VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS

**Ending
Violence
Against
Women**

KEY FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

▷ ▷ ▷

Qualitative component (storytelling and focus group discussions)

- Women shared stories of belittlement and offensive language, interruptions, jeers, insults, dirty jokes, false accusations in the media, threats. Other exclusionary and discriminatory practices included questioning women's abilities, removing women from party candidate lists, denying access to financial support during election campaigns, firing or threatening to fire women (and their family members) from government jobs, making false accusations and rumors of sexual nature, ignoring women during meetings, considering women's contribution as little or not important, limiting women's role in voting pre-determined decisions, appropriating women during voting procedures, and excluding women from information.

- Perpetrators of violence sought to preserve or expand the gains associated with political office such as jobs, income, assets, and access to networks. By questioning women's abilities, skills, and intentions in politics, perpetrators triggered gender biases and sought to influence voters. Other practices such as limiting women's role in voting pre-determined decisions were used to control women and render them invisible in politics.

- For women – especially those who tried to reach leadership positions in the party – the main perpetrator of political violence was their political party. Women characterized the violence that they experience in their party as "hidden, complex, and difficult to address." Women shared that party leaders appoint their favorites – people who are not always qualified or do not have strong grassroots connections – ignore the opinions of party members,

- remove party members with long contributions from party candidate lists, pre-determine election results, distribute resources (e.g., funds during election campaigns) unfairly, and lack transparency about their decision-making. A centralized and unfair system of decision-making in political parties produces violence, and it uses violence such as threats and accusations to survive.
- Women, especially the newcomers, said that because of the psychological violence that they experienced, they questioned their ability and place in politics. Women who have been targeted by false accusations and rumors in the media reported that such experiences have worsened their health problems and have affected their sleep. False accusations and rumors of sexual nature have had traumatic effects on women and their families – children, parents, and partners.
- For women, addressing political violence requires – first and foremost – that parties democratize. If parties democratize, women will experience less psychological violence. Overall, the political climate will be less aggressive.

Quantitative component (survey data)
- A higher percentage of political candidates reported that degrading talk and false rumors (55.56%) are a normal part of politics, followed by intimidation and violence (42.16%), threats against politicians (30.16%), destruction of property (16.34%), and *physical violence* (6.86%).
- 31.05% of respondents (n = 95) reported that they have experienced *degrading talk or false rumors* concerning their political role. Political candidates were mainly targeted by supporters of other parties (57.45%), digital and social media (50%), and leaders of other parties (44.68%). *Degrading talk or false rumors* mainly targeted gender (23.40%), age (21.28%), social status (21.28%), and economic status (17.02%).
- A higher percentage of women than men reported that the *degrading talk or false rumors* that they experienced were of a sexual nature.
- 13.40% of respondents (n = 41) reported that they have

experienced *threats* in relation to their political role. Political candidates were mainly targeted by leaders of other parties (60.98%) and supporters of other parties (58.54%).

- 10.16% of respondents (n = 31) said that they have experienced *damage to property* in relation to their political role.
- 18.52% of respondents (n = 55) said that they were denied financial support from the party, 12.79% (n = 39) said that they have experienced threats of dismissal because of their involvement in politics, and 6.89% (n = 21) said that they have experienced threats from family members – threats to cut them off economic resources or property – because of their involvement in politics.
- 12.42% of respondents (n = 38) said that people associated with them have experienced *violence* because of their political role. Victims of violence were mainly family members, friends, and people working for political candidates.
- 58 political candidates – 18.95% of the sample or 57.42% of those who experienced violence – said that they shared their experiences with the party. The main party structures with whom political candidates shared their experiences were the party leadership (68.42%) and political coordinators (52.63%). The reasons that political candidates did not share their experience with party structures were that they did not think that party structures would respond, they considered violence as something personal, or they did not consider their experience as worrisome enough.
- 36.84% of those who shared their experiences with party structures said that party structures took action. The main action was issuing a media declaration and denouncing violence.
- 57.14% of respondents who experienced violence said that they shared their experience with other actors, besides party structures. Political candidates shared their experiences mainly with the family (80.70%) and friends (78.95%). A small number of respondents said that they communicated with the State Police (n = 5), People's Advocate (n = 1), and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (n = 2).
- Political candidates suggested introducing legal instruments and

mechanisms that penalize perpetrators of violence. Other suggestions concerned the disengagement of the state administration from elections, the depoliticization of the State Police, the organization of information campaigns on political violence, and the engagement of civil society organizations, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, and the People's Advocate during election campaigns – to identify and denounce cases of political violence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women in politics violates human rights and reinforces women's marginalization in politics (Bardall et al., 2020; Council of Europe, 2011). Referring to "any violence that impedes the regular unfolding of political processes" (Bardall et al., 2020, p. 917), political violence is a global phenomenon. Violence exists in a continuum, and different forms of violence – physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence – interact with one another (Krook, 2020). Most studies of political violence focus on physical violence, resulting in "a bias toward visible, physical acts of violence taking place in the public sphere" (Bjarnegård, 2018, p. 2). It is only in recent years that scholars have focused on the gendered dimensions of political violence. Studies show that women politicians, compared to men, are more likely to experience violence that is not visible (Bjarnegård, 2018), to face violence in private (Krook, 2020), and to be the target of psychological violence (Bardall et al., 2020). Other studies show that women are more likely than men to be the target of threats and accusations with sexual connotations (Bjarnegård et al., 2020). Perpetrators of violence target in particular women who hold powerful positions in politics and are visible in the media (Håkansson, 2021).

Only a few studies have been conducted on violence against women politicians in Albania (Anastasi, 2020; National Democratic Institute, 2021; Observatory for Children and Youth Rights, forthcoming). Studies reveal a low level of awareness of what constitutes violence against women in politics (National Democratic Institute, 2021) and call for amendments to the Electoral Code, the Law on Gender Equality, the Criminal Code, the Law on Political Parties, the Law on Protection from Discrimination, and the Law on Civil Servants (Anastasi, 2020). A Code of Conduct – developed through collaborative efforts before the parliamentary elections of 2021 – can guide political parties during election campaigns (see the Code of Conduct, 2021).[1] The international community has supported greater participation of women in politics through policy reforms such as electoral gender quotas (Dauti, 2020). Adopting and

[1] The Code was introduced by the members of the "No Hate Alliance": the People's Advocate, Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, Audiovisual Media Authority, Albanian Media Council, and it was supported by the Council of Europe.

implementing gender equality reforms, however, is not sufficient. To ensure full inclusion and participation in politics, it is important to focus on what happens after women join politics, especially the barriers that they face. UNDP is supporting the government of Albania to meet the recommendations of GREVIO – the body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. UNDP is working closely with independent institutions, including the People's Advocate and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, to enhance their role as monitoring bodies of the Convention. UNDP has organized consultative meetings with various interest groups (e.g., independent institutions that monitor human rights protection, civil society organizations, lawyers, scholars, and service providers) to draft a law that addresses violence against women and girls. Part of these efforts is examining violence against women in Albanian politics. What do women's stories reveal about their experiences of political violence? What are the types, motives, and impacts of political violence? Are there differences between women and men concerning the types of violence that they experience? This research report will address these questions using three methods of data collection – storytelling, focus group discussions, and a survey with political candidates. In some parts of the report, we refer to the experiences of women and men. The comparison helps us understand whether perpetrators of violence target women because they are politicians or because they are women (Bjarnegård et al., 2020). The purpose of the research report is to examine violence against women in politics and to shed light on what different actors think should be done to address violence.[2] Research findings can be used by local, national, and international actors to address violence against women in politics and, more broadly, to create a safe environment in politics. In the future, independent human rights institutions and civil society organizations in Albania can monitor violence against women in politics and use monitoring results to shape public opinion and gender equality reforms.

The rest of the research report is divided in the following way: section 2 describes the methodology – research design, methods, and analysis; section 3 presents findings based on the three methods of data collection – storytelling, focus group discussions, and a survey with political candidates; section 4 presents suggestions provided by study participants including women in politics, political candidates, journalists, Equality in Decision-Making Network, civil society organizations, youth forums, the Alliance of Councilwomen, and female leaders of administrative units.

"Physical violence entails bodily harm and injury, but may also include various forms of unwelcome physical contact, as well as involuntary physical confinement. *Psychological violence* inflicts trauma on a person's mental state or emotional well- being, for example by sending death or rape threats or otherwise insulting, taunting, or scaring the target. *Sexual violence* involves sexual acts and attempts at sexual acts by coercion, as well as unwelcome sexual comments or advances. *Economic violence* comprises behaviors aimed at denying, restricting, or controlling women's access to financial resources" (Krook, 2020, p. 122).

Ending
Violence
Against
Women

METHODOLOGY

The study draws on three methods of data collection: storytelling, focus group discussions, and a survey with political candidates.

STORYTELLING

The purpose of storytelling was threefold: first, to provide a space for women to share stories that were important to them; second, to understand women's experiences from their perspective; and third, to reveal experiences that so far have remained invisible.

We invited women to share their stories of political violence. We used purposeful sampling to select a heterogeneous group of women – members of the parliament, council members, mayors, council chairs, and party members – and we paid attention to characteristics such as age, political experience, ethnicity, and disability. We sent an invitation via email, where we introduced the purpose and importance of the study and discussed issues of confidentiality. Out of 112 emails that were sent (most emails were followed by phone calls), we received 30 responses. Out of 30 women who responded to our invitation, 20 were available for an interview (final response rate: 17.86%). In some instances, women were concerned about sharing their stories or they said that they did not experience violence.

Storytelling was guided by the following questions:

1) Can you share with us your trajectory in politics? How did you get in politics and what do you aspire to achieve in your political career?
2) [After defining political violence] Can you share an experience with us? Please provide details about the event.

a.   What happened?
b.   When did it happen?
c.   Who were the actors involved?
d.   What were the motives of the perpetrator?

e. What did you do to address your concern?

f. Did you have other experiences that you would like to share with us?

g. How did this experience affect you?

Most interviews were conducted virtually (14 virtually, 3 via phone, and 3 in-person). The average length of interviews was 31.95 minutes (range: 13 – 57 minutes). Five graduate students and professionals were involved in data transcription. Thematic analysis was conducted to analyze the transcripts.

Characteristics of study participants

The women who shared their stories were selected from 8 regions and 16 municipalities.

The mean value of age was 46 years (SD = 7.88; *range:* 33 – 57). Twelve women had a Master's degree, 4 had a Doctoral degree, 3 had a Bachelor's degree, and one woman had high school education. The mean value of years in politics was 13.03 (SD = 10.93; *range:* 1 – 30); 19 women run for office at the local or national level; 17 served at least a term in the parliament or local council; 11 were members of governing bodies; 3 resigned from politics; 2 were minority members; 6 lived in rural areas; and 3 had different abilities. See Appendix A for more information on study participants.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of focus group discussions was to gain insights into the perspectives of different actors, especially on what should be done to address violence against women in politics.

Seven focus group discussions were organized with journalists (7 participants; 2 focus groups), members of the Equality in Decision-Making Network (8 participants), members of civil society organizations (7 participants), members and leaders of youth forums (6 participants), members of the Alliance of Councilwomen (12 participants), and female leaders of administrative units (5 participants). We tried to reach and invite via email and phone around 183 individuals. Out of 183 individuals who were invited in

Ending Violence Against Women

focus group discussions, 45 agreed to participate (response rate: 24.59%).

Each focus group discussion was guided by the following list of questions:
1) [After defining political violence] Is violence against women in politics a widespread problem in Albania?
2) Has your group (e.g., civil society organizations, the alliance, the network, youth forums) undertaken any initiative to address violence against women in politics? Can you tell us about these initiatives?
3) What kind of initiatives should be undertaken to address violence against women in politics, starting from your group?

The average length of focus group discussions was 45.5 minutes (range: 29 – 68 minutes). Four students and professionals were involved in data transcription. Thematic analysis was conducted to analyze the transcripts of focus group discussions.

Characteristics of study participants
Forty-five people participated in focus group discussions – 39 women (86.67%) and 6 men (13.33%). They joined focus groups from 7 regions and 14 municipalities. 40 out of 45 participants (88.89%) lived in urban areas. The mean value of age was 39.04 years (SD = 11.53; range: 21 – 63). Six participants had a Bachelor's degree (13.33%), 37 participants had a Master's degree (82.22%), and 2 participants (4.45%) had a Doctoral degree. Focus group participants had diverse professional backgrounds: They were biologists, editors, economists, journalists, lawyers, doctors, political scientists, social workers, social administrators, sociologists, teachers, psychologists. See Appendix A for more information on focus group participants.

SURVEY WITH POLITICAL CANDIDATES

The purpose of the survey was to understand the types, motives, and impacts of violence that targets politicians and

whether there are gender differences. We conducted the study with politicians who run for office in the parliamentary elections of 2021. The number of political candidates in the parliamentary elections of 2021 was 1,841 (732 women or 39.76% and 1109 men or 60.24%) (Central Election Commission, 2021; see Shtraza & Leskaj, 2021 for a historical overview of women's numeric representation in political decision-making). We randomly selected 500 political candidates (250 women & 250 men) from 6 political parties/alliances, including the Socialist Party, Alliance for Change, Socialist Movement for Integration, Social Democratic Party, Nisma (Initiative) Thurje, and Movement for Change.

During August – September 2021, we trained a group of 32 interviewers who initially tried to reach 500 political candidates. The refusal rate was particularly high in the regions of Tirana and Durrës. After the initial random selection of 500 candidates, we replaced 104 candidates who were randomly selected. The response rate was 50.66% (306 out of 604 respondents).

The questionnaire was divided in 5 parts: demographic characteristics and experience in politics, political climate, experience during the election campaign and parliamentary terms, ways of addressing violence, and the impact of political engagement. The questionnaire was tested with a group of 6 political candidates. Univariate and bivariate analysis was conducted to describe the data and elicit information on gender differences.

Characteristics of study participants

152 out of 306 political candidates who responded to the survey were women (49.67%) and 154 were men (50.33%). 19.28% of respondents had a Bachelor's degree, 66.34% had a Master's degree, and 8.82% had a doctoral degree. A small percentage had high school education or less. 41.18% of respondents were single, 57.19% were married, 1.31% were divorced, and 0.33% were widowed. A higher percentage of women than men were single: 44.74% of women and 37.66% of men were single, and 52.63% of women and 61.69% of men were married. 43.46% of respondents had children under the age of 18 living at home, 32.03% worked

in the public sector and 52.94% in the private sector, 8.50% were unemployed, and 4.90% were students. Men were more likely than women to be private sector employees: 61.69% of men and 44.08% of women were private sector employees, and 27.27% of men and 36.84% of women were public sector employees. The mean value of age was 37.16 years (SD = 11.86) – 35.5 years for women (SD = 11.45) and 38.79 years for men (SD = 12.06). The average number of years in the party was 6.30 (SD = 7.86), and the mean value of visibility on social and digital media was 6.69 (SD = 2.48).

81.05% of respondents have participated as a candidate in one parliamentary election, 11.76% have participated in two parliamentary elections, 4.90% have participated in three parliamentary elections, and 2.29% have participated in more than three parliamentary elections. 88.24% of respondents have not served for any term in the parliament, 5.88% have served for one term, 3.27% have served for two terms, and 1.63% have served for three terms. Only three political candidates (0.98%) have served for more than three terms. 9.15% of respondents (n = 28; 18 women & 10 men) were elected in the parliamentary elections of 2021. See Appendix B for more information on survey participants.

Fieldwork was conducted during August – October 2021. One of the challenges that we faced during fieldwork was the high refusal rate. There are several reasons for the high refusal rate. In the field, we learned that some political candidates did not run a campaign, or they were not in the country during the election campaign. In such instances, political candidates did not have any experience and therefore did not have anything to share. Another reason is the sensitivity of the topic. Despite the fact that the research team discussed the importance of confidentiality, some study participants remained skeptical and hesitated to share their experiences. Even when political candidates participated in the study, they did not always feel comfortable sharing their experiences. Politicians were concerned that sharing their experiences of political violence would lead to stigmatization in the party and removal from the party, and tarnish their reputation in the community. In

a few instances, politicians held the belief that "it is only the poor and less educated who experience violence." For these reasons, we think that political candidates underreported their experiences of political violence, which made it difficult to capture the gender gap, statistically speaking.

FINDINGS: QUALITATIVE COMPONENT

WOMEN TELL THEIR STORIES (STORYTELLING)

FORMS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Women's stories revealed numerous practices that reinforced and sustained their marginalization in politics. These practices included the following: belittlement and offensive language; interruptions, jeers, insults, dirty jokes; false accusations in the media; threats; questioning women's abilities; removing women from party candidate lists; denying access to financial support during election campaigns; firing or threatening to fire women (and their family members) from government jobs; false accusations and rumors of sexual nature; sexual harassment. Other practices included ignoring women during meetings; considering women's contribution as little or not important; limiting women's role in voting pre-determined decisions; appropriating women during voting procedures; excluding women from information. Below we share women's stories. Women's names are not their real names. We have used pseudonyms throughout the text.

Belittlement and offensive language

Blerta, a councilor, said that the head of the council called her "a secretary." "Do you understand?" she asked. "He said that I am nobody." During council meetings, the head of the council belittled her by saying: "Grow up because you don't know anything yet," "Sit down," "Huh, you have a voice? I didn't know that." Blerta shared with us that during her recent door-to-door campaign, she was called "a who*e"[3]: "Look, the who*e of the [removed] party is passing." She reported an incident where a community member

[3] "Who*e" (whore) is used to refer to the degrading language used against women in politics.

grabbed her arm and told her to leave. Her arm got bruised. Angry community members held sticks and told her and her election team "to disappear."

Interruptions, jeers, insults, dirty jokes

Valmira led three election campaigns in her community. The head of the council and the mayor interrupted her when she took the floor. Some of her male colleagues discouraged her from taking the floor. Valmira described her experience in the following way: "When you take the floor to discuss something for the community you represent, there are colleagues who say: 'What's wrong with you?'. He says: 'What's wrong with you, leave the community as it is' … This is pretty hurtful because I am not talking about myself." When Valmira took the floor to discuss the sewage system in her community and the lack of investments, the mayor made the following remark: "How do you know what is being done [i.e., what investments are made by the municipality]?" Valmira felt offended, and she explained to the mayor that she was talking about the community where she lives. Later on, the mayor would sarcastically refer to her as "the one who talks about the sewage system."

Offensive language targeted in particular women who were newcomers in politics. The newcomers shared that they were labelled "quota women," "present only to vote," "present only as numbers." These labels were used by men and women who were experienced in politics. Angry with Dea for finding a job in a state agency – an opportunity that he thought he deserved – Agim (Dea's colleague) openly said in a party meeting: "Huh, how does it come that these young people get all these leading positions?" Young women were insulted during parliamentary sessions, party meetings, and council meetings – insults that reinforced the belief that young women are not prepared and capable to be part of politics.

Dirty jokes were used by men to belittle women during conversations and to sexually objectify women. Besara, a former member of the parliament, said that some of her male colleagues in the parliament dropped dirty jokes during conversations. For her,

dirty jokes, besides being insulting and embarrassing, tell women that "you don't have a clue, you don't know anything, you don't understand politics."

Offensive language in the media, especially social media

Women characterized the media as a source of political violence. Women involved in national-level politics felt that the media was perpetuating a cycle of violence that reinforced hegemonic masculinity. Women shared with us that they were called "who*es," "witches," "chicken," among others.

Besara, a former minister, said that reading the comments that people post about her on Facebook "is traumatic." Besara characterized the comments as "extremely severe." She said: "Such comments put you down, belittle you, and later are used against you." Besara felt that she was being attacked more often and more severely than her male colleagues: "I am fully convinced that the language and comments are harsher, much more denigrating, much more personal, much more offensive and insulting for women [than men], and women are usually attacked for their honor and the fact that they are women."

Women reported other media practices that perpetuate the cycle of political violence. For instance, articles that draw attention to "how women dress up in the parliament," the beauty routine of women, the weight of women, and the family-work balance. All-male panels – inviting only men to discuss political events or to discuss women's experiences and speak on their behalf – is another practice that reinforces hegemonic masculinity.

False accusations in the media

Women, especially those in high-level positions (e.g., former ministers, parliamentarians, mayors), were concerned about false accusations in the media, especially social media. Gentiana, a former minister, characterized such accusations as "offensive," "ugly," "distorted," and "scandalous." She said: "The ugliest thing during election campaigns is that people create fake [social media]

accounts, do not reveal their identity, and offend and denigrate you." Gentiana referred to this group of people as "party soldiers," indicating that they are assigned by parties to attack opponents.

False accusations were made especially during election campaigns. Their purpose was to weaken the electoral support for women. Desara shared that a few days before the election day a newspaper published an article, which highlighted that Desara's political party planned to use her votes for another (male) candidate. She characterized this act as a political attack, seeking to discourage members of her community to vote for her.

While spreading false accusations in the media, opponents referred to characteristics such as gender, age, and religious beliefs. A woman who run for parliamentary elections in 2021 shared her story of how approaching her supporters and asking for funding to run the election campaign was interpreted by the media as a corrupt affair. Media articles referred to her beliefs and gender: "If you read the articles," she said, "you will see the derogatory language that is used. The woman [removed] who openly demands money." Odeta, a former government employee, had a similar experience. During the last election campaign, one of her opponents – a high-level official – posted a message on Facebook, where he accused her of corruption. Odeta said: "I immediately commented on his status and said: Bring out the facts and proof that I have been involved in corruption."

Threats

A few years ago, Odeta run for local office. Two days before the election day, she received a message on her Facebook account. "The person," said Odeta, "was saying that I have your photos and videos, and if you do not withdraw from the race, I will make them public." But threats came from the party as well, especially if women did not comply with party directives. Party leaders visited women at home to discuss their agendas or spoke with their husbands or fathers. If women did not comply with party directives or they were not silent during meetings, they were threatened. During a council meeting, Lediana demanded that the municipality invests in public services

in her village. A few days later, a villager paid a visit to her home and asked her why she interfered with the council's affairs: "He was pressuring me, directly, asking me why I raised the concern. I told him that I raised a problem that concerns us all. Why shouldn't you get investments if you pay the taxes?"

Questioning women's abilities

After being elected the head of the council, Aurora was flooded with questions and comments such as "Why did you take such a responsibility?" and "You don't have any idea of the responsibility that you have taken." She received phone calls that "reminded me that I could resign." These messages made her question her abilities, even though she was one of the most qualified persons in the council. Eneida, a member of the parliament, received a particular request from her (male) voters: "I have come across statements such as we are a northern area [i.e., a traditional area] and we would like a male deputy, or thank you for representing us, for being active everywhere, in the media, but we need a male deputy."

Women's abilities were questioned to trigger gender biases, affect voters' opinion – especially during election campaigns – and weaken electoral support. When Odeta was running for office, her opponents wrote a blog post. The post questioned her skills, ability, and her intentions in politics. Odeta said: "They were asking why she is always competing, and they were overlooking my contribution and the contribution of my family in politics." Odeta was insulted on Instagram as well: "I have received other messages – this time on Instagram – where they insulted me, telling me that I am a disgrace, and I should not be on the campaign."

Removing women from party candidate lists

Women who aspired to advance in their political careers said that they faced the insurmountable difficulty of being removed from party candidate lists. For them, the political party that they belonged was the main perpetrator of violence. Below we will share the experiences of Dafina, Ermira, & Adela who joined the two main

political parties in the country in the early '90s.

Dafina run for mayor. She said: "I was one of the first candidates, the favorite one, to run for mayor [year removed]. And let's say that I was pressured by high-level party leaders to give up on my aspiration and to leave my place to a man … Of course, this demoralized me, especially because I had been fighting for this thing, and it was not that the other candidate was impressive … this was a moment when I openly faced psychological violence." Dafina had a similar experience some years later when she was asked to resign from the parliament.

Adela aspired to become a member of the parliament. She had a long history in her political party. Adela joined the party in 1993, and she took pride in her ability to mobilize community members during election campaigns. Despite her role and contribution to the party, her name "disappeared" from the party list. This is how she described her experience: "Psychological abuse is when you compete, and you are removed from the race, and no one gives you any explanation why you were removed … I was a candidate in the last parliamentary elections. I filled out the self-declaration form but what happened was that my name was removed. We got 20 names from the commission [in Tirana] – the majority had nothing to do with the area. But the commission that selected them knows this better."

Ermira shared two experiences. "When I was a candidate for the deputies' list, I went through the first phase. What happened was that in the final phase, my name disappeared. Someone else's name was introduced – a person who did not have any connection with party structures. He was not proposed by local party structures, and he did not have any connection with the local party branch [name removed] … Then came the National Council. Even though I was among the most voted, officially, I was not told how many votes I received. But I had people in the commission who informed me. The winner was decided beforehand. Thus, there is no democracy within the party." Ermira resigned from the party afterward.

Dafina & Ermira emphasized that while men are not

immune to such practices, they are less vulnerable than women. Men have stronger networks and closer ties with party leaders, and therefore they are more likely to succeed when they run for office. Ermira emphasized that men seek to strengthen their positions within parties by running for office multiple times; meanwhile, they expect women's contribution to politics to be temporary. Women recalled other practices such as being forced to resign after obtaining leadership positions and being replaced with men.

Denying access to financial support during election campaigns
Dafina recalled her experience of running for mayor: "When I run for office [year removed], I was called to a meeting and I was told ok, you will be on the list, but you have to find your financial support." Disappointed, she said: "Some received support, some did not receive support. Some received more, some received less. I am one of those who did not receive anything." A newcomer in politics, Desara said that she did not receive any support from her party in the recent election campaign. She explained that the reason was that she was not considered "a safe investment" from the party leadership because her electoral success was not guaranteed.

Firing or threatening to fire women (and their family members) from government jobs
In the past, Ermira served as a school principal. But things changed in 2015 when her party lost elections. Soon afterward, she was transferred to a rural area. During the same year, Brikena was asked to resign from her job in a state institution. Brikena said: "Even though I had work experience, two degrees, and I did not receive any complaints for as long as I led a public institution, I was asked to resign. I resigned." She explained that her institution was audited every month for two consecutive years, something that affected her health and mental health. Brikena could not afford the pressure anymore, and she resigned.

Women who were members of local councils and held government jobs shared that voting against the will of party leaders

could cost them (and their family members) their jobs – a risk that was too great to face. "If a woman works in a government department," said Ardita, "she does not have a choice. She must protect her salary. It's not that you have other job opportunities, especially in small communities." Other women shared a similar concern.

False accusations and rumors of sexual nature

Women's presence in coffee shops – and more generally spaces where they have historically been excluded – continues to be unwelcoming in some communities. If women challenge cultural norms and practices, rumors of sexual nature and stigmatization follow.

Renata lived in a small, rural community where it was not considered appropriate for women to sit in coffee shops. She said: "It didn't go well for some of my female friends who sought to change this [sit in coffee shops]. Rumors spread and their reputation was tainted … This is something very delicate. You have to be careful, very careful." But this concern was not restricted to rural areas. Women in urban areas said that photos of having coffee with men were used by the media to damage their reputation, especially during election campaigns.

Attending party meetings alone is considered inappropriate in some communities. The expectation is that women should be accompanied by their fathers or husbands. Otherwise, they will be stigmatized. Renata served in the local council, and she was stigmatized for breaking this unwritten rule: "I live in a small community, where people know one another and the fact that a woman is getting out of the house to do politics is hard to swallow from community members. While in the council we are equal [in numbers], there are only two women in party meetings. We are judged, and we are labelled 'bad women.'" Renata confided in us that rumors spread in the community, and they affected her relationship with her husband.

Rumors and false accusations of sexual nature spread especially in the media. Gentiana, a former minister, shared the

story of how a web portal published a long article, where she was portrayed as the mistress of the party leader. She characterized the experience as "devastating." After explaining what happened, she said: "You understand what it means. You are a wife, a mother, a grandmother. You are at an age [pause] that you … could think of everything but not this."

Sexual harassment Sexual harassment

In almost all cases, women said that they have not experienced sexual abuse or harassment. They felt more comfortable sharing the stories of other women. They confided in us that it is not uncommon for women to resign from politics or leadership positions because of sexual harassment. These cases, typically, are not denounced because of the stigma they carry. Women are concerned that they will be stigmatized for the rest of their lives, they will not find justice, and they will lose job opportunities.

Other exclusionary practices

Other exclusionary practices included ignoring women during meetings, considering women's contribution as little or not important, limiting women's role in voting pre-determined decisions, appropriating women during voting procedures, and excluding women from information. Such practices sought to shun women and render them invisible in politics.

Dea, a councilor, was concerned that women's discussions during council meetings were not taken seriously. She said: "There have been instances and times when for example a woman has taken the floor to discuss a problem and it is not that there was any interest, not like when a man takes the floor to discuss a problem … I mean, I have noticed that to some extent women are being ignored or they are being disrespected when they articulate their concerns. What they are saying is not being heard." Women from disadvantaged communities such as remote, rural areas were denied taking the floor – a discriminatory practice that Dea tried to change in her council: "She [a councilor from a remote, rural area] was trying

to take the floor, but the head of the council and the vice-head of the council were ignoring her. They were not allowing her to take the floor. It was my intervention, together with a colleague of mine, because we noticed that she wanted to talk about the problems that were being discussed." This was the first time that she took the floor in two years.

Another exclusionary practice was limiting women's role in voting pre-determined decisions. Lediana, a councilwoman, shared with us her experience: "They [municipal officials] had already decided what they wanted to do, and they came and asked us for our signatures, for our approval. When we said no, they took it personally. They started offending us. On one hand they were saying that we are here to obtain your approval, on the other hand they were saying that no one cares about you."

Another practice was appropriating women during voting procedures. Ermira's experience illustrates this practice: "Three years ago, when we held elections for the chairperson, I was a candidate. But I did not know that I was a candidate. Two hours before the conference, I received a phone call and the person said: [Name removed] you are a candidate, and you must go [to the conference]. I said how can you do such things. I must have my people in the commission. I should follow the procedures. He said no. It has already been decided who will be the chairperson, you will be a puppet. I said I do not accept this kind of situation. I am not a puppet. Whoever thinks that I can be a puppet is wrong … The race was fake. There was no race."

Women who took a stand against such practices said that they were penalized – they were excluded from the information. After contesting the mayor and some of the party members, Blerta was not provided information about party meetings and events. Disappointed, Blerta said: "They are trying to get rid of me."

MOTIVES OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE
Perpetrators of violence sought to preserve or expand the gains associated with political office such as jobs, income, assets,

and access to networks. For example, false accusations and fabricated news were used more intensively during election campaigns to weaken the electoral support for women. The publication of blog posts that questioned women's abilities, skills, and intentions in politics was used to trigger gender biases and influence voters. Other practices such as limiting women's role in voting pre-determined decisions were used to control women and render them invisible in politics. Voter's demands for male representatives were made to ensure access to political networks. Eneida explained the requests of (male) voters for a (male) representative in the following way: "They [male voters] need a man not because he will do a better job at representing them, but because they will sit together, have a drink, smoke, have a glass of raki, beer, and discuss things that they would not be able to discuss with me." This kind of access to political decision-making is interrupted when the representative is a woman. Women who were newcomers in politics felt that they were perceived as a threat by men and women who were experienced in politics. For them, questions such as "Where were you till now [before joining politics]?" "How did you end up in politics?" "What have you done to deserve this position?" revealed that they were not welcomed.

For women – especially women who tried to reach leadership positions in the party – the main perpetrator of political violence was their party. Women characterized the violence that they experience in their party as "hidden, complex, and difficult to address." Dafina, a mayor, compared the fight inside and outside the party in the following way: "The fight within the species is much more difficult than the one outside the party. The fight outside the party is frontal, your enemy is in front of you, and you know with whom you fight, and you can see the strategies that he uses. And of course, you are prepared to face him, and you know that. Meanwhile, in the case of the fight inside the party, you don't know where your enemy is coming from, who is trying to harm you – you can't understand it immediately because later on of course you understand who doesn't have good intentions, who is trying to put a spoke in your wheels,

who doesn't want you to be where you are." Another difference is that political attacks are more common inside the party, especially if women aspire to reach leadership positions. Ermira tried, unsuccessfully, to run for the National Council and parliament. She said: "The biggest problem is inside the party because opponents openly say that I have the power and I can harm your work, your business – for those who own a business. Meanwhile, within the party, attacks are more frequent, especially if they view you as their rival for important positions."

IMPACT OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Women, especially the newcomers, said that they questioned their ability and place in politics. After the head of the council called her "fool," Blerta said that she asked herself whether she has done something wrong. After being bombarded with questions on whether she could chair the council, Aurora started thinking whether she was qualified enough. "But," she said, "then I looked around [the council] and I realized that I was one of the people who was qualified the most." Women who have been targeted by false accusations and rumors in the media reported that such experiences have worsened their health problems, and they have affected their sleep. False accusations and rumors of sexual nature have had traumatic effects on women and their families – children, parents, and partners. Dafina confided in us that "What happened during that moment [when false rumors of sexual nature were spread] was very hard. This is a form [of violence] that others may have experienced, it is not direct, of course, it is abusive, abusive to the maximum … These kinds of ways are not, are not fair, but they cause trauma [cries]." Gentiana, who was falsely accused as the mistress of the party leader, said that she felt ashamed for something that she did not do, and it was embarrassing for her to face her students in the classroom. "Some truths," she said, "cannot be distorted, and this insult is grave."

False accusations and rumors of sexual nature have also affected women's relationships with their partners. Renata lived in a

small community, and she was one of the few women who attended party meetings. One day, her husband came home and told her that one of his friends asked him "Why is your wife going there [attending party meetings]? For whom is she going there?" Renata sought the help of her in-laws to address the situation.

Other women who resigned from the party said that they took the decision after several unsuccessful efforts to climb the political ladder. During her political career, which started in the early '90s, Ermira aspired to become a member of the parliament. Repeatedly, she faced the same barrier: She was proposed by local party structures, but her name would disappear from the party candidate list. She felt that she was hitting a dead wall and disappointed, resigned from the party.

Some women withdrew from politics after a short period of involvement. Aurora – a civil society representative – chaired the local council for a single term, hoping, among others, to improve the lives of persons with disabilities – expand social services and make streets more accessible. She resigned after the first mandate. Aurora said that she lacked the support of political leaders, she found political networks inaccessible, and even though she was a strong voice for persons with disabilities, her voice was not heard.

FURTHER INSIGHTS INTO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS (FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS)

Journalists, Equality in Decision-Making Network, civil society organizations, youth forums,
the Alliance of Councilwomen, female leaders of administrative units
Other actors provided additional insights into violence against women in politics.
Insights from journalists:
- Journalists mainly report cases of physical violence, and such cases often occur during protests and election campaigns.
- Politics influences the way that political violence is portrayed in the media – the kind of messages that are communicated to the audience and how they are communicated.

- Insults, swearing, and name-calling are considered "normal" in official settings. Hence, they are not denounced.
- Threats are common during election campaigns. Often, threats are swept under the rug, and they do not become public.
- Newspaper articles tend to focus on the private lives of women and their physical appearance – not women's role in politics.
- Cases of violence inside parties tend not to become public.

Insights from the Network Equality in Decision-Making:
- Women face psychological violence, threats of dismissal and fines, and they are denied access to party funds during election campaigns. Rumors of sexual nature target especially women.
- Violence inside parties happens more often and it is more severe than between parties. Political violence inside the party is "invisible, hidden, insidious."
- The party is the main perpetrator of violence. Party leaders appoint their favorites – people who are not always qualified or do not have strong grassroots connections – ignore the opinions of party members, remove party members with important contributions from party candidate lists, pre-determine election results, distribute resources (e.g., funds during election campaigns) unfairly, and lack transparency about decision-making. *A centralized and unfair system of decision-making produces violence, and it uses violence such as threats and accusations to survive.*

Insights from civil society organizations:
- Training programs have focused on preparing women to participate in politics – build self-esteem and communicate with voters. So far, training programs have not focused on political violence.
- Women's organizations – political and non-political – have not focused on what happens inside political parties and the violence that women experience.
- Women who engage in politics – especially in small, traditional

communities – face false accusations and rumors of sexual nature.

- Violence in political parties is hidden.
- All-male party meetings and electoral campaigns are frequent. They sustain gender stereotypes and women's exclusion from politics.
- Party leaders use gender quotas to advance their private – not public – agendas.
- Women are concerned that if they denounce violence, they will be labelled as victims, and they will be stigmatized in their parties.
- Members of civil society organizations should run for political office. It might be difficult for politicians to bring about change if they are not party members; however, their presence in politics will increase the quality of representation.

Insights from youth forums:
- Party leaders appear highly supportive of women in public but threaten and discriminate against women in private. A young woman said: "The more efforts to empower women [in public], the more violence behind the scenes."
- Discussions in political parties have focused on how to promote more women in politics, not the violence that women experience. Political violence is often discussed in coffee shops.
- Female leaders and members of youth forums said that they felt judged by community members for being involved in politics. Some of the beliefs are that young women are not capable, are not well-educated, cannot do politics, and do not deserve to be in politics.
- Political violence – especially psychological and sexual violence – is one of the reasons why young women do not join politics.

Insights from the Alliance of Councilwomen:
- Through organized efforts, councilwomen have undertaken initiatives to support disadvantaged groups in communities, such

as victims of domestic violence and female heads of households, and they have organized awareness-raising campaigns on domestic violence. Such initiatives, however, have not focused on political violence.

- Even though the number of women in local councils has increased, it is still men who hold leadership positions. Women's numbers in leadership roles in some communities remain insignificant.
- There is a lack of awareness about political violence.
- The discussion of barriers that women face in politics – including violence – and the ways that they can address such barriers can encourage young women to participate in politics.

Insights from women who led administrative units:

- It is common to encounter community members who are skeptical of women's ability to lead administrative units. The head of an administrative unit shared her experience: "The majority [of community members] cannot accept the idea that a woman can solve their problems, or they can discuss their problems with a woman. There are many requests, maybe complaints that they take directly to the municipality because they think that a woman can't help them."
- Some community members sought to influence women through their male relatives. Women felt uncomfortable with such requests, and they said that requests affected their relations with family members.

FINDINGS: QUANTITATIVE COMPONENT

The three policy areas for which political candidates speak or write about most often in public include education (52.29%), unemployment and job creation (41.18), and healthcare (31.37%). Men were more likely to report that they speak or write about infrastructure and transport, agriculture, public security, and business development. Women were more likely to report that they speak or write about gender equality and women's rights, protection

and wellbeing of children, and social welfare. To convey messages, political candidates have mainly used digital and social media (76.14%), door-to-door canvassing (63.73%), political rallies and meetings with community members (50.98%), and political posters and flyers (34.64%). Men (70.78%) were more likely than women (56.58%) to report that they use door-to-door canvassing to convey their political messages.

POLITICAL CLIMATE

Political candidates were asked whether intimidation and violence, degrading talk and false rumors, threats, physical violence, and the destruction of property are a normal part of politics in the country. A higher percentage of political candidates reported that degrading talk and false rumors (55.56%) are a normal part of politics, followed by intimidation and violence (42.16%), threats against politicians (30.16%), destruction of property (16.34%), and physical violence (6.86%). We provide more information below.

Legend:
- Degrading talk and false rumors
- Threats
- Physical violence
- Intimidation and violence
- Destruction of property
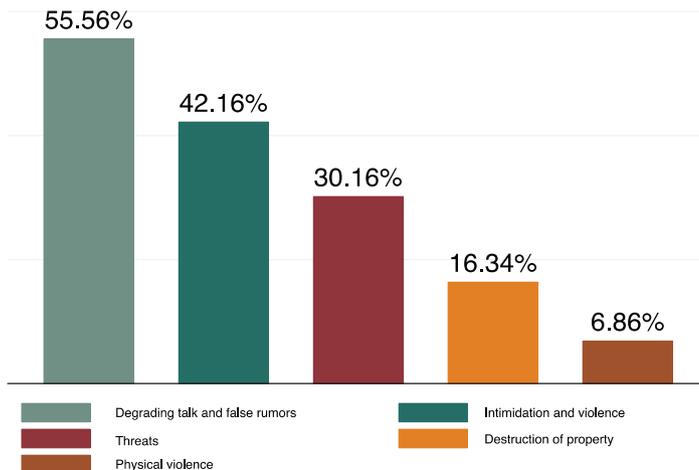
Figure 1:
"Violence is a normal part of politics"
42.16% of respondents (n = 129) said that intimidation and violence are a normal part of politics in the country, 36.60% (n = 112) said that "they happen sometimes," and 21.24% (n = 65) said that "they are not a normal part of politics."

Ending
Violence
Against
Women

42.16%　　　**36.6%**　　　**21.24%**

■ Yes, they are part of politics　　　■ No, but they happen sometimes
■ No, they are not a normal part of politics
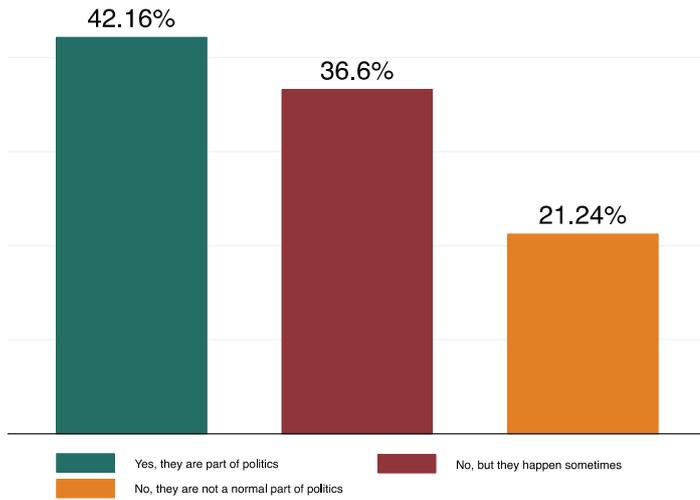
Figure 2:
Would you say that intimidation and violence are a normal part of politics in the country?

55.56% of respondents (n = 170) said that degrading talk and false rumors about politicians are part of politics, 32.68% (n = 100) said that "they happen sometimes," and 11.76% (n = 36) said that "they are not a normal part of politics."

55.56%　　　**32.68%**　　　**11.76%**

■ Yes, they are part of politics　　　■ No, but they happen sometimes
■ No, they are not a normal part of politics
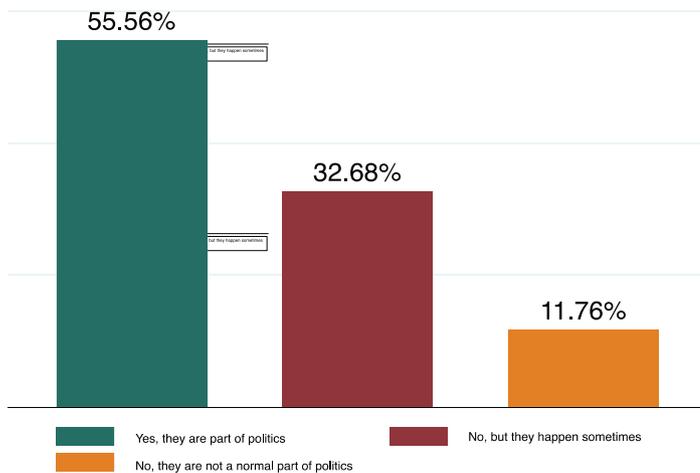
Figure 3:
Are degrading talk and false rumors about politicians a normal part of politics in the country?

30.16% of respondents (n = 92) said that threats against politicians are part of politics, 42.30% (n = 129) said that "they happen sometimes," and 27.54% (n = 84) said that "they are not a normal part of politics."

42.3%

30.16%

27.54%

■ Yes, they are part of politics   ■ No, but they happen sometimes

■ No, they are not a normal part of politics
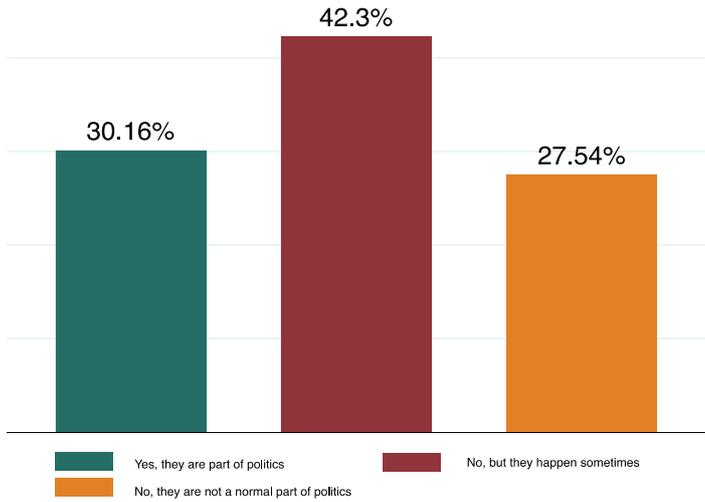
Figure 4:

Are threats against politicians a normal part of politics in the country?

6.86% of respondents (n = 21) said that physical violence against politicians is part of politics, 44.77% (n = 137) said that "it happens sometimes," and 48.37% (n = 148) said that "it is not a normal part of politics."

48.37%

44.77%

6.86%

■ Yes, they are part of politics   ■ No, but they happen sometimes

■ No, they are not a normal part of politics
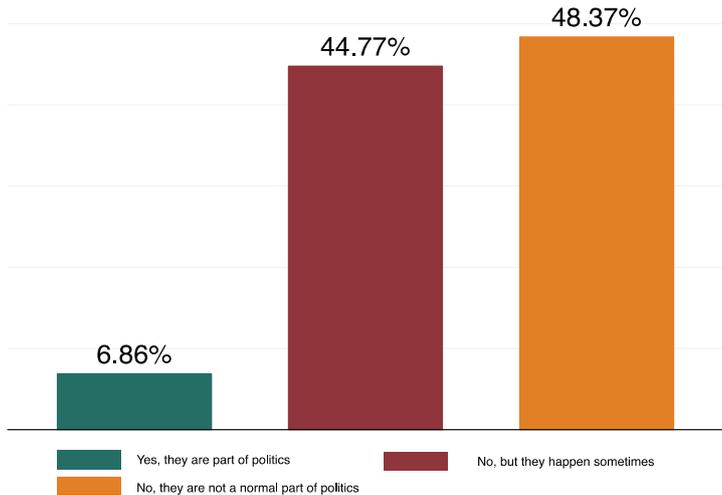
Figure 5:

Is physical violence against politicians a normal part of politics in the country?

16.34% of respondents (n = 50) said that the destruction of property – personal or party property – is part of politics, 46.41% (n = 142) said that "it happens sometimes," and 37.25% (n = 114) said that "it is not a normal part of politics."

46.41%

37.25%

16.34%

■ Yes, they are part of politics   ■ No, but they happen sometimes

■ No, they are not a normal part of politics
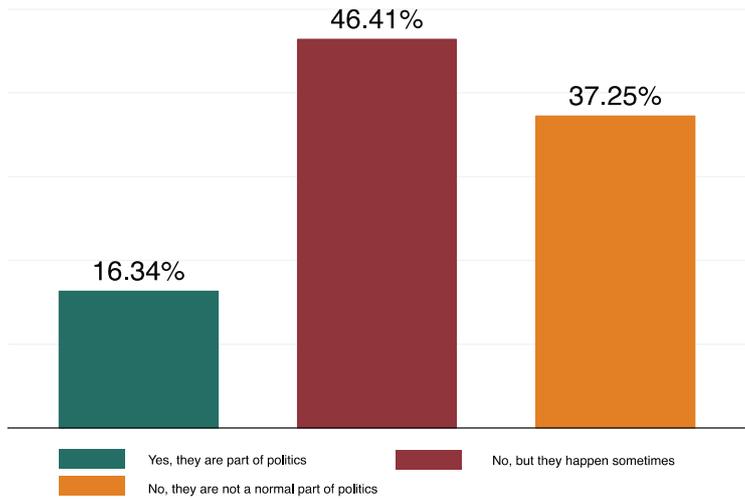
Figure 6:
Is the destruction of property – personal or party property – a normal part of politics in the country?

There were no statistically significant differences between women and men on the ways that they assessed the political climate in the country.

Experience during the election campaign and parliamentary terms

Degrading talk or false rumors

31.05% of respondents (n = 95) reported that they have experienced degrading talk or false rumors in relation to their political role.

68.95%

31.05%

■ Yes   ■ No
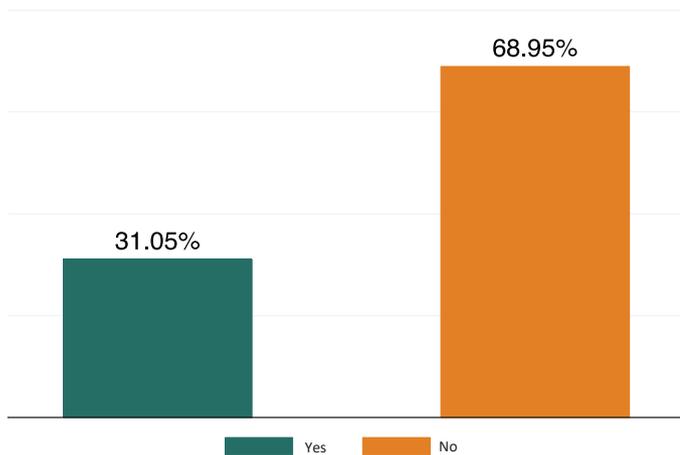
Figure 7:
Have you experienced degrading talk or false rumors about you in relation to your political role?

45 respondents who reported that they have experienced degrading talk or false rumors were women (29.61%) and 50 were men (32.47%). Political candidates were mainly targeted by supporters of other parties (57.45%), digital and social media (50%), and leaders of other parties (44.68%). A higher percentage of men (56.00%, n = 28) than women (31.82%, n = 14) reported that they have experienced degrading talk or false rumors from the leaders of other parties. Degrading talk or false rumors mainly occurred in public (70.22%), followed by political events (36.17%) and private settings (29.03%). Political candidates experienced degrading talk or false rumors mostly during the campaign phase (87.23%).

Degrading talk or false rumors mainly targeted gender (23.40%), age (21.28%), social status (21.28%), and economic status (17.02%). 21 out of 22 respondents who said that degrading talk or false rumors have targeted their gender were women; 13 out of 20 respondents who said that degrading talk or false rumors have targeted their age were women.

Among those who reported that they have experienced degrading talk or false rumors in relation to their political role, 15.96% said that they have experienced it once, 41.49% said a few times, 34.04% said several times, and 8.51% said many times.
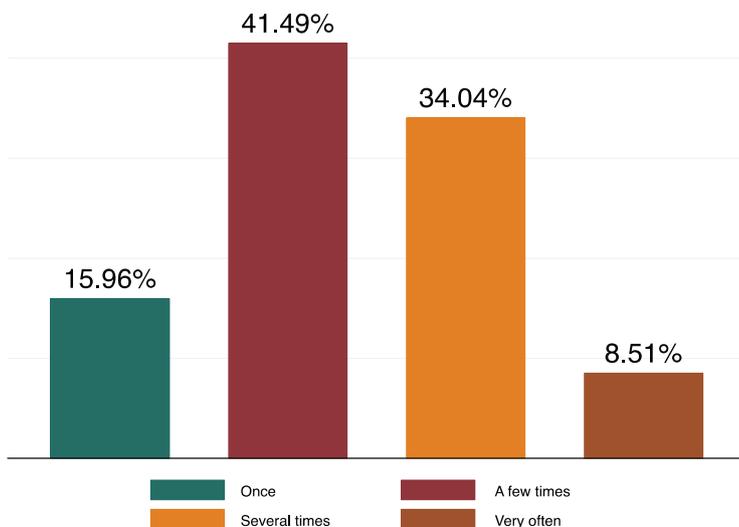
Figure 8:

How often did you experience degrading talk or false rumors?

On average, political candidates have faced 6.03 cases (SD = 7.55) *of degrading talk or false rumors*. The average number of times that women experienced *degrading talk or false rumors* (M = 6.64, SD = 10.02) was higher than for men (M = 5.45, SD = 4.17). The difference, however, was not statistically significant.

Twenty-three political candidates (24.47%) reported that *degrading talk or false rumors* were of a sexual nature. A higher percentage of women than men reported that the *degrading talk or false rumors* that they experienced were of a sexual nature. 43.18% of female respondents who experienced degrading talk or false rumors (n = 19) said this type of violence was of sexual nature. Meanwhile, this was the case for 8% of men (n = 4).

In terms of expectations, more than half of respondents (51.06%) who have experienced *degrading talk or false rumors* said that they had expected less than they experienced, 15.96% had expected more than they experienced, and 32.98% had expected about the level they experienced.

Threats against politicians

13.40% of respondents (n = 41) reported that they have experienced threats in relation to their political role.
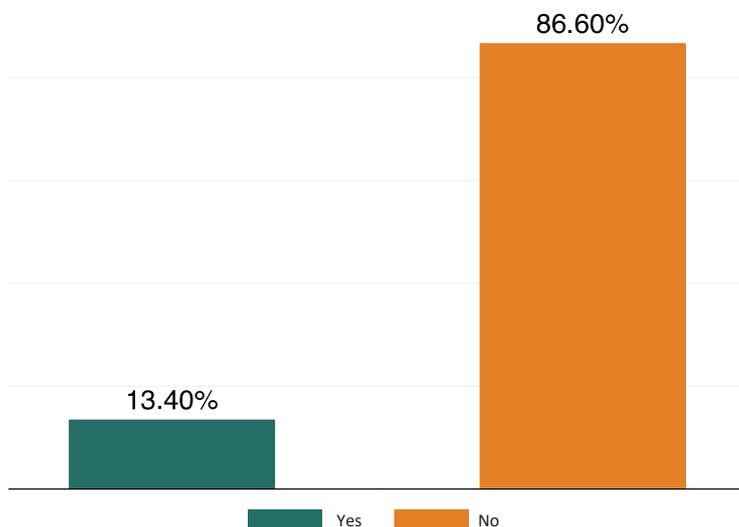
Figure 9:
Have you experienced threats against you in relation to your political role?
23 respondents who reported that they have experienced threats were men (14.94%) and 18 were women (11.84%). Political candidates were mainly targeted by leaders of other parties (60.98%) and supporters of other parties (58.54%). Other sources include MPs from other parties (21.95%) and government officials (21.95%). Threats mainly occurred in a private setting (43.90%) and during a political event (34.15%).

The majority of those who have experienced threats (90.24%) said that threats happened during the campaign phase.

17.07% of those who reported that they have experienced threats (n=7) said that they have experienced threats once, 34.15% said a few times (n = 14), 36.59% said several times (n = 15), and 12.20% said many times (n = 5). Six respondents said that threats were of a sexual nature.

34.15%

36.59%

17.07%

12.20%

Once   A few times
Several times   Very often
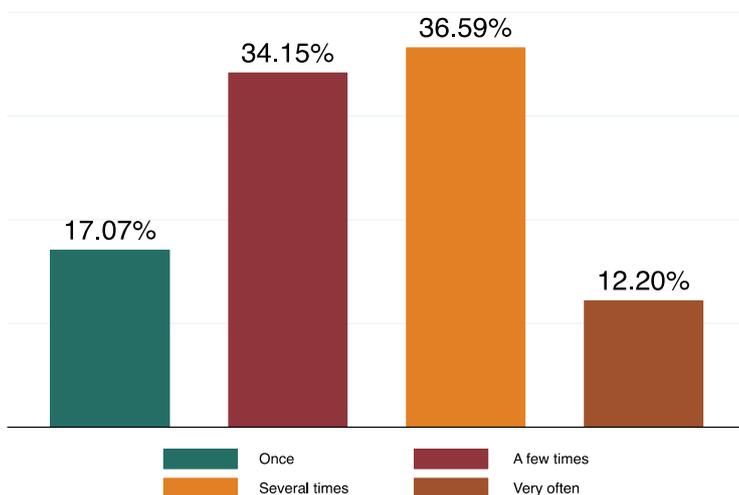
Figure 10:
How often did you experience threats?

58.54% of those who have experienced threats said that they had expected less than they experienced (n = 24), 12.20% said that they had expected more than they experienced (n = 5), and 29.27% said that they had expected about the level they experienced (n = 12).

5.56% of respondents (n = 17; 6 women and 11 men) said that they have experienced threats or harassment from the same person on a continuous basis (i.e., threat or harassment lasted for weeks or months).

94.44%

5.56%

Yes   No
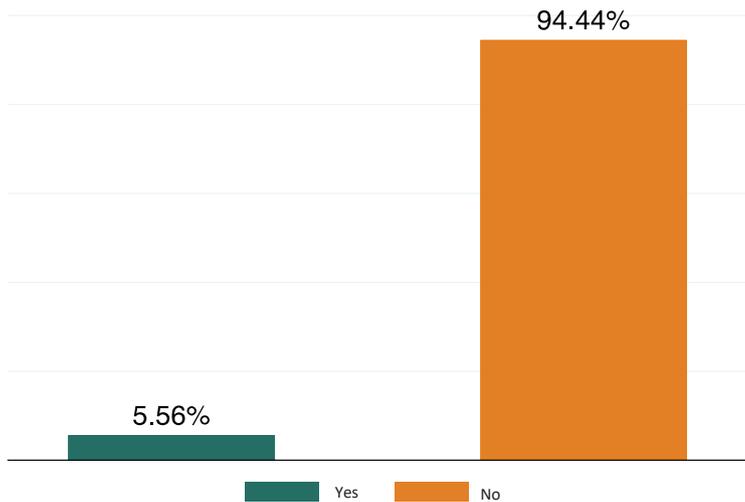
Figure 11:
Have you experienced threats or harassment from the same person on a continuous basis?

Physical violence

Six respondents (1.96%; 4 women and 2 men) reported that they have experienced physical violence in relation to their political role.

98.04%

1.96%

Yes   No
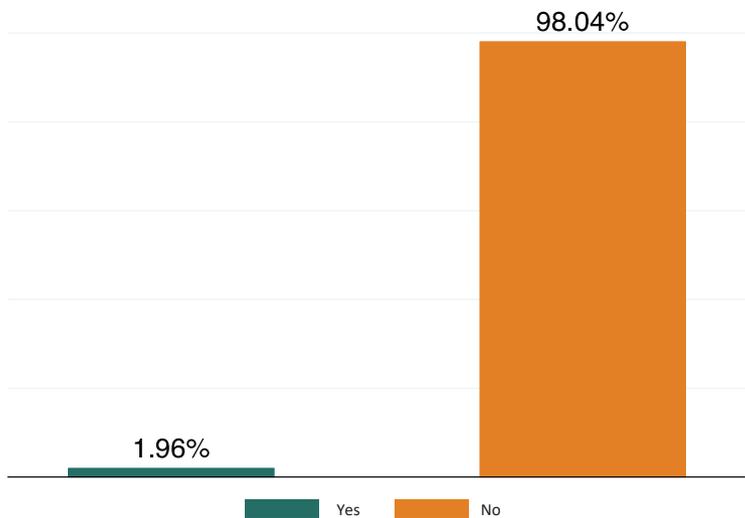
Figure 12:
Have you experienced physical violence in relation to your political role?

Political candidates were targeted by community members, leaders of other parties, MPs from other parties, organized militant groups, members of the military, and police officers. Physical violence occurred in a variety of settings – public and private. Four out of 6 respondents who experienced physical violence said that violence occurred during the campaign phase. All 6 respondents said that they had expected less *physical violence* than they experienced

Damage to property

10.16% of respondents (n = 31; 12 women and 19 men) said that they have experienced *damage to property* in relation to their political role.
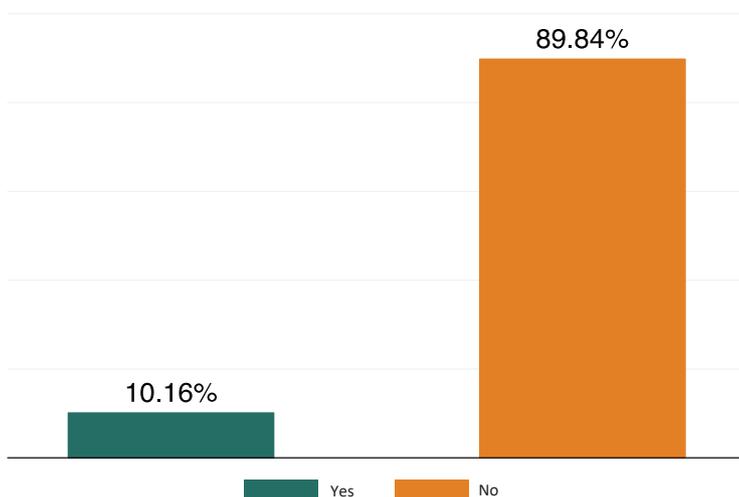
Figure 13:

Have you experienced damage to property in relation to your political role?

Political candidates were targeted by community members (n = 3), supporters of the same party (n =1), leaders of other parties (n =7), MPs from other parties (n =1), supporters of other parties (n =20), organized militant groups (n =3), police officers (n =3), and government officials (n = 1). Damage mainly occurred during the campaign phase (n = 28).

Among those who experienced damage to property, 12 said that they experienced damage once, 9 said a few times, 8 said several times, and 1 said many times.

Legend:
- Once
- A few times
- Several times
- Very often
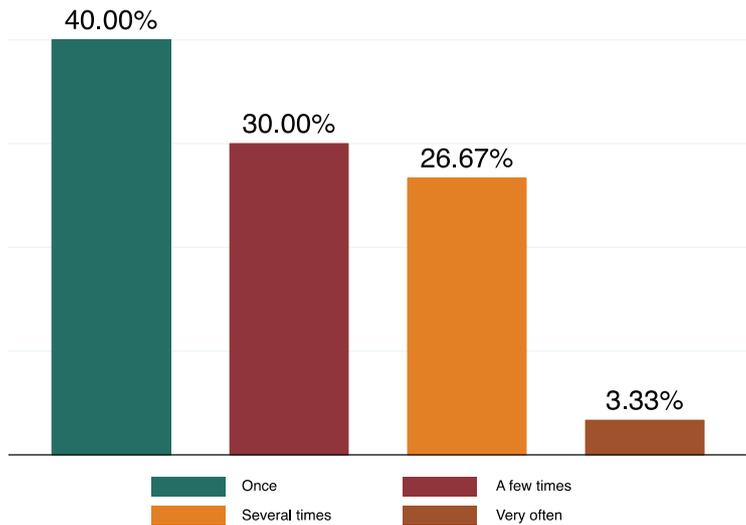
Figure 14:
How often did you experience damage to property?
51.61% of respondents who experienced damage to property (n = 16) said that they had expected less damage to property than they experienced, 25.81% (n = 8) said that they had expected more than they experienced, and 22.58% (n = 7) said that they had expected about the level they experienced

Other types of violence
18.52% of respondents (n = 55; 31 women and 24 men) said that they were denied financial support from the party, 12.79% (n = 39; 25 women and 14 men) said that they have experienced threats of dismissal because of their involvement in politics, and 6.89% (n = 21; 9 women and 12 men) said that they have experienced threats from family members – threats to cut them off economic resources or property – because of their involvement in politics.

18.52%

12.79%

6.89%

Denial of financial support   Threats of dismissal
Threats from family members
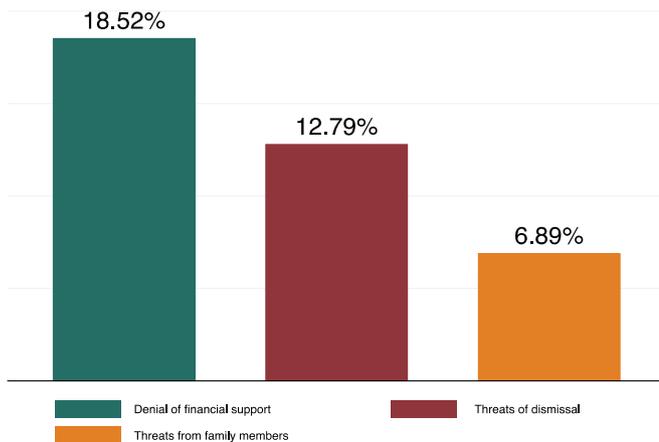
Figure 15:
Other types of violence experienced by political candidates

Violence targeting people associated with political candidates

12.42% of respondents (n = 38; 20 women and 18 men) said that people associated with them have experienced violence (e.g., derogatory language, false news, threats, physical violence, property damage) because of their political role.

87.58%

12.42%

Yes   No
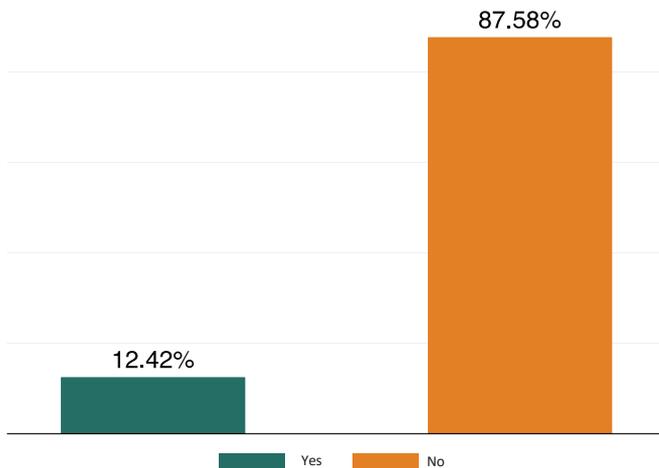
Figure 16:
Has someone associated with you experienced political violence because of your political role?

Victims of violence were mainly family members (67.57%), friends (35.14%), and people working for political candidates (32.43%). This type of violence mainly occurred during the election phase (n = 33).

13.16% of respondents (n = 5) who said that people associated with them have experienced violence reported that violence occurred once, 36.84% (n = 14) said a few times, 34.21% (n = 13) said several times, and 15.79% (n = 6) said many times.

Ending
Violence
Against
Women

Legend: Once · A few times · Several times · Very often

Bar values: 13.16% (Once), 36.84% (A few times), 34.21% (Several times), 15.79% (Very often)
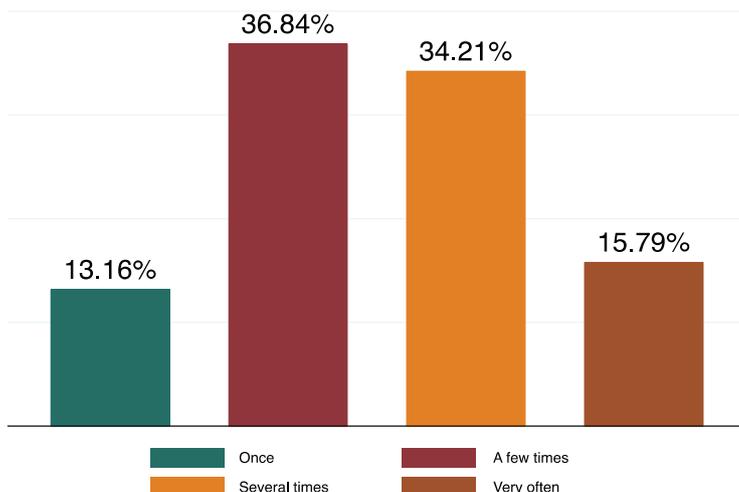
Figure 17:
How often did someone associated with you experienced political violence?

Regarding expectations, 62.16% of respondents who said that people associated with them have experienced violence (n = 23) said that they had expected less violence, 8.11% (n = 3) said that they had expected more violence, and 29.73% (n = 11) said that they had expected about the level they experienced.

Addressing violence

Political candidates were asked whether their party has a Code of Conduct or other instruments that foresee violence against women or gender-based violence. 57.52% of respondents said that their party has a Code of Conduct or other instruments, 10.46% said that their party does not have a Code of Conduct or other instruments, and 32.03% said that they don't know.
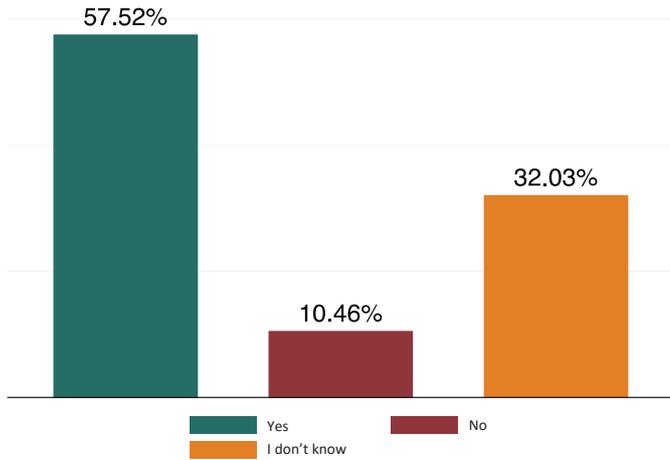
57.52%

32.03%

10.46%

Yes   No
I don't know

Political candidates were also asked whether their party has mechanisms and structures at place that have been established to prevent and address any case of gender-based violence, focusing on the victim. 46.73% of respondents said that their party has mechanisms and structures at place, 16.01% said that their party does not have mechanisms at place, and 37.25% said that they don't know.

46.73%

37.25%

16.01%

Yes   No
I don't know
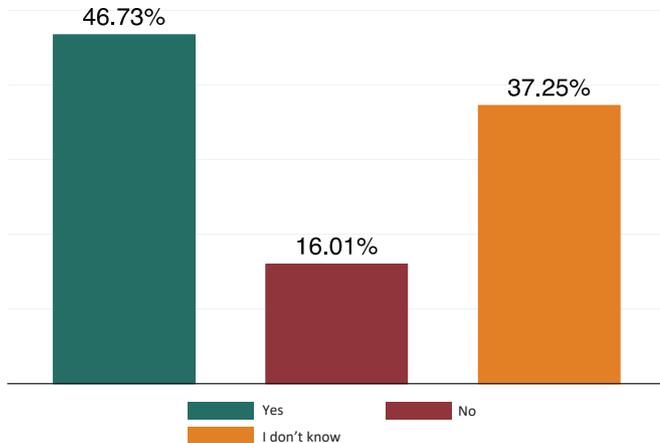
Figure 19:
Does your party have mechanisms and structures at place that have been established to prevent and address any case of gender-based violence, focusing on the victim?

58 political candidates – 18.95% of the sample or 57.42% of those who experienced violence – said that they shared their experiences with the party. The main structures with whom political candidates shared their experiences were the party leadership (68.42%) and political coordinators (52.63%). The reasons that political candidates did not share their experience with party structures were that they did not think that party structures would respond, they considered violence as something personal, or they did not consider their experience as worrisome enough. Typical responses were: "I did not believe that they would take action to protect me," "I don't trust anyone," and "I considered it a personal issue."

36.84% of those who shared their experiences with party structures said that party structures took action. The main action was issuing a media declaration and denouncing violence. Political candidates said that they supported one another on social media. Other, less frequent actions were denouncing violence to the Police and the Prosecutor, publically denouncing violence in the Parliament, and organizing meetings in the party to discuss the issue.

It was mainly members of small parties who shared the reasons why party structures did not take any action. They said that their party was powerless or, as one of the respondents said, "the ruling party has all the power in hand." Others mentioned that the election campaign was too intense, and they did not think that they would solve anything by communicating with party structures, the situation did not aggravate, and they followed the case themselves. One respondent said that it was his party that attacked him.

57.14% of respondents who experienced violence said that they shared their experience with other actors, besides party structures. Political candidates shared their experiences mainly with the family (80.70%) and friends (78.95%). Men were more likely to share their experiences with their friends: 92.59% of men (n = 25) and 66.67% of women (n = 20) who experienced violence said that they shared experiences with their friends. A small number of respondents said that they communicated with the State Police (n = 5), People's Advocate (n = 1), and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (n = 2). 18.33% of non-party actors (n = 11) took action.

The main reason that political candidates did not share their experience was that they did not expect non-party actors to do anything. Another reason was that they did not want to bother

family members, or they tried to protect family members by not engaging them. One respondent said that he was fearful of the consequences. If the case became public, he would suffer the consequences such as dismissal. Some examples of responses were: "It would not change anything," "I don't know people who would address my situation," "If you don't find support in your party, you can't find [support] outside of your party."

The family provided emotional support and encouraged political candidates to continue with the race. Political candidates mobilized the family and friends to react on social media. One of the respondents said: "The family and friends gave me optimism, and they tried to react on their social network and to support my public figure."

IMPACT OF POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

The impact of political engagement was assessed in relation to reputation, sense of safety, self-esteem, candidacy, pride, inspiration for the younger generation, and discussion of ideas. Discussion of issues (M = 8.56, SD = 2.06), pride (M = 8.40 SD = 2.13), self-esteem (M = 8.36, SD = 1.82), and inspiration (M = 8.25, SD = 2.40) received higher mean scores, compared to sense of safety (M = 7.19, SD = 2.43), reputation (M = 7.50, SD = 2.18), and candidacy (M = 7.67, SD = 3.05). There were no statistically significant differences between women and men.

SUGGESTIONS

Women in politics

Addressing violence requires first and foremost that political parties democratize. If parties democratize, women will experience less psychological violence. Overall, the political climate will be less aggressive. A justice system that is more effective and responsive will increase women's trust in state institutions and encourage women to denounce cases of violence. Women's organizations such as the Alliance of Women Parliamentarians, the Alliance of Councilwomen, and political forums should focus on the violence that women experience behind the scenes, collaborate with one another, and they should introduce mechanisms and regulations that address political violence. The Central Election Commission should take a proactive role to prevent economic violence (e.g., the unequal distribution of funds during election campaigns) and to monitor political parties. Women suggested enacting and

enforcing laws that penalize perpetrators of violence (including the media), engaging men in the discussion of political violence, and developing social services to support victims of political violence. Other suggestions included raising awareness about political violence and introducing the concept of political violence in the early-education system.

Political candidates
Political candidates suggested introducing legal instruments and mechanisms that penalize perpetrators of violence – before, during, and after elections. Other suggestions concerned the disengagement of the state administration from elections, the depoliticization of the State Police, the organization of information campaigns on political violence, the discussion of political violence in the media, the organization of early education programs on violence and violence in politics, and the engagement of civil society organizations, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, and the People's Advocate during election campaigns – to identify and denounce cases of political violence. Political candidates called for greater coordination among institutions to address political violence.

Journalists
Journalists said that media outlets (a) should not publish articles that use derogatory language, reinforce gender stereotypes, or perpetuate violence and (b) should react through editorials when political violence occurs. Journalists also suggested the provision of training sessions on writing professional articles about violence. To support the efforts of ending violence against women in politics, media outlets should pay attention to the composition of discussion panels and avoid all-male panels. Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA) should take steps to ensure that women who run for political office are visible in the media and they are allocated a fair amount of time to communicate their message and political agenda to voters.

Equality in Decision-Making Network
Members of the Network Equality in Decision-Making suggested introducing sanctions for perpetrators of violence, publishing newspaper articles that analyze political violence – do not stigmatize the victim, raising awareness about violence and political violence through educational programs, challenging

centralized decision-making in political parties, taking a stand and supporting women who experience political violence.

Civil society organizations

Representatives of civil society organizations suggested that future projects should focus on promoting inclusion, transparency, and fairness in political parties, building alliances with women's political forums, working with communities to challenge gender stereotypes, and organizing campaigns that promote greater participation of women in politics. They emphasized the importance of long-term projects that span beyond election campaigns and the importance of running for political office. Political parties should have an inclusive approach toward civil society organizations.

Youth forums

Leaders and members of youth forums suggested the organization of information campaigns on how and where to denounce violence. They also asked for more exposure to information through the organization of public events, training sessions, and conferences.

The Alliance of Councilwomen

Councilwomen emphasized the importance of organizing activities that raise awareness about violence against women in politics and the mechanisms that exist to address political violence. An initiative that they proposed was to monitor council meetings and other political spaces such as parliamentary commissions. Monitoring results can be used to raise awareness and promote change.

Female leaders of administrative units

The leaders of administrative units suggested organizing public discussions on the topic of violence against women in politics – the problem and what should be done to address it. For them, such activities should have a broad participation – involve the People's Advocate, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, the media, and civil society organizations, among others.

REFERENCES

Anastasi, A. (2020). Legislation on protection from violence against women in elections. Tirana, Albania: UN Women.

Bardall, G., Bjarnegård, E., & Piscopo, J. M. (2020). How is political violence gendered? Disentangling motives, forms, and impacts. Political Studies, 68(4), 916–935. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719881812

Bjarnegård, E. (2018). Making gender visible in election violence: Strategies for data collection. Politics & Gender, 14(4), 690–695. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X18000624

Bjarnegård, E., Håkansson, S., & Zetterberg, P. (2020). Gender and violence against political candidates: Lessons from Sri Lanka. Politics & Gender, 1–29. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X20000471

Central Election Commission. (2021). Zgjedhjet për Kuvend, 25 prill 2021. Retrieved from http://kqz.gov.al/results/results2021/results2021.htm

Code of Conduct of Albanian Political Parties During Election Campaigns [Kodi i Sjelljes së Partive Politike Shqiptare Gjatë Fushatave Zgjedhore]. (2021). Retrieved from https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/media/manager/website/reports/Kodi-i-Sjelljes-AKGJU.pdf

Council of Europe. (2011). Konventa e Këshillit të Evropës për parandalimin dhe luftën kundër dhunës ndaj grave dhe dhunës në familje. Retrieved from https://rm.coe.int/168046246b

Dalton, E. (2017). Sexual harassment of women politicians in Japan. Journal of Gender-Based Violence, 1(2), 205–219. https://doi.org/10.1332/239868017X15099566627749

Dauti, M. (2020). "It's not just a matter of increasing numbers!" Advancing women's political representation in quota-adopting countries. Social Policy Issues, 48(1), 73-91. https://doi.org/10.31971/16401808.48.1.2020.5

Håkansson, S. (2021). Do women pay a higher price for power? Gender bias in political violence in Sweden. Journal of Politics, 83(2), 515–531.

Krook, M. L. (2020). Violence against women in politics: A global phenomenon. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Krook, M. L., & Restrepo Sanín, J. (2020). The cost of doing politics? Analyzing violence and harassment against female

politicians. Perspectives on Politics, 18(3), 740–755. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592719001397

National Democratic Institute. (2021). Political participation and violence against women in politics in Southeastern Europe. Retrieved from https://www.ndi.org/publications/preliminary-report-violence-against-women-politics-southeastern-europe

Observatory for Children and Youth Rights. (forthcoming). Media monitoring report on violence against women during 2021 elections in Albania. Tirana, Albania: UN Women.

Shtraza, I., & Leskaj, I. (2021). Përfaqësimi i grave në zgjedhjet parlamentare: Raport monitorimi.

Tirana, Albania: AWEN. Retrieved from https://awenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/P%C3%8BRFAQ%C3%8BSIMI-I-GRAVE-N%C3%8B-ZGJEDHJET-PARLAMENTARE-2021_Raport-Monitorimi_AWEN-converted.pdf

Ending
Violence
Against
Women

APPENDIX A: CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS (QUALITATIVE COMPONENT)

Table 1: Characteristics of study participants (storytelling)

No.	Name	Age	Education	Years in politics	Election candidate	Served a term	Member of governing bodies	Political Party
1	Blerta	43	Master	6	Yes	Yes	Yes	PS
2	Desara	42	Master	1	Yes	No	No	PD
3	Valmira	43	Master	5	Yes	Yes	Yes	PS
4	Dea	33	Master	2	Yes	Yes	Yes	PS
5	Odeta	33	Master	6	Yes	No	Yes	PD
6	Eneida	48	Master	30	Yes	Yes	Yes	PD
7	Besara	53	PhD	12	Yes	Yes	Yes	PS
8	Ardita	41	Master	4	Yes	Yes	No	LSI
9	Klea	34	Master	3	Yes	Yes	No	PSD
10	Renata	37	Bachelor	10	Yes	Yes	No	PS
11	Brikena	56	Master	15	No	No	No	PD
12	Arbana	53	Bachelor	30	Yes	Yes	Yes	PS
13	Dafina	49	PhD	24	Yes	Yes	Yes	PS
14	Ermira	40	Master	20	Yes	Yes	No	PD
15	Gentiana	57	PhD	27	Yes	Yes	Yes	LSI
16	Lediana	48	Master	4	Yes	Yes	No	AAK
17	Rovena	54	I mesëm	30	Yes	Yes	No	PS
18	Arta	49	Bachelor	2,6	Yes	Yes	Yes	PS
19	Adela	53	Master	25	Yes	Yes	Yes	PD
20	Aurora	54	PhD	4	Yes	Yes	No	LSI

Note. Years in politics refers to the number of years that women were involved in politics; election candidate refers to whether women run for office at the local or national level; served a term refers to whether women served a term in the parliament or local council; member of governing bodies refers to whether women were members of governing bodies in their party; SP = Socialist Party, DP = Democratic Party, SMI = Socialist Movement for Integration, SDP = Social Democratic Party, AAK = Aleanca Arbnore Kombëtare.

Table 2: Characteristics of focus group participants
Table 2.1: Journalists

No.	Gender	Age	Education	Profession	Municipality	Region	Urban/Rural
1	Man	32	Master	Redaktor	Shkodër	Shkodër	Urban
2	Woman	29	Master	Gazetare	Tirana	Tirana	Urban
3	Man	29	Master	Gazetar	Tirana	Tirana	Urban
4	Man	23	Bachelor	Gazetar	Tirana	Tirana	Urban
5	Woman	34	Master	Redaktore	Tirana	Tirana	Urban
6	Man	34	Bachelor	Gazetar	Mat	Dibër	Urban/Rural
7	Man	30	Master	Gazetar	Elbasan	Elbasan	Urban

Table 2.2: Equality in Decision-Making Network

No.	Gender	Age	Education	Profession	Municipality	Region	Urban/Rural
1	Woman	46	Master	Journalist	Tirana	Tirana	Urban
2	Woman	51	Master	Teacher	Librazhd	Elbasan	Urban
3	Woman	57	Master	Economist	Tirana	Tirana	Urban
4	Woman	53	Master	Lawyer	Tirana	Tirana	Urban
5	Woman	50	Master	Teacher	Tirana	Tirana	Urban
6	Woman	58	Master	Social administrator	Tirana	Tirana	Urban
7	Woman	55	Master	Teacher	Peshkopi	Dibër	Rural
8	Woman	43	Master	Social worker	Kukës	Kukës	Urban

Table 2.3: Civil society organizations

No.	Gender	Age	Education	Profession	Municipality	Region	Urban/Rural
1	Man	34	Master	Lawyer	Tirana	Tirana	Urban
2	Woman	38	PhD	Lawyer	Shkodra	Shkodra	Urban
3	Woman	55	Master	Political scientist	Shkodra	Shkodra	Urban
4	Woman	29	Master	Project manager	Elbasan	Elbasan	Urban
5	Woman	28	Master	Psychologist	Peshkopi	Dibra	Rural
6	Woman	49	Master	Economist	Saranda	Vlora	Urban
7	Woman	45	Bachelor	Project manager	Vlora	Vlora	Urban

Table 2.4: Youth forums

No.	Gender	Age	Education	Profession	Municipality	Region	Urban/Rural
1	Woman	27	Master	Social administrator	Tirana	Tirana	Urban
2	Woman	26	Master	Psychologist	Tirana	Tirana	Urban
3	Woman	25	Bachelor	Sociologist	Tirana	Tirana	Urban
4	Woman	21	Bachelor	Doctor	Shkodra	Shkodra	Urban
5	Woman	21	Bachelor	Lawyer	Tirana	Tirana	Urban
6	Woman	22	Master	Lawyer	Tirana	Tirana	Urban

Table 2.5: Alliances of Councilwomen

No.	Gender	Age	Education	Profession	Municipality	Region	Urban/Rural
1	Woman	63	Master	Economists	Saranda	Vlora	Urban
2	Woman	28	Master	Lawyer	Shkodra	Shkodra	Urban
3	Woman	31	Master	Psychologist	Vlora	Vlora	Urban
4	Woman	35	Master	Economist	Vlora	Vlora	Urban
5	Woman	33	Master	Social worker	Mat	Dibër	Urban
6	Woman	48	PhD	Biologist	Shkodra	Shkodra	Urban
7	Woman	58	Master	Biologist	Shkodra	Shkodra	Urban
8	Woman	42	Master	Teacher	Delvina	Vlora	Urban
9	Woman	52	Master	Teacher	Prrenjas	Elbasan	Urban
10	Woman	47	Master	Economist	Vlora	Vlora	Urban
11	Woman	38	Master	Sociologist	Tirana	Tirana	Urban
12	Woman	43	Master	Lawyer	Vlora	Vlora	Urban

Table 2.6: Female leaders of administrative units

No.	Gender	Age	Education	Profession	Urban/Rural
1	Woman	42	Master	Lawyer	Urban
2	Woman	41	Master	Lawyer	Urban
3	Woman	33	Master	Political scientist	Urban
4	Woman	38	Master	Teacher	Rural
5	Woman	32	Master	Economist	Rural

Shënim. Information on the region and municipality was removed.

Table 3: Demographic characteristics and experience in politics

	n	%
Categorical variables		
Highest education level		
a. Primary school	1	0,33
b. Secondary school	4	1,31
c. High school	12	3,92
d. Bachelor	59	19,28
e. Master	203	66,34
f. Doctorate	27	8,82
Marital status		
a. Single	126	41,18
b. Married	175	57,19
c. Divorced	4	1,31
d. Widowed	1	0,33
Children under the age of 18 living at home		
a. Yes	133	43,46
b. No	173	56,54
Current employment		
a. Public sector	98	32,03
b. Private sector	162	52,94
c. Unemployed	26	8,50
d. Student	15	4,90
e. Other	5	1,63
Gender		
a. Man	154	50,33
b. Woman	152	49,67
c. Other	0	0
Were you affiliated to a party in the latest election?		
a. Yes	305	99,67
b. No, I was an independent candidate	1	0,33
If yes, which party were you affiliated with in the parliamentary elections of 2021?		
a. Socialist Party	45	14,71
b. Alliance for Change	48	15,69
c. Socialist Movement for Integration	65	21,24

d. Social Democratic Party	39	12,75
e. Nisma (Initiative) Thurje	60	19,61
f. Movement for Change	49	16,01
Have you ever held an official Yessition within this party (Have you ever been a member of the governing bodies of the party)?		
a. Yes	109	35,62
b. No	197	64,38
Have you ever been a candidate for a different party? (Or for any party, if the candidate is independent)		
a. Yes	22	7,19
b. No	284	92,81
How many parliamentary elections have you participated in as a candidate?		
a. 1	248	81,05
b. 2	36	11,76
c. 3	15	4,90
d. More than 3	7	2,29
How many terms have you served in the parliament (including the 2021 term)?		
a. 0	270	88,24
b. 1	18	5,88
c. 2	10	3,27
d. 3	5	1,63
e. More than 3	3	0,98
Were you elected a Member of Parliament in the parliamentary elections of 2021?		
a. Yes	28	9,15
b. No	278	90,85
Which policy areas do you most often speak or write about in public in your role as a politician? Circle the three most important.		
a. Education	160	52,29
b. Healthcare	96	31,37
c. Infrastructure and transport	74	24,18
d. Agriculture	62	20,26
e. Foreign policy	19	6,21
f. National economy	82	26,80
g. Gender equality and women's rights	96	31,37
h. Unemployment and job creation	126	41,18
i. Protection and wellbeing of children	45	14,71
j. Climate and environment	22	7,19
k. Post-war reconciliation and peace building	6	1,96

l. Anti-corruption	85	27,78
m. Public Security and violence	30	9,80
n. Rights of religious and ethnic minorities	16	5,23
o. Business development	47	15,36
p. Social welfare	53	17,32
q. Other	30	9,80
r. Other	2	0,65
s. Other	1	0,33
Which of the following methods do you use to convey your political messages?		
a. Political rallies and meetings with community members	156	50,98
b. Door-to-door canvassing	195	63,73
c. Political advertising in media (radio, TV, online media)	40	13,07
d. Written op-eds and interviews (radio, TV, online media)	55	17,97
e. Appearances in TV and radio	71	23,20
f. Political posters and flyers	106	34,64
g. Digital and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, phone messages, email, etc.)	233	76,14
h. Other methods	10	3,27
i. Other methods	0	0
Continuous variables	M (range)	DS
Age	37,16 (19-68)	11,86
For how many years have you been a member of this party?	6,30 (0-30)	7,86
What was your number (position number) in the party candidate list in the parliamentary elections of 2021?	8,95 (1-36)	7,02
How would you rate your visibility on digital and social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube), from 1 (very low) to 10 (very high)?	6,69 (1-10)	2,48

Table 4: Political climate

	n	%
Would you say that elections in Albania nowadays are generally free and fair?		
a. Yes, they are generally free and fair	40	13,07
b. Yes, but there are some problems	101	33,01
c. No, they are not free and fair	165	53,92
Would you say that intimidation and violence are a normal part of politics in the country?		
a. Yes, they are part of politics	129	42,16
b. No, but they happen sometimes	112	36,60
c. No, they are not a normal part of politics	65	21,24
Are degrading talk and false rumors about politicians a normal part of politics in your country?		
a. Yes, they are part of politics	170	55,56
b. No, but they happen sometimes	100	32,68
c. No, they are not a normal part of politics	36	11,76
Are threats against politicians a normal part of politics in the country?		
a. Yes, they are part of politics	92	30,16
b. No, but they happen sometimes	129	42,30
c. No, they are not a normal part of politics	84	27,54
d. Yes, they are part of politics		
Is physical violence against politicians a normal part of politics in the country?		
a. Yes, it is part of politics	21	6,86
b. No, but it happens sometimes	137	44,77
c. No, it is not a normal part of politics	148	48,37
Is the destruction of property – personal or party property – a normal part of politics in the country?		
a. Yes, it is part of politics	50	16,34
b. No, but it happens sometimes	142	46,41
c. No, it is not a normal part of politics	114	37,25

Table 5: Experience during the election campaign and parliamentary term

	n	%
Have you experienced degrading talk or false rumors about you in relation to your political role?		
a. Yes	95	31,05
b. No	211	68,95
If yes, from whom?		
a. Family members	2	2,13
b. Friends	7	7,45
c. Community members	13	13,83
d. Religious or community leaders	0	0
e. Leaders of my own party	5	5,32
f. MPs from my own party	0	0
g. Supporters of my own party	5	5,32
h. Leaders of other parties	42	44,68
i. MPs from other parties	19	20,21
j. Supporters of other parties	54	57,45
k. People from other ethnic or religious groups	2	2,13
l. Traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, etc.)	18	19,15
m. Digital and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, phone messages, email, etc.)	47	50,00
n. Business owners	3	3,19
o. Civil society organizations	2	2,13
p. Organized militant groups	13	13,83
q. Members of the military	0	0
r. Police officers	8	8,51
s. Government officials	10	10,64
t. Parliamentary staff members	1	1,06
u. Hired thugs	10	10,64
v. Other	2	2,13
Where did the degrading talk or false rumors occur?		
a. In a private setting (outside of the public eye)	27	29,03
b. During a political event	34	36,17
c. In the Parliament	5	5,32
d. In public (including social media)	66	70,22
e. Other	0	0
When did the degrading talk or false rumors occur?		

a. Candidate selection phase	21	22,34
b. Campaign phase	82	87,23
c. Election day	14	14,89
d. Post-election phase	12	12,77
e. In parliamentary sessions	4	4,26
f. Other	4	4,26
What did the degrading talk or false rumors target?		
a. Gender	22	23,40
b. Age	20	21,28
c. Physical appearance	1	1,06
d. Religion	4	4,26
e. Ethnicity	5	5,32
f. Social status	20	21,28
g. Economic status	16	17,02
h. Place of origin	9	9,57
i. Education level	8	8,60
j. Other	37	39,36
How often did you experience degrading talk or false rumors about you?		
a. Once	15	15,96
b. A few times	39	41,49
c. Several times	32	34,04
d. Many times	8	8,51
How many times – approximately – did you experience degrading talk or false rumors?	6,03 (7,55)	1-50
How often were the degrading talk or false rumors of a sexual nature?		
a. Never	71	75,53
b. Once	6	6,38
c. A few times	13	13,83
d. Several times	3	3,19
e. Many times	1	1,06
How many times – approximately – did you experience degrading talk or false rumors of sexual nature?	7 (1-20)	6,18
What level of degrading talk or false rumors had you expected?		
a. I had expected more than I experienced	15	15,96
b. I had expected about the level I experienced	31	32,98
c. I had expected less than I experienced	48	51,06
How would you rate the language used toward you on social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram), from 1 (very negative) to 10 (very positive)?	6,39 (1-10)	2,45

Have you experienced threats against you in relation to your political role?		
a. Yes	41	13,40
b. No	265	86,60
If yes, from whom?		
a. Family members	0	0
b. Friends	1	2,44
c. Community members	2	4,88
d. Religious or community leaders	0	0
e. Leaders of my own party	1	2,44
f. MPs from my own party	0	0
g. Supporters of my own party	2	4,88
h. Leaders of other parties	25	60,98
i. MPs from other parties	9	21,95
j. Supporters of other parties	24	58,54
k. People from other ethnic or religious groups	0	0
l. Traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, etc.)	1	2,44
m. Digital and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, phone messages, email, etc.)	5	12,20
n. Business owners	4	9,76
o. Civil society organizations	0	0
p. Organized militant groups	6	14,63
q. Members of the military	0	0
r. Police officers	5	12,20
s. Government officials	9	21,95
t. Parliamentary staff members	0	0
u. Hired thugs	2	4,88
v. Other	3	7,32
Where did the threats occur?		
a. In a private setting (outside of the public eye)	18	43,90
b. During a political event	14	34,15
c. In the Parliament	1	2,44
d. In public	7	17,07
e. Other	13	31,71
In what election phases did the threats primarily occur?		
a. Candidate selection phase	6	14,63
b. Campaign phase	37	90,24
c. Election day	10	24,39

d. Post-election phase	10	24,39
e. In parliamentary sessions	2	4,88
f. Other	2	4,88
How often did you experience threats?		
a. Once	7	17,07
b. A few times	14	34,15
c. Several times	15	36,59
d. Many times	5	12,20
How many times – approximately – did you experience threats?	14	34,15
How often were these threats of a sexual nature?	4,71 (1-15)	3,79
a. Never	35	85,37
b. Once	2	4,88
c. A few times	3	7,32
d. Several times	0	0
e. Many times	1	2,44
f. Never	0	0
What level of threats had you expected?		
a. I had expected more than I experienced	5	12,20
b. I had expected about the level I experienced	12	29,27
c. I had expected less than I experienced	24	58,54
Have you experienced threats or harassment on a continuous basis from the same person? (The threat or harassment lasted for weeks or months)		
a. Yes	17	5,56
b. No	289	94,44
Have you experienced physical violence in relation to your political role?		
a. Yes	6	1,96
b. No	300	98,04
If yes, from whom?		
a. Family members	0	0
b. Friends	0	0
c. Community members	1	16,67
d. Religious or community leaders	0	0
e. Leaders of my own party	0	0
f. MPs from my own party	0	0
g. Supporters of my own party	0	0
h. Leaders of other parties	2	33,33

i. MPs from other parties	1	16,67
j. Supporters of other parties	2	33,33
k. People from other ethnic or religious groups	0	0
l. Traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, etc.)	0	0
m. Digital and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, phone messages, email, etc.)	0	0
n. Business owners	0	0
o. Civil society organizations	0	0
p. Organized militant groups	1	16,67
q. Members of the military	1	16,67
r. Police officers	4	66,67
s. Government officials	0	0
t. Parliamentary staff members	0	0
u. Hired thugs	0	0
v. Other	0	0
Where did it occur?		
a. In a private setting (outside of the public eye)	1	16,67
b. During a political event	1	16,67
c. In the Parliament	1	16,67
d. In public	3	50,00
e. Other	2	33,33
In what election phases did the physical violence primarily occur?		
a. Candidate selection phase	0	0
b. Campaign phase	4	66,67
c. Election day	0	0
d. Post-election phase	1	16,67
e. In parliamentary sessions	1	16,67
f. Other	2	33,33
How often did you experience physical violence?		
a. Once	3	50,00
b. A few times	2	33,33
c. Several times	1	16,67
d. Many times	0	0
How often was physical violence of a sexual nature?		
a. Never	6	100
b. Once	0	0
c. A few times	0	0

d. Several times	0	0
e. Many times	0	0
f. Never	0	0
What level of physical violence had you expected?		
a. I had expected more than I experienced	0	0
b. I had expected about the level I experienced	0	0
c. I had expected less than I experienced	6	100
Have you experienced damage to property in relation to your political role? (Examples of damage include tearing down election posters, destroying campaign materials, damaging the house, the car, or the business.)		
a. Yes	31	10,16
b. No	274	89,84
If yes, from whom?		
a. Family members	0	0
b. Friends	0	0
c. Community members	3	9,68
d. Religious or community leaders	0	0
e. Leaders of my own party	0	0
f. MPs from my own party	0	0
g. Supporters of my own party	1	3,23
h. Leaders of other parties	7	22,58
i. MPs from other parties	1	3,23
j. Supporters of other parties	20	64,52
k. People from other ethnic or religious groups	0	0
l. Traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, etc.)	0	0
m. Digital and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, phone messages, email, etc.)	0	0
n. Business owners	0	0
o. Civil society organizations	0	0
p. Organized militant groups	3	9,68
q. Members of the military	0	0
r. Police officers	3	9,68
s. Government officials	1	3,23
t. Parliamentary staff members	0	0
u. Hired thugs	0	0
v. Other	7	22,58
In what election phases did the damage to property primarily occur?		
a. Candidate selection phase	3	9,68

b. Campaign phase	28	90,32
c. Election day	3	9,68
d. Post-election phase	1	3,23
e. In parliamentary sessions	0	0
f. Other	2	6,45
How often did you experience damage to property?		
a. Once	12	40,00
b. A few times	9	30,00
c. Several times	8	26,67
d. Many times	1	3,33
How many times – approximately – did you experience damage to property?	4,36 (1-10)	3,32
What level of damage to property had you expected?		
a. I had expected more than I experienced	8	25,81
b. I had expected about the level I experienced	7	22,58
c. I had expected less than I experienced	16	51,61
Were you denied financial support from the party – support that you were entitled to receive as a party member? (Support can cover areas such as electoral campaign financing, qualifications)		
a. Yes	55	18,52
b. No	242	81,48
Have you experienced threats of dismissal because of your involvement in politics?		
a. Yes	39	12,79
b. No	228	74,75
c. I am not employed	38	12,46
Have you experienced threats from family members – threats to cut you off economic resources or property – because of your involvement in politics?		
a. Yes	21	6,89
b. No	284	93,11
Did you resign from the electoral race in the parliamentary elections of 2021?		
a. Yes	5	1,64
b.No	300	98,36
Was your decision influenced by pressure or threats that you may have received?		
a. Yes	0	0
b. No	4	100
Has someone associated with you experienced any form of violence (e.g., derogatory language, false news, threats, physical violence, property damage) because of your political role?		

a. Yes	38	12,42
b. No	268	87,58
If yes, who was the victim?		
a. Family members	25	67,57
b. Friends	13	35,14
c. People working for me	12	32,43
d. Supporters	8	21,62
e. Party officials	2	5,41
f. Others	4	10,81
When did such violence against people associated with you primarily occur?		
a. Candidate selection phase	5	13,16
b. Campaign phase	33	86,84
c. Election day	6	15,79
d. Post-election phase	10	26,32
e. Parliamentary session	1	2,63
f. Candidate selection phase	4	10,53
g. Other	0	0
How often do you think that such violence against people associated with you occurred?		
a. Once	5	13,16
b. A few times	14	36,84
c. Several times	13	34,21
d. Many times	6	15,79
How many times – approximately – did the people associated with you experience violence?	4,48 (1-10)	3,08
What level of violence against people associated with you had you expected?		
a. I had expected more than I experienced	3	8,11
b. I had expected about the level I experienced	11	29,73
c. I had expected less than I experienced	23	62,16

Table 6: Addressing violence

	n	%
Does your party have a Code of Conduct or other instruments that foresee violence against women or gender-based violence?		
a. Yes	176	57,52
b. No	32	10,46
c. I don't know	98	32,03
Does your party have mechanisms and structures at place that have been established to prevent and address any case of gender-based violence, focusing on the victim?		
a. Yes	143	46,73
b. No	49	16,01
c. I don't know	114	37,25
Did you share your experience with party structures?		
a. Yes	58	18,95
b. No	43	14,05
c. I did not experience violence	205	66,99
If yes, specify the structures with whom you shared the experience		
a. Party leadership	39	68,42
b. National Council	6	10,53
c. Secretariat	7	12,28
d. Political coordinators	30	52,63
e. Women's Forum	6	10,53
f. Youth Forum	4	7,02
g. Other	3	5,26
h. Other	1	1,89
Did party structures take any action?		
a. Yes	28	36,84
b. No	48	63,16
Did party structures take any action?		
a. Yes	56	57,14
b. No	42	42,86
If yes, specify the actors with whom you shared the experience.		
a. Partner	27	47,37
b. Family	46	80,70
c. Friends	45	78,95
d. State Police	5	8,77
e. People's Advocate	1	1,75

f. Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination	2	3,51
g. Traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, etc.)	5	8,77
h. Digital and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, phone messages, email, etc.)	8	14,04
i. Alliance of Women Parliamentarians	0	0
j. Alliance of Councilwomen	0	0
k. Other	4	7,02
Did other actors take any action?		
a. Yes	11	18,33
b. No	49	81,67

Table 7: Impact of political engagement

	M (diapazoni)	DS
Reputation. Circle one number on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that your political engagement has ruined your political reputation and 10 means that your engagement has improved your political reputation.	7,50 (1-10)	2,18
Sense of safety. Circle one number on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that your political engagement has made you feel more afraid and 10 means that your engagement has improved your sense of safety.	7,19 (1-10)	2,43
Self-esteem. Circle one number on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that your political engagement has decreased your self-esteem and 10 means that it has improved your less self-esteem.	8,36 (1-10)	1,82
Candidacy. Circle one number on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that your political engagement has made you unwilling to run again and 10 means that engagement has increased your willingness to run again.	7,67 (1-10)	3,05
Pride. Please circle one number on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that your political engagement has decreased your pride and 10 means that your engagement has increased your pride.	8,40 (1-10)	2,13
Inspire the younger generation. Please circle one number on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that your political engagement has made it more difficult for you to inspire the younger generation to become political leaders and 10 means that your engagement greatly improved your possibilities to inspire the younger generation to become political leaders.	8,25 (1-10)	2,40
Discussion of issues. Please circle one number on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means your political engagement has led you to avoid certain controversial issues and 10 means that your engagement has greatly increased your willingness to speak about certain controversial issues.	8,56 (1-10)	2,06

Table 7: Other survey information

	n	%
Region		
Berat	21	6,86
Dibër	6	1,96
Durrës	27	8,82
Elbasan	35	11,44
Fier	39	12,75
Gjirokastër	16	5,23
Korçë	32	10,46
Kukës	7	2,29
Lezhë	19	6,21
Shkodër	29	9,48
Tirana	55	17,98
Vlorë	20	6,54
Electoral area		
Urban	185	65,60
Rural	27	9,57
Urban & Rural	70	24,82
Mode of data collection		
Face-to-face	272	88,89
Zoom	7	2,29
Google form	14	4,58
Email	13	4,25
Length of communication (min)	35,53 (10-101)	16,35