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**Findings from a research study  
on the impact of COVID-19  
on domestic violence against  
women in Ha Noi, Viet Nam**

Hanoi, September 2020



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Hanoi, September 2020

Implemented by The Institute for Social Development Studies and Hanoi School of Public Health, sponsored by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung SEA-Hanoi Office

Cover photo: ISDS



## FOREWORD



Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung is a centre for international dialogue, political exchange, and political education and is one of the six German political foundations. We are affiliated to the German Party “DIE LINKE” – The Left Party of Germany. Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung currently has over 25 offices worldwide and we are in collaboration with partner organisations including progressive non-Governmental organisations, universities, government agencies and left networks in more than 80 countries to achieve global social rights for all people. We thereby focus on the pillars of social justice and social Ecological transformation in our work in the Mekong Region and Vietnam.

Since the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Vietnam on the 23rd of January 2020, the Vietnamese government has been working against the clock to contain the spread of the virus and to protect its people. Large-scale quarantines, travel restrictions, social and physical-distancing measures, and a country lockdown were applied to control the pandemic. As of today, Vietnam has recorded just over 1000 confirmed COVID-19 cases and less than 50 deaths from the virus. In a worldwide comparison, Vietnam is among the most successful countries to stop the virus from spreading. Nevertheless, further efforts are needed to tackle the serious and long-term social, ecological, and economic impacts of the pandemic, particularly among the vulnerable populations.

As a left-wing political education institution, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Southeast Asia -Hanoi office has reacted to this pandemic politically to support the global fight against the virus and to shed light on its social consequences. We are working to ensure that the existing and coming policies shall not leave any one behind, including the more vulnerable and marginalised groups.

The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Southeast Asia -Hanoi office is thereby pleased to support the Institute of Social Development Studies (ISDS) in their collaboration with Hanoi University of Public Health to conduct the study on “The impact of COVID-19 on domestic violence victims in Hanoi, Vietnam.” As one of the first research undertaken on this topic in Vietnam, this study addresses the notable rise of domestic violence during COVID-19 pandemic and reveals the adverse impacts it exerts on women’s physical, mental, and sexual health.

We believe that the study findings help underline the various dimensions of the pandemic’s detrimental effects on women’s rights and well-being, as well as provide strong scientific and empirical evidence for the improvement of policies and programmes aiming to eliminate violence against women and to mitigate the pandemic’s ramification in general.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Philip Degenhardt'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

**PHILIP DEGENHARDT**

Regional Director of RLS SEA-Hanoi Office

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has been spreading globally and exerting catastrophic impacts on various aspects of life. As of 21 August 2020, the total numbers of infected and death cases that were associated with COVID-19 were 22,492,312 and 788,503 respectively;<sup>1</sup> and have been expected to continue to rise steadily over the upcoming months. Besides its visible consequences, the COVID-19 pandemic has also quietly crept into every single household, escalating a crisis of domestic violence. The violence, which tended to happen when women were locked down in their homes with their abusers<sup>4</sup>, could even be accelerated by disease control and prevention measures, such as physical distancing and mandatory quarantine at home.<sup>4</sup> It has been estimated that there would be an additional 15 million cases of intimate partner violence in 2020 for an average lockdown duration of 3 months, and would even increase to 31 million cases for an average lockdown duration of 6 months.<sup>5</sup> This type of “crisis within crisis” has emerged since lockdown was implemented, as domestic violence rose considerably in many countries worldwide.<sup>6</sup>

In Vietnam, since the first case of COVID-19 being detected on 23 January 2020, there have been 1,009 confirmed cases and 25 deaths reported.<sup>10</sup> The pandemic has had devastating impacts on the economy, threatening 10.3 million workers to lose their jobs, or have their income declined since the second quarter of the year. Nationwide social-distancing measures were enacted under the Directive No.16/CT-TTg throughout most of April 2020,<sup>12,13</sup> which led to more than 95 million people being isolated in the home. Home has not been totally safer, especially for women who are victims of domestic violence.

Institute for Social Development Studies and Hanoi School of Public Health, sponsored by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, have conducted a research study with an aim to examine impacts of the pandemic on women who were victims of domestic violence in Hanoi, Vietnam.

The study was deployed and implemented from June to September 2020 combining both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A total of 303 women aged 18-60 living in Ha Noi and used to be victims of mental, physical and sexual violence from their husband/partners were recruited to participate in this research.

The research study found 99% of couples had marital/domestic conflicts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Up to 80.9% of women reported suffering from controlling behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic; 34% experienced economic violence; the rate of women being abused psychologically and physically are 87.8% and 59% respectively. Furthermore, 25% of women were found to be victims of sexual violence.

What is noteworthy is that the majority of women respondents stated that all forms of violence occurred more frequently during the COVID-19 pandemic. In specific, 84% of women said that



controlling behaviours took place more often; 91% experienced more mental violence; 93% said physical violence occurred more frequently, among which 56% experienced physical violence more than five times, 30% from two to five times while 10% experienced it once; 79% said they were sexually abused more during the time of the pandemic, of which 52% experienced sexual abuse more than five times, followed by 37% from two to five times.

Up to 80.7% of women reported damage and/or injury caused by physical, psychological, and sexual violence. 75.2% of women endured emotional injury, while the figure is 43.3% for physical injury. About a third (31.7%) of the women need medical care due to the violence caused by their husbands/partners.

Among women experiencing domestic violence, 45% sought help to escape their situation. The rates of women who said that to find help when domestic violence occurs during the COVID-19 pandemic is difficult and very difficult are 17% and 2% respectively. During the pandemic, 51% of women who are victims of domestic violence had suicidal thoughts, among which 7.2% attempted to commit suicide.

Addressing the increase of domestic violence against women during COVID-19 pandemic would require a considerable amount of efforts from the government and active cooperation between government agencies, social organisations and communities.

- Prioritize and integrate domestic violence issue into prevention, response, and risk mitigation parts of COVID-19-related programs, including ensuring that adequate funding is provided for safe, appropriate, and high effective gender-based interventions.
- All aspects of programs' and/or interventions' design and implementation should ensure that women's voices are listened to, and that women's organizations have opportunities to involve in the decision-making processes for effective and context-specific approaches during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Raising public awareness of domestic violence against women during the pandemic and disseminating the supporting information for targeted women need to be carried out.
- Develop and strengthen supporting services for women who are victims of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES



Photo: Fernando Zhimaincelar/Phobay

The COVID-19 pandemic has been spreading globally and exerting catastrophic impacts on the health of the public. As of 21 August 2020, the total numbers of infected and death cases that were associated with COVID-19 were 22,492,503 and 788,503 respectively;<sup>1</sup> and have been expected to continue to rise steadily over the upcoming months. Not only has public health been threatened by the pandemic, but economic activities have also been deeply affected all over the world. During the second quarter of 2020, the amount of working hours fell by 14 per cent, which were equivalent to a loss of 400 million full-time jobs.<sup>2</sup> Almost 1.6 billion informal workers have been struggling to earn a living, due to lockdown measures being taken place, and/or because they worked in the hardest-hit sectors.<sup>3</sup>

Besides its visible consequences, the COVID-19 pandemic has also quietly crept into every single household, escalating a crisis of domestic violence. The violence, which tended to happen when women were locked down in their homes with their abusers<sup>4</sup>, could even be accelerated by disease control and prevention measures, such as physical distancing and mandatory quarantine at home.<sup>4</sup> It has been estimated that there would be an additional 15 million cases of intimate partner violence in 2020 for an average lockdown duration of 3 months, and would even increase to 31 million cases for an average lockdown duration of 6 months.<sup>5</sup> This type of “crisis within crisis” has emerged since lockdown was implemented, as domestic violence rose by 30% in France, and the number of emergency calls for domestic violence increased by 25% in Argentina.<sup>6</sup> There were also 30 per cent and 33 per cent increases in calls to helplines (regarding domestic violence) observed in Cyprus and Singapore.<sup>7</sup> The number of domestic violence cases and demands for emergency shelter because of the problem have also increased in Mongolia, Nigeria, China, Italia, Germany, Spain, the UK, Canada and the US.<sup>7–9</sup> Financial, emotional, and psychological abuses have been rising as direct results of income loss and unemployment. A report of Morocco showed that there were 60 per cent and 55 per cent increase in financial abuse and psychological violence, respectively.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, disease control measures, such as physical distancing, would be of barriers to provide prompt and efficient supports for women who were victims

of domestic abuse.<sup>6</sup> The capacity of shelters for domestic violence victims was very limited, while mobility restrictions also prevented women from accessing such support services.<sup>8</sup> Healthcare services and social protection services have also been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to more severe consequences of domestic violence.<sup>8</sup>

In Vietnam, since the first case of COVID-19 being detected on 23 January 2020, there have been 1,009 confirmed cases and 25 deaths reported.<sup>10</sup> The pandemic has had devastating impacts on the economy, threatening 10.3 million workers to lose their jobs, or have their income declined since the second quarter of the year.<sup>11</sup> This meant that millions of people might have to stay home in cramped and confined living conditions. Furthermore, nationwide social-distancing measures were enacted under the Directive No.16/CT-TTg throughout most of April 2020,<sup>12,13</sup> which led to more than 95 million people being isolated in the home. In other words, although stringent quarantine measures being enforced have effectively prevented the community transmission of COVID-19, they inevitably disrupted the normal routine, activities, as well as stability at household levels. Home has not been totally safer, especially for women who are victims of domestic violence, since they tend to be made more vulnerable with lower socioeconomic status and devastating consequences of physical, mental, and sexual health. Given the rate of nearly 63% of Vietnamese women who have ever experienced at least one type of violence from husband/partner according to a recent national survey<sup>14</sup>, it could be expected that the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic would further exacerbate among women who experienced domestic violence. To date, research on COVID-19's impacts in relation to domestic violence is scarce.

With support from Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Institute for Social Development Studies and Hanoi School of Public Health have collaborated to conduct this research with an aim to examine impacts of the pandemic on women who were victims of domestic violence in Hanoi, Vietnam. Causes of domestic violence during the pandemic and women's coping strategies in such situations were also explored in the study.

## METHODS



### 2.1. Study design and settings

A mixed-method approach was employed by combining cross-sectional quantitative and qualitative data of a survey analysis conducted in Hanoi, Vietnam.

### 2.2. Study participants

Women were invited to participate in the study if they met all of the following inclusion criteria: (1) aged 18-60 years; (2) were victims of domestic violence (physical/psychological/sexual abuse) caused by their husbands/partners; (3) lived with their husbands/partners during the pandemic; (4) lived in Hanoi, Vietnam; and (5) gave consent to participate in the study. Three hundred and three (n=303) eligible women were interviewed in the quantitative study, among whom 15 women suffering from domestic violence more severely, were invited to the qualitative study.

### 2.3. Variables

The questionnaire of the quantitative study includes ten main sections: (1) personal and household information, (2) employment status and income, (3) marital/domestic conflict, (4) controlling behaviors, (5) financial abuse, (6) psychological violence, (7) physical violence, (8) sexual violence, (9) consequences of domestic violence, (10) supporting against domestic violence. Definitions of controlling behaviors, financial abuse and domestic violence were adopted from the National Study on Domestic Violence against Women in Vietnam. A semi-structured in-depth interview guide was developed to explore reasons for the domestic violence and how women handled these situations during the pandemic. All information obtained in this study focused on the first peak of COVID-19 (from 23 January to 22 April 2020) in Vietnam.

## 2.4. Data collection procedure

We sent out official letters to Hopebox, Center for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender-Family-Women and Adolescent, Hagar International in Vietnam, and Peace House, which are all institutes/organizations/enterprises supporting domestic violence victims to seek collaboration and support for contacting eligible women. Additionally, the research team conducted an investigation to detect victims of domestic violence in Hanoi by applying a snowball sampling method, since this vulnerable group was extremely difficult to approach. For quantitative study, five data collectors were recruited and trained for interpersonal skills to build a rapport with the respondents and experiences in dealing with sensitive issues. All interviews were conducted via telephone with absolute confidentiality and privacy. For qualitative study, all in-depth interviews were conducted via phone by experts from the Institute of Social Development Studies and Hanoi University of Public Health.

## 2.5. Data management and analysis.

For quantitative study, the data entry system was created via the Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap) at Hanoi University of Public Health. All data collected was entered into the questionnaire on the REDCap application with a tablet and was subsequently transferred to a main server. All statistical analyses were performed using the STATA software version 16. For the qualitative study, all interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The qualitative data was analyzed based on content analysis techniques.

## 2.6. Ethics

All study protocols and processes were approved by the Ethical Review Board for Biomedical Research of Hanoi University of Public Health (No.285/2020/YTCC-HD3). Only the team leader had access to the list with the women's names. Interviewers only received a code for the respondents' answers in respect of each interview. No information regarding personal identification was collected. Participants were fully informed about how confidentiality their information would be ensured by the research team. Verbal consent on the telephone was obtained from all participants.

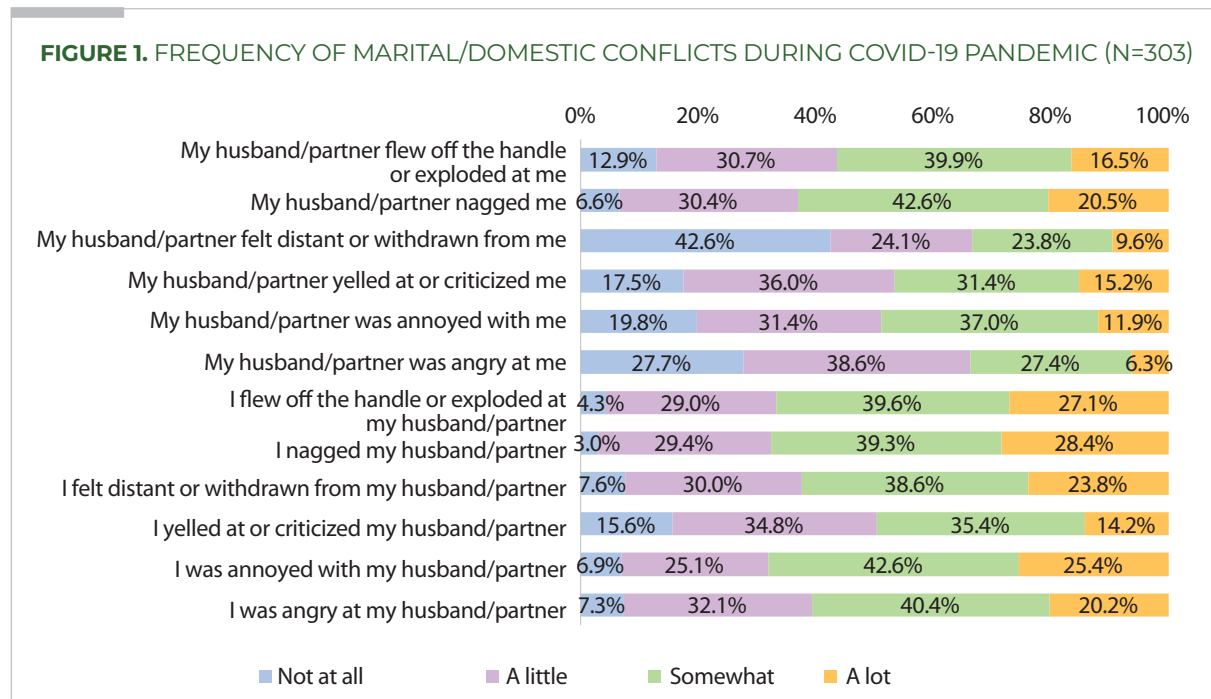
# Main findings



Photo: ISDS

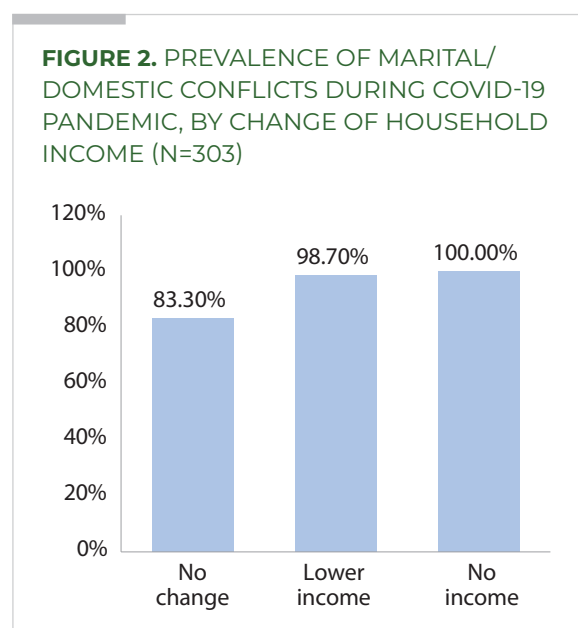
### 3.1. Marital/domestic conflicts

Ninety-nine per cent of couples had marital/domestic conflicts during the pandemic. Marital/domestic conflict behaviors caused by husbands/male partners were higher than caused by women. Nearly 30% of women reported that their husbands/partners were usually annoyed or angry at them. The detailed frequency of such marital/domestic conflict behaviors is shown in Figure 1.



Qualitative results showed that women had to endure marital/domestic conflicts caused by their husbands/partners on a daily basis: **“Very often, he nags while eating, about everything, even when going to sleep. In general, nagging happens all the time.”** (A domestic violence victim, 53 years old, Dan Phuong).

Our findings showed that all households with no income during the pandemic were subjected to marital/domestic conflicts. This also happened in households with lower income due to COVID-19 and still in households with no change of income during the pandemic at lower prevalence of 83.3% and 98.7%, respectively (Figure 2).



## 3.2. Controlling behaviors

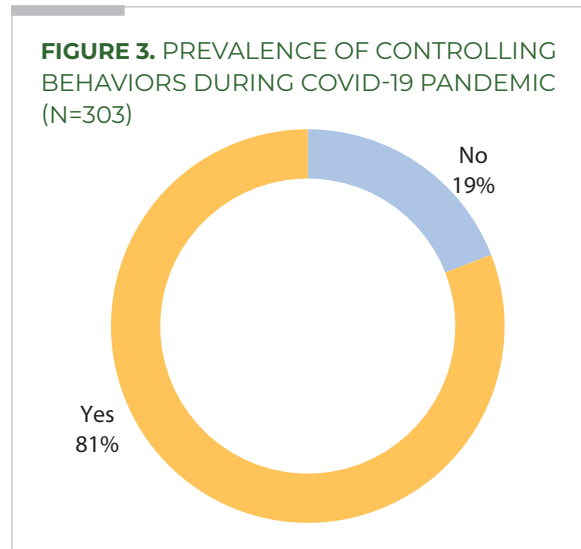
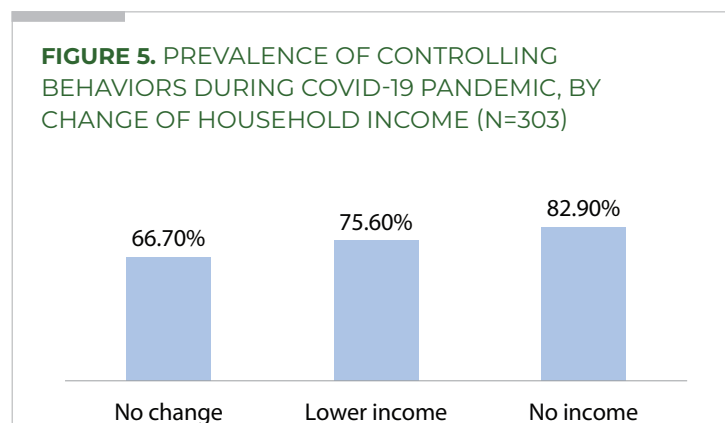
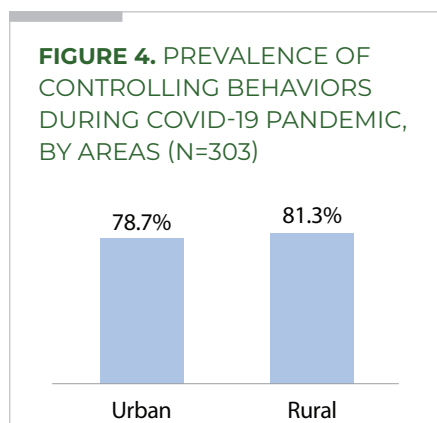
### Prevalence of controlling behaviors

Our study investigated controlling behaviors of husbands or partners towards the women during the pandemic, which included: (1) tried to keep her from seeing friends, or tried to restrict contact with her family of birth; (2) insisted on knowing where she was at all times, or ignored her and treated her differently; (3) got angry if she spoke with another man; was often suspicious that she was unfaithful; and (4) expected her to ask for his permission before seeking healthcare for herself. The results showed that the proportion of women suffered from at least one of these behaviors during the pandemic was quite high, being at 80.9% (245 out of 303 women) (Figure 3). Among these 303 women, 65.4% were ignored and treated differently, and 53.64% were monitored any movements at anytime and anywhere. Half of these women had their husbands/partners being angry at them when talking to another man. In some cases, they suffered from such controlling behaviors severely, which reflected the following quote:

*“I don't need to meet any other man. But my husband just imagined such circumstances himself, then he was jealous... I have already had three children, so I could not go anywhere but stay at home all day, but he still had irrational jealousy.”*

- A domestic violence victim, 39 years old, Phuc Tho-

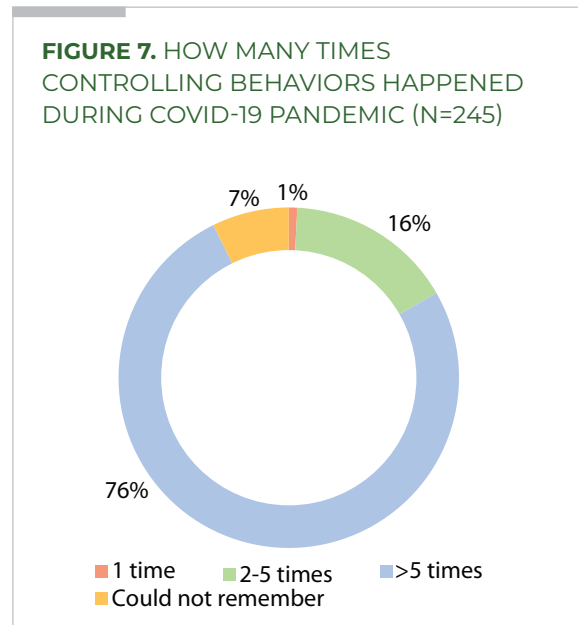
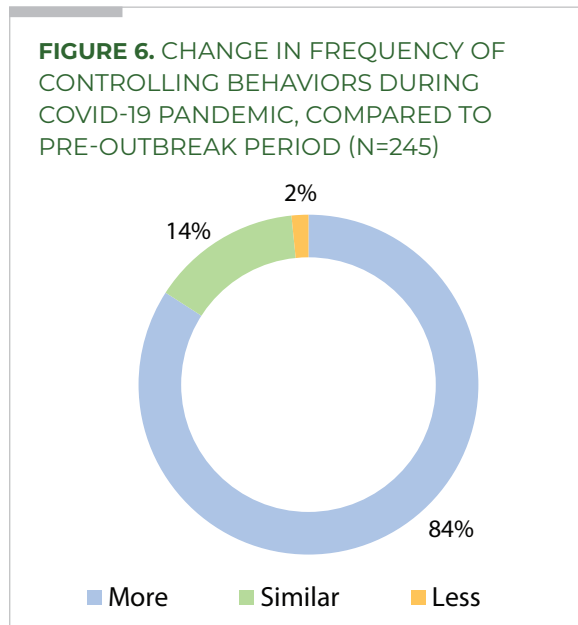
The percentage of women reported controlling behaviors of their husbands/partners in rural areas was higher than that in urban areas, being at 81.3% and 78.7%, respectively (Figure 4). These behaviors towards women having no change in household income were less frequent (66.7%), compared to households with lower income (75.6%) and no income (82.9%) during the pandemic (Figure 5).





### Frequency of controlling behaviors

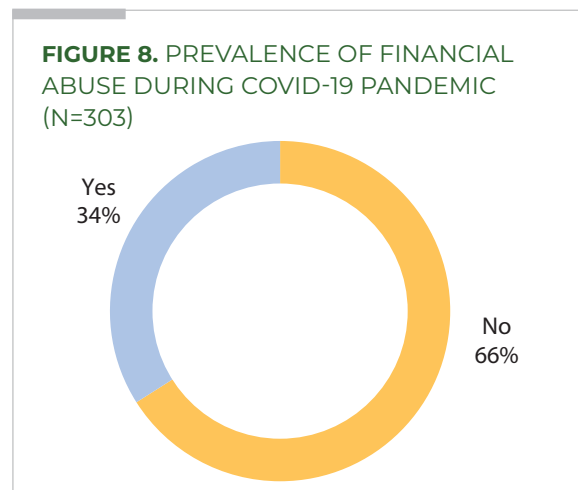
Among women having to suffer from controlling behaviors of their husbands/partners (245 out of 303 women), 84% of them reported that such things happened more during the outbreak, compared to the pre-outbreak period. Most of these women also endured such acts of controlling more than 5 times during the pandemic, reported at 76% (Figure 6 & Figure 7).



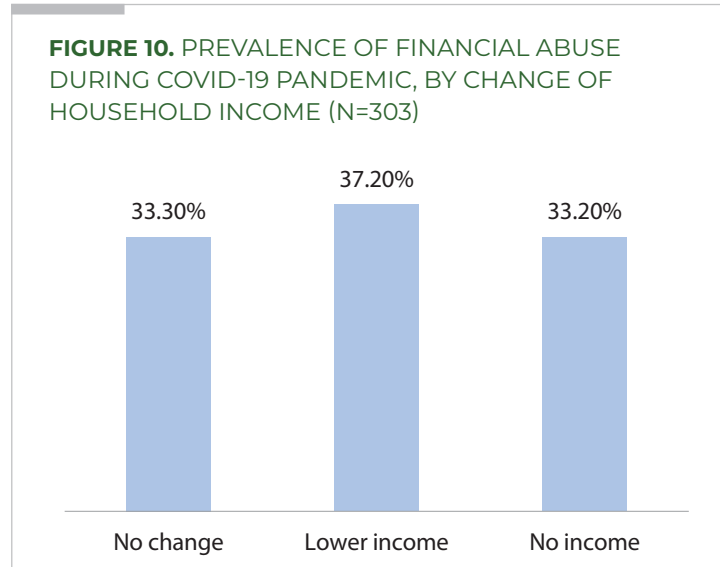
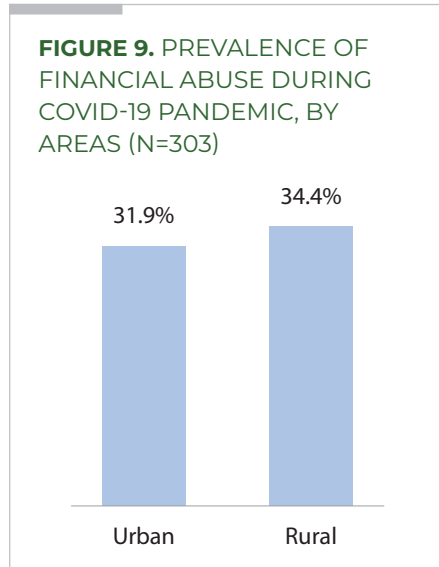
### 3.3. Financial abuse

#### Prevalence of financial abuse

Financial abuse by the husbands/partners was defined by such behaviors as (1) he ever took his wife’s/partner’s earnings or savings against her will; or (2) he ever refused to give his wife/partner money for household expenses while he spent money on other things. The results from this survey indicated that 34% of women (102 out of 303) suffered from financial abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 8).



More women in rural areas were subjected to financial abuse than those in urban areas (34.4% vs 31.9%, respectively) (Figure 9). Also, households with no change in income or having no income at all, were less likely to have the woman being abused financially by the husband/partner (33.3% and 33.2%, respectively), compared to ones with lower income (37.3%) during the pandemic (Figure 10).



The qualitative survey also disclosed many cases of financial abuse. A husband asked his wife to pay for his debt, but he did not want to contribute money to raising children and running errand for the family. What is more, if the wife does not agree with his requirement, it would not stop at financial abuse, but could unleash emotional or physical violence.

***“Since my husband plays too much, just requires me to give him money to pay off his debt, if I do not follow, he’ll be enormously angry.”***

-A domestic violence victim, 35 years old, Phuc Tho-

***“Over the years, I have no idea about his salary, I just tell him to divide it up, for example “if you don’t give it (some money) to me, then you have to pay for our child’s tuition fees”, “you have to pay electricity fees” or “you have to take care of all customary stuff, then I only have to concern about the housework”. I have to assign him things like that.”***

-A domestic violence victim, 53 years old, Dan Phuong-

***“Whenever he goes out, if I do not give any money to him, he will talk to me as “a useless bitch” or anything similar. There was even once he beat me in the house and dragged me out to the gate, it made me so scared.”***

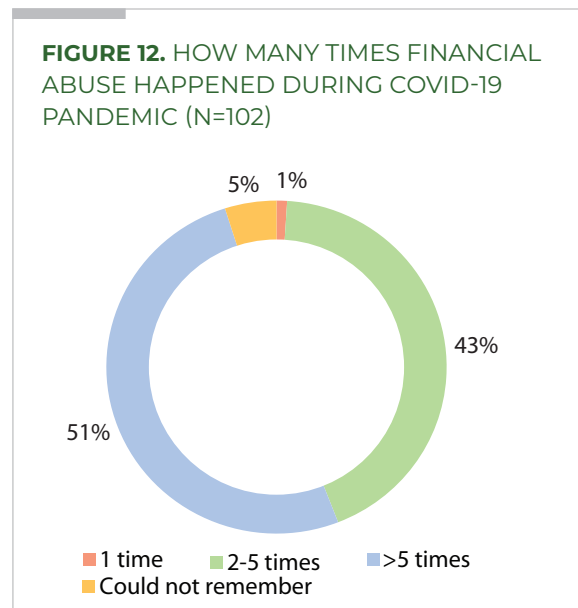
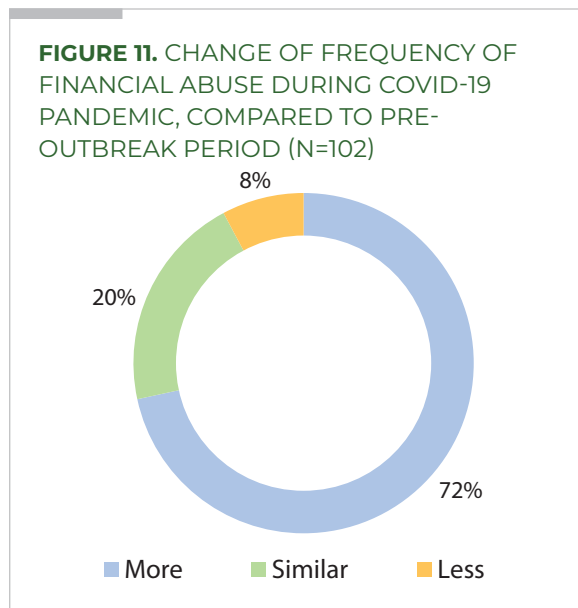
-A domestic violence victim, 40 years old, Son Tay-

***“When he came home without receiving any money from me, he just quarreled and beat my face directly.”***

-A domestic violence victim, 40 years old, Phuc Tho-

### Frequency of financial abuse

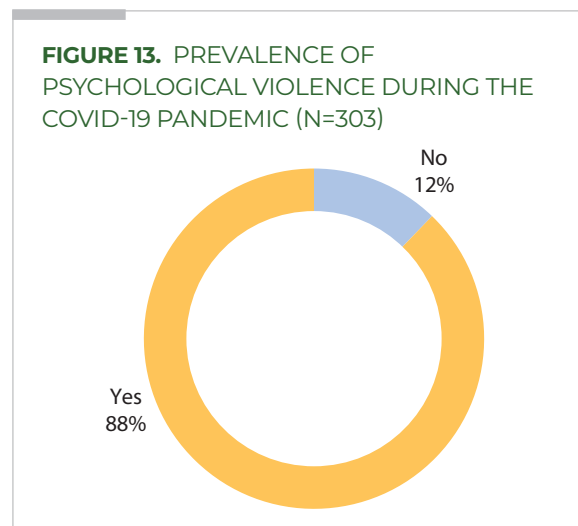
Among women who were financially abused (102 out of 303 women), 72% of them suffered more during the outbreak, compared to during the pre-outbreak period. It appeared that most of these women were abused at least two times during the pandemic (94%), in which about half of them (51%) reported their husbands’/partners’ financial abuse towards them for more than five times (Figure 11 & Figure 12).



### 3.4. Psychological violence

#### Prevalence of psychological violence

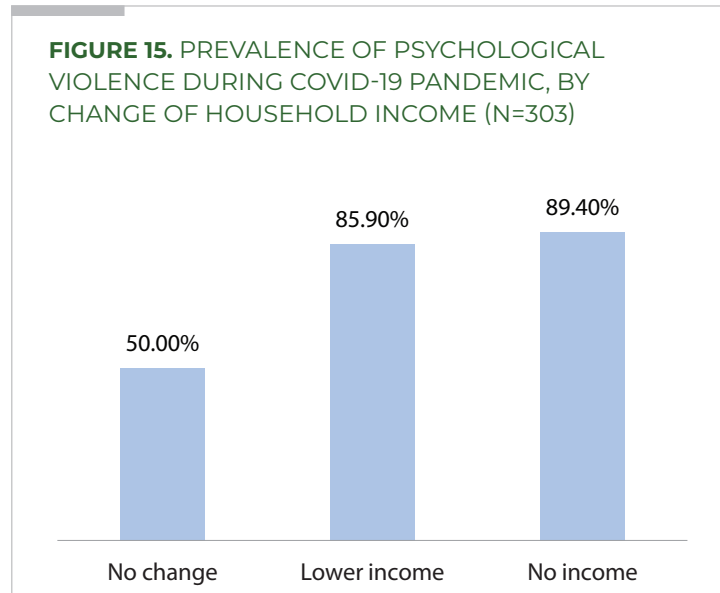
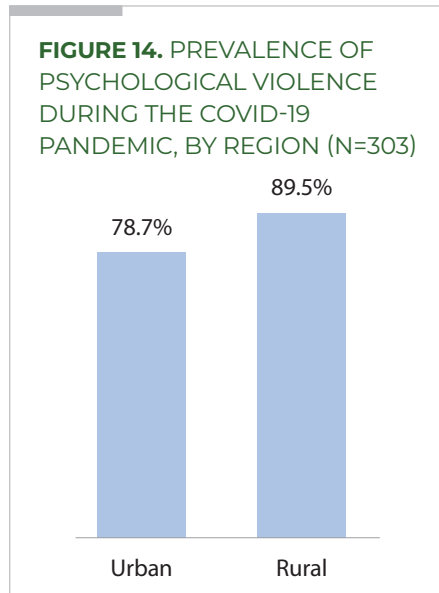
With regards to psychological violence, our study looked into the husbands’/partners’ behavior types of (1) insulting or verbally abusing the woman so she felt bad about herself; (2) humiliating or belittling her in front of others; (3) threatening or intimidating the woman in any way (by cursing, yelling, or by smashing furniture); (4) threatening to beat her or her loved ones (typically people from the woman’s birth family); and (5) threatening to or expelling the woman out of the house for any reason. Results showed that the proportion of women suffered from at least one of these behaviors during the pandemic was at 87.8% (266 out of 303 women) (Figure 13).



Among these 303 women, more than three quarters were insulted/made to feel bad about themselves, or were threatened, intimidated by cursing/smashing furniture at 76.2% and 77.2%, respectively. Meanwhile, the other types of violent acts were experienced by about half of these women.

Women living in rural areas experienced more psychological violence from their husbands/partners than those in urban areas (89.5% vs 78.7%, respectively) (Figure 14). Also, households with no change in income were almost half less likely to have the woman being psychologically

abused (50%), compared to those with lower (85.9%) or no income (89.4%) when the outbreak occurred (Figure 15).



In in-depth interviews, the women revealed various ways how their husbands/partners insulted them with horrible words. Even though such behaviors could not cause any physical pain, these verbal belittling and humiliation could extremely hurt their feelings: ***“He doesn’t hit me, but it’s his words that hurts my heart the most”*** a victim of emotional violence in Thanh Tri said.

***“My husband often jumps into arguments for a long time, then if I fight back, he would quarrel and offended me as a non-educated person, which would be so humiliating.”***

-A domestic violence victim, 47 years old, Thach That-

***“He kept saying that ‘You, dog, come here then I will punch you to death.’”***

-A domestic violence victim, 35 years old, Phuc Tho-

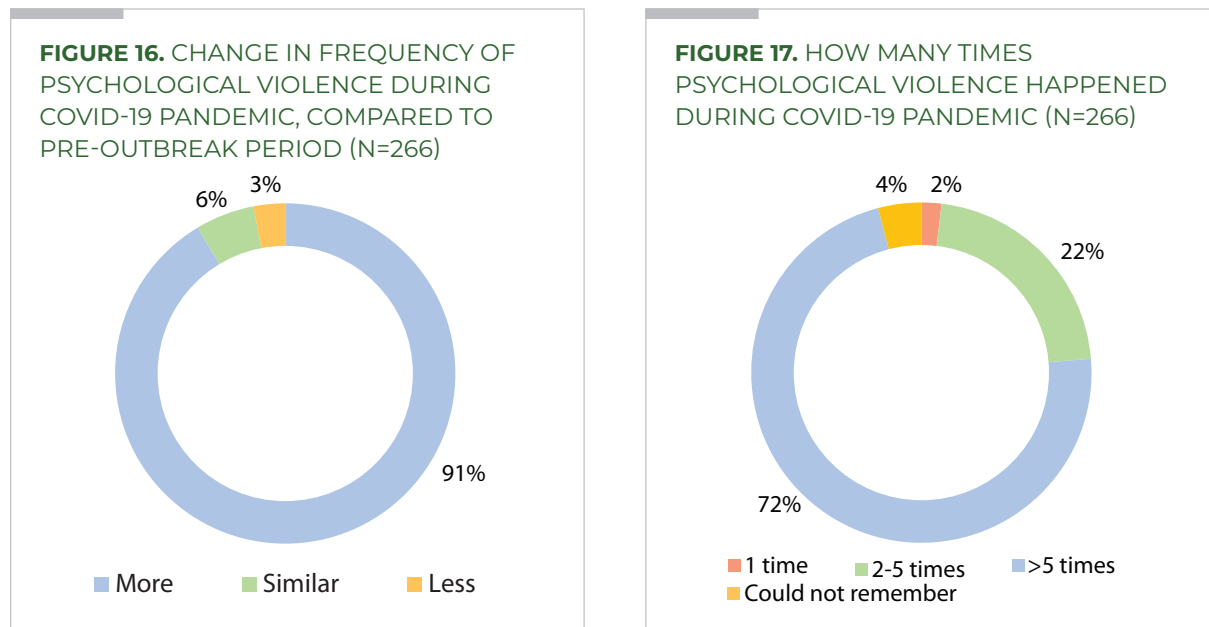
***“There were many times when he said things like “get away, bullshit”, then I had to sneak into the garden to hide myself.”***

-A domestic violence victim, 33 years old, Phuc Tho-

### Frequency of psychological violence

Among women suffered from psychological violence (266 out of 303 women), most of them reported having to suffer more during the outbreak (91%), compared to the pre-outbreak period. It appeared that most of these women were abused at least two times during the

pandemic (94%), in which 22% experienced psychological violence from their husbands/partners within 2-5 times, and 72% experienced more than five times during the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 16 & Figure 17).



Our qualitative results from conducting interviews also supported findings on higher frequencies of psychological violence during the pandemic, these women even “cannot remember exactly” how many times they suffered from these situations.

**“Since the COVID-19 period, he usually comes back, yelling at me with bad words like “get out your holy crap” or “get out - you bullshit”. It has already happened 3 to 4 times, but from the outbreak period till now, it turns out to be the most troubled.”**

-A domestic violence victim, 47 years old, Thach That-

**“I cannot remember exactly, but maybe it was more than 5 times.”**

-A domestic violence victim, 53 years old, Dan Phuong-

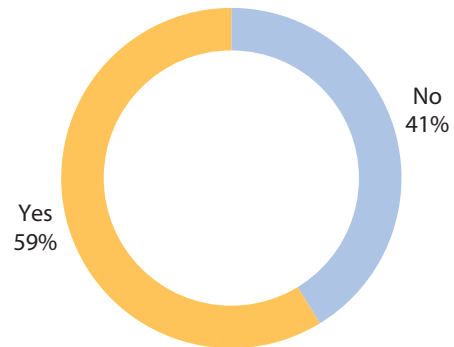
### 3.5. Physical violence

As for physical violence, our study looked into the husbands’/partners’ behavior types of (1) slapping or throwing objects that could hurt the women; (2) pushing, shoving objects at the women, or pulling her hair; (3) hitting and punching the women bare-handed or with an object; (4) kicking, dragging, or beating the women brutally; (5) strangling, choking, or burning her in anyway; and (6) threatening to use or having used guns, knives, or other weapons to harm the woman. Results showed that more than half of the women suffered from at least one of these behaviors during the pandemic (178 out of 303 women) (Figure 18). Among these 303 women, more than half of them (54.1%) were slapped or thrown something at, followed by 34% and

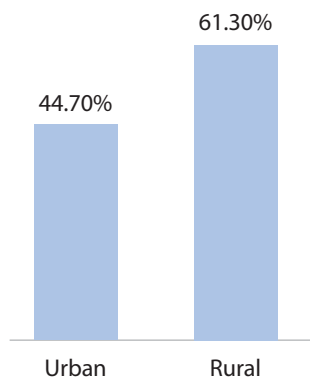
33% of them were either pushed/showed objects at, or punched bare-handed/with an object, respectively.

Women living in rural areas experienced more physical violence from their husbands/partners (61.3%), compared to their urban counterpart (44.7%) (Figure 19). Also, households with no change in income were about half less likely to have the woman suffer from this type of violence caused by the husband/partner (33.3%), than those with lower (52.6%) or no income (61.8%) when the outbreak occurred (Figure 20).

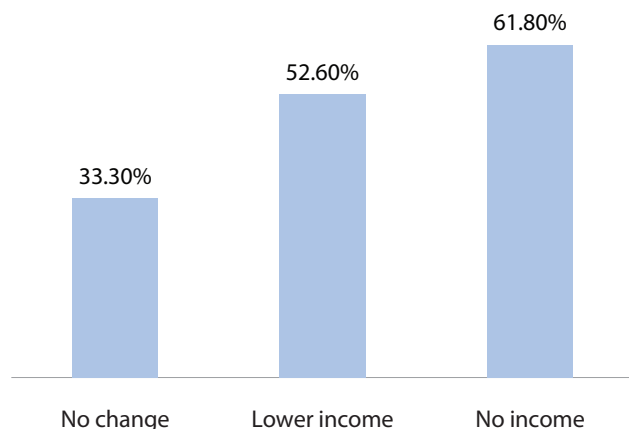
**FIGURE 18.** PREVALENCE OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC (N=303)



**FIGURE 19.** PREVALENCE OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC, BY AREAS (N=303)



**FIGURE 20.** PREVALENCE OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC, BY CHANGE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME (N=303)



In-depth interviews with domestic violence victims revealed that women often suffered from multiple acts of severe physical violence at once. For example, the husband/partner could hit, beat and punch, and during the same event also pull her hair aggressively.

***“So many times I have been beaten, he pushed me pulled my hair, all sorts of things, I’m so scared now. He pulled my hair and hit my head on the door... He pushed me onto the wall, then he pulled my hair and hit me.”***

-A domestic violence victim, 33 years old, Phuc Tho-

***There was one time when he beat me, I shouted loudly that the village head came over, but he cursed at the local head anyway. After that, my neighbors had carry me to the communal health center. There I was in the emergency room for awhile then when I woke up, I saw my head was bleeding. I had to get it stitched.***

-A domestic violence victim, 49 years old, Phuc Tho-

In many cases, the husband/partner did not need specific reasons to start beating the woman.

***He usually gets home at 11pm drunk, then he plays the radio very loudly and at 1-2 am he wakes me and the children up, tears off our clothes, curse and beat us.***

-A domestic violence victim, 40 years old, Phuc Tho-

***In the middle of the night, he even turned over the blanket and started beating me. I had no idea what happened but I stayed calm, I didn't get angry or curse at him or anything. I just said "I didn't do anything for you to beat me in the middle of the night like that", he didn't say anything but just got more infuriated. After that my nephew said it was because of a joke my children said that made him angry. He even broke my phone many times. It is so exhausting***

-A domestic violence victim, 53 years old, Dan Phuong-

***There was a time during the outbreak that while we were eating and talking about something, I just told him not to mind other people's business, then he said "Shut your mouth right away". Then he threw his bowl at me. Luckily I managed to move otherwise it would have hit my face.***

-A domestic violence victim, 35 years old, Phuc Tho-

More severely, there are cases in which the husband/partner wants to kill the woman – his wife – and even his children.

***He even wanted to burn me and my children, with clothes put around the house. Clothes and blankets were placed around the house, filled with gasoline and were burned... At around 10pm, in our sleep, my children and I started to feel the burning smell, we got up and then realized the door was locked outside by him. Back then we would have died already, now thanks to mobile phone we could call for help otherwise back then without a phone the four of us would have been dead.***

-A domestic violence victim, 40 years old, Phuc Tho-

***He beats me all the time. One time he pushed me into a big barrel. Only when my children ran out and bit him could I escape; otherwise, I would have died in there.***

-A domestic violence victim, 33 years old, Phuc Tho-

***He even hit my head, my mouth, and kept saying that I have to die.***

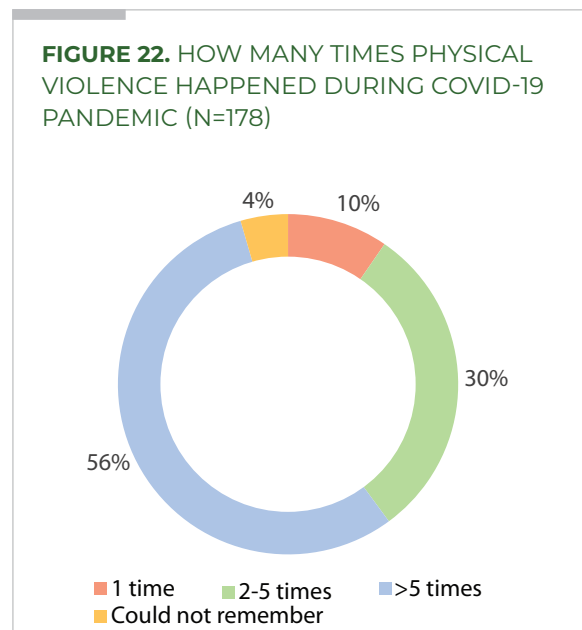
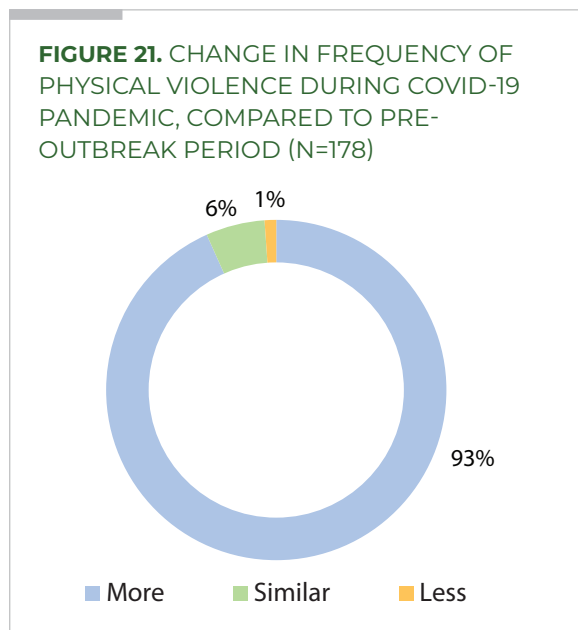
-A domestic violence victim, 49 years old, Phuc Tho-

***He held a knife and kept swinging it in front of my face, terrifying!***

-A domestic violence victim, 39 years old, Phuc Tho-

### Frequency of physical violence

Among women suffered from physical violence (178 out of 303 women), most of them reported suffering more during the outbreak (93%), compared to the pre-outbreak period. It appeared that more than half of these women (56%) experienced such behaviors for more than 5 times, followed by ones were victims of physical violence for 2-5 times (30%), and 1 time at 10% (Figure 21 & Figure 22).



The qualitative results also unveiled that physical violent acts happened so frequently during the pandemic that they “cannot remember exactly” how many times they experienced it.

***Previously, the frequency of his fights was five days a month, but then during the outbreak, it was almost every day.***

-A domestic violence victim, 33 years old, Nam Tu Liem-

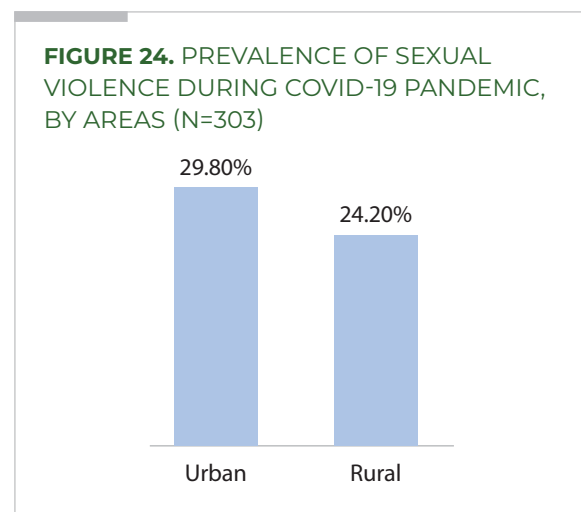
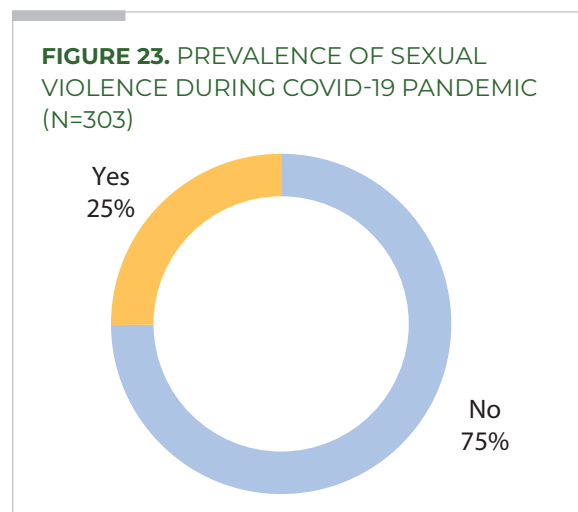


***I cannot remember exactly, but it is so often that I am exhausted everyday.***

-A domestic violence victim, 53 years old, Dan Phuong-

### 3.6. Sexual violence

With regards to sexual violence, our study looked into the husbands'/partners' behaviors of (1) using violent acts to force the woman to have sex against her will; (2) having the woman have sex because she was afraid that bad things would happen if she did not; (3) forcing the woman to involve in sexual activities that she felt humiliated and disgusted; and (4) forcing her to have sex with another person. Quantitative results showed that a quarter of the women (76 out of 303 women) suffered from at least one of these behaviors during the pandemic (Figure 23). Among these 303 women, none was forced to have sexual intercourse with another man, while 25% of them experienced the three other types of sexual violence mentioned above. Moreover, it appeared that women living in urban areas were about 5% more likely to be sexually abused by their husbands/partners than the rural group (Figure 24).



From qualitative results, we believed that the true prevalence of sexual violence was much higher than what our findings illustrated to be in this survey. It can be explained that women were “shy” or “too embarrassed” when mentioning their sexual issues, and they think “it is a private and highly sensitive matter, who would dare to speak it out” or “no one dares to mention the issue of forced sexual intercourse”.

In these quotations below, a husband forced sexual intercourse and also added insult and hurt by comparing his woman to other women.

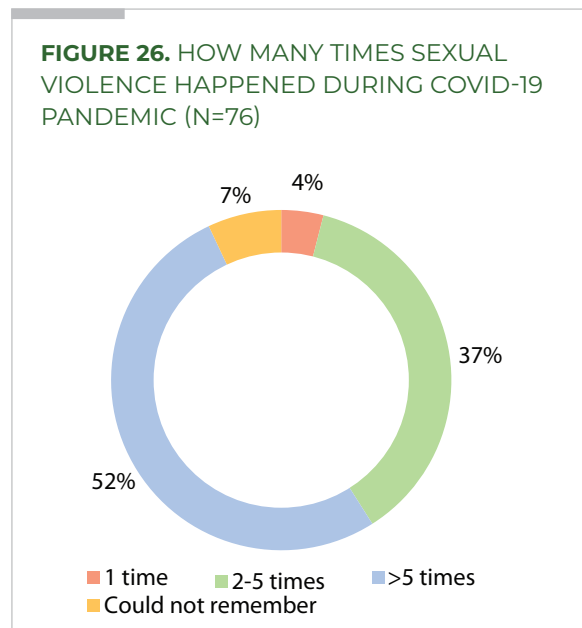
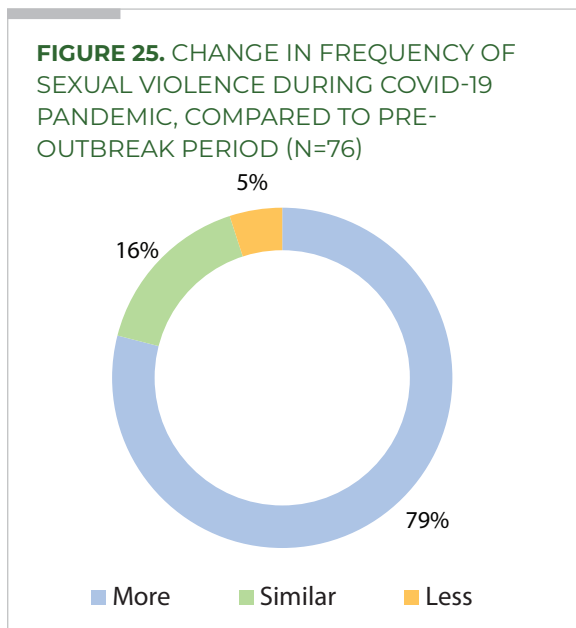
***During the day he fought with me, then at night, you know, I don't have any desires because of the fights but he continued to torture me. There are times when he lies on me but still verbally abuse me, compared me to other women, I don't like that at all.***

-A domestic violence victim, 53 years old, Dan Phuong-

***That (forced sex) is usual. Sometimes I have to pretend I'm in my period so that he won't force me, if not, he would force me everyday.***

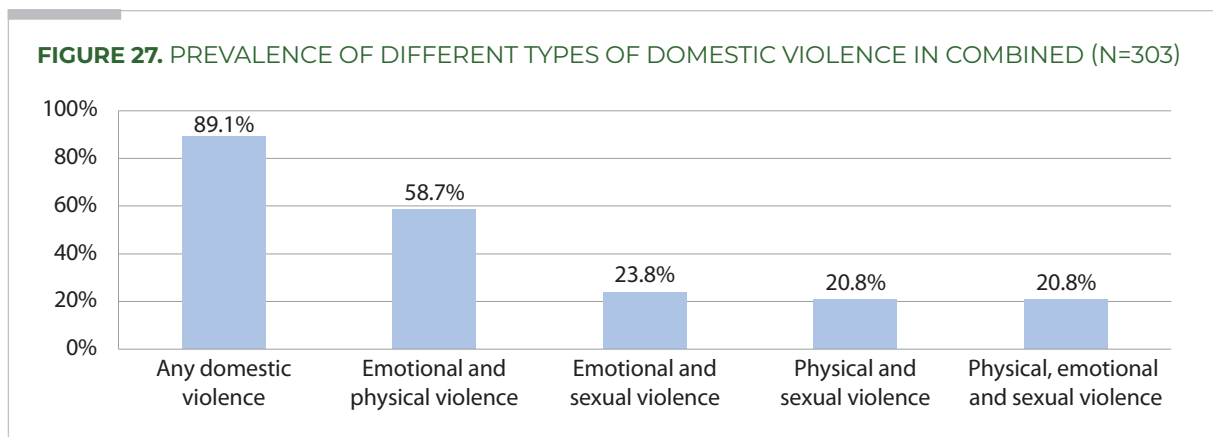
-A domestic violence victim, 37 years old, Nam Tu Liem-

Among women suffered from sexual violence (76 out of 303 women), 79% of those reported having to experience more during the outbreak, compared to the pre-outbreak period. It appeared that more than half of these women (52%) experienced more than 5 times, followed by ones experienced this type of violence 2-5 times (37%) (Figure 25 & Figure 26).



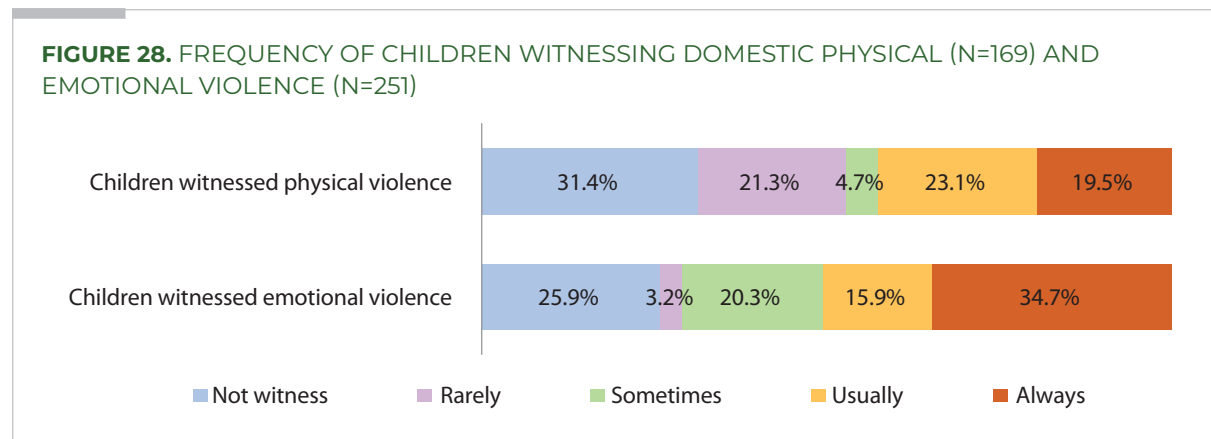
### 3.7. Combined domestic violence

Our findings revealed a high prevalence of women experiencing any kind of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, being at 89.1%. Among 303 women participating in our study, more than half of them were victims (58.7%) of emotional and physical violence in combined. Meanwhile, other types of violence combination, such as emotional and sexual, physical and sexual, and physical, emotional and sexual violence, all had numbers of women experienced them at more than 20% (Figure 27).



### 3.8. Children's witness to domestic violence

The rate of children witnessing emotional violence is higher than that of children witnessing physical violence. The proportion of children always witnessing physical violence accounted for 19.5%, while that of emotional violence accounted for 34.7% (Figure 28).



In all domestic violent events, women did not want children to witness violent acts between their parents. However, children usually or always witnessed because they stayed at home all the time due to school closure during the pandemic. Basically, these children would “cry”, “feel afraid”, or “feel scared”, and additionally begged or interrupted the father to stop his violence while confronting these situations. This is reflected in following quotes:

***My house only has one room, so my children often witness such scenes (domestic violence). I feel so sad... I feel so bad for them. During times like that the kids just hug me and cry. I can only tell them “Don’t worry, dad feels sick so he yells at me”. So they would stop crying.***

-A domestic violence victim, 37 years old, Nam Tu Liem-

***I am most worried and sad about my two children having to watch us fight. I feel so sad, I don’t want them to know, but he is so violent. The kids know that he curses all day so they are also upset.***

-A domestic violence victim, 39 years old, Phuc Tho-

***My children feel self-pity when having to witness their parents’ fights and do not want us to have arguments like that... They cried and asked us to stop fighting.***

-A domestic violence victim, 33 years old, Phuc Tho-

In some of the worst situations, domestic violence caused serious consequences (trauma) on children because of their witnessing these events. For example, a woman who is a 45-year-old victim of domestic violence in Dong Anh revealed:

*My older daughter is very depressed and autistic due to the detrimental influence of our domestic issues, so if we leave each other, our children will be spoiled.*

### 3.9. What causes domestic violence more frequently during the pandemic?

The large proportion of husbands and wives who lost their jobs or had declined wages due to the pandemic could be a crucial reason of exacerbating marital conflicts, which eventually lead to domestic violence.

It appeared that proportions of woman and household having no income during the pandemic were quite high, being at 78.5% for personal income level and 72.1% for household income level. In contrast, only small amounts of women and household have their earnings unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic, being at 2.3% (7 women) and 2% (6 households), respectively (Table 1).

**TABLE 1.** CHANGE OF MONTHLY INCOME DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC AT PERSONAL AND HOUSEHOLD LEVELS

Change of income during the pandemic	n (%)
Change of monthly personal income	
No change	7 (2.3%)
Lower income	58 (19.1%)
No income	238 (78.5%)
Change of monthly household income	
No change	6 (2.0%)
Lower income	78 (25.9%)
No income	217 (72.1%)

The qualitative study disclosed that job losses or having no income were the main roots of domestic violence during the pandemic. This explained why marital/domestic conflicts, controlling behaviors, as well as physical and emotional violence were more frequent among women of households with lower income or no income during the COVID-19 pandemic, as mentioned in above sections. It usually originated from financial conflicts, and eventually became psychologically and physically violent acts.

*He curses and beats me brutally... Since he does not have a job, he just stays at home or goes out with friends. This (violence) didn't happen at all when we both*

**were working. Because of COVID there is no work, so much free time so these things happen. He stays at home without anything to do so he beats me.**

-A domestic violence victim, 49 years old, Phuc Tho-

**During COVID there was no money. He used to work 15 days a month but during COVID he just stayed at home, no money so many conflicts happened... That time I didn't have much money either, so he often caused troubles and treated the children and me badly. When he needed money but there was none he often beat me, beat the kids, even told us to go sleep in the street... After COVID it's better, he is back at work with money to spend so it's better.**

-A domestic violence victim, 40 years old, Phuc Tho-

**There is no job, no income, but he drinks all day then demands to eat this and that while I have no money to buy it. Also, there are many things I want to spend on, but there is not enough money so we quarrel and fight... During the epidemic, the tension was so much because both of us were unemployed, then we quarreled, and I was beaten with bruises all the time.**

-A domestic violence victim, 33 years old, Nam Tu Liem-

**Before (the pandemic) we didn't fight much but later (during the pandemic) it was so often. In general, all issues revolve around economic aspects. Sometimes, due to financial difficulties, we just quarrel and fight with each other.**

-A domestic violence victim, 33 years old, Phuc Tho-

**Without a job, we all stay at home, with financial issues lingering, we easily get engaged in arguments, even fights. We still fight each other during the time of better finance, let alone this situation."**

-A domestic violence victim, 40 years old, Son Tay-

Sometimes, because the woman (wives/female partners) could not earn money, it becomes the reason for the husband/partner to force domestic violence against her.

**I can't make money so my husband gets angry and gets violent, like he hits me, a dozen times, more than before the pandemic.**

-A domestic violence victim, 24 years old, Phuc Tho-

**He sees me at home not working so he cursed at me "You'd better die for doing nothing'. All because of COVID... It happens more often because he sees me at home doing nothing.**

-A domestic violence victim, 33 years old, Phuc Tho, Hanoi-

Besides having no income or reduced income, losing jobs and physical distancing measures also mean **staying home more frequently, which increases the likelihood of physical and psychological violence in a domestic environment. Additionally, staying at home for a long period of time may also result in more sexual violence.**

*In general, the more we stay at home, the more often conflicts occur. You know, you see each other all the time. I have let it go many times but he keeps causing fight I had to argue back and it just got worse. It's better when you go to work and don't see each other all day... During lockdown people were not allowed to go to each other's house, but before that we could go visit people... I have been tolerating for many years, but now (during COVID epidemic) our conflicts are worse as we just stay at home and mock each other all the time.*

-A domestic violence victim, 53 years old, Dan Phuong-

*It (forced sex) is more often than before because we stay at home more during the pandemic.*

-A domestic violence victim, 37 years old, Nam Tu Liem-

*It (forced sex) is more definitely. We both are at home, how can I refuse? Back then it was better because we had different work schedule.*

-A domestic violence victim, 45 years old, Dong Anh-

**Given the negative economic impacts of the pandemic, alcohol consumption among husbands/partners also played a role in exacerbating domestic violence.**

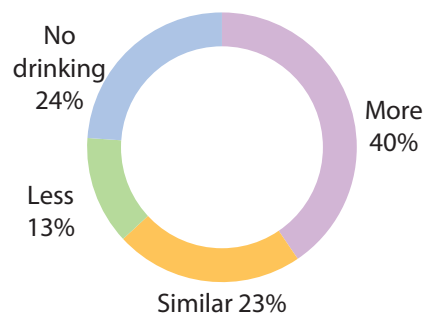
Our findings showed that 63% of husbands/partners drank more or similarly when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, than during the pre-outbreak time. Meanwhile, only 13% of these men appeared to consume less alcohol during the pandemic. Men who did not drink at all accounted for about a quarter of all husbands/partners in this survey (Figure 29).

The relationship between alcohol consumption and domestic violence was observed in our qualitative quotes as follow:

*During the pandemic my husband's shop was closed. So both of us just stayed at home and had nothing to do. He was depressed and also he was drunk so we had many fights... Before the pandemic he was working and had money. Now he just stays at home with no money, he is depressed and falls into over-drinking ... When he is drunk he curses a lot. When things don't go his way, he would throw things at me.*

-A domestic violence victim, 39 years old Phuc Tho-

**FIGURE 29.** CHANGE IN FREQUENCY OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AMONG HUSBANDS/ PARTNERS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC, COMPARED TO PRE-OUTBREAK PERIOD (N=303)



### 3.10. Consequences of domestic violence

Our study showed that domestic violence experienced by women resulted in injury in 80.7% of all cases. It seemed that domestic violence led to emotional injury more likely than physical injury, since such consequences were reported more frequently in the former one (75.2% of the women) than in the latter one (43.3% of the women). Moreover, about a third of the women need medical care due to the violence caused by their husbands/partners, specifically being at 31.7% of all cases (Table 2).

**TABLE 2.** CONSEQUENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REGARDING INJURY AND MEDICAL CARE-SEEKING (N=270)

	n (%)
<b>Any injury</b>	
No	52 (19.3%)
Yes	218 (80.7%)
<b>Emotional injury</b>	
No	67 (24.8%)
Yes	203 (75.2%)
<b>Physical injury</b>	
No	153 (56.7%)
Yes	117 (43.3%)
<b>Need medical care</b>	
No	149 (68.3%)
Yes	69 (31.7%)

### 3.11. Coping with domestic violence

***“I have to be quiet, even if I die, I can’t say anything back.”***

The qualitative study asked women how they responded to the husband’s/partner’s violent acts. Findings show that most of them “please” and “beg” him even if it was not her fault. They also “go elsewhere” and “run outside” to avoid these violent acts. In some cases, when things seemed to be out of control, they will fight back. However, many women choose to be “silent” because the situation will become worse, such as being beaten, even being killed if they react.

***Since the day I was beaten, now I do not dare to say it out loud, but rather keep silent without any reaction, it’s best to not respond. If I argue back, he might beat me more to death.***

-A domestic violence victim, 35 years old, Phuc Tho-

***Sometimes it is necessary to keep silent, otherwise I can be hit to death if I quarrel back. I have to be quiet, even if I die, I can’t say anything back. Whenever I argue back, he will beat me to death.***

-A domestic violence victim, 33 years old, Phuc Tho-

In response to sexual violence, even though they did not have sexual desire, they usually must satisfy their husbands/partners wishes because they think it was wives' duty.

***I myself do not want to have sex, I have to satisfy him even though I don't really want to... I don't really want to have sex but I am forced to.***

-A domestic violence victim, 35 years old, Phuc Tho-

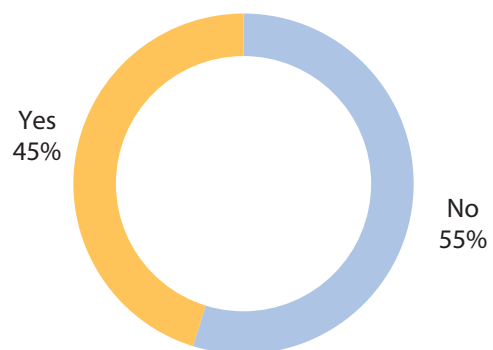
***I still have to please him. So even though I don't want to have sex with him, I still have to indulge him... It is a wife's role to satisfy any sexual desire of the husband.***

-A domestic violence victim, 45 years old, Dong Anh-

***"Sometimes they came to help but the situation would only get better for a few days..."***

Our study had 270 women having experienced domestic violence, among whom 45% seek help for their situation (Figure 30). It appeared that family members/relatives and friends were the ones to reach out for help, accounting for 29.6% and 21.5% of all domestic violence cases against women. Seeking help from Women's unions, commune/ward leaders, and neighbors were also preferred options when domestic violence occurred, yet these were only chosen by respectively 5.2%, 3%, and 4.1% of women. Moreover, the option of hotline supporting women with domestic violence was barely used as means of help-seeking by these women.

**FIGURE 30. FREQUENCY OF HELP-SEEKING DUE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**



Even though women received support from family members or even from local authorities, marital/domestic conflicts could not end; it got better for sometimes, but then returned to the usual.

***Local women's union came to reconcile us a few times. Sometimes they came to help but the situation would only get better for a few days before returning to what it is normally... His family's relatives also came to help, but after a few days, it ended up as usual.***

-A domestic violence victim, 40 years old, Phuc Tho-

***The communal head and the women's union also come to help, but it doesn't help, he still beats me.***

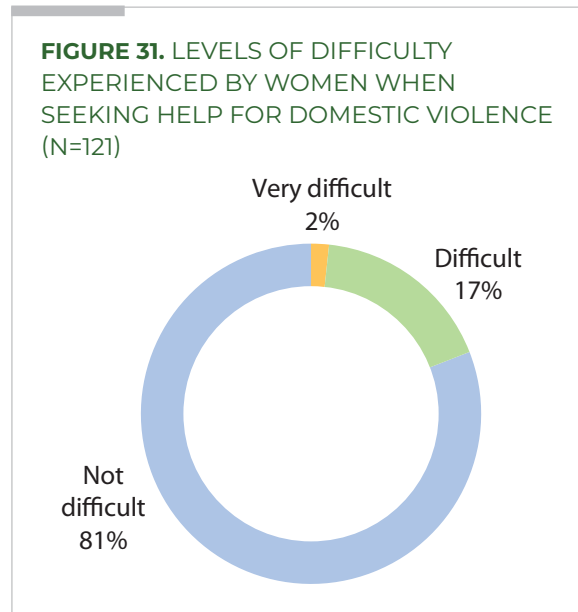
-A domestic violence victim, 33 years old, Phuc Tho-



***“During the epidemic, people have to practice social distancing... they don’t want to get close...”***

Among the women seeking help against violent acts, most received it without any difficulties (81% of all cases). However, about 17% and 2% of women seeking help with their domestic violence found it difficult and very difficult, respectively (Figure 31).

There were some difficulties in seeking support from others that were revealed in in-depth interviews. Some women lived too far away from family or relatives to “neither care nor notice”, or lived in a city where “neighbors rarely contact each other, but rather close their doors”. During the pandemic, it was particularly difficult to search for help due to physical distancing and fear of virus infection, as follows:



***During the epidemic, people have to practice social distancing and limit communicating; therefore, it would be more difficult to seek help during this time, compared to previously... People are scared of this epidemic, so they don’t want to get close because of COVID prevention regulations.***

-A domestic violence victim, 40 years old, Son Tay-

In some cases, women did not know any institutes/associations supporting victims of domestic violence; therefore, it is one of the obstacles to escape from violent situations.

***I also wish to have some associations supporting, helping with that issue... but because I don’t know which organizations can protect women with such circumstance like me, it is difficult for me to find help.***

-A domestic violence victim, 37 years old, Nam Tu Liem-

***“... people will have rumors like “There must be a reason for her to be beaten...”***

In-depth interviews unveiled reasons of not seeking help against domestic violence. These women did not want to speak out or ask for help from outsiders, because it was her “personal stories” and “private affairs” that could be “self-addressed” or “self-arranged”.

Another reason is that women believed that no one could help their marriage, as a woman in this story revealed: ***“I thought of asking the communal head and communal police for their phone number but then I decided to handle my issues myself... They (the communal head) came to give some advice a few times, but it didn’t help. After all, I have to save myself***

***otherwise I could have died waiting for others to save me.*** (A domestic violence victim, 53 years old, Dan Phuong).

Narratives from qualitative interviews showed that women were also afraid of vicious rumors about her marriage, herself, or her family members. This was another reason why they kept hiding even if they could die because of marital/domestic violence:

***If it is disclosed, our acquaintances will know, particularly those from my husband's family will know, they will say it is so shameful, and then rumours, I will not be able to live.***

-A domestic violence victim, 45 years old, Dong Anh-

***Now in this society, people do not need to know who is wrong and who is right, people will have rumors like "There must be a reason for her to be beaten", because it doesn't happen in every family. There will be less good than bad. I don't feel it's good to disclose it so I don't really mention it... Instead of helping they will gossip, and even assume that my parents don't know how to teach me.***

-A domestic violence victim, 33 years old, Nam Tu Liem-

In addition, some victims of domestic violence did not disclose true situations to their beloved persons such as parents or relatives because they did not want them to feel sad or worried about them.

***I have not told my parents yet. Of course, all of them love me, and so do my aunts, but my mother is so old that I don't want to make them think much about this issue... If my uncles know, they will not like it, so I don't dare to tell them.***

-A domestic violence victim, 47 years old, Thach That-

In some cases, the husband hid his "true face" by having "the perfect cover" as a good person:

***Because everyone compliments him as a good guy, and that he is very happy in the outside world, but the opposite goes for whenever he comes home. So if I say anything people wouldn't believe me.***

-A domestic violence victim, 47 years old, Thach That-

In cases of sexual violence, women perceived sexual abusive acts as "delicate" and "private", and that "no one dares to mention", so they would not help her to escape from sexual-related situations.

***I find it hard to disclose such a sensitive matter like forced sex. I want to find help to resolve that problem, but I can't, because no one will help, and actually no one can really help.***

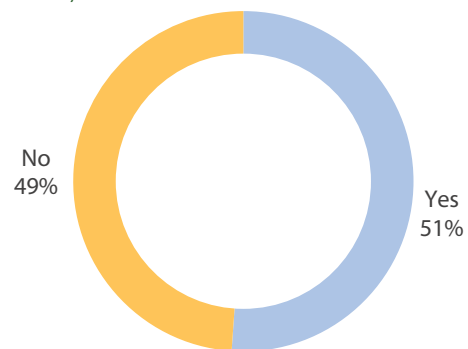
-A domestic violence victim, 37 years old, Nam Tu Liem-

***"I think about suicide a lot..."***

Our findings showed that about half of the women victimized by domestic violence also had suicidal ideation, being at 51% of all cases (Figure 32). Among those, domestic violence against women resulted in a 7.2% rate of suicidal attempt.

The qualitative study indicated that many women felt exhausted and hopeless for being tortured by their husbands/partners, so they thought about suicide as one of the ways to rescue from domestic violence. However, all of the women kept trying their best to live just because of their children.

**FIGURE 32.** PREVALENCE OF SUICIDAL IDEATION DUE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (N=270)



***I'm so fed up to the point that if it weren't for my girl, I would go to death.***

-A domestic violence victim, 38 years old, Nam Tu Liem-

***I think about suicide a lot... But at night when I think about my children, if I actually die what would happen to them. I have thought about it a lot but I can't do it.***

-A domestic violence victim, 47 years old, Thach That-

***Once I thought of jumping off into the river, but I thought about my children, they will suffer so much if I die, one is sick, one is too small, my parents are too old to look after them, my sibling have their own children, I want to just die many times, I actually took sleeping pills and had to go to hospital already.***

-A domestic violence victim, 40 years old, Phuc Tho-

***I also think about that (suicide), but it's just thoughts, I haven't tried. If I keep thinking negatively like that, my children will not have a shelter and my parents will lose their child, that will cause bad rumours, so I try to be more optimistic.***

-A domestic violence victim, 35 years old, Phuc Tho-

**“Try to endure for the children.”**

In the qualitative study, women who were domestic violence victims, were asked for reasons why they did not make the decision to end their marriage. The most common reason was that they love and want to protect their children, so that they kept living in an unhappy marriage.

***I think quitting this marriage now is simple, but it would be too miserable for my three children. If it was just me, it would have been simple. But now if I leave, my three children will not have a family with father and mother, so I stay.***

-A domestic violence victim, 33 years old, Phuc Tho-

***I have the intention of getting divorce several times but thinking about my children makes me try. I tolerate so I can take care of my children, I want them to have both father and mother.***

-A domestic violence victim, 40 years old, Son Tay-

***I have also thought about it (divorce), but if the children separated then the one who will have to live with the father will suffer so much. So I accept to stay for them... If they have to live with their father, they will be yelled at and hit, that will be terrible. So I try to endure for the children.***

-A domestic violence victim, 40 years old, Phuc Tho-

Another reason was that they were afraid of vicious rumors for herself and her family, a 45 year old victim of domestic violence in Dong Anh shared: ***“If I get divorced, I will be so evil and it’s a shame for my parents.”***

Some other women could not escape from violent marriage because of their economic limitations, as a 40-year-old woman in Phuc Tho explained: ***“If we get divorced the children will be separated, but now we are not making a lot of money... I earn 5 million but 1 million is already for rent, so much pressure, a lot of problems, I have been thinking about it a lot, we are farmers so it’s very hard.”***

## 3.12. Case studies

### CASE STUDY 1. "WHILE I WAS EATING RICE, HE HELD A BOWL TO HIT MY FACE"

Mrs. T lives in Phuc Tho, a sub-urban district of Ha Noi. She is a garment worker at a private company, which was temporarily closed due to physical distancing and virus-infected prevention during the COVID-19 outbreak. Therefore, she lost her job and had no income during the pandemic. Mrs. T's husband, an electric worker, was also out of job during that time. There are five people in her family, including her husband, three children and her. She and her husband were main breadwinners, yet both had no income at the time, which had devastating impacts on her family living conditions during the pandemic. Therefore, she tried to sell vegetables from her own garden to earn some money, but it is a red cent. Tragically, her younger son got sick and hospitalized during the pandemic; therefore, she had to borrow a huge amount of money from her relatives to pay for his medical costs. Meanwhile, her husband spent all of his money for himself and gambling; thus, he usually required her to give him more money. However, she did not have any, so he fiercely quarreled and also beat her severely. She narrated: *"While I was eating rice, he threw a bowl to my face that I had to get stitches."* Another violent act is that he broke her index finger. During the pandemic, he beat her so for more than four times, that she had to go to the provincial healthcare center for medical care. Different types of marital conflicts and violence happened more frequently, and all were originated from financial difficulties of both adults during the pandemic. One time, he required her to borrow money from others. But it was night time and all houses were closed, so she could not go. At around 10 pm, while sleeping, she and her children started to smell something burning, they got up and realized that the door was locked from the outside by her husband. He put all the clothes and blankets around the house, filled with gasoline, and burned them. At that moment, she had to call her husband's family members to come and rescue her and the children. The husband's family members, neighbors, the local women's union and local authorities had come to help her several times during such violent events. However, the situations got better within just only two weeks or a month, and still got back to the usual. She also revealed that she was a victim of sexual coercion. One time, he beat her because she did not want to have sex, and since then, she always had to satisfy all his sexual desire because she was afraid of what her husband might do. Sexual violent acts were also more severe during the pandemic since they stayed at home more. Her children were also victims of domestic violence, because they usually witnessed fights among their parents. This has also led her 15-year-old child to develop depression. After all, she still keeps silence to her birth family because she did not want them to know and felt sad about her. She thought so many times to give up her life, and for once she was even brought into an emergency room for taking sleeping pills to commit suicide. She wants a divorce to end her unhappy marriage, but she loves her children and is financially insecure, so she had to keep enduring and staying in the marriage.

### CASE STUDY 2. "I HAD TO FOLLOW ALL HIS ORDERS"

Mrs. N lives in Dan Phuong, Hanoi city. She is a full-time housewife and sometimes works as a garment worker at home. Her husband is a teacher in a secondary school, but he was off from his work and stayed at home during the COVID-19 outbreak due to school closure. She was financially abused that she has never received any money from her husband to spend on their household since the beginning of their marriage. Furthermore, she has also suffered from physical and emotional violence for several years, but such things happened more frequently during the pandemic, because her husband stayed at home all the time. This meant that he saw and noticed of all her activities more regularly, she explained: *"He even forced me to stand, to sit, I had to follow all his orders, otherwise, he cursed at me."* He also beat and seriously threatened to kill her without specific reasons in front of others. Once, his slapping her was so bad that cause her jaw seriously misplaced. Moreover, she was humiliated and offended by being forced into sexual acts together, while simultaneously being compared with another woman during the sexual intercourse by her husband. However, she has endured and kept silence to all violent acts for dozens of years, because she perceived domestic violence as a private story, and she loves her children and has to think about her dignity. But when the epidemic happened, she could not bear these violent acts that went beyond her tolerance limits, so she decided to move out to live with her son, separated from her husband.

# Conclusion and recommendation



Photo: ISDS

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated domestic violence, which was reflected upon the fact that controlling behaviors, financial abuse, as well as psychological, physical, and sexual domestic violence occurred more frequently by at least 70% during the pandemic, compared to the pre-outbreak period. The emergence of domestic violence was mainly caused by negatively indirect impacts of the household's economic status and containment measures (physical distancing and mobility restrictions). Women who worked in informal sectors, such as garments and manufacturing, and live in poor socio-economic conditions, were the most vulnerable group to domestic violence. Financial issues caused by job loss and reduced or no income underpinned domestic conflicts and violent acts during the pandemic. Physical distancing or quarantine measures compelled women and her husband/partner to stay in cramped spaces at home, which further facilitated domestic violence. Although women suffered from devastating consequences of physical, mental, and sexual health problems, more than half of them did not seek support to escape from the violence, since such events were perceived as personal or sensitive issues and that no one could help them. In contrast, some did look for help but restrictions during the pandemic caused great difficulties to access help. The majority of women did not know of hotlines or any other suitable supporting services in the context of social distancing.

Addressing the increase of domestic violence against women during COVID-19 pandemic would require a considerable amount of efforts from the government and active cooperation between government agencies, social organisations and communities, as well as to learn from international successful stories to carry out the following recommendations:

- Prioritize and integrate domestic violence issue into prevention, response, and risk mitigation parts of COVID-19-related programs, including ensuring that adequate funding is provided for safe, appropriate, and high effective gender-based interventions.
- All aspects of programs' and/or interventions' design and implementation should ensure that women's voices are listened to, and that women's organizations have opportunities to involve in the decision-making processes for effective and context-specific approaches during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Raising public awareness of domestic violence against women during the pandemic and disseminating the supporting information for targeted women need to be carried out.
  - Diffuse and disseminate information to raise the visibility of increased domestic violence against women, its prevention and responses during COVID-19 via mass media, social media, social networks.
  - Cooperate with telecom mobile companies to deliver messages on gender-based violence and referral information.
  - Provide guided self-help materials or information through local women's unions, provincial or commune healthcare facilities, and peer support groups for survivors of domestic violence.
  - Integrate private sectors in providing guidelines or materials on how to prevent and respond to marital/domestic violence among female employees during the period of working from home.

- Develop and strengthen supporting services for women who are victims of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - Training on psychosocial support for women who experienced violence for healthcare workers, social support workers and law enforcement and court officials in local areas during the crisis.
  - Launching and promoting helplines, online-based counselling such as SMS, online tools, websites, etc., including regular trainings for counselling staff.
  - Ensuring that shelters are safe for women and their children. In cases of lacking, expand the capacity and availability of these shelters by rearranging other places such as empty motels/hotels, or educational institutions, to address high demands during the pandemic.
  - Mobilize the participation of community leaders and local authorities to address violence against women through raising their awareness of this issue and knowledge of violations of domestic violence injunction to prevent, mitigate and respond to violent abuse.
  - Empower women to address violence by coping skills training through women's union, peer-support groups, women's organizations.
  - Government organizations/ institutions, service providers and social organizations should ensure all supporting services safely provide, including through a combination of appropriate adapted in-person activities and remote means, depending on what is most relevant and feasible in a particular context, and in line with existing inter-agency protocols.



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