decisions is largely limited to upbringing of the children.

These overall findings of the HH surveys were further confirmed during the FGDs. The participants consistently expressed that they live in a culture revolving around "eib" ("shame"), i.e., limitations on what individuals can and cannot do based on understandings of honor and morals. When asked how honor impacts HH decisions, a female participant explained that it leads to "parents denying women and girls access to education to avoid scandals" and, as one male participant added, **creates expectations for a woman "to only stay at home."**<sup>31</sup> Finally, it is worth noting that when regarding expenditures, there were nuances to the replies presented above. As explained by a respondent, "if it [the expense] is low, women are allowed to decide by themselves."<sup>32</sup>

The KIs fed this assumption of socially constructed notions of honor limiting women's decision-making power:

**"An honourable woman is one who wears proper clothes, does not mix with men, does not go to the market, whose body and hair nobody sees, and someone against whom people do not speak."**<sup>33</sup>

Diyala, Moukhtar, male, 45, September 2020

Another male interviewee added, "I even clean outside the house so that my wife does not have to leave the home." This takes a toll on the extent of the decisions women are allowed to make, and "because of the burden women carry to preserve their reputation, they end up making endless concessions." However, this does not mean that these understandings of honor are fixed or shared by the whole population; as a female interviewee expressed, **"[U]nlike for my community, for me an honourable woman is someone who depends on herself, can take decisions and leaves according to humanitarian principles."**



## Average age of marriage for girls

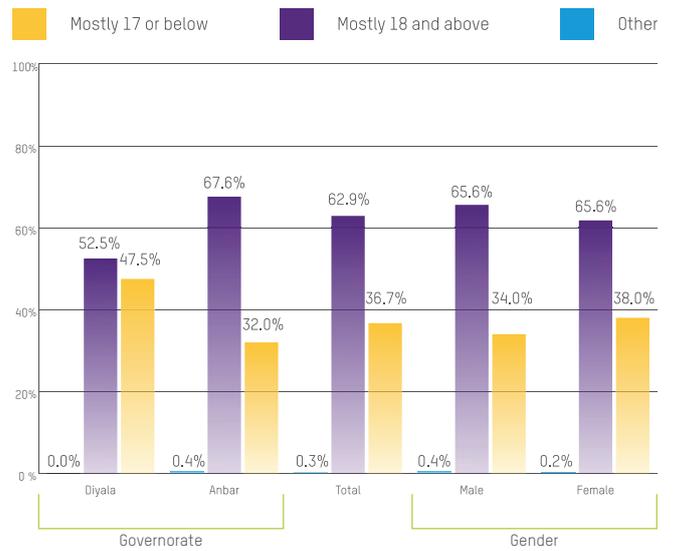


Figure 4 "At what age do girls get married in your community?"

## Average age of marriage for boys



Figure 5 "At what age do boys get married in your community?"

## Reasons for early marriage

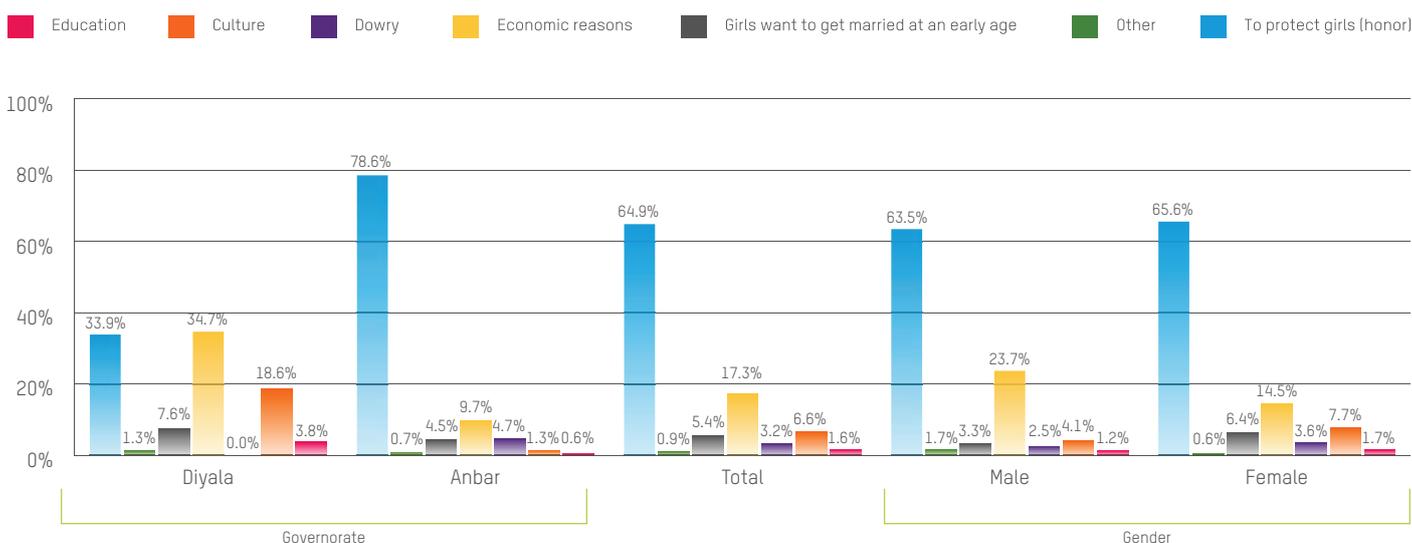


Figure 6 “Why do you think early marriage takes place?”

Across locations, it was found that early marriage is still prevalent in the target communities. In Diyala, almost half of the respondents (47.5%) expressed that girls usually get married before their seventeenth birthday, while only one in four (17.8%) reported boys being married at this age. The female participants (59.3%) were more likely to reply that the age girls get married at is “mostly 18 or above” compared to their male counterparts (39.7%). In Anbar, one in three (32%) participants reported girls marrying at age 17 or below, while only one in ten (11%) expressed the same for boys.

**It is not surprising that early marriage has gendered effects, i.e., it impacts boys and girls unevenly. When analyzing the data from both governorates, we observed that girls were almost three times as likely to be married before the age of 17.**

When the respondents were given different options as to why early marriage takes place, across the different locations and genders, the two most popular reasons were “economic reasons” and “to protect girls.”

**The FGD participants explained that early marriage can be a “way to relieve the financial burden of the family” or to “preserve their [girls’] honour and protect them from delinquency, making mistakes, being abused by other men and bringing shame on to their families.”** However, as explained by a female interviewee, “[E]arly marriage destroys girls; I call this selling, not marriage.”

## The high prevalence of early marriage does not necessarily mean the communities agree with it; rather, the findings suggested this form of violence takes place out due to a combination of harmful traditional practices, lack of economic opportunities, and widespread SGBV.

In this sense, only one in four (25%) respondents in Diyala and less than one in five (20%) in Anbar expressed that early marriage can be good for girls. It is worth noting, however, that across the governorates, men were either three (Diyala) or four times (Anbar) as likely as women to believe this practice is beneficial for girls. A Sheikh taking part in the KIs raised that early marriage is not for everyone: “[I]n Islam, early marriage is allowed but only for special ladies. Today, no such special ladies exist anymore.” When asked about this “special” characteristic, it was explained that it concerns girls who are mature enough to face marriage.

### Perspectives on divorce and child custody

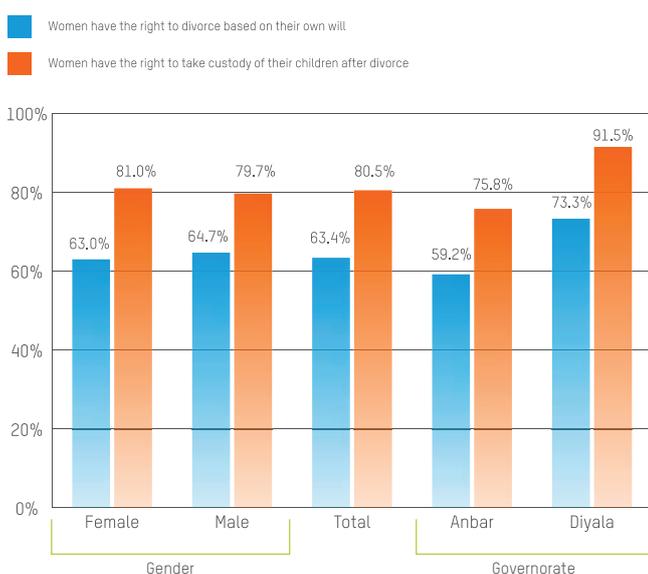


Figure 7 “Should women have the right to divorce based on their own will? Should women have the right to custody of their children after divorce?”

Across the locations and genders, the majority of respondents believed that women should have the right to divorce based on their own will, but over one in four (25.8%) respondents in Diyala and almost four in ten (39%) in Anbar expressed the opposite. Across the governorates, men were consistently more likely to believe women should not have this right.

According to the Personal Status Law, although the fathers retain guardianship of the children, after divorce, women get custody of their descendants until the age of ten, which can be extended by the judge to 15 years old. After that, the minor can decide with whom to live.

Overall, there seemed to be a consensus that in cases of divorce, women should take custody of the children: Almost nine in ten respondents in Diyala and seven in ten participants in Anbar believed this to be the case.

Likewise, most respondents (86.9%) declared that women should receive financial support for the children’s daily expenditures (Nafaqa) after divorce.

If a woman decides to remarry, less than two in ten respondents thought she should keep the custody.

### 3.3 Forms of violence against women in Iraq

#### Reasons for justifying any form of violence against wife

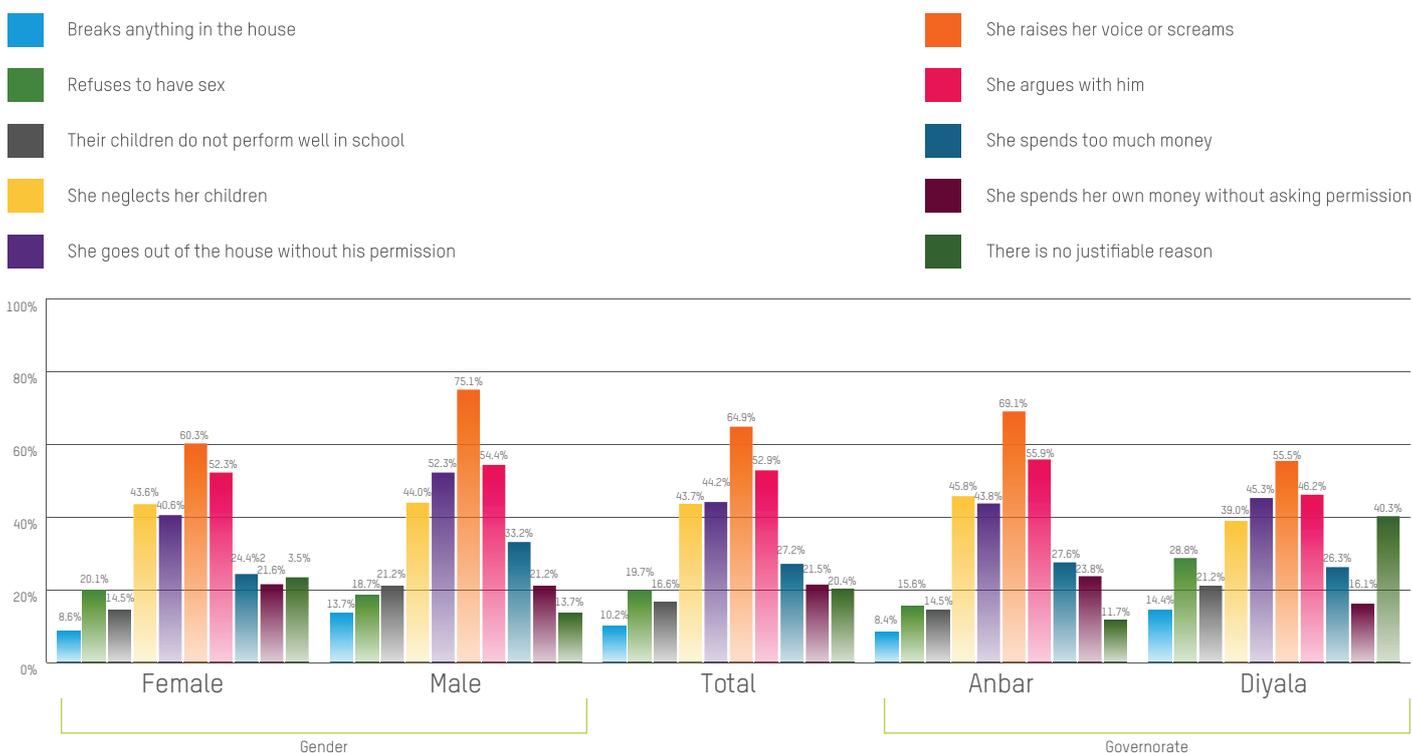


Figure 8 “Do you think it is justifiable to practice any form of violence against one’s wife?”

In Diyala, over four in ten respondents (40.3%) declared that there is no justification for a husband to be violent with his wife. In Anbar, only one in ten (11.7%) believed so.

When disaggregating the data by sex, this point proved to be highly gendered. In Anbar, women were almost five times (15.4%) as likely as men (3.6%) to believe there is no justification for violence. Similarly, but with a less pronounced variation, women in Diyala (41.7%) were more likely to believe violence cannot be justified compared to their male counterparts (37%).

Across participants, as shown in Figure 8, the three most popular justifications for a man to commit violence against his wife were (1) “if she raises her voice or screams,” (2) “if she argues with him,” and (3) “if she goes out of the house without his permission.”

The overall findings of the surveys were confirmed upon conducting the FGDs. The men consistently gave examples to justify such violence, and in Diyala, the female attendees presented a greater diversity of opinions. As raised during the FGDs with men, “the type of punishment (violence) depends [on] the type of mistake the wife does. If small she will be insulted; if big, she will be hit, forced to isolate or be expelled from the HH.”<sup>41</sup>

FGD, males, Diyala & Anbar, September 2020

During the discussions, the participants pointed out that some of the most common justifications were if the “wife spends money without the husband’s permission,” “neglects the children and the house,” or “leaves the home without permission.” The female participants did not have a unanimous stance in this regard, especially in Diyala. Some of them insisted that a “man does not have the right to punish a woman,” while others thought “beating, forced isolation or denial of money could be justified if the woman does something inappropriate.”

## Are women and girls in your community subjected to any of the following forms of violence?

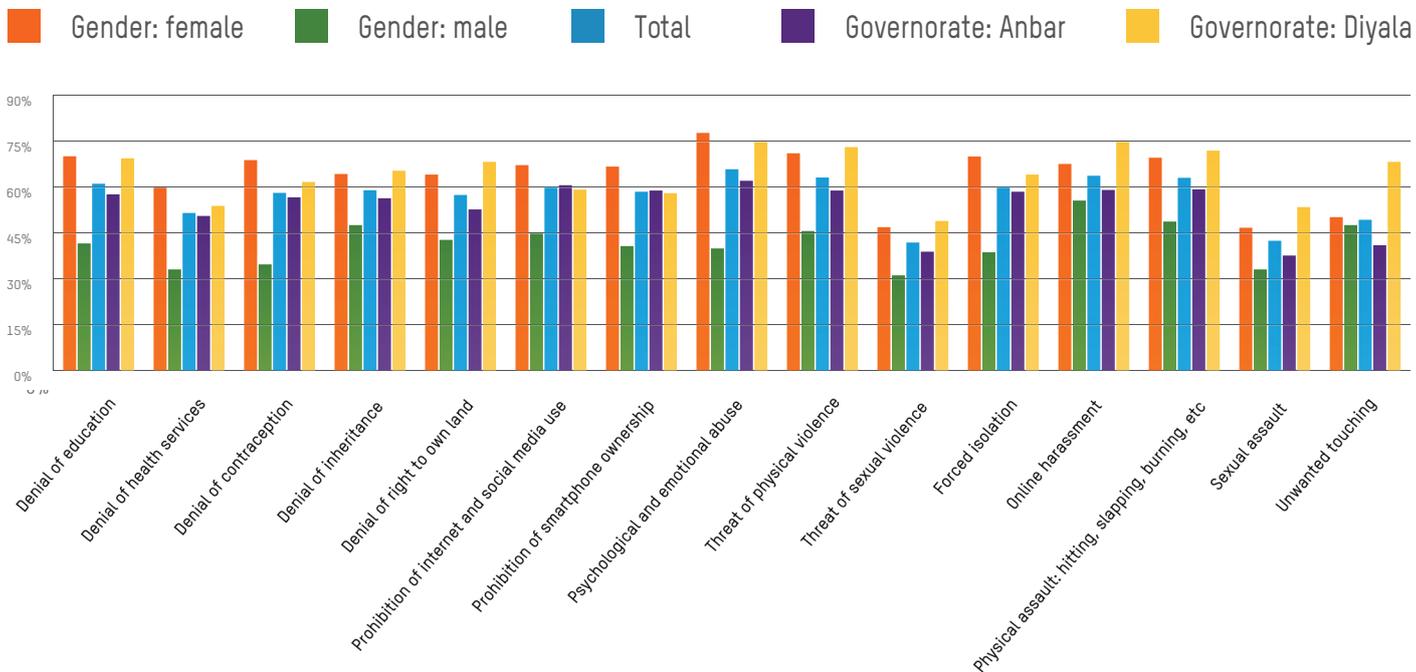


Figure 9 “Are women and girls in your community subjected to any of the following forms of violence?”

When given a range of different forms of SGBV (Figure 9), the most prevalent options overlapped in Diyala and Anbar. Moreover, **every time men were asked if women and girls are subjected to a type of SGBV, they were less likely to identify violence as taking place in each suggestion.**

Most men participating in the FGDs expressed that SGBV is rare in their communities and occurs in only a few specific forms, namely forced isolation, physical violence, burning, and expulsion from the HH. Inversely, the female participants declared that SGBV is very common, with the most recurrent forms being emotional abuse, early marriage, inheritance/economic deprivation, and physical violence. During a KII, a female interviewee linked the broader topic of SGBV to the power struggles among the different actors in Iraq, including the tribes. As she explained, “when tribes clash, they sometimes retaliate against women as a form of revenge.”<sup>42</sup>

## Has a relative or a neighbour of yours experienced SGBV in the last 12 months?

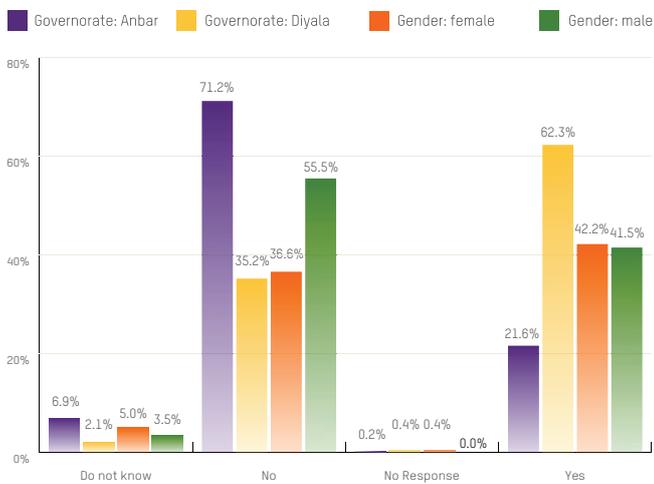


Figure 10 “Has a relative or a neighbor of yours experienced SGBV in the last 12 months?”

In Diyala, more than half of the respondents (61.3%) expressed knowing a neighbor or relative experiencing SGBV. In Anbar, almost three in four respondents (71.2%) replied they did not know of a relative or neighbor who had experienced SGBV.

The lack of variation among the sexes in Diyala and the low number of people who reported knowing such a person in Anbar did not match the results of the previous question, in which the respondents were asked to identify the different forms of SGBV present in their communities. It is worth noting that to avoid re-victimization, the team did not ask they participants if they had suffered violence themselves. Instead, the question was framed toward their relatives or neighbors. Moreover, this point was difficult to measure given the delicacy of the matter and the larger trend of SGBV being underreported or not recognized as such.

Of the respondents who reported knowing a neighbor or relative who had experienced SGBV, almost half (44.5%) in Diyala expressed that no services were received; in Anbar, this number rose to 66%.

This suggested an overall lack of existence/ accessibility of services for SGBV survivors in both governorates, with Anbar scoring the poorest in this regard. Although the accessibility and existence of such services was further analyzed in this study, the preliminary data already validated the relevance of a project like Naseej.

## What kind of services did your relative or neighbour receive?

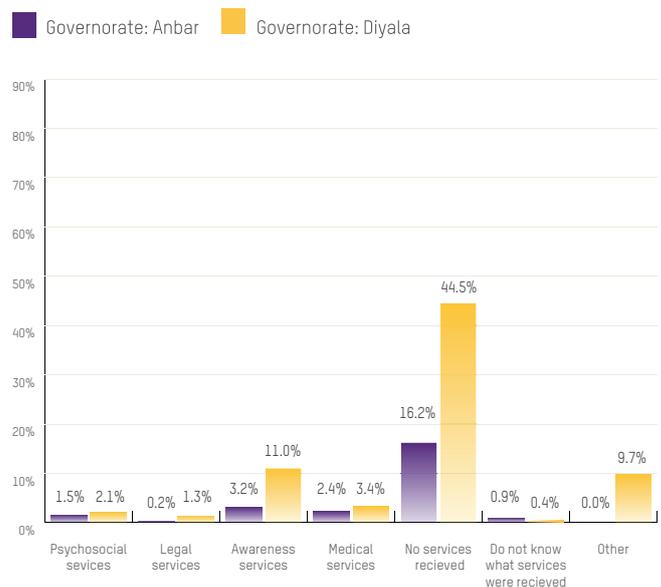


Figure 11 “What kind of services did your relative or neighbor receive?”

Figure 11 shows that for those who received services, across locations, the most frequent options were awareness-raising services, medical services, and psychosocial support.

## Agreement with statements regarding: honor crimes and family protection

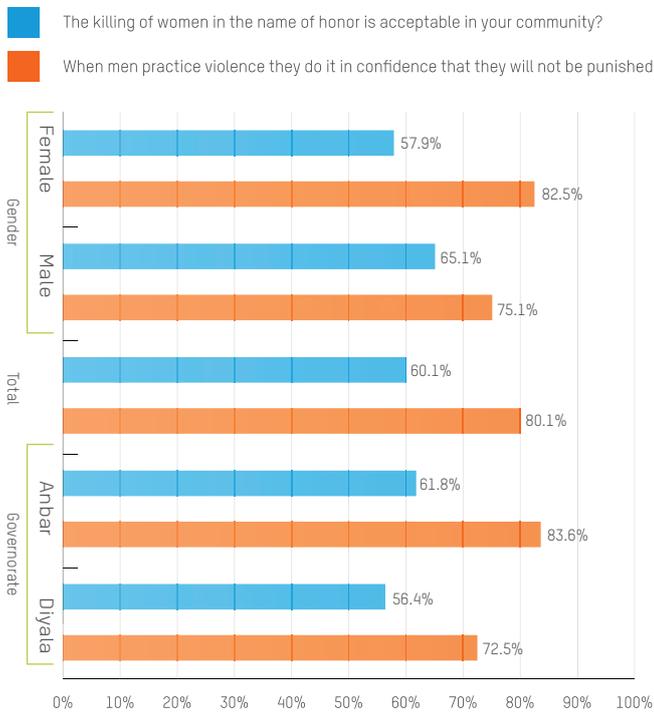


Figure 12 "The killing of women in the name of honor or femicide is acceptable in your community. When men practice violence, they do it with confidence that they will not be punished."

The majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed that femicide is acceptable in their communities without great differences between the governorates or genders.

More than half of the participants (56.4%) in Diyala and over eight in ten (79.5%) in Anbar believed this.

As explained above, the participants expressed that women are subjected to a number of expectations to be perceived as "honorable" and to not bring "eib" upon themselves or their families. It is this honor that society tries to "protect" when marrying girls early, limiting their decision-making in and outside the HH. Ultimately, honor killing is perceived as a way to "wash away the shame." Moreover, as one participant explained, there also seems to be a link between honor killings and the expectations of women's alleged reproductive role: "[H]onourable women will bring honourable babies into life. If a woman loses her honour, there is no point in continuing with her life as her children will be born dishonourable and she will be killed." Defense of honor can be used as a reason to lower a penalty or discharge a person who commits femicide. As portrayed by the 2018 UNFPA report, the criminal code grants this privilege under certain circumstances explained in the literature review.

As explained by a female FGD participant, "the fear of breaking honor codes control[s] (to a great extent) women's and girls' lifestyles and choices."<sup>45</sup>

FGD, Anbar, female, September 2020

Moreover, there seems to be an overall perception that performance of sexuality by a woman outside of societal constrictions is dishonorable and can bring severe consequences upon her. Indeed, the attendees focused on examples regarding sexuality: "[W]hen a woman makes a mistake with a young boy, she will be very disgusting and dishonourable, and the community will perceive her as not being able to keep her reputation." The consequences vary: "[S]he will be punished by her family, relatives and tribe and, depending on the community, it could lead to honour killing to wash the shame." As another female participant added, femicide does not always take a single shape in society, and suicide can be one of its forms, as women might be forced or pressured into it.

Although men and boys are also subjected to gender roles and expectations, women and girls seem to be taking the biggest toll, as suggested when conducting the KIs. As explained by a female interviewee, “punishments for breaking honour codes do not apply to men, however when a woman does something considered dishonourable, she might even be killed in order to wash the family’s reputation.” Another participant continued by saying that “for men, everything is allowed and forgiven.” Moreover, it is rather unlikely that men and boys will not be punished when they do not meet their gender expectations, but this calls for further analysis on masculinity.

As shown in Figure 12, across the governorates, **the most prevalent perception among respondents was that when men practice violence, they do it with confidence they will not be punished.** This was expressed by seven in ten (72.5%) respondents in Diyala and eight in ten (83.4%) in Anbar.

In Diyala, the men (34%) were over twice as likely as the women (16%) to disagree that men practice violence with such confidence. In Anbar, no variance was reported.

**Most male FGD participants expressed that the community should not intervene in cases of SGBV and that “only the head of HH, brother of the survivor or Sheikh can to a limited extent try to mediate in this situation.”**

A male attendee in Anbar explained that “if the family cannot resolve the problem, the tribe should intervene.” However, another male participant stressed the risks of mediation by tribal leaders: “[T]he tribe should not be involved as it can lead to bigger problems such as killings.”

**In the FGDs with women, the attendees mostly stated that the response to SGBV is very limited and that, often, “people say no violence took place, its only in the survivor’s dreams.”<sup>52</sup>**

FGD, Diyala, female, August 2020

Sometimes, the family or tribe intervenes to try to fix the situation and is “successful in doing so in some cases.” What a successful intervention entails was not clear after analyzing the data. As explained by a female interviewee, **“the community encourages SGBV and men feel they are the most powerful and see women as second-class citizens.”<sup>53</sup>**

KII, Anbar, government employee, female, 53, September 2020

**Overall, these findings suggested that limited intervention, or lack thereof, leads to uncertainty as to whether punishment or reform is implemented, reinforcing a culture of impunity. Moreover, these interventions seem to be male dominated, as the Sheikhs, heads of HH, and tribe leaders are likely to be men.**

## In your opinion, what is the gender of perpetrators of SGBV within the family?

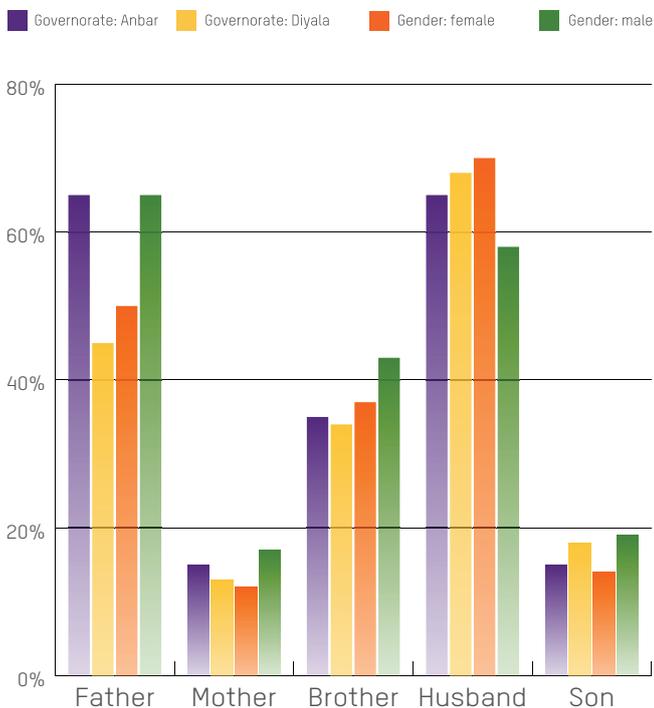


Figure 13 "In your opinion, what is the gender of perpetrators of SGBV within the family?"

Figure 13 shows that across the governorates and genders, there was a consensus that in the family, the perpetrators of SGBV are primarily the husband, father, and brother.

**The husband was the family member most respondents believed exercises violence, suggesting that intimate partner violence is the main form of SGBV within the HH.**

## In your opinion, what is the gender of perpetrators of SGBV outside the family?



Figure 14 "In your opinion, what is the gender of perpetrators of SGBV outside the family?"

Figure 14 shows there was a consensus among the respondents in both governorates and genders that males are the primary perpetrators of SGBV outside the family. Over eight in ten participants shared this opinion in Diyala (84.7%) and Anbar (86%).

## Agreement with statements regarding: vulnerable groups

- Violence against women and girls is mainly prevalent in rural areas, camps, and villages
- Violence against women and girls is mainly prevalent among the poor
- Violence against women and girls is mainly prevalent among households with many members
- Violence against women and girls is mainly prevalent among polygamous households

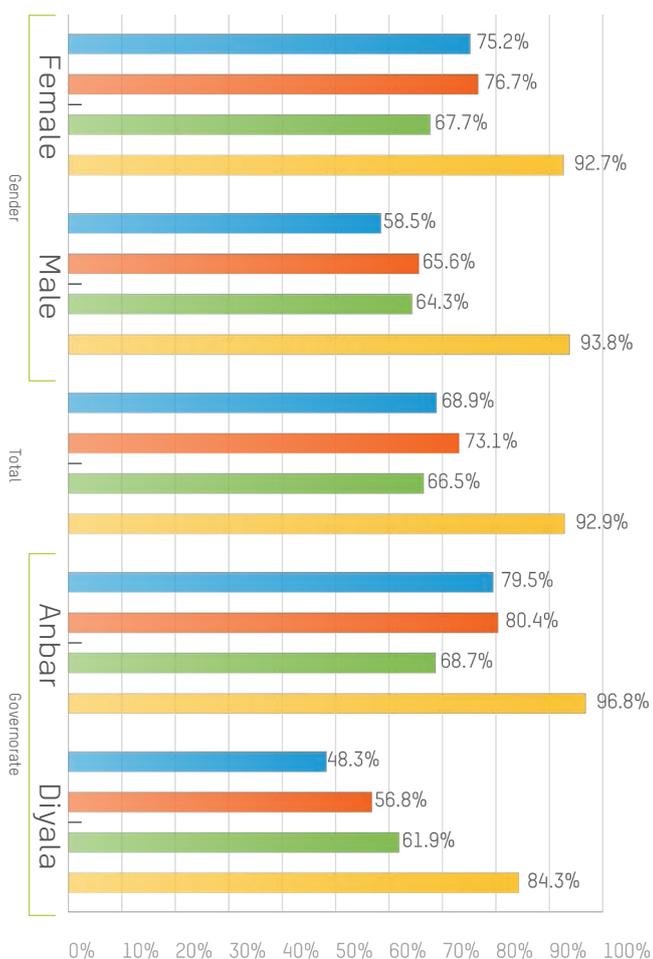


Figure 15 Prevalence of SGBV in vulnerable groups.

Figure 15 shows that the participants declared SGBV to be most prevalent in the vulnerable groups suggested to them.



### 3.4 Legal and security measures regarding SGBV

#### The law in Iraq protects women and girls and their rights

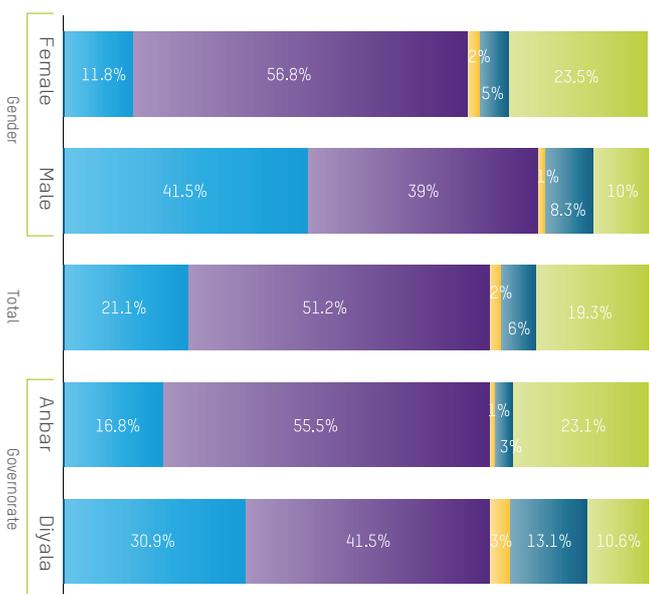


Figure 16 “The law in Iraq provides protection for women and girls and their rights.”

Overall, most respondents expressed that the law in Iraq does not provide protection for women and girls and their rights. However, the replies varied across the locations and genders.

Over half of the respondents (52.1%) in Diyala and more than three-fourths (78.4%) in Anbar declared that Iraqi law does not protect the rights of women and girls. While there was no major variation between the genders in Diyala, the male respondents (54.1%) in Anbar were 12 times as likely to consider that Iraqi law protects women compared to the female participants (4.3%).

Overall, the FGD findings further reinforced the assumptions based on the HH surveys.

As one female participant explained,

“The government must place laws to hold accountable and punish men committing SGBV as well as [compensate] the survivors.”<sup>54</sup>

FGD, Anbar, female, September 2020

The male FGD attendees tended to focus on the causes of SGBV rather than on where the laws in place protect women and girls. “Laws need to ensure the right to education, inheritance, and provide for job opportunities as financial constrains are among the factors that contribute to SGBV the most,” one male participant explained. The relationship between poor economic conditions and SGBV was further stressed by a female interviewee: **“[W]hen men do not have a job, they release their stress by hitting [their] wife and children.”**<sup>56</sup>

FGD, Anbar, female, September 2020

The responsibility of the husband is very high; marriage is not easy.” This highlighted the need to work on the constructs of masculinity so that men will stop using SGBV as a coping mechanism for failing to meet their gender expectations (e.g., being “breadwinners”) in society and even shift those gender roles.

## The police protect women and girls and their rights

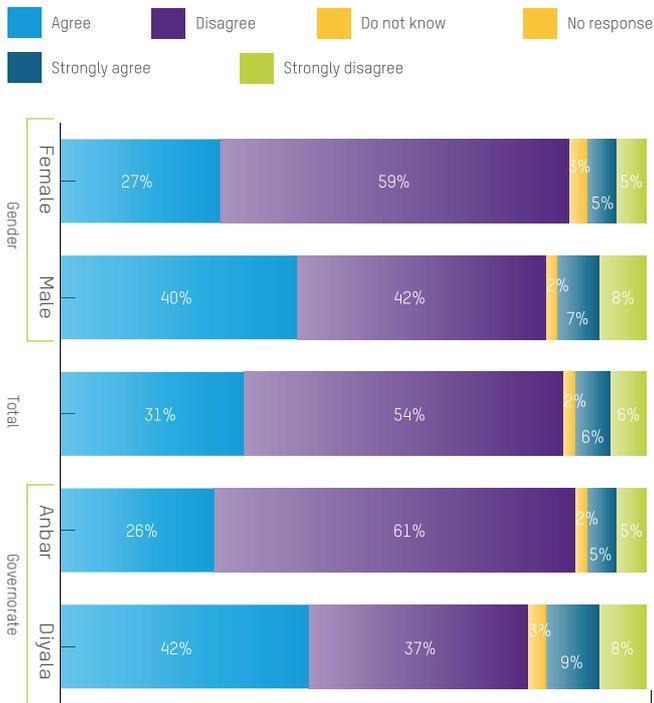


Figure 17 "The police and/or other security forces protect women and girls and their rights."

Figure 17 shows this point was highly contested among the respondents. In Diyala, five in ten participants (50.8%) believed the police or other security forces protect women and their rights.

In Anbar, over six in ten respondents (66.4%) declared that the police or other security forces do not protect women and girls.

## The law must punish men who practice violence against their wives

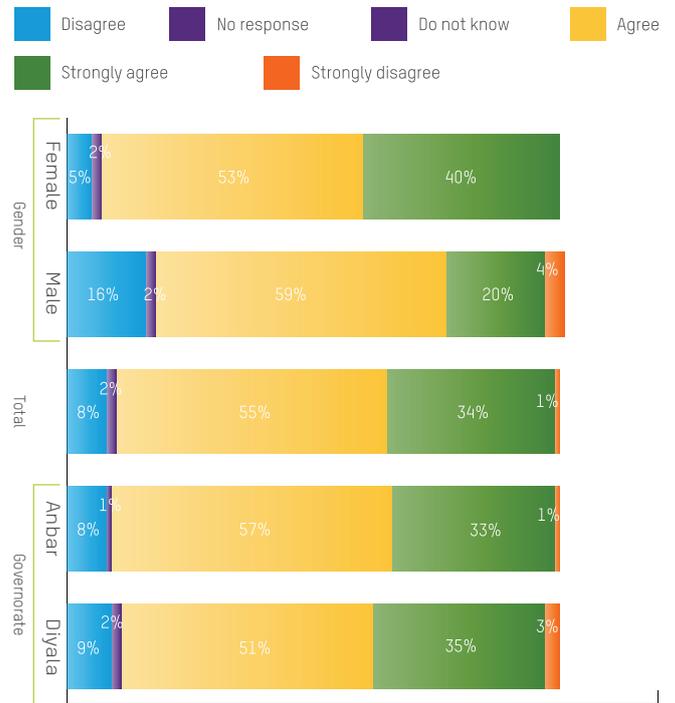


Figure 18 "The law must punish men who practice violence against their wives."

## When violence occurs in the family, the wife should not report the husband

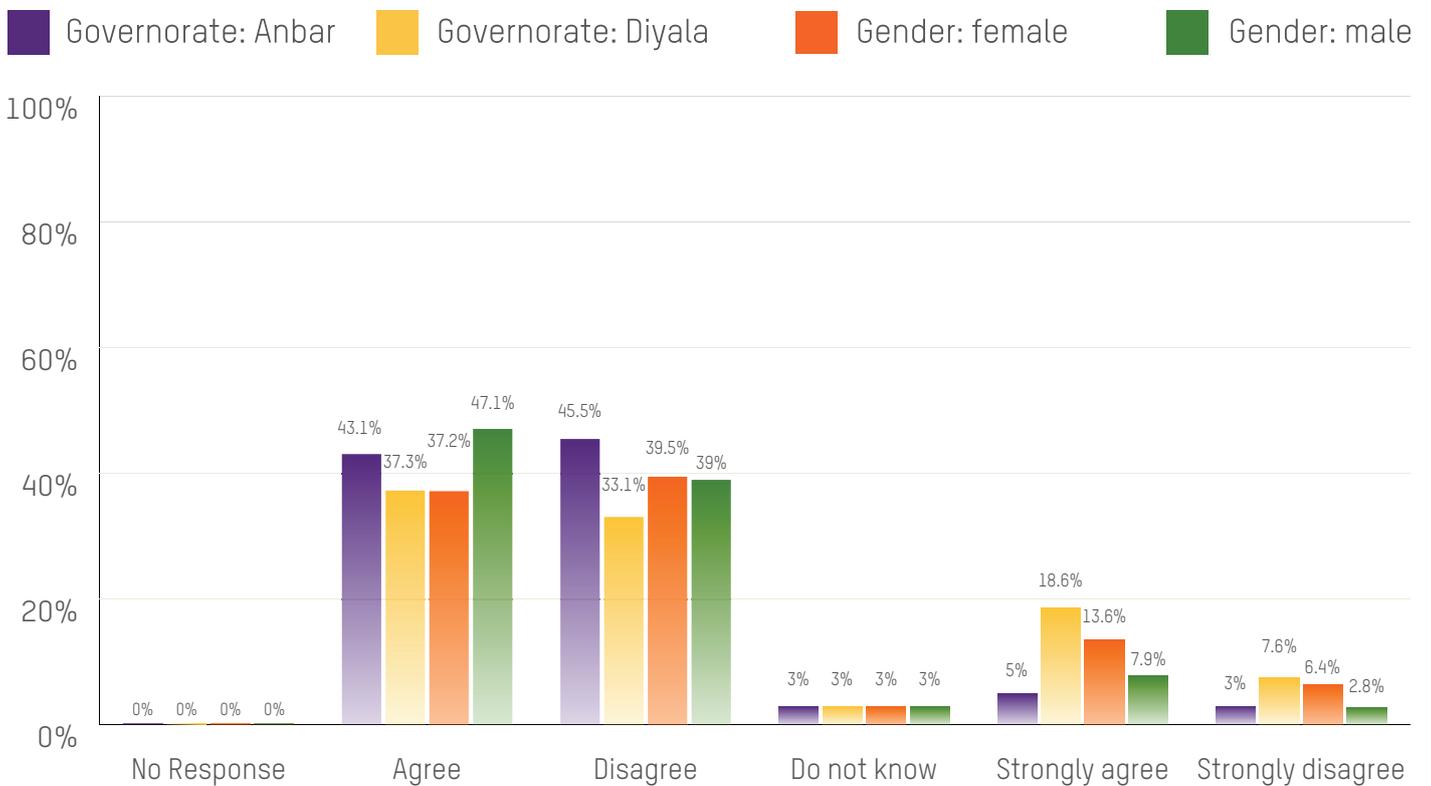
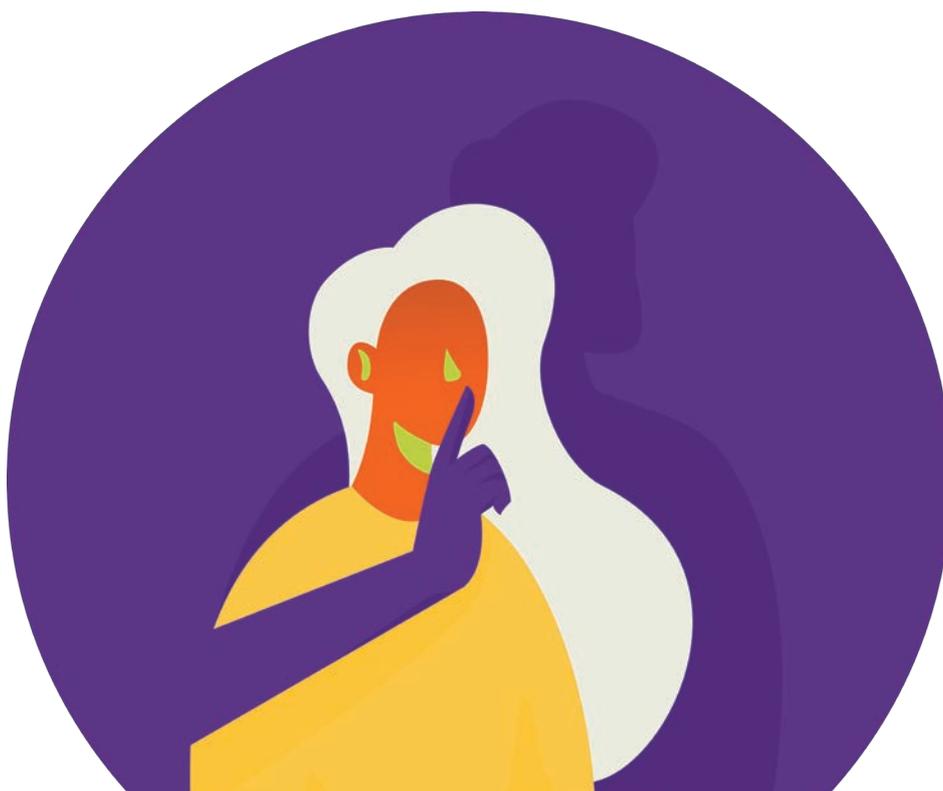


Figure 19 "When violence occurs in the family, the wife should not report the husband."



## Would you report a case of VAW occurring in the community?

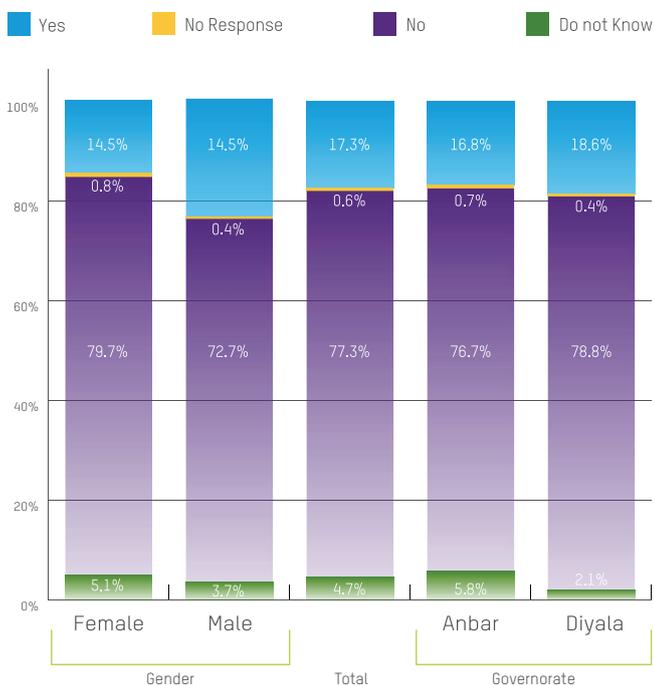


Figure 20 "Would you report a case of SGBV occurring in your community?"

A total of eight in ten respondents in Diyala and nine in ten in Anbar believed the law must punish a man who practices violence against his wife. Interestingly, the male respondents in Diyala were over seven times more likely to state that perpetrators should not be punished than their female counterparts (20.5% vs. 3.7%, respectively).

Although these data suggested a consensus on the need for laws to punish men practicing violence against their wives, there were several contradictions and nuances when contrasted with the findings on SGBV reporting in both governorates.

Even though the Diyala respondents were in favor of perpetrators of violence being punished, only four in ten participants agreed (33%) or strongly agreed (7.6%) that a wife should report her husband.

Surprisingly, the female respondents (57.1%) were slightly more likely to believe this compared to their male counterparts (53.4%). The number of people who would report a case of SGBV happening in the community was even lower, with eight in ten respondents (78.8%) expressing they would not report such a case. Here, the female participants (22%) were twice as likely to say they would report compared to the men (11%).

Similarly, in Anbar, less than five in ten participants agreed (45%) or strongly agreed (3%) that a wife should report her husband.

The male respondents were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree (56.5%) compared to their female counterparts (44.5%). Additionally, seven in ten respondents (76.6%) expressed they would not report such a case of SGBV happening in their community. Interestingly, the men here (29.2%) were more likely to say they would report this compared to the women (11.1%).

## To whom would you report SGBV happening in your community?

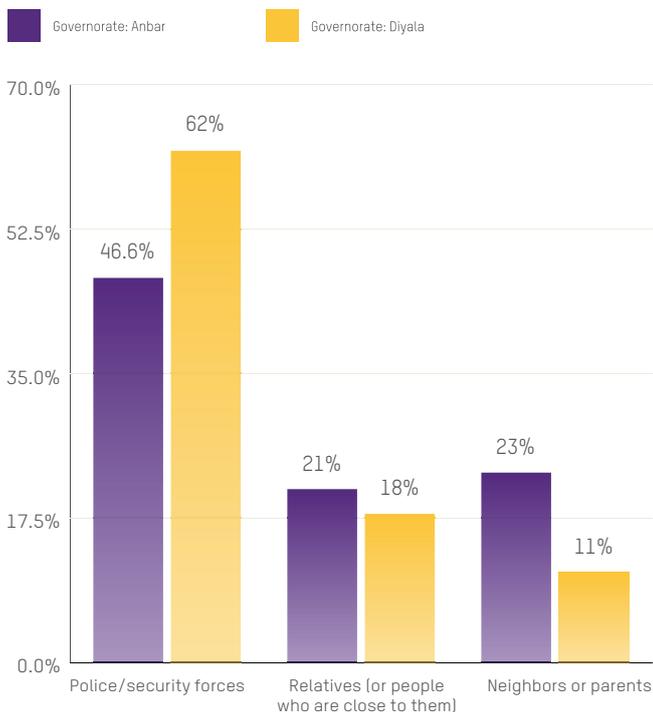


Figure 21 “To whom would you report SGBV happening in your community?”

Regarding to whom the participants would report a case of SGBV happening in their communities, Figure 21 shows that the most popular options across the governorates were the following:

- **Police/security forces (54.4%)**

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- **Relatives (or people who are close/affections) (19.5%)**

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- **Neighbors or parents (17%)**

Most FGD participants agreed there should be laws punishing perpetrators of SGBV and that perpetrators should be prosecuted no matter the relationship between the survivor and perpetrator. As expressed by a male FGD attendee in Diyala, “[W]e defend the improvement of the laws to prosecute men who use excessive violence against women.” As mentioned in the literature review, this opinion matched the current criminal code, of which Article 41 allows the husband to “punish his wife, and parents to discipline their children within the limits prescribed by law or custom.” What those limits entail is not clear and allows for interpretations that hinder the rights of women, girls, and boys.

When conducting the FGDs with females, although some of them agreed that some cases, such as physical violence, should be reported to the police, most stated that women do not report their husbands because, as a female from Diyala raised, “it brings them more problems and family members usually take the husband’s side.” The female attendees in Anbar had different views: While some mentioned reporting violence “undermines the status of men and this is not correct nor accepted,” others explained that women do not report because of “fear for what might happen to them, to take care of the children and because of fear of divorce.”

One of the major challenges in reporting SGBV is that

**“(in reporting SGBV cases) there are no rules nor punishment for the perpetrator and the survivor is forced to choose between reporting and saving her reputation.”<sup>61</sup>**

Anbar, education supervisor, female, 43, September 2020

Another interviewee added,

**“[A]lthough there should be laws protecting women, they would not be able to use them in their favour, women and girls are not even allowed to pose simple complaints.”<sup>62</sup>**

Anbar, government employee, female, 53, September 2020

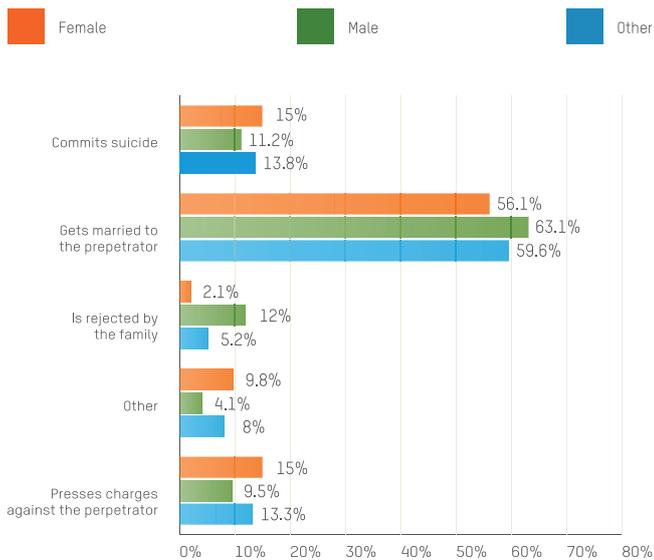
Sometimes, even leaving the HH to report SGBV is not possible because for some women, “if they try to report SGBV, [their families] would punish [them] for leaving the house without permission.”<sup>63</sup>

Once again, **these findings demonstrated an overall culture of impunity that not only relies on the (in)existence of laws punishing men who commit SGBV but also, most importantly, the limited access to justice women have in the target locations.** A law is of little worth if while trying to have it implemented and seek justice, women only face a higher risk of violence and a judiciary system likely to operate through patriarchal logic. As for the laws punishing SGBV, although the Iraqi

constitution prohibits “all forms of violence and abuse in the family,” the criminal code lacks explicit mention of domestic violence and grants husbands the right to punish their wives “within the limits prescribed by law and custom.” The code also contains mitigations to the punishment of violent acts, including murder, when committed for “honorable motives.” Despite civil society efforts to pass an anti-domestic violence law, the initiative has been stuck in the parliament since 2019.



## Usually the survivor of rape



## Usually the survivor of rape

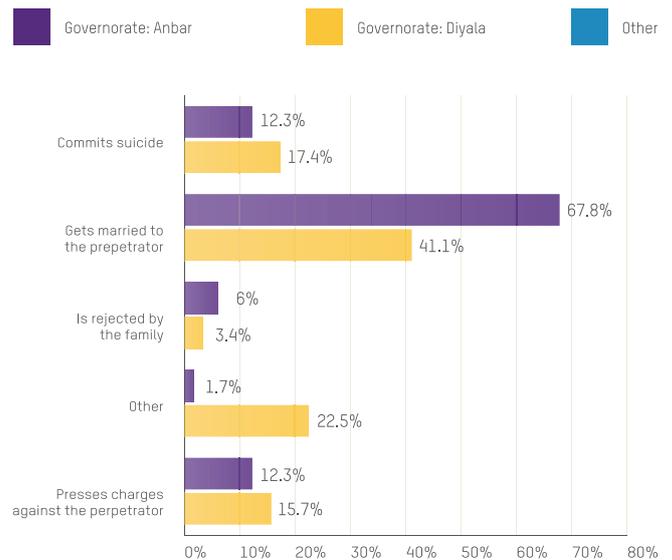
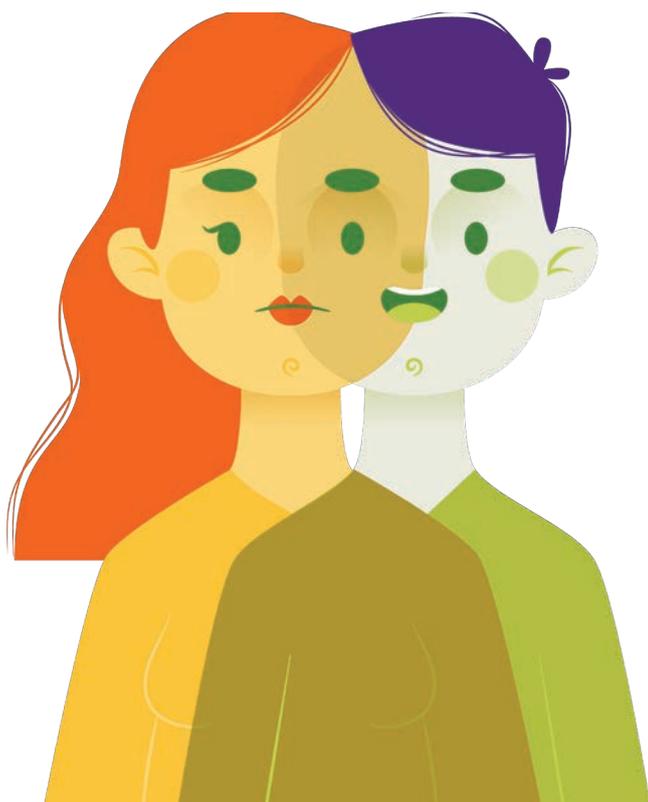


Figure 22 "Usually the survivor of rape..."

In total, 4 in 10 participants in Diyala (41.1%) and over 6 in 10 (67.7%) in Anbar stated that usually, a survivor of rape is married to the perpetrator.

Across the governorates, according to the respondents, 1 in 10 survivors commit suicide, highlighting the urgent need for psychosocial support as a life-saving activity. In the target locations, **over 5 in 10 survivors of rape are likely to marry the perpetrator**, which amounts to a type of continuous violence infringed against them. Thus, the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) community and service providers should develop the skills to target these survivors.



### 3.5 Support for women and girl survivors of violence, including women with disabilities

#### In your community, what actions are taken in cases of SGBV (multiple answers possible)?

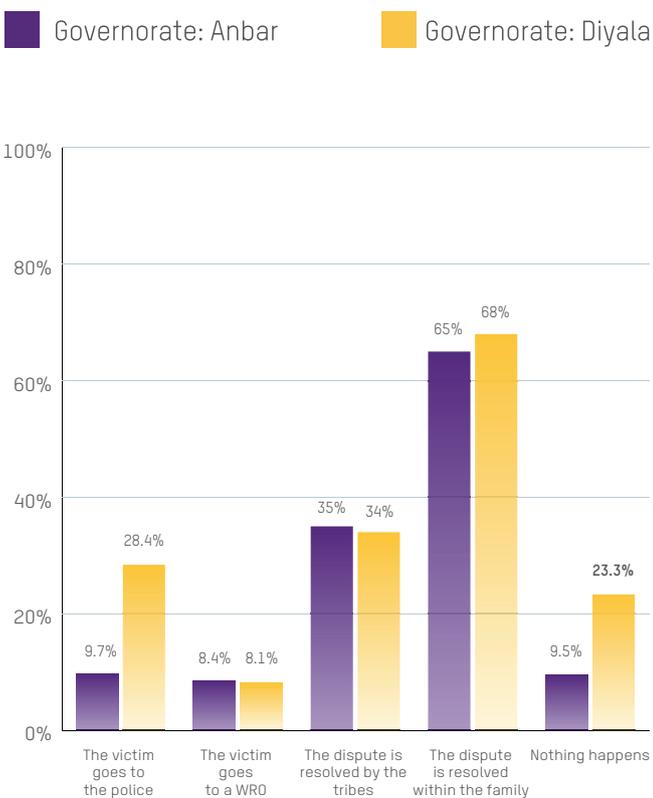


Figure 23 "In your community, what actions are taken in case of SGBV (multiple answers possible)?"

Figure 23 shows that SGBV within the target communities is generally solved through the family or tribe and that only a small percentage of survivors seek support from a WRO.

In Diyala, eight in ten respondents (85%) reported the dispute is resolved within the family, and three in ten expressed (34%) it is dealt with by the tribe. It is worth noting that two in ten interviewees (23%) believed "nothing happens." **Less than one in ten (8.1%) participants, all of whom were women, reported that the survivor seeks support from a WRO.** Similarly, in Anbar, nine in ten (90.5%) respondents expressed the dispute is resolved within the family and five in ten (50.4%) by the tribe. Almost one in ten (9.5%) reported "nothing happens," and only 8.4%, primarily women (82%), replied that the survivor goes to an WRO. One participant summarized, "SGBV became a lifestyle in my community."<sup>65</sup>

Anbar, government employee, female, 53, September 2020

#### Why do you think women and girls experiencing violence do not seek support (gender)?

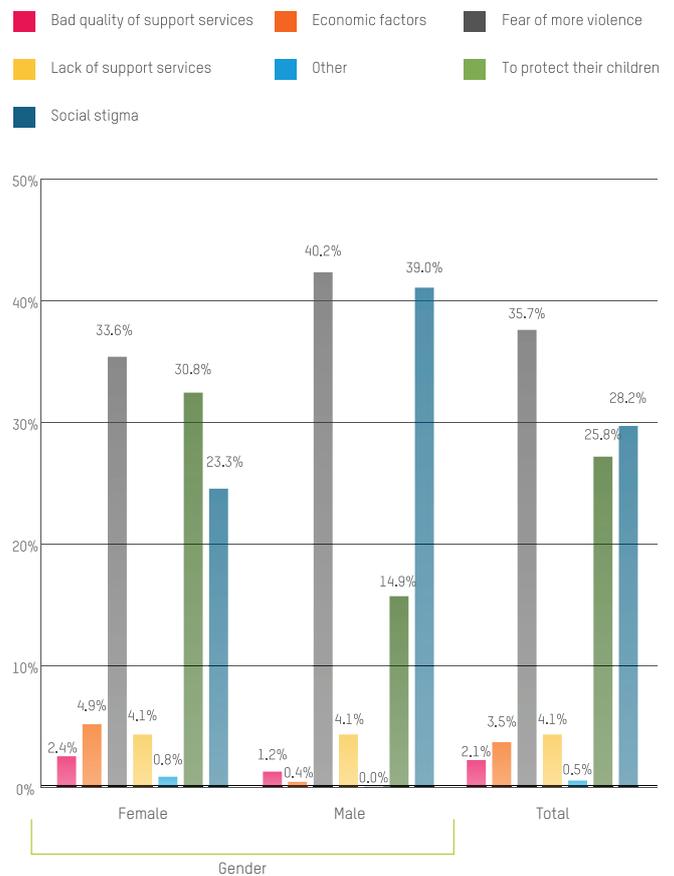


Figure 24 "Why do you think women and girls experiencing violence do not seek support?" (gender)

## Why do you think women and girls experiencing violence do not seek support (location)?

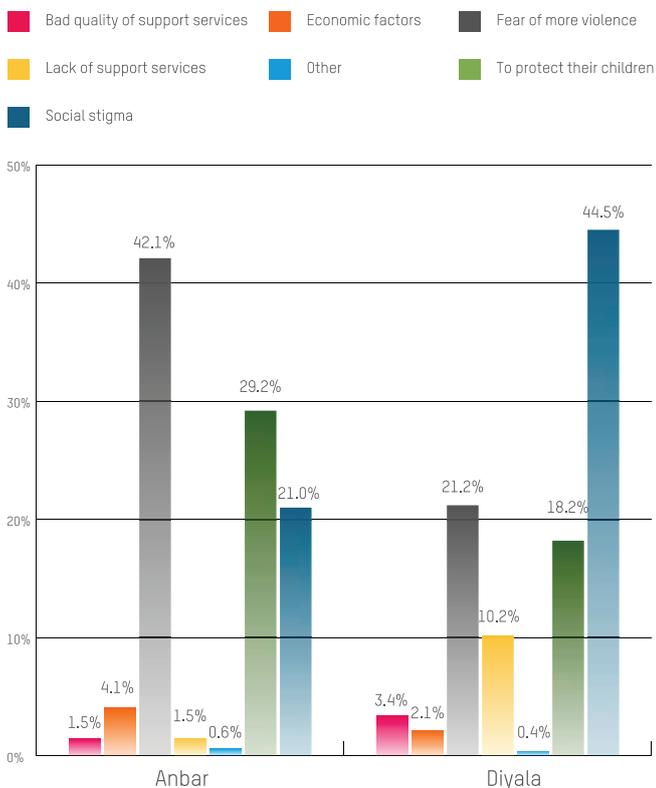


Figure 25 “Why do you think women and girls experiencing violence do not seek support?” (location)

Across the governorates, the respondents replied that less than one in ten (8.2%) survivors seek support from a WRO. The main reasons survivors do not seek assistance from WROs were said to be “social stigma” (44.5% in Diyala and 29% in Anbar), “fear from violence” (21% in Diyala and 42% in Anbar), and “to protect her children” (18% in Diyala and 29% in Anbar).

These findings, i.e., the notions that SGBV in these communities is mostly resolved within the family or tribe and that a very low number of survivors seek support from WROs, were reinforced upon considering the qualitative data.

As previously mentioned, the male FGD participants mostly expressed that the community should not intervene in SGBV cases and that “only the head of HH, brother of the survivor or Sheikh can to a limited extent try to mediate in this situation.” Tribe intervention seemed to be more contested: While some attendees thought “it can lead to bigger problems such as killings,” others thought it acceptable when a dispute cannot be resolved in the family.

The assumption of SGBV being a matter dealt with mostly by the family was reinforced in a KII with a Sheikh in Diyala:

“Issues among married couples can be solved by buying a bunch of flowers, tolerance, and negotiations. My married sister came back home one day and said she did not want to return to her husband as he always curses our dead father. I took my sister to her husband and asked him not to speak about past things, and since then they live happily together”.

During the KIIs, service providers and humanitarian workers highlighted that fear, shame, and social norms inhibit survivors from seeking support in WROs. As explained by a female humanitarian worker, **“even when services for SGBV survivors are available, many do not access them because of shame and social norms.”**<sup>67</sup>

Diyala, humanitarian worker, female, 30, September 2020

A female health service provider added that “women do not approach SGBV service providers because they are scared.” Another female health service provider affirmed that overall, **“[W]e live in a patriarchal society that forces women to obey the rules and SGBV survivors not to request services.”**<sup>69</sup>

Anbar, nurse, female, 26, September 2020

These data suggested a set of societal barriers that limit SGBV to being dealt with in the family while shaming survivors for seeking support as well as a lack of capacity of the system to guarantee the safety of the survivors of violence reaching out to WROs.

## Survivors of SGBV seek/receive health services

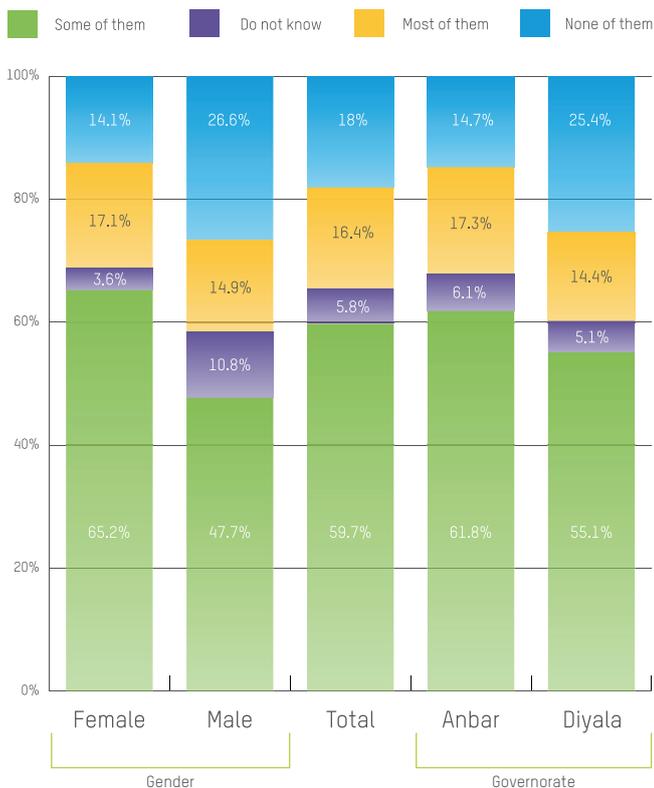


Figure 26 "Survivors of SGBV seek/receive health services."

## Survivors of SGBV seek/receive support from shelters/safe houses

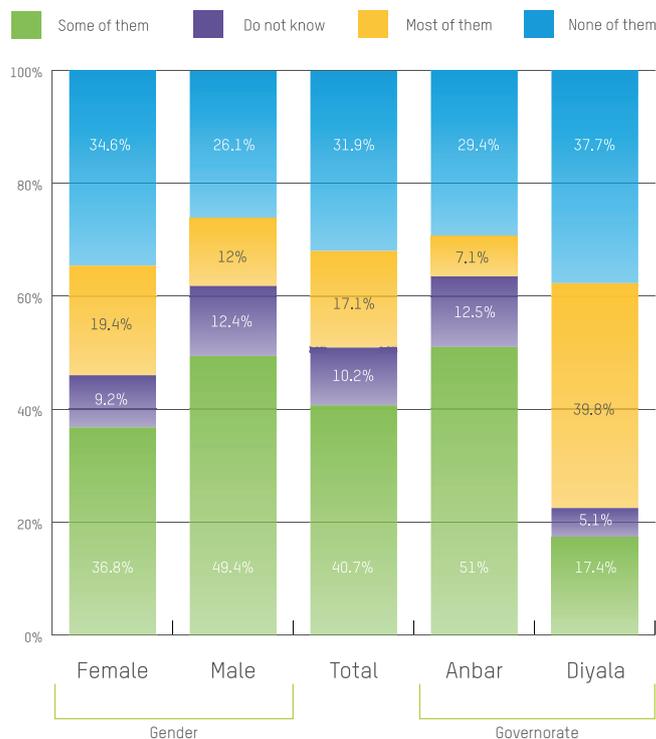


Figure 27 "Survivors of SGBV seek/receive support from shelters/safe houses."

## Survivors of SGBV seek/receive legal services

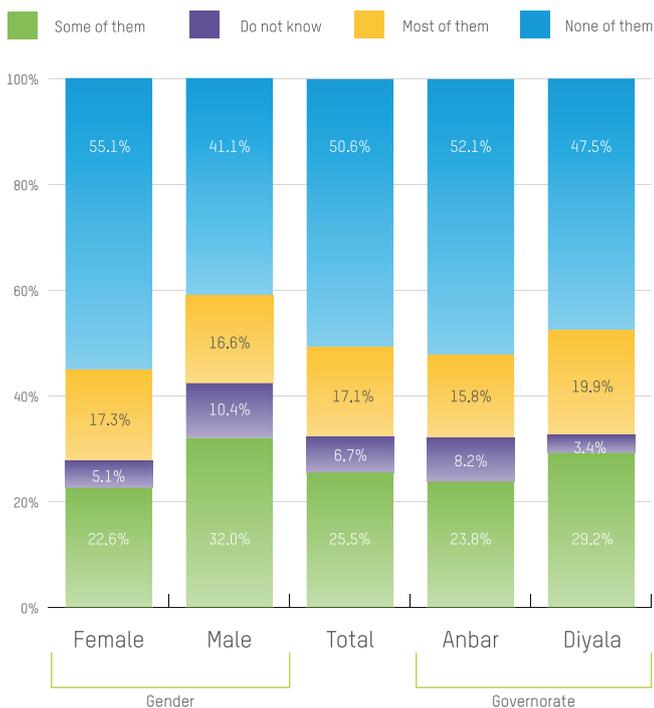


Figure 28 "Survivors of SGBV seek/receive legal services."

## Survivors of SGBV seek/receive psychosocial services

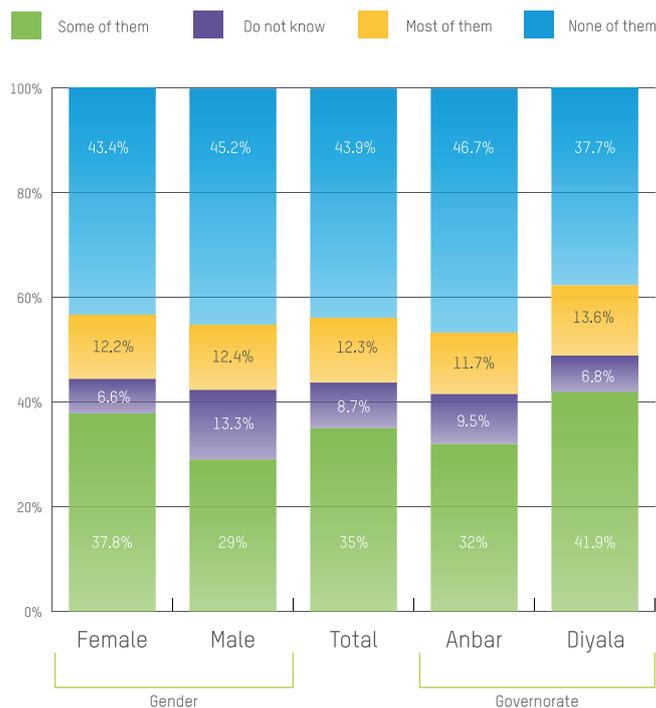


Figure 29 "Survivors of SGBV seek/receive psychosocial services."

## Survivors of SGBV with disabilities seek/receive support from shelters/safe houses

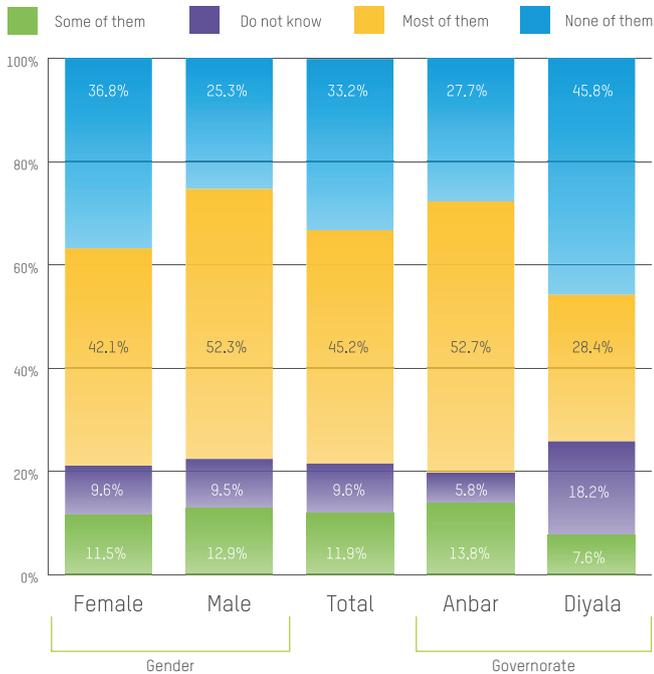


Figure 30 "Survivors of SGBV with disabilities seek/receive support from shelters/safe houses."

The respondents were asked to choose which type of support they thought survivors seek assistance from.

## Survivors of SGBV with disabilities seek/receive health services

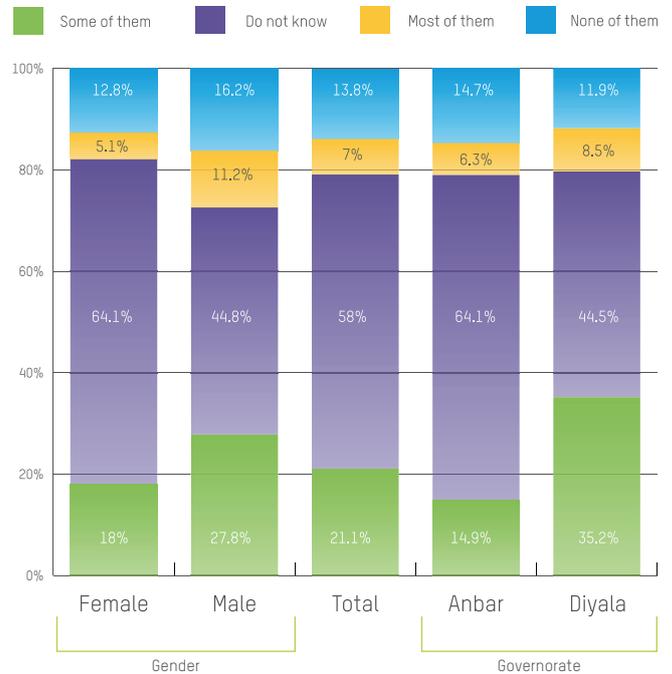


Figure 31 "Survivors of SGBV with disabilities seek/receive health services."shelters/safe houses."

## Do you think that safe houses/shelters are able to serve/protect SGBV survivors?

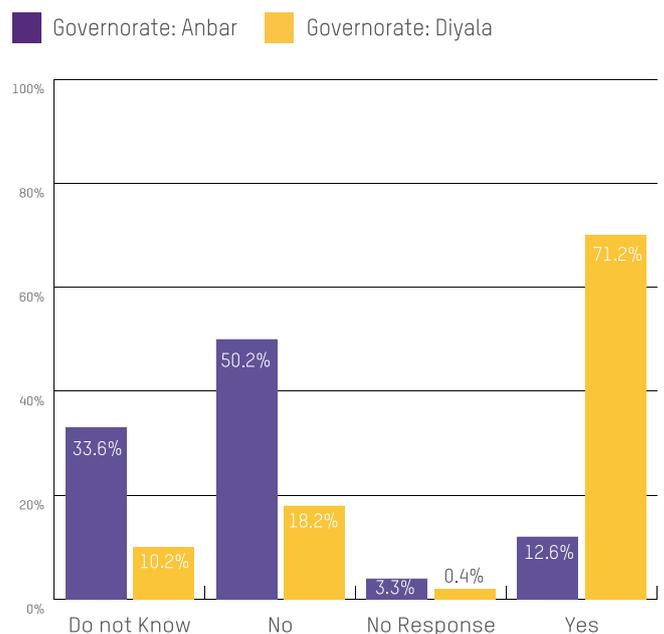


Figure 32 "Do you think that safe houses/shelters are able to serve/protect SGBV survivors?"



In Diyala, seven in ten (71%) respondents believed that safe houses can protect SGBV survivors, but in Anbar, five in ten individuals were convinced of the contrary.

As a female interviewee explained, in their communities, “safehouses and shelters are shameful things for women to use.” A female health provider added to this point, insisting that “even if there were [safe houses], it is impossible for SGBV survivors to use them.”

## Are you aware of committees or networks in your community where women and girl survivors can go when they experience violence?

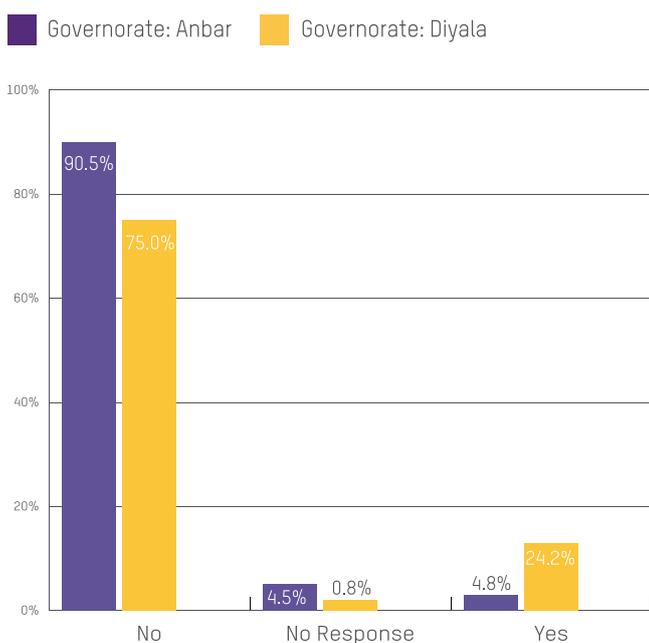


Figure 33 “Are you aware of committees or networks in your community where women and girl survivors can go when they experience violence?”

## Are you aware of committees or networks in your community where women and girls with disabilities can go when they experience violence?

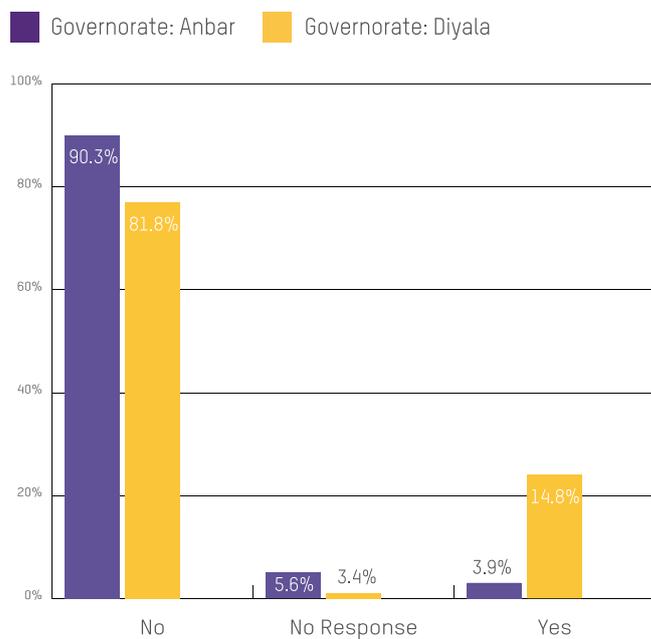


Figure 34 “Are you aware of committees or networks in your community where women and girls with disabilities can go when they experience violence?”

As Figures 33 and 34 portray, across the governorates, **most respondents did not know of community networks where female survivors of violence could go to; this number increased when asked about women and girls with disabilities.**

In Diyala, only two in ten respondents (24%) were aware of such networks, and when asked about women and girl survivors with disabilities, the percentage fell to one in ten (15%). In the FGDs, most female participants did not know of any networks or WROs operating in their areas. In Anbar, the respondents were even less likely to know about committees supporting women and girl survivors, with less than 4% aware of these community-based support networks. Note that in Ramadi (33.3%), the respondents were over four–seven times more likely to be aware of these institutions than those in Qaim (3.8%) and Ana (6.7%). Ramadi is the capital and biggest city of Anbar Governorate, located approximately 100 km from Baghdad and with easier access for humanitarian actors compared to more rural areas such as Qaim or Ana. The female FGD respondents in Ramadi explained that although SGBV services were limited, they were satisfied with the quality of the support. In Qaim, no FGD attendees knew of committee networks, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), or WROs providing SGBV services.

Across the governorates, **most respondents believed services to support SGBV survivors are important. The majority of those who did not believe such services are important were men.** As mentioned previously, the male respondents did not identify SGBV happening in their communities as often as the female respondents. This could explain the variation: If a person does not recognize violence taking place, they will hardly think services for survivors are important.

In Diyala, eight in ten participants (80.5%) believed services to support SGBV survivors are important. Men (35.6%) were three times as likely as women (10.4%) to express that such services are not important. Similarly, in Anbar, seven in ten respondents believed these services are important, and the men (29.2%) were over seven times as likely as the women (4.1%) to report that they are not important.

## Do you think that services to support GBV survivors are important?

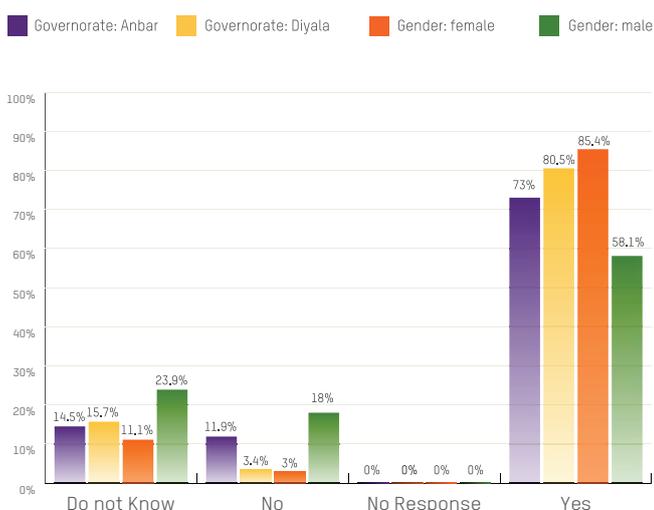


Figure 35 “Do you think that services to support GBV survivors are important?”

### 3.6 Engagement in awareness-raising activities

#### Most respondents across the locations had not heard of any awareness-raising activities on SGBV.

In Diyala, only two in ten respondents had heard of these, with the women (27%) reporting higher numbers than the men (19.2%). In Anbar, one in ten participants had heard of the sessions, with no variation upon disaggregating the data by sex.

#### Would you participate again or do you want to participate in awareness-raising activities on SGBV?

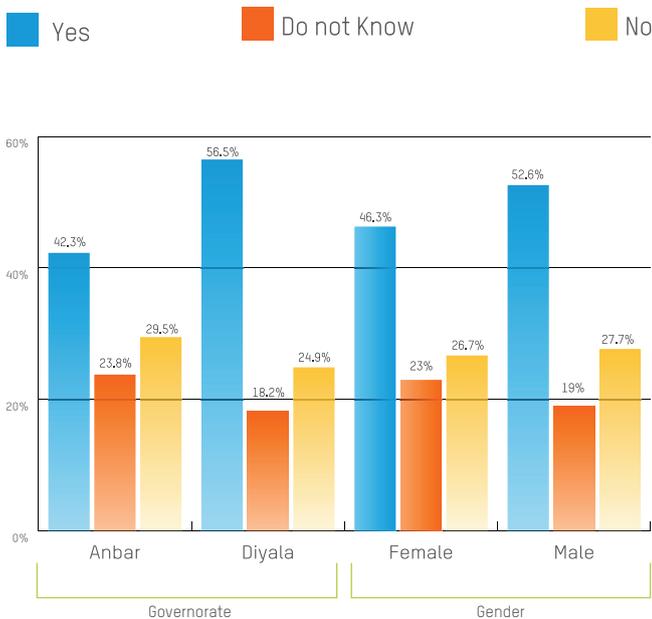


Figure 36 “Would you participate again or do you want to participate in awareness-raising activities on SGBV?”

As Figure 36 shows, when asked if they would participate in such sessions, the replies were positive overall, with a great number of participants saying they would. Surprisingly, the men in Diyala (67.1%) were more likely to express interest in attending awareness-raising sessions compared to the women (46%). On the contrary, in Anbar, the women (46.6%) were more likely to be interested in attending than the men (38.1%).

**These data suggest that high interest rates regarding awareness-raising sessions are a great entry point in communities to tackle SGBV, especially within the male population.**

#### Women’s rights organizations’ work is effective in increasing awareness about SGBV

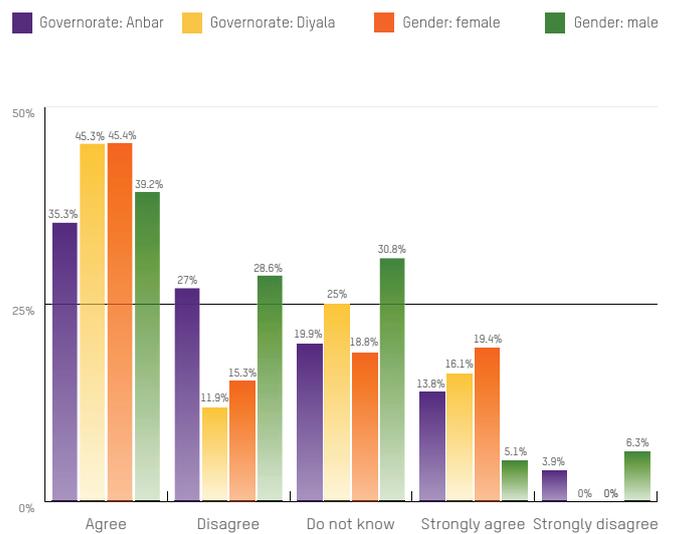


Figure 37 “Women’s rights organizations’ work is effective in increasing awareness about SGBV.”

Overall, almost half of the respondents across the locations believed WROs' work is effective in increasing SGBV awareness. In Diyala, six in ten participants (61.4%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while in Anbar, five in ten (49.1%) reported similar replies.

**Perceptions on the effectiveness of WROs to increase SGBV awareness varied between the genders. In Diyala, while seven in ten female respondents (69.9%) agreed or strongly agreed, four in ten of the male participants (42.5) did so. In Anbar, women (59.6%) were twice as likely to agree or disagree than men (26.2%).**

The FGDs further confirmed the assumption that men are less likely to believe in WROs' effectiveness in raising awareness and shed light on the perceptions of male members of the target communities on the topic.

The female FGD attendees suggested that awareness sessions "should focus on families so they can support instead of condemn SGBV survivors and to change practices such as early and forced marriage."<sup>72</sup> **It is worth noting that women in Qaim had not heard of awareness-raising sessions being available in their community, suggesting a gap in funding and activities at this location.**

In the FGDs with men, an array of opinions were shared, which could help inform work on SGBV awareness raising. **There seemed to be a rejection by part of the male community who believed these sessions "make women dominate men"**<sup>73</sup>

FGD, Diyala, male, August 2020

Some of the men also believe that the NGOs conducting them "want to apply a European way of thinking."<sup>74</sup>

Others had more nuanced positions, highlighting the importance of these sessions. They explained that "WROs should foster understanding between husband and wife, to respect each other and to tell the woman she should not insult the man."<sup>75</sup> Lastly, the participants (especially in Ramadi) agreed to these sessions because "women play an important role in the society."<sup>76</sup>

These data suggested that SGBV awareness raising is needed for both men and women and that the approaches and contents should be tailored to the target audience. A KII interviewee explained, "[W]e need to raise awareness with women, so they understand they have rights, empower them, and show them statistics and information on SGBV."<sup>77</sup>

Anbar, education supervisor, female, 43, September 2020

As for working with men, there must be efforts to tackle harmful constructs of masculinity and focus on how SGBV also affects men; thus, **"awareness-raising sessions should be conducted in mosques and focused on men."**<sup>78</sup>

Anbar, government employee, female, 53, September 2020

Lastly, it is important that the content facilitated in the sessions be culturally sensitive and not built solely on arguments perceived as "Western" or "foreign" to tackle the myth of gender justice being a monopoly of "European thinking" as mentioned previously. Although access remains a challenge, rural locations such as Qaim should be prioritized due to the lack of awareness-raising sessions reported in these places. There seemed to be "higher levels of SGBV because there [are not] any awareness-raising activities."

## Women’s rights organizations’ work is effective in supporting SGBV survivors

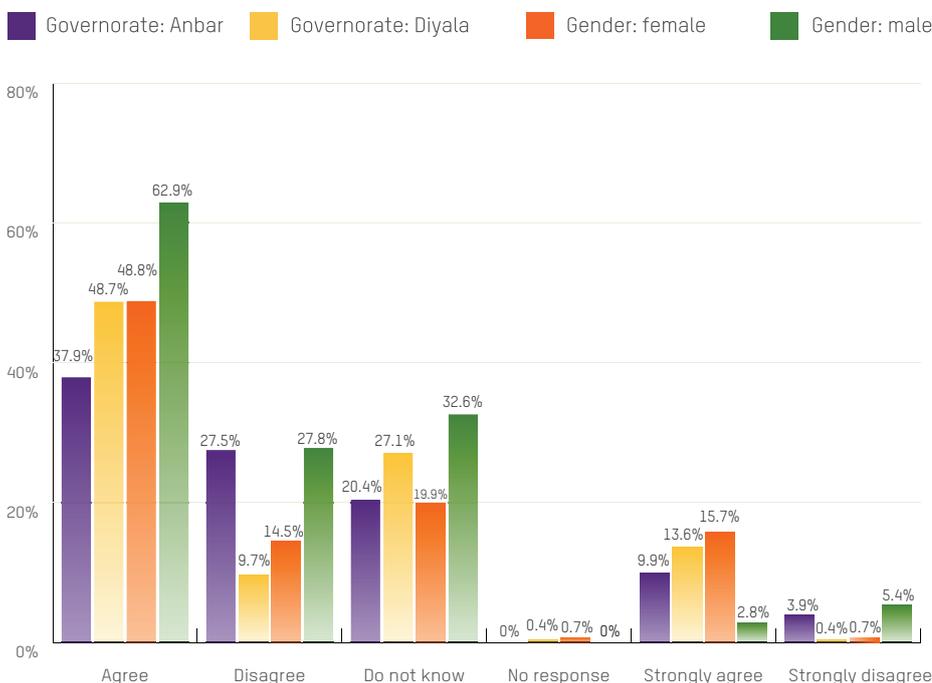


Figure 38 “Women’s rights organizations’ work is effective in supporting SGBV survivors.”

In Diyala, six in ten participants (62.3%) believed WROs’ work is effective in supporting SGBV survivors, while in Anbar, five in ten (47.6%) reported similar replies.

**Perceptions on the effectiveness of WROs in supporting survivors varied between the genders. In Diyala, while seven in ten female respondents (69.9%) agreed or strongly agreed, only four in ten of the male participants (45.2%) did. In Anbar, women (59.1%) were twice as likely as men (23.2%) to agree.**

In the FGDs, the men had a diversity of opinions. While some believed the work of WROs is important and effective in supporting SGBV survivors, others had more nuanced positions. As explained by a male attendee, the work of WROs has both advantages and disadvantages, but they need to “talk to women so they learn to respect their husbands.” There seemed to be a misunderstanding of what WROs do and what support they provide to survivors. For WROs to become more effective in supporting survivors, a female interviewee raised that “there is [a] need for strong coordination among service providers.” It is important to note that when services are provided, this is likely to have a multiplying effect among the female population: **“[O]nce a SGBV survivor receives support from a WRO, she will disseminate the word among her acquaintances, and the trust of women in these organization will start to become stronger.”<sup>81</sup>**

Anbar, government employee, female, 53, September 2020

### 3.7 Human rights–based perspectives

#### Ending violence against women and girls should be a priority for Iraqi society

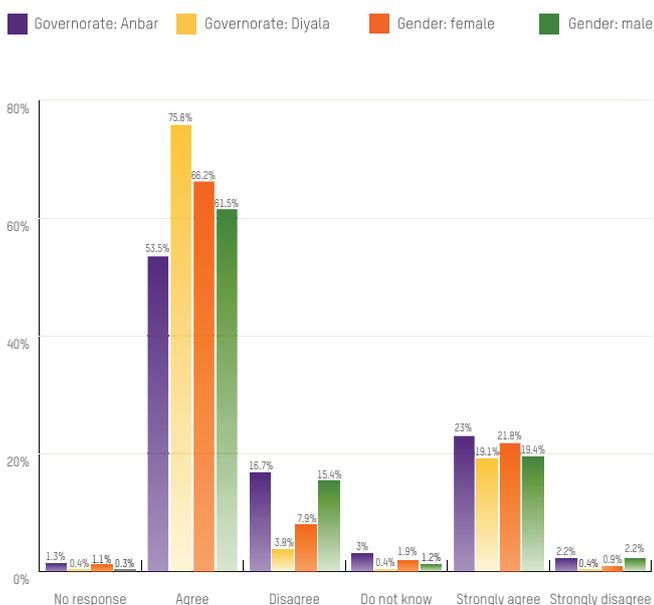


Figure 39 “Ending violence against women and girls should be a priority for Iraqi society.”

**Most respondents declared that ending violence against women and girls should be a priority for Iraqi society:** nine in ten (94.8%) in Diyala and almost eight in ten (76.5%) in Anbar. However, in Anbar, the men (26.8%) were twice as likely as the women (12.2%) to believe this should not be a priority.

The high number of respondents who believed ending SGBV should be a priority for Iraqi society was surprising considering the high number who reported that SGBV can be justified.

#### Ending violence against women and girls is the primary responsibility of the government

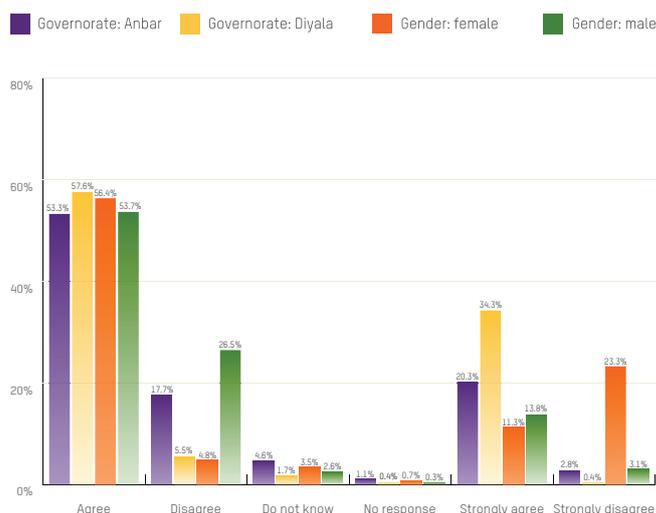


Figure 40 “Ending violence against women and girls is the primary responsibility of the government.”

Similar findings were reported when the participants were asked if ending violence is the primary responsibility of the government. In Diyala, nine in ten (91.9%) believed this to be the case. In Anbar, only seven in ten (73.6%) believed this, and almost eight in ten (77%) of those who disagreed were men.

When asked what the government should do to decrease SGBV, the female FGD respondents expressed that it needs to provide job opportunities, as the financial situation is perceived to be one of the main drivers of SGBV. Moreover, the government must enact laws that hold accountable and punish the men committing SGBV and compensate the survivors.

The male participants expressed that laws need to ensure the right to education and inheritance and provide men and women with job opportunities.

These results highlighted the need for a comprehensive approach to gender including not only awareness raising and access to SGBV services but also economic empowerment for women and livelihood opportunities for men. **Evidence suggests that domestic violence may increase when men cannot fulfill their expected gender role of breadwinner.** Domestic violence against women increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and past research has suggested this was due to several elements, including the impact on men’s jobs.<sup>82</sup> Service provision locations reported an increase of 65% in one or more types of SGBV in their areas of intervention, and 94% reported a sharp increase in domestic violence perpetrated by a spouse or other family member within the HH.

## Ending violence against women is mainly the responsibility of women’s rights organizations

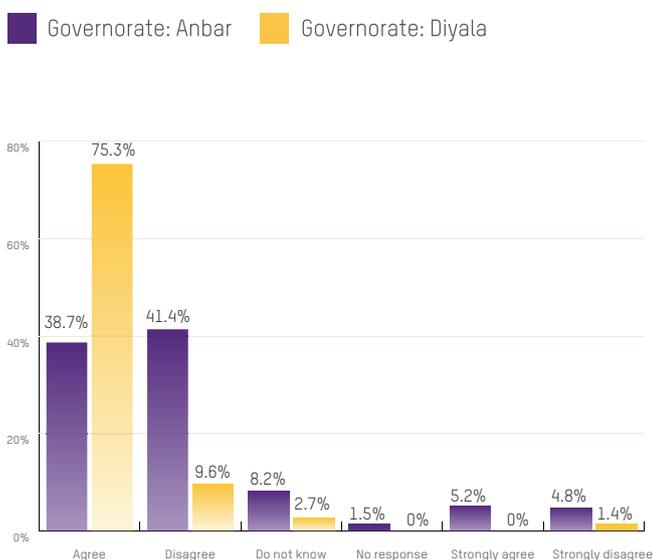


Figure 41 “Ending violence against women is mainly the responsibility of women’s rights organizations.”

In total, seven in ten respondents (71.3%) in Diyala and four in ten (43.9%) in Anbar declared that ending violence against women is mainly the responsibility of women’s rights organizations. Across the governorates, the women believed this statement more often than the men.

Overall, these findings coincided with the reported replies of those who believed WROs’ work is effective in supporting SGBV survivors.

## Ending violence against women and girls is the responsibility of men in society

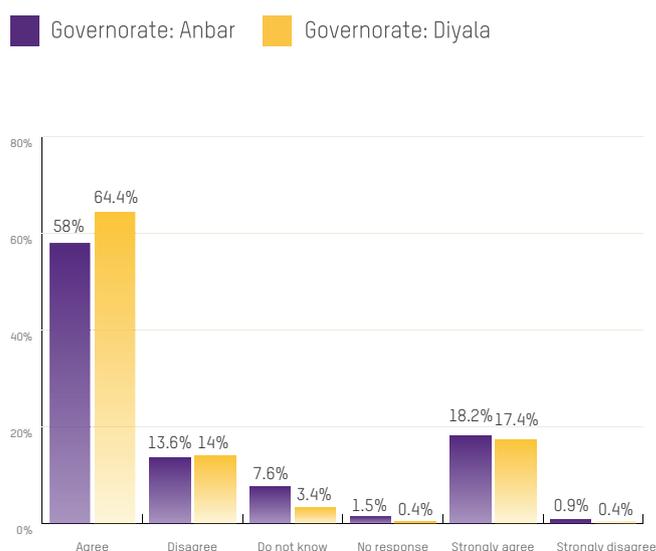


Figure 42 “Ending violence against women and girls is the responsibility of men in society.”

Across the governorates, close to eight in ten (79%) respondents believed ending SGBV is the responsibility of men in society. Therefore, more men declared ending SGBV to be their responsibility rather than that of WROs.

## Ending violence against women and girls is the responsibility of women and girls themselves

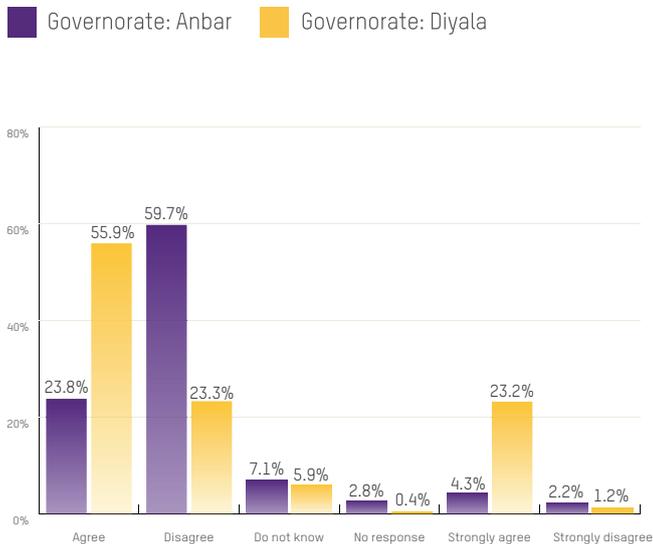


Figure 43 “Ending violence against women and girls is the responsibility of women and girls themselves.”

As Figure 43 shows, the replies varied across the governorates, with most respondents in Diyala believing that ending SGBV is the responsibility of women and girls themselves and participants in Anbar reporting the opposite. In Diyala, seven in ten (69.7%) participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, and in Anbar, six in ten (61.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

## Ending violence against women and girls is the responsibility of the extended family

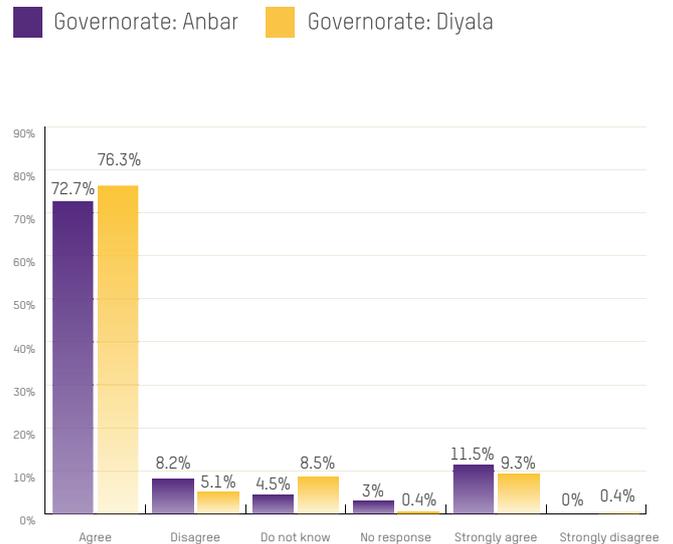


Figure 44 “Ending violence against women and girls is the responsibility of the extended family.”

In both Diyala (85%) and Anbar (84.2%), more than eight in ten respondents agreed that ending SGBV is the responsibility of the extended family. This finding further confirmed the previous assumption that SGBV is considered mainly a private matter.



## 4. Key Discussions

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### 4.1 Prevalence of and forms of violence in participating communities

This baseline study started exploring several aspects regarding SGBV in Diyala and Anbar, a topic that is still under-researched to date. We recommend the organization of a study covering all governorates following the same methodology to understand the differences and commonalities in how SGBV operates across the country. As per this study, the types of violence women and girls are exposed to are perceived to be mostly perpetrated by men both outside and inside the HH. Within the family, it is the husband who exercises SGBV the most. Although in both cases, in and outside the HH, SGBV is usually not addressed, it is more pronounced if the husband is the perpetrator, allowing the violence to remain behind doors and making it invisible.

Although the topic of SGBV is, to a great extent, a taboo in the target communities, this study showed there is a high level of awareness by women of the violence taking place and most participants opened for these discussions. This is an encouraging fact, suggesting that women no longer automatically keep quiet as the patriarchal structures demand. Interestingly, the male participants were consistently less likely to recognize inequality or violence.

This study further confirmed that not all women and girls are perceived to be at the same risk of SGBV: Rural areas, female-headed HHs, ISIS-affected zones, and unemployment intersect, creating overlapping vulnerabilities. Poor economic opportunities can potentially foster an environment in which SGBV takes place. This highlights how other humanitarian programs, such as livelihoods, have a direct connection to SGBV. Moreover, it shows the need to work on the constructs of masculinity to stop men from using SGBV as a coping mechanism when they struggle to meet their gender expectations of being the “breadwinners” in society and to shift the fixed gender roles.

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## 4.2 Social norms and behaviors

Despite the overall perception of men and women having unequal rights in the target communities, men were more likely to believe in existing equality between the two genders compared to their female counterparts across the locations.

This study also suggested that the space where women can make their own decisions within the HH is largely limited to the upbringing of the children. Moreover, it seemed that across the locations and genders, the participants agreed women do not currently have the right to decide on their own to participate in community activities or use sexual and reproductive health services. Additionally, in Anbar, the data portrayed women as facing even more restrictions than those in Diyala, with a consensus among the survey participants that women cannot decide for themselves to visit health facilities when sick or spend money on basic HH needs.

It was not surprising to see that early marriage has gendered effects: It impacts boys and girls unevenly. This baseline study found that in both governorates, girls are almost three times as likely as boys to be married at age 17 or below.

*The data presented on the prevalence of early marriage do not necessarily mean those who reported that girls are married early agree with it. Rather, the findings suggested this occurs due to harmful cultural practices, lack of economic opportunities, and widespread SGBV. The two most common explanations on why girls are married early were to 'protect' them (preserve their honor) and relieve the family from financial burden. This suggests marriage is imposed on girls and therefore can amount to a form of SGBV.*

Across the locations and genders, most respondents agreed women have the right to divorce based on their own will, but a significant number expressed the opposite. If the woman decides to remarry, the extent of the rights she enjoys decreases, specifically regarding custody of her children. This can lead to women staying married against their will, as they might be forced to choose between the divorce and their children. This difficulty can result in women being forced to remain in abusive relationships and not speak out against SGBV.

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### 4.3 Forms of violence against women

Violence against women was still justified within the target communities. In Diyala, more respondents believed there is no justification for it compared to those in Anbar. Moreover, there seemed to be an overall lack of existence/accessibility of services for SGBV survivors in both governorates, especially Anbar.

This study found that SGBV is strongly connected to gender roles. Women are subjected to a number of expectations to be perceived as “honorable” and not bring “eib” upon themselves or their family. It is this honor society tries to “protect” when making girls marry young and limiting their decision-making inside and outside the HH. Ultimately, honor killing is perceived as a way to “wash away the shame.” As explained in this report, over half the participants in Diyala and over eight in ten in Anbar believed that femicide or honor killing is acceptable where they live.

Across the governorates, the most prevalent perception was that when men practice violence, they do it with confidence they will not be punished. This is largely due to limited intervention, or lack thereof, when SGBV takes place, reinforcing a culture of impunity. Moreover, these interventions of informal “justice” seem to be male dominated, as the Sheikh, head of HH, and tribe leaders (those who usually intervene) are most likely to be men.

This culture not only relies on limited interventions and the (in)existence of laws punishing the men who commit SGBV but also, most importantly, the limited access to justice women have in the target locations. A law has little worth if while trying to have it implemented and seek justice, women only find a higher risk of violence and a judiciary system likely to operate through patriarchal logic.

---

#### 4.4 Support for women and girl survivors of violence, including women with disabilities

This study found that the majority of SGBV survivors do not seek assistance from WROs, as accessibility to services is extremely challenging. This is due to a combination of societal barriers that limit SGBV to being dealt with in the family while shaming survivors for seeking support as well as a lack of capacity of the system to guarantee the safety of survivors of violence reaching out to WROs. Another major influencing element is the lack of awareness that such organizations or services exist, which was particularly low among the respondents in the case of knowledge of service providers for survivors with disabilities.

Overall, this study found high levels of satisfaction with services for survivors when these exist in the target locations, with many believing WROs' work to be effective in supporting SGBV survivors.

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#### 4.5 Engagement in awareness-raising activities

The data suggested high interest in and needs rates for awareness-raising sessions, which could be a good entry point in the target communities to tackle SGBV, especially within the male population. It is important that the content facilitated in the sessions be culturally sensitive and not built solely on arguments perceived as "Western" or "foreign" to tackle the myth of gender justice being a monopoly of "European thinking," as stated by one of the participants.

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## 4.6 Responsibility to end SGBV

This study found that most respondents believed that ending SGBV is a priority and a shared responsibility of the government, WROs, men, women, girls, and the extended family.



## 5. Key Recommendations

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1. The humanitarian community should enhance coordination among service providers in target communities to ensure a comprehensive survivor-centered approach.

Optimize the use of existing platforms such as the GBV Sub-Cluster and strengthen collaboration with the Women's Empowerment Directorate at the Office of the Prime Minister to agree on a common approach to referrals. The Naseej project should support its partners by setting referral pathways for the project location; however, a more coordinated approach, beyond the target areas, is required.

2. Humanitarian actors should expand their geographical scope of work to target underserved areas, especially Qaim and Anna in Anbar.

This will require conducting needs assessments in hard-to-reach areas to understand their needs and operational environments. While limited access is an obvious obstacle for many national and international NGOs, humanitarian actors may engage in negotiating a common response strategy to address operational challenges while using existing coordination structures, such as the NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq and Access Working Group. Additionally, the donor community could encourage the formation of consortia to intervene in hard-to-reach locations to coordinate on both common approaches by partners and cost-sharing.

3. Civil society organizations, formal and informal education institutions, and other entities should engage diverse groups of men and boys in reflecting on the constructs of masculinity that contribute to the persistence of SGBV.

There is an urgent need to change the current negative coping mechanisms men and boys use when they do not meet the societal pressures of being the main breadwinners, decision-makers, and other roles associated with dominant masculinities. Oxfam in Iraq recently conducted a study on the constructs of masculinity in Iraq as part of the project "Women and Girls Rebuilding a New Iraq," funded by Global Affairs Canada. This study and the awareness materials that will be prepared based on its findings will be shared with the humanitarian community and inform the interventions planned under the Naseej project.

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4. Linked to the above, engagement with men should be conducted with positive reinforcement communication strategies.

This entails avoiding perceptions of men only as perpetrators of violence, and, instead, highlighting and building on the various positive roles men can and already do play in reducing SGBV at various levels.

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5. Given societal constraints (shame, fear of retaliation, etc.), access to services by SGBV survivors is limited. Therefore, innovate ways to reach survivors who cannot leave their HH should be employed.

Such services could involve direct door-to-door or remote assistance. It is, however, important to keep in mind that these are short-term solutions. In the long run, it is crucial to work with male members of these communities to ease women's access to SGBV services.

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6. Organizations engaged in preventing and responding to SGBV should take affirmative actions and invest in increasing the capacities of local female staff to support survivors.

Remember that many female staff members are themselves affected by the existing patriarchal structures analyzed in this study and face multiple barriers to accessing employment and performing their duties in comparison to their male counterparts. Female staff members are essential to the provision of adequate SGBV services and the overall positive outcome of humanitarian, peace-building, and development efforts.

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7. It is imperative that the NGO community continue to advocate for legislative reforms that will meaningfully contribute to eradicating SGBV. This includes, but is not limited to, passing legislation that protects women and girls (including those from minority groups) and ultimately improves their access to justice.

In this context, the lack of female staff in the formal judiciary system is likely to slow down the resolution of SGBV cases. Moreover, any justice system personnel, regardless of their gender, should be trained on the gendered aspects of accessing justice within the existing avenues of the formal justice system. With respect to strategies seeking reconciliation, legal processes should foresee and mitigate the obstacles women face in fair resolution of their legal cases given their lower bargaining power in comparison to men, which can increase the risk of negative outcomes for them. The Naseej project will prioritize those advocacy activities that support efforts to pass the anti-domestic violence law at the federal level while coordinating on organizational-level advocacy to support women's access to justice.

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8. Engage community leaders in increasing their capacity to recognize that informal justice systems are almost exclusively dominated by men.

The informal justice systems is mostly dominated by men (male family members, heads of tribes, or sheikhs) with a high likelihood of SGBV case resolutions detrimentally affecting women and girls. Engagement with informal justice leaders should provide space for a dialogue that would help reach a consensus on how women's rights are understood at the community level and what the protection of women and girls actually entails.

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9. Support women's economic empowerment that is transformative and undermines women's societal inequalities.

This avenue for increasing women's autonomy and decision-making at the HH, community, and societal levels would also contribute to the eradication of SGBV. Such interventions should be designed and implemented in close collaboration with WROs, who are essential partners in facilitating the understanding of women's obstacles in accessing paid employment and identifying the structures and systems that exclude women from economic involvement. Additionally, WROs identify and analyze the potential risks associated with women's entry in the labor market, including SGBV risks, and are best placed to identify solutions to mitigate them.

---

10. There is a need to expand strategies of community-based awareness raising with the participation of women, men, boys, and girls, including those in under-served areas.

Such strategies should be conducted with transformative goals in mind, which would facilitate more meaningful measurement of the actual changes brought about via a particular intervention. At the minimum, this should involve information on the available SGBV services and existing rights of women and girls within the formal and informal justice systems as well as dialogue with both women and men on social concepts such as gender roles, honor, shame, and respect and how these contribute to perpetuating SGBV.

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11. In relation to the above, adapt the content of awareness sessions to the target audiences, using language and paradigms that are not perceived as alien to the engaged communities.

For instance, it would be useful to raise awareness within the context of Iraq's indigenous movements for women's rights rather than universal human rights, which are perceived as foreign imports. It is also crucial to investigate other entry points to engage with local communities on sensitive subjects, e.g., utilizing discussions on marriage quality to discuss strategies to reduce/eradicate intimate partner violence.

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12. Continue psychosocial support efforts as a life-saving activity.

Given the high rates of suicide and forced/early marriage, it is critical to earmark resources for psychosocial support for survivors of SGBV and measure its impact on the survivors' wellbeing.

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13. Support coordination efforts with public and private service providers for services for SGBV survivors to identify the risks of such service provision.

Use existing platforms, such as the GBV Sub-Cluster, to facilitate discussions on common approaches and share information.

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14. Support peer-to-peer interventions by involving survivors who have managed to reintegrate into society.

Use existing platforms, such as the GBV Sub-Cluster, to facilitate discussions on common approaches and share information.



## 6. Annexes

### Annex 1: Overview of the Interviewees

Position	Sex	Age	Governorate
Humanitarian Worker (gender)	Female	30	Diyala
Humanitarian Worker	Female	31	Diyala
Humanitarian Worker	Female	N/A	Diyala
Health Service Provider	Female	33	Diyala
Health Service Provider	Female	39	Diyala
Mukhtar	Male	45	Diyala
Sheikh of Tribe	Male	50	Diyala
Health Service Provider	Male	30	Diyala
Health Service Provider	Female	26	Anbar
Private Sector Employee	Female	57	Anbar
Government Employee	Female	53	Anbar
Education Worker	Female	43	Anbar
Humanitarian Worker	Male	28	Anbar
Worker at Cultural Sector	Female	46	Anbar
Member of Local Council (Elder)	Male	57	Anbar
Education Worker	Male	47	Anbar

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## Annex 2: Survey Questionnaire

### Introduction

My name is (ENUMERATOR's name), and I work with Oxfam. I would like to ask you some questions about violence against women (VAW). The aim of the study is to collect information from the local communities' members about VAW to support Oxfam and other local organizations to implement a project that contributes to more gender-equitable societies. The same study will be conducted in Palestine and Yemen.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and there is no penalty for not participating. There are no direct benefits or risks to you if you agree to participate. However, we hope the information that you share with us will help improve our programs and services for people in Iraq. During the interview, we will ask you questions that some people might consider personal. If you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you are not obliged to answer them. You can stop the interview at any time. All responses are anonymous, which means your answers will receive a designated code and no one will know your answers. The information that you will share with us will be used in a private and confidential manner. Would you like to participate in this survey? We will record your answers with this tablet. The only purpose of this device is to make the process of recording answers easier.

This interview will take approximately 30 minutes. At this time, do you have any questions about the survey?

---

### Section 1: Social Norms and Attitudes

1. Do men and women have equal rights in your community?

1. Agree
2. Disagree
3. Do not know
4. No response

---

2. Do women and girls have the right to make their own decisions at the household level?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Do not know
4. No response

If yes, move to question 5. Otherwise skip to question 6.

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3. If yes, what kind of decisions do they make? (several answers possible)

1. Education and health of children
2. Spending money for basic household needs (foods, clothes, etc.)
3. Spending money for their own needs
4. Spending money they have earned with their own livelihood activity
5. Visiting family and friends when they are willing to
6. Studying or working outside the household
7. Getting married to the person they have chosen
8. Participating in activities in the community
9. Visiting the health facility when they are sick
10. Using sexual and reproductive health services
11. Using family planning/contraceptive methods

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4. At what age do girls get married in your community?

1. Mostly 17 or below
2. Mostly 18 and above
3. Others, specify: .....

---

5. At what age do boys get married in your community?

1. Mostly 17 or below
2. Mostly 18 and above
3. Others, specify: .....

---

6. What do you think is the main reason that early marriage takes place? (one answer only)

1. Economic reasons
2. To protect girls (honor)
3. Dowry
4. Girls want to get married at an early age
5. Education
6. Culture
7. Others, specify: .....

---

7. Should women have the right to divorce based on their own will?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Do not know
4. No response

---

8. Do you think that women should have the right to take custody of their children after divorce?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Do not know
4. No response

---

9. Do you think that women have the right to receive financial support for the children's daily expenditures ('Nafaqa') after divorce?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Do not know
4. No response

---

10. Do you believe that if a woman decides to remarry:

1. She has the right to keep her under-18 children under her custody
2. Both parents have the right to raise their children based on agreement between the spouses
3. The father has the right to keep their children under his custody if he doesn't get married
4. The father has the right to keep their children under his custody even if he gets married
5. The children should be raised by the closest family members from the father's side (maternal grandmother, aunt, sister, etc.)

---

11. Do you think women and girls receive sufficient education on sexual and reproductive health rights?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Do not know
4. No response

---

12. Do you think men and boys receive sufficient education on sexual and reproductive health rights?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Do not know
4. No response

---

13. Should women be able to decide by themselves to use family planning/ contraceptive methods?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Do not know
4. No response

---

## Section 2: Forms of Violence Against Women in Iraq

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

14. Violence against women and girls is common in the private space (home) in your community.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

15. Violence against women and girls is common in the public places (street, parks, work) in your community.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

16. The killing of women in the name of honor (or femicide ) is acceptable in your community.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

17. When men practice violence, they do it in confidence that they will not be punished.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

18. Violence against women and girls is mainly prevalent in rural areas, camps, and villages.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

19. Violence against women and girls is mainly prevalent among the poor.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

20. Violence against women and girls is mainly prevalent among households with many members.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

21. Violence against women and girls is mainly prevalent among polygamous households.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

22. Violence against women and girls is mainly prevalent among the least educated.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

23. Violence against women and girls is widespread among mainly unemployed women.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

24. Violence against women and girls is mostly widespread among employed women.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

25. Early marriage can be good for girls.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

26. Early marriage contributes to increasing violence against women.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

27. In conflict-affected areas impacted by ISIS and conflict between armed groups, the communities are more exposed to violence, more specifically the women and girls.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

28. Violence against women and girls has increased since the COVID-19 outbreak.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

29. Do you think it is justifiable for a man to practice any form of violence against his wife:

1. If she breaks anything in the house
2. If she refuses to have sex
3. If their children do not perform well at school
4. If she neglects her children
5. If she goes out of the house without his permission
6. If she raises her voice or screams
7. If she argues with him
8. If she spends too much money
9. If she spends her own money without asking permission

---

Are women and girls in your community subjected to any of the following forms of violence?

30. Denial of education

1. Yes    2. No    3. Do not know    4. No response

31. Denial of health services

1. Yes    2. No    3. Do not know    4. No response

32. Denial of contraception

1. Yes    2. No    3. Do not know    4. No response

33. Denial of inheritance

1. Yes    2. No    3. Do not know    4. No response

34. Denial of right to own land

1. Yes    2. No    3. Do not know    4. No response

35. Denial of using internet and/or social media

1. Yes    2. No    3. Do not know    4. No response

36. Denial of having a smart phone

1. Yes    2. No    3. Do not know    4. No response

**37. Denial of savings**

1. Yes 2. No 3. Do not know 4. No response

**38. Psychological and emotional abuse**

1. Yes 2. No 3. Do not know 4. No response

**39. Threat of physical violence**

1. Yes 2. No 3. Do not know 4. No response

**40. Threat of sexual violence**

1. Yes 2. No 3. Do not know 4. No response

**41. Forced isolation**

1. Yes 2. No 3. Do not know 4. No response

**42. Online harassment**

1. Yes 2. No 3. Do not know 4. No response

**43. Physical assault (hitting, slapping, burning, etc.)**

1. Yes 2. No 3. Do not know 4. No response

**44. Sexual assault**

1. Yes 2. No 3. Do not know 4. No response

**45. Unwanted touching**

1. Yes 2. No 3. Do not know 4. No response

**46. Forced marriage**

1. Yes 2. No 3. Do not know 4. No response

**47. Early marriage**

1. Yes 2. No 3. Do not know 4. No response

**48. Rape**

1. Yes 2. No 3. Do not know 4. No response

**49. Marital rape**

1. Yes 2. No 3. Do not know 4. No response

**50. Child abuse**

1. Yes 2. No 3. Do not know 4. No response
- 

**51. Has a relative or neighbor of yours experienced any form of VAW in the last 12 months?**

1. Yes  
2. No  
3. Do not know  
4. No response

If yes, move to question 5. Otherwise skip to question 6.

---

**52. What form of VAW did your relative or neighbor experience? (multiple responses)? Answer with the violence type number(s) from the table**

---

**53. What kind of services did any of your family members or neighbors receive?**

1. Psychosocial services  
2. Legal services  
3. Awareness services  
4. Medical services  
5. Other, specify: .....  
6. No service received  
7. Don't know what services were received
- 

**54. If your family member or neighbor received one or several of those services, were you/ they satisfied with the quality of the services provided?**

1. Yes  
2. No  
3. Do not know  
4. No response

---

55. In your opinion, who mostly perpetrates VAW within the family? (multiple responses)

1. Father
2. Mother
3. Brother
4. Uncle
5. Husband
6. Son
7. Other, specify: .....

---

56. In your opinion, what is the gender of perpetrators of VAW outside the family?

1. Male
2. Female

---

## Section 3: Legal and Security Measures Regarding Violence Against Women

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

57. The law in Iraq provides protection for women and girls and their rights.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

58. The police and/or other security forces protect women and girls and their rights.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

59. The law must punish a man who practices violence against his wife.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

60. The law must punish a man who practices violence against his daughter or his sister.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

61. When violence occurs in the family, the wife should not report the husband.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

62. When violence occurs in the family, the child (girl or boy) should not report the perpetrator.

1. Strongly agree
  2. Agree
  3. Disagree
  4. Strongly disagree
  5. Do not know
  6. No response
- 

63. Would you report a case of VAW occurring in your community?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Do not know
4. No response

64. If yes, to whom? .....

---

65. If a case of rape is disclosed in your community:

a) Usually the survivor of rape:

1. Commits suicide
2. Gets married to the perpetrator
3. Is rejected by the family
4. Presses charges against the perpetrator
5. Other, specify.....

b) Usually the perpetrator of the rape:

1. Gives financial compensation to the family of the survivor
2. Asks the tribe to intervene to solve the dispute
3. Lives freely in the community
4. Is put into custody by the police for investigation
5. Other, specify.....

---

## Section 4: Support for Women and Girl Survivors of Violence, Including Women with Disabilities

66. In your opinion, among women and girls experiencing violence, how many seek health services?

1. Most of them
  2. Some of them
  3. None of them
  4. Do not know
- 

67. In your opinion, among women and girls with disabilities experiencing violence, how many seek health services?

1. Most of them
  2. Some of them
  3. None of them
  4. Do not know
- 

68. In your opinion, among women and girls experiencing violence, how many seek support from shelters/safe houses?

1. Most of them
2. Some of them
3. None of them
4. Do not know

---

69. In your opinion, among women and girls with disabilities experiencing violence, how many seek support from shelters/safe houses?

1. Most of them
2. Some of them
3. None of them
4. Do not know

---

70. In your opinion, among women or girls experiencing violence, how many seek legal services?

1. Most of them
2. Some of them
3. None of them
4. Do not know

---

71. In your opinion, among women or girls with disabilities experiencing violence, how many seek legal services?

1. Most of them
2. Some of them
3. None of them
4. Do not know

---

72. In your opinion, among women or girls experiencing violence, how many seek psychosocial support services?

1. Most of them
2. Some of them
3. None of them
4. Do not know

---

73. Among women or girls with disabilities experiencing violence, how many seek psychosocial support services?

1. Most of them
2. Some of them
3. None of them
4. Do not know

---

74. In your opinion, why do you think women and girls experiencing violence don't seek support?

1. Fear of more violence
2. Social stigma
3. To protect their children
4. Economic factors
5. Lack of support services
6. Bad quality of support services
7. Others, specify: .....

---

75. Where would you go to seek help if you would experience any form of VAW?

*Please select three*

1. Health
2. Police
3. Courts
4. Safe houses
5. Psychosocial support
6. Friends
7. Relatives
8. Parents' house
9. Women's rights organization
10. Others, specify: .....

---

76. Are you aware of committees/networks in your community where women and girl survivors can go when they experience violence?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. No response

---

77. Are you aware of committees/networks in your community where women and girls with disabilities who are survivors of VAW can go to when they experience violence?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. No response

---

78. If available, what services do these committees/networks provide?

- 1. Health services
- 2. Psychosocial services
- 3. Economic support
- 4. Safe space for women and girls
- 5. Legal support
- 6. Others, specify: .....

---

79. Do you think that services to support GBV survivors are important?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Do not know
- 4. No response

---

80. Do you think that committees/networks in your community are able to serve/protect VAW survivors?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Do not know
- 4. No response

---

81. Do you think that committees/networks in your community are able to serve/protect VAW survivors with disabilities?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Do not know
- 4. No response

---

82. Do you think that safe houses/shelters are able to serve/protect VAW survivors?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Do not know
- 4. No response

---

83. In your community, what actions are taken in the case of VAW? (multiple answers)

- 1. The victim goes to the police
- 2. The victim goes to a WRO
- 3. The dispute is resolved by the tribes
- 4. The dispute is resolved within the family
- 5. Nothing happens
- 6. Other, please specify .....

---

## Section 5: Engagement in Awareness-Raising Activities

84. Have you heard of any awareness-raising activities on VAW implemented by committees/networks?

1. Yes
  2. No
  3. Do not know
  4. No response
- 

85. If yes, have you attended awareness-raising activities implemented by civil society organizations/women's rights organizations/VAW community service centers?

1. Yes
  2. No
  3. Do not know
  4. No response
- 

86. If no, why?

1. Not interested
  2. Don't have the time
  3. Husband/family member would not allow me
  4. Not aware of the activity
  5. Other, specify .....
- 

87. Would you participate again, or do you want to participate in awareness-raising activities on VAW?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Do not know
4. No response

---

88. If yes, what kind of activities do you want to participate in?

---

89. Where do you hear about VAW?

*Select three that you think are most occurring:*

1. Radio
  2. TV
  3. Facebook
  4. Instagram
  5. Twitter
  6. YouTube
  7. Newspapers
  8. Internet
  9. Friends
  10. Family members
  11. Billboards
  12. Posters
  13. Community VAW response centers
  14. Women's rights organizations
  15. Others, specify: .....
- 

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

90. Women's rights organizations' work is effective in increasing awareness about VAW.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

91. Women's rights organizations' work is effective in supporting VAW survivors.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

## Section 6: Human Rights– Based Perspectives

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

92. Women and girls have the right to make their own decisions.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

93. A woman wearing a garment that does not match the opinion of her family is a justification for violence.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

94. A husband has the right to request sexual intercourse with his wife against her will.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

95. Ending violence against women and girls should be a priority for the Iraqi society.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

96. Ending violence against women and girls is the primary responsibility of the government.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

97. Ending violence against women is mainly the responsibility of women's rights organizations.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

98. Ending violence against women and girls is the responsibility of men in society.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. Do not know
6. No response

---

99. Ending violence against women and girls is the responsibility of women and girls themselves.

1. Strongly agree
  2. Agree
  3. Disagree
  4. Strongly disagree
  5. Do not know
  6. No response
- 

100. Ending violence against women and girls is the responsibility of the extended family.

1. Strongly agree
  2. Agree
  3. Disagree
  4. Strongly disagree
  5. Do not know
  6. No response
- 

## Section 7: Demographic Background

Demographic information about the respondents:

### 1. Sex:

- a. Male
  - b. Female
- 

### 2. Age:

- a. 18–24
  - b. 25–40
  - c. 41–50
  - d. 51 and above
- 

---

### 3. Marital status:

- a. Married
  - b. Not married
  - c. Divorced
  - d. Widowed
- 

### 4. Household:

- a. Urban
  - b. Semi-urban
  - c. Rural
- 

### 5. Head of household:

- a. Male-headed household
  - b. Female-headed household
- 

### 6. Status of your household:

- a. Displaced
  - b. Returnee
  - c. Remainee
- 

### 7. Composition of household:

- a. Number of family members
  - b. Number of female members
  - c. Number of male members
  - d. How many adults are there in the family, excluding you? (above 18)
  - e. How many children are in the family? (17 and younger)
- 

### 8. What is your position in the family?

- a. Wife
  - b. Husband
  - c. Son
  - d. Daughter
  - e. Other, specify: .....
-

---

**9. Level of education**

- a. Less than secondary
- b. Secondary
- c. Bachelor
- d. Master or higher

---

**10. Relation to labor force**

- a. Business owner/self-employed
- b. Governmental employee
- c. Private sector employee
- d. Non-governmental institution/international organization employee
- e. Housewife
- f. Student
- g. Unemployed/temporarily unemployed
- h. Unable to work
- i. Retired
- j. Other, please specify: .....

---

## Annex 3: Guidelines for Female FGDs

### 1. Breaking the ice

The moderator will start the discussion by letting the participants talk about themselves and their future. The following points may be used to guide the discussion for the breaking-the-ice part:

- Age
- Marital status
- Employment
- Number of males and females in the family
- What are you doing these days?
- “What is your level of happiness? If you are not happy, why?”
- What do you think about future? Do you think it will be better or worse? Why?

---

### 2. Effect of community norms on females

- In Iraqi society, do you think men and women are equal, or do they enjoy the same freedoms?
  - *In what way are they equal or unequal?*
  - *Why do you think this is the case?*
- Are there any social norms in your community that affect females negatively? If yes, how?
- Do you think they affect females’ choices of education, marriage, employment, and other life choices? How? Can you give an example?
- Do people in your community pay much

attention to what is called the honor of women? If so, explain how.

- Does the fear of breaking family honor codes control your lifestyle/life choices (for example, getting married at a certain age, not going to university, not getting a job)?
- If a woman does something considered dishonorable within the family, what will happen to her?

---

### 3. Violence against women in the community

- To what degree do you feel that there is no fear of violence toward you because you are a woman? If it is a low degree, why?
- What are the most common forms of violence against women and girls in your community?
- Do you think there are situations where men have a right to punish their wives?
  - *If yes, what are they?*
  - *If yes, what is the kind of punishment?*
- Should women report male family members who harm them? What are the main reasons for not reporting or main reasons for reporting?
- What do you think would make it easier for women to report violence against them?
- What do you think about violence against women? Does it exist in your community?
- How common do you think it is?

---

## 4. Community reaction toward violence against women

- How does your community react to VAW? Do they interfere when a woman is experiencing violence?
- Who usually interferes when women are experiencing violence?
- What about the result of this interference? Is it for the benefit of the women?
- What other methods are available in your community to treat/address violence against women?
- What about tribal interference? Is it used to treat VAW? Explain and give an example if possible.

---

## 5. Witnessing/experiencing violence

**Would any of you like to share experiences of witnessing any form of violence against women?**

**Guided questions for the moderator:**

- Have you or has anyone close to you ever been violated? What action did you/she take?
- What was the reaction of your/her family?
- If it was reported, what happened?
- Did you/she receive help or assistance?
- If yes, what kind of assistance did you/she receive?
- If not, why not?

- Should women report male family members who harm them? Why/why not? What are the main reasons for not reporting or main reasons for reporting?
- What do you think would make it easier for women to report violence against them?

---

## 6. Awareness of services related to VAW

- Do you know of women's rights organizations or civil society organizations that provide services from women suffering from violence?
- If yes, what are their names? What services do they provide?
- What do people say about the quality of services provided by WROs and CSOs?
- Do you know what to do if a violent act (from husband, brother, uncle, others) is committed against you? Explain.
- Are there any centers/organizations within your community that respond to VAW?
- What services do these centers provide?
- Have you or has anyone you know ever used the center? How did you/they use it? What happened?
- What are the main positive and negative attributes found within these centers/organizations?

---

## 7. Awareness of activities/ campaigns related to combating VAW

- Have you heard of any awareness-raising activities implemented by organizations/ networks?
- Have you attended awareness-raising activities implemented by civil society organizations/women's rights organizations/ VAW community service centres?
- What do you think about these activities? Are they contributing to decreasing violence against women? If yes, how? If not, why?

---

## 8. Confidence in WROs

- To what extent would you trust any women's rights centers/organizations to support/help you if you were harmed? Why? Why not?
- What do the males in your community think about WROs?
- Do they trust the WROs? Why? Why not?
- How satisfied do you think women are with the SGBV services provided in your area?
- How satisfied do you think men are with the SGBV services provided in your area?

---

## 9. Suggestions and recommendations to decrease VAW

- What should be done/changed to decrease VAW?
- What should the community do/change to decrease VAW?
- What should WROs do/change to decrease VAW?
- What should the government do/change to decrease VAW?

---

## Annex 4: Guidelines for Male FGDs

### 1. Breaking the ice

The moderator will start the discussion by letting the participants talk about themselves and their future. The following points may be used to guide the discussion for the breaking-the-ice part:

- Age
- Marital status
- Employment
- Number of males and females in the family
- What are you doing these days?
- “What is your level of happiness? If you are not happy, why?”
- What do you think about future? Do you think it will be better or worse? Why?

---

### 2. Effect of community norms on females

- In Iraqi society, do you think men and women are equal or enjoy the same freedoms?
  - *In what way are they equal or unequal?*
  - *Why do you think this is the case?*
- Are there any social norms in your community that affect females negatively? If yes, how?
- Do you think they affect females’ choices of education, marriage, employment, and other life choices? How? Can you give an example?

- Should men within the family control women’s personal decisions (for example, her choice to go to school/university, marry, work, use her money, inheritance)? Why?
- Do you think males should be prosecuted for committing violence against women? If not, why not?

---

### 3. Family honor

- Do people in your community pay much attention to what is called the honor of women?
- What does honor mean to you and those around you?
- How does the honor of women impact household decisions (for example, getting married at a certain age, not going to university, not getting a job)?
- If a woman does something considered dishonorable within the family, what will happen to her?
- Do people consider the males within the family responsible for making sure the women in the family are honorable? How do you do so?
- If a woman does something considered dishonorable within the family, is it justifiable that she is punished by male family members?
- Do you think there are situations where men have a right to punish their wives? If yes, what are they?
- If yes, what is the kind of punishment?

---

## 4. Perceptions about VAW

- What are the most common forms of violence against women in your community?
- How common do you think they are?
- Do you think there are situations where men have a right to punish their wives?
  - If yes, what are they?
  - If yes, what is the kind of punishment?
- Should women report male family members who harm them? Why/why not? What are the main reasons for not reporting or main reasons for reporting?
- How do you think VAW issues should be solved?

---

## 5. Community reaction toward VAW

- How does your community react to VAW?
- Do they interfere when a woman experiences VAW? How?
- Who usually interferes when women experience VAW?
- What about tribal interference? Do they support finding solutions to address VAW? Explain and give an example if possible.
- How do you think VAW issues should be treated/addressed?

---

## 6. Awareness of services related to VAW

- Do you know of organizations/centers that provide services to women suffering from violence?
- If yes, what are their names? What services do they provide?
- Are there any centers/organizations within your community that respond to VAW?
- What services do these centers provide?

---

## 7. Awareness of activities/ campaigns related to combating VAW

- Have you heard of any awareness-raising activities implemented by organizations?
- Have you attended awareness-raising activities implemented by civil society organizations/women's rights organizations/VAW community service centres?
- What is your perception of those organizations?
- What do you think about these activities?
- Do you think women should participate in these activities?

---

## 8. Confidence in WROs

- What do you think about the work of WROs?
- To what extent would you trust women's rights centers/organizations to support/help women if they experience VAW harm? Why? Why not?
- How satisfied do you think men and women are with the SGBV services provided in your area?

---

## 9. Suggestions and recommendations to decrease VAW

- In your opinion, what should be done/changed to decrease VAW?
- In your opinion, what should the community do/change to decrease VAW?
- In your opinion, what should WROs do/change to decrease VAW?
- In your opinion, what should the government do/change to decrease VAW?

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## Annex 5: KII Tool

My name is XXX, and I work for Oxfam in Iraq. We are conducting a study to further understand the needs in the community to provide services accordingly. Your opinions will be highly valued, and the information will only be used for the purposes of this study and understanding the community better. There are no right or wrong answers.

**If recording, ask for consent and explain that the recording will be used to do a transcript of the answers and will be deleted afterwards. The recording will not be shared with anyone outside the team conducting this study.**

### In-depth Interview Questions:

1. What do you think are the most common types of GBV that exist in your community?
2. What do you think are the most common types of GBV that exist in Iraq?
3. Do these types of GBV exist at the same level among the different regions in Iraq?
4. If no, which areas have the highest levels of GBV? Why?
5. If no, which areas have the lowest levels of GBV? Why?
6. In the areas where GBV is high, are the GBV-related services provided effective? If not, why?
7. Do you believe that referral channels to receive cases from and refer cases to other service providers/networks/organizations are effective? What are the major gaps in your opinion?
8. What do you think should be done to improve coordination channels between GBV service providers, especially when working at the grassroots level?
9. What do you think are the most critical gaps in addressing GBV in Iraq?
10. What are the strategies that are adopted to raise awareness in relation to available services to address GBV cases?
11. How do you think we can improve people's/women's trust in GBV services?
12. What do you think are the most effective programs that aim to combat domestic violence? Are there any success stories?
13. Do you think that media is an effective tool that contributes to raising awareness about the consequences of GBV on Iraqi women and girls? How and why?

14. What are the most effective advocacy tools/interventions that are used/implemented to prevent GBV?

15. Do you think there are sufficient safe houses/shelters to protect women and girls from domestic violence? What do you think are the gaps?

16. Do you think that response services provided by expert organizations/networks are capable of effectively responding to violence against women and girls with disabilities? What do you think are the most critical gaps? Can you recommend solutions?

**The following questions can be sensitive for the interviewees. Please ask if it is alright to pose questions related to “early marriage” and “honor.”**

17. After conducting the surveys, many interviewees reported that “early marriage” was a way to protect girls. What do you think they mean by this protection? From what are they being protected?

18. Although, in the surveys conducted, the interviewees reported agreeing with “early marriage,” they also expressed that “early marriage” contributes to violence against women. What do you think is the reason for this apparent contradiction?

19. It has been reported that women and girls are often denied the possibility to attend health facilities for consultation or treatment when sick. Do you think this is accentuated in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?

20. Do people in your community pay much attention to what is called the honor of women?

21. What does honor mean in your community? What is an “honorable” woman like?

22. If a woman does something considered dishonorable within the family, what will happen to her?

23. Do men and boys have to follow the same honor codes in society? If yes, what happens to a boy or man if he does something considered dishonorable?

## 7. Acknowledgments

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