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Human Rights and Multi-level Governance**



WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE AS A PIVOTAL  
DIMENSION IN COMBATING INTIMATE PARTNER  
VIOLENCE: THE ITALIAN CASE

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*C'est par le travail que la femme a en grande partie franchi la distance qui la séparait du mâle ; c'est le travail qui peut seul lui garantir une liberté concrète.*

Simone de Beauvoir

# Women’s economic independence as a pivotal dimension in combating Intimate Partner Violence: the Italian case

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CESCR</b>	UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
<b>D.i.Re</b>	Donne in Rete Contro la Violenza
<b>EIGE</b>	European Institute for Gender Equality
<b>GREVIO</b>	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
<b>HRC</b>	Human Rights Council
<b>ICESR</b>	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>ISTAT</b>	Istituto Nazionale di Statistica
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

## INTRODUCTION

Intimate Partner Violence is the most common and prevalent form of violence against women and affects approximately 641 million women worldwide. This type of violence concerns women of all ages, regardless of background, social or economic status. However, data show that IPV mainly affects women living in low- and middle-low-income countries, thus revealing a kind of correlation between this type of violence and the economic situation of the woman and the family itself. In other words, the presence of one increases the risk of the other and vice versa.

This dissertation therefore aims to analyse the correlation between intimate partner violence and poverty, in order to demonstrate the vital importance that economic independence and economic empowerment have on a women's life. The last decades have witnessed a significant change in the status of women within the family and society, thanks to an increasing recognition of economic and social rights at international and national level. Unfortunately, today we are still a long way from *de jure* and *de facto* gender equality, the achievement of which is sanctioned by the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence as a “key element in preventing violence against women” (Preamble). The gender wage gap shows that women earn on average 23% less than men and that they are therefore overrepresented in lower-paid sectors and jobs. As a matter of fact, women's work is valued less. In addition, we live in a society where it is assumed that women have to take on the greatest care responsibilities within the home and family, bearing a “double burden” of work, inside and outside the home.

The research question of this dissertation is to understand if there is a correlation between the economic independence of women and the risk of intimate partner violence, both at the level of prevention and at the level of response to violence. Economic independence is therefore a protective factor, especially because it can allow the woman who has experienced violence to undertake a path out of violence and to rebuild her life on her own. In the light of what has been mentioned above, it becomes evident that the woman who has survived intimate partner violence will encounter many obstacles to rebuild her economic and housing independence, facing a discriminating labour market, in a context of public services which do not support women and mothers, and of a system of laws which is formally appropriate but not always concretely effective.

The theme dealt with in this dissertation is certainly highly topical, in Italy and in the world. Every day we hear debates about gender-based violence against women, about wage discrimination and discrimination in the workplace, and about gender inequality. However, limited attention is paid to the link between these issues. It is therefore important to understand in depth and in a broader



perspective how gender inequality, at the cultural, social, political, and economic levels, negatively affects the phenomenon of gender-based violence and, in the case of this dissertation, intimate partner violence.

The first chapter aims at framing the relationship between intimate partner violence and poverty. It starts with the different definitions of intimate partner violence, continues with data on the global phenomenon and analyses this type of violence from a feminist perspective. In addition, it explains the different types of violence that intimate partner violence manifests itself and the consequences for women's physical and mental health and their ability to work. Finally, it analyses how poverty and intimate partner violence feed themselves.

The second chapter deals with the empowerment of women and the role that economic independence plays in their lives within the family and society. It analyses the history of women's economic empowerment in recent decades and economic rights in International Law. Despite the numerous economic rights contained in international documents, the gender wage gap is still a significant issue in all parts of the world, and labour markets are unfortunately particularly discriminatory towards women. It is precisely from this gender pay discrimination that emerges the importance of women's economic empowerment and the protective role that economic independence plays against the risk of intimate partner violence.

The third chapter addresses the obstacles that women survivors of intimate partner violence face once they have undertaken a pathway out of violence. Structural barriers, such as government policies, laws, and public services, are often not attentive to the needs of women, especially mothers. Furthermore, barriers related to housing autonomy, which leads to a very high number of homeless women and with housing instability, due to the scarcity of benefits and lack of investment in social and public housing. This chapter also deals with the barriers to employability, including discrimination in the labour market, the stigma in the workplace for women who are victims of violence, and the lack of sufficient measures to facilitate the "double burden" of childcare and unpaid work that women still have to bear.

The fourth chapter focuses on the Italian case, analysing the phenomenon in the Italian context, including legislation concerning violence against women and the level of gender equality and discrimination at work. It also analyses the national policies that support women who are victims of violence, both economically and in terms of reintegration into employment. The chapter subsequently considers the most relevant regional regulations on gender-based violence, focusing on the Emilia-Romagna region. Finally, from the regions it shifts the attention to the measures taken by municipalities and anti-violence centres across the country.

The fifth chapter deals with the experience of the anti-violence centre in Piacenza, “La Città delle Donne”, when it was born, how it works, how it has developed over the years and what measures it takes to help women victims of violence to rebuild their economic independence. In addition, it analyses the data on the economic situation of women who have accessed the centre in recent years in the light of what has been discussed in the previous chapters.



# Chapter 1

## Intimate Partner Violence and Poverty

### 1.1 Understanding Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

#### 1.1.1 On definition of IPV

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is one of the most common forms of violence against women. It refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to those in the relationship<sup>1</sup>.

The term is not systematically defined at the international level and is often described as falling within the scope of domestic violence. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) provides a comprehensive definition of “domestic violence”, referring to four types of violence: physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) defines Intimate partner violence as “any act of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occurs between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim<sup>3</sup>”.

The World Health Organization has put forward the most comprehensive definition of IPV that refers to physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and controlling behaviours by an intimate partner and provides examples of the types of indicators for each element<sup>4</sup>. More specifically, IPV occurs in all settings and among all socio-economic, religious, and cultural groups and its overwhelming global burden is borne by women. Furthermore, IPV refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to those in the relationship. Acts of physical violence includes slapping, hitting, kicking, and beating, and sexual

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<sup>1</sup> WHO (2012). *Understanding and addressing violence against women*, p. 1. Retrieved from: [https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/violence/vaw\\_series/en/](https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/violence/vaw_series/en/)

<sup>2</sup> Council of Europe (2011). *Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)* article 3(b).

<sup>3</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality (2018). *Report on Indicators on intimate partner violence and rape for the police and justice sector*, pp. 3-19. Retrieved from: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/indicators-intimate-partner-violence-and-rape-police-and-justice-sectors>

<sup>4</sup> WHO (2012), cit., p. 4.

violence refers to forced sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion. Emotional (psychological) abuse can cover insults, belittling, constant humiliation, intimidation (e.g., destroying things), threats of harm, threats to take away children. Finally, controlling behaviour encompasses isolating a person from family and friends; monitoring their movements; and restricting access to financial resources, employment, education, or medical care<sup>5</sup>.

### 1.1.2 Data on the phenomenon

Intimate partner violence is by far the most prevalent form of violence against women globally, affecting around 641 million<sup>6</sup>. Worldwide, almost one third (27%) of women aged 15-49 years who have been in a relationship report that they have been subjected to some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner<sup>7</sup>. This violence starts early: 1 in 4 young women (aged 15-24 years) who have been in a relationship will have already experienced violence by an intimate partner by the time they reach their mid-twenties<sup>8</sup>.

Violence disproportionately affects women living in low- and lower-middle-income countries. An estimated 37% of women living in the poorest countries have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their life. The regions of Oceania, Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa have the highest prevalence rates of intimate partner violence among women aged 15-49, ranging from 33% - 51%. Three countries from sub-Saharan Africa (Equatorial Guinea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Liberia) have IPV prevalence rates ranging from 35.0 to 43.6 %<sup>9</sup>. Four countries from Oceania (Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands) have an IPV range from 41.8 to 47.6 %, while the lowest rates are found in the high - income countries: Europe (16–23%), Central Asia (18%), Eastern Asia (20%) and South-Eastern Asia (21%)<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> WHO (2017) *Violence Against Women*. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

<sup>6</sup> WHO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP) for the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence Against Women Estimation and Data (2021), *Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018 Global, regional, and national estimates for intimate partner violence against women and global and regional estimates for non-partner sexual violence against women*, pp. XII-XIII

<sup>7</sup> Ivi, p. XII

<sup>8</sup> WHO (2021). *Devastatingly pervasive: 1 in 3 women globally experience violence*. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/news/item/09-03-2021-devastatingly-pervasive-1-in-3-women-globally-experience-violence>

<sup>9</sup> UNFPA (2021). *Prevalence Rates, Trends and Disparities in Intimate Partner Violence: Power of Data in the IPV Geospatial Dashboard*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/prevalence-rates-trends-and-disparities-ipv>

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem

Over the last decades and especially in 2020, during the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic, many reports from several countries have underlined a remarkable increase in the cases of IPV. Measures and policies taken to address the pandemic, such as lockdown and distancing rules, have led to an escalation in reports of intimate partner violence against women to helplines, police forces and other service providers<sup>11</sup>. To the extent that the United Nations expect an additional 15 million cases of gender-based violence for every three months of lockdown<sup>12</sup>. The reasons for increased IPV during COVID-19 are broadly associated firstly with negative emotions, problematic coping, and mental health disorders; secondly, social distancing leads to an increase in exposure to perpetrators, less support opportunities for both survivors and perpetrators and facilitates perpetrator tactics of isolation and control. Lastly, the pandemic leads to more financial distress and unemployment, which are both associated with an increased likelihood of IPV<sup>13</sup>.

### 1.1.3 The feminist perspective

Since the early 1970s, the feminist perspective has been one of the predominant theoretical models in the intimate partner violence field, undergirding many programs, interventions, advocacy efforts, and legislative agendas. The feminist model is grounded in the principle that intimate partner violence is the result of male oppression of women within a patriarchal system in which men are the primary perpetrators of violence and women the primary victims<sup>14</sup>. The feminist theoretical tradition views violence towards women as a special case, different from other forms of violence and other forms of crime<sup>15</sup> and aims to understand violent relationships through examining the sociocultural context in which these relationships occur.

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<sup>11</sup> WHO (2021). *Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2018: global, regional and national prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence against women and global and regional prevalence estimates for non-partner sexual violence against women*. Executive summary IX. Retrieved from: <https://apps.who.int>

<sup>12</sup> UNFPA (2020). *Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage*. Retrieved from [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19\\_impact\\_brief\\_for\\_UNFPA\\_24\\_April\\_2020\\_1.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19_impact_brief_for_UNFPA_24_April_2020_1.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Brink J., Cullen P., Beek K., Peters S.A.E., (2021) *Intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic in Western and Southern European countries*, *European Journal of Public Health*. 2021 Oct 26; 31(5), pp. 1058-1063. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckab093>

<sup>14</sup> Dobash R.E., Dobash R.P., (1979). *Violence against Wives: A Case against the Patriarchy*. New York, Free Press, pp. 45-59.

<sup>15</sup> Idem (2004). *Women's Violence to Men in Intimate Relationships: Working on a Puzzle*. *The British Journal of Criminology*, Volume 44, Issue 3, May 2004, pp. 324–349. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azh026>

Proponents of the feminist theory suggest that men often use different tactics, including physical violence, to exert control and dominance over women and their families<sup>16</sup>, and that women's violent behaviour towards their male partners should be understood as self-defence, retaliation, or pre-emption for male violence. According to the model, male violence within intimate relationships results from historic and current power differentials that keep women subordinate, primarily by control, including physical, sexual, economic, and psychological abuse, comprising tactics of intimidation and isolation. The feminist model challenges male entitlement and privilege as well as the traditional notion that IPV is a private family matter.

Moreover, feminist research emphasizes that the motivations, meanings, and outcomes of IPV are gendered. The feminist view of patriarchy as a system of social control that constructs definitions of the sexes as inherently different, unequal, and complementary suggests that understanding IPV requires theoretically conceptualizing and measuring the gender identities (masculinities and femininities) and gender ideologies (the elements that make up gender identities) that support and reproduce the patriarchal order<sup>17</sup>. Connell's (1987) theory of gender and power argues that the imbalance in power between the genders that exists on a societal level plays out in the interpersonal relationships between men and women. Since it is instilled in men that they are supposed to be more powerful in the world compared to women, they try to maintain that amount of power in all situations, sometimes resorting to physical violence to do so. Under patriarchy, masculinity is equated with dominance, independence, rationality, and strength; by contrast, femininity is associated with dependence, emotiveness, passivity, and weakness<sup>18</sup>.

Although IPV affects women of all classes and cultures, there is evidence that more traditional gender relations, where women are economically dependent on men, increases the risk, with higher levels of dependence linked with more extreme violence<sup>19</sup>. However, material gender inequalities work in cooperation with cultural gender discourses and practices that are conducive to gendered violence. These are historical, multifarious, and interlinked, but variously position

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<sup>16</sup> Dobash R.E., Dobash R.P., (1979), cit.

<sup>17</sup> Connell R.W., Messerschmidt J.W., (2005). *Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept*. Gender & Society, Vol. 19(6), pp. 829-859. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639>

<sup>18</sup> Messerschmidt J., Messner M. A. (2018) *Hegemonic, Nonhegemonic, and "New" Masculinities*. In J. W. Messerschmidt, P. Y. Martin, M. A. Messner and R. Connell (eds) *Gender Reckonings: New Social Theory and Research* New York: New York University Press, pp. 35-56. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.18574/9781479866342>

<sup>19</sup> Walby S., Allen J., (2004). *Domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*. London: Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate. Retrieved from: <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/21697>

men as superior, authoritative, and rational; and women as inferior, emotional, dependent, responsible for domestic work and children, and the property of their male partners<sup>20</sup>.

## 1.2 Different types of violence

Intimate partner violence can occur in many different forms, which can be concomitant and in varying degrees of severity. IPV endorses physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence which are the four multi-faceted types of violence those perpetrators utilize to achieve, maintain, and regain control of their intimate partners or potential ones<sup>21</sup>.

### 1.2.1 Physical violence

Most of the research focuses on the physical forms of IPV. Physical violence is the intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or harm. Research has shown that physical violence is often accompanied by psychological violence and, in one-third to one-half of cases, by sexual violence<sup>22</sup>. Physical violence includes scratching, pushing, or shoving; throwing, grabbing, or biting; choking, shaking, aggressive hair pulling, slapping, punching, hitting, or burning; use of a weapon and of restraints or one's body, size, or strength against another person<sup>23</sup>. Moreover, it may include damaging property when angry (throws objects, punches walls, kicks doors, etc.); abandoning a partner in a dangerous or unfamiliar place; using weapon to threaten or to hurt; forcing a partner to leave or to be locked in the house; preventing a partner from calling police or seeking medical attention; hurting their children and finally using physical force in sexual situations<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Wendt S., Zannettino L., (2015). *Domestic violence in diverse contexts: a re-examination of gender*. (1st ed.). London, Routledge. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315751894>

<sup>21</sup> Hart B., Klein A.J., (2013). *Practical Implications of Current Intimate Partner Violence Research for Victim Advocates and Service Providers*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Criminal Justice Reference Service; January 2013 pp. 14-17. Retrieved from: <https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/justice>

<sup>22</sup> Heise L., Garcia-Moreno C., (2002). *Violence by intimate partners*. In Krug E., Dahlberg L. L., Mercy J. A. et al. (Eds.), *World report on violence and health*. Geneva: WHO.

<sup>23</sup> Breiding M.J., Basile K.C., Smith S.G., Black M.C., Mahendra R., (2015). *Intimate Partner Violence Surveillance. Uniform Definitions and Recommended Data Elements*. Version 2.0. Atlanta (GA): National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2015, p. 53. Retrieved from: [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs\\_report2010-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> UN (2021), *What is domestic abuse?* Retrieved from: [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)



### 1.2.2 Psychological violence

The type of psychological violence, compared to physical and sexual violence, is estimated to be the most common form of IPV in both the USA and Europe<sup>25</sup>, affecting between 35 and 49% of women. It targets the emotional and psychological well-being of the victim, and it is often a precursor to physical violence.

Psychological violence can be defined by an overall definition combining that of both the WHO<sup>26</sup> (i.e., both emotional/psychological abuse and controlling behaviours) and the European Institute of Gender Equality<sup>27</sup>: “Any act or behaviour which causes psychological harm to the partner or former partner. Psychological violence can take the form of, among others, coercion, defamation, a verbal insult or harassment”, including belittling one’s abilities, constant humiliation, intimidation (e.g., destroying things), threats of harm, threats to take away children and/or isolating a person from family and friends. Damaging a partner’s relationship with the children; monitoring their movements; and restricting access to financial resources, employment, education, or medical care<sup>28</sup>.

Article 33 of the Istanbul Convention states a shortened version of this definition: “seriously impairing a person’s psychological integrity through coercion or threats”. The offence of psychological violence set out in the article limits criminalising any act to ‘intentional conduct’ which ‘seriously impairs a person’s psychological integrity’. Perpetrators must use ‘coercion or threats’ for their behaviour to fall under this offence and psychological violence refers to a course of conduct amounting to an abusive pattern of behaviour occurring over time rather than a single event<sup>29</sup>.

Furthermore, emotional violence involves comments or behaviours intended to undermine the victim’s sense of value and self-worth; and used to degrade the victim’s sense of logic and reasoning, making the victim feel as if she is losing her mind. Women described their experiences

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<sup>25</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (EUAFR), (2014). *Violence against women, an EU-wide survey: Main results*. Vienna: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. Retrieved from: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/violence-against-women-eu-wide-survey-main-results-report>.

<sup>26</sup> WHO (2012), cit., p. 2

<sup>27</sup> EIGE, (2017). *Glossary of definitions of rape, femicide, and intimate partner violence*. p. 45 Retrieved from: <https://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/glossary-definitions-rape-femicide-and-intimate-partner-violence>

<sup>28</sup> WHO (2012), cit., p. 2

<sup>29</sup> Council of Europe (2011), cit., art. 33.

with this form of violence as devastating to their self-esteem and self-identity: such experiences manifested in feelings of sadness, isolation, degradation, and despair<sup>30</sup>.

Previous research has shown that battered women may blame themselves for being victims of IPV and this further degrades self-esteem. The repeated instances of violence experienced by these victims may lead them to believe that they are powerless to stop the violence.

Women often blame themselves for the violence because of justifications, accusations, and excuses made by the abuser<sup>31</sup> and as a potential coping mechanism in the hopes that, if they could possibly change their behaviour, the abuse would end. Self-blame has long been noted among intimate partner violence survivors<sup>32</sup> and generally is associated with several negative psychological experiences including shame and depressive symptoms<sup>33</sup>.

### 1.2.3 Sexual violence

In addition to experiencing physical and psychological violence, approximately one third to one half of women in abusive relationships experience sexual abuse<sup>34</sup>. Sexual violence can range from unwanted touching and sexual harassment to sexual assault or rape. It refers to “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person, regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work<sup>35</sup>”.

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<sup>30</sup> Childress S., (2013). *A Meta-Summary of Qualitative Findings on the Lived Experience among Culturally Diverse Domestic Violence Survivors*. Issues Mental Health Nursing. 2013 Sep; 34(9): pp. 693-705. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.3109/01612840.2013.791735>

<sup>31</sup> Landenberg K., (1989). *A Process of Entrapment in and Recovery from an Abusive Relationship*. Issues Mental Health Nursing. 1989; Vol. 10(3-4): pp. 209-227. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.3109/01612848909140846>

<sup>32</sup> Weaver T.L., Clum G.A., (1995). *Psychological distress associated with interpersonal violence: A meta-analysis*. Clinical Psychology Review. Vol. 15(2), pp. 115-140. Retrieved from: [https://doi.org/10.1016/0272-7358\(95\)00004-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0272-7358(95)00004-9)

<sup>33</sup> Cascardi M., O’Leary K., (1992). *Depressive symptomatology, self-esteem, and self-blame in battered women*. Journal of Family Violence, 7, pp. 249-259. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00994617>

<sup>34</sup> Campbell J.C., (1989). *Women's responses to sexual abuse in intimate relationships*. Health Care Women Int. 1989; Vol. 10(4), pp. 335-46. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07399338909515860>

<sup>35</sup> Jewkes R., Sen P., Garcia-Moreno C., (2002). *Sexual Violence*. From World Report on Violence and Health, WHO, Geneva, p. 213-239. Retrieved from: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(02\)11133-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(02)11133-0)

In the context of IPV, sexual violence refers to physically forcing a partner, who is not willing, to have sexual intercourse; forcing a partner to do something that she finds degrading or humiliating, harming her during sex or forcing her to have sex without protection<sup>36</sup>.

Furthermore, in sexually abusive relationships the partner might be requested to dress in a sexual way; insulted in sexual ways; forced or manipulated into having sex or performing sexual acts; and to have sex when sick, tired or after being beaten<sup>37</sup>.

#### 1.2.4 Economic violence

Economic violence, defined as controlling a woman's ability to acquire, use, and maintain economic resources<sup>38</sup>, is widely reported among survivors of IPV and over the last two decades has been conceptualized as a distinct form of violence<sup>39</sup>. It is as common in abusive relationships as physical and psychological violence. It is therefore broadly defined as the persistent control, exploitation, and sabotage of a partner's economic resources and employment<sup>40</sup>.

Economic abuse involves behaviours that interfere with and control an individual's ability to acquire, use and maintain economic resources involving access to food, clothes, telephones, transport and somewhere to stay<sup>41</sup>, "thus threatening her economic security and potential for self-sufficiency<sup>42</sup>". It occurs when the abuser gains complete control over the victim's financial

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<sup>36</sup> WHO (2014). *Violence against women: intimate partner and sexual violence against women: intimate partner and sexual violence have serious short- and long-term physical, mental and sexual and reproductive health problems for survivors: fact sheet*. Retrieved from: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/112325>

<sup>37</sup> UN (2021), cit.

<sup>38</sup> Adams A. E., (2011). *Measuring the Effects of Domestic Violence on Women's Financial Well-Being*. Center for Financial Security Research Brief 2011-5.6, pp. 2-5. Retrieved from: <https://cfs.wisc.edu/2011/05/01/adams2011/>

<sup>39</sup> Stylianou A. M., (2018). *Economic Abuse Experiences and Depressive Symptoms among Victims of Intimate Partner Violence*. *Journal of Family Violence*, Vol. 33(5): pp. 381-392. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-018-9973-4>

<sup>40</sup> Postmus J. L., Plummer S. B., McMahon S., Murshid N. S., (2018). *Understanding Economic Abuse in the Lives of Survivors*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*; Vol. 27(3): pp. 411-430. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260511421669>

<sup>41</sup> SafeLives (2019). *Report on Psychological Violence*. Retrieved from: <https://safelives.org.uk/psychological-abuse>

<sup>42</sup> Adams A. E., Sullivan C. M., Bybee D., Greeson M., (2008). *Development of the Scale of Economic Abuse*. *Violence Against Women*. 2008; Vol. 14(5): pp. 563-588. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801208315529>

resources<sup>43</sup> and includes three forms of economic abuse: economic control, employment sabotage, and economic exploitation<sup>44</sup>.

Economic control emerges when the perpetrator prevents the victim from having access to or knowledge of the finances and from having financial decision-making power<sup>45</sup>. Victims of economic control report their partners control and limit access to financial resources<sup>46</sup> and deny access to necessities such as food, clothing, and/or medications. A perpetrator may track the victim's use of money, withhold, or hide jointly earned money, prevent the victim from having access to a bank account, or lie about shared properties and assets<sup>47</sup>.

Employment sabotage encompasses behaviours that prevent the victim from obtaining or maintaining employment<sup>48</sup>, in ways in which perpetrators forbid, discourage, and actively interfere with their partners' employment and/or educational endeavours<sup>49</sup>.

Economic exploitation occurs when a perpetrator intentionally engages in behaviours aimed to destroy the victim's financial resources or credit<sup>50</sup>. As consumer lending has increased, perpetrators increasingly use debt as a means of gaining power and control over their partners<sup>51</sup>. This can occur when a perpetrator steals money, checks, or credit cards; opens or uses a victim's line of credit without permission; refuses to pay the mortgage, rent, or other utility payments; runs up bills under the name of the victim or of his or her children; or gambles jointly earned money<sup>52</sup>.

One of the greatest impacts of economic violence is that it creates economic dependency on the perpetrator, which is the primary obstacles victims face in attempting to leave abusive

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<sup>43</sup> Fawole O.I., (2008). *Economic Violence to Women and Girls: Is It Receiving the Necessary Attention?* Trauma, Violence, & Abuse. 2008; Vol. 9(3): pp. 168-170. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838008319255>

<sup>44</sup> Postmus J.L., Plummer S.B., Stylianou A.M., (2015). *Measuring Economic Abuse in the Lives of Survivors: Revising the Scale of Economic Abuse*. Violence Against Women. 2016 May; Vol. 22(6): pp. 692-695. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801215610012>

<sup>45</sup> Anderson M.A., Gillig, P.M., Sitaker M., McCloskey K., Malloy K., Grigsby N., (2003). "Why doesn't she just leave?": A descriptive study of victim reported impediments to her safety. Journal of Family Violence, 18, pp. 151-155. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1023564404773>

<sup>46</sup> Sanders C.K., (2015). *Economic Abuse in the Lives of Women Abused by an Intimate Partner: A Qualitative Study*. Violence Against Women. 2015; Vol. 21(1): p. 23. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801214564167>

<sup>47</sup> Brewster M.P., (2003). *Power and control dynamics in prestalking and stalking situations*. Journal of Family Violence 18, pp. 207-217. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024064214054>

<sup>48</sup> Postmus J.L., Plummer S.B., Stylianou A.M., (2015), cit., p. 694.

<sup>49</sup> Alexander P.C., (2011). *Childhood maltreatment, intimate partner violence, work interference and women's employment*. Journal of Family Violence, Vol. 26(4), pp. 255–261. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-011-9361-9>

<sup>50</sup> Postmus J.L., Plummer S.B., Stylianou A.M., (2015), cit. p. 694.

<sup>51</sup> Littwin A., (2012). *Coerced debt: The role of consumer credit in domestic violence*. California Law Review, 100(4), pp. 951–1026. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23249825>

<sup>52</sup> Anderson M.A., Gillig P.M., Sitaker M., McCloskey K., Malloy K., Grigsby N., (2003), cit., pp. 151-155.

relationships<sup>53</sup>. Dependency includes not only income but also material well-being and housing concerns. Sufficient housing, financial assistance, job training, and childcare prevent women from permanently escaping abusive relationships<sup>54</sup>.

Economic violence is often interwoven with psychological, physical and/or sexual violence creating a context in which the individual is intimidated and isolated. For example, psychologically, a victim can be abused and belittled by being told they have no understanding of finances or humiliated over their ability to work.

## 1.3 Consequences on women's wellbeing

### 1.3.1 Effects on physical and mental health

The impact of intimate partner violence on the health and wellbeing of women and their families is devastating. Its effects range between physical, psychological, emotional, and social health problems, and can manifest as poor health status, poor quality life, and high use of health services. They can be immediate and acute, long-lasting, and chronic, and/or fatal.<sup>55</sup> It has been demonstrated that women who are physically and/or sexually abused by their partners may suffer up to 60% more physical illnesses than women who are not victims of such violence<sup>56</sup>.

Common physical health consequences can be acute or immediate physical injuries, more serious injuries, which can lead to disabilities, and long-term health problems. It can result in fractures, traumatic brain injuries, skin lacerations, burns, and, in severe cases, death<sup>57</sup>. WHO's 2013 study on the health burden associated with violence against women found that women who had been physically or sexually abused were 1.5 times more likely to have a sexually transmitted

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<sup>53</sup> Sanders C.K., (2015), cit., pp. 3-29.

<sup>54</sup> Davis L.V., Hagen J.L., (1992). *The problem of wife abuse: The interrelationship of social policy and social work practice*. Social Work, Vol. 37(1), pp. 15-20. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/37.1.15>

<sup>55</sup> WHO (2012), cit., p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> Wijma B., Schei B., Swahnberg K., et al., (2003). *Emotional, physical, and sexual abuse in patients visiting gynaecology clinics: a Nordic cross-sectional study*. Lancet 2003; Vol. 361: pp. 2107–13. Retrieved from: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(03\)13719-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(03)13719-1)

<sup>57</sup> Antai D., (2011). *Traumatic physical health consequences of intimate partner violence against women: what is the role of community-level factors?* BMC Women Health 11, 56 (2011). Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6874-11-56>

infection and, in some regions, HIV, compared to women who had not experienced partner violence<sup>58</sup>. They are also twice as likely to have an abortion and low birth weight<sup>59</sup>.

Depression and post-traumatic stress disorder are the most prevalent mental-health sequelae of intimate partner violence<sup>60</sup>. Approximately 20% of IPV survivors reported experiencing a new onset of psychiatric disorders such as major depressive disorder, self-harm, suicidal feelings, generalized anxiety disorder, and posttraumatic stress disorder, and a wide range of substance use disorders<sup>61</sup>. The 2013 analysis found that women who have experienced intimate partner violence were almost twice as likely to experience depression and problem drinking.

Intimate partner violence in pregnancy also increases the likelihood of miscarriage, stillbirth, pre-term delivery and low birth weight babies. The above mentioned WHO's 2013 study showed that women who experienced intimate partner violence were 16% more likely to suffer a miscarriage and 41% more likely to have a pre-term birth<sup>62</sup>.

IPV also have a negative impact on children's health and wellbeing. They may suffer a range of behavioural and emotional disturbances, which can also be associated with perpetrating or experiencing violence later in life. For instance, in America each year an estimated 15.5 million children are exposed to intimate partner violence (i.e., watching or hearing the violence, involvement such as trying to intervene or stop the violence, or experiencing the aftermath of the violent event, such as seeing bruises<sup>63</sup>), and one in four are exposed before the age of 18<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> WHO (2013). *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-partner Sexual Violence*. pp. 21-22. Retrieved from: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/85239>

<sup>59</sup> Ellsberg M., Jansen H.A.F.M., Heise L., Watts C.H., Garcia-Moreno C., (2008). *Intimate partner violence and women's physical and mental health in the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence: an observational study*. *Lancet*. 2008 Apr 5; 371(9619): pp. 1165-72. Retrieved from: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(08\)60522-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(08)60522-X)

<sup>60</sup> Campbell J.C., (2002). *Health consequences of intimate partner violence*. *Lancet*. 2002 Apr 13; 359(9314): pp. 1331-36. Retrieved from: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(02\)08336-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(02)08336-8)

<sup>61</sup> Romito P., Turan J.M., (2005). *The impact of current and past interpersonal violence on women's mental health*. *Social Science & Medicine*. 2005 Apr; Vol. 60(8): pp. 1717-27. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soescimed.2004.08.026>

<sup>62</sup> WHO, (2021) *Violence against women: health consequences*. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

<sup>63</sup> McDonald R., Jouriles E.N., Ramisetty-Mikler S., Caetano R., Green C.E., (2006). *Estimating the number of American children living in partner-violent families*. *Journal of Family Psychology* 2006 Mar; Vol. 20(1): pp. 137-142. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.20.1.137>

<sup>64</sup> Finkelhor et al., (2009) *Violence, Crime, and Abuse Exposure in a National Sample of Children and Youth. An Update*. *JAMA Pediatrics*. 2013; Vol. 167(7): pp. 614-621. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.42>

### 1.3.2 On women worker capacity and employability

A great deal of research has examined the effects of IPV on women's employment and the ways in which abuse affects women's employability and attempts to work. Early on, researchers focused on employment status (employed vs. not employed) as the central employment issue. However, it quickly became evident that what sets women with abusive partners apart from their non-abused counterparts are their higher levels of job instability<sup>65</sup>.

Over the last two decades, researchers have examined the interrelationships between IPV and employment by primarily focusing on the prevalence of economic abuse tactics (e.g., job interference, on the job harassment, workplace disruptions) that impede survivors' ability to secure employment<sup>66</sup>. In fact, once employed, numerous barriers thwarted employment maintenance. They often experience a variety of interference tactics from their abusive partner including undermining efforts to get to work, hiding or stealing keys or transportation money, and not showing up to care for children<sup>67</sup>. In addition, they inflict physical and emotional pain to keep women from working<sup>68</sup>, or show up at their partners' place of employment and harass them on the job. Survivors of abuse have reported that their partners' actions make it difficult to concentrate on the job, contribute to a poor attendance record, and often result in job loss.

Furthermore, due to the physical and psychological short- or long-term effects of abuse, many women are not able to look for work, which contributes to their social isolation, emotional degradation, and feelings of worthlessness. Experiencing IPV is also associated with increased tardiness, absenteeism, and use of sick days because of injury as well as problems with concentration, job performance, and productivity<sup>69</sup>. Women who are in abusive relationships tend to experience high

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<sup>65</sup> Tolman R.M., Wang H.C., (2005). *Domestic violence and women's employment: fixed effects models of three waves of women's employment study data*. American Journal of Community Psychology, Vol. 36, Nos. 1/2, September 2005 Special Issue: Theoretical and Methodological Innovations in Research on Intimate Partner Violence. pp. 147-158. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-005-6239-0>

<sup>66</sup> Showalter K., (2016). *Women's employment and domestic violence: A review of the literature*. Aggression and Violent Behaviour, 31, pp. 37-47. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2016.06.017>

<sup>67</sup> Swanberg J.E., Logan T.K., Macke C., (2006). *The Consequences of Partner Violence on Employment and the Workplace*. In Kelloway E. K., Barling J., Hurrell J. J., Jr., Handbook of workplace violence (pp. 351-379). Sage Publications, Inc. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412976947.n16>

<sup>68</sup> Moe A.M., Bell M.P., (2004). *Abject Economics: The Effects of Battering and Violence on Women's Work and Employability*. Violence Against Women. 2004; 10(1): pp. 29-55. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801203256016>

<sup>69</sup> Reeves C., O'Leary-Kelly A.M., (2007). *The Effects and Costs of Intimate Partner Violence for Work Organizations*. Journal of Interpersonal Violence. 2007; 22(3): pp. 327-344. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260506295382>  
Banyard V., Potter S., Turner H., (2011). *The impact of interpersonal violence in adulthood on women's job satisfaction and productivity: The mediating roles of mental and physical health*. Psychology of Violence, 1(1), pp. 16-28. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021691>

rates of job loss and turnover and many times are forced to quit or are fired<sup>70</sup>. Moreover, mental health symptoms following IPV interfere with women's ability to concentrate and complete work tasks. Employed women reported intrusive memories, depression, and hyper-arousal, related to the abuse, decreased when they were working<sup>71</sup>. Women who experienced physical assault were significantly more likely to report low or moderate employment stability in the preceding 12 months than women who did not experience IPV<sup>72</sup>.

Even after leaving the abusive relationship, survivors can often face multiple barriers that interfere with the employment-seeking process. These barriers include limited work experience, welfare restrictions, homelessness, childcare, transportation, immigration status, racial bias, homophobia, and transphobia<sup>73</sup>, but also lack of specific job skills (e.g., technology/IT, math, reading, writing) or higher education, physical injuries, and psychological issues (e.g., depression, anxiety, trauma, addiction)<sup>74</sup>.

A survivor's particular social locations (e.g., race, sexuality, age, immigration status, culture) can increase the risk of exposure to adverse economic conditions that can negatively impact employment outcomes<sup>75</sup>. Survivors with diverse social locations, understood here as the social positioning of an individual within society, are frequently disadvantaged in the labour market and vulnerable to precarious employment.

Partners may abuse employed women, or women seeking employment, to prevent them from obtaining any level of financial means with which they could establish independence, resourcefulness, and social power<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> Swanberg J.E., Logan T.K., Macke C., (2006), cit., pp. 351–379.

<sup>71</sup> Brush L.D., (2003). *Effects of Work on Hitting and Hurting*. *Violence Against Women* 9(10): pp. 1213-14. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801203255848>

<sup>72</sup> Crowne S.S., Juon H.S., Ensminger M.E., Burrell L., (2011). *Concurrent and Long-Term Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Employment Stability*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 2011 Apr; 26(6): pp. 1282-304. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260510368160>

<sup>73</sup> Chronister K.M., Mcwhirter E.H., (2004). *Ethnic Differences in Career Supports and Barriers for Battered Women: A Pilot Study*. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 2004; 12(2): pp.169-187. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072703257754>

<sup>74</sup> Idem, (2006). *An experimental examination of two career interventions for battered women*. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 53(2), pp. 151–164. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.53.2.151>

<sup>75</sup> Ballou M., Balogun O., Gittens G., Matsumoto A., Sanchez W., (2015). *Trauma and Returning to Work: Women's Lived Experiences and its Implications for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselling*. *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*, 46(1), pp. 25–33. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1891/0047-2220.46.1.25>

<sup>76</sup> Moe A.M., Bell M.P. (2004), cit., pp. 29-55.



## 1.4 The nexus between IPV and poverty

Intimate partner violence and poverty are strictly correlated. Increased vulnerability to IPV is an outcome of poverty, likewise IPV may increase women's vulnerability to poverty.

Poverty can be described as the impossibility of meeting a person's minimum biological, social, spiritual, and cultural requirements. It is a multidimensional concept, which includes the multiple and overlapping deprivations that constitutes people's experience of it. This includes being excluded from social institutions, experiencing poor health, and limited education and low levels of income and consumption<sup>77</sup>. Despite improvements over the past four decades, women across the world remain overrepresented among the poor and low paid, underrepresented in positions of power, and undertake most of the unpaid domestic and care work<sup>78</sup>. Therefore, poverty disproportionately affects women and single mothers<sup>79</sup>.

The link between IPV and poverty is particularly concerning because economic hardship can further the cycle of violence, deepening women's dependence on an abusive partner for basic needs and security for themselves and their children<sup>80</sup>. Poverty could thus be regarded a fuelling factor in domestic violence<sup>81</sup>. Some women keep potentially dangerous men in their lives, only so that their basic needs could be met. It is therefore clear that poverty creates an extra burden for abused women<sup>82</sup>. The relationship between poverty and domestic violence is complex. On one hand, poverty may exacerbate the likelihood of experiencing domestic violence. With fewer options for economic self-sufficiency and social support systems with little ability to offer

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<sup>77</sup> World Bank (2021). *Multidimensional Poverty Measure*. Retrieved from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/brief/multidimensional-poverty-measure>

<sup>78</sup> UN Women, (2017). *Annual Report 2017-2018*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/6/annual-report-2017-2018>

<sup>79</sup> Niess-May B., (2019) *The Intersection of Domestic Violence and Poverty*. Retrieved from: <https://www.safehousecenter.org/the-intersection-of-domestic-violence-and-poverty/>

<sup>80</sup> Voth Shrag R.J., Ravi K.E., Robinson S.R., (2018). *The Role of Social Support in the Link Between Economic Abuse and Economic Hardship*. Journal of Family Violence, Vol. 35, pp. 85–93 (2020). Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-018-0019-8>

<sup>81</sup> Purvin D.M., (2007). *At the Crossroads and in the Crosshairs: Social Welfare Policy and Low-Income Women's Vulnerability to Domestic Violence*. Social Problems, Vol. 54, Issue 2, pp. 188–210. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2007.54.2.188>.

<sup>82</sup> Bassuk E.L., Dawson R., Huntington N., (2006). *Intimate Partner Violence in Extremely Poor Women: Longitudinal Patterns and Risk Markers*. Journal of Family Violence 21(6): pp. 387-399. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-006-9035-1>

financial help, poor women may feel more trapped in unhealthy relationships<sup>83</sup>. On the other hand, domestic violence may lead to poverty for women in previously financially sound situations as women who escape violent relationships are often left with no financial resources<sup>84</sup>.

### 1.3.1 The “feminisation of poverty”: a general perspective

The ‘feminisation of poverty’ was first coined in the 1970s by researcher Diana Pearce<sup>85</sup>, who worked on gender and poverty in the United States, but did not make its breakthrough into the development lexicon until the mid-1990s. A critical catalyst was the Fourth UN Conference on Women in 1995 at which it was asserted that 70 per cent of the world's poor were female and when eradicating the “persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women” was adopted as one of the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>86</sup>.

Feminist research over the last 25 years has consistently stressed the importance of more holistic conceptual frameworks to encapsulate gendered privation. These include: (a) “capability” and “human development” frameworks, which identify factors which pertain to human capabilities or “functioning” such as education, health and infrastructure; (b) “livelihoods” frameworks, which emphasise social as well as material assets; (c) “social exclusion” perspectives which highlight the marginalisation of the poor from mainstream society through lack of political participation, social dialogue and “voice”; and (d) frameworks which stress the importance of subjective dimensions of poverty such as self-esteem, dignity, choice and power<sup>87</sup>.

Women are still more likely than men to live in poverty. Across the world, women are in the lowest-paid work, and they earn 24 percent less than men. In addition, 700 million fewer women than men are in paid work. Concerning unpaid care work, women do at least twice as much unpaid care work, such as childcare and housework, as men. Women work longer days than men when paid and

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<sup>83</sup> Tolman R., J. Raphael, (2000). *A Review of Research on Welfare and Domestic Violence*. Journal of Social Issues, 56(4): pp. 655-682. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00190>

<sup>84</sup> Davis, M. (1999). *The Economics of Abuse: How Violence Perpetuates Women's Poverty*. In Brandwein R. (Eds.) (1999), *Battered women, children, and welfare reform: The ties that bind* (pp. 17-30). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

<sup>85</sup> Pearce D., (1978). *The feminization of poverty; Women, work, and welfare*. Urban and Social Change Review, 11, pp. 28-36. Retrieved from: <http://doi.org/10.13140/2.1.3039.2000>

<sup>86</sup> UN (1995). *Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action*, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 27 October 1995, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3dde04324.html>

<sup>87</sup> Chant S., (2008). *The ‘Feminisation of Poverty’ and the ‘Feminisation’ of Anti-Poverty Programmes: Room for Revision?* Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220380701789810>

unpaid work is counted together. That means globally, a young woman today will work on average the equivalent of four years more than a man over her lifetime<sup>88</sup>.

Poverty is associated with intimate partner violence as both a cause and a consequence. The relationship between poverty and IPV is a reinforcing loop, with multiple pathways<sup>89</sup>. Poverty exacerbates the abuse because it increases or prolongs women's exposure to it as it reduces their capacity to leave. Financial insecurity is both a catalyst and product of the physical violence women experience in their families.

### 1.3.2 Poverty as a “structural driver” of IPV

Poverty is a key driver of women's experiences of IPV. The WHO Multi Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women showed that in all ten countries, Women living in poorer places with lower socio-economic status, higher food insecurity, and less access to education and work opportunities are more likely to experience IPV<sup>90</sup>.

Poverty causes IPV because it involves socioeconomic strains and financial insecurity. Risk factors for IPV include financial instability, less education, unemployment, previous victimization, and housing instability<sup>91</sup>, which contributes to frustration and powerlessness and encourages men to display violent behaviours against women<sup>92</sup>.

Women from impoverished communities lack the resources of middle- or upper-class women, they are more likely to rely on the practical and financial support of an abusive partner and therefore face more material hurdles in leaving an abusive or potentially abusive relationship<sup>93</sup>. Moreover, those who could not obtain employment (or whose controlling partners sabotaged their efforts to stay employed) were forced to rely still more heavily on emotionally and physically abusive partners for

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<sup>88</sup> Oxfam International, (2021). *Why the majority of the world's poor are women*. Retrieved from: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/why-majority-worlds-poor-are-women>

<sup>89</sup> Gibbs A., Duvvury N., and Scriver S., (2017). *What Works Evidence Review: The relationship between poverty and intimate partner violence*. Retrieved from: <https://www.whatworks.co.za/resources/evidence-reviews/item/348-what-works-evidence-review-the-relationship-between-poverty-and-intimate-partner-violence>

<sup>90</sup> WHO (2005). *Multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women*. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/24159358X/en/>

<sup>91</sup> Rollins C., Glass N., Perrin N., Billhardt K.A., (2012). *Housing Instability Is as Strong a Predictor of Poor Health Outcomes as Level of Danger in an Abusive Relationship: Findings from the SHARE Study*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 2012 Mar; 27(4): pp. 623-43. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260511423241>

<sup>92</sup> Cano A., Vivian D., (2001). *Life stressors and husband-to-wife violence*. *Aggression and violent behaviour*, 6(5), pp. 459-480. Retrieved from: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1359-1789\(00\)00017-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1359-1789(00)00017-3)

<sup>93</sup> Goodman L.A., Epstein D., (2008). *Listening to battered women: A survivor-centered approach to advocacy, mental health, and justice*. American Psychological Association. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/11651-000>

instrumental help or direct financial assistance. women without economic and social resources find it harder to leave abusive relationships<sup>94</sup>.

Other factors associated with poverty that may entrap women in abusive relationships include language barriers in trying to engage with the social services or legal systems, fear of racism, and immigration problems that may prevent women from seeking outside sources of support<sup>95</sup>.

In broad terms, economic inequality within a context of poverty is more important than the absolute level of income of a man or woman in a relationship. Violence is associated with the product of inequality, whether in the form of advantage to either party. Because socioeconomic injustice at a community or societal level is increasingly being shown to be important in other forms of violence, income disparities between partners could be a cause of IPV<sup>96</sup>.

Facing the time limit and trying to find and keep a job while also caring for their children, some women were able to avoid homelessness and sustain employment only by relying on their (abusive) partners for childcare, transportation, and assistance with household labour. Those who could not obtain employment (or whose controlling partners sabotaged their efforts to stay employed) were forced to rely still more heavily on emotionally and physically abusive partners for instrumental help or direct financial assistance<sup>97</sup>.

### 1.3.3 IPV as a driver of “structural poverty”

In the same way, IPV is a risk factor for women’s economic poverty, and it also decreases a woman’s likelihood of escaping poverty.

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<sup>94</sup> Coll C.V.N., Ewerling F., Garcia-Moreno C., Hellwig F., Barros A.J.D., (2020). *Intimate partner violence in 46 low-income and middle-income countries: an appraisal of the most vulnerable groups of women using national health surveys*. BMJ Global Health 2020; 5(1), Published online 2020 Jan 26. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2019-002208>

<sup>95</sup> Humphreys C. (2007). *A health inequalities perspective on violence against women*. Health Soc Care Community. 2007 Mar;15(2): pp. 120-7. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2524.2006.00685.x>

<sup>96</sup> Ahmadabadi Z., Najman J.M., Williams G.M., Clavarino A.M., (2017) *Income, Gender, and Forms of Intimate Partner Violence* Journal of Interpersonal Violence 2020; 35(23-24): pp. 5500-5525. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517719541>

<sup>97</sup> Goodman L.A., Smyth K.F., Borges A.M., Singer R., (2009). *When crises collide. How Intimate Partner Violence and Poverty Intersect to Shape Women’s Mental Health and Coping?* Trauma, Violence & Abuse, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 306-32. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838009339754>

Women in abusive relationships might have to bear costs due to violence such as medical care and replacement of broken household goods, and households facing lost time, productivity, and income due to the impact of violence. An example of this includes reducing women's engagement in formal or care work<sup>98</sup>. In addition, IPV tends to reduce women's social networks, thus potentially decreasing their ability to depend on family and friends for support, for instance, to carry-out economic activities within the home or to engage in paid work or training.

As mentioned above, IPV can negatively affect employment and productivity. This happens, for instance, when abusive partners follow victims to their places of work, use work-related phone or computer technologies to intimidate, harass or control them, or prevent them from leaving the household to go to work. It can also spill over into the world of work through the stress and trauma it causes, which may affect the ability to work of the victim and the perpetrator<sup>99</sup>. In addition, women tend to be employed in low-wage work because of direct negative consequences from abuse, such as physical and mental health problems or abuser's deliberate interference with women's efforts to get and maintain jobs or to continue their education<sup>100</sup>. IPV has also long-term negative effects on women's job stability. Women in abusive relationships frequently lose their jobs, experience high job turnover, are forced to quit, or are fired<sup>101</sup>. IPV has therefore immediate consequences on women's ability to remain employed but also inhibits their ability to maintain a job for some time after the abuse ends<sup>102</sup>.

Regarding economic violence, it results in deepening poverty because of women's diminished access to independent means of livelihood. It compromises educational attainment and developmental opportunities for women. It leads to tension, which may spill over into physical violence and negatively affects the mental health of abused women and their children.

Intimate partner violence can also be a driver of poverty vulnerability for partners fleeing abuse. Women who experiencing this type of abuse are often left with no financial resources, limited or inconsistent work experience, poor education, physical and mental health problems, and substance abuse issues. They might become single parents with limited capacity to earn independently and are

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<sup>98</sup> Duvvury, N., Nguyen M., Carney P., (2012). *Estimating the cost of domestic violence against women in Vietnam*. Vietnam: UN Women. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2013/2/estimating-the-cost-of-domestic-violence-against-women-in-viet-nam>

<sup>99</sup> ILO (2020). *Domestic violence and its impact on the world of work*. Retrieved from: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_738117.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/briefingnote/wcms_738117.pdf)

<sup>100</sup> Moe A.M., Bell M.P., (2004), cit., pp. 29-55.

<sup>101</sup> Crowne S.S., Juon H.S., Ensminger M.E., Burrell L., (2011), cit., pp. 1282-304.

<sup>102</sup> Adams A. E., Tolman R., Bybee D., Sullivan C.M., (2012). *The Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Low-Income Women's Economic Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Job Stability*. *Violence against Women* 18(12) pp. 1345-67. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801212474294>

more likely to report both financial difficulties and ongoing financial abuse from abusive former partners (e.g., withholding child support contributions). Such problems pose serious barriers in escaping violence and achieving self-sufficiency and present a challenging situation for social service programs<sup>103</sup>.

Moreover, IPV may contribute to poverty by pushing women into housing instability or outright homelessness, which can include multiple unwanted moves, not paying other bills to pay rent, eating less or skipping meals to pay rent, doubling up with family or friends, being threatened with eviction, or experiencing rental or credit problems<sup>104</sup>. Thus, insufficient income to live independently, limited availability of affordable housing, potential housing discrimination against women as IPV survivors, histories of credit or rental problems, a criminal history, or ongoing harassment and assaults by the ex-intimate partner may contribute to increase the level of poverty.

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<sup>103</sup> Renzetti C., (2009). *Economic stress and domestic violence*. CRVAW Faculty Research Reports and Papers. 1. pp. 2-10. Retrieved from: [https://uknowledge.uky.edu/crvaw\\_reports/1](https://uknowledge.uky.edu/crvaw_reports/1)

<sup>104</sup> Baker C. K., Cook S. L., Norris F. H., (2003). *Domestic violence and housing problems: A contextual analysis of women's help seeking, received informal support, and formal system response*. Violence against Women 2003; Vol. 9(7): pp. 754-83. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801203009007002>

## Chapter 2

### Women's empowerment: the role of economic independence

#### 2.1 On women's economic rights and gender-based pay discrimination

Throughout history wives have been the property of their husbands<sup>105</sup>. Since the beginning, women's economic status, as determined by the property rights they hold, was practically non-existent because they bear no right to own and control property, to enter legally binding contracts, to litigate, to own and operate businesses, and to own market earnings. However, substantial change in married women's economic status occurred in many countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because of changes in women's economic rights.

##### 2.1.1 Outlines of women's economic independence

Mary Wollstonecraft, a pioneer for Women's Rights, in her eighteen-century ground-breaking work "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman", perfectly expressed the condition of women at that time: "She (woman) must not be dependent on her husband's bounty for her subsistence during his life or support after his death; for how can a being be generous who has nothing of its own? or virtuous, who is not free? [...] How much more respectable is the woman who earns her own bread by fulfilling any duty, than the most accomplished beauty!"<sup>106</sup>

In the early nineteenth century only a small fraction of women worked in the agricultural, industrial, and service portion of the market sector. Within agriculture the wages of women relative to those of men were remarkably low. Women were the eternal victims of social and economic discrimination and were also forced, for several reasons, to be dependent upon their husbands for financial support. Moreover, women's choices were limited to marriage and motherhood, and both resulted in domestic dependency. Even though they could find jobs, women were discouraged from being wage earners by the belief that women who earned wages were "unnatural." In addition, "[l]ow

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<sup>105</sup> Geddes R., Lueck D., (2002). *The Gains from Self-Ownership and the Expansion of Women's Rights*. The American Economic Review, Vol. 92, No. 4, pp. 1079-1092. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1257/00028280260344623>

<sup>106</sup> Wollstonecraft M. (1792). *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*. Chapter 9

wages, the absence of upward mobility, depressing and unhealthy working conditions, all made marriage an attractive survival strategy for working-class women<sup>107</sup>".

However, once industry spread during the Industrial Revolution, relative wages for women increased, and their employment appeared linked to the diffusion of the factory system. The female labour force that expanded in this period was primarily young and unmarried. In 1890 only 11% of the non-farm female labour force was married. It was indeed not until the twentieth century that married women entered the market sector in a substantial way. Impressive gains in the participation of married women in the labour force were eventually achieved, with age groups affected during decades<sup>108</sup>: first in the 1920s when young, and later, in the 1940s and 1950s, in their post-child-rearing years. Therefore, by 1950 the percentage of female labour force had increased to 46%<sup>109</sup>. Before the 1920s, women generally exited the workforce at marriage, although it did not happen in poorer homes and among the more highly educated. Substantial social stigma regarding the work of wives outside the home existed due in large measure to the nature of the work. The industrial revolution alone would not have raised up disciples to the woman movement had it not been for the World War<sup>110</sup>. The war, stripping young men from salaried positions as it did, gave to many women a taste of independence which otherwise would have come many years later, and thus were aggravated conditions going on before the war.

During the second half of the nineteenth century though, women gained economic rights related to property, child custody, and divorce. During the early twentieth century, political rights were extended to women. Finally, women gained full equality in the labour market and improved rights over their own body<sup>111</sup>. However, even by the mid-twentieth century, women had not gained legal rights equal to men along all dimensions. Women continued to face unequal legal treatment in the labour market long after they had gained the right to vote. For instance, in the United States, restrictions on hours worked, wages, and work conditions of female employees were introduced in almost all states during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, typically disguised as

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<sup>107</sup> Smith-Rosenberg C. (1965). *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*. New York, Oxford University Press

<sup>108</sup> Goldin C., Kenneth S., (1981). *Women, Children, and Industrialization in the Early Republic: Evidence from the Manufacturing Censuses, 1820 to 1850*. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper, no. 795. Retrieved from: <https://ideas.repec.org/p/nbr/nberwo/0795.html>

<sup>109</sup> Goldin C., (1984). *The Historical Evolution of Female Earnings Functions and Occupations*. Explorations in Economic History 21 (1) pp. 14-17. Retrieved from: [https://doi.org/10.1016/0014-4983\(84\)90014-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0014-4983(84)90014-7)

<sup>110</sup> Johnson G.G., (1925). *Feminism and the Economic Independence of Woman*. The Journal of Social Forces Vol. 3 N. 4, pp. 612-16. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/3005054>

<sup>111</sup> Doepke M., Tertilt M., Voena A., (2011). *The Economics and Politics of Women's Rights*. Annual Review of Economics, Vol. 4: pp. 339-372. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-061109-080201>



protective legislation<sup>112</sup>. Moreover, women were not allowed to work night shifts, yet night shift experience was required to move up the career ladder<sup>113</sup>. Similarly, marriage bars, which excluded married women from certain occupations such as clerical work and teaching, were common until World War II. Legislations that promoted equal treatment in the labour market was introduced during the second half of the twentieth century: the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in the United States and the Equal Pay Act of 1970 in the England. Thus, equality in the labour market was achieved relatively late, and indeed, to the extent that gender discrimination is still an issue of public debate today, the focus is usually on equality in the labour market.

Regarding marriage, until the nineteenth century, under the common law, women lost their legal identity upon marriage: they could not hold property or land in their own name, write wills or contracts, nor did they have legal control over their own children. The legal rights of husband and wife were merged upon marriage and exercised exclusively by the husband<sup>114</sup>. In England, in 1850, married women were legally considered “feme covert” which meant that upon marriage the legal rights of the woman merged and became that of her husband. Married women had practically no rights regarding property, child custody, or the ability to make contracts. Conversely, women regarded as “feme sole” were allowed to make contracts and to have their own property in their own name. One of the earliest changes in the legal position of married women concerned child custody rules. For instance, in 1838 Iowa was the first U.S. state that permitted custody to mothers, with other states following shortly thereafter<sup>115</sup>. In England, the Custody of Infants Act passed in 1839, and gave mothers the possibility of custody for children below seven years of age. After several further reforms, by the end of the nineteenth century women could be awarded custody of all minor children in case of divorce. Another key area of reform concerned marital property law. In the U.S. context, Maine was the first state that passed a law to allow married women to own separate property in their own name in 1844. By the end of the century, all married American women had access to some form of property and earnings protection<sup>116</sup>.

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<sup>112</sup> Goldin C., (1990). *Understanding the Gender Gap: An Economic History of American Women*. New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 169-171. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3115857>

<sup>113</sup> Huber J., (1976). *Toward a Sociotechnological Theory of the Women's Movement*. *Social Problems*, Vol. 23, Issue 4. pp. 371–388. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.2307/799849>

<sup>114</sup> Hecker E.A. (1971). *A Short History of Women's Rights*. Cosimo Classics, pp. 245-280

<sup>115</sup> Mason M.A. (1994). *From Father's Property to Children's Rights: The History of Child Custody in the United States*. Columbia University Press, pp. 68-85

<sup>116</sup> Khan B.Z. (1996). *Married Women's Property Laws and Female Commercial Activity: Evidence from United States Patent Records, 1790-1895*. *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 56, No. 2, pp. 368-388. Retrieved from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2123970>

In England, the Married Women's Property Act was passed in 1870 and expanded in 1874 and 1882, giving English women control over their own earnings and property<sup>117</sup>. The Married Woman's Property Acts and Earnings Acts (hereafter MWPAs and EAs) were statutes that expanded married women's rights to their property and labour market earnings. Prior to these laws, most married women were *femes covert*, or "covered women," under the common law. This meant that, upon entering the marriage contract, the wife transferred her property to her husband, who had exclusive ownership and control rights over it<sup>118</sup>. Married women's property acts (MPAs) granted married women the right to own and control real and personal property. Married women's earnings acts granted married women the right to own their earnings from work outside the home<sup>119</sup>. Reformers sought the same rights for married women over their property as those enjoyed by men and unmarried women. Whilst recognizing the principle that, in certain circumstances, women should retain and control their own property, the 1870 Act was regarded as a 'feeble compromise' and the Married Women's Property Committee pressed for greater reform. The 1882 Act, allowing wives to acquire, hold, use, and dispose of their separate property, with recourse to the same legal protection as if unmarried, was a major victory.

By being able to earn an income to support herself, a woman could also avoid finding herself in the position of having to marry an unsuitable man just to "acquire a home". Finally, a woman able to work could support herself and her family when illness, death, or financial disaster struck.<sup>120</sup> a woman's primary concern was still expected to be the wellbeing of her family, physically and spiritually. Also, work was acceptable outside the home only when it fell within women's traditional sphere; occupations such as housekeeping, or nursing fell within the domestic realm. Provided a woman was not married with her own family to care for, school teaching was accepted, despite its intellectual leanings, as it involved childbearing.

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<sup>117</sup> Combs M.B. (2005). *A Measure of Legal Independence: The 1870 Married Women's Property Act and the Portfolio Allocations of British Wives*. The Journal of Economic History, Vol. 65, Issue 4, pp. 1028-1057. Retrieved from: <https://doi:10.1017/S0022050705000392>

<sup>118</sup> MacDonald D., Dildar Y., (2018). *Married Women's Economic Independence and Divorce in the Nineteenth- and Early-Twentieth Century United States*. Social Science History 42(3), pp. 601–629. Retrieved from: <http://doi.org/10.1017/ssh.2018.16>

<sup>119</sup> Geddes R., Lueck D., Tennyson S., (2012). *Human Capital Accumulation and the Expansion of Women's Economic Rights*. The Journal of Law & Economics, Vol. 55, No. 4, pp. 839-867. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/666086>

<sup>120</sup> Cruca S.M., (2005). *Changing Ideals of Womanhood During the Nineteenth-Century Woman Movement*. General Studies Writing Faculty Publications. 1. pp.189-192. Retrieved from: [https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/gsw\\_pub/1](https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/gsw_pub/1)

### 2.1.2 Women's economic and social rights in International Law

Women's economic rights are by now substantially well-articulated in international conventions and regional human rights instruments in Europe, Africa, and the Americas. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and ILO conventions have established and expanded concepts of gender equality and non-discrimination in the economic sphere along with other spheres of human endeavour<sup>121</sup>.

The economic rights of women broadly include the right to own and inherit property (especially land); the right to work; the right to just and favourable conditions of work; the right to equal pay for equal work; the right to rest and leisure; the right to be protected against sexual harassment and violence at the workplace or outside; the right not to be discriminated against in professions and selections for jobs, in promotions, and in education and training opportunities; the right to safe conditions for stay and work at places away from home and for travel; and the right to help in bringing up young children without being denied economic opportunities.

Economic rights protected by the ICESCR include the rights to work, to receive a fair wage, safe working conditions, and to form and join trade unions. Article 6 of the ICESCR protects the right to work, which is the opportunity to gain a living by work that one freely chooses or accepts<sup>122</sup>. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Protocol of San Salvador, American Declaration, and the European Social Charter, among others, contain similar provisions<sup>123</sup>. The ICESCR protects the right to just and favourable work conditions, including the right of all workers to receive "fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value." ICESCR, article 7. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Protocol of San Salvador, American Declaration, and the European Social Charter, among others, include comparable provisions. The ICESCR's emphasis on equality prohibits States from discriminating against women and requires States to "ensure equal opportunities

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<sup>121</sup> Manohar S. (2014). *Women's Economic Rights, International Law, and the Financial Crisis*. Proceedings of the Annual Meeting (American Society of International Law), Vol. 108, The Effectiveness of International Law, pp. 259-262. Retrieved from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5305/procanmeetasil.108>

<sup>122</sup> ICESCR (1966). Article 6. Par. 1 The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right; Par. 2. The steps to be taken by a State Party to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include technical and vocational guidance and training programmes, policies, and techniques to achieve steady economic, social, and cultural development and full and productive employment under conditions safeguarding fundamental political and economic freedoms to the individual.

<sup>123</sup> African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, art. 15; Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights "Protocol of San Salvador", art. 6; American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man, art. XIV; European Social Charter, art. 1.

and treatment between men and women in relation to their right to work.”<sup>124</sup> Moreover, the work itself must be “decent,” meaning that it respects workers’ physical and mental integrity and respects their human rights in terms of work safety and remuneration<sup>125</sup>. The remuneration should thus be enough so that individuals are able to earn “a decent living for themselves and their families.” Finally, International human rights law protects the right to form and join trade unions and protects the unions’ right to function freely without restrictions other than organization rules, regulations “prescribed by law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public order,” and limitations necessary to protect others’ rights<sup>126</sup>.

Economic and social rights are interconnected and inseparable. Henceforth, absence of rights in one sphere affects rights in the other sphere. Social rights protected by the ICESCR include the rights to social security, protection of the family, an adequate standard of living (including freedom from hunger, access to clean water, adequate housing, and protection of property), and mental and physical health. According to the CESCR, the right to social security includes the right to access and maintain benefits without discrimination to help secure protection from lack of work-related income, unaffordable access to healthcare, and insufficient family support (in the case of children and adult dependents)<sup>127</sup>. International human rights law requires States to accord “the widest possible protection and assistance” to the family, especially when the family is “responsible for the care and education of dependent children.”<sup>128</sup> For instance, mothers should receive special protection for a reasonable time before and after childbirth, including maternity leave with pay or with adequate social security benefits<sup>129</sup>. The right to an adequate standard of living entails the rights to adequate food, clothing, housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. States are required to “take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right.”<sup>130</sup> Moreover, the right to food, to water and to housing<sup>131</sup>. Article 12 of the ICESCR protects “the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> CESCR (2006). *General Comment No. 18: The Right to Work* (Art. 6 of the Covenant) para. 13. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4415453b4.html>

<sup>125</sup> CESCR (2006). *General Comment No. 18: The Right to Work* (Art. 6 of the Covenant), para. 7. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4415453b4.html>

<sup>126</sup> ICESR (1966). art. 8 (1) Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36c0.html>

<sup>127</sup> CESCR (2008). *General Comment No. 19, The Right to Social Security* (Art. 9 of the Covenant). Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/47b17b5b39c.html>

<sup>128</sup> ICESR (1966). Art. 10 Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36c0.html>

<sup>129</sup> Ivi, art. 10(2) “Special protection should be accorded to mothers during a reasonable period before and after childbirth. During such period working mothers should be accorded paid leave or leave with adequate social security benefits.”

<sup>130</sup> Ivi, art. 11

<sup>131</sup> Ivi, art. 11(2) The Right to Food, art. 11 and 12 The Right to Water, art. 11 The Right to Housing

<sup>132</sup> Ivi, art. 12(1)

### 2.1.3 The gender wage gap

Worldwide, women earn on average substantially less than men. The gender wage gap, defined by OECD as “the difference between median earnings of men and women relative to median earnings of men<sup>133</sup>”, stands on average at 23%, which means that women earn 77 cents on every dollar earned by men for each hour worked<sup>134</sup>.

The gender wage gap is the result of several interconnected factors. It is due, in part, to the fact that women tend to be overrepresented in sectors and jobs that pay less<sup>135</sup>. In fact, overall, women’s work is valued less; professions that are traditionally “feminised, generally receive a lower salary than so-called “male jobs”. In addition to occupational segregation between sectors, women also tend to hold lower-level positions within enterprises. They are dramatically underrepresented in managerial positions, holding only 31 per cent of senior leadership positions<sup>136</sup>.

Furthermore, across the globe women still assume the main responsibility for care tasks within households. Women typically spend disproportionately more time on unpaid care work than men, undertaking 76.4% of all unpaid care work and dedicating 3.2 times more time on these care tasks than men do: 4 hours and 32 minutes per day against 1 hour and 24 minutes for men<sup>137</sup>. Unpaid care work is seen by gendered social norms as a female responsibility and prerogative<sup>138</sup>. This is in addition to their paid activities, thus creating the “double burden” of work for women. The unequal distribution of unpaid care work between women and men represents an infringement of women’s rights and a brake on their economic empowerment<sup>139</sup>. In 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action highlighted the importance of tackling the unequal distribution of paid and unpaid work between men and women, as an essential step towards achieving gender equality. Finally, gender discrimination, both direct (i.e., explicitly paying an employee less because of gender) as well as

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<sup>133</sup> OECD (2022). *Gender Wage Gap (indicator)*. Retrieved from: <http://doi.org/10.1787/7cee77aa-en>

<sup>134</sup> UN Women (2019). *Equal pay for work of equal value*. Retrieved from: [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)

<sup>135</sup> International Trade Union Confederation, (2018). *ITUC Economic and Social Policy Brief: The Gender Wage Gap*. Retrieved from: [www.ituc-csi.org](http://www.ituc-csi.org)

<sup>136</sup> Grant Thornton (2021) *Women in Business 2021*. Retrieved from: <https://www.grantthornton.global/en/insights/women-in-business-2021/>

<sup>137</sup> Charmes J. (2019). *The Unpaid Care Work and the Labour Market. An analysis of time use data based on the latest World Compilation of Time-use Surveys*. International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2019, pp. 47-50. Retrieved from: [www.ilo.org/publns](http://www.ilo.org/publns)

<sup>138</sup> Ferrant G., Pesando M.L., Nowacka K., (2014). *Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes*. OECD Development Centre, pp. 1-11. Retrieved from: [https://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/Unpaid\\_care\\_work.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/Unpaid_care_work.pdf)

<sup>139</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights Sepulveda Carmona M. (2013), *Report on Unpaid Care Work and Women's Human Rights*. pp. 21-24. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2437791>

indirect (i.e., unconscious bias), remains a pervasive problem and major contributor to the gender wage gap.

One of the most powerful ideologies underpinning women's lower wages is the notion that by virtue of their family role women are in less need of wage income than men. Men are seen – by employers, trade unions and governments – as being in 'need' of a living wage. Women are assumed to be able to take part-time jobs even though few part-time jobs provide sufficient income support to meet an adult's living costs. Second, women are also assumed to be available for work at hourly wages which, even if in full-time work, would not be sufficient to generate a living wage. The factors that constrain women's labour supply under these conditions are the opportunity costs of working (childcare costs in particular) and the level of family income. If the need to supplement household income is high, women face few options other than to accept a low paid job even in the context of relatively well-developed welfare systems. For women, therefore, often the best protection against having to take a low wage job is not unemployment benefits but minimum wage protection<sup>140</sup>.

Furthermore, low female employment rates and women's exclusion from employment have a negative impact on women's economic empowerment. Moreover, the total yearly economic costs of the lower female employment rate, considering forgone earnings, missed welfare contributions and additional public finance costs, corresponded to 2.8 per cent of the EU's GDP, or EUR 370 billion, in 2013 as estimated by Eurofound, while the cost of a woman's exclusion from employment is estimated by the EIGE at between EUR 1.2 and 2 million, depending on her level of education<sup>141</sup>.

Further, Expanding women's economic opportunities means more and better jobs for women across a wider range of sectors; a business climate that supports women in starting and growing businesses, and building their management and entrepreneurial skills; a financial sector in which commercial banks and microfinance institutions provide women with effective access to a range of financial services and products tailored to their needs, including especially credit and savings instruments; and, in times of high food and fuel prices, greater livelihood security for women, especially in rural areas and vulnerable environments.

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<sup>140</sup> Rubery J. (2003). *Pay equity, minimum wage, and equality at work*. ILO Working Papers 993668723402676, International Labour Office, pp. 5-8. Retrieved from: [http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2003/103B09\\_400\\_engl.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2003/103B09_400_engl.pdf)

<sup>141</sup> EU Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (2017). *Report on women's economic empowerment in the private and public sectors in the EU*. Para. 5. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2017-0271\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2017-0271_EN.html)

## 2.2 Women's empowerment

Women's empowerment deals with promoting and giving the value to women. "Empowerment" has been used to represent a wide range of concepts and more often to advocate for certain types of policies and intervention strategies than to analyse them, becoming a widely used word. Applied to gender issues, the discussion of empowerment brings women into the political sphere, both private and public. In the intimate partner violence context, empowerment is a process to change the distribution of power between men and women in interpersonal relations<sup>142</sup>.

### 2.2.1 Defining women's empowerment

The issue of "women's empowerment" is now a global phenomenon. Since the origin of the United Nations Organization the concept has come in the political agenda of many countries. At present, the term "empowerment" has replaced the erstwhile term "development". Though the term "empowerment" had become a keyword in the sixties, it was not discussed so extensively in literature until the eighties. It took about twenty-five years for the United Nations to proclaim the year 2001 as the "International Year for Women's Empowerment" after declaring the "Women's Decade" in 1975.<sup>143</sup>

The term empowerment is a multidimensional social process, and it helps people gain control over their own lives. Empowerment is thus the process of enabling or authorizing an individual to think, behave, act and control work in an autonomous way and to take control of one's own destiny<sup>144</sup>. It can further be called as a process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society, by acting on issues they think as important<sup>145</sup>. The World Bank also defines the term empowerment as "the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this

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<sup>142</sup> Tandon T., (2016). *Women Empowerment: Perspectives and Views* in The International Journal of Indian Psychology Volume 3, Issue 3, No. 8, pp. 76-98. Retrieved from: <http://doi.org/10.25215/0303.134>

<sup>143</sup> Mandal K. C., (2013). *Concept and Types of Women Empowerment*. International Forum of Teaching and Studies Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 17-28. Retrieved from: [http://scholarspress.us/journals/IFST/pdf/IFOTS-2-2013/IFOTS\\_v9\\_n2\\_art3.pdf](http://scholarspress.us/journals/IFST/pdf/IFOTS-2-2013/IFOTS_v9_n2_art3.pdf).

<sup>144</sup> Battiwala S., (1994). *The meaning of women's empowerment: new concepts from action*. In Sen G., Germain A., Chen L.C. (eds): *Population Policies Reconsidered: Health, Empowerment and Rights*, Boston, Harvard University Press, pp. 127–138. Retrieved from: <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog/SENPOP.html>

<sup>145</sup> Page N., Czuba C.E., (1999). *Empowerment: What Is It?* Journal of Extension. Vol. 37 No. 5, October 1999. Retrieved from: <https://archives.joe.org/joe/1999october/comm1.php>

process are actions which both build individual and collective assets and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets”<sup>146</sup>. In addition, the term empowerment is defined as “the process of gaining control over one’s own life while supporting and facilitating others’ control over their lives”<sup>147</sup>. Women’s empowerment can be seen as a process of which awareness, alternatives, resources, voice, agency, and participation are integral parts. The logic of women’s empowerment is to enhance women’s ability to make choices over the areas in their lives that matter to them<sup>148</sup>.

The term empowerment has different meanings in different socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts. An exploration of local terms associated with empowerment around the world always encompasses a wide variety of definitions. These terms include self-strength, self-control, self-power, self-reliance, personal choice, capability of fighting for one’s rights, independence, own decision-making power, freedom, etc. These definitions are embedded in local value systems and beliefs.

Women’s empowerment has five components: women’s sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; to have power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally<sup>149</sup>. In this context, education, training, awareness raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources, and actions to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality are important tools for empowering women and girls to claim their rights<sup>150</sup>. The above five components are applicable to the economic sphere, where women’s economic empowerment can be achieved by targeting initiatives to develop women’s economic opportunity, strengthen their legal status and rights, and ensure their voice, inclusion, and participation in economic decision-making.

Empowerment of women can be categorized into five main parts: social, educational, economic, political, and psychological. Social empowerment refers to the enabling force that

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<sup>146</sup> World Bank Group. Empowerment (2011) Retrieved from: <http://go.worldbank.org/GOB032TQ40>.

<sup>147</sup> Aspy C. B., Sandhu D. S., (1999). *Empowering women for equity: A counselling approach*. American Counselling Association, VA. 22304, pp. 280-301. Retrieved from: <https://archive.org/details/empoweringwomenf00aspy>

<sup>148</sup> Charms, J., Wieringa S., (2003). *Measuring empowerment: an assessment of the gender related development index and the gender empowerment measure*. Journal of Human Development and Capabilities 4(3), pp. 419–435. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1464988032000125773>

<sup>149</sup> EIGE Glossary: *Empowerment of women*. Retrieved from: <https://eige.europa.eu/taxonomy/term/1102?lang=en>

<sup>150</sup> UN Economic and Social Council (2002). *Agreed Conclusions on eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle, in a globalising world*, pp. 35-40. Retrieved from: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/475761>



strengthens women's social relations and their position in social structures. It addresses the social discriminations existing in the society based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, or gender. Educational empowerment encompasses education as one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process<sup>151</sup>. It further creates self-confidence, self-esteem, self-sufficiency to a person. It also increases social, political, intellectual, cultural, and religious consciousness; broadens the length of mind and removes all kinds of bigotry, narrowness, superstition and enhances fellow-feeling, tolerance. Through psychological empowerment, women not only breach the traditional and patriarchal taboos and social obligations, but they also transform their selves and subjectivities. They also learn the art of living and how to adjust with the changed circumstances. Further, it gives them satisfaction in various ways relating to work, living, learning, and adjusting in personal and financial situations.

### 2.2.2 Economic empowerment

Economic empowerment is the capacity of women to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity, and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. This type of empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development, and market information<sup>152</sup>. Moreover, it provides women the ability to enjoy their rights, to get access to and control over productive resources, control over their own time, lives, and bodies, make strategic choices, and exercise agency in key areas of their lives, and it is linked to being able to generate regular, adequate, and independent income<sup>153</sup>.

Women's economic empowerment is essential to realizing women's rights and it is a prerequisite for achieving gender equality, because it contributes to increase voice, agency, and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels from the household to

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<sup>151</sup> UNFPA (1994). *Programme of Action*, adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). Retrieved from: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/event-pdf/PoA\\_en.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/event-pdf/PoA_en.pdf)

<sup>152</sup> OECD (2011). *Women's Economic Empowerment*. Issues Paper. Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd.org/development/womens-economic-empowerment.htm>

<sup>153</sup> Pathways of Women's Empowerment Research Programme Consortium (2011), *Empowerment: A journey not a destination, final synthesis report*, Brighton: *Pathways of Women's Empowerment RPC*.

international institutions<sup>154</sup>. As a matter of fact, its achievement is now a global policy priority considering its potential contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as evidenced by the convening of a dedicated High-Level Panel by the UN Secretary-General to bolster progress in this area. The United Nations Secretary General’s High-Level Panel (UNHLP) on Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) was established by then-UNSG Ban Ki-moon in 2016 “to address the specific economic issues that affect women and to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its promise to leave no one behind.” His successor, António Guterres affirmed and expanded this commitment recognizing that “Women’s economic empowerment is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. We will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals if there is no accelerated action to empower women economically.” The SDGs contain a range of targets relating to gender equality and women’s empowerment, including in the economic domain<sup>155</sup>. Women’s economic empowerment cuts across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with targets on recognising and valuing unpaid care and domestic work, women’s equal rights to economic resources, full and productive employment and decent work, and equal pay for work of equal value<sup>156</sup>.

While legal reforms have expanded women’s economic rights and opportunities, women still face gender-based job restrictions in 100 economies around the world, and in 18 economies husbands can legally prevent their wives from working<sup>157</sup>. Progress in closing the global gender gap in labour force participation rates has stalled. Women remain concentrated in gender segregated occupations at the lower end of the employment hierarchy, leading to gender pay gaps which persist both in developing and OECD countries<sup>158</sup>. Globally, women earn on average 23% less than men<sup>159</sup>. Women continue to make up the largest share of workers in informal forms of employment that are typically precarious, poorly paid and which lack basic social protections, such as unpaid family workers,

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<sup>154</sup> UN *Facts and Figures*. Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/en/actnow/facts-and-figures>

<sup>155</sup> OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (2016). *Tracking the money for women’s economic empowerment: still a drop in the ocean*, pp. 1-8. Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Tracking-the-money-for-womens-economic-empowerment.pdf>

<sup>156</sup> SDGs targets on women’s economic empowerment include equal rights to economic resources (SDG1 and SDG5), women small scale food producers (SDG2), equal access to technical and vocational education (SDG 4), unpaid care and domestic work (SDG5), women’s participation and equal opportunities, including in economic life (SDG5), full and productive employment for all women and men (SDG8).

<sup>157</sup> World Bank Group (2019). *Women, Business, and the Law 2019: A Decade of Reform*. World Bank, Washington, DC. Retrieved from: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/31327>

<sup>158</sup> OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (2016), cit., pp. 1-8.

<sup>159</sup> UN Women (2019), cit.

subsistence farmers, homeworkers, and domestic workers<sup>160</sup>. This makes women disproportionately vulnerable to poverty and can render their economic contributions invisible.

The European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality identifies different actions and tools for improving the economic empowerment of women. Firstly, an improvement in the work-life balance, emphasising that a better work-life balance and greater equality between women and men are essential for achieving the goals of women's empowerment, and it further would ensure a fairer distribution of paid and unpaid work within families. As a result, it will increase women's participation in the labour market and, accordingly, reduce the gender pay and pension gap. In addition to it, the Committee recalls that the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value is respected and applied with a view to eliminating the persistent gender pay gap. Moreover, gender balance in private and public sectors, gender equality plans, and collective agreements and social partners<sup>161</sup> have the potential to promote gender equality, to empower women through unity and to combat gender pay inequalities.

### **2.3 The relationship between women's economic independence and risk of IPV**

Women's economic independence can increase their autonomy, enhance their economic and social status, and shift power relations between women and men, including within the household<sup>162</sup>. Thus, empowered women will enjoy more decision-making power within her family.

Women's empowerment, both economically and socially, may interact with IPV because women depend economically on men and tolerate some level of violence in return for economic and social support<sup>163</sup>. If women's income increases, this may decrease their risk of violence as their economic dependence decreases<sup>164</sup>.

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<sup>160</sup> International Labour Organisation (2016), *Women at Work: Trends 2016*. International Labour Office, Geneva, pp. 17-19. Retrieved from: [https://www.ilo.org/gender/Informationresources/Publications/WCMS\\_457317/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/gender/Informationresources/Publications/WCMS_457317/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>161</sup> EU Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (2017). *Report on women's economic empowerment in the private and public sectors in the EU*. Paras. 7-37. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2017-0271\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2017-0271_EN.html)

<sup>162</sup> OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (2016), cit., pp. 1-8.

<sup>163</sup> Sanawar S.B., Islam M.A., Majumder S., Misu F., (2018). *Women's Empowerment and Intimate Partner Violence in Bangladesh: Investigating the Complex Relationship*. Journal of Biosocial Science. 2019 Mar; Vol. 51(2), pp. 188-202. Retrieved from: <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0021932018000068>

<sup>164</sup> Perova E., (2010). *Three Essays on Intended and Not Intended Impacts of Conditional Cash Transfers*. University Of California, Berkeley, pp. 15-16. Retrieved from: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2767982k>

Empirical studies show that improvements in the female's opportunities outside the relationship significantly reduce the level of violence<sup>165</sup> and the decreases in the male-female wage gap reduce violence against women, consistent with a household bargaining model<sup>166</sup>. These findings are consistent with a simple model of household bargaining in which an increase in a woman's relative income increases her bargaining power and leads to a reduction in violence against her.

It is important to emphasise that the strengthening of women's rights and economic empowerment means that it is necessary to address the deep-rooted unequal gender power-relations that give rise to discrimination and violence against women and girls and that gender power structures interact with other forms of discrimination and inequality such as those related to race, disability, age, and gender identity<sup>167</sup>.

### 2.3.1 Household bargaining models

The distribution of consumption within the household is essential to the understanding of its members' well-being and their internal dynamics. From a conceptual perspective, distinguishing the appropriate household model sheds light on how consumption decisions are made, while highlighting the importance of information, preferences, and power distribution within the household<sup>168</sup>. The unitary model of the household is the point of departure for the analysis of household decisions. Primarily proposed by Becker, the unitary model treats households as entities with unique preferences. That is, all household members have the same utility function or, alternatively, household decisions are made according to the preferences of one household member. Consequently, under the unitary household model, household decisions are not affected by which family member controls the family's income or wealth<sup>169</sup>.

The unitary model, which treated household as a single unit with common preferences, utility, decisions, and choices. In the unitary model, married couples maximize a family utility function

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<sup>165</sup> Tauchen H.V., Witte A.D., Long S.K., (1991). *Domestic Violence: A Non-random Affair*. International Economic Review, Vol. 32(2), pp. 491-511. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2526888>

<sup>166</sup> Aizer A., (2007). *Wages, Violence and Health in the Household*. NBER Working Paper No. w13494. Retrieved from: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1021972>

<sup>167</sup> EU Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (2017). *Report on women's economic empowerment in the private and public sectors in the EU* para. 2. Retrieved from: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2017-0271\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2017-0271_EN.html)

<sup>168</sup> Martínez C., (2013). *Intrahousehold Allocation and Bargaining Power: Evidence from Chile*. Economic Development and Cultural Change, Vol. 61, No. 3, pp. 577-605. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1086/669260>

<sup>169</sup> Becker G.S., (1965). *A Theory of the Allocation of Time*. The Economic Journal, Vo. 75, No. 299. pp. 493-517. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2228949>

subject to a family budget constraint. The unitary model implies that husbands and wives "pool" their nonlabour income: that is, a couple's expenditure pattern depends on their total nonlabour income, but not on the fractions of this total controlled by the wife and by the husband. This implication is testable. Empirical evidence shows that couples' expenditure patterns depend not only on their total nonlabour income but also on the fractions controlled by each spouse. This evidence has been crucial in undermining economists' commitment to the traditional unitary model.

However, as Becker observes, the allocation of resources within a household is determined by bargaining among household members, with outcomes that may therefore depend on the determinants of the bargaining power of each household member. In general, the existence of a decision process involving several agents can produce household demand functions that are no longer equivalent to those obtained by maximising a single well behaved household utility function. This has led to the rise of collective household models, where non-unitary behaviour is exploited to empirically identify and estimate resource allocations and other intra-household behaviour<sup>170</sup>.

The two most common economic household bargaining models are the cooperative bargaining model and the noncooperative bargaining model. In the former, factors that affect an individual's fallback position or "threat point of divorce" include independent wealth e.g., market wage rate; non-wage income; parental wealth, and factors that capture the welfare of individuals outside of marriage or "extra environmental parameters" e.g., the state of the marriage market; property rights legislation and enforcement; the legal structure of marriage with its attendant rights and responsibilities; and other policy interventions<sup>171</sup>. Within this framework, enhancing women's economic opportunities outside of marriage puts them in a stronger position to be able to leave an abusive relationship.

By contrast the noncooperative framework acknowledges that divorce or dissolution of the household may not always be a viable option<sup>172</sup>. In the event a mutually agreeable solution cannot be reached each individual household member retreats into their "separate sphere" and pursues their own best interest. Within this framework, if the disutility from experiencing violence is greater than their fallback position, then the resulting outcome is that women behave autonomously with minimum interaction with their partner.

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<sup>170</sup> Becker G.S. (1974). *A theory of social interactions*. Journal of Political Economy, Vol. 82(6), pp. 1063–93. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/260265>

<sup>171</sup> McElroy M.B., Horney M.J., (1990). *Nash-Bargained Household Decisions: Reply*. International Economic Review Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 237-242. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2526642>

<sup>172</sup> Lundberg S., Pollak R.A., (1994). *Noncooperative Bargaining Models of Marriage*. The American Economic Review Vol. 84, No. 2, Papers and Proceedings of the Hundred and Sixth Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association, pp. 132-137. Retrieved from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2117816>

Another crucial household bargaining model was proposed by Nash, in which each spouse's well-being in the cooperative equilibrium is an increasing function of his or her well-being at the "threat point." In virtually all bargaining models of marriage, an increase in a spouse's nonlabour income increases his or her well-being at the threat point and, hence, increases that spouse's well-being at the cooperative equilibrium. Thus, we can identify a spouse's "bargaining power" with his or her well-being at the threat point. More generally, a spouse whose earnings are high because he or she chooses to allocate more hours to market work, and correspondingly less to household production and leisure, does not have more bargaining power. But a spouse whose earnings are high because of a high wage rate does have more bargaining power<sup>173</sup>. Thus, in a bargaining model with household production, a spouse's productivity in home production is a source of bargaining power<sup>174</sup>.

### 2.3.2 Bargaining framework and IPV

Economists conceptualize women's risk of violence as a function of their relative bargaining power within the household. According to bargaining theory, access to paid work reduces women's vulnerability to partner violence by improving their bargaining power and strengthening their "fallback position". A person's fallback position is the level of utility they would enjoy outside of the household or union should bargaining break down. The stronger the individual's fallback position, the greater bargaining power they can muster within the household. Economic household bargaining models thus propose that increased access to monetary resources will enhance women's "agency" and so hence their bargaining power within the household. This, in turn, reduces their vulnerability to violence by an intimate partner.

Studies of IPV risk using variations of the intra-household bargaining framework support the hypothesis that women's increased individual status lowers the risk of IPV. The bargaining framework posits that in a dyadic relationship, the person with more resources (including income, fixed assets,

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<sup>173</sup> Pollak R.A., (2005). *Bargaining power in marriage: earnings, wage rates and household production*. NBER Working Papers 11239, National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc, pp. 2-29. Retrieved from: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w11239>

<sup>174</sup> Nash J.F., (1950). *The Bargaining Problem*. *Econometrica*, Vo. 18, Issue 2, pp. 155-162. Retrieved from: [https://doi.org/0012-9682\(195004\)18:2<155:TBP>2.0.CO;2-H](https://doi.org/0012-9682(195004)18:2<155:TBP>2.0.CO;2-H)

employment, and education) can leverage those resources to prioritize his or her own goals within a relationship<sup>175</sup> or, specifically with respect to IPV, to leave a violent relationship<sup>176</sup>.

Bargaining theory sees power in intimate relationships as reflected by resource allocation on the micro level. Based on this research, we hypothesize that women who work are less likely to experience physical violence than women who do not and that women with higher educational attainment are less likely to experience physical violence than women with less than a primary education<sup>177</sup>. According to household bargaining models' women's welfare inside the family is determined by their fallback positions (their exit options and alternatives to the marriage). The more educated and wealthier a woman is, the higher her chances of ending an unhappy marriage or changing the terms of the marriage in favour of her, with the threat of divorce. Therefore, women who have economic independence are expected to be more protected from IPV.

While most studies of gendered practices in households focus on division of labour, decision-making power along gender lines can provide similar insight into which gender values are incorporated within a relationship. Several studies suggest that decision-making structures can have a profound impact on the likelihood of intimate partner violence. Couples with equal decision-making power have a lower prevalence of IPV than couples in which one partner (male or female) dominates the decision-making process<sup>178</sup>. Furthermore, female-dominated decision-making increases the likelihood of IPV in five Latin American countries<sup>179</sup>. Similarly, cooperative decision-making is associated with a lower likelihood of intimate partner violence and is plausibly indicative of more equal gendered relationships and beliefs that are not solely defined by partners' economic statuses<sup>180</sup>.

Women who make more decisions jointly with their partner are less likely to experience physical violence and that joint decisions decrease the risk of violence for women who earn more than their partner or have more education than their partner. The role of decision-making structures

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<sup>175</sup> Agarwal B. (1997). "Bargaining" and Gender Relations: within and beyond the household. *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 3(1). pp. 1-51. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/135457097338799>

<sup>176</sup> Svec J., Andic T., (2018). *Cooperative Decision-Making and Intimate Partner Violence in Peru*. *Population and Development Review*. 2018 Mar; 44(1): pp. 63-64. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/padr.12127>

<sup>177</sup> Ivi, p. 69

<sup>178</sup> Coleman D.H., Straus M.A., (1986). *Marital Power, Conflict, and Violence in a Nationally Representative Sample of American Couples*. *Violence and Victims* Vol 1, Issue 2, pp. 141-57. Retrieved from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/3154145/>

<sup>179</sup> Flake D., Forste R., (2006). *Fighting Families: Family Characteristics Associated with Domestic Violence in Five Latin American Countries*. *Journal of Family Violence* 21(1) pp. 19-29. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-005-9002-2>

<sup>180</sup> Friedemann-Sanchez G., Lovaton Davila R., (2012). *Intimate partner violence in Colombia: Who is at risk?* *Journal of Social Forces*, 91(2). pp. 663-688. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sos131>

Joint decision-making, which signifies a more gender-cooperative household, is linked to lower levels of violence<sup>181</sup>.

Moreover, abusive relationships might be analysed using non-cooperative bargaining models. The man's utility inside the marriage is assumed to increase with his exercise of violence (due to increasing self-esteem or better control of family's financial resources etc.). Using a non-cooperative framework, a rise in woman's income broadens her chances of leaving the abusive relationship. This increases her threat point utility (utility after divorce) and lowers the level of violence if she stays inside the marriage. Similarly, they show generous divorce settlements and better-quality shelter services for battered women would lower the incidence of domestic violence by increasing women's threat point utility<sup>182</sup>.

Using a Nash-bargaining model, Tauchen further shows that changes in male and female income have the opposite effect on domestic violence. An increase in man's income allows him to exercise more violence in exchange for higher financial transfers to his wife (he can "buy" more violence). An increase in woman's income, on the other hand, forces her partner to reduce violence to assure her reservation utility (wife can "buy" her freedom from violence)<sup>183</sup>.

### 2.3.3 The protective effect of economic independence on IPV

The United Nations, in its Beijing Declaration, a visionary agenda for the empowerment of women, strongly recommended economic empowerment and independence of women as a protective factor for violence against women<sup>184</sup>.

The first indicator of economic independence is labour force status. As a matter of fact, the probability of leaving an abusive relationship is significantly lower for a woman who has not worked in the past twelve months<sup>185</sup>. However, the proportion goes down by nearly half a percentage point among working women and the decrease is significant at conventional level. There are both

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<sup>181</sup> Svec J., Andic T., (2018), cit., pp. 63-85.

<sup>182</sup> Farmer A., Tiefenthaler J., (1997). *An Economic Analysis of Domestic Violence*. Review of Social Economy Vol. 55, No. 3, pp. 227-358. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00346769700000004>

<sup>183</sup> Tauchen H., Long S., (1991), cit., pp. 491-511.

<sup>184</sup> UN (1995). *Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>

<sup>185</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, Bettio F., Ticci E., (2017). *Violence against Women and Economic Independence*. Publications Office, 2017, pp. 42-59. Retrieved from: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2838/394400>



theoretical arguments and empirical evidence that females' access to labour market opportunities improves women's bargaining power within the household<sup>186</sup>. Female work opportunities in fact expand a woman's bargaining power by providing women the possibility to earn their own income if they leave the marriage<sup>187</sup>. Women who are exposed to intimate partner violence are employed in higher numbers in casual and part-time work and their earnings are 60% lower compared to women who do not experience such violence<sup>188</sup>. Conversely, women with access to jobs, banks accounts and other financial services may have greater control over their earnings and more options to leave abusive relationships<sup>189</sup>.

In all household bargaining models, the outside option of household members is a crucial determinant of bargaining power and thus of the actions that members take in the household bargaining context. Therefore, if a woman outside option improves, her situation within the household can develop as she is better able to leave if she is treated poorly<sup>190</sup>. However, women who face very low baseline bargaining power may not actually be able to leave an abusive relationship.

Examining the male-female wage gap, rather than female labour force participation, increase in relative female wages results in decrease of intimate partner violence<sup>191</sup>. Equal couples, in which both partners are employed, tend to have the lowest risk of physical violence<sup>192</sup>. Women's earning power, their economic role outside of the household, literacy, and property rights increase their bargaining power and thus should enhance their ability to exert change. Access to paid work allows women to become less dependent on others and enhances their position in the household through their visible financial contribution to family maintenance. In other words, working status and economic empowerment of women can concretely be seen as protective factors.

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<sup>186</sup> Anderson S., Eswaran M., (2009). *What determines female autonomy? Evidence from Bangladesh*. Journal of Development Economics, Vol. 90, No. 2, pp. 179-191. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2008.10.004>; Blumberg R.L., Coleman M.T., (1989). *A Theoretical Look at the Gender Balance of Power in the American Couple*. Journal of Family Issues, Vo. 10, Issue 2, pp. 225-250. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/019251389010002005>

<sup>187</sup> Health R., (2012). *Women's Access to Labor Market Opportunities, Control of Household Resources, and Domestic Violence*. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 6149, pp. 2-10. Retrieved from: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/11987>

<sup>188</sup> UN Women, (2016). *The Economic Costs of Violence Against Women*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/9/speech-by-lakshmi-puri-on-economic-costs-of-violence-against-women>

<sup>189</sup> Gammage S., (2017). *Gender and Digital Financial Inclusion: What Do We Know and What Do We Need to Know?* Washington: International Center for Research on Women, pp. 15-52. Retrieved from: <https://www.icrw.org/publications/gender-digital-financial-inclusion/>

<sup>190</sup> Aizer A., (2010). *The gender wage gap and domestic violence*. American Economic Review, Vol. 100(4), pp. 1850-59. Retrieved from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27871277>

<sup>191</sup> Ivi, pp. 1847-1849

<sup>192</sup> Alonso-Borrego C., Carrasco R., (2016). *Employment and the Risk of Domestic Violence: Does the Breadwinner's Gender Matter?* UCD Geary Institute for Public Policy Discussion Paper Series 201607, Geary Institute, University College Dublin. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2748885>

Women who were more economically advantaged in terms of employment status and personal income were less psychologically committed and significantly more likely to leave than other women<sup>193</sup>. Income variables were not only among the most consistently related but possibly the most powerful predictors of the stay/leave decision overall<sup>194</sup>. Increased access to assets could reduce a woman's risk of violence in many ways; potentially allowing financial autonomy enabling women to leave a violent relationship. It could also increase a woman's value to the household and increase a woman's relative bargaining power within the relationship. More broadly, reductions in household poverty could reduce economic stress and so reduce potential triggers for conflict<sup>195</sup>.

Moreover, in multivariate global analyses, increased levels of women's financial inclusion were associated with lower levels of recent intimate partner violence after accounting for asset-based enablers of economic autonomy and gender norms. There is also evidence suggesting that the ability to exit an abusive relationship, which may be facilitated by augmented economic autonomy, can deter further IPV. For instance, state level family law reforms facilitating divorce in the United States reduced the risk of marital violence<sup>196</sup>.

The concept of economic solvency as a protective factor for women, is theorized to decrease her risk of IPV and interrupt the cycle of IPV and poverty<sup>197</sup>. It signifies "a long-term state that occurs when there is societal structure that supports gender equity and external resources are available and can be used by a woman who has necessary human capital, sustainable employment and independence"<sup>198</sup>. To be effectively used for research and interventions, a Model of Economic Solvency was developed. Originally it included four factors that made up an individual's economic solvency: human capital, social capital, sustainable employment, and independence<sup>199</sup>. Human capital includes knowledge, attitudes, and life skills the woman can use to negotiate issues of daily living. Education identified psychological strength, self-motivation, and life skills as factors important to

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<sup>193</sup> Rusbult C.E., Martz J.M., (1995). *Remaining in an abusive relationship: An investment model analysis of nonvoluntary dependence*. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 21(6), pp. 558–57. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167295216002>

<sup>194</sup> Anderson D.K., Saunders D.G., (2003). *Leaving an Abusive Partner: An Empirical Review of Predictors, the Process of Leaving, and Psychological Well-being*. Trauma, Violence & Abuse, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 163-191. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838002250769>

<sup>195</sup> Ellsberg M.D., Arango D.J., Morton M., Gennari F., Kiplesund S., Contreras M., Watts C., (2014). *Prevention of violence against women and girls: what does the evidence say?* Lancet. 2015 Apr 18; 385(9977): pp. 1555-66. Retrieved from: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(14\)61703-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61703-7)

<sup>196</sup> Stevenson B., Wolfers J., (2006). *Bargaining in the shadow of the law: Divorce laws and family distress*. The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 121(1), pp. 267–88. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/121.1.267>

<sup>197</sup> Gilroy H., Symes L., McFarlane J., (2015). *Economic solvency in the context of violence against women: a concept analysis*. Health Soc Care Community, 23(2), pp. 100-106. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.12103>

<sup>198</sup> Ivi, p. 99

<sup>199</sup> Gilroy H., McFarlane J., Fredland N., Cesario S., Nava A., (2018). *Using a Model of Economic Solvency to Understand the Connection between Economic Factors and Intimate Partner Violence*. Journal of International Women's Studies, 19(6), pp. 305-325. Retrieved from: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol19/iss6/20>

economic solvency<sup>200</sup>. In addition, social capital is defined as the ability of a woman to access and use a network of individuals for her welfare. Finally, sustainable employment is a paid position that provides sufficient income and benefits to meet the woman's needs over time. Employment, regardless the type, has been shown to positively correlate with economic solvency.

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<sup>200</sup> Hong P.Y., Sheriff V.A., Naeger S.R., (2009). *A Bottom-up Definition of Self-sufficiency: Voices from Low-income Jobseekers*. *Qualitative Social Work* 8(3), pp. 357-376. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325009337844>

## Chapter 3

### Obstacles to rebuilding economic and housing independence among IPV survivors

After leaving an abusive relationship, intimate partner violence survivors always find themselves struggling with avoiding poverty and gaining financial independence. Understanding and addressing economic needs of survivors is complex but crucial because expanding services to meet survivors' needs for economic independence may facilitate long-term safety.

The ability to secure financial essentials, like a job, housing, and insurance, is a key determinant of a survivor's ability to escape intimate partner violence. In studies, IPV survivors who were forced to return to their abusers, report that they were driven primarily by financial instability, including a lack of housing or the inability to obtain employment<sup>201</sup>. As a matter of fact, a list of financial factors that may have affected their decision to stay with or return to their partner, respondents most selected "unable to support myself and/or my children" and "didn't have another place to live"<sup>202</sup>.

Due to the unique difficulties posed by these policies for survivors of violence who seek to develop economic independence, need of survivor centred response which can provide access to economic resources. Moreover, this response must address long-term needs, which are lack of material and tangible resources, lack of housing, financial and insurance insecurity, lack of childcare.

Public policy encourages women, including survivors of intimate partner violence, to develop economic independence. However, they face unique obstacles in doing so. Firstly, structural obstacles resulting from policies, laws, and public services, create difficulties in their rebuilding economic and housing independence. Secondly, obstacles to the right to adequate housing contribute to increase the level of home instability and homelessness among IPV survivors, which is a key element for regaining autonomy after leaving an abusive relationship. Moreover, barriers to employment, posed by the labour market, the discrimination and stigma among employers and the lack of childcare resources, hinder their path towards economic independence. Finally, minority populations who have difficulties

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<sup>201</sup> Connor D.H. (2014). *Financial Freedom: Women, Money, and Domestic Abuse*. 20 *Wm. & Mary J. Women & L.* 339 (2014), pp. 339-340. Retrieved from: <https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmjowl/vol20/iss2/4>

<sup>202</sup> Hess C., Del Rosario A. (2018). *Dreams Deferred: A Survey on the Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Survivors' Education, Careers, and Economic Security*. Institute for Women's Policy Research. p. 33. Retrieved from: <https://iwpr.org/>

with the host-language, or problems with documentation, have to cope with more obstacles, including discrimination and isolation.

### 3.1 Structural obstacles

Intimate partner violence survivors, once they get out of an abusive situation, must cope initially with structural obstacles, posed mainly by public policies, laws and public services. Although these tools are developed to address abused women's needs, they are not part of a survivor-centred response. As a matter of fact, IPV survivors, especially those with young children, criminal convictions, limited education or job skills, and mental health or substance abuse challenges, often face insurmountable barriers as they attempt to escape from an abusive relationship, or to transit from emergency shelter to independence<sup>203</sup>.

#### 3.1.1 Policies

Intimate partner violence interventions in the last decades have focused more on providing crisis intervention as well as the criminalization of violence than long-term economic security of survivors<sup>204</sup>. In addition to the relatively short history of interventions on economic empowerment, the intersectional nature of violence and poverty requires close attention to multiple areas of women's lives, including their abuse experiences, financial resources, and employment<sup>205</sup>.

Employment can create independence and help IPV survivors avoid social exclusion and poverty, which could further increase their risk of experiencing violence in the future. The provision of employment services has been identified as essential in providing important long-term help for victims. In fact, article 20 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence states that "Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims have access to services facilitating their recovery

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<sup>203</sup> Goodman, L. A., Epstein, D. (2008). *Listening to battered women: A survivor-centered approach to advocacy, mental health, and justice*. American Psychological Association. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/11651-000>

<sup>204</sup> Adelman M. (2004). *The Battering State: Towards a Political Economy of Domestic Violence*. Journal of Poverty, Volume 8, Issue 3, pp. 45-64. Retrieved from: [https://doi.org/10.1300/J134v08n03\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J134v08n03_03)

<sup>205</sup> Ah Hahn S., Postmus J.L. (2014). *Economic Empowerment of Impoverished IPV Survivors*. Trauma, Violence & Abuse, Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 79-93. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838013511541>

from violence. These measures should include, when necessary, services such as legal and psychological counselling, financial assistance, housing, education, training, and assistance in finding employment<sup>206</sup>”.

Regarding employment, a policy that can make a significant difference for survivors of intimate partner violence is access to paid sick and safe days, which allow them time to leave the relationship, seek support and recover. Paid sick and safe days legislation would thus permit survivors to take time off work to address the health consequences of violence or to attend to other critical safety needs such as filing for an order of protection or cooperating with law enforcement, without compromising their jobs or economic stability. For instance, in the United States, a federal standard for paid sick and safe days, like the Healthy Families Act, would help survivors focus on what they and their families need, not whether they will lose their jobs and their ability to afford basic expenses like food and rent<sup>207</sup>.

Moreover, non-discrimination legislation would permit survivors to ask for important safety accommodations such as changing work hours and would prohibit employers from firing employees because of their status as a victim of intimate partner violence. Also, access to unemployment insurance can significantly assist survivors in sustaining economic stability if they lose their jobs or need to relocate because of concerns about their safety or that of an immediate family member.

Like all women, survivors of IPV, would benefit from equal pay initiatives. As long as women make less than men for performing the same work, survivors’ ability to gain financial stability and independence is hampered, as the amount of time that a survivor might need to continue relying on support from an abuser could extend longer than necessary. Increasing the minimum wage will better enable survivors, and all women, to build assets to help them and their families meet both daily and long-term needs.

Furthermore, introducing temporary income support measures can help to minimally support survivors in the short-term. These measures ensure that survivors of intimate partner violence can rely upon a minimum wage for at least 2 years when they decide to come out of violent relationships. For instance, in Italy on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020 “Reddito di Libertà” was introduced. It consists of an economic contribution to women victims of violence, with or without children, implemented by the

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<sup>206</sup> Council of Europe (2011). *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*. Art. 20, para. 1.

<sup>207</sup> National Partnership for Women and Families, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (2019). *Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence Need Paid Safe Days*, pp. 1-5. Retrieved from: <https://vawnet.org/material/survivors-intimate-partner-violence-need-paid-safe-days>

anti-violence centres and recognized by the regions and social services in the paths of escaping from violence, to help support their autonomy<sup>208</sup>.

Integrating in programmes for social and economic inclusion, including those supported by the European Social Fund, is a further intervention to support IPV survivors in accessing training and job opportunities with the purpose of building their economic independence.

### 3.1.2 Laws

Article 29 of the Istanbul Convention declares that “Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide victims with adequate civil remedies against the perpetrator” and “shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide victims, in accordance with the general principles of international law, with adequate civil remedies against State authorities that have failed in their duty”<sup>209</sup>.

In view of starting their path towards economic independence, survivors of intimate partner violence need immediate protection and safety after escaping an abusive relationship. Protection orders are among the most effective legal remedies available to complainants/ survivors of violence against women. They were first introduced in the United States in the mid-1970s, offering an immediate remedy to complainants/survivors of domestic violence by authorizing courts to order an offender out of the home. All states now provide for protection orders. Such orders vary greatly in their specificity regarding the length of the order, its enforceability, who may apply for and issue it, and whether financial support or other relief may be ordered. Experience has shown that complainants/survivors of forms of violence other than domestic violence also seek protection orders and several recent legislative developments have extended the application of such orders accordingly<sup>210</sup>. It’s important that there are no delays in the conduct of trials, because it may increase

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<sup>208</sup> Article 3, c. 1 “Per le finalità di cui all'art. 1, comma 2, è riconosciuto un contributo denominato «Reddito di libertà», stabilito nella misura massima di euro 400 pro capite su base mensile per un massimo di dodici mensilità destinato alle donne vittime di violenza, sole o con figli minori, seguite dai centri antiviolenza riconosciuti dalle regioni e dai servizi sociali nei percorsi di fuoriuscita dalla violenza, al fine di contribuire a sostenerne l'autonomia.”

<sup>209</sup> Council of Europe (2011). *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*. Chapter V – Substantive Law, Art. 29 – Civil Lawsuits and remedies. Paras. 1-2

<sup>210</sup> UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for the Advancement of Women (2010). *Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women*. 3.10 Protection orders, pp. 44-45. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2012/12/handbook-for-legislation-on-violence-against-women>

the risk to the complainant of retaliation, particularly if the perpetrator is not in police custody, and it may prevent the abused woman from feeling safe and starting to create her own independence.

Regarding child custody, in many countries, violent offenders have used custody of children as a way to continue to abuse and gain access to survivors. presumption against award of custody to the perpetrator; presumption against unsupervised visitation by the perpetrator; requirement that, prior to supervised visitation being granted, the perpetrator must show that at least three months has passed since the most recent act of violence, that he has stopped using any form of violence, and that he is participating in a treatment programme for perpetrators; and no visitation rights are to be granted against the will of the child. Experience in some countries and cases suggests that custody decisions in protection order proceedings should be temporary and permanent custody issues should be dealt with only in divorce proceedings or family court. An alternative view is that courts deciding custody matters in protection order cases have a better understanding of domestic violence than courts deciding custody in the context of divorce or other family law matters and should therefore be granted power to make permanent custody orders.

The civil legal response to intimate partner violence has developed and expanded to include housing rights, employment rights, and increased access to visas for immigrant victims. These progresses reflect an advancement from addressing the immediate legal needs of victims to addressing the long-term needs that enable them to live lives free from violence.

Women, Business and the Law, which measures laws and regulations that restrict women's economic inclusion, has linked laws protecting women from violence with economic outcomes. For example, women are found more likely to own firms in economies where workplace sexual harassment laws exist. The enforcement of legislation aimed at protecting women from domestic violence and sexual harassment is associated with a reduction in gender inequality and discrimination in the labour market. Despite this important link, 45 economies still do not have legislation on domestic violence. Moreover, out of the 155 economies that do have these provisions in place, only 101 strictly adhere to international good practices by defining domestic violence as physical, psychological, sexual, and economic abuse.

In most countries, protection or restraining orders issued by the courts explicitly or implicitly cover the workplace, although they are not always adequately enforced. A legal framework on enforcement of protection orders is critical to women workers' safety. In the United States, for example, ten States have passed laws, enabling employers to apply for workplace restraining orders to prevent violence, harassment and stalking of their employees. It is important to note that, when the employer applies for such measures, it should be done in consultation with, and with the consent of,



victims. In addition, promising practices can be found in Germany and in the EU through the introduction of a European protection order, which, according to national law, can be applicable in the workplace. Furthermore, protection orders may also cover protection against workplace stalking, such as in Italy, which can happen in the framework of domestic violence or can be perpetrated by other actors of the world of work, such as colleagues or clients<sup>211</sup>.

Furthermore, family leave better allow survivors to seek medical care and participate in the justice system while maintaining a job. Survivors also strongly benefit from employment rights laws that allow them to leave work to seek services, access unemployment insurance through domestic violence exceptions, and protect against job discrimination or retaliation. Some survivors of violence against women have lost employment because they missed work due to injuries and other consequences of the violence, including the need to find housing or go to court. Legislation should: protect the employment rights of survivors of violence against women, including by prohibiting employers from discriminating against them or penalizing them for the consequences of their abuse<sup>212</sup>.

### 3.1.3 Public services

Article 20 of the Istanbul Convention mentions that “Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims have access to health care and social services and that services are adequately resourced, and professionals are trained to assist victims and refer them to the appropriate services”<sup>213</sup>. In fact, women who flee their abusive situations, usually with few economic resources and low access to funds, require financial and social assistance to afford necessities, and receive the supports they need.

This system is arranged so that increases in income levels result in reduced benefits and claw backs by government agencies. The advantages of the benefits received may outweigh the advantages of income that survivors could potentially earn. Women can become dependent on financial supports,

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<sup>211</sup> UN Women, Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls (2020). *Legislation and policies on domestic violence and its effects on the world of work*. Retrieved from: <https://www.endvawnow.org/fr/articles/1946-legislation-and-policies-on-domestic-violence-and-its-effects-on-the-world-of-work.html>

<sup>212</sup> UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for the Advancement of Women (2010), cit., pp. 32-33.

<sup>213</sup> Council of Europe (2011). *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*. Chapter IV – Protection and support, Article 20 – General support services. Para. 2

and this assistance can become a disincentive to work. Some women may choose to rely on and become dependent on these supports, in fear that they will not be able to make ends meet with reduced assistance and low incomes.

Several studies have found that intimate partner violence-involved patients use more healthcare resources on an annual basis than do patients without this risk factor<sup>214</sup>. Furthermore, the higher use of healthcare resources by abuse survivors does not end when IPV ends. As a result, primary- and emergency-care settings are important settings in which to identify and help IPV survivors<sup>215</sup>. Ideally, the healthcare setting could provide opportunities for private communication with a healthcare provider and be equipped to manage crises and provide comfort measures, such as emotional support, information, and guidance, along with being able to make connections to community-based social service agencies. Systems interventions combine IPV screening and referral by healthcare providers, on-site IPV services to respond to survivors' immediate needs, an environment that promotes safe disclosure, and community linkages with strong leadership and oversight<sup>216</sup>.

Lack of transportation adds another barrier. Survivors of intimate partner violence may not have bus passes, or cars, or financial resources to afford them. Among those who owned their own car, they described struggling to keep up with auto loan payments, insurance, servicing, and refuelling costs. Inadequate transportation access on leaving the abusive relationship made it difficult to meet necessities, get a job or maintain employment, access social services, or any combination of these. Moreover, lack of transportation limited job search options and prevented them from getting or maintaining employment. Since IPV survivors are mostly working a low-wage jobs, missing work, paying for transportation, or both, places a heavy economic burden on them. A substantial portion of their salary goes just to pay for transportation expenses<sup>217</sup>. Concerns about the accessibility of public transportation where they were currently living. They focused on availability, affordability,

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<sup>214</sup> Rivera F.P., Anderson M.L., Fishman P. (2007). *Healthcare utilization and costs for women with a history of intimate partner violence*. American Journal of Preventive Medicine. Vol. 32(2), pp. 89–96. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2006.10.001>

<sup>215</sup> Ambuel B., Hamberger L.K., Guse C.E., Melzer-Lange M., Phelan M.B., Kistner A. (2013). *Healthcare can change from within: Sustained improvement in the healthcare response to intimate partner violence*. Journal of Family Violence. Vol. 28, pp. 833–847. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-013-9550-9>

<sup>216</sup> Bair-Merritt M.H., Lewis-O'Connor A., Goel S., Amato P., Ismailji T., Jelley M. et al. (2014). *Primary care-based interventions for intimate partner violence: a systematic review*. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 46(2), pp. 188–94. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2013.10.001>

<sup>217</sup> Nahar S., Cronley C. (2021). *Transportation Barriers among Immigrant Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence*. Transportation Research Record 2021, Vol. 2675(9), pp. 861–869. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/03611981211004587>

reliability, safety, and faster service of public transportation. Lacking this basic resource impedes the women's ability to regain independence as they exit the abusive situations.

Moreover, having access to affordable, quality childcare will also greatly increase survivors' safety and stability. Due to a lack of options in the community, many intimate partner violence survivors, who are also mothers, may face unique barriers to finding and utilizing stable, quality childcare and accessing childcare subsidies. Therefore, they often rely on their abusive partners or ex-partners, to provide childcare. This can place survivors in danger of further or increased physical and/or emotional abuse. Also, abusers may intentionally cancel or change their plans to provide childcare as a tactic to interfere with the survivor's work.

### **3.2 Housing barriers**

Survivors of intimate partner violence face housing insecurity or homelessness when escaping violence<sup>218</sup>. As a matter of fact, housing remains a critical unmet need for survivors because access to housing is viewed by many women as a key factor in their decision to leave the relationship or remain in the home. Women find housing support difficult to access, and most of them have difficulty and a long wait to obtain more permanent or stable accommodation. Therefore, housing has been identified as critical for survivors of intimate partner violence to achieve long-term stability, but both individual- and system-level barriers hinder its obtainment.

Lack of available housing influenced a woman's decision to leave a violent relationship and it has other negative effects for women path towards independence, including constraining their ability to obtain or maintain employment, increasing personal debt, and impacting their ability to maintain social networks and family support crucial in times of financial hardship. On the other side, where women have access to a more comprehensive housing service, this tends to have benefits on their pathways to regaining economic stability more quickly.

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<sup>218</sup> Keefe R., Hahn S.A., (2021). *Policy Roles in Promoting Affordable Housing for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence*. *Violence Against Women* 2021, Vol. 27(9), pp. 1317–1336. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801220913629>

### 3.2.1 Housing instability and homelessness

Intimate partner violence survivors are much more likely to experience housing insecurity or homelessness than those who have not experienced IPV. Housing instability is different from literal homelessness. It encompasses several indicators, such as difficulty paying rent or a mortgage; being denied housing because of past credit or rental history problems; but also, eviction threats or notices; moving frequently or living in over-crowded conditions<sup>219</sup>. Housing insecurity is thus distinct from homelessness because an individual experiencing it might have a current place to live while experiencing multiple problems related to a lack of permanent or adequate housing<sup>220</sup>.

However, although there is not internationally definition of homelessness, for some countries it is restricted to people who are living on the streets or in public spaces, and/or living in shelters or other emergency accommodation. The American National Coalition for the Homeless acknowledges intimate partner violence as one of the most common contributing factors to homelessness for women<sup>221</sup>.

However, even though an IPV survivor may currently occupy a home, she can face multiple difficulties, both individual (e.g., loss of job) and systemic (e.g., high unemployment rates, increases in cost of rent), to maintain that residence. Housing assistance ranges from short-term crisis intervention to permanent housing for survivors and their children<sup>222</sup>. Options include emergency shelters, site-based transitional housing rent assistance and subsidized permanent housing. IPV survivors may not know about housing assistance options or the assistance most appropriate to their current situation. Even when survivors do obtain housing, they confront barriers to maintaining it, facing financial costs and threats of eviction due to violence-related incidents.

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<sup>219</sup> Kushel M.B., Gupta R., Gee L. (2006). *Housing instability and food insecurity as barriers to health care among low-income Americans*. Journal of General Internal Medicine 21(1), pp. 71–77. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1525-1497.2005.00278.x>

<sup>220</sup> Rollins C., Glass N. E., Perrin N.A., Billhardt K.A., Clough A., Barnes J., Bloom T.L. (2012). *Housing instability is as strong a predictor of poor health outcomes as level of danger in an abusive relationship: Findings from the SHARE study*. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 27, pp. 623–643. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260511423241>

<sup>221</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless, (2017). *Homeless in America* “...50% of the cities surveyed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors identified domestic violence as a primary cause of homelessness...” p. 1. Retrieved from: <https://nationalhomeless.org/>

<sup>222</sup> Baker C.K., Holditch Niolon P., Oliphant H. (2009). *A Descriptive Analysis of Transitional Housing Programs for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence in the United States*. Violence Against Women. 2009; 15(4): pp. 460-481. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801208330933>

There are multiple factors that lead to housing instability and homelessness for women who experience IPV, such as economic vulnerability, housing shortages, and predatory landlords<sup>223</sup>. contribute to Foremost, IPV survivors often struggle with their economic well-being, and they might have such struggles because their partners provided economically or employed economic abuse tactics, resulting in inconsistent work experience and/or constraints to their job training and educational opportunities<sup>224</sup>. In turn, obtaining stable, living-wage employment can be a challenge. As a matter of fact, job instability has been found to play a mediating role on the relationship between IPV and housing instability and homelessness<sup>225</sup>. Economic abuse tactics commonly used by perpetrators include stealing survivors' money, sabotaging their employment or housing contracts, and destroying their credit. Consequently, survivors may not have the financial resources to establish their own independent housing<sup>226</sup> and may be unable to secure housing contracts because they appear unreliable due to multiple moves or perpetrators' efforts to sabotage references or get them evicted. Survivors may also experience unemployment or job instability because of the physical and mental health trauma they have endured (e.g., injuries, mental health issues, substance misuse, and disconnection from social networks).

### **3.1.2 Housing Policy strategy**

Improving housing quality, ensuring access to affordable housing, and increasing the housing supply remain the main housing policy objectives among countries, as lack of safe and affordable housing is often reported as one of the primary barriers survivors of intimate and domestic violence face when they choose to leave an abusive partner.

The OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (QuASH) report that many countries' housing policy approach explicitly targets support for specific groups: 36 countries report policy objectives that target low-income households; 31 countries people with disabilities; 27 countries target seniors; 27 countries families with children; 26 countries youth; 26 countries the homeless; and 16 countries specific cultural or ethnic groups. In Canada policy objectives include

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<sup>223</sup> Clough A., Draughon J.E., Nije-Carr V., Rollins C., Glass N. (2014). "*Having Housing Made Everything Else Possible*": *Affordable, Safe and Stable Housing for Women Survivors of Violence*. Qualitative Social Work. Vol. 13 No. 5, pp. 671-688. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325013503003>

<sup>224</sup> Sanders C.K. (2015), cit., pp. 3-29.

<sup>225</sup> Adams A.E., Tolman R.M., Bybee D., Sullivan C.M., Kennedy A.C. (2012), cit., pp. 1345–1367.

<sup>226</sup> Galano M.M., Hunter E.C., Howell K.H., Miller L.E., Graham-Bermann S.A. (2013). *Predicting shelter residence in women experiencing recent intimate partner violence*. Violence Against Women. Vol. 19(4), pp. 518-35. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801213487056>

granting access to affordable housing to people with developmental disabilities, seniors, and survivors of domestic violence. Improving housing outcomes of Indigenous communities is also a priority of the National Housing Strategy. Also in Portugal, youth, seniors, the homeless, and victims of domestic violence are among the priority vulnerable groups in the country's housing policies. Finally, in Spain additional priority groups for housing policies include victims of domestic violence and victims of terrorism<sup>227</sup>.

Multiple factors have made housing less affordable over time. First, on average across the OECD, public investment in housing has been declining over the past two decades, while overall investment (both public and private) has been uneven. Second, housing development is increasingly expensive; while there are differences across countries, some factors include land scarcity (especially in dynamic urban areas), overly restrictive land regulations and planning processes that make housing development more costly, as well as increasing construction costs, not least those related to energy efficiency and other environmental sustainability regulations, even if some energy savings may ultimately accrue to the homeowner in later years. Third, demographic changes imply both growing and evolving demand for housing, while the elasticity of housing supply –which varies widely across countries –determines the extent to which the supply can adapt to changing demand. }Finally, low interest rates can also affect housing affordability, but the relationship is complex. On the one hand, they can make buying a home more affordable through cheaper loans. On the other hand, low interest rates can also fuel higher demand for housing and drive-up housing prices, thereby reducing the overall affordability of housing<sup>228</sup>.

Therefore, governments need to invest more in affordable and social housing because survivors' housing insecurity and homelessness can have detrimental consequences on their well-being. Moreover, growing up with periods of homelessness or housing instability are at risk for many of the same detrimental outcomes as children exposed to intimate partner violence.

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<sup>227</sup> OECD Affordable Housing Database OECD Directorate of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs - Social Policy Division (2021). *PH1.2 Housing Policy Objectives and Obstacles*, pp. 1-14. Retrieved from: <http://oe.cd/ahd>

<sup>228</sup> OECD (2021). *Building for a better tomorrow: Policies to make housing more affordable*. Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Policy Briefs. Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd.org/stories/housing/en/resources>

### 3.1.3 Women and the right to adequate housing

The right to adequate housing is a central component of women's right to equality under international human rights law and, as a result of discrimination and inequality in housing, many women and girls live in insecure, undignified and unsafe conditions, at increased risk of homelessness and violence. Increased vulnerability of women and girls to acts of domestic violence and sexual abuse when alternative safe housing is not available or when living in homelessness. In recent decades, the attention of international forums has been drawn to links between violence against women, including domestic violence, and the lack of enjoyment of the right to adequate housing. In fact, in her 2000 report on economic and social policy and its impact on violence against women, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences underlined that women's poverty, together with a lack of other housing options, made it difficult for women to leave violent family situations, and reaffirmed that forced relocation and forced eviction from home and land had a disproportionate impact on women, especially when these violations were committed by spouses or in-laws<sup>229</sup>. Housing policy is directly related to issues of violence against women. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights sets out the equal right of women and men to an adequate standard of living, which includes the right to adequate housing. Inadequate housing provides living conditions that are conducive to violence. Women and children spend more time at home than other family members and are thus more likely to experience harm from unhygienic environments and lack of access to safe drinking water. Moreover, overcrowded housing conditions, where stress levels are high, and tolerance is low - added to unemployment or poverty and the resulting financial anxieties - exacerbate the risk of domestic violence.

In addition to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>230</sup> (art. 25), the most authoritative international recognition of the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living is contained in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which states that States parties "[...] recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard

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<sup>229</sup> Commission on Human Rights, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy (2000), Resolution 1997/44 *Economic and social policy and its impact on violence against women*. Retrieved from: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00efbd24.html>

<sup>230</sup> UN General Assembly (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* Art. 25 "1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. 2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection." Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3712c.html>

of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing, and housing”<sup>231</sup>, and that men and women have an equal right to enjoy this right<sup>232</sup>. In, addition, all States must guarantee the right to adequate housing without any discrimination of any kind, including in relation to sex<sup>233</sup>. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights clarified that rights to equality and to be free from discrimination are not subject to progressive realization, but entail obligations of immediate application, and that guarantees of non-discrimination and equality in international human rights treaties mandate both de facto and de jure equality<sup>234</sup>.

Furthermore, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women states that: “States Parties shall undertake all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas [...] and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right [...] (h) to enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications”<sup>235</sup>. States have the obligation to ensure “the same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration”<sup>236</sup>.

Housing must as well be safe, which includes protection of women and girls against domestic violence in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has recommended that States should in situation of violence against women “ensure access to financial aid, crisis centres, shelters, hotlines and medical, psychological and counselling services”<sup>237</sup>. Article 23 of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence of the

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<sup>231</sup> ICESCR, (1966). art. 11 par. 1 “1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.” Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36c0.html>

<sup>232</sup> Ivi, art. 3 “The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights set forth in the present Covenant.”

<sup>233</sup> Ivi, art. 2 par. 2 “The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to guarantee that the rights enunciated in the present Covenant will be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

<sup>234</sup> CESCR (2005). *General Comment No. 16: The Equal Right of Men and Women to the Enjoyment of All Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (Art. 3 of the Covenant) paras. 7 and 40. Retrieved from: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/43f3067ae.html>

<sup>235</sup> CEDAW (1979). Art. 14 (2) “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right: (h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.” Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3970.html>

<sup>236</sup> Ivi, art. 16(1)

<sup>237</sup> UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, (2015). *General Recommendation No. 33 on women’s access to justice*, para. 16. Retrieved from: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/807253>



Council of Europe says that “[State] Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide for the setting-up of appropriate, easily accessible shelters in sufficient numbers to provide safe accommodation for and to reach out pro-actively to victims, especially women and their children.”<sup>238</sup>

As regards to resolution, according to the Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council, “discrimination in law and practice against women with respect to having access to, acquiring and securing land, property and housing, as well as financing for land, property and housing, constitutes a violation of women’s human right to protection against discrimination”<sup>239</sup>. The Human Rights Council has furthermore urged States to “ensure women’s equal right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living in all aspects of housing strategies, including through equal access to credit, mortgages, home ownership and rental housing, to take the safety of such housing properly into account, especially when women and children face any form of violence or threat of violence, and to undertake legislative and other reforms to realize equal rights for all with respect to property and inheritance.”<sup>240</sup> Moreover, in 2020 the Human Rights Council urged States to “ensure increase the to prevent and respond to the increase in violence against women and girls amid the COVID-19 pandemic, including by designating and expanding the capacity of domestic violence shelters as essential services and increasing resources for them, in collaboration with civil society and communities”<sup>241</sup>.

In 2000, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights appointed its first Special Rapporteur on adequate housing with a mandate to focus on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living in the context of non-discrimination<sup>242</sup>. The Guidelines for the implementation of the right to adequate housing developed by the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, urge States in Guideline No. 9 to recognize the independent right of women to security of tenure, irrespective of their family or relationship status; guarantee equal access to credit, mortgages, home ownership and rental housing, including through subsidies; ensure in situation of

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<sup>238</sup> Council of Europe (2011), cit., art. 23

<sup>239</sup> HRC (2005). *Resolution 2005/25 on Women’s equal ownership, access to and control over land and the equal rights to own property and to adequate housing*. Reaffirmed by the Human Rights Council (2020). *Resolution 43/14 on Adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and the right to non-discrimination in this context*. Retrieved from: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/551410004.html>

<sup>240</sup> HRC (2020). *Resolution 43/14 Adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and the right to non-discrimination in this context*, para. (i). Retrieved from: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/43/L.20>

<sup>241</sup> HRC (2020). *Resolution 44/17 on Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls*, para. 5. Retrieved from: <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/RES/44/17>

<sup>242</sup> HRC (2000). *Resolution 2000/9 on Question of the realization in all countries of the economic, social, and cultural rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and study of special problems which the developing countries face in their efforts to achieve these human rights*, para. 7(c-d). Retrieved from: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/418218>

household violence immediate access to emergency shelters and through legislation that, regardless of whether a woman has title, formal ownership or tenancy rights, she is able to remain in her own home where appropriate and have the perpetrator removed; and finally guarantee the right of women to participate in all aspects of housing-related policymaking, including housing design and construction, community development and planning, and transportation and infrastructure<sup>243</sup>.

In addition, Guiding Principle 6 of the Guiding principles on security of tenure for the urban poor<sup>244</sup> calls upon States to strengthen and protect women's security of tenure, regardless of age, marital, civil or social status, and independent of their relationships with male household or community members. They urge States among other adopt legislative and administrative measures to prohibit and eliminate discrimination against women by landlords, public housing providers and credit institutions and prioritize safe emergency shelters to women and children in humanitarian emergencies.

### **3.3 Barriers to employability**

Employment is the essential step towards economic independence. Most survivors of intimate partner violence, even if they were employed, risk to lose their jobs as a consequence of the abusive relationship. Moreover, due to the vital opportunity of financial independence employment creates, job loss undermines efforts to secure the safety of IPV survivors by increasing the likelihood that they will return to abusers. Therefore, job loss and the threat of job loss without an alternative income source can push an abused women back into a violent relationship, into poverty, or into homelessness by forcing her to quit her job or by creating circumstances under which she is fired.

On their way out of violence, intimate partner violence survivors face barriers to employability, in addition to employment stability, arising from the labour market dynamics, lack of childcare and unpaid work supports, workplace assistance and interventions to help survivors avoid losing their jobs. Furthermore, discrimination and stigma against IPV survivors by both employers

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<sup>243</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, (2020). *Guidelines for the Implementation of the Right to Adequate Housing*. Guideline No. 9 paras. 53-57. Retrieved from: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Housing/Pages/GuidelinesImplementation.aspx>

<sup>244</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, (2014). *Guiding principles on security of tenure for the urban poor*. Paras. 60-65. Retrieved from: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Housing/Pages/GuidingPrinciplesSecurityOfTenure.aspx>

and co-workers contributes to making their path towards an independent life free from violence even more oppressive and burdensome.

### 3.3.1 Labour market

The realities of the labour market appear to discourage women who are survivors of intimate partner violence from developing economic independence through gainful employment. Employment patterns of women in general are consistently and significantly characterized by part-time job, temporary work, work in small organizations, low job security, low pay, few social benefits, little or no union protection<sup>245</sup>. One explanation offered is that the labour market is tailored to cater to white males who are absolutely dedicated to their work and free of family or other obligations, thereby entrenching inequality regimes based on gender, class, and race<sup>246</sup>.

Employers lay off women who do not show up for work, even when this is due to their search for a shelter following an intimate partner violence incident or need to attend court hearings or to meet other related bureaucratic obligations<sup>247</sup>. Despite evidence of the high economic costs incurred by organizations due to IPV<sup>248</sup>, employers still view it as the victims' personal problem, rather than a social issue that requires the development of formal organizational policies to provide assistance to the survivors<sup>249</sup>. Thus, despite a growing awareness of the importance of workplace support for IPV survivors, current trends in labour market, work conditions and employers' perspectives appear to place additional barriers to economic independence among them.

Obtaining better insights into the dynamics of intimate partner violence within the context of the workplace would greatly benefit the field of social work and subsequently victims, especially female victims, because many victims may be dependent on their male or female batterers for financial security and obtaining and maintaining employment may be a critical factor in leaving their

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<sup>245</sup> Vosko L.F., MacDonald M., Campbell I. (2009). *Gender and the Contours of Precarious Employment*. (1<sup>st</sup> edition), London, Routledge, pp. 1-26. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203874424>

<sup>246</sup> Acker J. (2006). *Inequality regimes: Gender, class, and race in organizations*. *Gender & Society*, 20, pp. 441–464. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243206289499>

<sup>247</sup> Moe A.M., Bell M.P. (2004). *Abject Economics: The Effects of Battering and Violence on Women's Work and Employability*. *Violence Against Women*. Vol. 10(1), pp. 29-55. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801203256016>

<sup>248</sup> Swanberg J.E., Logan T., Macke C. (2005). *Intimate partner violence, employment, and the workplace: consequences and future directions*. *Trauma Violence Abuse*. Vol. 6(4), pp. 286-312. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838005280506>

<sup>249</sup> Swanberg J.E., Ojha M.U., Macke C. (2012). *State Employment Protection Statutes for Victims of Domestic Violence: Public Policy's Response to Domestic Violence as an Employment Matter*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. Vol. 27(3), pp. 587-619. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260511421668>

abusers. The intersection between victimization and the workplace is a delicate balance between economic survival and safety.

The International Labour Organisation passed the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 (No. 206), both of which address the issues of intimate partner violence at work. The convention states that ILO members “shall take appropriate measures to recognize effects of domestic violence and mitigate its impact in the world of work.”<sup>250</sup> It is important that survivors of intimate partner violence have a specific employment protection, with access to flexible work arrangements, anti-discrimination provisions, workplace gender-equality strategies and protection measures for workers’ physical safety at work. The characteristics of DV employment leave vary between jurisdictions with leave provisions leave.

Another important instrument of protection is the unemployment insurance. The unemployment insurance program is funded through taxes that employers pay based upon their employees’ wages.

### **3.3.2 Discrimination and stigma**

Survivors of intimate partner violence can face several challenges in the workplace. One such challenge is discrimination which, when experienced, can compound the harm of the original acts of violence. Although discrimination takes many forms, research suggests that it is common for women who have experienced intimate partner violence to be denied leave or flexible work arrangements to attend to violence-related matters, such as attending court or moving into a shelter; to have their employment terminated for violence-related reasons, including a drop in performance or attendance occasioned by intimate partner violence, or to be transferred. As a matter of fact, workplaces have failed to consider IPV a serious form of workplace violence. For this reason, few employers have taken the necessary steps to prevent IPV from spilling over into the workplace and to address the issue effectively when it does spill over to reduce its potential negative ramifications.

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<sup>250</sup> International Labour Office (2017). Ending violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work – Report V(1) and “C190 – Convention on Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)”. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C190](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C190)

Moreover, many workplaces have failed to consider how gender assumptions influence workplace practices, policies, and cultures. The mainstream view of waged work in the 20th century was that men were the paid workers and women, who were unpaid, met the needs of family members. According to this perspective, women's paid employment was a strain on the family and men's paid employment was the usual practice<sup>251</sup>. This perspective established an organizational norm which presumed that employees had few or any family responsibilities. As a result, this gendered perspective was the backdrop against which contemporary organizational policies and practices were created. In fact, some feminist theorists have argued that gender is integrated into the ongoing processes at work, including the organizational culture and norms<sup>252</sup>. Gendered assumptions have thus prevented organizations from developing workplace cultures that are responsive to female employees' work and family needs. IPV that traverses the workplace is an extreme form of work-family conflict that organizations have essentially ignored until recently<sup>253</sup>.

Women in general face barriers to employment (also known as a "glass ceiling"), which is further complicated for survivors of IPV. Discriminatory hiring practices, discrimination in the workplace, and stigmatized attitudes about intimate partner violence and homelessness all act as barriers to employment for many survivors. A glass ceiling still exists due to gender discrimination, which can impede survivors' success and job promotion, and results in a lower wage earned in comparison to men in the same job position<sup>254</sup>. As mentioned, glass ceilings can prevent women from gaining more leadership, responsibility, and overall success in their careers. The majority of survivors who access services find employment in non-benefit, low-skilled jobs, in part-time, temporary positions, with low wages. The type of jobs that most of their clients can readily access is often limited, and places women in non-standard and precarious employment. The type of employment available and accessible to a large number of survivors makes it very difficult to do so, as most cannot earn a living wage, and may have to take on multiple part-time jobs in order to make ends meet.

If a IPV survivor is employed, that violence may affect her work. It is common for abused women to be fired by employers due to "absences, workplace disruptions, performance problems, or

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<sup>251</sup> Acker J. (1989). *The Problem with Patriarchy*. *Sociology*. Vol. 23(2), pp. 235-240. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038589023002005>

<sup>252</sup> Idem (1990). *Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations*. *Gender & Society*. Vol. 4(2), pp. 139-158. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124390004002002>

<sup>253</sup> Swanberg, J.E. (2004). *Illuminating gendered organization assumptions: An important step in creating a family-friendly organization: A case study*. *Community, Work & Family*, 7(1), pp. 3-28. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1366880042000200271>

<sup>254</sup> Interval House (2016). Report on *Barriers to Employability and Employment for Women Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence*. pp. 3-16. Retrieved from: [www.intervalhouse.ca](http://www.intervalhouse.ca)

simple prejudice against victims<sup>255</sup>”. Some women may be fired simply because the employer learns she is a survivor of intimate partner violence and fears “the potential drama” that this violence may bring to the workplace. In fact, studies suggest that managers in businesses underestimate the likelihood that they are employing victims of domestic violence and overestimate the likelihood that employing victims will lead to violence in the workplace. Therefore, the support of co-workers and supervisors can be extremely important for victims struggling to end an abusive relationship. Workplaces can also be an ideal forum for helping victims know about intimate partner violence services that may be available in their communities.

Among the employees who did not tell someone at work about the abuse, the stigma associated with victimization, lack of trust, and fear may have played a role in not disclosing their victimization. These findings are consistent with previous research<sup>256</sup> that has suggested that employed survivors fear that disclosing IPV will result in the automatic loss of their jobs. Therefore, not disclosing their victimization out of the belief that IPV is a personal matter that is not to be shared at work. Although this belief is understandable, it may put the victim and her or his co-workers at risk of a potentially volatile situation should the batterer appear at work. This is an example of how the “ideal worker” expectation places employees and the people with whom they work at greater risk than if IPV victims, most often women, could openly disclose their situation without fearing that they will be perceived as “trouble employees.” These data highlight the importance of educating supervisors and employees, alike, about IPV and creating a workplace violence plan that incorporates the spill over of IPV.

### **3.3.3 Childcare resources and unpaid work**

Women who are survivors of intimate partner violence face a multitude employment barrier. The experience of violence hinders a woman’s ability to work directly when partners hide car keys or call excessively during work hours, and indirectly through the psychological consequences of

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<sup>255</sup> Widiss D.A. (2008). *Domestic Violence and the Workplace: The Explosion of State Legislation and the Need for a Comprehensive Strategy*. Brooklyn Law School, Legal Studies Paper No. 90. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1027726>

<sup>256</sup> Swanberg J.E., Logan T., Macke C. (2005), cit., pp. 286-312.

abuse<sup>257</sup>. Women who are subject to physical, psychological, and/or economic abuse by their intimate partner face additional challenges as mothers, due to the high cost of childcare and the economic consequences of leaving an abusive partner.

As a matter of fact, lack of childcare resources and all child-related needs is a serious challenge to employment for many survivors who are single, sole-support parents. Accessing childcare services, even with subsidies, is an unaffordable expense for many survivors. In addition, many childcare services operate within stipulated times that may not be conducive to the mother's job search or work schedule. Child-related needs may also be a barrier to employment for some survivors. This includes dealing with any health issues children have, attending doctor's visits, affording children's medication, accessing counselling services for children, getting children involved in extracurricular activities, dealing with child custody and visitation issues, and of course necessities such as providing food, shelter, and clothing for children. Lack of childcare can further result in restricted job search and/or employment hours, absenteeism at the workplace, and tardiness or needing to leave early or have flexible hours. Mothers often prioritize their children's needs ahead of their own, and they try to deal with their children's issues before focusing on their own goals, such as employment.

Research has suggested that when organizations offer workplace supports, such as training supervisors to be responsive to employees' family caregiving and personal concerns or providing flexible scheduling arrangements, employees are able to respond more effectively to their multiple responsibilities. The same organizational policies have been related to reduced job turnover and absenteeism and enhanced productivity. Despite the evidence that creating "family-friendly" workplaces is good for employees and employers, the majority of organizations have not integrated policies and practices into workplace cultures that would assist employees in meeting the often-conflicting demands of home and work<sup>258</sup>.

As previously mentioned, organizations still adhere to the workplace structures and gendered norms that were created in the early 20th century. As a result, work-family strain often ensues when employees attempt to respond to the multiple and often-conflicting demands of home and work. Thus, adhering to a gendered perspective encourages the continuation of the misnomer that what happens at home stays at home. Furthermore, the gendered perspective prevents organizations from creating

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<sup>257</sup> Swanberg J.E., Macke C. (2006). *Intimate Partner Violence and the Workplace. Consequences and Disclosure*. Journal of Women and Social Work Volume 21 Number 4, pp. 391-406. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109906292133>

<sup>258</sup> Roehling P.V., Roehling M.V., Moen P. (2001). *The Relationship Between Work-Life Policies and Practices and Employee Loyalty: A Life Course Perspective*. Journal of Family and Economic Issues, Vol. 22, pp. 141-170. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1016630229628>

work environments that are responsive to employees' diverse work, family, and personal responsibilities, including the responsibilities and needs of women who are victimized by their partners.

### **3.4 Minority populations**

It is important to note that in addition to all the existing barriers to accessing services that are experienced by all victims of abuse, the condition of abuse victims is greatly exacerbated if they are immigrants. They encounter difficulties such as limited host language skills, isolation from and contact with their relatives and friends, immigration status or uncertain legal statuses, and financial challenges; and they often feel trapped in abusive relationship because of these obstacles. Moreover, documentation, language, discrimination, and isolation barriers are not mutually exclusive, and frequently overlap, thus intensifying immigrant women's experiences with intimate partner violence<sup>259</sup>.

#### **3.4.1 Documentation**

Being undocumented, adds another layer to the complicated, expensive, and emotional process of leaving a domestically abusive environment. Immigrant women with documentation are often economically, socially, and psychologically dependent on their spouses and his family. Living as an immigrant without legal documentation dramatically exacerbates both that dependence on the partner and the extremely limited access to safety-securing resources. As a result, this condition increases their risk of experiencing intimate partner violence, which is further compounded by their equally restricted access to needed resources for increasing safety while in the relationship and when leaving the abusive partner. Thus, living as an immigrant without legal documentation dramatically

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<sup>259</sup> Menjivar C., Salcido O. (2002) *Immigrant Women and Domestic Violence: Common Experiences in Different Countries*. Gender and Society, Vol. 16(6), pp. 898-920. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124302237894>



exacerbates both that dependence on the partner and the extremely limited access to safety-securing resources<sup>260</sup>.

Immigrant women without documentation are at an even higher risk for violence than those with legal status. Those without documents among the most socially, economically, and legally marginalized in every society, and subsequently the most vulnerable. Their lack of documentation defines their experience and is a pivotal factor in their risk for intimate partner violence. More than cultural issues or language barriers, an individual's immigration status is emerging as "the most significant factor in determining how, or even if, domestic violence is addressed when it occurs in immigrant families"<sup>261</sup>.

Many immigrant women, both with and without legal status in their country of residence, have left their entire social support system behind in their country of origin, furthering their emotional, social, and psychological reliance on their partners. Abusers actively exploit this reliance and use it to additionally isolate women. The abuser's coercive control, that is the woman's limited language skills, and lack of knowledge of legal rights and services available for IPV survivors, serves to deepen her isolation as an immigrant woman<sup>262</sup>. Isolation techniques may include also restricting their contact with family in their country of origin, as well as prohibiting friendships with host country residents<sup>263</sup>.

Further exacerbating the barriers faced by abused immigrant women, both documented and undocumented women may lack information that legal recourse for intimate partner violence exists. Studies consistently report that immigrant and refugee women of all legal statuses who are abused are often completely unaware of the intimate partner violence services in their communities, or that laws exist that may protect them from abuse, especially as there frequently are few or no laws against IPV in their countries of origin<sup>264</sup>. Moreover, even if women are aware of the illegality of intimate partner violence in the country of residence, many of them, regardless of

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<sup>260</sup> Adams M.E., Campbell J. (2012). *Being Undocumented & Intimate Partner Violence (IPV): Multiple Vulnerabilities Through the Lens of Feminist Intersectionality*. *Women's Health and Urban Life*, Vol 11 (1), pg 15-34. Retrieved from: <http://hdl.handle.net/1807/32411>

<sup>261</sup> Earner I. (2010). *Double risk: Immigrant mothers, domestic violence, and public child welfare services in New York City*. *Evaluation & Program Planning*, 33(3), pp. 288-293. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2009.05.016>

<sup>262</sup> Glass N., Annan S.L., Bhandari T.B., Fishwick N. (2011). *Nursing Care of Immigrant & Rural Abused Women*. *Family Violence & Nursing Practice*, pp. 207-224. Retrieved from: <https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/socialwork/2>

<sup>263</sup> Raj A., Silverman J. (2002). *Violence Against Immigrant Women: The Roles of Culture, Context & Legal Immigrant Status on Intimate Partner Violence*. *Violence Against Women*, Vol. 8(3), pp. 367-398. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778010222183107>

<sup>264</sup> Moynihan B., Gaboury M.T., Onken K.J. (2008). *Undocumented and unprotected immigrant women & children in harm's way*. *Journal of Forensic Nursing*, Vol. 4(3), pp. 123-129. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-3938.2008.00020.x>

documentation status, do not seek help because of shame, stigma attached to abuse, fear of the abuser, and/or cultural expectations of maintaining familial harmony.

Another dramatic consequence is that without any form of identification, undocumented immigrant women are often unable to secure employment and, if employed, may not be able to keep any of their wages. Some undocumented women without legal work papers are simultaneously abused and/or exploited by their employer. Moreover, due to lack of recognition of credentials, they cannot find a job for which they have invested time and resources in education.

### 3.4.2 Language

In addition to the usual obstacles to leaving a violent relationship, IPV immigrant survivors face also the barriers posed by the language and the consequent difficulty of communication. Lack of host-language skills can further contribute to the disadvantages that many immigrant women dealing with intimate partner violence already experience in terms of accessing and communicating their needs to service providers<sup>265</sup>. They may be unable to communicate with the police, get medical care, learn about resources available to them in the community or negotiate the legal system to obtain an order for protection or apply for citizenship on their own. In fact, “language is a factor that impedes women from learning and accessing services in receiving communities” but it also impedes communicating their needs to these services.

Not speaking the host-language can act as a key barrier to integrating or accessing services. e importance of offering interpreter services to mitigate language barriers. They emphasized not only the importance of offering interpreter services, but also making sure that the interpreters are easily accessible, certified and preferably trained with regards to violence against women. However, even in cases where interpreters are available, “the information given to a police officer may be filtered and distorted by an interpreter who may even favour the aggressor.”<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Ahmadzai M., Stewart C.C., Sethi B. (2016). *A Study on Visible Minority Immigrant Women's Experiences with Domestic Violence*. Open Journal of Social Sciences, Vol. 4(5), pp. 269-286. Retrieved from: <http://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2016.45030>

<sup>266</sup> Menjivar C., Salcido O. (2002), cit., pp. 898-920.

Furthermore, IPV perpetrators frequently rely on women with limited host-language skills to control their behaviour. As a result, they feel themselves even more vulnerable and trapped in an abusive condition. For example, perpetrators who possess greater host-language skills might silence their abused partners by serving as the family's sole communicator in that language. Moreover, immigrant women's social relationships are often confined to those who share their language. Lack of linguistic skills thus contributes to the isolation of immigrant women, in addition to their impossibility to learn the host-language.<sup>267</sup>

For immigrant women, the language barrier exacerbates the difficulty of escaping an abusive relationship and trying to rebuild an economic independence. Frequently they are pre-literate in their own language, and this inability to read, combined with other language problems, reinforces barriers to accessing communication. Lack of fluency in the mainstream language inhibits access to information, resources, and services available through the justice and health care systems. Many immigrant women, for example, do not know that they can obtain protection orders even if they continue to live with their abusers, can remove the abuser from the family home, or can receive assistance from domestic violence groups even if they do not move to a shelter. They are also often unaware that if they leave the home, they may be eligible for child support and financial assistance from the state.

### **3.4.3 Discrimination and isolation**

Studies of intimate partner violence have demonstrated that despite differences in language, religion, and custom, violence against women occur at all social and economic levels. However, there has been a common tendency to stereotype IPV in some ethnic groups as an inherent part of their cultural repertoire<sup>268</sup>. "Specific cases are not conceptualized as reflecting individual behaviour; instead, entire groups are stereotyped<sup>269</sup>", with the result of further intensifying discrimination against specific ethnic groups.

Isolation is another factor that can affect immigrant women experiencing DV and hinder them from seeking help. Immigrant women experience an additional layer of vulnerability because these "women live within two often conflicting cultures and within a context in which they are isolated and

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<sup>267</sup> Erez E. (2000). *Immigration, Culture Conflict and Domestic Violence/Woman Battering*. Crime Prevention and Community Safety, Vol. 2(1), pp. 27–36. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.cpcs.8140043>

<sup>268</sup> Menjivar C., Salcido O. (2002), cit., p. 901.

<sup>269</sup> Sokoloff N.J., Dupont I. (2005) *Domestic Violence at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender: Challenges and Contributions to Understanding Violence against Marginalized Women in Diverse Communities*. Violence against Women, Vol. 11(1), pp. 38-64. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801204271476>

viewed as other.<sup>270</sup>” The experience of moving to a new country can be an isolating one, even without the domestic abuse, simply due to being viewed as other. In other words, social isolation can increase immigrant women’s vulnerability to not only experiencing abuse but can also make leaving an abusive relationship more difficult. Therefore, not only do their spouses directly isolate them by preventing their contact with family, friends, and strangers, but both women also experience isolation as a result of immigrating. Both women lived far away from their families and had no immediate support network.

Isolation may occur more easily for immigrant women as many have left behind families and loved ones. They enter a foreign environment where they may not know the language, culture, or physical geographic area and may recognize only a few familiar faces. In these situations, it is easier for men to control women’s lives both emotionally and physically. Due to isolation, men are better able to gain sole control over resources that could offer legal, financial, and/or emotional support to the women. And conflicts often arise when women establish links in their communities.

Often, when a woman is involved in an abusive relationship, social service providers expect her to leave her home and ties to receive assistance at a shelter. However, if she leaves the abusive partner, she runs the risk of being ostracized by her family because she left and thus could not possibly be a “good wife,” and she feels profoundly guilty. These women face the difficulty of challenging traditional gender structures, where they usually hold a lower status, while at the same time trying to make use of the options that have become available to them through social service providers. Other factors may compound this lack of support, as when the abusive partner is the primary source of income for the extended family or when social norms exist that encourage women to sacrifice themselves for the sake of other family members<sup>271</sup>.

Additionally, women refugees may lack the critical social support systems they are accustomed to and rely on to maintain mental, emotional, social, and potentially physical health. Some refugee women may find themselves isolated particularly if they are single parents, do not work outside the home, or do not have other women from their ethnic or language group in proximity.<sup>272</sup> Isolation from larger society can also limit language acquisition, which in turn limits availability of jobs, income, and access to necessary health and wellness services

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<sup>270</sup> Raj A., Silverman J. (2002), cit., pp. 367-398.

<sup>271</sup> Menjívar C., Salcido O. (2002), cit., pp. 898-920.

<sup>272</sup> Saksena J., McMorrow S. (2021). *At the intersection of gender and discrimination: Experiences of Congolese refugee women with social and cultural integration in the United States*. Women’s Studies International Forum 88. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2021.102517>

The high rate of this type of violence seen in immigrant populations is not a function of culture, so much as it is a function of socioeconomic marginalization. Thus, while IPV may appear more prevalent in immigrant populations for “culturally innate” reasons, research shows that differences in IPV by race and ethnicity often decrease or disappear when socioeconomic status is included in the analysis.

Immigrant survivors of intimate partner violence are likely to face a lack of social and family support, language barriers, and unfamiliarity with the legal system in society. Immigrant women intending to leave their marriage might give up because of their religious beliefs, social biases, fear, and children. Also, immigrant women might believe that IPV is a private family matter and hesitate to share their difficulties with their family members or seek outside help.

## Chapter 4

### Italian approaches towards economic independence within intimate partner violence

#### 4.1 The Italian situation

According to Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), 31.5 per cent (6,788,000) of Italian women between the ages of 16 and 70 have been victims of physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. Almost half of these violent experiences were caused by a partner or former partner<sup>273</sup>.

At the international level, on 10 June 1985, Italy ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)<sup>274</sup> adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly. Then, Italy has signed and ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2013<sup>275</sup>, which has been in force since 2014. At the national level, domestic violence is criminalised under a specific offence, which also covers intimate partner relationships (Article 572 of the Penal Code). Several legislative reforms, including the Law No. 69 of 19 July 2019 (known as the Red Code) have led to the development of a solid legislative framework in line with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention on the civil and criminal law remedies for victims of violence<sup>276</sup>.

Gender stereotypes, which predetermine the roles of men and women in society, are deeply rooted.<sup>277</sup> Women carry a heavy burden in terms of household care, while the contribution of men thereto is amongst the lowest in the world<sup>278</sup>. As a result, Female unemployment rates are higher than

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<sup>273</sup> ISTAT (2021). Available at: [www.istat.it](http://www.istat.it)

<sup>274</sup> Law 14 March 1985 n. 132. *Ratifica ed Esecuzione della Convenzione sull'eliminazione di ogni forma di discriminazione nei confronti della donna*, adopted in New York on 18 December 1979.

<sup>275</sup> Law 27 June 2013, n. 77. *Ratifica ed Esecuzione della Convenzione del Consiglio d'Europa sulla prevenzione e la lotta contro la violenza nei confronti delle donne e la violenza domestica*, adopted in Istanbul on 11 May 2011.

<sup>276</sup> GREVIO (2019). *Baseline Evaluation Report Italy*. Retrieved from: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/home>

<sup>277</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2011). *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Republic of Italy*, 2 August 2011, paras. 151-152. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4eeb4ba12.html>

<sup>278</sup> ISTAT (2008). *Work life balance*. pp. 22-23. Retrieved from: [https://www.istat.it/it/files/2019/12/chap3\\_Work\\_and\\_life\\_balance.pdf](https://www.istat.it/it/files/2019/12/chap3_Work_and_life_balance.pdf)

male rates, career advancement is difficult, and women are over-represented in low-paid and precarious jobs.

#### 4.1.1 Intimate Partner Violence in Italy

According to the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), in Italy 31,5 per cent of women have experienced violence in their lifetime. The most serious forms of violence are perpetrated by partners or ex-partners, relatives, or friends. Rapes and sexual violence were committed in 62.7 per cent of cases by partners<sup>279</sup>. 31,5 per cent of women have experienced some form of violence in their life: 20.2 per cent (4 million 353 thousand) suffered physical violence, 21 per cent (4 million 520 thousand) sexual violence, 5.4 per cent (1 million 157 thousand) the most serious forms of sexual violence such as rape (652 thousand) and attempted rape (746 thousand). 13.6 per cent of women (2 million 800 thousand) experienced physical or sexual violence from partners or ex-partners, 5.2 per cent (855 thousand) from current partners and 18.9 per cent (2 million 44 thousand) from ex-partners. The majority of women who had a violent partner in the past left the partner because of the violence (68.6 per cent). In particular, for 41.7 per cent it was the main reason for breaking off the relationship, for 26.8 per cent it was an important element of the decision.

Furthermore, according to the 2019 Italian National Institute of Statistics Report on women victims of homicide, of the 111 women killed in 2019, 88.3 per cent were killed by a known person. Specifically, 49.5 per cent of the cases by the current partner, corresponding to 55 women, 11.7 per cent, by the previous partner, corresponding to 13 women, in 22.5 per cent of the cases (25 women) by a family member (including children and parents) and in 4.5 per cent of the cases by another person they knew (friends, colleagues, etc.) (5 women). In more than half of the cases, women were killed by their current or previous partner and to a greater extent than in previous years: 61.3 per cent of women killed in 2019, 54.9 per cent in 2018 and 54.7 per cent in 2014<sup>280</sup>. In the family/affective sphere, the number of offences fell in 2020, with 144 incidents compared to 151 in the previous year (-5 per cent). The number of women killed in the family/affective sphere rose from 94 in 2019 to 99 in 2020, an increase of 5 per cent. In contrast to the decrease of homicides in family/affective settings, the incidence of female victims increases (from 62 per cent in 2019 to 69 per cent in 2020), while the

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<sup>279</sup> ISTAT (2021) Available at: [www.istat.it](http://www.istat.it)

<sup>280</sup> ISTAT (2019) *Report Autori e Vittime di Omicidio, anni 2018-2019*. Retrieved from: <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/253296>

incidence of women killed in the family/affective sphere by partners and ex-partners decreases (from 72 per cent to 68 per cent)<sup>281</sup>.

Regarding 2021, for the first quarter of the year show that the number of valid calls received by the anti-violence number 1522 (promoted and managed by the Department for Equal Opportunities at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers<sup>282</sup>) both by phone and via chat increased compared to the same period in 2020: 7,974 valid calls and 4,310 victims (+38.8 per cent compared to the first quarter of 2020). In 2020, however, the peak of calls had been recorded in the second quarter (12,942 valid calls)<sup>283</sup>.

Concerning Anti-violence Centres, operated by non-governmental organizations and financed and supported by local government (Regions or Municipalities), in the year 2019, a total of 20,432 women were welcomed with an increase, compared to 2018 (19,715), of 717 contacts (3.6 per cent). Among these, 14,431 are "new" women (year 2018: 15,456). In the year 2020 a total of 20,015 women were received with a slight decrease, compared to 2019, of 417 contacts, or 2 per cent, of which 13,390 are "new" women. Compared to 2019 there has been a decrease of 1,041 new contacts, equal to 7.2 per cent, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and restrictions in 72.3 per cent of cases the violence is exercised by a man in a relationship with the woman<sup>284</sup>. With regard to the economic situation of women who were welcomed in an Anti-violence Centre, one in three women have zero income (32.9 per cent) and less than 40 per cent have a secure income<sup>285</sup>.

#### 4.1.2 Italian Legislation

Abuse and violence against family members and cohabitants is accounted for by article 572 of the Italian Criminal Code, which punishes the perpetrator of these crimes with an imprisonment

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<sup>281</sup> Ministry of the Interior, Department of Public Security, Central Directorate of Criminal Police, Criminal Analysis Service (2021). *8<sup>th</sup> March – Women victims of violence*. Retrieved from: [https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2021-03/report\\_2021\\_-\\_donne\\_vittime\\_di\\_violenza.pdf](https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2021-03/report_2021_-_donne_vittime_di_violenza.pdf)

<sup>282</sup> Number 1522 was launched in 2006 by the Department for Equal Opportunities with the aim of developing a broad system of action for the emergence and contrast of the phenomenon of intra and extra-family violence to the detriment of women. In 2009, with the entry into force of the Law 38/2009 amended in 2013 on persecutory acts, it also started support action for stalking victims.

<sup>283</sup> ISTAT (2021). *Gender-based violence in the time of Covid-19: calls to the 1522 helpline*. Retrieved from: <https://www.istat.it/en/archivio/245001>

<sup>284</sup> D.i.Re (2020). *Report Annuale Rilevazione Dati 2020*, pp. 1-7. Retrieved from: <https://www.direcontrolaviolenza.it/pubblicazioni/>

<sup>285</sup> Ivi, p. 8



from 2 to 6 years: “Anyone who abuses a person in the family or in any case cohabiting, or a person subjected to his authority or entrusted to him for reasons of education, care, supervision or custody, or for professional reasons”<sup>286</sup>.

The crime of sexual violence, introduced by the Law of 15 February 1996 no. 66 “Rules against sexual violence”<sup>287</sup>, is regulated by Article 609 bis of the Italian Criminal Code which states that “anyone who violently or threatens or through the abuse of authority forces someone to perform or undergo sexual acts is punished with imprisonment from five to ten years”<sup>288</sup>. Law No. 66 of 1996 has redefined the sexual sphere as a right of the person in terms of free expression of their sexuality, so that in order to be criminal the conduct must now be assessed in relation to respect due to the person and an attitude to offend the freedom of determination of the victim. Moreover, the new law prescribes free legal aid for the victim regardless of their income.

Law of 4 April 2001 No. 154, “Domestic violence and protective measures” introduces new measures to combat domestic violence with the removal of violent family members<sup>289</sup>. In the same year, laws No. 60 and No. 134 of 29 March 2001 on legal aid for women without financial means who have been raped and/or mistreated were also approved, a fundamental tool to defend them and assert their rights, in collaboration with anti-violence centres and courts<sup>290</sup>.

Law of 23 April 2009 No. 38<sup>291</sup> regulates urgent measures on public security and against sexual violence, as well as on stalking. After introducing in the Criminal Code art. 612 bis (stalking), the 2009 law includes the new provision of a restraining order, that prohibits the perpetrator from approaching the victim ex art. 282-ter Criminal Procedure Code, with the aim of protecting victims of stalking<sup>292</sup>.

Italy has then taken a historic step in combating gender-based violence with Law No. 77 of 27 June 2013, approving the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, drawn up on 11 May 2011. The guidelines set out in the Convention are in fact the track and the lighthouse for launching effective measures, at national level, to prevent and combat this phenomenon.

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<sup>286</sup> Italian Criminal Code, art. 572

<sup>287</sup> Law of 15 February 1996 no. 66 *Rules against sexual violence*.

<sup>288</sup> Italian Criminal Code, Art. 609-bis

<sup>289</sup> Law No. 154 of 4 April 2001

<sup>290</sup> Laws No. 60 and 134 of 29 March 2001

<sup>291</sup> Former decree No. 11 of 23 February 2009

<sup>292</sup> A crime punished by art. 612 bis Criminal Code.

Law no. 119 of 15 October 2013 converting into law contains urgent provisions on security and for combating gender violence<sup>293</sup>. It introduced more severe penalties against persecutory acts committed by the separated spouse (even if *de facto*), or a person who is or has been linked to the victim by an emotional relationship. More severe penalties are also envisaged for the crimes against life and individual safety that are committed in the presence of or against a minor. Furthermore, Law No 119 of 15 October 2013 converting Decree Law No 93 of 14 August 2013 strengthened the “warning” (*ammonimento*) and introduced new aggravating circumstances. In particular, the penalty is increased if children under 18 years of age witness violence, as well as if the victim is in a particularly vulnerable situation (if pregnant). Also, the particularly close relationship between the victim and the perpetrator was introduced as an aggravating circumstance (e.g., if the perpetrator is the victim’s spouse or partner, or non-cohabiting partner). The law ensures greater protection for victims in relation to hearings and that information is provided to victims about support services existing in the local area. Furthermore, the law also provided for the granting of legal aid for women victims of domestic violence whose income exceeds the income limits fixed by the national legislation<sup>294</sup>.

On 19<sup>th</sup> of July 2019, the Italian legislation has modified the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure by including new elements in relation to domestic and gender violence. Law No. 69 (the so-called Red Code) makes the following changes to the Criminal Code. Article 4(1) adds article 387-*bis* to the Criminal Code, punishing those who violate temporary removal orders from the family home or the prohibition against approaching places frequented by the injured person with six months to three years of imprisonment<sup>295</sup>. Article 7(1) adds article 558-*bis* to the Criminal Code, to introduce the new crime of compelling a person to contract marriage or a civil union through violence or threat or inducing a person to do so owing to their vulnerability. Offenders are punishable by one to five years’ imprisonment, with increased penalties when the victim is 18 years of age or younger<sup>296</sup>. Article 9(2) amends article 572 of the Criminal Code, increasing the punishment for mistreating a family member; a cohabiting person; or a person subjected to the perpetrator’s authority or entrusted to him/her by reason of education, instruction, care, oversight, custody, or the performance of a profession or art to three to seven years’ imprisonment. The penalty is increased by half if the offense

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<sup>293</sup> Law No. 119 of 15 October 2013. *Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 14 agosto 2013, n. 93, recante disposizioni urgenti in materia di sicurezza e per il contrasto della violenza di genere, nonché in tema di protezione civile e di commissariamento delle province.*

<sup>294</sup> Law No. 119 of 15 October 2013 converting Decree Law No. 93 of 14 August 2013

<sup>295</sup> Italian Criminal Code, art. 387-*bis*: “Whoever infringes obligations or prohibitions of a supervision measure shall be punished with imprisonment from six months to three years. This sanction also operates in the event of restraining orders concerning family home”

<sup>296</sup> *Ivi*, art. 558-*bis*

is committed in the presence of or injures a minor, pregnant women, or disabled person, or if weapons are used. Article 10(1) adds article 612-*ter* to the Criminal Code to criminalize the unlawful dissemination, sale, or publication of sexually explicit images or videos of a person without the person's consent, to harm the person. Offenders are punishable by imprisonment from one to six years and a fine, with increased penalties when the crime is committed by the spouse, even if divorced or separated, or by those who have been sentimentally connected with the offended person, or when the offense is committed through computer or electronic means<sup>297</sup>. Article 12(1) adds article 583-*quinqüies* to the Criminal Code, punishing someone who causes permanent deformation or disfigurement of a person's face with eight to fourteen years' imprisonment<sup>298</sup>.

The Council of Ministers gave the approval to the draft law "for preventing and combating the phenomenon of violence against women and domestic violence". The text approved by the Government on 3 December 2021 contains protection and prevention measures against violence against women, with particular attention to the domestic sphere and cohabitation relationships, the vulnerability of victims and the specific risks of recurrence and multiple offences. The text proposes amendments to the penal code, criminal procedure and anti-mafia laws and prevention measures. The aim is to strengthen crime prevention and victim protection from the first moment of reporting<sup>299</sup>. The new bill, which seeks to address gaps in Italy's existing legislation tackling domestic abuse and violence against women, is centred around the pillars of "protection" and "prevention", said Justice Minister Ms. Marta Cartabia. Among the most important changes is the possibility for magistrates to proceed *ex officio* in certain specific cases and the prospect of immediate arrest for threats, violence, and stalking.

However, the country is still lacking an organic law on violence against women at the national level, and the regulations at the regional levels are fragmented and heterogeneous<sup>300</sup>. In the recent years, there has been a willingness to regulate the system of services supporting women, through the adoption of National Action Plans and the approval of the so-called "Agreement between State and Regions on minimum requirements for anti-violence centres (AVCs) and shelters" in 2014<sup>301</sup>.

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<sup>297</sup> Italian Criminal Code, art. 612-*ter*

<sup>298</sup> Ivi, art. 583-*quinqüies*

<sup>299</sup> Draft Law (DDL) of 3 December 2021 for the prevention and combating of violence against women and domestic violence.

<sup>300</sup> Virgilio M. (2017). *Contrastare le violenze maschili contro le donne: politiche del diritto e libertà femminile*. In Babini V. (a cura di) (2017) *Lasciatele vivere. Voci sulla violenza contro le donne*, Bologna, Pendragon. pp. 67-76.

<sup>301</sup> Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers (D.P.C.M.) 27 November 2014.

### 4.1.3 Gender equality

Despite articles 37 and 51 of the Constitution of the Italian Republic, which entrench the principle of gender equality<sup>302</sup>, women are underrepresented in the public and private employment spheres, whether at the national, regional, or local levels<sup>303</sup>. In addition, article 117 states that “regional laws shall remove all obstacles which prevent the full equality of men and women in social, cultural, and economic life, and shall promote equal access of men and women to elective office.”<sup>304</sup> However, women continue to earn less than men, and the government has not enacted yet any measure to try to overcome the gender pay gap. According to the Italian National Institute of Statistics, in 2019, the female employment rate was 50,1 per cent, while the average in the EU-27 was 63 per cent (age 15-64); Italy is among the EU countries with the lowest employment rate of young women in the 15-24 age group. The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the employment situation of all women, especially young women without permanent contracts. The fall in female employment is greater than that of men and this trend is expected to continue for both female employees and entrepreneurs in the future according to the ISTAT data and projections provided at a hearing in parliament, given that the majority of women have businesses and/or work in the sectors most negatively affected by the consequences of COVID-19. In 2019, Italy was the penultimate EU country in terms of the number of workers in the welfare sector (education, health, assistance, and public administration). Indeed, over the last 30 years Italy has structurally reduced investment in these sectors, which are the ones where women are more represented than others. The continued lack of investment has created labour shortages and led to a situation where the reduced services get compensated by services provided informally and by families.

The Gender Equality Index is a tool to measure the progress of gender equality in the EU, developed by the European Institution of Gender Equality. With 63.8 out of 100 points, Italy in 2020 ranks 14<sup>th</sup> in the EU on the Gender Equality Index. Its score is 4.2 points below the EU’s score. As a matter of fact, Italy was one of 14 countries warned by the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) about noncompliance with the right to equal pay and equal opportunities. Since 2018, Italy’s

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<sup>302</sup> Constitution of the Italian Republic (1947). Art. 37 “Working women have the same rights and are entitled to equal pay for equal work. Working conditions must allow women to fulfil their essential role in the family and ensure specific appropriate protection for the mother and child.” And art. 51 “All citizens of either sex are eligible for public offices and for elective positions on equal terms, according to the conditions established by law. To this end, the Republic shall adopt specific measures to promote equal opportunities between women and men.”

<sup>303</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2011). *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Republic of Italy*, para. 32.

<sup>304</sup> Constitution of the Italian Republic (1947). Art. 117

score has shown no change (only + 0.3 points) and its ranking has dropped by one place<sup>305</sup>. Italy's performance in the domain of work scores 63.7 points and consistently ranks last among all EU Member States.

Gender gaps in the labour market are still large. Female employment rates remain low, especially in Southern Italy and in general for women with low education. Lack of services for children and above all for the elderly combined with rigid work arrangements make it hard to reconcile work and family life. Female unemployment rates are higher than male rates; career progress is difficult; and women are over-represented in atypical and precarious jobs. Two kinds of measures to improve women's employment have been mainly envisaged: provision of childcare services and incentives (of various amount and length) for employers who hire women. The gender pay gap is one of the lowest in the EU (5.8 per cent): in 2020, women in Italy earned annually about 3.1 thousand euros less than men. The low level is due to the prevalence of highly educated women in the female labour force and a strong system of collective bargaining where gender is not considered. The reform of the pension system has raised the retirement age to 66 years for all men and women, in both the public and the private sector. However, no provision is envisaged for rebalancing the huge disparities which exist in terms of income between retired men and women.

While the full equality between men and women is recognised in the Italian Constitution, women *de facto* continue to earn less than men. Wage differences also have a major impact on women's choices forcing them to choose between the private and the professional sphere, choosing a part time job or staying home if their partner earns more (as it is usually the case.) The difficulty of women's participation in the labour market remains closely related to family responsibilities. Many young women, even when with high levels of education, are confined to low-quality and precarious jobs, something that prevents and hampers long-term life strategies and choices, including motherhood. A law aimed to end the gender pay gap, with rewarding and penalty mechanisms for businesses, is now under discussion in the parliament.

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<sup>305</sup> EIGE (2021). *Gender Equality Index*. Retrieved from: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/IT>

## 4.2 National Policies

The Department for Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers is the office of the Italian Government responsible for coordinating regulatory and administrative initiatives in all matters relating to the design and implementation of equal opportunities policies<sup>306</sup>. The department may be headed by a minister without portfolio. Since the Draghi government took office on 13 February 2021, the current Minister for Equal Opportunities is Elena Bonetti, who is also in charge of family policies. In 2006, the Code of equal opportunities between men and women was approved, pursuant to Article 6 of Law No 246 of 28 November 2005, which came into force the same year<sup>307</sup>.

The Department of Equal Opportunities has so far approved three national strategic plans on male violence against women: the Extraordinary action plan against sexual and gender-based violence 2015-2017, the National strategic plan on male violence against women 2017-2020 and the National strategic plan on male violence against women 2021-2023.

On 3 November 2021, the new Strategic Plan on male violence against women was approved. In continuity with the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan, it is divided into Axes, in line with the Istanbul Convention: Prevention, Protection and Support, Prosecution and Punishment, Assistance and Promotion. Each Axis is associated with specific Priorities, which address the most significant dimensions of male violence against women. The Plan is the result of a shared work, which has seen the involvement of the National Steering Committee (Central Administrations, Regions, and local autonomies), the Social Partners and the main associations active in the field of prevention and fight against gender-based violence. The Plan intends to provide adequate responses to the different forms of violence against women through a wide range of measures, such as prevention, protection of victims, training and education of operators, information and awareness-raising of the community, interventions on men perpetrators of violence, protection of migrant women and victims of multiple discrimination, and promotion of working, economic and housing autonomy of victims. In particular, Priority 2.1 concerns interventions foreseen in the support and reintegration pathways, both for the emergency phase and in favouring job and housing integration and empowerment in the pathway out

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<sup>306</sup> The Department for Equal Opportunities was established by the Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers (D.P.C.M.) No. 405 of 28 October 1997

<sup>307</sup> Legislative Decree No.198 of 11 April 2006

of violence. Moreover, Priority 2.2 deals with the activation of economic, financial, labour and housing empowerment paths<sup>308</sup>.

Fund for policies related to rights and equal opportunities was established at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers<sup>309</sup>. It was specifically increased with appropriations tied to the financing of the plan against gender-based violence, amounting to 10 million euros in 2013, based on the so-called Femicide Law no. 119 of 2013<sup>310</sup> and for a further 10 million for each of the following three years, thanks to the 2014 Stability Law<sup>311</sup>. Over time, the fund has been increased on the basis of individual provisions within the financial manoeuvres or through other interventions including, recently, the so-called Decreto Rilancio with art. 105-bis "Fund for freedom income for women victims of violence"<sup>312</sup>. Within this Fund, 13 million euros are allocated to the regions to finance, among others, the training of health and social care personnel; the employment of women victims of violence; independent housing for women victims of violence; the updating of regional observatories to bring their operation into line with the national database on the phenomenon of violence; the employment of women victims of violence. Moreover, 10 million euros, through a public notice, for six types of projects concerning, among others, job placement for women victims of violence, support for women prisoners who have suffered violence, treatment programmes for men perpetrators of violence.

#### 4.2.1 National Housing policy

Italy is the country with the highest percentage of property owners in Europe, but rents and purchase prices are extremely high. Although public housing is not expressly mentioned in Article 117 of the Italian Constitution<sup>313</sup>, following the reform of Title V of Part II of the Constitution, it can be reclassified, on the one hand, as part of the social policies for which the Region is responsible and, on the other hand, as part of the "territorial government", which is a shared competence.

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<sup>308</sup> Presidency of the Council of Ministers – Department of Equal Opportunities (2021). *National Strategic Plan on male violence against women 2021-2023*. Protection and Support Axis, pp. 35-36.

<sup>309</sup> Art. 19 of Decree-Law 223/2006

<sup>310</sup> Decree-Law No. 93 of 14 August 2013. *Disposizioni urgenti in materia di sicurezza e per il contrasto della violenza di genere, nonché in tema di protezione civile e di commissariamento delle province*. Art. 5, para. 4

<sup>311</sup> Law No. 147 of 27 December 2013. *Disposizioni per la formazione del bilancio annuale e pluriennale dello Stato* (Legge di stabilità 2014)

<sup>312</sup> Decree-Law No. 34 of 19 May 2020. *Misure urgenti in materia di salute, sostegno al lavoro e all'economia, nonché di politiche sociali connesse all'emergenza epidemiologica da COVID-19*. Art. 105-bis.

<sup>313</sup> Constitution of the Italian Republic (1947). Art. 117 enumerates the subjects on which the State has the legislative power. The Regions have legislative powers in all subject matters that are not expressly covered by State legislation.

At the national level, housing needs, which are the subject of housing policies, do not enjoy express constitutional protection in the same way as other rights such as the right to health (Art. 32) or the right to work (Art. 35), although constitutional case law has recognised their value as a social right pertaining to the dignity and life of every person<sup>314</sup>. Thus, although it is financially "conditioned", it has not obtained, as has happened instead for the right to health, "a parameterization in terms of essential levels of services to be guaranteed throughout the national territory" while, "at the European level, the right to housing has a decidedly stronger connotation, falling fully within the sphere of fundamental rights, instrumental to the pursuit of a decent standard of living, as well as to the fight against inequalities, discrimination and exclusion"<sup>315</sup>.

In order to address the difficulties encountered by the citizens in enjoying their right to housing, an important fund has been established. Fondo nazionale di sostegno per l'accesso alle abitazioni in locazione is an income support measure for the most vulnerable income support measure for the weaker social categories, consisting in the disbursement of a partial for the payment of rent to tenants who, despite meeting the requirements, are unable to access the public housing system. The investigation, which focused on the activities carried out by the relevant Division of the General Directorate for Housing Conditions of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, brought to light a number of critical issues related, inter alia, to the timing and preparatory activities for the adoption of the annual decrees for the allocation to the regions of the resources allocated by the budget law, as well as to the unsatisfactory organisation of the monitoring activities entrusted by the rules to the central administration, which is also responsible for coordinating and guiding the activities carried out at territorial level for the use of State Funds.

Furthermore, an important element of housing policy, social housing, has been developed in Italy since 2008 as a result of the Piano Casa<sup>316</sup> (Housing Plan) and provides new forms of financing and public-private partnerships compared to the old system of subsidised and subsidised housing. It is a new form of public-private intervention aimed at the intermediate group of households that are "disadvantaged" because they are unable to afford a market rent but are not so disadvantaged that they are able to access public housing. An official definition of social housing in Italy was provided in 2008 by the ministerial decree 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2008, precisely, "mainly dwellings rented on a permanent

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<sup>314</sup> *Ex plurimis* Constitutional Court judgement No. 106 of 24 May 2018, No. 28 of 4 February 2003, and No. 520 of 21 November 2000.

<sup>315</sup> Corte dei Conti, Sezione centrale di controllo sulla gestione delle amministrazioni dello Stato (2020). *I Fondi per il sostegno all'abitazione in locazione per le categorie sociali deboli* (2014-2020), Resolution of 3 August 2020, No. 9/2020/G, p. 24.

<sup>316</sup> The national housing plan, the so-called Piano Casa, was introduced by Article 11 of Decree-Law 112/2008, with the aim of "guaranteeing throughout the national territory the minimum essential levels of housing requirements for the full development of the human person".



basis; also to be considered as social housing are dwellings built or rehabilitated through public and private contribution or with the use of public funding, rented for at least eight years and also sold at affordable price, with the goal of achieving a social mix.”<sup>317</sup> It provided for a series of measures aimed at increasing the housing stock, both through new buildings and the renovation of existing ones, to be carried out with the involvement of public and private capital, intended for disadvantaged social categories. The law also identifies the principle of social cohesion and states that the aim of social housing is reducing housing distress and offering housing opportunities to families and people who cannot access free market housing. Regions are responsible for defining requirements for accessing social housing, as well as rules for setting rents.

To this purpose, a fund was created, the Fondo investimenti per l'abitare, managed by Cassa Depositi e Prestiti. European contributions, in the form of structural funds and other financial instruments, and loans from the European Investment Bank (EIB) also finance social housing initiatives. Italy, however, is a country with a small social housing stock (approx. 2-9 per cent of total housing stock)<sup>318</sup>.

Regarding housing policy and housing independence for women survivors of intimate partner violence, the National Strategic Plan on male violence against women 2021-2023 aims to systematise actions in favour of women victims of violence in all its different forms, with the provision of support measures for women, which must necessarily be flanked by systemic actions on transversal areas, such as reintegration into employment and housing autonomy. Also, the includes pathways to housing autonomy through the implementation and differentiation of the reception network, with second autonomy and co-housing, and through actions supporting the possibility of including, with specific priorities, women coming out of violence in the rankings for access to public housing stock<sup>319</sup>.

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<sup>317</sup> Ministero delle Infrastrutture, Decree of 22 April 2008. *Definizione di alloggio sociale ai fini dell'esenzione dall'obbligo di notifica degli aiuti di Stato, ai sensi degli articoli 87 e 88 del Trattato istitutivo della Comunità europea*. Art. 1

<sup>318</sup> OECD (2020). *Social housing: A key part of past and future housing policy*. Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Policy Briefs, OECD Paris. Retrieved from: <http://oe.cd/social-housing-2020>

<sup>319</sup> Presidency of Council of Ministers, Department of Equal Opportunities (2021). *Piano Strategico Nazionale sulla Violenza Maschile contro le Donne 2021-2023*. P. 37

#### 4.2.2 Economic support: Reddito di Libertà and Microcredito di Libertà

Article 18 of the Istanbul Convention, ratified by Italy in 2013, states that “Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to protect all victims from any further acts of violence<sup>320</sup>” and it also requires specialist support services to aim at the empowerment and economic independence of women victims of violence<sup>321</sup>. In 2006 the Italian legislator has first established and then regulated a fund (Fondo per le Politiche relative ai Diritti e alle Pari Opportunità) for women who are survivors of violence, aimed at promoting their economic emancipation and independence<sup>322</sup>. for the financing of the Plan, increase the allocation of the the Fund for Rights and Equal Opportunities policies by 5 million euros per year from 2022 onwards: resources are allocated to both national and regional actions<sup>323</sup>. In addition to this funding, the draft law further increases, for 2022 5 million euros to interventions to foster economic independence, self-reliance, and empowerment of women victims of violence in poverty condition<sup>324</sup>.

On 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020 a new measure aimed at supporting economic independence of intimate partner violence survivors was developed. “Reddito di Libertà” (Freedom Income) consists of a financial contribution to women victims of violence, with or without minor children, who have addresses to an anti-violence centre, recognised by the regions and by social services in their pathways out of violence, in order to contribute to support their autonomy<sup>325</sup>. This measure, aimed at containing the serious economic effects resulting from the epidemiological emergency from COVID-19, in particular with regard to women in a more vulnerable condition, as well as with the objective of favouring, through economic independence, paths of autonomy and emancipation of women victims of violence in a condition of poverty,

The so-called Reddito di Libertà, which can be appreciated on a theoretical level as an instrument aimed at promoting the emancipation of women victims of violence, will necessarily be measured in practice, to verify, for example, whether the requirements identified are reasonable or

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<sup>320</sup> Council of Europe (2011). *Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*. Art. 18 para. 1

<sup>321</sup> Ivi, para. 3

<sup>322</sup> Decree-Law No. 223 of 4 July 2006, Art. 19 c. 3 “Al fine di promuovere le politiche relative ai diritti e alle pari opportunità, presso la Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri è istituito un fondo denominato «Fondo per le politiche relative ai diritti e alle pari opportunità», al quale è assegnata la somma di 3 milioni di euro per l'anno 2006 e di dieci milioni di euro a decorrere dall'anno 2007.”

<sup>323</sup> Law No. 234 of 30 December 2021. *Bilancio di previsione dello Stato per l'anno finanziario 2022 e bilancio pluriennale per il triennio 2022-2024*. (Budget Law 2022), cc. 149-150.

<sup>324</sup> Ivi, cc. 669-670.

<sup>325</sup> Decree of the President of Council of Ministers of 17 December 2020. *Reddito di libertà per le donne vittime di violenza*.

whether the economic threshold provided is actually suitable to ensure the objectives that the legislature has set itself through the introduction of the new instrument. The Italian national network of shelters for women subjected to gender-based violence D.i.Re network<sup>326</sup> who pointed out that "this is a cosmetic intervention, if we consider the 3 million euros of the National Anti-Violence Plan 2017-2020 that have been invested in it: a maximum of 625 women throughout Italy will benefit from it, when there are more than 20,000 women each year welcomed in the D.i.Re network anti-violence centres alone, and about 50,000 in the total of 302 anti-violence centres counted by ISTAT in 2018<sup>327</sup>. Although it is a good measure, it is not sufficient

Antonella Veltri, D.i.Re President, commented this measure as follows: "As is often the case with measures concerning women, for the time being it is a one-off intervention. We can already anticipate that the available resources will soon be exhausted, also considering the short time available to apply for the contribution: this confirms the need to transform this measure into a structural intervention. As we know, violence against women is a structural problem<sup>328</sup>".

Another measure is the fund "Fondo di Garanzia per il Microcredito di Libertà" which was set up by the Department for Equal Opportunities and is the result of the November 2020 agreement with ABI, Federcasse, Caritas and Ente Nazionale per il Microcredito. The agreement provides for the activation of the so-called "Microcredit of Freedom", i.e., a system of social and business microcredit dedicated to women affected by violence and assisted by Anti-Violence Centres in a path of liberation and re-introduction into the community through economic emancipation. Business microcredit can be guaranteed by the Guarantee Fund for SMEs to the maximum extent provided for by law. Social microcredit financing, on the other hand, is 100% guaranteed by the new guarantee fund, which has an initial budget of 3 million euros<sup>329</sup>.

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<sup>326</sup> D.i.Re is an association which includes 84 organisations in Italy, managing over 100 Anti-Violence Centres and more than 50 Shelter Houses, listening to about 21,000 women every year, formally established on 29 September 2008.

<sup>327</sup> D.i.Re (2021) Press release: *Reddito di libertà: la realtà dietro i proclami*. Retrieved from: <https://www.direcontrolaviolenza.it/reddito-di-liberta-la-realta-dietro-i-proclami/>

<sup>328</sup> Ibidem

<sup>329</sup> Presidenza del Consiglio dei ministri- il Ministro per le pari opportunità e la famiglia, Prof.ssa Elena Bonetti e l'Associazione Bancaria Italiana (ABI) e la Federazione Italiana delle Banche di Credito Cooperativo (Federcasse) e l'Ente Nazionale per il Microcredito e la Caritas Italiana (2020). Memorandum of Understanding "Microcredito di libertà - Protocollo di microcredito per l'emancipazione economica delle donne che hanno subito violenza".

### 4.2.3 Measures for gender equality

In Italy women face difficulties to enter the labour market. As a matter of fact, in 2019, the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) suggested that women in Italy have trouble entering the labour market and often face more tenuous working conditions and a marked gender pay gap in the private sector. In addition, the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) warned Italy about non-compliance with the right to equal pay, as well as with the right to equal working opportunities for men and women<sup>330</sup>. This problematic is related to structural weaknesses that, in turn, is also the result of traditional welfare policies and organization of services. These weaknesses are expected to be counterbalanced by informal family support systems. However, families are left to fend off for themselves in absence of adequate and effective welfare policies, especially single-parent and mother worker. The current family based social protection should instead be replaced by a welfare system based on universal social protection system as it would also allow to fully include single women of every age.

With the aim of addressing gender inequality and gender pay gap, in 2006, the Code of equal opportunities between men and women was adopted. It called for “equal treatment and opportunities for women and men must be ensured in all areas, including those including employment, work and pay.”<sup>331</sup> In 2021 the so-called Equal Pay Act was proposed to modify some norms of the Code of equal opportunities<sup>332</sup>. It is based on two lines of action. The first provides for a series of measures to tackle the gender pay gap upstream, by rewarding companies that remove discrimination. The second one envisages measures to promote women's participation in the labour market. The aim is therefore to fully achieve the reconciliation of working and living time.

Moreover, this law also provides for the establishment of a Gender Equality Certification from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 to certify the concrete policies and measures taken by employers to reduce the gender gap in relation to growth opportunities in the company, equal pay for equal work, gender diversity management policies and maternity protection. Companies will be able to achieve this certification by reaching certain minimum parameters, and they will be entitled to equality bonus mechanisms,

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<sup>330</sup> Council of Europe (2020). Press release: *Right to equal pay: European Committee of Social Rights finds violations in 14 countries*. Retrieved from: [https://search.coe.int/directorate\\_of\\_communications/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016809ed61b](https://search.coe.int/directorate_of_communications/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016809ed61b)

<sup>331</sup> Decree-Law No. 198 of 11 April 2006, art. 1 c. 2

<sup>332</sup> Law No. 162 of 5 November 2021. *Modifiche al codice di cui al decreto legislativo 11 aprile 2006, n. 198, e altre disposizioni in materia di pari opportunità tra uomo e donna in ambito lavorativo*.

including exemption, up to a limit of €50 million, from the payment of the employer's total social security contributions<sup>333</sup>.

Furthermore, the Equal Pay Act introduces the obligation for public and private companies with "more than 50" employees (instead of "100" as under current legislation) to draw up a report every two years on the situation of male and female employees in each of the professions and in relation to the status of recruitment. It also highlights actions on other mobility phenomena, on the intervention of the Wages Guarantee Fund, on redundancies, early retirements and retirements, on pay actually paid. On the other hand, public and private companies employing up to 50 employees have the option, on a voluntary basis, of drawing up the report. The report must be submitted by 31 December each year. Companies that do not comply may be subject to sanctions and inspections by the Labour Inspectorate.

A further important aspect of this measure is that the concept of discrimination in the workplace will be expanded to include any treatment or modification in the organization of working conditions and working hours that disadvantages employees in terms of employment opportunities (in life in general and at the company specifically), career progression and advancement for reasons of sex, age, personal or family care needs, pregnancy, motherhood or fatherhood (including adoption), or the exercise of corresponding rights.

The Budget Law for 2018 recognised a contribution to social cooperatives for the hiring with open-ended employment contracts, carried out in 2018, of women who are victims of gender-based violence and are included in special protection paths duly certified. The contribution was recognised, by way of relief from compulsory social security and welfare insurance rates due, for a maximum period of thirty-six months within the expenditure limit of €1 million for each of the years from 2018 to 2020<sup>334</sup>. Under the latest extension provision this contribution is also recognised for hirings that will take place during 2021, for a maximum period of twelve months<sup>335</sup>.

The 2021 Budget Law established that, for recruitment or conversion to open-ended contracts of female workers carried out in the two-year period 2021-2022, the employer is entitled to a 100 per cent exemption, up to a maximum amount of €6,000 per year<sup>336</sup>. For the hiring bonus for disadvantaged women, i.e., women of any age who have not been employed for at least 24 months or

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<sup>333</sup> Law No. 234 of 30 December 2021. *Bilancio di previsione dello Stato per l'anno finanziario 2022 e bilancio pluriennale per il triennio 2022-2024*. (Budget Law 2022) Art. 1, c. 145

<sup>334</sup> Law No. 205 of 27 December 2017. *Bilancio di previsione dello Stato per l'anno finanziario 2018 e bilancio pluriennale per il triennio 2018-2020*. (Budget Law 2018).

<sup>335</sup> Decree-Law No. 137 of 28 October 2020, Art. 12, para. 16-bis

<sup>336</sup> Law No. 178 of 30 December 2020. *Bilancio di previsione dello Stato per l'anno finanziario 2021 e bilancio pluriennale per il triennio 2021-2023*. (Budget Law 2021) Art. 1 c. 16

who have not been employed for at least six months and belong to disadvantaged areas, the 2021 Budget Law has allocated 37.5 million euros for 2021 and 88.5 million euros for 2022.

A further crucial aspect of the gender inequality in Italy is the lack of appropriate measures to balance personal and professional life. For instance, there is insufficient financial support for services such as childcare. One of the main problems is the shortage of places in kindergartens: according to National Institute of Statistics in 2020 it has been calculated that there are 25.5 places for every 100 children under the age of three. Percentage below the 33 per cent threshold set by the European Union in 2002 "to support the reconciliation of family and working life and promote greater participation of women in the labour market". The budget Law for 2022 increases the share of the Municipal Solidarity Fund (CSF) allocated to increase the number of places available in kindergartens and sets a minimum level that each municipality or territorial basin is required to guarantee. The number of places in childcare services for children in the 3–36-month age group must reach a guaranteed minimum level of 33 per cent on a local basis by 2027<sup>337</sup>.

Another measure is the fact that the Budget Law for 2021 increased the Family Policy Fund by €50 million, to be used to support and enhance the organisational measures adopted by companies to facilitate mothers' return to work after childbirth. Moreover, Paragraph 334, as amended during the examination in the Chamber, establishes the Fund for the financial coverage of legislative interventions aimed at the recognition of the social and economic value of care activities of a non-professional nature of the so-called family caregiver (care provider)<sup>338</sup>, with an allocation of 30 million euros, for each year, from 2021 to 2023.

The Budget Law for 2022 introduces 50 per cent exemption from social security contributions for mothers employed in the private sector for one year from the date of return to work after compulsory maternity leave and for a maximum period of one year from the date of return<sup>339</sup> and provides for the possibility of obtaining an extension of the maternity allowance for self-employed women for a period of 3 months following the maternity period, which lasts 5 months (as for employees)<sup>340</sup>.

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<sup>337</sup> Law No. 178 of 30 December 2020, cit., art. 1, c. 172

<sup>338</sup> Law No. 205 of 27 December 2017. *Bilancio di previsione dello Stato per l'anno finanziario 2018 e bilancio pluriennale per il triennio 2018-2020*. (Budget Law 2018). Art. 1, para. 255.

<sup>339</sup> Law No. 234 of 30 December 2021. *Bilancio di previsione dello Stato per l'anno finanziario 2022 e bilancio pluriennale per il triennio 2022-2024*. (Budget Law 2022) Art. 1, c. 137

<sup>340</sup> Ivi, art. 69.

#### 4.2.4 Law proposals on reintegration into work of women victims of violence

On 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022 before the XI Commission (Public and Private Employment) of the Chamber of Deputies three law proposals were discussed. The measures under consideration (Law proposals No. 1458<sup>341</sup>, No. 1791<sup>342</sup> and No. 1891<sup>343</sup>) aim to promote the employment of women victims of violence. In particular, law proposals No. 1458 and No. 1791 establish tax benefits in favour of companies that hire women with a certified situation of distress with open-ended contracts, i.e., women who are included in protection programmes certified by the social services of the municipality of residence, anti-violence centres or Refugee Houses. The law proposals No. 1791 and No. 1891 also propose to allocate a reserve quota on the number of employees of public and private employers in favour of women victims of gender-based violence, as already provided for orphans of victims of femicide.

During this discussion, the Institute of National Statistics presented a document which describes the Integrated System for the collection and processing of data on gender-based violence, built and managed by ISTAT according to a multi-source approach. This document then proposes, albeit in a necessary synthesis, a reading of the main statistical information available on gender-based violence in the years of the pandemic<sup>344</sup>.

Moreover, the Institute has elaborated an analysis of the employment and economic condition of women victims of violence, using information from the most recent sources available. Although limited by the lack of data, a preliminary analysis was carried out to identify the number of women who could access the employment benefits provided by the measures. more than 15,000 women have started in 2020 to leave violence with the support of anti-violence centres. For these, the Survey on the users of the Centres allows to estimate their economic situation economic situation through a combined analysis of the professional status and of a question that whether the woman had economic autonomy. However, this information was not provided for all women, but for 69.6% of them in the case of professional status (10,833) and for 68.7% (10,693) in the case of economic autonomy. economic autonomy. Among the women for whom the operators of the centres indicated the

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<sup>341</sup> Law proposal No. 1458. *Introduzione del comma 220-bis dell'articolo 1 della legge 27 dicembre 2017, n. 205, in materia di benefici per l'assunzione delle donne vittime di violenza di genere*. Submitted on 19 December 2018

<sup>342</sup> Law proposal No. 1791. *Disposizioni per l'inserimento lavorativo delle donne vittime di violenza di genere*. Submitted on 18 April 2019

<sup>343</sup> Law proposal No. 1891. *Modifica all'articolo 18 della legge 12 marzo 1999, n. 68, in materia di inserimento delle donne vittime di violenza nelle categorie protette ai fini del collocamento obbligatorio al lavoro*. Submitted on 5 June 2019.

<sup>344</sup> ISTAT (2021). *Examination of the Law Proposals No. 1458 Frassinetti, No. 1791 Fragomeli and No. 1891 Spadoni (Provisions for the job placement of women victims of gender-based violence)*. Retrieved from: <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/266245>

professional condition (35.5%), almost all of them (95%) had a stable job and are economically autonomous. 14.4% have an occasional job, which only for 51.5% of the women implies autonomy, while 2.5% are retired from work. For the latter, the pension from work is not sufficient to be autonomous for one out of four women. Among women who are seeking employment (28.1%) and those who are housewives (8.7%) and students (5.2%), the vast majority are not economically autonomous (87.3%, 87.1% and 90.9% respectively).

Overall, slightly less than half of the women were not autonomous at the time they started their way out of violence were not economically independent. economically. For 4 out of 10 women in the full working age group 30-59, no economic autonomy is found, while the percentages increase in the age group up to 29, usually dedicated to training and job search (69.5%). Women with foreign citizenship are the ones who present Women with foreign citizenship are the ones who present greater economic uncertainty (63.5% of cases). In conclusion, women who started a pathway out of violence with an anti-violence centre in 2020 and are not permanently employed represent 60.5%<sup>345</sup>.

### 4.3 Regional strategies

Due to the Italian administrative system, anti-violence policies, as well as other policies, are implemented both at the national and regional level: therefore, regional governments and local authorities, following national rules and principles, reserve some autonomy to make decisions on, for instance, how to distribute funding as well as how to formally recognise women's centres and shelters<sup>346</sup>. However, at the same time, they have the power to influence the policy-making debate at the national level. Therefore, Regions are the most appropriate level of observation for violence policies addressing violence against women.

All Italian regions have one or more regional laws on male violence against women. The Regions with a law addressing the issue within a law dedicated more generally to gender equality and

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<sup>345</sup> ISTAT (2021). *Examination of the Law Proposals No. 1458 Frassinetti, No. 1791 Fragomeli and No. 1891 Spadoni (Provisions for the job placement of women victims of gender-based violence)*. Statistical Annex. Retrieved from: <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/266245>

<sup>346</sup> Toffanin A. M., Pietrobelli M., Gadda A., Misiti M. (2020). *VAW Policy Regimes in Italy: An Analysis Across Regional Governments and Women's Centres*. *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge-JMK*, Vol. 5(1), Policies on Violence Against Women in a Comparative Perspective - Guest Editor, Consuelo Corradi, pp. 47-72. Retrieved from: <https://www.mediterraneanknowledge.org/publications/index.php/journal/article/view/178>



equal opportunities are Emilia Romagna and Umbria. This reveals an unavoidable heterogeneity of the regional regulatory framework on the issue.

Article 5-*bis* of Law No. 119 of 15 October 2013 on so-called femicide provides for the annual allocation to the Regions of resources from the Fund for policies relating to rights and equal opportunities<sup>347</sup>. These resources are intended to strengthen the forms of assistance and support to women victims of violence and their children, through homogeneous ways of strengthening the network of territorial services, anti-violence Centres and shelters (Case rifugio) to women victims of violence<sup>348</sup>. The monitoring system on the allocation of the Fund for policies relating to rights and equal opportunities as per Article 5-*bis* of Decree-Law No. 93 of 2013, converted into Law No. 119 of 15 October 2013 system provides for a standardised monitoring form that the Regions undertake to transmit every six months to the Equal Opportunities Department.

#### 4.3.1 Regional Laws and Policies

Article 117 of the Constitution lists among the matters of exclusive legislation of the State<sup>349</sup> the determination of the essential levels of services concerning civil and social rights that must be guaranteed throughout the national territory. guaranteed throughout the national territory. Therefore, the general and common provisions for health protection and social policies are the exclusive competence of the State. At the same time, the matters of concurrent legislation do not include social policies<sup>350</sup>. As a result, by virtue of the principle of the residual competence of the Regions in matters that are not exhaustively referred to State legislation<sup>351</sup>, the planning and organisation of health and social services is the responsibility of the Regions. From the legislative framework, also corroborated by Law 328 of 8 November 2000<sup>352</sup>, which provides for an integrated system of interventions and social services, the importance of an interdisciplinary and collective approach to combat gender-based violence against women emerges.

Hence the promotion and dissemination of territorial inter-institutional anti-violence networks in all regions. Territorial anti-violence networks consist of institutions, public bodies, private social

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<sup>347</sup> Law No. 119 of 15 October 2013, art. 5-*bis*

<sup>348</sup> Ivi, art. 5, c. 2, l. d)

<sup>349</sup> Constitution of the Italian Republic (1957). Art. 117, l. m)

<sup>350</sup> Ivi, para. 3

<sup>351</sup> Ivi, para. 4

<sup>352</sup> Law No. 328 of 8 November 2000. *Legge quadro per la realizzazione del sistema integrato di interventi e servizi sociali*.

associations working in the field of assistance and support to women victims of violence, sometimes also involving their children. The objective of each inter-institutional anti-violence network is to create a rich, harmonious, balanced, and effective system of interventions that ensures more and equal opportunities to support victims. The regions use instruments to constitute these networks such as the memorandum of understanding, which is an act entered into by a number of public and private parties, acting as a political with political-administrative functions, whereby the parties agree among themselves to achieve common objectives according to criteria of reciprocity; the framework agreement, an act defining the project areas and the modalities of collaboration from which the which will lead to implementation/operational agreements. Furthermore, the convention or operational agreements, acts describing in detail activities and define, among other things, the persons responsible, the objectives, the forms of commitment (institutional, economic and service of service provision), the modalities of implementation, the duration<sup>353</sup>.

Furthermore, regarding housing policy, as a result of the transfer of powers introduced by Legislative Decree No 112 of 1998, the public housing sector now falls under regional competence<sup>354</sup>. In application of the guidelines of current legislation, in particular the provisions of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers - Department of Equal Opportunities in Article 5 of the Prime Ministerial Decree of 13.11.2020, some economic resources have been allocated to the Region to carry out interventions aimed at combating sexual and gender-based violence, as part of the Extraordinary Action Plan and the Operational Plan provided for by the "National Strategic Plan on male violence against women 2017-2020".

#### 4.3.2 Critical issues

The lack of coordination between the central and regional governments as well as the constant weakness of administrative bureaucracy represent an important obstacle to the action of existing local networks on combating and preventing violence against women. Moreover, a further critical issue is timely distribution of financial resources to specialised services, Anti-violence centres, and shelters,

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<sup>353</sup> IRPPS-CNR, Department of Equal Opportunities (2018). Progetto ViVa - Monitoraggio, Valutazione e Analisi degli interventi di prevenzione e contrasto alla violenza contro le donne. *Raccolta e analisi comparativa delle leggi regionali in materia di violenza maschile contro le donne ai fini dell'attuazione operativa del Piano strategico nazionale sulla violenza maschile contro le donne 2017-2020*, pp. 94-97. Retrieved from: [www.viva.cnr.it](http://www.viva.cnr.it)

<sup>354</sup> Legislative Decree No. 112 (Articles 59-64) also provided for the abolition of the Committee for Public Residential Housing (CER) and the direct attribution to the Regions of the funds to finance the interventions and the competence to establish the criteria for the allocation of housing and the definition of rents.

as well as transparency on the distribution of national, regional and local funding, and monitoring of their use. As of 15 October 2020, 72 per cent of the resources allocated by the Department of Equal Opportunities for the 2015-2016 biennium have been liquidated by the Regions, 67 per cent for those of 2017. Fifteen months after the transfer by the Department of Equal Opportunities, the Regions have liquidated only 39 per cent of the 2018 resources, i.e., approximately 7.6 million Euros compared to the 19.6 allocated. For the year 2019, the Department of Equal Opportunities has allocated 30 million euros among the Regions, of which 20 million to be allocated to the ordinary operation of shelters and anti-violence centres and 10 million for the Anti-Violence Plan. It took an average of seven months to transfer the resources from the Equal Opportunities Department to the regions, which to date have only disbursed 2 per cent of the funds, and in only two regions, Liguria and Umbria. Therefore, in 2020, only 2 per cent of funding for anti-violence centres and shelters reached its destination<sup>355</sup>. As showed by GREVIO's report and ActionAid Italy's survey, "one of the consequences of this multi-tiered funding system is the delay with which funds reach the final recipients, in particular the NGOs running anti-violence centres and/or Shelters. (...) These delays have a negative impact on the ability to achieve the National action plans' objectives and represent an obstacle to the continuity and quality of services and programmes to support and protect women and their children from violence. Another consequence of this way of distributing national funds is the lack of transparency and uniformity in the management of resources at regional and local level<sup>356</sup>".

Furthermore, the distribution of services supporting women throughout the country still seems of great concern. The lack of an organic legislative and policy system in Italy and the violence against women policies regionalization risk producing multiple systems of protection and support to escape violence, as a consequence of the fragmentation and heterogeneity of the measures undertaken. If, on one hand, those policies are closer and permeable to the needs of the territories, on the other hand, "risks emerge when, in the logic of decentralization, the rights that only the state's regulatory capacity can guarantee, remain entangled<sup>357</sup>". In order to address this problem, the governance of the National Strategic plan on male violence against women 2021-2023 is confirmed in its structure with a model consisting of three levels, integrated with each other: the National Steering Committee with the function of strategic policy direction; the Observatory, with a specialist function; Territorial Governance, with the function of linking central and local government and coordinating the territorial networks active on the themes of the plan.

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<sup>355</sup> ActionAid (2021). *Tra retorica e realtà. Dati e proposte sul sistema anti violenza in Italia*. Retrieved from: <https://www.actionaid.it/informati/pubblicazioni/monitoraggio-sistema-antiviolenza>

<sup>356</sup> GREVIO (2020), cit., p. 23.

<sup>357</sup> Saraceno C. (2005). *Città, solidarietà, sicurezza: disagio e coesione sociale e welfare locale*. In Mollica S. (a cura di) (2005) *Città e sviluppo*, Milano, Angeli.

All these weaknesses expose women who live violence to more difficulties to access timely support services, protection, and adequate empowerment. There is a need of a more comprehensive and integrated system of governance, and adequately budgeted, implemented, and monitored by way of effective coordination between national, regional, and local authorities. More integration is needed between anti-violence policies and different national social policies (housing, labour, etc.). The major need is therefore a holistic intra- and intra-sectoral approach involving the work of multiple ministries, adopting a true gender perspective. This is especially crucial in light of the presentation of the national plans for the recovery fund, a unique opportunity in history to rethink a more inclusive model of society, with specific reference to women's economic independence and women's empowerment, a key factor in the fight against gender-based violence.

### 4.3.3 Emilia-Romagna

For over 20 years, Emilia-Romagna Region has been engaged in the fight against gender-based violence. Since the 1990s, when the phenomenon was still in many ways poorly recognized and little known, this Region carried out an initial study on gender-based violence. Its commitment is longstanding. In 2003, by Regional Act No. 2 on "Rules for the promotion of social citizenship and for the implementation of the integrated system of social interventions and services", the reception of women and children victims of violence finds its realm in the integrated services network, starting from the municipal and district/provincial levels, including shelters and anti-violence centres in social planning systems of a local level. By Regional Government Deliberation No.1677/2013, it was approved the "Regional guidelines for the reception of women victims of gender-based violence". Afterwards, by Regional Act No. 6/2014, entitled "Framework Act for gender equality and against discrimination"<sup>358</sup>, all actions undertaken in previous years have been systematised and find their legal standing at a regional level. This regional Act is the result of a long pathway of participation and sharing, which involved a broad audience of stakeholders of both sexes, within the region and in the territories, between the women's associations and the qualified third sector<sup>359</sup>. A new phase has

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<sup>358</sup> Emilia-Romagna Regional Law No. 6 of 27 June 2014. *Legge quadro per le parità e contro le discriminazioni di genere*.

<sup>359</sup> Presidency of Council of Ministers, Department of Equal Opportunities (2018). *Legislative and other measures undertaken by Italy, to give effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, in accordance with Article 68, para.1*. Report submitted by Italy pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 1 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Baseline Report), p. 54. Retrieved from: [www.coe.int/conventionviolence](http://www.coe.int/conventionviolence)

been launched and results in an important step towards the full realization of equal opportunities on the territory.

In addition to numerous measures promoting gender citizenship and respect for differences, female work and employment and the reconciliation and sharing of social and care responsibilities, the law intervenes on the prevention of gender-based violence. In particular, the Region supports anti-violence centres, which offer free legal, psychological, labour, and social counselling to women who have suffered violence, and shelters, which provide support to women victims of violence and their minor children, to enable them to restore their autonomous individuality in conditions of anonymity and secrecy. In addition, the Region, in order to promote the achievement of gender equality in the prevention of violence against women, supports and promotes specific projects and experimental services, dedicated to abusive men, to activate new relational methods that exclude the use of violence in intimate relationships. Finally, the Region acts as an observatory on gender-based violence and on actions to prevent and combat it<sup>360</sup>.

Since 2003, the Region's policies on preventing and combating violence have been based on the violence have found a legislative basis in regional law no. 2 of 12 March 2003<sup>361</sup>. Norms for the prevention of violence. promotion of social citizenship and for the realisation of the integrated system of interventions and social services, which foresaw the inclusion of the services offered by Anti-Violence Centres and Houses in the social networked of social network services, starting from the municipal and district level. In 2013, the following were adopted regional guidelines for the reception of women who are victims of violence were adopted in 2013<sup>362</sup>. These, which became an integral part of the first Regional Plan against gender-based violence, are still a necessary reference point, still constitute a necessary reference point for those who, in their daily work, intervene to protect and/or to protect and/or help women victims of violence. The guidelines define in fact, the paths of taking charge, the modalities of collaboration between network subjects, the levels of service and the access criteria. The enactment of regional law no. 6 of 27 June 2014<sup>363</sup>, the framework law for equality and against gender discrimination, recomposed the system into a solid regulatory framework and was the basis and support for all the prevention and protection actions subsequently implemented, as well as for the training of the operators of the various services, and for raising the awareness of citizens and

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<sup>360</sup> Emilia-Romagna Regional Law No. 6 of 21 June 2014, cit.

<sup>361</sup> Emilia-Romagna Regional Law No. 2 of 12 March 2003. *Norme per la promozione della cittadinanza sociale e per la realizzazione del sistema integrato di interventi e servizi sociali.*

<sup>362</sup> Regional Council Resolution 1677/2013 of 18 November 2013. *Adozione linee di indirizzo regionali per l'accoglienza di donne vittime di violenza di genere e per l'accoglienza e la cura di bambini e adolescenti vittime di maltrattamenti e abuso.*

<sup>363</sup> Emilia-Romagna Regional Law No. 6 of 21 June 2014, cit.

the younger generations on these issues. This law was later complemented by Regional Law No. 15 of 1 August 2019<sup>364</sup>, Regional Law against discrimination and violence determined by sexual orientation or gender identity. A number of resolutions of the Legislative Assembly and the Regional Council, now programmatic and now implementing the provisions of the law, then completed the regional regulatory framework on combating gender-based violence.

On 13 October 2021 the Regional Council approved a new Three-year plan on violence against women. The fundamental axis of the new Regional Plan is a vision of gender-based violence as the outcome of a culture and an economic and social organisation still based on historically unequal relations between the female and male genders, a stereotyped vision of the roles of men and women, the persistence of a discriminatory system in the world of work, the lack of attention to a sexist language that shapes social and communicative behaviour damaging to women's dignity. The aim is to combat male violence against women and the culture that fuels it, by means of intervention strategies that combine the prevention of violence with the protection of women who are subjected to it, through multi-level governance involving multi-level governance, involving all the actors in the field, both institutional and private social. and the private social sector. Among the legal protection actions, those facilitating the victim's compensation through access to regional and national funds. In addition, support for the recovery of housing and economic autonomy, by promoting, together with local institutions, low-cost housing and experimenting with freedom income<sup>365</sup>.

The Emilia-Romagna Region supports and implements actions and initiatives that promote housing autonomy in the region for women and their children, included in a path out of violence in application of the principles and lines of action contained in the "National Strategic Plan on male violence against women 2017-2020, in the Regional Law 6/2014 and in the "Regional Plan against gender-based violence" In 2020, with a funding of 658,000.00 euro in favour of Local Authorities, actions have been implemented for housing support and accompaniment in the path out of gender-based violence. The financial intervention takes the form of vouchers of a maximum value of 6,000.00 euro per woman. The Emilia-Romagna Region also received a State funding of 1,986,567.75 euro, of which 993,283.88 euro for the maintenance of Anti-Violence Centres and 993,283.87 euro for the maintenance of existing shelters. existing shelters. The total funding was distributed and assigned to the local authorities' sites of anti-violence centres or shelters<sup>366</sup>.

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<sup>364</sup> Emilia-Romagna Regional Law No. 15 of 1 August 2019. *Legge regionale contro le discriminazioni e le violenze determinate dall'orientamento sessuale o dall'identità di genere.*

<sup>365</sup> Emilia-Romagna Regional Council (2021). *Three-year plan against gender-based violence (2021)*

<sup>366</sup> Emilia-Romagna (2021). *L'impatto sulle donne e le azioni promosse dalla Regione Emilia-Romagna. Promozione dell'occupazione femminile Conciliazione dei tempi di vita e lavoro Pari opportunità e contrasto alla violenza di genere*

## 4.4 Addressing economic independence within Municipalities and Anti-violence Centres

In the Italian multi-level governance, municipality is the closest level to citizens' needs. On the basis of Article 114 of the Constitution<sup>367</sup>, the Municipality is an autonomous body with its own Statute, as well as its own powers and functions. The State resources allocated to the Regions for the enhancement of assistance and support to women victims of violence and to their children are disbursed by the Regions through different administrative procedures, according to their own governance model. Regions that, in turn, transfer them to other public administrations/local entities, in order to subsequently finance the Anti-violence Centres and Shelters, or regions that allocate the resources directly to the Centres and Shelters. These resources are intended to commit the municipalities to different interventions regarding violence against women and gender equality. The most crucial ones are designing cross-cutting public policies in the various administrative areas that reduce inequality and ensure respect for differences in order to guarantee equal opportunities for women and men and to empower women; supporting people in reconciling work and family life by promoting appropriate services to support children, adolescents, and senior citizens; and promoting, encouraging, and supporting Anti-Violence Centres and Shelters<sup>368</sup>.

Anti-violence Centres are the backbone of the institutional anti-violence system in Italy. Totally or partially self-funded, these centres were both political actors, fighting for the public recognition of male violence against women as a structural and cultural problem, and women-oriented counselling centres with their own telephone helplines, offering different activities: information provision, counselling, psychological and legal consultancy, employment advice, and also shelters. They often shared a working methodology based on a trusting and empathetic relationship between women<sup>369</sup>. They usually avoided proactive interventions, meaning that most of the support was oriented towards aiding women to make their decisions by themselves. By laying their action on the recognition of violence against women as a structural problem, their activities politically signify their action, as they are aimed at challenging the patriarchal culture and making power relations and gender inequalities more evident. In recent years, the system of support services for women experiencing violence has

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<sup>367</sup> As it stands following the amendments made to Title V, Part II of the Constitution by the Constitutional Law no. 3. 18 October 2001.

<sup>368</sup> National Association of Italian Municipalities – ANCI (2019). *Municipalities' Pact for equality and against gender-based violence*. Retrieved from: <https://www.anci.it/wp-content/uploads/Patto-dei-Comuni-per-la-Parit%C3%A0-e-controla-Violenza-di-genere.pdf>

<sup>369</sup> Corradi C., Bandelli D. (2018). *Movimenti delle donne e politiche contro la violenza. Fattori politici e sociali e specificità del caso italiano*. *Sociologie e Politiche Sociali*, 1/2018, pp. 27-43. Retrieved from: <http://doi.org/10.3280/SP2018-001003>

become increasingly heterogeneous: State and Regions' interventions, and the consequent allocation of new resources, have been joined by new social actors, both private (not-for-profit) and public.

#### 4.4.1 Anti-Violence Centre

Well before the public administrations, in the 1970s, Italian women and feminist groups became active both in the public sphere and in daily interventions, by supporting women who were experiencing violence. From the places of feminism, from associations that had animated the political experience of those years, the first spaces for the search of freedom, autonomy and expression were born, starting from the desire to get rid of constraints, prescriptions and oppression that had settled over time in the relationships between men and women. Reflection among women starting from their own lives, experiences, starting from the self, questioning traditional roles and expectations anchored to gender differences and expectations anchored to gender differences, has been the basis for the birth and construction of new spaces for relations between women. Anti-Violence Centres start a path and their history on the awareness of the structural nature of violence against women. In the late 1980s and in the early 1990s, anti-violence centres grew up within women's and feminist groups mainly in the central–northern Regions of the country<sup>370</sup>. In this sense, if today anti-violence centres and shelters “are the central point of the network of territorial care and the crucial elements of integrated systems of local territorial governance and of the relevant networks” , representing the most coordinated and organised response to the phenomenon of gender-based violence, it is thanks to the ten-year commitment that women's associations have made throughout the country<sup>371</sup>.

Anti-Violence Centres are facilities where women of all ages and their underage children who have suffered violence or who are exposed to the threat of violence of any kind are received free of charge, regardless of their place of residence<sup>372</sup>. The Centre must guarantee among its minimum services free of charge orientation to work through information and contacts with social services and

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<sup>370</sup> Creazzo G., Pipitone E., Vega Alexandersson A.M. (2011). *Intimate Partner Violence and the Process of Seeking Help: Im/migrant Women who Approached Anti-Violence Centres in Emilia-Romagna (Italy)*. In R. K. Thiara, S. A. Condon, & M. Schröttle (Eds.), *Violence against Women and Ethnicity: Commonalities and Differences across Europe*. pp. 319-336. Retrieved from: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-63383-8>

<sup>371</sup> Presidency of Council of Ministers, Department of Equal Opportunities (2017). *National Strategic Plan on male violence against women 2017-2020*, p. 27

<sup>372</sup> Presidency of the Council of Ministers (2014). *Intesa, ai sensi dell'articolo 8, comma 6, della legge 5 giugno 2003, n. 131, tra il Governo e le regioni, le province autonome di Trento e di Bolzano e le autonomie locali, relativa ai requisiti minimi dei Centri antiviolenza e delle Case rifugio, prevista dall'articolo 3, comma 4, del D.P.C.M. del 24 luglio 2014*. Art. 1, c. 1



employment centres to identify a path of labour inclusion towards economic autonomy and orientation towards housing autonomy through conventions and protocols with local authorities and other agencies<sup>373</sup>. They support women through a range of different activities (information giving, counselling, legal and psychological consultancy and sheltering) which mostly take place at the centre, whose address is publicly available. The centres offer various services, from telephone reception, to interviews aimed at analysing the situation and needs and structuring a pathway out of violence, legal and psychological counselling, accompaniment in the search for a housing solution and job placement, and accommodation in shelters. A work desk within an anti-violence centre, which generally operates in close connection with the psychological area, as therefore a complex task: to help women reconnect with the social context of reference, regain confidence in healthy interpersonal and socio-occupational relationships and start a targeted job search. All this, also through the support and selection of job offers made available by the operators.

The Centres work in a network with local services and do not replace or overlap with them. Their uniqueness lies in the fact that they are places of daily movement between the private and the public spheres, between the urgency of individual listening and individual help and the construction of projects for women's freedom, incompatible with any form of violence. As a consequence, in order to guarantee social protection, reintegration and health interventions to women and their children, the Centres participate in inter-institutional territorial networks promoted by local authorities. The establishment and functioning of the network are regulated by specific protocols or territorial agreements conducted by the local authorities with the involvement of all social, economic, and institutional actors within the territory indicated by the regional planning<sup>374</sup>.

The absolute majority of the Centres are managed by private non-profit organisations: there are 283 of them, 84.5 per cent of the total. There are 51 (15.2 per cent) publicly run Anti-Violence Centres, more than half of which are located in the Northern Regions. Even among the bodies that manage the Refugee Centres, private bodies prevail in absolute terms (92 per cent), while public bodies account for the remaining 8 per cent. A detailed analysis of the situation shows that there is also an uneven distribution in the various parts of the country: in the North, the number of public providers reaches 10 per cent, while in the South and the Centre it is 4 per cent<sup>375</sup>.

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<sup>373</sup> Presidency of the Council of Ministers (2014), cit., art. 4, c. 1, l. f) and g)

<sup>374</sup> Ivi, art. 6 c. 1

<sup>375</sup> Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into Femicide and All Forms of Gender-Based Violence (2020). Session No. 54 of 14 July 2020. *Relazione sulla governance dei servizi antiviolenza e sul finanziamento dei centri antiviolenza e delle case rifugio*. Annex 2. Retrived from: <https://www.senato.it/leg/18/BGT/Schede/docnonleg/40934.htm>

The resources, amounting to 22 million euro, have been distributed among the Regions and Autonomous Provinces according to the following criteria the following criteria 9.5 million for the funding of public and private anti-violence centres already existing in each region 9.5 million for the financing of public and private shelters already existing in each region; 3 million in favour of shelter houses to finance interventions related to the prevention of the spread of Covid-19<sup>376</sup>.

#### **4.4.2 Building economic independence through territorial network**

According to the National Institute of Statistics, in 2021 the Anti-violence Centres offered employment guidance 12.3% and housing support and advice 9.1%.

the methodology that anti-violence centres and shelters managed by women's and feminist associations have developed over time is mainly focused on empowering women who decide to undertake a path out of violence. A goal that can only be achieved or pursued through a personalised process of listening and active support between women, which is able to support them in the difficult process of liberation from the cycle of violence in which they have been trapped by the abuser, through the reconstruction of their own relational context and the reappropriation of all the resources, symbolic and material, necessary for a full self-management of everyday life, as well as the possibility of redesigning their life choices.

The methodology of women's relations is also intimately linked to the need to intervene also at a cultural level on the fabrication and intersectionality of the system of economic, social and political gender inequalities that generates and perpetuates male and gender-based violence. It is therefore an integrated approach to violence as well as a personalised approach to the needs of the women who experience it, which however frequently comes into conflict with the organisational logic, parcelling out and standardising, that underlies both the institutional approach to the provision of care services and the approach expressed by the managing bodies that are not exclusively specialised in violence against women<sup>377</sup>. The lack of coordination policies and of a substantial valorisation of the competences developed by women's associations, therefore, reflects first of all on the capacity to really put at the centre of all services, both specialised and general, the response to the

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<sup>376</sup> Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into Femicide and All Forms of Gender-Based Violence (2020), cit., paras. 1 (Il sistema istituzionale anti violenza e il ruolo delle associazioni di donne) and 1.1 (I dati ISTAT e IRPPS-CNR sui servizi specializzati).

<sup>377</sup> Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into Femicide and All Forms of Gender-Based Violence (2020). Session No. 54 of 14 July 2020. *Relazione sulla governance dei servizi anti violenza e sul finanziamento dei centri anti violenza e delle case rifugio*, para. 1.4 Il Rapporto tra servizi specializzati e servizi generali

needs of women who commit themselves to paths of exit from violence in the respect of their self-determination.

It is therefore essential to encourage the formation of territorial networks that bring together the public and private sectors, as well as the business world, to facilitate women's reintegration or job placement, but also to strengthen the capacity of the 'territorial anti-violence system' to collaborate with subjects who are not part of the network but who can, within the framework of their own functions and in the pursuit of their own aims, contribute to the achievement of the objectives. Moreover, involving the various territorial services in order to guarantee a shared planning for the protection and protection and promotion of women, with the aim of enabling them to undertake pathways out of violence, through the development of safe havens and social, work and housing autonomy. safe shelters and pathways to social, work and housing autonomy has to be one of the main objectives.

#### **4.4.3 Project examples aimed at economic independence**

The project We Go II “Building Economic Independence: the way out of Intimate Partner Violence”<sup>378</sup>, started in December 2018 and will be carrying out its activities until November 2020. We Go II aims to support the economic empowerment of women who survived intimate partner violence by strengthening the local and national support systems, exchanging European good practices, and establishing cooperation networks between private and public stakeholders. The project lies on three pillars: capacity building among Anti-violence Centres, NGOs and other actors working directly with women; network building, in order to create sustainable multi-agency networks capable of properly responding to and supporting women survivors of violence in the development of their social and economic relationships; and finally awareness raising and advocacy directed to enterprises, private and public stakeholders to promote Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) on economic empowerment into the institutional framework.

Moreover, a project promoted by the network D.i.Re is Borse Lavoro (Work Bursaries) was created with the aim of supporting the pathways to autonomy for women coming out of situations of violence. Support to job placement is fundamental because often the pathways out of violence clash with the difficulty for women to find a job and decent living conditions for themselves and their

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<sup>378</sup> ActionAid (2018). *We Go II Building Economic Independence: the way out of Intimate Partner Violence*. Retrieved from: <https://morethanprojects.actionaid.it/it/projects/wego2-indipendenza-economica/>

children. In order to meet this fundamental need, the project aims to provide the teams of the anti-violence centres with specific skills and to set up counters for orientation and accompaniment to work for the labour inclusion of women in difficulty and to activate internships financed by work grants for women victims of violence. The project actions are activation of a training course for the operators of anti-violence centres aimed at acquiring skills in orientation and job placement of women welcomed in anti-violence centres; activation of work placement/reintegration traineeships for women sheltered in anti-violence centres and implementation of job guidance desks. In 2016 and 2017, the intensive training course enabled the operators to acquire skills in orientation and job placement for women housed in anti-violence centres<sup>379</sup>.

Another interesting project is "DANAE", funded by the Department for Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. In addition to Poiesis, a non-profit social cooperative society, lead partner of the initiative, the Municipality of Civitanova nelle Marche and Praxis, a social promotion association, are the promoters. The women victims of violence, who are the recipients of the work and social reintegration project, will be able to obtain free of charge: a new professional qualification, through the attendance of a recognised training course, psychological support, housing, care of small children, job placement in a company and internship in a municipality. In addition, the association also offers support for the development of a professional idea for job placement. For private companies that want to help women victims of violence, the DANAE project foresees the possibility of drawing qualified workforce through facilitated recruitment, or, an external entrusting to the cooperative of the tasks needed by the company (workers, jobs, departments, etc.), without resorting to recruitment<sup>380</sup>.

Furthermore, the Power project is funded by the Emilia-Romagna Region through the Call for Proposals for the promotion and achievement of equal opportunities and the fight against discrimination and gender-based violence and takes place in 2016-2017. The project is led by the Coordinamento dei Centri Antiviolenza dell'Emilia-Romagna (Coordination of the Emilia-Romagna Anti-Violence Centres) and involves eleven of the fourteen centres that are part of it. POWER is aimed at guaranteeing and enhancing a vocational guidance context attentive to the requests and needs of women victims of violence, with the following objectives: to promote and facilitate training, learning and work placement opportunities for women who have suffered physical, sexual, psychological violence and economic constraints; to maintain and implement informal and formal

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<sup>379</sup> D.i.Re (2015). *Inserimento lavorativo delle donne in uscita dalle situazioni di violenza*. Retrieved from: <https://www.direcontrolaviolenza.it/inserimento-lavorativo-delle-donne-in-uscita-dalle-situazioni-di-violenza/>

<sup>380</sup> Praxis Association. *Progetto DANAE: Per Lavorare Oltre Gli Abusi (Inserimento Lavorativo vittime di abusi)*. Retrieved from: <https://www.progettodanae.it/>

synergies and networks with the services of the territory on the theme of violence against women from the point of view of labour demand/supply. Work is the context in which women who have come out of violence can find their place of redemption, building economic and professional autonomy and a social network that will allow them not to go back to those who have shown violent behaviour towards them. Constructing a woman-worker identity through orientation paths and approaching work also means contributing to re-approaching an extra-domestic world and coming out of the isolation that violence has created; strengthening and modifying areas of identity eroded and weakened by violence<sup>381</sup>.

Regarding housing independence, the network D.i.Re has launched the *Doti di autonomia* project, a fund that can be disbursed to women coming out of shelters or out of anti-violence programmes, dedicated to covering the costs of the deposit and the first months of rent, any agency costs, the activation and the first utilities (electricity, gas, water and rubbish), the purchase of household appliances or essential furniture or any expenses necessary to start living and economic autonomy<sup>382</sup>.

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<sup>381</sup> Coordinamento dei Centri Antiviolenza dell'Emilia-Romagna. Gruppo di orientamento al lavoro. Progetto POWER – Percorsi di Orientamento ed empowerment per le donne dei centri antiviolenza (2016-2017). Retrieved from: <https://www.centriantiviolenzaer.it/index.php/gruppi-di-lavoro/gruppo-di-orientamento-al-lavoro/>

<sup>382</sup> D.i.Re – Donne in rete contro la violenza (2018). *Dopo la casa rifugio. Doti di autonomia*. Retrieved from: <https://www.direcontrolaviolenza.it/dopo-la-casa-rifugio-doti-di-autonomia/>

## **Chapter 5**

### **Experience in the Anti-Violence Centre in Piacenza**

#### **Centro Antiviolenza Telefono Rosa Piacenza**

##### **Ass.ne “La Città delle Donne O.d.v.”**

### **5.1 History and Mission**

The association "La Città delle Donne" was established in 1994 by a group of women from Piacenza who wanted to open a channel for listening and hospitality for local women in difficulties. It has been operational through a telephone number since 1996: they were initially based at the Family Centre of Piacenza, where they had a space in the evening from 8 pm to midnight. Afterwards, a daytime telephone service was opened thanks to the availability of a shared room in the offices. The continuous training of the operators working in the centre, and the comparison with other centres in the region, led the volunteer operators of the Association to think how essential it was to start face-to-face interviews as a shared practice. However, the physical location could not guarantee the privacy necessary for personal interviews. By temporarily moving to Via Gaspare Landi, the Association was able to have an autonomous room where it could conduct interviews with its members. In 2006, there was a strong need to be structured in the same way as other Anti-Violence Centres in the Region and to be able to offer accommodation in shelters to women who needed to be removed from the violent environment. In 2008, a secret shelter for women, with or without children, who needed to get away from violent family environments was opened.

The Association is a founding member of the national network "D.i.Re.", established in 2008, which initially included 60 anti-violence centres in Italy, and of the Coordination of Anti-violence Centres in Emilia Romagna, set up in 2009, to which 13 Anti-Violence Centres belong and with which it shares working methods and good practices. Moreover, the Anti-Violence Centre Telefono Rosa Piacenza has been registered in the register of voluntary associations of the Province of Piacenza since 1999.

Its mission is to develop specific activities aimed at combating the phenomenon of violence against women, and to build “another” place for women who survive abuse and/or violence.

Accompanying every woman to rediscover her value, to become authoritative, economically independent, free and to build her own life is its principal goal. In other words, rediscovering herself as a woman who knows the value of gender difference and works in solidarity with other women.

As a matter of fact, the Association does not act as a welfare subject, but it accompanies women in their personal journey of redemption from the violence suffered, considering them perfectly capable of bringing out their intrinsic capacities and potential, even if often not aware of it because they are underestimated or even despised in the cycle of violence suffered. In this perspective, the anti-violence centre "La Città delle Donne" is a place of protection, enhancement, and redesign of women's lives. It is an environment of women for women, where volunteers and operators recognise themselves in the political practice of relations between women and are linked by a common project: that of producing female freedom and autonomy.

The anti-violence centre provides listening, reception, support, and shelter for women who feel threatened or are exposed to any form of mistreatment and/or violence. Women who are victims of violence of any kind (psychological, physical, sexual, economic, religious, etc.) are welcomed, guaranteeing respect for the confidentiality of the cases handled and for the current legislation on the processing of personal data of those who contact the service. Our centre is a provincial anti-violence centre officially recognised at regional and national level, as it has the experience, management methodology and reception requirements consistent with the common view of anti-violence centres.

The Association has always been trying to pursue specific objectives, which are considered essential to its own mission. To support the women who come to the Centre through the relationship with the receptionists and in agreement with the woman, to help her face legal, medical, psychological, and social problems with the necessary technical support. Accompanying by supporting every woman to rediscover her value, authoritative, economically independent, free and a builder of her own life: a woman who knows the value of gender difference and works in solidarity with other women. Our mission is to produce specific activities aimed at combating the phenomenon of violence against women. In fact, the Association has based its work on the desire to build another place for women who survive abuse and/or violence. In this perspective, the Anti-Violence Centre is a place of protection, enhancement, and redesign of women's lives. The Association is a place of women for women. The volunteers and the operators recognise themselves in the political practice of the relationship between women and are linked by a common project: that of producing female freedom and autonomy.

Furthermore, The Association is guided by the following fundamental principles. Equality, which means no discrimination in the provision of services may be made on the grounds of ethnicity,

language, religion, sexual orientation, political opinions, socio-economic and socio-physical conditions. Justice the Association is guided by criteria of justice, impartiality, and objectivity. Equal treatment and equal conditions of use of the service are guaranteed for all women and their children. Continuity, which means that the Association guarantees the provision of the service with continuity and regularity; in the event of exceptionally irregular operation, it undertakes to adopt measures that cause the least possible inconvenience to all women and their children. Moreover, confidentiality: the services and the processing of data relating to the status and facts concerning the woman being cared for are carried out with absolute respect for confidentiality in accordance with the provisions of Legislative Decree 196 of 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2003. Efficiency and effectiveness are other principles followed by the centre: the work of the operators is centred on the woman received and/or hosted, trying to make the most of and optimise the human, logistical, economic and network resources available to guarantee protection and support. Finally, accessibility: the services can be accessed by calling the Association's number, or by coming to the head office or by using the national number 1522.

The anti-violence centre operates at different levels: it manages the office, the Shelter Houses Casa 1 and Casa 2, it carries out prevention campaigns through information, training, participation and organisation of seminars, conventions, territorial meetings. Moreover, it enhances the culture of equality and gender education, developed over years of social commitment, and it participates in national and international projects in favour of women.

At the centre of all our activities are women, their stories, their needs, their desires; there are the difficulties they face and the resources they can express to overcome them. The Anti-Violence Centre is characterised by some main services: Reception, Hospitality, Free legal and psychological counselling, Minors, Work Desk, Parallel activities (Tailoring/Modelling workshops - School support for minors - Language support - Self-mutual help groups - Parenting support - Workshops for minors (recreational - expressive - educational). These activities can also be carried out by women and their children or wives who are housed in protected structures.

The anti-violence centre has a shelter with two apartments (House 1) and a house with six apartments (House 2), both of which are secret. The structures were made available by A.S.P. Città di Piacenza with which the Association signed an agreement for their management. House 1 and House 2 offer protection to women alone or with children (male children up to 14 years of age) who have suffered violence, housing them in accommodation whose address is not disclosed. In the Shelter Houses, women can refer to the Operators who offer them support with constant coaching and supervision. They are also guaranteed the food and primary supplies they need for themselves and



their children. The women who choose, after an emergency period of about 15 days, to continue a project of autonomy free from violence, enjoy a weekly pocket money, calculated also on the number of children, so that they can independently provide for food expenses and the needs for personal hygiene and cleaning of the premises. Hospitality usually lasts six months but can be extended. The difficulty in finding a stable job that can guarantee economic autonomy has prolonged the length of stay.

The association "La Città delle Donne" considered it essential to create a network of contacts and collaborations to provide women with an important response that supports them from every point of view and in order to integrate with the society for which they meet a need. For many of the women followed, it is necessary to take on a global load and therefore collaborative contacts with the territorial network: Social Services, Police, the National health Service, lawyers, Employment Centre, cultural mediators, family and specialist doctors.

There is a strong shared commitment to make the territorial support, in its totality and heterogeneity of interventions, more and more cohesive, linear and protective towards the women who need it. Psychological counselling: Professional psychologist operators, trained in gender-based violence and active for years at the Anti-Violence Centre, offer women who request it or at the suggestion of the operator (always with the woman's consent) an indispensable support for women who turn to the Association and who need a personal processing of their experiences in order to achieve an awareness of value and self-esteem that helps them to distance themselves from the abuser. A maximum of 4 consultations are offered per woman and take place at the Association's headquarters. The psychologists do not provide psychotherapy but intervene in order to provide indications and strategies on how to manage the trauma of the violence suffered also through a broader reflection from a gender and female value perspective. If the professional believes it is necessary, she will recommend a structured pathway, giving indications on the relevant territorial services.

The association "La Città delle Donne" has considered it essential to create a network of contacts and collaborations in order to provide women with an important response that supports them from every point of view and in order to integrate with the society for which it satisfies a need. This network is composed by the Social Services, which are addressed in situations where minors are involved. When the woman is hosted in a protected shelter, the Social Services are immediately informed of the presence of minors. Moreover, the Police Forces are part of this network. The Centre' can be contacted by the police for emergency accommodation of women and minors who suffer violence. The woman herself can ask the police to get her in touch with the Anti-Violence Centre. The Centre's operators can also contact the Police to evaluate together with the woman the possible

activation of protection systems (complaint, lawsuit, removal order, etc.); in the case of women hosted in emergency, the Operators can ask the Police to accompany the woman to her home to pick up her most urgent personal belongings. The Centre's operators, together with the woman, can ask for the intervention of the police in the most delicate cases of accompaniment on the territory (Courts, Public Prosecutor's Offices, meetings at school, etc.), cases in which there is a greater risk of encountering the abuser and therefore dangerous for the safety of the woman and the operators. Furthermore, the anti-violence Centre collaborates with a group of professional lawyers on issues concerning gender violence. At the request of the woman who suffers violence and turns to the Centre through the reception and/or hospitality, it offers free legal advice in order to clarify any civil proceedings, rules on the custody of children and/or criminal law with regard to possible actions against the abuser.

Over the years, the Association has forged important relationships with other cultural, sports, voluntary and other associations. It collaborates in the organisation of events and, with the valuable support of women belonging to the various associations, it organises meetings and discussions at its own headquarters, which are also open to the public. The operators are available for information/training in any place where requested. Training/information is one of the primary activities of the Centre, which can boast of elaborate projects suitable for a wide range of users, both scholastic and professional, also in English. Within the Association, many of the activities and services offered are carried out by volunteers whose work is fundamental and characterises our Centre. The Association is accredited with S.V.E.P. for Civil Service; dozens of girls have taken turns over the years, bringing interest, energy, and practical support, which is very important and valuable. Some of them have remained as voluntary members. The Association has agreements with the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, the University of Parma (Psychology) and with some high schools (of age) for the activation of training courses for female students.

## **5.2 Territorial Agreements**

The first important agreement that allows the operation of the anti-violence centre is the Agreement between the Municipality of Piacenza and the anti-violence centre. Its goal is the promotion of shared strategies aimed at preventing and combating the phenomenon of gender-based violence (Protocol of agreement) to ensure financial support for the running of the anti-violence centre, including the shelter and the emergency telephone call service. The protocol comprises 13 articles, setting out the objectives of the anti-violence centre (art. 3), the commitments of the

municipality (art. 4) and the anti-violence centre (art. 5), financial and insurance coverage (art. 9), traceability of financial flows (art. 8), and the duration of the agreement (art. 10), which may be amended and renewed by express agreement of both parties. (2018-2021). In the year 2021 there will be the renewal of the convention, in which more funding will be required, also because of the covid emergency.

Regarding shelters for women victims of violence, Agreement on the use of buildings for a shelter between ASP “Città di Piacenza”<sup>383</sup> and the anti-violence centre. This agreement provides for the concession of 6 flats (named Structure A) and another structure (named Structure B) intended for the accommodation of women victims of violence with a secret address. The shelter for women victims of violence is a residential facility that offers hospitality and assistance to women victims of physical and/or psychological violence, with or without children, for whom it is necessary to detach them from the physical and relational context that generated the violence and, consequently, to place them in a protected environment. The present convention regulates the respective commitments and competences that the ASP and the Centre assume. The agreement also includes articles on financial charges, duration (one year) and termination, and insurance cover.

Another significant agreement of which the anti-violence centre is part is the Protocol of agreement between the Emilia-Romagna region, the association of municipalities of Emilia-Romagna (ANCI Emilia-Romagna<sup>384</sup>), the union of provinces of Emilia-Romagna (UPI Emilia-Romagna<sup>385</sup>), and the associations operating in the region on the theme of violence against women: activation of a “Project to combat violence against women in Emilia-Romagna”, including actions, projects or initiatives that can be traced back to the five areas of intervention identified at international level as most significant and priority areas, with the following aims, linking and networking all that is in place to combat violence, both in the field of public and private sector, To promote and stimulate the assumption of responsibility for the issue by all the sectors involved, especially in the public sector (services and the public administration, social and health services, judiciary, law enforcement, etc.).

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<sup>383</sup> The "ASP Città di Piacenza" is a Personal Services Agency established by the Regional Council decision n. 999 of 13 July 2009, on the basis of the regional law n. 2 of 2003 "Regulations for the promotion of social citizenship and for the implementation of the integrated system of interventions and social services".

<sup>384</sup> The National Association of Italian Municipalities, whose members are all municipalities regardless of demographic importance, is a unitary association of a national character. ANCI Emilia-Romagna was established on 3 May 1969 in Bologna. It represents the associated local authorities of the region and pursues the objectives of the national association within Emilia-Romagna.

<sup>385</sup> The UPI is the association that represents all the provinces of Emilia-Romagna, bringing together, in associated form, the provincial administrations of: Piacenza, Parma, Reggio Emilia, Modena, Ferrara, Forlì-Cesena, Ravenna and Rimini and is an integral part of the Union of Italian Provinces (UPI).

Promote the implementation of actions in each of the thematic areas identified at international level as necessary for a meaningful approach to the issue.

Moreover, the anti-violence centre signed a Protocol of understanding for the promotion of shared strategies aimed at preventing and combating gender-based violence between the municipality of Piacenza, the anti-violence centre and the local health authority of Piacenza (AUSL). The Local Health Unit of Piacenza undertakes to collaborate, to consolidate and, if necessary, implement the methods of integration between the Anti-Violence Centre and the Corporate pathway dedicated to women who have suffered violence, which involves the First Aid Station, the Family Advice Bureau, Basic Psychology, Obstetrics and Gynaecology. The common goal is to extend the support network for women who are victims of violence, facilitating access to care and making strategies to tackle the problem in all its aspects more effective.

The anti-violence centre in Piacenza has been part of the Coordination of the anti-violence centres in Emilia-Romagna since 2009, when it signed the Statute of the Coordination. The Coordination, created with the aim of building a common identity that develops the and visibility of anti-violence centres and women's houses in the territory, consists of 10 and Women's Houses in the territory, is made up of 10 associations that are active in the region in combating violence against women. The idea of a Coordination Unit to bring together all the organisations in the Region that defend women started way back. The idea of a Coordination Unit to bring together all the organisations in the region that defend women began a long time ago, at the first national conference of Anti-Violence Centres and Women's Houses held in Ravenna in 1996. It laid the foundations for an organic network in our region, with periodic meetings to plan, develop and implement common objectives. For years, the Anti-Violence Centres in the region have continued to share training, good practices, methodological comparisons, projects and awareness-raising projects and awareness-raising campaigns to combat violence against women and their children.

Furthermore, on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2014, ANCI Emilia-Romagna and the Regional Coordination of the anti-violence centres in Emilia-Romagna signed a protocol of agreement in which they undertake to cooperate in order to promote and develop actions, projects and initiatives aimed at preventing and combating gender-based violence. In particular, the two parties undertake to promote the integration and networking of social, health and justice services in order to develop an effective and coordinated response to the problem with a view to protecting victims. In addition, promote the setting up of training courses for the professionals involved, collaborate on regional, national and European projects, and encourage the setting up of technical tables involving all the actors concerned.

Concerning the establishment of technical tables, in 2011 the municipality of Piacenza set up a provincial table for the province of Piacenza, consisting of the councillor of the province of Piacenza, the provincial councillor for Equality, the state police, the local health authority, the anti-violence centre of Piacenza, and others. The main objective of this provincial round table is the comparison between the parties, in order to analyse the context through the periodical collection of data and projects related to gender-based violence, to strengthen the networks of public and private services of information and prevention of violence against women but also of help and reception of women themselves. Furthermore, the development of projects and the organisation of initiatives aimed at prevention, information, and the dissemination of a culture of respect between men and women. Finally, the raising of citizens' awareness of gender-based violence.

### **5.3 Data on women victims of violence from Anti-violence centre in Piacenza**

On average, the Anti-Violence Centre in Piacenza receives 300 women per year and 17 in sheltered accommodation. Accepted women are those who contacted the anti-violence centre for problems of violence and/or various hardships, or who have had access to listening and sharing interviews, in addition to all other services offered.

In 2021, 272 women turned to the anti-violence centre. This figure also includes referrals from third parties (50), i.e., people who contacted the centre to report violence by a woman, but who never contacted the centre herself. Compared to 2020, during which 242 women contacted the centre, there was an increase of 16%. Obviously in 2020 there was a drop in the number of women due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its lockdown, that have made women more vulnerable to violence, especially within the family, but with significantly more difficulties to access services on the territory due to restrictions. Regarding the previous years, in 2019 there were 298 contacts from women, in 2018 278 and in 2017 345.

In 2020, 44 legal counselling sessions, 74 psychological support sessions and 13 accompaniment sessions by professionals were provided. The year 2021 saw a 35% increase in legal advice (63), a 36% increase in psychological support (98) and a 150% increase in accompaniment (43).

The data on the economic situation of women who accessed the anti-violence centre are a significant starting point for reflection. These data were collected by the operators during the first interviews with the women, so they are the result of a human interaction whose aim is to put the woman at ease and understand what happened and how she feels. Although there are no fixed questions or a fixed rule for conducting these interviews, the practitioner tries, by conversing with the woman, to understand the situation as fully as possible. It is also the woman herself who decides what she wants to talk about.

Of the women who contacted the centre in 2021 (222), 40% said they were employed, 16% unemployed, 12 were students and 7 were retired. Of the total number of women, 34% did not know their professional status. This means that during the interview the woman did not talk about it and the operator did not ask about it. In addition, data on the type of employment contract show that 4% of employed women have a fixed-term contract, 31% a permanent contract, 4% work illegally and 61% are unknown. Finally, the data show that 46% of women have an income they consider sufficient for themselves, 5% have an insufficient income and 26% have no income at all due to a lack of their own income (20%) or a lack of external resources (6%), i.e., those women who do not have a network of family or friends who can help and support them financially. It is significant that of 23% of women, the status of their income is unknown.

In 2020, out of 192 women who were received at the anti-violence centre, 40% were employed, 17% unemployed, 3 were students and 14 were retired. The interviews show that in 34% of the cases the topic of professional status was not addressed. Same percentage as in 2021. Concerning the employment contract, 4% of the women had a fixed-term contract, 31% had an open-ended contract, 3% worked illegally and 60% are not known. Moreover, 46% of the women had sufficient income, 5% had insufficient income, 22% had no income and in the remaining 27% of cases this matter was not mentioned during the interviews.

In 2019, 234 women turned to the anti-violence centre. 35% were employed, 18% unemployed, 3% were students and 3% retired women. In the remaining 40%, slightly less than half, neither the woman nor the operator had addressed this topic during the interviews. Data from 2018 are similar: out of 223 women, 45% were employed, 14% unemployed, 3 students and 10 retired. However, the professional condition was unknown in 33% of the cases. Concerning the employment contract, 3% of the women had a fixed-term contract, 33% had an open-ended contract, 8% worked

illegally and 56% did not know which contract they had. Furthermore, 41% of the women interviewed had sufficient income, 10% insufficient, 21% no income and 28% resulted unknown<sup>386</sup>.

Data from 2018 to 2021 in the shelter registers concerning the stay of women who have experienced violence in sheltered accommodation (House 1 and House 2) show a kind of stagnation. Women and children hosted cannot find opportunities to leave the facilities due to lack of income on their own. In fact, the difficulties for mothers to find a job on the territory are immense. Despite the commitment and activation in the search for work on the part of the women themselves, there are only occasional activities, often with fixed-term contracts, which do not find a solution in permanent employment. As a matter of fact, according to the data, the women hosted in the last years have remained in the shelter from 1 to 3 years, precisely because of this lack of economic and housing independence. On the other hand, women who have found a job, with a fixed income, and have therefore been able to obtain a social housing or social housing, have been able to leave the shelter.

Lack of economic independence does not allow women who would be ready to engage in a violence-free future caring for their children, and it also prevents access to new households in need of shelter. Indeed, the anti-violence centre has found itself refusing hospitality on several occasions requested by the police and social services (in 2019, approximately 8 requests). This group of data is therefore particularly important to understand the importance of economic independence, work reintegration and housing autonomy in the pathway out of violence, not only because it provides women survivors of IPV with the sufficient resources to move forward and rebuild a new life, but also for allowing new women who needs a shelter to receive necessary protection.

#### **5.4 Initiatives regarding economic independence**

It is a free service, aimed at women in difficulty, which provides dedicated operators to support the construction of a personal work project, through guidance interviews, identification of professional skills, accompaniment, support to motivation, internships for employment mediation. The Sportello Lavoro is part of the Regional project "A Regional Network for the Labour Inclusion of Women in Difficulty", financed by EU resources within Axis III - Social Inclusion of the POR Emilia Romagna. This project is managed by Scuola Arti e Mestieri Angelo Pescarini and involves all the Anti-Violence Centres in Emilia-Romagna. The orientation interviews take place in the Anti-

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<sup>386</sup> Data provided by the Coordination of the anti-violence centres of Emilia-Romagna database

violence Centre offices by appointment, and subsequent meetings are planned in order to identify personal skills and accompany the woman towards a path of knowledge of local resources useful for a prospective job placement. The main objectives of this project are to familiarise women with the tools for active research and access to work; to enhance the experiences they have gained, to give meaning to previous experiences and recognise the potential that can be developed; and finally, to deepen self-knowledge and broaden the development of a new identity and awareness.

The first project was 2007-107/RER, which started on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2008 and ended on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2010. In this project 445 women participated, including all anti-violence centres which joined the project. Of these 445, 40 were from the anti-violence centre in Piacenza. From 3 March 2010 to 28 April 2011, the second project, called 2009-5959/RER, took place in which 382 women participated (40 in Piacenza), 30% of whom were Italian and the remaining 70% foreign. Subsequently, the 2010-1112/RER project started on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011 and ended on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2012. 372 took part, including 32 in the anti-violence centre in Piacenza. The following project was 2012-1809/RER, from 27 March 2013 to 7 April 2014, which targeted 416 women, of whom 25 in Piacenza. In addition, the project 2013-2589/RER started on 7 April 2014 and ended on 30 December 2014 308 women participated in this project, of which 22 were in Piacenza. In the 2015-3792/RER project (running from 23 September 2015 to 21 December 2017) there was an increase in the number of women participants: 563, of whom 49 were in Piacenza. Moreover, from 19<sup>th</sup> July 2017 to 17<sup>th</sup> January 2019, project 2016-6540/RER addressed 427 women victims of violence, 30 of whom at the anti-violence centre in Piacenza. The three most recent projects were 2017-8888/RER (from 4<sup>th</sup> June 2018 to 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020) in which 688 women participated, 47 in Piacenza; project 2018-1110/RER active from 5<sup>th</sup> August 2019 to 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020, in which 644 women participated, 39 in Piacenza; and finally project 2019-14880/RER, which started on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021 and will end on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2022. So far 198 women have taken part, including 6 in Piacenza. The last project saw fewer women involved due to the Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions<sup>387</sup>.

Another important instrument used to help women victims of violence in their reintegration into employment is the Emilia-Romagna Regional Law No. 14 "Regulations in support of job placement and social inclusion of people in fragile and vulnerable conditions, through the integration of public labour, social and health services"<sup>388</sup>. The law envisages that the different services present on the territory - social, health, labour, and training services - work together and in an integrated way

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<sup>387</sup> Data provided by Scuola Arti e Mestieri Angelo Pescarini

<sup>388</sup> Emilia-Romagna Regional Law No. 14 of 30 July 2015 *Disciplina a sostegno dell'inserimento lavorativo e dell'inclusione sociale delle persone in condizione di fragilità e vulnerabilità, attraverso l'integrazione tra i servizi pubblici del lavoro, sociali e sanitari*.



to allow fragile people to get out of their condition of vulnerability, characterised by the lack of work and by the presence of further social or health problems, through job placement and the achievement of autonomy. This objective can only be pursued with the help of the economic-productive system and local businesses. In order to facilitate the encounter with the world of work, Law 14/2015 introduced a new type of internship - the orientation, training and insertion or reintegration internship - aimed at strengthening the autonomy of people, their rehabilitation and inclusion. The work placement of people in companies can take place using the various existing modalities and types of contracts. In implementation of Law No. 14/2015, the Region has invested €40 million from the European Social Fund. With these resources, social inclusion paths provided by the Active Employment Network have been made available to the recipients.

## **5.5 Personal considerations**

When analysing the data on the economic and working situation of women who experienced violence and therefore turned to the anti-violence centre, in the years considered (2018 to 2021) less than half of them are employed and therefore claim to have a sufficient income.

This is very important because it shows that women in general have difficulties in finding a job and that the labour market does not meet the needs of mothers, because due to the time they spend caring for their children there are fewer possibilities to find a job. Furthermore, this data shows how this lack of a stable job leads women to be economically dependent on their partners and at the same time it is the partner who does not allow the woman to work and manages the family income (so-called economic violence).

However, this figure referring to the limited reality of Piacenza is also reflected at a national level, as shown by the document published by ISTAT on 8 February 2022<sup>389</sup>. This analysis proves that 60.5% of women who accessed anti-violence centres throughout Italy are not permanently employed. This shows a pattern where less than half of the women are employed. These data refer both to Piacenza and to the national level to women who accessed the anti-violence centre for reasons of violence and then started a path out of violence.

Shifting the focus to women who came to live in the shelters for reasons of safety but also for lack of economic possibilities, it can be seen that the duration of their stay ranges from one to three

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<sup>389</sup> ISTAT (2021). Examination of the Law Proposals No. 1458 Frassinetti, No. 1791 Fragomeli and No. 1891 Spadoni (Provisions for the job placement of women victims of gender-based violence). Statistical Annex. Retrieved from: <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/266245>

years. Not an indifferent period. Analysing their situation from the moment they entered to the moment they left, having found a stable job and a house, allowed the real exit from violence. The fact that it took years to be able to rebuild or in some cases to build for the first time an economic independence confirms once again the difficulties that a woman and in most cases a mother encounters in the labour market. This data is fundamental to reflect on the importance of economic independence for a woman, in this case in a path out of a situation of violence, but also during the periods in which they experienced violence, as the data on professional status and income show. After working for a year in the anti-violence centre in Piacenza, I could see that it is precisely the lack of all-round economic independence, i.e., a stable job, a non-salaried work contract, an income and housing autonomy, that blocks women in their path out of violence.

Another important aspect I have reflected on is the data collected on employment status, type of employment contract and income reported by the workers of the anti-violence centre after their interviews with the women victims of violence. I was sincerely surprised by the high percentage referred to the item “not indicated”, i.e., when this topic is not dealt with during the interviews. For professional status in 2018 it was 33%, in 2019 40%, in 2020 and 2021 34%. Regarding the type of employment contract, the percentages are even higher: 56% in 2018, 78% in 2019, 60% in 2020 and 61% in 2021. Finally, the percentages for income are 28% in 2018, 26% in 2019, 27% in 2020 and 23% in 2021. Also at national level, according to the ISTAT analysis mentioned above, there are 4726 cases out of 15559 (30%) in which occupational status is not reported.

This led me to reflect on the importance given to economic independence both by the women themselves who talk about it in the interviews and by the centre workers who conduct the interviews. The fact that during interviews where women generally explain what they have experienced, how they feel and what their family situation is, they themselves do not address the topic of their economic and employment status shows that they do not consider it to be a particularly important issue. At the same time, the same can be said of the women interviewers, who do not consider it relevant to ask about the employment situation or income. Thus, there is a general underestimation of the economic aspect of women and mothers who access the anti-violence centre.

I therefore wondered why the necessary importance is not given to that very aspect, economic independence, which has proven to be the key to a pathway out of violence. I think that at a more general level, both from a cultural and societal point of view, taking into consideration the Italian context, work and economic independence are not considered as primary aspects in a woman's life. Childcare, home care and family care are still unfortunately considered to be women's responsibilities, as evidenced by data on maternity leave and public childcare services, to name but a

few. Not to mention labour market discrimination against women, and even more so against mothers. On the other hand, it is important to underline how economic independence is the basis of women's awareness that they are not only bound to the role of mothers and wives, but that they can rely on themselves, on their work outside the family sphere, and thus strengthen their own empowerment.

Thus, I think it is crucial to work on this aspect in an anti-violence centre, both from a pragmatic point of view, to be able to acquire the means to face a path out of violence, and from a personal point of view of the woman, to be able to rebuild her own self-esteem and regain that sense of self that violence has inevitably undermined.

## CONCLUSIONS

The case of the anti-violence centre in Piacenza, in its limited but significant experience, represents a good starting point to reflect on the relationship between women's economic independence and the risk of intimate partner violence. The data collected from the interviews between the operators and the women who experienced violence show that on average in the last years less than half of the women were permanently employed and consequently a high percentage had an insufficient or even non-existent income. However, the apparently insignificant fact that needs to be reflected on even more deeply is the high number of cases in which nothing is known about the economic situation, i.e., this topic was not discussed during the interviews. This shows an underestimation of the economic situation by the women themselves and by the operators of the anti-violence centre.

This lack of importance given to the economic situation of a woman who has experienced violence from her intimate partner leads to two fundamental considerations. The first one concerns the view of the role that culture and society assume for women. A role mainly related to care work, family and home, where work and economic independence fade into the background. In an attempt to cope with the “double burden” of working inside and outside the home, women are hired for temporary and part-time jobs, and are therefore over-represented in lower paid jobs. Consequently, they are hardly able to be economically independent. This dynamic is also demonstrated by the few efforts the State makes to encourage women's work, to change this view of women's roles and to try to achieve de jure and de facto gender equality. Gender inequality contributes to this devaluation of women as workers and economically independent.

The second observation concerns the underestimation of the economic condition of women who turned to the anti-violence centre to start a path out of violence. As the data on the length of stay in the shelter show, the main reason for blocking this path is the failure to achieve economic independence, due to the difficulty in finding a stable job and housing. The same applies to women who are not in a shelter, but still live with the perpetrator and do not leave home because they do not have the resources to rebuild their lives on their own. It is therefore evident that taking into account the economic and professional situation is crucial to support women victims of violence who turn to the anti-violence centre. Focusing primarily on the reconstruction of economic independence enables women to move more quickly from the abusive relationship and to rebuild their lives by their own means.

It is precisely this issue of the importance of achieving economic independence for women victims of violence that leads to the research question that this dissertation has tried to answer. The correlation between women's economic independence and the risk of intimate partner violence can be identified both at the level of prevention and response to violence.

From the perspective of preventing intimate partner violence, economic independence by increasing women's autonomy and improving their economic and social status, shifts the power relations between men and women, including within the household. Access to paid work reduces women's vulnerability to intimate partner violence by improving their bargaining power. Several studies show that a stable job and thus a salary makes shared decision-making relationships within a household more balanced and thus less prone to violence. Furthermore, women's economic independence contributes to addressing deep-rooted unequal gender power relations and challenging gender inequality, which relates women to a marginal role in power compared to men.

In contrast, from the perspective of responding to intimate partner violence, women who are economically dependent on men can tolerate a certain level of violence in exchange for social and economic support. The lack of income leads women to be more tolerant towards their partners, especially if there are children in the household. The economic dependence on the partner makes it even more difficult to leave the relationship, even if it is violent, because of the lack of economic resources. Not having a job and therefore an income, and not having resources to find a stable home, are key factors in the woman's decision to stay in a violent relationship. Moreover, female work opportunities expand a woman's bargaining power by providing them the possibility to earn their income if they leave the marriage. Several studies show that women who are more exposed to intimate partner violence are employed in greater numbers in temporary and part-time jobs and, according to the United Nations, their income is 60% lower than women who do not experience violence.

Economic independence can therefore be considered as a real protective factor for intimate partner violence, both to reduce the risk of violence, both to be able to move away from the abusive relationship and rebuild their lives. Although it may be clear, after this analysis, that the economic independence of women plays a very important role in escaping intimate partner violence, the reality of the situation shows the opposite. As a matter of fact, women who experience violence and decide to undertake a path out of it face a considerable number of obstacles in achieving economic independence and housing autonomy. In the last decades, intimate partner violence interventions, in fact, have focused more on providing crisis intervention as well as the criminalization of violence than long-term economic security of survivors.

The analysis of the obstacles that women victims of violence deal with during their path of escape from violence to achieve economic independence concretely demonstrates the lack of measures in support of this aspect. Instead, it is crucial to address intimate partner violence in this regard because a response to it cannot be effective without achieving economic and housing autonomy. This issue is therefore highly relevant and needs to be re-evaluated, in order to shape valuable measures and to develop policies capable of supporting women victims of violence not only from the point of view of immediate safety and removal from the violent situation, but also to actually facilitate their already difficult and arduous path to rebuild their lives on their own.

Analysing the Italian context, a serious gender inequality negatively affects women, and especially women victims of violence. Few measures in support of women's work, unpaid work and childcare have actually been taken. Lack of appropriate measures to balance personal and professional life, for instance, insufficient financial support for services such as childcare arrangements, negatively interfere with the attempt to reconcile work and family life. A critical discrimination in employment is therefore a major barrier to achieving economic independence, and the lack of concrete concern for this fundamental aspect of a woman's life reveals a culturally, socially, and politically deep-rooted view of the role of women. It is from this vision that significant change and progress towards gender equality must take off, aimed at challenging gender discrimination in all respects. On the economic side, the analysis of the gender wage gap does not merely show that women are over-represented in lower-paid jobs and therefore on average earn less than men, but that it leads to an exacerbation of gender inequality and a decreasing possibility of economic independence. As a result, women will tend to be more economically dependent on men within households, and to submit to the role imposed by the society.

In spite of these premises, small improvements towards gender equality can be observed in some of the laws passed in Italy recently. The so-called Equal Pay Act which provides for a series of measures to tackle the gender pay gap upstream, by rewarding companies that remove discrimination, and to promote women's participation in the labour market, with the aim to fully achieve the reconciliation of working and living time. Regarding women victims of violence, a significant example is the contribution to social cooperatives for the hiring with open-ended employment contracts women who are victims of gender-based violence. Moreover, most recently three law proposals on the reintegration into employment of women who have experienced violence have been examined before the Parliamentary Commission with the aim of supporting them in achieving economic independence.

These small steps forward may represent a hopeful sign of a greater concern for the economic and work aspect of a woman's life, and thus of the recognised importance of economic independence, particularly for women victims of intimate partner violence. The economic and professional status of women, in fact, is a key factor in combating intimate partner violence and requires special attention. Although the direction of these measures and considerations is right, the path is still long and complex, and certainly needs more effort and in-depth analysis.

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