

«ҚАЗАҚСТАН РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫНДАҒЫ ОТБАСЫЛЫҚ-ТҰРМЫСТЫҚ
ЗОРЛЫҚ-ЗОМБЫЛЫҚТЫҢ АЛДЫН АЛУ ТУРАЛЫ»

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THE NATIONAL REPORT

«ON THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN»



Қазақстан Республикасының
Мәдениет және ақпарат
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Ұлттық баяндама қазіргі Қазақстан қоғамындағы отбасылық-тұрмыстық зорлық-зомбылық проблемасын зерттеуге арналған. Халықаралық және Қазақстан тәжірибесі зерделеніп, заңнамаға талдау жасалды, тұрмыстық зорлық-зомбылыққа қарсы мүдделі мемлекеттік органдардың, дағдарыс орталықтарының, қоғамдық ұйымдардың жұмысы қарастырылды. Бұқаралық ақпарат құралдарында және әлеуметтік медиада осы проблеманың қоғамда қабылдануы зерделенді.

Баяндама отбасылық-тұрмыстық зорлық-зомбылық саласындағы нормативтік құқықтық базаға, ресми статистика мен мемлекеттік органдардың дерегіне, халық арасында жүргізілген жаппай сауалнама нәтижесіне, отбасылық-тұрмыстық зорлық-зомбылық көргендер, сондай-ақ зорлық-зомбылық әрекеттерін жасаған адамдармен жүргізілген терең сұхбатқа негізделді.

Басылым мүдделі мемлекеттік органдарға, үкіметтік емес және қоғамдық ұйымдарға, ғылыми қоғамдастық, отбасын қолдау орталықтары, дағдарыс орталықтары және отбасылық-тұрмыстық зорлық-зомбылық проблемасын шешуге бағытталған өзге де ұйым өкілдеріне арналған.

«Қазақстан Республикасындағы отбасылық-тұрмыстық зорлық-зомбылықтың алдын алу туралы» ұлттық баяндама Қазақстан Республикасы Мәдениет және ақпарат министрлігінің тапсырысы бойынша дайындалды.

Национальный доклад посвящен исследованию проблемы семейно-бытового насилия в современном казахстанском обществе. Изучены международный и казахстанский опыт, проанализировано законодательство, рассмотрена деятельность заинтересованных государственных органов, кризисных центров, общественных организаций по противодействию домашнему насилию, изучено общественное восприятие данной проблемы в средствах массовой информации и социальных медиа.

Доклад основывается на нормативной правовой базе в сфере семейно-бытового насилия, данных официальной статистики и государственных органов, результатах массового опроса населения, глубинных интервью с экспертами, пострадавшими от семейно-бытового насилия, а также с лицами, совершившими насильственные действия.

Издание предназначено для заинтересованных государственных органов, неправительственных и общественных организаций, представителей научного сообщества, центров поддержки семей, кризисных центров и иных организаций, чья деятельность ориентирована на решение проблемы семейно-бытового насилия.

Национальный доклад «О профилактике семейно-бытового насилия в Республике Казахстан» подготовлен по заказу Министерства культуры и информации Республики Казахстан.

The National Report is devoted to the study of the issue of domestic violence in contemporary Kazakhstani society. It examines both international and national experiences, analyzes the existing legislation, and reviews the activities of relevant state bodies, crisis centers, and civil society organizations engaged in combating domestic violence. In addition, it analyzes how public perceptions of this issue are represented in mass media and social media.

The report is based on the regulatory and legal framework in the field of domestic violence, official statistics and governmental data, the results of a nationwide population survey, in-depth interviews with experts, victims of domestic violence, as well as with individuals who have committed violent acts.

This publication is intended for state authorities, non-governmental and civil society organizations, representatives of the academic community, family support centers, crisis centers, and other institutions whose activities are directed toward addressing the problem of domestic violence.

The national report "On the prevention of domestic violence in the Republic of Kazakhstan" was prepared at the request of the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

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Ministry of Culture
and Information of the
Republic of Kazakhstan



MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN
NJSC «KAZAKHSTAN INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC DEVELOPMENT»

NATIONAL REPORT

ON THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN



Astana
2025



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ABBREVIATIONS

BNS ASPR RK – Bureau of National Statistics under the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan

CAM – Centre of Adaptation of Minors

CLS&SR GPO of the RK – Committee on Legal Statistics and Special Records of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan

COI of the RK – The Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On Administrative Infractions'

CPC of the RK – Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan

CSC – Child Support Centres

DFV – Domestic and family violence

DLS – a difficult life situation

EKR – East Kazakhstan region

FSC – Family Support Centres

GPO of the RK – General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan

KIPD – Kazakhstan Institute of Public Development

LEB – local executive body

MCI – Monthly Calculation Index

MCI of the RK – Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan

MDDIAI of the RK – Ministry of Digital Development, Innovation and Aerospace Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan (renamed to the "Ministry of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan" pursuant to Presidential Decree № 997 dated 18 September 2025)

MH of the RK – Ministry of Healthcare of the Republic of Kazakhstan

MIA of the RK – Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan

MJ of the RK – Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan

MLSPP of the RK – Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan

MNE of the RK – Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan

NGO – non-governmental organisation

NKR – North Kazakhstan region

PC of the RK – Penal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan

PHC – primary health care

PPSSEI – psychological and pedagogical support services for students in educational institutions

SC of the RK – Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

SSS – special social services

TADC – Temporary Adaptation and Detoxification Centre

UN – The United Nations

USA – United States of America

WHO – World Health Organization

WKR – West Kazakhstan region

YHC – Youth Health Centres

INTRODUCTION

The necessity to examine the issue of domestic and family violence arises from several important social, legal, psychological, and economic factors. Without thorough analysis and empirical data, developing effective legal mechanisms to safeguard victims is unfeasible. Domestic violence results in decreased work capacity and higher spending on healthcare, law enforcement, and social support. Understanding the extent and mechanisms of violence enables the optimisation of state resources and reduces economic losses. Only through systematic analysis can preventive measures be developed – education, changing public opinion, developing a culture of non-violent communication and upbringing. Studying the problem helps identify risk groups and address the causes of violence.

This report has been prepared to analyse domestic violence in Kazakhstan and to develop practical recommendations for its resolution.

The following tasks were completed to accomplish the set goal:

- the current situation regarding domestic and family violence in Kazakhstan has been analysed;
- existing mechanisms and legislative reforms aimed at preventing domestic violence and safeguarding women's rights and child safety in Kazakhstan have been evaluated;
- dynamics have been analysed based on statistical data and sociological research results;
- international experience in preventing domestic and family violence has been examined;
- recommendations have been developed to enhance the prevention of domestic violence.

The National Report consists of an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion.

The first chapter outlines the current situation and public view of domestic violence in Kazakhstan, analysing statistical data along with the age and gender profiles of victims and perpetrators. Particular focus is given to the issue of violence against children and vulnerable family members.

The second chapter investigates hidden types of violence and their effects (such as psychological, economic, and social pressures) and evaluates how advancements in information and communication technologies influence domestic violence.

The third chapter assesses the mechanisms for countering domestic and family violence, including legislation, family support infrastructure, and mechanisms for protecting victims of domestic violence.

The fourth chapter discusses the theoretical aspects of domestic and family violence, as well as how foreign experience can be practically applied to address this issue, considering the Kazakh context.

The National Report was prepared on the basis of the results of a comprehensive study conducted using the following methods: a mass representative face-to-face survey of the population aged 18+ according to key socio-demographic and territorial parameters; qualitative methods (expert interviews, in-depth interviews with victims and perpetrators); and an analysis of official statistics from the Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan (BNS), which was used to compare and refine the quantitative data.

The sample size of the mass survey amounted to 3 000 respondents (Appendix 1). The sociological study covered all regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan – the cities of republican significance Astana, Almaty, and Shymkent, 17 regional centers, as well as rural settlements.

The qualitative component of the study included 10 expert interviews, 35 in-depth interviews with victims of domestic violence, and 5 interviews with individuals who had committed violence against family members.

Based on the analysis results, practical recommendations were developed for central and local executive bodies, NGOs, and crisis centres to enhance their efforts to combat and prevent domestic violence, assist victims, and establish the necessary infrastructure.



CHAPTER I.

THE ISSUE OF FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

1.1. The current situation regarding domestic violence

The issue of domestic and family violence (DFV) in the Republic of Kazakhstan has grown more prominent in recent years, both socially and politically. Domestic violence is no longer seen just as a private matter and is increasingly becoming a topic of public discussion. There has been a rise in civic activism, an expansion of legislative efforts, and greater cooperation among agencies in the fight against domestic violence.

Between 2012 and 2017, reported criminal offences related to DFV declined from 783 to 446 cases (Figure 1.1.1¹). This decline might be attributed to the latent nature of violence and underreporting. However, since 2018, there has been consistent growth: from 919 cases in 2018 to over 1 000 cases annually between 2020 and 2023.

In 2024, the number of criminal cases more than tripled, reaching 3 382. By the end of June 2025, 1 630 cases have already been registered. This increase is not due to a rise in violence but rather to changes in legislation. On 15 April 2024, Law No. 72-VIII of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan Regarding the Protection of Women's Rights and Children's Safety" (hereinafter referred to as "the Law") came into force, increasing penalties for domestic violence and strengthening protections for victims.

The survey results² indicated a high level of awareness: 59,3% of respondents knew that in 2024, a law enhancing penalties for DFV and introducing support measures was passed.

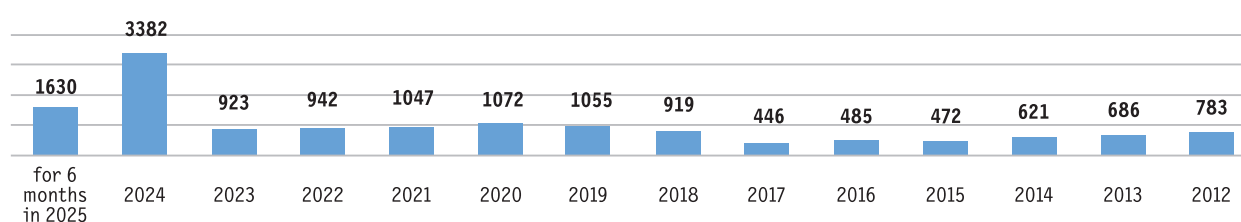


Figure 1.1.1. Trends in criminal offences within the family and domestic sphere from 2012 to 2025

Source: CLS&SR GPO RK

Therefore, the rise in criminal cases since 2024 should be viewed as a sign of positive developments in law enforcement practices rather than an indication of worsening overall conditions. This may also suggest increasing confidence in state protection mechanisms and the slow decline of the tradition of silence around domestic violence.

An analysis of the structure of registered criminal offences from 2018 to 2025 reveals notable changes in the severity and classification of cases. According to Table 1.1.1, from 2018 to 2023, most registered cases were crimes, including serious and very serious crimes (an average of 900–1 050 cases annually), while the number of criminal offences remained low (16–41 cases per year).

Since 2024, the number of offences has increased by more than 100 times, from 18 to 2 494 cases, while the number of crimes has remained roughly the same (888). This change is connected to legislative updates that reclassify certain administrative offences as criminal offences. This expanded the scope and enabled consideration of a broader range of violence forms.

¹ Portal of the Authority of Legal Statistics and Special Accounts of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: <https://qamqor.gov.kz/crimestat/statistics> (date of access: 10.07.2025).

² KIPD sociological study "On the Prevention of Domestic Violence in the Republic of Kazakhstan", 2025

Simultaneously, there has been a decline in grave and especially grave crimes – from 504 in 2023 to 445 in 2024 (-11,7%), which may suggest earlier intervention and containment of the escalation of violence.

Thus, alongside the increase in the total number of cases, there have been qualitative changes in their structure: legal coverage has expanded and prevention at early stages has been strengthened.

Table 1.1.1.

Information on registered criminal offences in the family and domestic sphere from 2018 to the first half of 2025

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 months 2025
Total criminal offenses	919	1055	1072	1047	942	923	3382	1630
- Criminal infraction	29	41	29	18	16	18	2494	1262
- Crimes:	890	1014	1043	1029	926	905	888	368
of little gravity	343	414	392	422	366	345	378	172
of average gravity	28	44	27	22	29	56	65	15
grave crime	356	406	430	392	386	348	275	113
especially grave crime	163	150	194	193	145	156	170	68

Source: CLS&SR GPO RK

An analysis of data from Table 1.1.2, covering 2018-2024 and the first half of 2025, indicates a moderate decline in the number of serious crimes, including intentional homicides (Article 99 of the PC of the RK): from 144 in 2018 to 101 in 2024. In the first half of 2025, 41 cases were recorded. The number of cases under Article 106 (serious harm to health) decreased from 368 (2022) to 251 (2024), and under Article 107 (moderate harm) from 359 (2021) to 298 (2024).

The most notable quantitative changes in the 2024 statistics are due to the introduction of new provisions into the Penal Code – Article 108-1 ("Intentional infliction of minor injury to health" in the field of DFV) and Article 109-1 ("Battery" in the field of DFV). In 2024, 754 and 1 799 cases were recorded under these articles, respectively, representing over 75% of all criminal offences in the area of DFV (Table 1.1.2).

Unlawful actions under these articles were previously regarded as administrative offences and therefore did not appear in criminal statistics; now, they constitute a significant proportion of all cases. This indicates the extent of previously underestimated forms of violence and confirms the common occurrence of less severe episodes of domestic and family violence within households.

Article 121-1, "Sexual harassment against persons, not attained the age of 16", which was previously dealt with in the administrative sphere, has also been introduced. Its introduction enhanced the legal safeguards for children in family and domestic relationships.

Table 1.1.2.

Structure of criminal offences committed in the family and domestic sphere from 2018 to the first six months of 2025

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 months 2025
Murder (Article 99)	144	116	115	141	108	108	101	41
Preparation and assault to murder	12	13	23	20	13	17	16	9
The killing by a mother of her newborn child (Article 100)	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Murder, committed in the affective state (Article 101)	7	3	5	4	1	4	4	1
Murder, committed upon use of excessive force in self-defense (Article 102)	6	3	3	1	7	5	6	1
Cause death by negligence (Article 104)	5	10	9	11	3	2	6	1
Incitement to suicide (Article 105)	1	0	2	0	2	0	3	0
Intentional infliction of grievous harm to health (Article 106)	350	393	413	374	368	337	251	101
Intentional infliction of average-gravity harm to health (Article 107)	314	356	354	359	321	336	298	121
Intentional infliction of non-grave harm to health (Article 108)	0	0	0	0		0	0	1
Intentional infliction of minor injury to health (Article 108-1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	754	383
Blows (Article 109)	0		0			0	0	0
Battery (Article 109-1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1799	912
Torment (Article 110)	0	2	6	7	2	4	13	3

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 months 2025
Infliction of harm to the health in affective state (Article 111)	0	1	1	0	15	0	1	2
Infliction of grievous harm to health upon use of excessive force in self-defence (Art. 112)	10	21	14	23	0	17	10	6
Negligent infliction of harm to health (Article 114)	4	20	13	24	25	19	14	3
Threat (Article 115)	26	36	25	14	10	10	15	4
Leaving in danger (Article 119)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rape (Article 120)	6	27	32	14	14	16	30	11
Violent acts of sexual nature (Article 121)	9	9	24	18	13	15	27	8
Sexual harassment against persons, not attained the age of sixteen (Article 121-1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
Sexual intercourse or other acts of a sexual nature with a person under sixteen years of age (Article 122)	0	1	3	5	1	8	2	0
Corruption of persons, not attained the age of sixteen (Article 124)	3	5	9	10	0	3	6	0
Kidnapping (Article 125)	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Illegal imprisonment (Article 126)	2	1	1	5	0	0	0	1
Non-performance of obligations on payment of child maintenance, evasion of funds for maintenance of disabled parents, disabled husband (wife) (Article 139)	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
Non-performance of obligations on upbringing of a minor (Article 140)	1	0	1	3	1	2	6	2
Violation of integrity of private life and the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan on personal data and their protection (Article 147)	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Violation of inviolability of housing (Article 149)	7	11	6	4	2	5	1	3
Intentional destruction or damaging of another's property (Article 202)	0	0	1	1	3	2	2	2

Source: CLS&SR GPO RK

Regional data (Table 1.1.3) reveal substantial heterogeneity. The national average ratio in 2024 was 17 per 100 000 people, but in some regions it is considerably higher. The highest values were recorded in the following regions: Ulytau (32), West Kazakhstan and Mangystau (26 each), Almaty (24), Zhetysu (22), Akmola and East Kazakhstan (21 each). At the same time, the lowest figures were recorded in Astana (6), Almaty (12), Zhambyl (13), and Turkestan (14) regions.

Significant regional differences in ratios reflect not only the objective scale of the problem but also possible variations in registration practices and victim reporting levels. High rates in sparsely populated areas and low rates in large cities may reflect differences in latency and distinct social perceptions of the issue, warranting caution when interpreting statistical data.

Table 1.1.3.

Trends in criminal offences committed within the family and domestic sphere,
by region of the Republic of Kazakhstan and ratio per 100,000 people (2023-2024)

Regions	Criminal offences within the family and domestic context		+, - in %	Ratio per 100,000 population *	
	2023	2024		2023	2024
Abay region	25	99	296,0	4	16
Akmola region	67	168	150,7	8	21
Aktobe region	29	161	455,2	3	17
Almaty region	75	368	390,7	5	24
Atyrau region	26	122	369,2	4	17
WKR	31	183	490,3	4	26
Zhambyl region	47	162	244,7	4	13
Zhetysu region	33	156	372,7	5	22
Karaganda region	80	171	113,8	7	15

Regions	Criminal offences within the family and domestic context		+, - in %	Ratio per 100,000 population *	
	2023	2024		2023	2024
Kostanay region	53	139	162,3	6	17
Kyzylorda region	21	127	504,8	2	15
Mangystau region	22	210	854,5	3	26
Pavlodar region	88	144	63,6	12	19
NKR	47	84	78,7	9	16
Turkestan region	52	291	459,6	2	14
Ulytau region	29	70	141,4	13	32
EKR	75	151	101,3	10	21
Astana	52	89	71,2	4	6
Almaty	35	277	691,4	2	12
Shymkent	34	198	482,4	3	16
Total for the Republic**	923	3 382	266,4	5	17

* In official statistics, rates are calculated per 10,000 people; in this report, rates are calculated per 100,000 people to ensure comparability with international practice.

** Taking into account non-regional indicators

Source: CLS&SR GPO RK

Before the 2024 reform, most cases of DFV were categorised as administrative offences. In 2023, more than 85 000 cases were registered under Articles 73, 73-1, and 73-2 of the Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On Administrative Infractions', with nearly 48 000 under Article 73 (see Table 1.1.4).

In 2024, following legislative changes, there was a significant decline in cases under Articles 73-1 and 73-2, and an increase in cases under Article 73. In the first six months of 2025, only 20 cases were registered under Article 73-1, 25 under Article 73-2, while 65 690 were registered under Article 73.

The rise in indicators is due to the implementation of a proactive response procedure from 1 July 2023, which does not require a statement from the victim. According to data from the MCI RK, 19 000 cases of DFV were recorded in the first half of 2025 based on information from group chats and social networks³.

Therefore, the caseload was redistributed between administrative and criminal jurisdictions, enabling more precise identification and suppression of various forms of DFV.

Table 1.1.4.

Number of registered administrative offences committed in the family and domestic sphere from 2018 to the first six months of 2025

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 months 2025
Illegal actions in the scope of family relations (Article 73)	23 904	25 730	25 844	27 975	25 142	47 587	73 893	65 690
Intentional infliction of slight damage to health (Article 73-1)	15 496	16 227	15 015	15 746	17 436	20 788	11 649	20
Drubbing (Article 73-2)	5 800	7 270	7 530	8 643	9 663	16 850	12 543	25

Source: CLS&SR GPO RK

Public perception of the extent of domestic and family violence

Criminal and administrative statistics do not fully capture the extent of the problem, as a substantial number of DFV cases remain unreported. Cultural norms, dependence on the abuser, and fear of public condemnation still restrict victims' willingness to seek help. In this context, it is important to consider not only official indicators but also citizens' public perceptions, attitudes, and personal experiences.

Despite a notable rise in reported offences, survey data indicate that the public still underestimates the extent of the issue. Some respondents view incidents of violence as infrequent or exaggerated, highlighting a gap between objective statistics and public perception. This discrepancy may stem from a lack of awareness of legislative changes and response mechanisms, as well as a persistent tendency to see violence as a "private family matter".

According to a sociological survey, most Kazakhstani citizens consider DFV a serious social problem (69%). Although official statistics show over 3 000 registered offences in 2024, 22,3% of respondents believe the problem is

³ A Year Without Compromise: How the Law on Domestic Violence Changed Kazakhstan. Website of the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan. [electronic resource]. – Access mode: <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mam/press/news/details/1019239?lang=ru> (date of access: 07/17/2025).

exaggerated, and nearly 7% deny its existence (Figure 1.1.2).

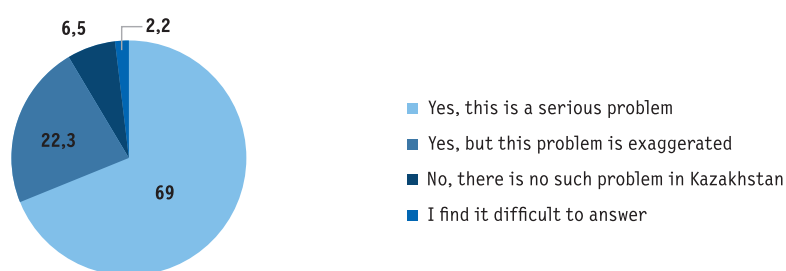


Figure 1.1.2. Breakdown of answers to the question: **"Is domestic violence a problem in our country?"**, in %

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents

The survey results (Table 1.1.5) reveal notable differences in perceptions of the DFV issue. Women are more likely than men to regard it as a serious issue. Rural residents are less likely to recognise DFV, and their level of denial of the problem is twice as high as that of urban residents.

The higher the respondents' level of education, the more frequently they recognise the seriousness of the issue.

Thus, public perception of DFV varies and is influenced by a wide range of socio-cultural factors. These differences are crucial to consider when designing communication and prevention strategies.

Table 1.1.5.

Breakdown of answers to the question: **"Is there a problem of domestic violence (so-called family and domestic violence) in our country?"**, broken down by gender, type of area of residence, education, ethnicity and language of communication of respondents, in %

		Yes, this is a serious problem	Yes, but this problem is exaggerated	No, there is no such problem in Kazakhstan	I find it difficult to answer
Gender	Men	63,7	25,3	8,2	2,8
	Women	73,5	19,7	5,2	1,7
Type of area	Urban	72,9	20,8	4,4	1,9
	Rural	62,4	24,9	10,2	2,6
Education	Secondary education	67,4	21,8	7,7	3,0
	Vocational secondary education	66,3	25,1	6,8	1,8
	Incomplete higher education	73,2	20,1	3,6	3,1
	Higher	70,9	21,1	6,1	1,9
Ethnic group	Kazakhs	67,7	23,6	6,3	2,4
	Russians	75,4	16,7	7,3	0,6
	Other ethnic group	69,2	21,4	6,8	2,6
Language of communication (language they prefer to speak at home)	In Kazakh	65,3	23,8	8,0	2,9
	In Russian	72,5	19,0	7,3	1,2
	In Kazakh and Russian	70,6	23,2	4,1	2,1

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents

As Table 1.1.6 shows, public perceptions of DFV in Kazakhstan vary considerably across regions.

A high level of concern about DFV (over 78%) is observed in the Abay, Karaganda, Pavlodar, Ulytau, East Kazakhstan, and Akmola regions. Here, DFV is more frequently seen as a serious social issue. This could be attributed to the high levels of urbanisation, awareness, and civil society activity in these regions.

Respondents in the Zhambyl, Zhetysu, and North Kazakhstan regions are least likely to view the DFV as a serious issue (less than 55%). Here, a high proportion of people either minimise or deny the issue, suggesting that the topic is stigmatised.

These data indicate a zone of social inertia, where violence is frequently regarded as a "private matter" and cultural stereotypes obstruct the development of zero tolerance. In these regions, it is likely that DFV remains absent

from public discourse, and victims themselves may be less willing to seek help due to fear of condemnation or distrust of institutions.

Table 1.1.6.

Breakdown of answers to the question: **"Is there a problem of domestic violence (so-called family or domestic violence) in our country?"**, by region, in %

Regions	Yes, this is a serious problem	Yes, but this problem is exaggerated	No, there is no such problem in Kazakhstan	I find it difficult to answer
Abay region	94,7	1,1	0,0	4,2
Akmola region	78,9	18,0	0,8	2,3
Aktobe region	66,7	18,1	7,2	8,0
Almaty region	69,8	19,8	9,0	1,4
Atyrau region	55,1	34,7	10,2	0,0
WKR	73,1	14,8	8,3	3,7
Zhambyl region	44,8	39,5	15,7	0,0
Zhetysay region	50,5	39,8	6,8	2,9
Karaganda region	88,7	4,3	6,5	0,5
Kostanay region	57,0	20,4	19,7	2,8
Kyzylorda region	63,5	27,8	4,3	4,3
Mangystau region	63,5	25,0	1,0	10,6
Pavlodar region	84,8	13,6	1,6	0,0
NKR	54,3	32,6	13,0	0,0
Turkestan region	66,3	21,7	10,9	1,1
Ulytau region	81,8	15,2	0,0	3,0
EKR	79,8	15,3	1,6	3,2
Astana	63,8	31,2	5,0	0,0
Almaty	73,9	21,9	2,0	2,2
Shymkent	72,1	26,7	1,2	0,0

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents

A comparison of regional criminal statistics (Table 1.1.3) and survey results (Table 1.1.6) reveals that recognising domestic violence as a serious social issue does not always match the actual scale of reported offences. In several regions with high crime rates per 100 000 population, such as Mangystau and Almaty, public concern remains relatively moderate. At the same time, regions with lower coefficients, such as Karaganda and Abay, have experienced high levels of public sensitivity. This indicates that perceptions of the problem are shaped not only by the actual prevalence of violence but also by the level of awareness, social attitudes, and the openness of public discussion on the subject.

An assessment of changes in the situation reveals polarised perceptions: one in three Kazakhstani citizens (34,6%) believe that the situation with DFV has improved over the past two years, one in three (34,8%) see no change, and one in four (24,4%) note a deterioration (Figure 1.1.3).

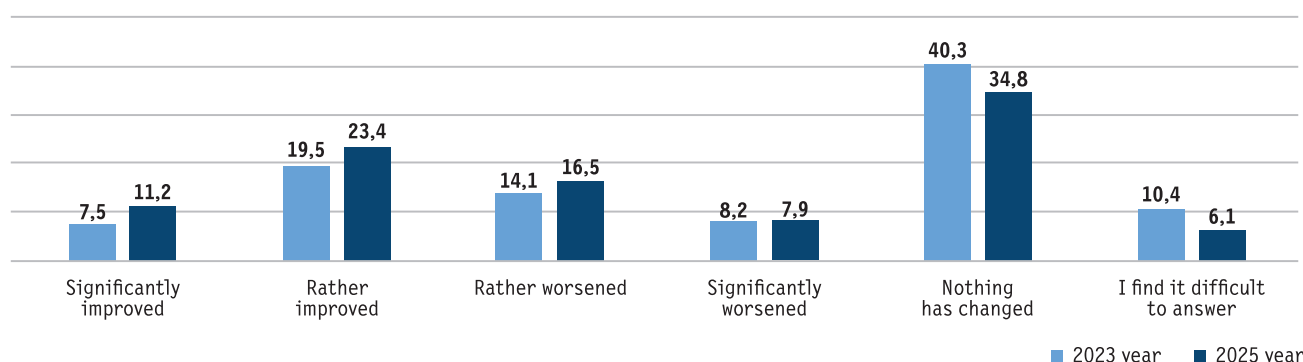


Figure 1.1.3. Breakdown of answers to the question: **"In your opinion, how has the situation with domestic violence in Kazakhstan changed over the past two years?"** (comparison of survey data for 2023 and 2025), in %

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents

A comparison of data from the 2023 and 2025 surveys reveals a moderate shift towards more positive assessments of the domestic violence situation. The proportion of people reporting an improvement has risen, while those finding it difficult to answer and believing nothing has changed has declined. This may suggest a rise in public awareness of the measures being implemented, despite ongoing ambiguity in perceptions.

Level of DFV cases in the immediate environment. More than a fifth of respondents (21,9%) reported instances of DFV within their immediate families (relatives, friends, neighbours). Women and urban residents report such incidents more frequently (25,3% and 23,3%) than men and rural residents (17,8% and 19,4%). This is likely because of increased sensitivity to signs of violence and greater willingness to discuss these issues within these groups.

There are noticeable regional differences (Figure 1.1.4). The highest awareness was recorded in the Ulytau region, the cities of Almaty and Shymkent, the West Kazakhstan region, and the Pavlodar region (30–36%), while the lowest awareness was documented in the Atyrau, Zhambyl, Mangystau, and Kyzylorda regions (less than 9%). This may mirror both local cultural attitudes and a readiness to share sensitive information.

A comparison with 2023 reveals a decline in the proportion of people aware of DFV cases in their environment, dropping from 31,4% to 21,9%. The decline may be due to the effects of preventative measures and increased public awareness of the issue, as well as a possible reduction in the visibility of violence, for example, because of greater secrecy by offenders or the normalisation of certain types of violent behaviour.

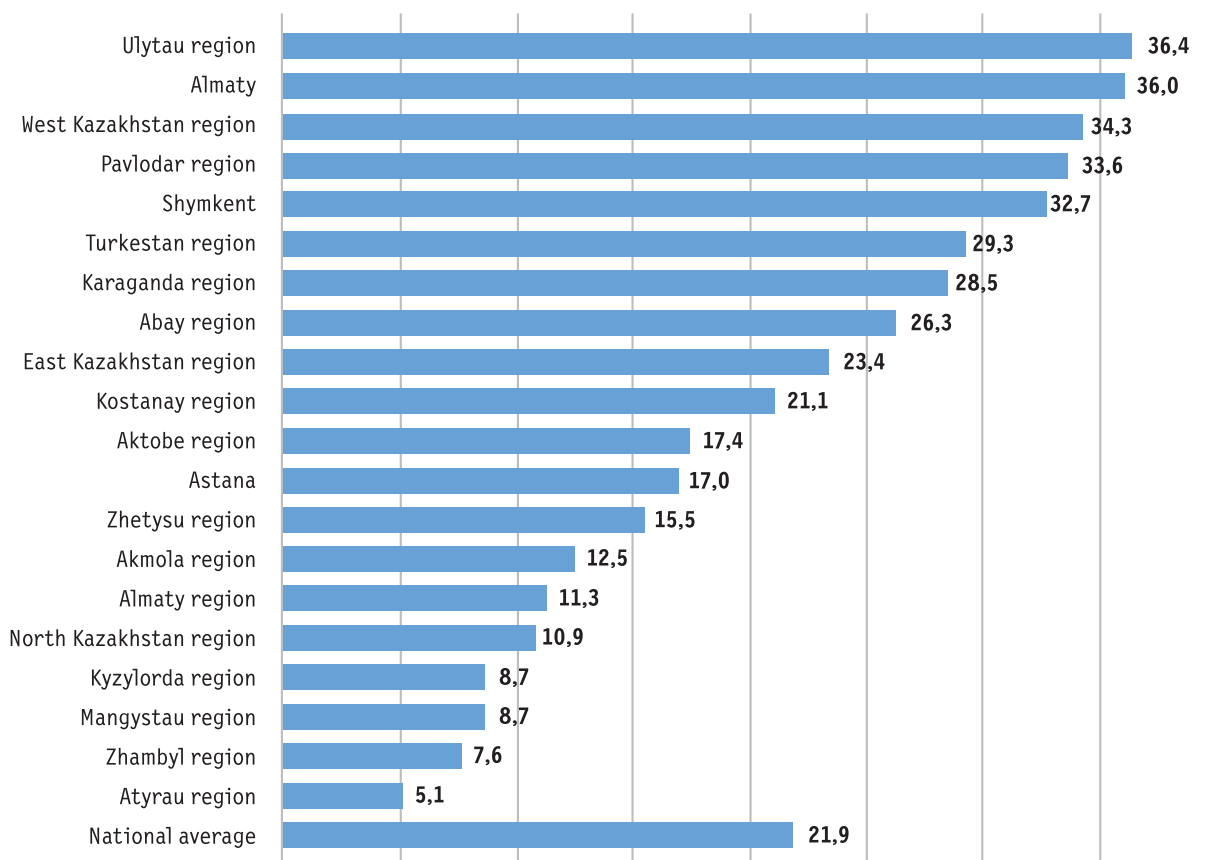


Figure 1.1.4. Percentage of respondents who reported encountering cases of DFV in their immediate environment, region, in %

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents

A comparison of regional criminal statistics (Table 1.1.3) and survey results (Figure 1.1.4) shows that public awareness of DFV cases in the immediate environment does not always correlate with the actual extent of reported offences. In regions with high crime rates, such as the Ulytau and West Kazakhstan regions, there is also a high level of awareness, suggesting a possible correlation between the frequency of offences and the social visibility of the issue. At the same time, in certain regions with high statistical indicators, such as Mangystau, Almaty, Akmola, and Zhetysu, the population is less likely to notice cases of DFV. The opposite situation occurs in the cities of Almaty and Shymkent, where, despite relatively low crime rates, the proportion of respondents who are aware of DFV cases in their neighbourhood is considerably higher. This discrepancy highlights differences in awareness, public openness, and how violence is regarded as taboo.

Therefore, public perceptions of the extent of DFV do not always align with objective indicators.

Expert assessments generally confirm the discrepancy identified between statistical data and public perception of the problem. Experts highlight that the population underestimates the extent of DFV due to limited awareness, cultural attitudes that accept violence as a way to regulate domestic issues, and the covert nature of many cases.

Analysis of the interviews shows that the issue of DFV in Kazakhstan remains essential, affecting all social groups and regions. According to experts, there has been no sustained decline in the number of cases. There is a cyclical pattern: a temporary decline followed by renewed growth.

"It remains at the same level. That is, there is just some kind of cyclicity. That is, at a certain point, there is a surge, followed by a decline, and then it stabilises at the same level". (Expert 5. President of the Women's Support Centre)

Some note adverse dynamics, linking them to the post-COVID consequences, rising social tensions, economic decline, and the decriminalisation of several offences in 2017.

Experts believe that the lack of positive dynamics is not primarily due to the absence of measures but rather to the delay in ideological and cultural changes. There is talk of a crisis in family values, a decline in respect for women, and a lack of systematic prevention measures.

"However, I wouldn't say that the problem has been fully solved. Because it still hasn't been addressed: ideology, everyday culture, and family values are lagging behind in society at the moment, and their underdevelopment, of course, is negatively affecting the situation. Attitudes towards women are worsening, and respect for women is declining. We are dealing with the consequences, but we need preventative measures. If we work correctly, constructively, and systematically with those who will start families in 5-10 years, this will help to prevent violence within their families in the future". (Expert 7. Representative of law enforcement agencies)

At the same time, the decriminalisation of DFV in 2024 will result in more reported cases, which does not necessarily indicate that the situation has worsened, but rather shows a change in reporting practices.

High-profile cases involving public figures have prompted stricter legislation and heightened public debate. The internet and social media minimise latency and foster a "zero tolerance" environment. Overall, increased openness and awareness are encouraging victims to seek help.

"Domestic violence remains one of the most urgent issues in Kazakhstan, especially following the incident where Bayan Yessentayeva was violently assaulted by her husband, Bakhytbek Yessentayev. Subsequently, after the death of Saltanat Nukenova, the problem became even more severe, prompting significant legal reforms". (Expert 6. Director of the crisis centre)

"...20 years ago they hid it, now they don't... young women call 102 immediately". (Expert 9. Representative of law enforcement agencies)

The most common forms of violence. An analysis of respondents' answers to the question about «the type of violence they most often observed in families they knew» (Table 1.1.7) shows a dominance of physical violence (64,5%) and moral and psychological pressure (59,6%). Forms such as economic abuse (29,4%), travel restrictions (22,3%), and control of digital devices and communications (20,9%) are reported less frequently due to the more covert nature of these types of violence. Nevertheless, this also underscores the complexity of the issue: violence is often multifaceted and controlling. Less common but highly alarming forms include sexual violence (10,4%), deprivation of basic needs such as food (5,9%) and medical care (5,8%). It should be noted that this distribution is only applicable to a smaller sample of respondents who observed cases of DFV in their immediate surroundings (Table 1.1.7).

Table 1.1.7.

Breakdown of answers to the question: **"How did the cases of DFV you know about manifest themselves in families you are familiar with?"** (respondents who had encountered cases of DFV in their immediate circle answered), in %

	Percentage of responses among those who have encountered DFV in their immediate environment	Based on the total number of respondents
Physical violence	64,5	14,1
Moral and psychological abuse (insults, blackmail, threats)	59,6	13,0
Economic abuse	29,4	6,4
Travel restrictions (prohibition on leaving the house, etc.)	22,3	4,9



	Percentage of responses among those who have encountered DFV in their immediate environment	Based on the total number of respondents
Monitoring devices (tracking location, reading personal correspondence, checking contact lists, etc.)	20,9	4,6
Sexual violence (rape, sexual harassment)	10,4	2,3
Ignoring basic healthcare needs	5,9	1,3
Ignoring basic food needs	5,8	1,3

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents

Personal experience. The most common types of violence experienced by respondents were psychological pressure and social control: constant criticism (26,1%), prohibition of communication (21,9%), insults (19,1%), and control of personal space (16,6%). 14–16% of respondents experienced physical violence, while approximately 12% reported sexual violence and coercion to have an abortion. Therefore, one in six respondents had experienced physical abuse, and between 13 and 26% had endured various forms of psychological abuse and social control.

Recognition of violence as such does not always align with experience: only 9–14% of victims recognise what is happening as violence. Non-physical forms are often overlooked: approximately 30% of respondents with no experience of DFV do not see constant criticism, prohibiting communication, and monitoring correspondence as violence. Among victims of DFV, between 1,7% and 3% do not even recognise physical and sexual violence as acts of abuse. This shows a culture of acceptance towards emotional and economic pressure, especially in the areas of control and financial reliance. The results emphasise the hidden aspects of many forms of violence and the importance of addressing not only acts of aggression but also the perceptions of the victims themselves.

Socio-demographic profile of victims of violence

The results of the 2025 survey indicate that Kazakhstani citizens most frequently identify women (78,2%) and children (56,3%) as victims of domestic violence. Compared to 2023:

- women continue to be regarded as the primary category of victims (an increase of 4 percentage points);
- the proportion of mentions of children as a risk group rose (from 52,4% to 56,3%);
- recognition of the vulnerability of older people (+4,5 percentage points) and people with physical disabilities (+3,3 percentage points) increased;
- for people with mental disorders, the figure was 15,2% (not measured in 2023);
- men were less likely to be perceived as potential victims (decrease from 14,3% to 8,9%);
- 8,2% of respondents see people in unregistered marriages as vulnerable.

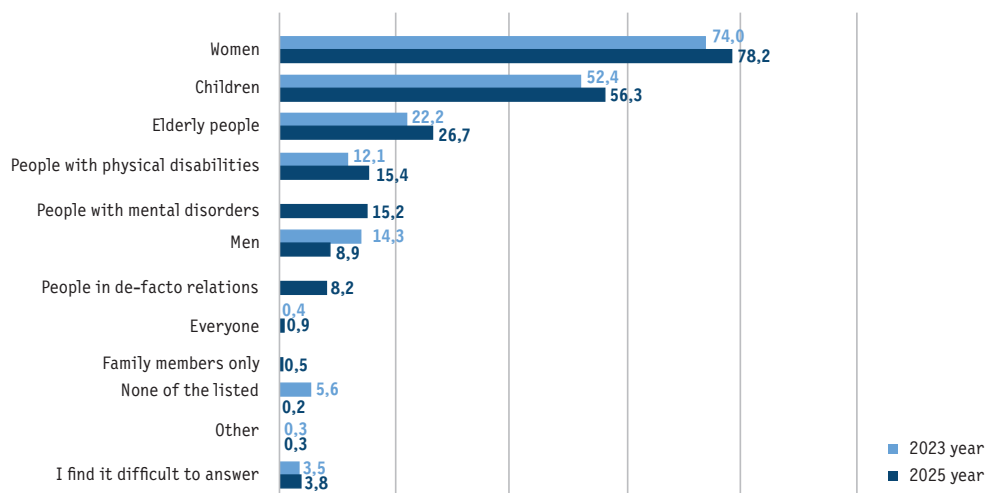


Figure 1.1.5. Breakdown of answers to the question: "In your opinion, which groups of people are most often subjected to domestic violence by family members?", in % (data from surveys conducted in 2023 and 2025)

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents

These perceptions are supported by the **personal experiences of respondents who have observed violence in families they know** (Figure 1.1.6). Among those who had faced such situations, the victim was a woman in 82% of cases, and a child in 33,7% of cases. Less frequently mentioned were elderly people (13,4%), men (12%), and persons with

disabilities (6,7%). A comparison with 2023 shows that the frequency of mentions of women and children has remained almost the same, but the proportion of reports of violence against men, older people, and people with disabilities has increased slightly.

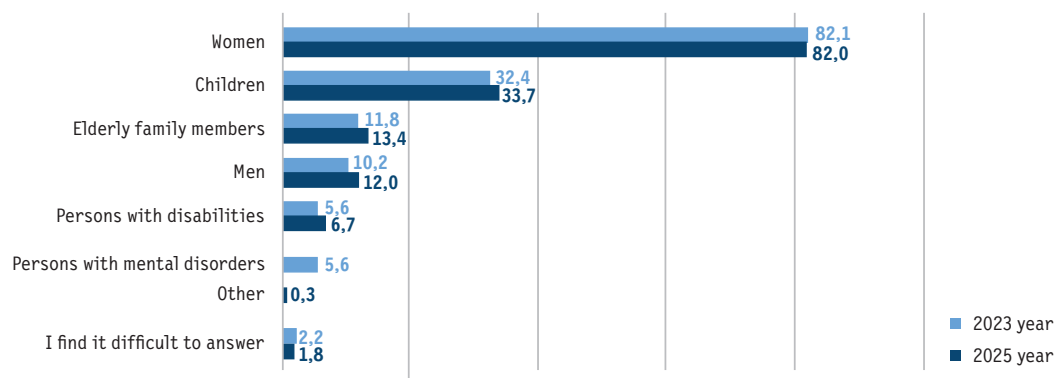


Figure 1.1.6. Breakdown of answers to the question: "Who was the victim of domestic violence in families you know?", in % (data from surveys conducted in 2023 and 2025)

* Only respondents who had personally experienced cases of family violence among their acquaintances responded.

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents

Portrait of victims of domestic violence. Analysis of interviews with experts and victims reveals that DFV impacts all age and social groups, but women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities experience its effects most severely.

Women. Most commonly, these are women who are married or living with a partner, aged 25–45, with one or more minor children. Most often, they possess secondary or vocational education, are unemployed, or have unstable incomes. They may be economically dependent because of maternity leave or lack of permanent employment, as well as psychologically and emotionally reliant on their partner. Violence often starts soon after marriage or the birth of a child and involves physical, psychological, and economic coercion. Social isolation and the absence of a supportive environment are among the main factors that sustain women in situations of violence.

Experts observe that female victims experience a range of consequences: loss of self-esteem, economic and psychological dependence, reduced ability to work, depressive disorders, and, in some cases, isolation and self-destructive behaviour. Women who experience violence often become disabled socially and professionally, which heightens their vulnerability and sustains violence as the usual situation.

Children. According to experts, children experience both direct physical and psychological abuse and witness it within their families. Witnessing violence between parents shapes distorted behaviour patterns in children, diminishes their emotional stability, and raises the likelihood of them replicating aggressive or submissive roles in adult life. It is observed that the consequences include psycho-emotional disorders, social adaptation difficulties, the development of complexes, and a tendency towards suicidal behaviour.

Some experts highlight instances of sexual violence against minors, including both girls and boys. Particular emphasis is placed on the vulnerability of children in dysfunctional families or families where the adults are not the biological parents. There are instances of children falling victim to sexual violence committed by relatives. Childhood trauma often goes unnoticed and necessitates specialised assistance, including post-traumatic psychological support.

The elderly. According to experts, elderly family members, including parents who rely on their adult children, often face both direct violence from their children and emotional neglect or psychological pressure. There have been instances of physical aggression, expulsion from the home, and humiliation by close relatives. The vulnerability of older people is worsened by the scarcity of alternative sources of support and accommodation, which compels them to tolerate violence.

Persons with disabilities. Violence against this group often remains hidden. People with mental disorders are especially vulnerable, as they may not realise what is happening or might be unable to seek help.

Common features of the victims' situation

- Social isolation and lack of support from family members.
- Economic vulnerability and lack of own housing.
- Repeatedly returning to the abuser due to pressure, fear, or concern for the children.
- Enduring long-term violence with hope for change.
- Late requests for help, sometimes years later.

"Many women don't even realise they are experiencing psychological abuse... they think, well, he said something, he insulted me... it's not that bad". (Expert 5. Head of the Women's Support Centre)

"A woman... is deprived of the opportunity to earn her own income. She has to... prove herself, beg, humiliate herself...". (Expert 1. Candidate of Law, teaching professor)

Analysis of DFV forms based on expert interviews. Experts confirm that all types of DFV are common in Kazakh families: physical, psychological, economic, and sexual. These forms frequently merge and can intensify with time. Physical violence is most visible; it is simpler to recognise and record. However, even beatings often remain a family matter that does not prompt intervention from others. Psychological abuse, according to experts, is far more common but stays concealed. It encompasses control, humiliation, intimidation, and isolation, and is often not recognised by the victim as violence.

Thus, victims of DFV often become trapped in a vicious cycle of dependency, isolation, and limited access to resources. This leaves them susceptible to continuous violence even after trying to escape.

Socio-demographic profile of abusers

According to most Kazakhstani respondents, the typical family abuser is usually a man (58,3%), while both spouses being equally responsible is less common (20,3%). Women as initiators of violence are mentioned in only 3% of cases. In public view, the main focus is on violence within married couples, while other vectors – against children, the elderly, or dependent family members – remain in the shadows.

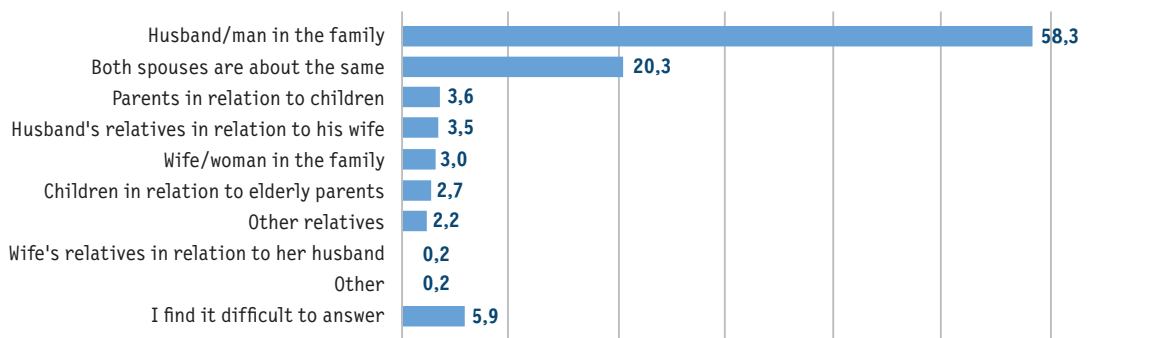


Figure 1.1.7. Breakdown of answers to the question: *"In your opinion, who most often commits domestic violence?"*, in %

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents

Psychological and behavioural traits of the abuser, observed in interviews with study participants and experts:

- Male abusers often struggle with some form of addiction, most commonly alcohol, occasionally substance abuse, or gambling addiction.
- A tendency for impulsive reactions, outbursts of irritation, and an authoritarian communication style.
- Low stress tolerance: conflicts often escalate amid fatigue, poverty, or unemployment.
- The desire to dominate one's spouse and other family members, including restrictions on communication and movement.
- Transferring behavioural patterns from the parental family, where conflicts and violence occurred.
- Justifying aggression through external circumstances (partner's "provocations", financial hardships, alcohol).
- Aggressors often believe they are in the right and do not recognise their own part in creating a toxic atmosphere in the family.

"...most of the aggressors who come to us are men who drink and don't work. That is, men who have their own problems. And they cannot seem to solve these societal problems, so they vent all their aggression on their loved ones: their wives and children. Mostly like that... but they can also be relatively prosperous. Seeming self-sufficient men can also be abusers". (Expert 5. President of the Women's Support Centre)

"Abusers are men aged 30–50 who lack permanent employment, professional or higher education (90%), and who abuse alcohol and drugs. Also, those who are undergoing divorce proceedings". (Expert 8. Representative of law enforcement agencies)

Abusers among the spouse's relatives. According to victims' accounts, in several cases, mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and other close relatives are the initiators or accomplices of violence. Their actions include both direct psychological and physical violence (humiliation, expulsion from the home) and indirect violence, such as exerting pressure on the husband and inciting aggression. Women note that this is especially typical of traditional family structures, where the authority of the husband's older relatives is considerable.

"He beat and battered me. Even in front of his mother, he hit and kicked me. My sister-in-law and mother-in-law also assaulted me... I bought a pair of trousers for a thousand tenge. "Why are you buying that?" they said, and while pulling my hair, my mother-in-law and sister-in-law caused a scene in front of the entire bazaar". (Female victim of DFV, 35 years old, secondary education, unemployed, Zhetysay region)

"After leaving the hospital, that same night, around 1:30–2:00 a.m., I was beaten again. He really choked me, and my face was covered in blood. I had just left the hospital; it happened at night. I didn't say anything. He hit me on the arms while I was lying down, with my child nearby, but he didn't even look at the child. He was choking me, and at that moment, my mother-in-law came in. My face was covered in blood, but even then, she said that no one had beaten me yesterday. Honestly, she said, "No one even touched you". (Female victim of DFV, 32 years old, secondary education, unemployed, Shymkent)

Causes of domestic violence in public perception. According to the survey (Figure 1.1.8), the public perceives harmful habits (60,4%) and socio-economic difficulties (54,9%) as the primary causes of DFV. Respondents also mentioned childhood trauma (27%), financial dependence (25,9%), stereotypes ("if he hits you, it means he loves you", 24%), and the impunity of the abusers (24,1%) as significant factors. Less common causes include mental disorders, pressure from relatives, unpreparedness for family life, and poor prevention. These data reflect a mix of personal, cultural, and institutional factors, emphasising the importance of comprehensive actions – from addiction treatment and family support for those in crisis to changing social attitudes.

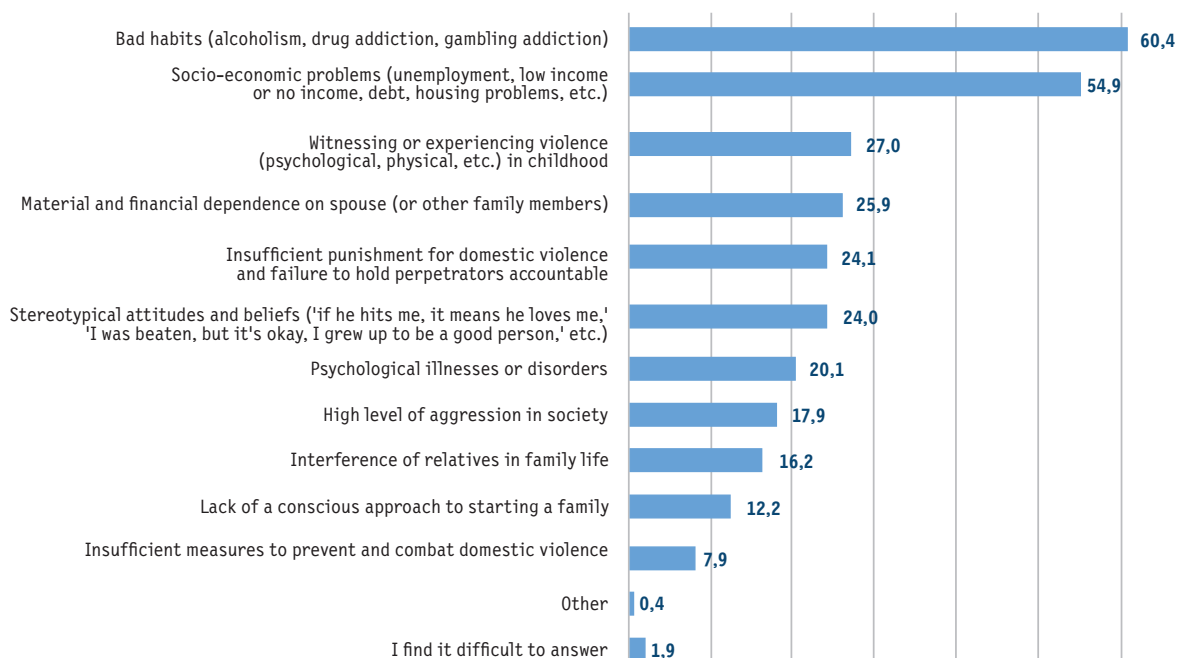


Figure 1.1.8. Main causes of domestic violence according to respondents, in %

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents

The acceptability of violence and the allocation of responsibility for DFV in the views of the population and experts. In assessing the acceptability of violence (Figure 1.1.9), the stance of unconditional prohibition prevails: 78% of respondents support it (a rise of 3,2% from 2023). However, 16,6% still justify violence depending on the

circumstances. Women and urban residents are more definitive (80,2% and 79%) than men and rural residents (75,5% and 76,3%). Higher and secondary specialised education correlates with a strong condemnation of violence (around 80%). In contrast, among respondents with secondary education, this figure drops to 69,4%, and the proportion of those who conditionally justify violence reaches 20,6%. Correlation analysis revealed that financially secure respondents were more likely to be intolerant of violence, whereas less secure respondents were more likely to justify it in some instances ($r = -0,118$; $p < 0,01$).

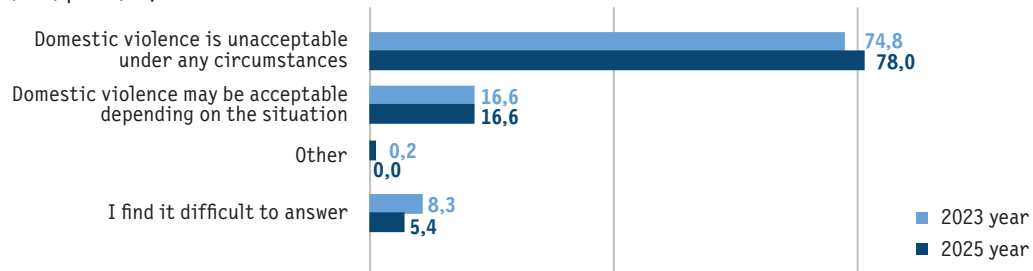


Figure 1.1.9. Breakdown of answers to the question: *"Which of the following positions is closest to your own?"*, in % (data from surveys conducted in 2023 and 2025)

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents

Most respondents (63,9%) attribute the responsibility for the DFV to the abuser. This illustrates the widely accepted public view that it is unacceptable to attribute blame to external circumstances. However, one in five (21%) still believe that both the abuser and the victim are to blame, while another 5,1% blame the victim alone, showing that victim blaming still persists. Compared to 2023, the proportion of people who blame only the abuser has risen, while those who believe both sides are responsible have fallen.

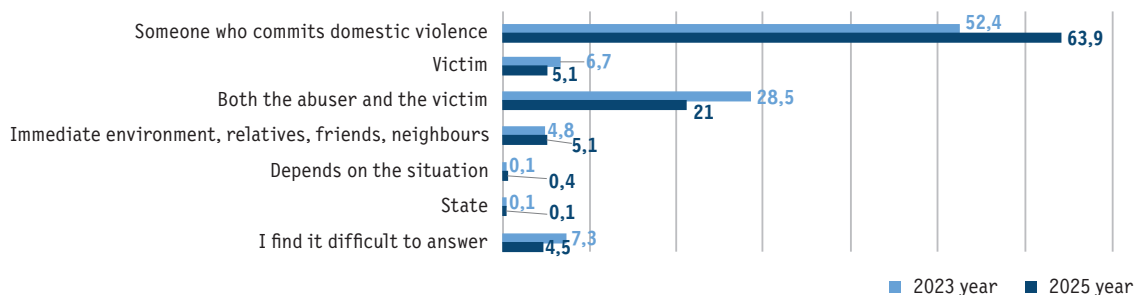


Figure 1.1.10. Breakdown of answers to the question: *"In your opinion, who is primarily to blame for domestic violence?"*, in % (data from surveys conducted in 2023 and 2025)

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents

Experts confirm the duality of public attitudes: on the one hand, the media, social networks and high-profile cases increase openness on the subject, while on the other hand, traditional patriarchal attitudes (shame, "don't wash your dirty linen in public") and pressure from those around them prevent victims from seeking help. Those closest to the individual often adopt a neutral stance, reducing the likelihood of timely intervention.

"We are still a Muslim state, and we have "ұят болады, құдалар не дейді" (it is embarrassing, what would in-laws say)". (Expert 9. Representative of law enforcement agencies)

"The current practice is not to violate other people's boundaries or interfere if something is happening in someone else's family". (Expert 10. Educational psychologist)

"Following the Bishimbayev case, numerous cases started to emerge. In fact, the problem has always been present, but it was not openly discussed before. These days, information surfaces on the Internet, but many choose to remain silent about what is occurring. However, this matter should be raised for public debate". (Female victim of DFV, 53 years old, higher education, self-employed, East Kazakhstan region)

1.2. Violence against children

Violence against children within the family remains one of the most distressing and serious forms of DFV. Although children rarely report violence, they are often its unseen victims – both through direct physical or psychological abuse and as witnesses to adult aggression.

In recent years, Kazakhstan has made efforts to enhance the protection of children's rights and to prevent violence. Amendments have been introduced to criminal and administrative laws aimed at strengthening liability for child abuse. In 2023, a National Model for the Protection of Children's Rights was adopted, incorporating an interdepartmental approach to identify and prevent violence. The work of children's rights ombudsmen is being intensified, programmes are being introduced to train specialists in the early detection of violence, and support services for children and adolescents are being developed, including helplines (e.g., the 111 service). However, the systemic nature of the problem demands further efforts, sector coordination, and ongoing inter-agency cooperation.

Trends in criminal offences against minors

Official statistics reveal a concerning trend: from 2021 to 2024, the number of criminal offences against minors in Kazakhstan rose from 2 088 to 3 356 cases, representing an increase of over 60%. In the first half of 2025 alone, 1 825 crimes were recorded, and if this trend continues, the annual total could reach or surpass the level seen in 2024.

The highest rates are observed in densely populated regions – Almaty region (390 cases in 2024), Almaty (258), Astana (254), Turkestan region (261), Shymkent (241), and Zhambyl region (192). High population density partly explains these figures, but the scale of the problem indicates systemic issues in child protection.

Several regions are expected to undergo particularly significant growth from 2022 to 2024: Astana, more than doubling; Almaty – 36%; Aktoobe region – 65%; Atyrau region – 55%; and Almaty region – 67%. This notable rise may be due to both a deteriorating situation and higher crime detection rates resulting from increased law enforcement efforts and greater social awareness.

New and small regions are a particular cause for concern. In 2024, 99 cases were recorded in the Abay region, 48 in Ulytau, and 92 in Zhetysu. With a relatively small child population, this results in a high specific burden and highlights the need for targeted measures – from early detection of family issues to ensuring access to specialised support.

Table 1.2.1.

Information on the number of criminal offences committed against minors
from 2021 to 2024 and the first six months of 2025

Regions	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 months 2025
Abay region	0	38	101	99	48
Akmola region	97	60	88	126	70
Aktobe region	84	96	107	177	98
Almaty region	183	185	234	390	182
Atyrau region	101	90	116	180	85
WKR	109	152	128	158	101
Zhambyl region	141	110	133	192	96
Zhetysu region	0	27	72	92	51
Karaganda region	253	168	185	203	100
Kostanay region	131	84	81	78	59
Kyzylorda region	68	47	80	119	48
Mangystau region	69	84	104	142	66
Pavlodar region	61	81	86	105	68
NKR	78	67	62	89	38
Turkestan region	230	213	212	261	171
Ulytau region	0	16	41	48	23
EKR	140	100	107	110	77
Astana	96	93	123	254	173
Almaty	90	143	189	258	136
Shymkent	141	126	168	241	105
Total for all regions	2072	1980	2417	3322	1795
Total for the Republic	2088	2005	2452	3356	1825

* Taking into account non-regional indicators

Source: CLS&SR GPO RK



Crimes against the sexual integrity of minors. An analysis of data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2021-2024 and the first half of 2025 (Tables 1.2.2 and 1.2.3) reveals that the level of sexualised violence against minors remains consistently high.

According to Articles 120 and 121 of the PC of the RK ("Rape" and "Violent acts of a sexual nature"), 436 cases were registered in 2023, 440 in 2024, and 193 in the first six months of 2025. Under Articles 122 and 124 ("Sexual intercourse or other acts of a sexual nature with a person known to be under sixteen years of age..." and "Corruption of persons, not attained the age of sixteen"), 416, 408, and 203 cases, respectively.

The Almaty region, Almaty, Astana, Karaganda region, and Turkestan region remain the leaders in terms of the number of crimes. In the Atyrau, Kostanay, Pavlodar, and Zhambyl regions, there have been isolated spikes, particularly regarding Article 122.

Table 1.2.2.

Information on registered offences related to sexual integrity (under Articles 120 and 121 of the PC of the RK) from 2019 to 2024 and the first six months of 2025

Regions	Rape (Article 120) of minors					Violent acts of a sexual nature (Article 121) against minors				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 months 2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 months 2025
Abay region	-	6	7	3	6	-	1	8	3	5
Akmola region	9	9	6	14	5	7	4	8	10	4
Aktobe region	7	9	11	11	3	3	6	5	6	2
Almaty region	31	24	38	65	10	16	25	35	41	9
Atyrau region	13	3	16	4	2	13	5	6	3	0
WKR	6	7	4	7	3	9	7	11	8	4
Zhambyl region	6	1	12	9	5	5	4	7	7	6
Zhetysu region	-	4	9	11	1	-	2	5	8	2
Karaganda region	38	13	21	11	10	36	29	47	23	8
Kostanay region	20	2	7	3	2	16	2	6	8	7
Kyzylorda region	5	3	3	6	7	1	4	3	7	2
Mangystau region	3	4	6	7	2	7	5	3	7	0
Pavlodar region	6	12	15	17	8	2	13	8	12	10
NKR	9	7	9	3	1	7	2	4	8	1
Turkestan region	13	10	13	10	11	25	13	20	20	4
Ulytau region	-	2	3	3	0	-	0	3	2	0
EKR	22	10	9	6	4	16	21	15	4	4
Astana	13	6	7	16	11	12	6	6	17	10
Almaty	12	11	15	12	5	11	12	5	12	13
Shymkent	11	3	7	7	3	15	10	11	7	3
Total by region	224	146	218	225	99	201	171	216	213	94
Total for the Republic	224	152	219	225	99	201	236	217	215	94

* Taking into account non-regional indicators

Source: CLS&SR GPO RK

Table 1.2.3.

Information on registered offences committed against sexual integrity (under Articles 122 and 124 of the PC of the RK) from 2019 to 2024 and the first six months of 2025

Regions	Sexual intercourse or other acts of a sexual nature with a person under the age of sixteen (Article 122)					Corruption of minors (Article 124)				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 months 2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 months 2025
Abay region	-	6	16	5	1	-	1	8	7	3
Akmola region	28	18	17	13	6	4	2	3	7	0
Aktobe region	2	9	5	10	1	9	7	7	4	1



Regions	Sexual intercourse or other acts of a sexual nature with a person under the age of sixteen (Article 122)					Corruption of minors (Article 124)				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 months 2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 months 2025
Almaty region	38	32	30	40	19	5	6	5	16	4
Atyrau region	30	17	14	21	12	13	5	7	3	4
WKR	11	8	9	15	7	3	2	4	5	4
Zhambyl region	21	17	31	17	7	4	3	4	3	6
Zhetysu region	-	4	15	4	3	-	0	3	0	0
Karaganda region	29	20	20	34	5	26	8	6	6	5
Kostanay region	32	17	13	9	6	13	1	6	1	0
Kyzylorda region	9	5	4	8	8	6	2	6	5	1
Mangystau region	14	11	9	10	4	7	15	5	4	0
Pavlodar region	10	4	3	8	5	3	7	5	3	4
NKR	13	20	11	10	2	0	2	3	2	1
Turkestan region	28	25	20	24	13	15	15	7	5	7
Ulytau region	-	4	10	7	4	-	1	0	0	0
EKR	25	15	16	11	10	8	5	6	1	2
Astana	14	21	25	25	7	4	6	3	5	7
Almaty	16	19	24	24	16	7	4	6	10	4
Shymkent	16	11	15	12	8	12	1	8	4	5
Total by region	336	283	307	307	144	139	93	102	91	58
Total for the Republic	340	284	310	309	145	140	94	106	99	58

* Taking into account non-regional indicators

Source: CLS&SR GPO RK

To assess the extent of sexual violence, it is important to consider not only absolute figures but also specific indicators per 100 000 children (Table 1.2.4). In 2024, the highest rates were recorded in the Almaty region (29,1), the Karaganda region (23,3), the Akmola region (19,7), the Pavlodar region (19,5), and the North Kazakhstan region (18,2). These figures are considerably higher than the national average and warrant special attention, although the high detection rate might reflect both the severity of the problem and the effectiveness of the services.

In sparsely populated areas, low absolute numbers can mask a significant burden: in the Ulytau region, with 12 cases, the rate was 15,9; in West Kazakhstan, 16,1; and in the Abay region, 9,6. This highlights the importance of considering specific indicators when planning preventive measures.

The lowest coefficients were observed in Shymkent (6), Turkestan (6,4), Zhambyl (7,7), Kyzylorda (7,8), and Mangystau (8,5) regions, but their interpretation should be approached with caution due to possible latency and inadequate detection.

Table 1.2.4.

Rates of offences against the sexual integrity of minors (under Articles 120, 121, 122, 124 of the PC of the RK per 100 000 children by region of Kazakhstan for 2024)

Regions	Number of children	Article 120	Article 121	Article 122	Article 124	Total crimes by 4 articles	Per 100 000 children
Abay region	188321	3	3	5	7	18	9,6
Almaty region	556114	65	41	40	16	162	29,1
Karaganda region	317101	11	23	34	6	74	23,3
Akmola region	223493	14	10	13	7	44	19,7
Pavlodar region	205030	17	12	8	3	40	19,5
NKR	126424	3	8	10	2	23	18,2
WKR	217427	7	8	15	5	35	16,1
Ulytau region	75506	3	2	7	0	12	15,9
Astana	472070	16	17	25	5	63	13,3
EKR	182714	6	4	11	2	23	12,6
Atyrau region	274688	4	3	21	3	31	11,3
Kostanay region	206584	3	8	9	1	21	10,2



Zhetysay region	245056	11	8	4	0	23	9,4
Aktobe region	330877	11	6	10	4	31	9,4
Almaty	665430	12	12	24	10	58	8,7
Mangystau region	329613	7	7	10	4	28	8,5
Kyzylorda region	335399	6	7	8	5	26	7,8
Zhambyl region	465492	9	7	17	3	36	7,7
Turkestan region	927107	10	20	24	5	59	6,4
Shymkent	497081	7	7	12	4	30	6,0

Source: CLS&SR GPO RK

The extent of the violence against children issue based on survey findings. The survey results confirm a significant concern among the public: over half of respondents (56,3%) see children as one of the groups most vulnerable to violence. Among those who had encountered DFV in families they knew, one in three (33,7%) noted that the victims were children.

14,4% of respondents reported experiencing harsh punishment of children within their family, with 12,1% describing these actions as violence and 2,3% denying it. Respondents from the Aktobe region (80%), Shymkent (35%), the Turkestan region (29,3%), and Astana (20,2%) were the most likely to report that there had been cases of severe punishment of children in their families.

Tolerance of violence for educational purposes. The survey revealed that over a third of respondents (37,5%) in Kazakhstan condone the use of physical or psychological violence against children as a disciplinary measure (29,5% in certain circumstances, 8% in general) (Figure 1.2.1). Compared to 2023, the proportion of unconditional supporters of violence remains unchanged at 8%, while those adopting a more conciliatory stance have increased by 4,9%.

Tolerance towards violence against children is greater in rural areas, among men, respondents with lower education levels, and older age groups. Women, urban residents, and those with higher education are more inclined to disapprove of violence.

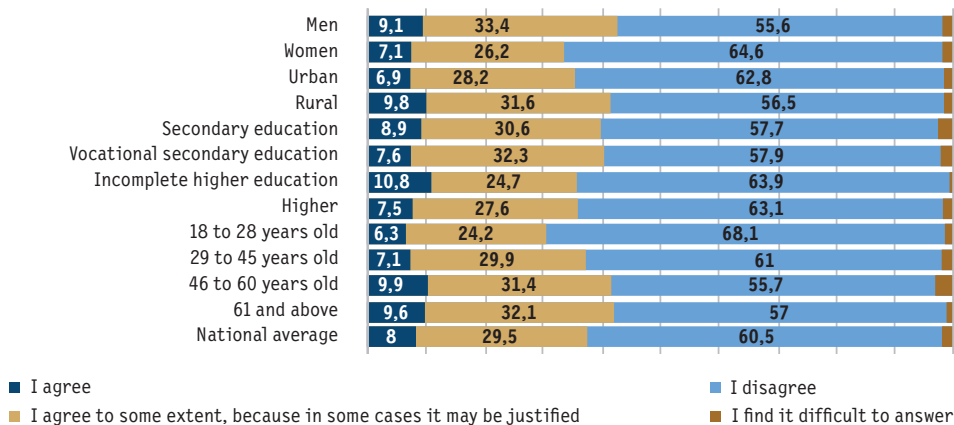


Figure 1.2.1. Breakdown of answers to the question: "Do you agree with the statement that the use of violence by parents against their children for educational purposes can be justified?", in %

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents

Personal experience of the respondents. More than a third of respondents (34%) admitted to experiencing physical or psychological abuse by adult family members during childhood, with around 11% enduring this repeatedly (Fig. 1.2.2.). Older generations report such experiences more often, which may indicate a decline in the acceptance of violence in recent decades and its social acceptance in the past. Ethnic differences are not especially noticeable, but individuals of Russian and other nationalities report experiencing violence in childhood more frequently than Kazakhs.

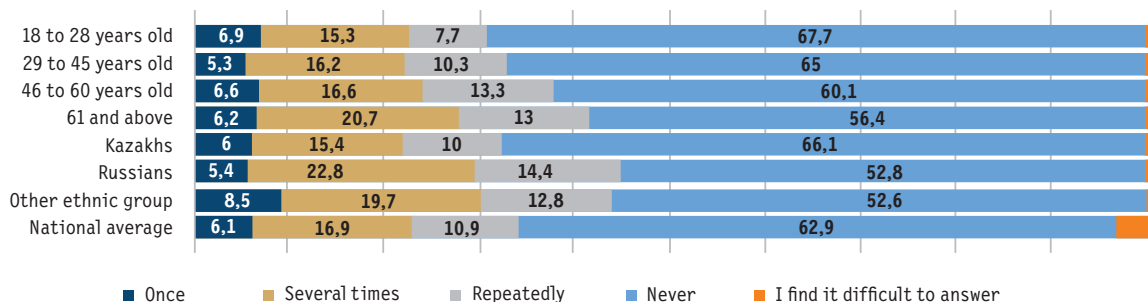


Figure 1.2.2. Breakdown of answers to the question: "Did you experience violence (physical, psychological) from adult family members during your childhood?", in %

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents

Further correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant link between childhood abuse and the acceptability of its use for educational purposes ($r = 0,154$; $p < 0,01$): respondents with such experiences were more inclined to justify physical punishment of children. This confirms the continuation of violent practices across generations and emphasises the need to address parental attitudes and norms that have become deeply ingrained in the family of origin.

The results also emphasise the significance of the intergenerational aspect: violence experienced in childhood can be passed down within families, as confirmed by interviews with victims and expert opinions.

Expert opinion. Experts emphasise that DFV has serious physical, psychological, and behavioural consequences, ranging from trauma and disability to depression, suicidal tendencies, aggression, substance abuse, and intergenerational transmission of violence.

"What are the consequences? Poor academic performance, substance abuse... Children who experience violence at home are likely to commit violence against their own children in the future. In other words, it is a predictive factor". (Expert 1. Candidate of Law, teaching professor)

Even if a child is not a direct victim but witnesses violence between adults, they experience deep psychological trauma and develop destructive behaviour patterns.

"This has a significant impact on children, as they become witnesses. Having experienced this within the family, when they grow up, they either become abusers or victims. There is no third option". (Expert 4. Psychologist of the crisis centre)

Juvenile inspection officers' experiences indicate that individuals who were victims or witnesses of violence often become suspects in cases of DFV later in life.

"...what children witness in childhood, they carry into their own families when they become our clients as adults". (Expert 9. Representative of law enforcement agencies)

Among the hidden types of violence are neglect, inadequate care, and a lack of attention.

"Consequences for children... Children are not always actually beaten or subjected to physical violence. It could be a lack of care and attention. Such a neglectful attitude towards children..." (Expert 1. Candidate of Law, teaching professor)

Particularly disturbing is sexualised violence against minors, which is frequently hidden by adults close to them. It is used alongside psychological coercion and intimidation. Experts emphasise its deeply hidden nature and the considerable level of stigmatisation, particularly when violence is perpetrated by stepfathers, biological fathers, or other close relatives. In some cases, victims find themselves in situations where other adults (including mothers) deliberately hide the facts of violence, which calls for a specific legal and preventive response.

"...the father's place is taken by a stranger, who can rape a girl or a boy. There is also bullying, they are frightened, forced to do things they shouldn't do". (Expert 2. Psychologist of the crisis centre)

"People often try to hide sexual abuse. They conceal it and do not discuss it. It can remain in a hidden, latent state for many years. For example, we recently encountered a case where a girl was raped by her father's younger brother a year ago. Their tactic involves threatening: if you tell anyone, I will cut off your ear, kill your mother, kill myself, and then I will be tried. The child believes this, and no one can speak out". (Expert 7. Director of the Social Assistance Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence)

Expert assessments emphasise that violence against children is not only a direct trauma but also a factor that sustains the cycle of violence across generations. Witnessing or enduring violence during childhood raises the likelihood that the individual will replicate it within their own family as an adult. This requires comprehensive prevention measures – from early detection and protection to long-term work on parental attitudes and family behaviour norms.

The views of violence victims. Analysis of interviews with women who have experienced DFV shows that even if children are not the direct targets of aggression, they suffer greatly from the atmosphere of violence. Witnessing conflicts, beatings, and humiliation directed at their mother causes them to develop fear, anxiety, and an inner conflict between love for their father and pity for their mother. In some cases, children faced verbal abuse and threats, and were also manipulated as assets when the abuser stopped them from calling their mother "mom" or threatened to take them away.



"Yes, my son grew up in this environment. It was psychologically complex for him. He is torn between his parents, but there is nothing he can do to help. It's particularly frightening when the aggression is directed at the child". (Female victim of DFV, 53 years old, higher education, self-employed, East Kazakhstan region)

The mother's emotional exhaustion, which results in outbursts towards the children, also has a negative impact. Sometimes the children tried to protect their mother, which signalled to the women that they needed to change the situation.

Consequences for children include:

- chronic fear and anxiety;
- feelings of guilt and inner conflict;
- early psychological stress and forced "adulthood";
- aggressive or anxious behaviour;
- distorted perceptions of family roles;
- risk of repeating the pattern of violence in adult life.

"I noticed that my child became anxious, stopped speaking, and started stuttering. When my husband was drunk, he would come home and shout, raising his voice in the middle of the night when I was holding a newborn – she was two months old and would wake up frightened by the noise. My older daughter also refused to interact with other children". (Female victim of DFV, 35 years old, secondary vocational education, self-employed, Aktobe region)

"My two daughters are terrified. However, they are in good health. They often ask me, "Let's leave. They are afraid of their father and ask, let's leave". (Female victim of DFV, 39 years old, secondary education, unemployed, Kyzylorda region)

Children are psychologically traumatised not only by the violence itself but also by the absence of emotional support from their mother, who remains under constant stress. After a divorce, many are left without the involvement and financial support of fathers, which worsens the family's circumstances.

The results of the mass survey confirm the findings from the interviews: respondents who experienced domestic violence in childhood are more likely to cite its long-term effects – anxiety, behavioural problems and the repetition of violent patterns in adulthood. This aligns with the statistically significant correlation identified in the study between personal childhood experience of violence and its acceptability for educational purposes.

The link between domestic violence and suicide among minors

According to WHO data, one in seven adolescents suffers from mental disorders, and suicide ranks among the top three causes of death for young people aged 15–29⁴. Domestic violence and lack of support substantially raise the risk of suicidal behaviour.

In 2024, Kazakhstan recorded 175 suicides and 452 attempts among minors; in the first six months of 2025, there were already 100 and 219, respectively, which could result in one of the highest annual figures in recent years (Table 1.2.5). There has been a decrease in the number of suicide cases compared to 2023 (–14,2%), with an increase in attempts (+20,5%).

The highest number of suicides is recorded in the Turkestan region, the Almaty region, and the city of Almaty. The level of attempts is particularly high in Astana and East Kazakhstan Region, and there has also been a noticeable increase in Atyrau Region and Shymkent. In several regions (Pavlodar, Kostanay, North Kazakhstan, Akmola), there has been a decline in both completed cases and suicide attempts.

In 2024, 5,1% of all completed suicides and 11,2% of attempts in the country involved minors.

Table 1.2.5.

Number of suicides and suicide attempts among minors from 2019 to 2024 and for 6 months in 2025

Regions	Suicide among minors							Suicide attempts among minors						
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 months 2025	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 months 2025
Abay region	-	-	-	3	8	3	1	-	-	-	10	12	19	4
Akmola region	3	6	8	4	4	5	2	25	21	27	13	11	14	4
Aktobe region	8	3	11	2	4	5	4	23	8	16	21	22	22	17
Almaty region	27	26	20	14	22	19	8	23	23	13	18	14	21	8

⁴ WHO. 2021. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide> (date of access: 07/13/2025)

Regions	Suicide among minors							Suicide attempts among minors						
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 months 2025	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 months 2025
Atyrau region	3	3	7	4	11	8	2	5	4	8	14	35	36	10
WKR	8	7	9	2	5	9	8	4	8	6	8	12	9	9
Zhambyl region	16	8	3	13	10	14	8	7	4	8	5	5	17	5
Zhetysu region	-	-	-	7	10	7	5	-	-	-	3	7	8	3
Karaganda region	5	7	7	5	8	4	6	24	10	11	13	7	18	9
Kostanay region	11	6	6	8	7	3	4	24	17	5	5	5	2	3
Kyzylorda region	6	7	11	8	8	6	6	7	8	4	5	5	1	3
Mangystau region	5	5	4	5	11	7	2	6	4	5	1	6	4	1
Pavlodar region	6	5	5	6	4	2	0	17	18	24	22	19	21	9
NKR	9	6	2	5	3	2	1	12	15	13	10	15	8	9
Turkestan region	38	30	40	36	45	34	19	43	51	30	46	38	41	27
Ulytau region	-	-	-	0	2	1	0	-	-	-	1	6	3	2
EKR	14	9	11	5	7	2	3	54	48	64	15	28	33	11
Astana	5	5	13	5	12	11	5	42	45	104	74	76	103	56
Almaty	7	5	12	16	8	15	8	26	20	22	15	35	38	12
Shymkent	8	6	6	7	14	17	8	9	3	12	8	16	34	17
Total		144	175	155	203	175	100	351	307	372	307	374	452	219

Source: CLS&SR GPO RK

Although recent years have seen an increase in both completed and attempted suicides among minors, long-term data (suicide mortality rate per 100 000 population) for the period from 2010 to 2024 show an overall decline in rates. This indicates that short-term fluctuations may be due to temporary crisis factors, but overall, the indicator has shown a consistent decline over the past 14 years.

From 2010 to 2024, suicide mortality rates in Kazakhstan declined substantially across all age groups. Among 15-19-year-olds, the rate decreased from 20,14 per 100 000 people in 2010 to 5,21 in 2024, but remains nearly four times higher than among 10-14-year-olds. In the 10-14 age group, the decline was from 6,51 to 1,34, especially noticeable after 2013-2014, which may relate to the intensification of suicide prevention efforts. Between the ages of 5 and 9, the indicators remain consistently low (0-0,55), but even individual cases require attention. Despite positive developments, adolescents still form a vulnerable group, and prioritising their mental health remains essential. Meanwhile, the experience of DFV may be a significant risk factor that worsens suicidal tendencies among minors.

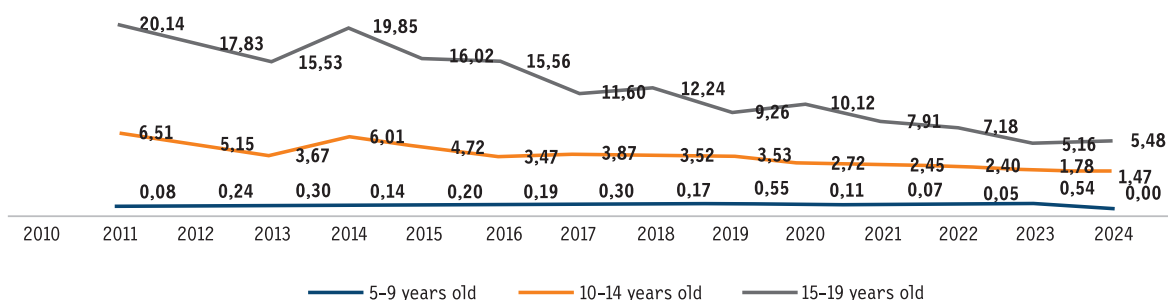


Figure 1.2.3. Trends in suicide mortality rates among individuals under 19 years of age⁵

Source: BNS ASPR RK

Perception of the consequences of child abuse. Most respondents believe that domestic violence has serious effects on children: psychological trauma and anxiety (64,7%), depression and suicidal thoughts (35,8%), aggression or fleeing from home (33,4%), difficulties at school and in socialising (29,2%), and a tendency towards violence in the future (28,2%). Only 10,6% believe that children quickly forget wrongdoings.

⁵ The suicide mortality rate, defined as the number of deaths by suicide per year, is calculated by dividing by the population and multiplying by 100,000.



Figure 1.2.4. Breakdown of answers to the question: "What are the consequences of domestic violence for a child who has been a victim or witness of violence?", in %

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

The link between violence and suicidal intentions is particularly concerning: 35,8% of respondents believe this to be true, with the highest percentages among young people aged 18-28 (41%), students (39,3%), women (37,8%), and Kazakhs (37,5%). The greatest concern that DFV may lead to depression and suicidal tendencies has been documented in several regions, including Shymkent, Aktobe, Kyzylorda, Abay, Mangystau, Turkestan, and Atyrau (43-59%).

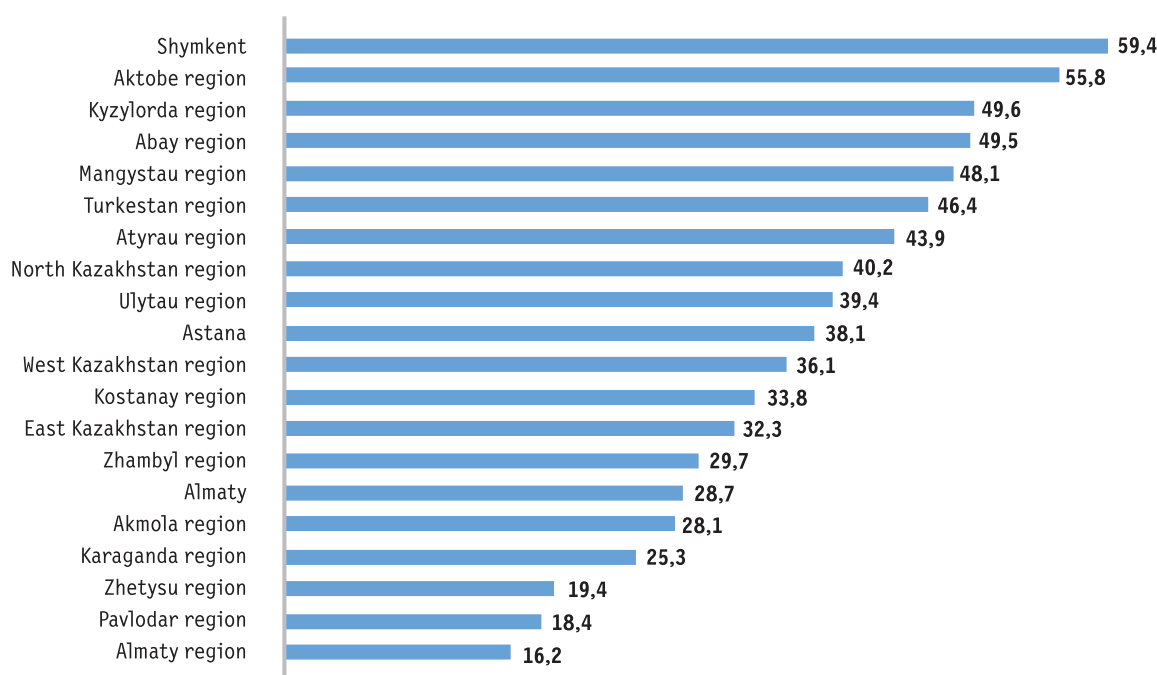


Figure 1.2.5. Percentage of responses indicating "Depression, suicidal thoughts or suicide attempts in children" as a consequence of DFV, by region, in %

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

The relationship between violence and suicidal behaviour. International studies, including "Cultural risk factors of suicidal behaviour among adolescents in Kazakhstan" (Jumageldinov, A. et al., 2020), confirm that dysfunctional family relationships and violence destabilise the psycho-emotional state of adolescents and can contribute to the development of suicidal intentions. The authors highlight that exposure to violence within family and school settings is a significant factor in adolescent suicide in Kazakhstan, and prevention strategies must consider cultural specificities.

Cross-analysis of survey data reveals that serious consequences of DFV, such as psychological trauma, depression, and suicidal thoughts, are observed both by respondents who experienced violence in childhood and by those who did not personally endure violence (Table 1.2.6). Furthermore, individuals who did not face violence in childhood are more likely to recognise these consequences of DFV.

At first glance, a contradictory pattern emerges: among those who experienced childhood abuse, a slightly higher proportion (13–15%) believe that "children quickly forget grievances" compared to 8,4% of those who did not encounter violence. This may suggest either protective psychological mechanisms or a tendency to normalise violence in the victims' experiences.

Thus, subjective experiences of violence in childhood not only fail to increase respondents' awareness of the potential serious psychological effects of DFV, but may also, paradoxically, lessen it through justification or normalisation of traumatic experiences, including the possible activation of psychological defence mechanisms. This factor may result in the reproduction of violent behaviour patterns in children who are victims of DFV in adulthood.

Table 1.2.6.

Cross-sectional study of childhood violence experiences and perceptions of its effects

What are the effects of domestic violence on a child who has been a victim or witness?	Did you suffer physical or psychological abuse from adult family members during your childhood? (% per column)			
	Once	Several times	Repeatedly	Never
Psychological trauma, fears, etc.	55,2	56,2	48,2	71,6
Depression, suicidal thoughts or attempts in children	31,7	32,3	33,2	38,1
Deviant behaviour in children, including aggression and running away from home	33,3	35,3	34,5	33,2
Problems with studying and socialising	34,4	30,6	30,5	28,1
In the future, they become prone to violence themselves	27,9	29,0	24,7	29,0
No serious consequences – children quickly forget their grievances	15,8	13,4	14,6	8,4

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

The link between DFV and suicide among children, according to experts. Experts point out that domestic violence, including sexualised violence, can be a significant factor in child suicides, although it is not the only one. Fear, intimidation, feelings of shame, and an inability to trust adults heighten the risk, particularly if the child is afraid to disclose the abuse.

"If the parents are the ones committing domestic violence against the child, the child also endures this situation of confinement and depression. They don't know who to turn to if his own parents allow this... They can become very withdrawn and silent, especially if it is preceded by an incident, such as someone hurting them at school or their parents shouting at them. Although there may have been sexual abuse, everyone will assume he had a falling out with his parents, which is why he committed suicide. In other words, the reasons remain unknown". (Expert 1. Candidate of Law, teaching professor)

"I've seen this in my practice. A mother rushed in and said she had caught her daughter, who had decided to attempt suicide. Fortunately, the mother arrived in time and sought help. I began counselling this girl... She was psychologically distressed due to her biological father". (Expert 2. Psychologist of the crisis centre)

According to the director of the crisis centre, the risk heightens when DFV is combined with poverty, family conflicts, and humiliation by peers. In some cases, children grow up in an emotionally dysfunctional environment with strict control, leave home, and when they return, face even harsher sanctions, which can lead to suicide attempts.

"For example, no one leaves a good place. That is, if there was something wrong in the family or something was not right, the child leaves home. And then he or she may commit suicide". (Expert 7. Representative of law enforcement agencies)

Some experts believe that the impact of DFV is indirect: suicidal tendencies may be worsened by parental neglect or lack of attention, as well as by the influence of social media and "games" with tasks, when children try to attract their parents' attention.

"...More often than not, it is not domestic violence, but the fact that parents do not devote enough time to their children". (Expert 1. Candidate of Law, teaching professor)

"The second situation arises when children mention during our conversations that it was a suicide attempt. They say they wanted to frighten their parents into paying attention to them. Then I speak to these children and ask, 'How could



you do that? Well, they'll cut their wrists. "Our parents don't need us. Why did they even bring us into this world?" It all comes down to the family". (Expert 9. Representative of law enforcement agencies)

Some also believe that DFV is just one of several possible triggers, alongside unrequited love and disagreements with peers. At the same time, experts agree that a dysfunctional family environment and lack of support are key risk factors for adolescent suicide.

"I wouldn't claim that domestic violence is the only cause of suicide. No, young people face many issues of their own, but it is still one of the reasons. If a child feels so intimidated that they cannot confide in their mother or close relatives about the violence, or if they are threatened with harm to their parents if they disclose anything, or if they are threatened to harm their parents if they disclose anything, the child, understandably, may choose to take their own life to keep everything concealed and avoid making others suffer, except themselves". (Expert 1. Candidate of Law, teaching professor)

"Generally, in recent years, I haven't been actively researching, but I have been observing the issue of child suicide. I believe that, as is the case worldwide, there is no clear algorithm to precisely identify what constitutes violence that might indicate a child will commit suicide... Most likely, there is a certain percentage, perhaps, where violence against a child could act as a trigger for suicide. But not necessarily". (Expert 10. Educational psychologist)

Therefore, experts agree that DFV, especially sexualised DFV, can be a significant but not the only factor that increases the risk of suicide among minors. The primary mechanisms include fear, intimidation, shame, lack of trust and support within the family, worsened by poverty, conflict, neglect, and negative influences from peers or the online environment.

Statistical and sociological data indicate that violence against children in Kazakhstan takes many forms. Criminal statistics mainly show cases of physical violence and offences against sexual integrity. Meanwhile, research and expert evaluations emphasise the widespread presence of psychological stress and other forms of abuse within family and domestic environments. Public opinion remains ambivalent: on one hand, most respondents recognise that violence is unacceptable, while on the other hand, some sectors of society accept that punishing children is justified. Such attitudes increase the likelihood of postponing and sustaining violence through future generations.

1.3. Violence against dependent family members

Analysis of violence cases involving elderly and disabled individuals

Violence against dependent family members continues to be one of the least visible and least researched forms of DFV in Kazakhstan. Dependent family members include not only elderly people and persons with disabilities but also women in vulnerable situations and girls who have been victims of forced marriage or bride kidnapping. Although there is no specific legislative definition of this type of violence, data from sociological studies and expert interviews reveal persistent cultural attitudes, social expectations, and pressures that can incite or conceal violent actions.

The PC of the RK and the Code of Administrative Infractions of the Republic of Kazakhstan do not include a specific article explicitly addressing liability for "violence against dependent family members". Depending on the specific circumstances and nature of the violent acts, the offending party may face criminal or administrative liability under the relevant articles of the PC of the RK or the Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On Administrative Infractions', as well as be subject to preventive measures outlined in the Law "On the Prevention of Domestic Violence".

Public perception tends to mention older persons and persons with disabilities less often as victims of DFV than women and children, but at the same time, a significant proportion of respondents also regard them as vulnerable groups at risk of domestic violence. In particular, more than a quarter (26,7%) of respondents believe that older people are most often subjected to domestic violence by family members, 15,4% think that individuals with physical disabilities are victims of domestic violence. The same proportion (15,2%) mentions people with mental disorders.

Awareness of cases of violence. According to the survey, nearly one in four residents of Kazakhstan (24,2%) have heard of cases of violence or cruelty towards elderly people or individuals with disabilities committed by family members (Figure 1.3.1). This is a high indicator for a subject that is traditionally taboo to discuss. Meanwhile, 73,2% of respondents had not encountered such information, which may reflect both the actual delay in addressing the issue and society's insensitivity to this kind of violence.

Women report such cases more frequently than men, likely because they are more involved in caring for elderly and disabled family members and have greater awareness of their immediate family situation. Russian respondents report such cases more often than representatives of Turkic-speaking ethnic groups: Kazakhs, Tatars, and Uzbeks.

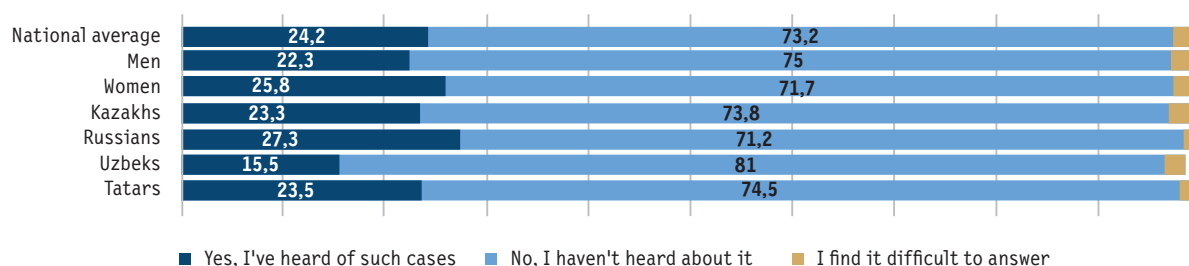


Figure 1.3.1. Breakdown of answers to the question: "Have you heard of cases of violence or cruelty towards elderly people or people with disabilities by family members?", in %

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

By region (Figure 1.3.2), a higher proportion of respondents (over 30%) who had heard of cases of violence against older persons or persons with disabilities by family members was recorded in Ulytau, Karaganda, and Zhambyl regions, as well as in the cities of Shymkent and Almaty. In contrast, the lowest proportion was noted in Aktoobe, North Kazakhstan, and East Kazakhstan regions, which may reflect differences in the openness of discussion or the actual prevalence of the problem.

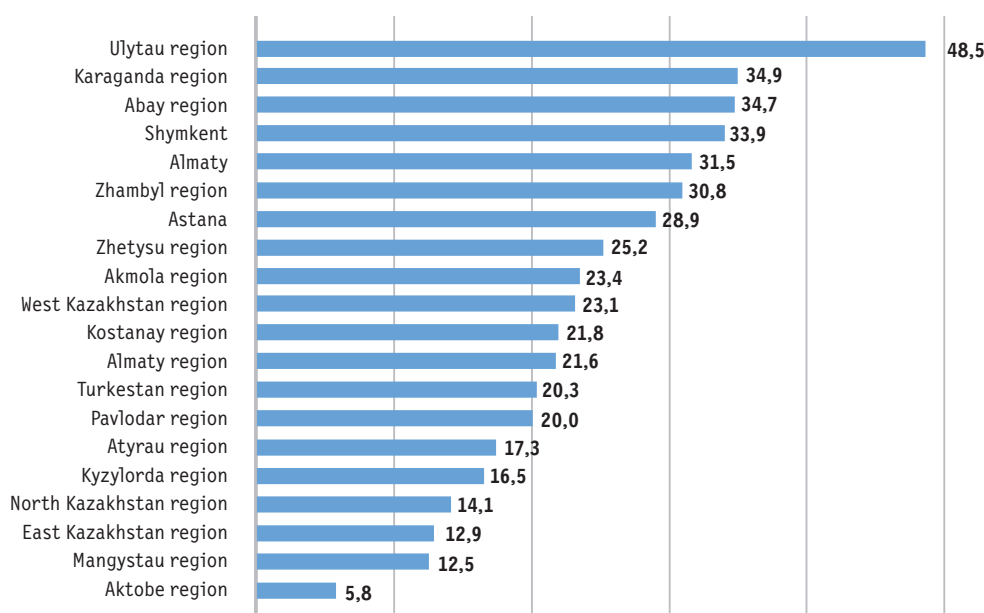


Figure 1.3.2. Percentage of people who have heard of cases of violence or cruelty towards the elderly or individuals with disabilities by family members, broken down by region, in %

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

Caring for dependent family members – a tradition of care or a source of vulnerability?

Caring for dependent family members in Kazakhstan is traditionally regarded as an unconditional duty, rooted in cultural norms and ways of life. This tradition is particularly evident in Kazakh families, where the youngest son (kenzhe) is responsible for caring for his elderly parents, and his wife (kelin) takes on a significant amount of caregiving, combining it with household chores.

There is a widespread belief in society that family members should be willing to sacrifice their own interests to support elderly relatives and those with disabilities. This view is shared by the majority of Kazakhstani respondents (61,5%), with agreement significantly higher among older age groups and urban residents (Figure 1.3.3). Support for this norm mainly stems from the underdeveloped social infrastructure that can partly ease the care burden on family members. In cities, this attitude may be more evident due to more frequent contact with single elderly individuals and people with disabilities, as well as lower participation in neighbourhood and family mutual aid networks than in rural areas. However, limited options for fulfilling these responsibilities often lead to emotional and physical burnout among caregivers, as well as a loss of control over their time and personal space.

Ethnocultural analysis reveals differences. Among Kazakhs, the proportion of supporters of forced care is lower (58,3%) than among Russians (73,3%) and other ethnic groups (69,2%). This may suggest a gradual re-evaluation of

traditional norms, especially among young Kazakhs, who increasingly see caregiving responsibilities as a source of pressure (Fig. 1.3.3.). For them, preserving family values does not mean sacrifice: reduced support may indicate an internal protest against excessive expectations and lack of choice.

At the same time, the strong support for this norm among Russians and other ethnic groups probably reflects an abstract sense of moral duty that is not always supported by the experience of long-term, intensive care typical of Kazakh families. Thus, the perception of needing to sacrifice personal interests in favour of caring for dependent family members is influenced by a combination of cultural traditions, personal experience, and the availability of external support resources.

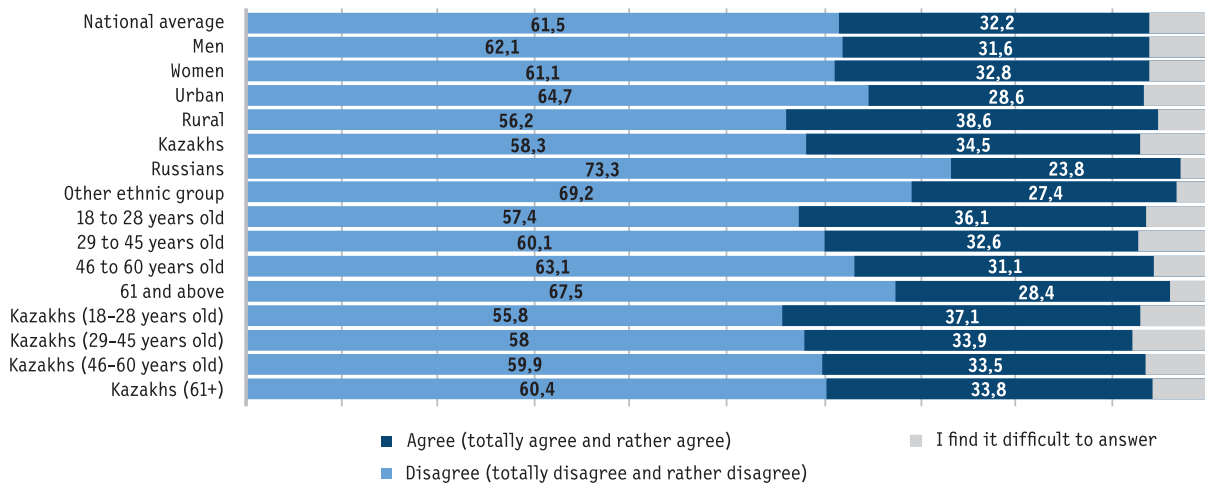


Figure 1.3.3. Breakdown of answers to the question: *"Do you agree with the statement that relatives are obliged to care for elderly relatives or family members with disabilities to the detriment of their own interests?"*, in %

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

High levels of support for the installation are recorded in the Ulytau, Karaganda, and West Kazakhstan regions, as well as in the city of Shymkent (over 80%). Weak support is observed in the East Kazakhstan, North Kazakhstan, and Kyzylorda regions, as well as in the Abay and Zhetysu regions (less than 40%).

At the same time, despite certain differences, the idea that caring for elderly or incapacitated family members is a duty, even at the expense of one's own interests, continues to enjoy strong support across all social strata, underscoring its enduring presence in public consciousness.

Forced care as a hidden form of pressure. In Kazakhstan, it is common for a family member, usually a woman, to care for an elderly or seriously ill relative not out of their own choice, but due to pressure from the family, their community, and social expectations. This obligation is portrayed as a display of duty and responsibility, but in reality, it often leads to emotional burnout, physical fatigue, and social isolation. In some cases, this causes breakdowns and violence towards those they are responsible for.

According to the survey, 8,7% of respondents have been compelled to care for family members, another 36,1% are aware of such cases, and 53,1% are unaware. Thus, nearly half (44,8%) recognise that this practice exists, but it is often disguised as a moral obligation, making it challenging to identify and support carers.

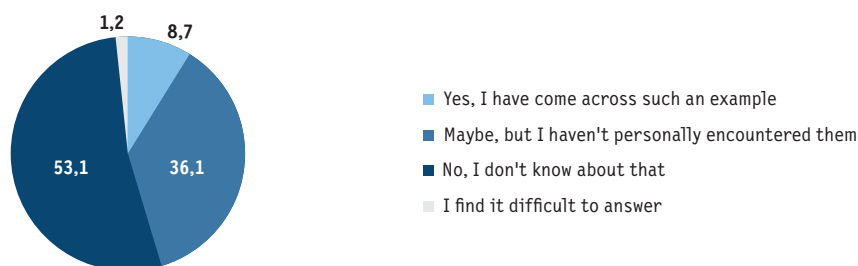


Figure 1.3.4. Breakdown of answers to the question: *"Have there been cases when a family member was forced to care for an elderly or seriously ill relative against their will?"*, in %

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

Respondents from Shymkent (20%), Ulytau Region (18,2%), and Almaty Region (17,6%) were more likely than others to have personally experienced cases of family members being coerced into caring for a seriously ill relative against their will. Rural residents experienced such incidents somewhat more frequently than urban residents (10,6% versus 7,6%). Such cases were most commonly reported by people over 60 (12%) and the least well-off respondents (12,6%). The ethnic breakdown showed no differences in the proportion of individuals who had witnessed forced care for a sick person.

Experts emphasise that hidden psychological and economic pressure is frequently exerted on elderly people and persons with disabilities. This issue is especially severe in care situations: relatives are compelled to undertake challenging tasks without assistance, leading to frustration and potential violence.

"That is, unfortunately, not only women but also older people and individuals with disabilities. But since they cannot resist, they are unable to report to law enforcement agencies or relatives that they are being abused. They are vulnerable to some extent". (Expert 1. Candidate of Law, teaching professor)

Several experts highlight that people with disabilities are frequently isolated, have restricted rights and social interactions, and in some cases, are unable to recognise acts of violence.

Experts also cite specific examples of violence against elderly parents by their adult children, as well as against men with disabilities by their wives and children.

"We have had cases where elderly people have suffered violence from their children. We had two men with disabilities who were also subjected to violence from both their wives and their children". (Expert 5. President of the Women's Support Centre)

"Elderly people also suffer. They have nowhere to turn. For example, a son beats his mother and forces her out of the house when he is drunk. Or, the daughter-in-law persuades her husband that he doesn't need his mother because she is old". (Expert 8. Law enforcement representative)

Experts highlight the complexity of the phenomenon: older people can be both victims and active participants in a culture of violence, promoting aggression or intimidating other family members.

"Elderly people can be categorised into different groups. Some support their son's violence against his wife, rejoicing: 'He hit my daughter-in-law,' 'He threw her out of the house.' Others are too afraid to intervene when their children assault their wife or daughter and stay silent. Disabled individuals are often also too scared to oppose such abusers; they simply lack the strength. Essentially, it is our children who suffer". (Expert 6. Director of the crisis centre)

The law enforcement representative emphasises the psychological trauma experienced not only by direct victims but also by witnesses to violence, including children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. He notes that no work had previously been done with this group, but from 2025 onwards, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan is establishing a new focus area – support for witnesses of violence.

"There are six main aspects to this. Previously, for example, if there were violence in a family, we would place the woman in a crisis centre, take her and her children away, and the abuser would remain at home. As a result, the mental health of children, elderly people, or individuals with disabilities who witnessed domestic violence was, of course, affected. But no one worked with them. Now, we involve specialists in working with these people and are making progress in this area". (Expert 7. Representative of law enforcement agencies)

Bride kidnapping and forced marriages: between tradition and violence

Archaic practices that can be viewed as a form of violence against dependent persons still exist in Kazakhstan, including the so-called "qyz alyp qashu" – the abduction of a bride without her consent. It should be noted that the tradition of "qyz alyp qashu" has historical and cultural roots and, in the past, in some cases, it could be agreed upon by young people and their families. In modern interpretation, "alyp qashu" often denotes the abduction of a girl without her consent, which violates human rights and freedoms and constitutes forced marriage.

According to data from the CLS&SR GPO RK of the Republic of Kazakhstan, approximately 20 criminal cases involving the abduction of women are recorded annually in Kazakhstan. In 2023, 18 such cases were recorded, with two-thirds (12) occurring in the southern regions, including six cases in Almaty. A single case was recorded in Astana. Furthermore, the number of cases under the related article – unlawful deprivation of freedom – declined from 71 in 2018 to 13 in

2023⁶. Given the data from the population survey, the statistics reveal only the tip of the iceberg, with the majority of cases remaining concealed by the entrenched practice of silence.

Civil society and human rights activists have long called for stronger measures to combat forced marriages, and positive changes have now occurred: in July 2025, the President of Kazakhstan signed legislation establishing criminal liability for bride kidnapping. This step shows the state's strong intention not to allow blatant human rights violations, which are disguised as "cultural traditions", to go unpunished.

According to the survey results (Figure 1.3.5), most Kazakhstani citizens (67,6%) have a negative attitude towards "qyz alyp qashu", while 20,5% remain neutral, suggesting hidden tolerance. Support is higher among Kazakhs (10,8%) and especially Uzbeks (29,3%), reflecting the influence of traditional norms within Turkic-speaking communities. Among Russians, approval is minimal (3,5%). Women are more likely than men to condemn bride kidnapping, and a higher level of education is associated with more adverse attitudes ($r = 0,057$; $p < 0,01$).

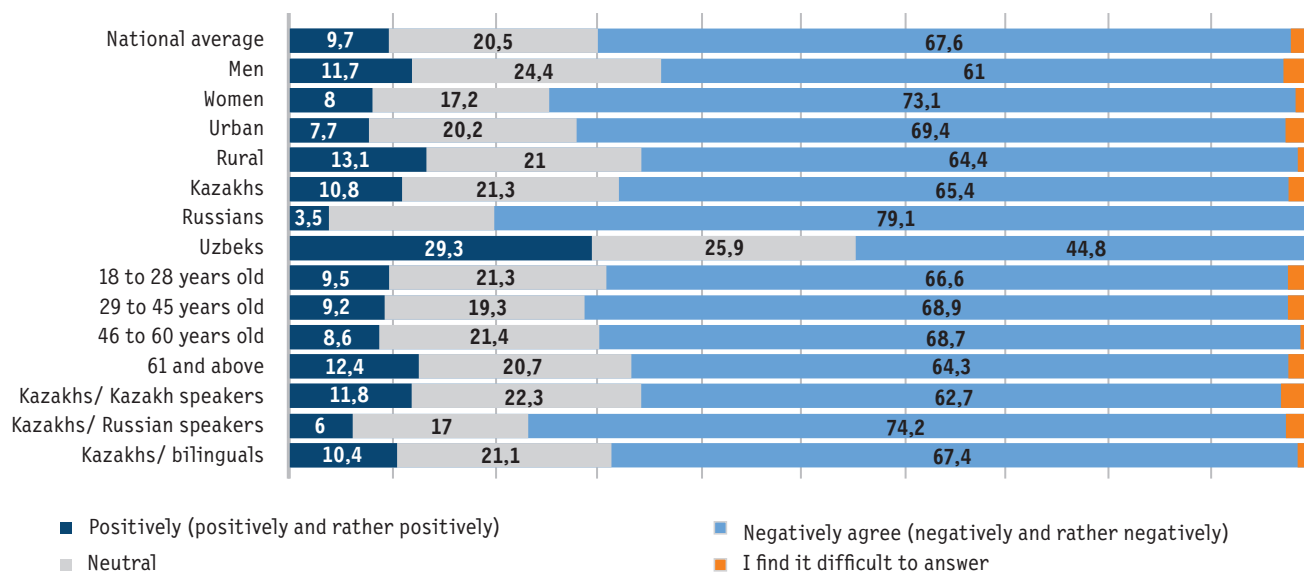


Figure 1.3.5. Breakdown of answers to the question: "How do you feel about bride kidnapping against the bride's will ("qyz alyp qashu")?", in %

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

Correlation analysis also revealed that tolerance of bride kidnapping is moderately linked to justification of violence against children ($r = 0,207$; $p < 0,01$) and inversely related to complete rejection of domestic violence ($r = -0,206$; $p < 0,01$). This suggests that attitudes towards bride kidnapping are more often negative among those who adopt an uncompromising stance on issues of violence. Conversely, those who justify violence in other contexts (such as child rearing and domestic conflicts) are more inclined to accept the traditional practice of bride kidnapping. Thus, the perception of "qyz alyp qashu" fits into a broader system of views in which violence is regarded as an acceptable way of building and regulating family and gender relations.

The highest level of support for the tradition of bride kidnapping is mainly found in the southern regions of the country: Shymkent (31,5% overall), the Almaty, Zhambyl, and Turkestan regions (18-19%), and the Mangystau region (13,4%). At the same time, in the regions of Ulytau, Atyrau, and Aktobe, only a few respondents (less than 1%) expressed a positive attitude towards this practice.

Reaction to the fact of the bride kidnapping. In the case of "qyz alyp qashu", without the girl's consent, most Kazakhstani people (58%) believe she should leave and contact the police (Figure 1.3.6). Another 18,4% are also opposed to marriage but would rather avoid involving law enforcement agencies – likely due to mistrust or reluctance to engage in public conflict.

At the same time, 11,5% of Kazakhstani respondents would consider marrying their abductor, reflecting the persistence of traditional attitudes that prioritise the "preservation of the family's reputation" over personal safety. A significant proportion of those who found it difficult to answer (12,1%) may indicate internal conflict among respondents between legal norms and cultural traditions.

⁶ ranking.kz [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: <https://ranking.kz/reviews/socium/mrakobesie-a-ne-traditsii-v-kazahstane-prakticheski-ne-menyetsya-statistika-ugolovnyh-del-po-faktam-pohischeniya-zhenschin.html> (date of access: 07/12/2025)

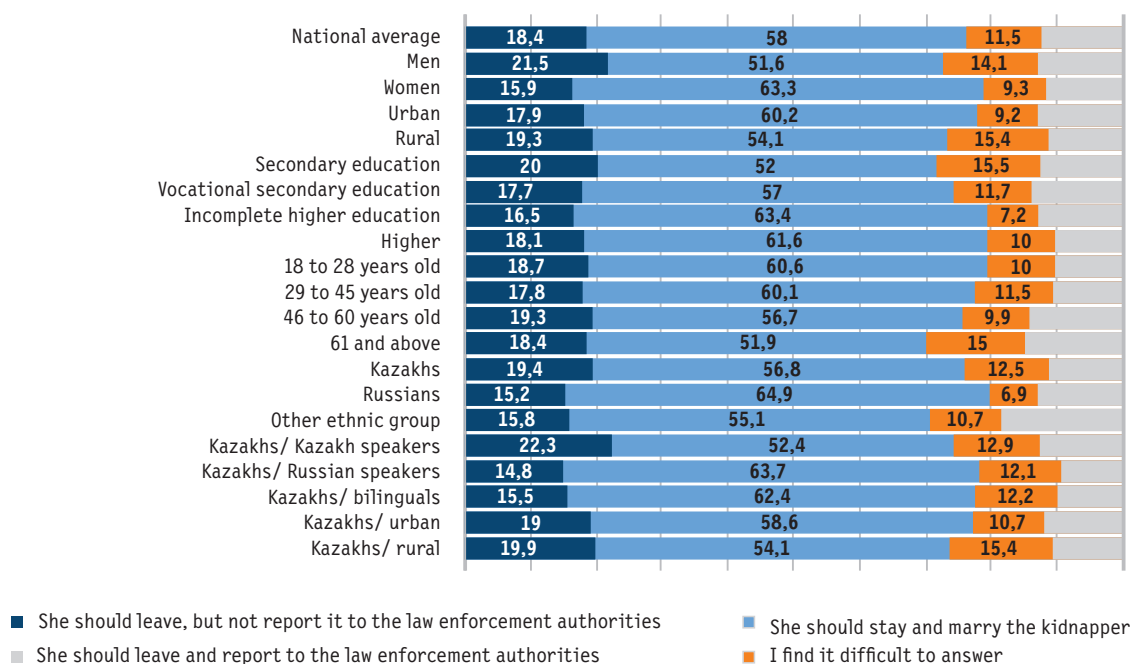


Figure 1.3.6. Breakdown of answers to the question: "In your opinion, if a girl has been kidnapped against her will, should she leave or is it better for her to stay and get married?", in %

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

Women are more likely than men to support reporting the incident to the police, while men are more inclined to suggest leaving without reporting or staying with the abductor (Figure 1.3.6). The oldest age group is more likely to believe that a girl should marry.

Among Kazakhs, the proportion of those who believe that a girl should stay with her abductor is higher than among other ethnic groups. Kazakh-speaking respondents are less inclined to report incidents to the police (52,4%) and are more likely to remain silent about the situation. In rural areas, there is a higher tendency to uphold forced marriages.

The educational factor is also essential: as education levels rise, the proportion of those advocating reporting the crime to law enforcement increases, while the proportion of those justifying keeping the marriage after the abduction decreases. This affirms the role of education in influencing intolerance towards violent marriage practices.

Regional analysis reveals notable differences in public attitudes towards bride kidnapping and reporting it to law enforcement agencies. The highest willingness to support lawful actions by contacting the police (over 72%) was observed in the northern and eastern regions of the country (Akmola region, East Kazakhstan region, Abay region), as well as in Atyrau region, which may indicate a greater level of legal awareness and trust in law enforcement agencies. In contrast, in the Mangystau, Kyzylorda, and Karaganda regions, the proportion of people who recommend contacting the police is significantly lower. The situation in Mangystau region is particularly concerning, where, amid minimal support for reporting to the police (24%), there is the highest level of approval for marrying the abductor (27,9%), which may suggest a partial normalisation of this practice. This indicator is also above average in the southern regions: Almaty (22,5%) and Turkestan (16,3%).

The clear stance of "leave, but do not go to the police" dominates in the Kyzylorda region (45,2%) and is generally characteristic of several southern and western regions. This may suggest a combination of two factors: condemnation of forced marriage based on personal beliefs and, at the same time, reluctance to report it to authorities. This reluctance may be influenced by informal norms, fears for "family honour", or mistrust of human rights mechanisms.

Table 1.3.1.

Breakdown of answers to the question: "In your opinion, if a girl has been abducted without her consent, should she leave or is it better for her to stay and get married?", in %

Regions	She should leave, but not report it to the law enforcement authorities	She should leave and report it to the law enforcement authorities	She should stay and marry her kidnapper	I find it difficult to answer
Abay region	16,8	74,7	0,0	8,4
Akmola region	13,3	77,3	6,3	3,1



Regions	She should leave, but not report it to the law enforcement authorities	She should leave and report it to the law enforcement authorities	She should stay and marry her kidnapper	I find it difficult to answer
Aktobe region	4,3	50,0	8,7	37,0
Almaty region	20,3	49,5	22,5	7,7
Atyrau region	15,3	72,4	10,2	2,0
WKR	13,0	66,7	13,9	6,5
Zhambyl region	21,5	48,8	14,5	15,1
Zhetysu region	23,3	54,4	5,8	16,5
Karaganda region	11,8	50,0	12,4	25,8
Kostanay region	18,3	62,0	9,9	9,9
Kyzylorda region	45,2	31,3	8,7	14,8
Mangystau region	28,8	24,0	27,9	19,2
Pavlodar region	18,4	69,6	0,0	12,0
NKR	14,1	68,5	17,4	0,0
Turkestan region	19,2	55,4	16,3	9,1
Ulytau region	9,1	51,5	0,0	39,4
EKR	12,1	75,0	4,0	8,9
Astana	20,2	65,1	12,8	1,8
Almaty	14,6	61,2	7,0	17,1
Shymkent	27,9	55,8	14,5	1,8

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

DFV in the context of forced marriages

The incidence of forced marriages and the associated level of violence. Despite legal prohibitions and public condemnation, the practice of abducting brides without their consent (qyz alyp qashu) persists in Kazakhstan.

According to the survey, 10,9% of respondents reported that there had been cases of forced marriages or bride abductions in their immediate circle over the past two years, while 11,4% had witnessed violence in such families (Table 1.3.2).

The highest prevalence was observed among Turkic-speaking ethnic groups – among Uzbeks (27,6% reported forced marriages within their immediate circles, 17,2% witnessed violence in such marriages) and Kazakhs (12,2% and 12,9%). Women report violence in forced marriages slightly more frequently than men, and residents in rural areas report forced marriages more often than those in urban areas.

Table 1.3.2.

Percentage of respondents who experienced forced marriage or bride kidnapping in their immediate circle in the past two years, and respondents who witnessed family or marriage violence related to forced marriage, in %

		Percentage of respondents who have experienced forced marriages or bride kidnapping in their immediate circle over the past two years (%)	Percentage of respondents who witnessed cases of violence in families or marriages established through forced marriage (%)
	National average	10,9	11,4
Gender	Men	11	10,8
	Women	10,8	11,9
Ethnic group	Kazakhs	12,2	12,9
	Russians	4,6	5,6
	Uzbeks	27,6	17,2
	Tatars	11,8	9,8
Place of residence	Urban	10	11,4
	Rural	12,5	11,4

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

Regional analysis shows that respondents from Shymkent (33,3%), the Turkestan region (28,3%), the Mangystau region (15,4%), and the Zhambyl region (15,1%) more often report cases of forced marriage in their immediate environment. These regions also exhibit high rates of observed violence in such marriages, particularly in the city of Shymkent (42,4%) and the Turkestan region (15,2%). In Astana, one in five respondents had encountered violence in forced marriages.

These data reveal territorial variation in the distribution of both forced marriages and associated violence. The southern regions of the country stand out in particular, where the practice of forced marriage remains significantly higher than the national average. This highlights the need for regionally adapted preventive and educational measures, especially in areas with the highest levels of tolerance for such forms of rights violations.

Table 1.3.3.

Percentage of respondents who experienced forced marriage or bride kidnapping in their immediate circle in the past two years, and respondents who witnessed family or marriage violence related to forced marriage, in %

Regions	Percentage of respondents who have experienced forced marriages or bride kidnapping in their immediate circle over the past two years (%)	Percentage of respondents who witnessed cases of violence in families or marriages established through forced marriage (%)
Abay region	10,5	9,5
Akmola region	0,8	1,6
Aktobe region	1,4	0,7
Almaty region	12,6	14,0
Atyrau region	3,1	2,0
WKR	7,4	12,0
Zhambyl region	15,1	13,4
Zhetysu region	5,8	10,7
Karaganda region	4,3	5,4
Kostanay region	7,7	5,6
Kyzylorda region	1,7	2,6
Mangystau region	15,4	6,7
Pavlodar region	1,6	4,8
NKR	2,2	0,0
Turkestan region	28,3	15,2
Ulytau region	3,0	6,1
EKR	4,0	8,1
Astana	9,6	20,6
Almaty	12,1	13,2
Shymkent	33,3	42,4
Across the country	10,9	11,4

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

The link between forced marriage and violence. Cross-tabulation (Table 1.3.4) indicates that among those who have encountered forced marriages in their environment, half (52,4%) have witnessed violence during them. Among those who had not come across it, this figure was just 6,4%. This shows that violence in such unions is a common pattern, not an exception.

Table 1.3.4.

The existence of a link between forced marriages and violence in these families, in %

		Have there been any instances of forced marriages or "bride kidnapping" against her will in your community over the past two years?		Total
		Yes	No	
Have you come across instances of violence in families or marriages that were imposed on individuals?	Yes	52,4	6,4	11,4
	No	45,7	90,6	85,7
	I find it difficult to answer	1,8	3,0	2,9
Total		100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

The vulnerability of women following "alyp qashu" based on victims' testimonies. Interviews with victims of domestic violence confirm that the practice of bride kidnapping (alyp qashu) continues to be a factor in women's heightened vulnerability. In such situations, the marriage is entered into without her consent or the opportunity to



choose a partner, thereby preventing the development of a trusting and equal relationship. A woman finds herself in a new family amid social isolation and the inability to end the marriage without facing stigma. The risk of violence rises during the initial months of cohabitation. This is acknowledged in interviews by the victims themselves.

"...I was kidnapped against my will; no one asked me if I wanted to marry him... I was kidnapped when I was 17 years old." (Female victim of DFV, 28 years old, higher education, unemployed, Turkestan region)

"He began to forbid many things, impose restrictions, and tell me not to communicate with friends and acquaintances. At the time, I didn't think much of it, assuming that was just his way. Then he started to prevent me from going home. I only went back once a year. Later, he began to forbid me from communicating with my relatives. For example, we were invited to a party, but we stopped attending. Gradually, he completely restricted my communication. In the end, he said: 'Don't talk to your parents.'" (Female victim of DFV, 28 years old, higher education, unemployed, Turkestan region)

"I went to the village, and my brother spoke to me: 'Are you going to keep going out on your own? Aren't you going to get married? We won't always be around.'" My mother also kept saying, "Go back to your husband." It turns out that after a divorce, a woman can't find her place even in her parents' house. My brother said, "You're a separate person here, you won't live here," and I left. I had nowhere to go, so I returned to my husband. My husband said, "You have nowhere to go, like a dog, you'll come back to me," that's what he said. Although when we lived together, he often travelled with me to visit my relatives, and seeing their attitude towards me, he said, "No one needs you, not even your brother." (Female victim of DFV, 39 years old, secondary education, unemployed, Kyzylorda region)

Women's stories show that "alyp qashu" committed without a woman's consent breaches the fundamental right to choose a marriage partner freely and often results in long-term dependency, frequently accompanied by psychological and physical abuse. Women usually experience despair and hopelessness, which can lead to depression and suicidal thoughts.

"But in my case, when I was living with my husband, I reached the point where I wanted to hang myself because of him; I wanted to die. He got drunk and assaulted me, but I didn't know where to turn. My eldest daughter prevented me from taking my own life by saying, "Don't do it, mum, we're here for you." (Female victim of DFV, 39 years old, secondary education, unemployed, Kyzylorda region)

Bride kidnapping as a risk factor for violence: experts' perspectives. Nearly all experts surveyed agree that bride kidnapping without consent is an unacceptable practice that infringes women's rights and can directly or indirectly provoke violence in marriage. Although some may justify kidnapping through societal tradition, experts highlight that forcible deprivation of freedom, taking away a girl's choice, and pressure from family and peers are forms of violence regardless of cultural background.

"If this kidnapped bride arrives at the house, she has already been abused; she has been forcibly taken from her family, which suggests she will continue to be abused in the future. In my opinion, these are potential victims." (Expert 1. Candidate of Law, teaching professor)

Many experts note that such marriages are often characterised by a lack of trust and mutual respect, which heightens the risk of aggression, psychological pressure, and physical violence.

"Because 'alyp qashu' essentially means that complete strangers were compelled to live together. And when a person, first of all, has no affection, let's not even talk about love, right? The woman was simply brought here by force and left here; she also displays a kind of anger and aggression. And so, there is no mutual understanding or respect, and against this backdrop, it gradually begins". (Expert 5. President of the Women's Support Centre)

Therefore, the practice of forced marriages, including bride kidnapping, remains a significant issue, especially in certain regions and ethnocultural communities where there is still a high tolerance for such rights violations. A mix of legal bans, education, and targeted support for victims is essential to lowering the prevalence of this phenomenon and other forms of domestic violence.



CHAPTER II.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: HIDDEN ASPECTS AND INDIRECT CONSEQUENCES

2.1. Latent forms of violence and their consequences

Domestic violence does not always manifest itself in explicit physical aggression. In many cases, it appears in latent forms that often lie outside the scope of both official statistics and public perception. Generally, these involve psychological (including social) and economic pressure applied by one family member to another. According to some scholars, latent forms of DFV are "types of violent or controlling behaviour within intimate or family relationships that are not accompanied by apparent physical injuries, remain private, and are rarely officially recorded"⁷. Their manifestations are hard to identify from the outside, and their effects develop gradually, significantly affecting victims' emotional and social well-being.

Some studies in Kazakhstan indicate that 21% of women aged 18–75 who have ever had a partner have experienced psychological violence from them, and 7% have faced economic abuse. One in three women (33%) has experienced at least one form of controlling behaviour from their intimate partner⁸.

Analysis of data from a large-scale sociological survey⁹ on domestic violence in families shows a high occurrence of hidden, non-physical forms of violence that are often overlooked by law and the public.

Psychological abuse

The WHO recognises psychological violence as a form of intimate partner violence, emphasising that it is not just physical or sexual assault but behaviour that inflicts psychological harm through intimidation, threats, humiliation, isolation, and control¹⁰. Psychological abuse involves methodical humiliation, manipulation, emotional suppression, behavioural control, restrictions on freedom of expression, as well as threats and intimidation that do not include physical violence. Psychologists also observe factors such as gaslighting (denying the victim's feelings and emotions), neglect, social isolation, and body shaming¹¹. It often manifests itself in daily life, becomes normalised, and is seen as "part of family life".

According to some estimates, the risk of emotional abuse increases by 12.8% when a partner faces economic instability¹². Research also indicates that psychological abuse takes place across all sections of society. While the common belief suggests that "poorer means higher risk", some extensive reviews highlight that abuse occurs in all groups regardless of socio-economic status, and material wealth does not ensure freedom from emotional abuse¹³.

Psychological abuse represents a significant danger with long-term effects on victims. It impacts mental, physical, and social well-being and is considered to be as severe as physical violence. Major reviews and guidelines highlight increased risks of depression, anxiety disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The WHO underscores the enduring impact of psychological violence by partners on the mental health of women and girls worldwide^{14, 15}. Research indicates that victims suffer long-lasting cognitive and emotional effects: difficulties with memory and attention

7 Cavanaugh CE, Messing JT, Petras H, Fowler B, La Flair L, Kub J, Agnew J, Fitzgerald S, Bolyard R, Campbell JC. Patterns of Violence Against Women: A Latent Class Analysis. *Psychol Trauma*. 2012 Mar;4(2):169–176. doi: 10.1037/a0023314. PMID: 22662284; PMCID: PMC3362828.

8 Selective Survey on Violence Against Women: Kazakhstan. Astana, 2017 [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://kazakhstan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Report%20on%20Nat%20VAW%20survey%20RUS.pdf>? (date of access: 12.11.2025)

9 Sociological study by KIPD on the prevention of domestic violence, 2025.

10 World report on violence and health. 2002. <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/67403/a77019.pdf>

11 Puzankova, I.E., & Dycheskul, O.M. (2020). Psychological Abuse in the Family: What It Is and How to Combat It. *Journal of the Prikamsky Social Institute*, (1 (85)), 134–139.

12 Sapkota PM, Pandey AR, Adhikari B, Shrestha G, Piya R, Lamichhane B, Garu S, Joshi D, Baral SC. Intimate partner violence in Nepal: Analysis of Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2022. *PLoS One*. 2024 Aug 16;19(8):e0308107. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0308107. PMID: 39150935; PMCID: PMC11329113

13 Facts and figures: Ending violence against women. 25 November 2024. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-ending-violence-against-women>

14 Mechanic M. B., Weaver T. L., Resick P. A. Mental health consequences of intimate partner abuse: A multidimensional assessment of four different forms of abuse // *Violence against women*. – 2008. – T. 14. – №. 6. – C. 634–654. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2967430/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

15 Radell M. L. et al. The impact of different types of abuse on depression // *Depression research and treatment*. – 2021. – T. 2021. – №. 1. – C. 6654503. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8060108/?utm_source=chatgpt.com#B81



amidst chronic stress and heightened vigilance. This underscores the importance of addressing the issue and calls for further research and targeted measures to prevent various forms of domestic and family violence.

Analysis of the results of a sociological survey. Based on the results of a large-scale sociological survey, the most commonly reported form of violence observed by respondents in their families was moral and psychological pressure, noted by 59,6% of respondents. This category includes insults, threats, blackmail, emotional suppression, and other forms of humiliation, suggesting that the psycho-emotional environment in families, even among acquaintances, is viewed as traumatic and dysfunctional. Such practices often occur before or alongside physical violence, but because of their "invisibility", they frequently go unaddressed legally and socially.

Equally concerning is that 2,3% noted observing travel restrictions within families they know, and 20,9% mentioned control over devices and location tracking. These forms of control demonstrate elements of coercive isolation and total surveillance, infringing on fundamental human rights to travel and privacy. It is especially important to note that such manifestations have become widespread in recent years due to the development of digital technologies, which necessitate the creation of new forms of response, including digital hygiene and the protection of human rights in the online space.

Less common but equally important types of abuse cited by respondents include neglecting basic needs like food (5,8%) and medical care (5,9%).

Table 2.1.1.

Breakdown of answers to the question: **"How did the cases of domestic violence you know about manifest themselves in families you know?"**, in %

Answer options	%
Physical violence, assault, beating	64,5
Economic abuse, such as denying someone the ability to manage their own finances.	29,4
Moral and psychological abuse, insults, blackmail, threats	59,6
Sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment	10,4
Travel restrictions	22,3
Device control, location tracking	20,9
Ignoring basic food needs	5,8
Ignoring basic healthcare needs	5,9
I find it difficult to answer	1,8

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

A comparative analysis of data on respondents' place of residence reveals significant regional differences in the perception and occurrence of latent forms of domestic violence. These differences illustrate the varying perceptions of violence typical of urban and rural communities, highlighting the need for tailored prevention and response strategies.

Similarly, moral and psychological abuse are recorded significantly more often in urban areas (63,2%) than in rural areas (52,1%). This difference may indicate both a greater sensitivity among urban residents to emotional forms of violence and the relative "invisibility" of these forms in the traditional rural context, where such practices might be considered acceptable norms of intra-family communication. Higher levels of education, access to information, and participation in human rights discourse may lead urban residents to recognise emotional pressure as violence more frequently.

Digital surveillance warrants special focus – tracking location and monitoring devices, which is also more frequently mentioned by city residents (22,8% versus 16,9% in rural areas). This may be caused by increased engagement with the digital environment and extensive use of smartphones and social networks in urban areas, which create new possibilities for partners to monitor and surveil. This emphasises the importance of digital literacy and advocacy initiatives, particularly among young people.

Simultaneously, neglect of basic needs is more evident in rural areas, reflecting different mechanisms of domestic violence related to social vulnerability, poverty, and limited access to infrastructure. Particularly concerning is the gap in access to medical care: in rural areas, 13,1% of respondents reported not seeking it, compared to only 2,5% in urban areas. This may suggest both physical inaccessibility of healthcare services and cultural or gender barriers to seeking help.

Neglecting nutrition is more common in rural areas (8% versus 4,7% in urban areas), possibly due to low income levels, lack of social services, and a high proportion of large families, where neglect of children's or older family members' needs may go unnoticed.



Table 2.1.2.

Breakdown of answers to the question: "How did the cases of domestic violence you know about manifest in families you know?", broken down by type of area of residence, in %

Answer options	Urban	Rural
Physical violence, assault, beating	65,5	62,4
Economic abuse, such as denying someone the ability to manage their own finances.	31,8	24,4
Moral and psychological abuse, insults, blackmail, threats	63,2	52,1
Sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment	9,9	11,3
Travel restrictions	21,7	23,5
Device control, location tracking	22,8	16,9
Ignoring basic food needs	4,7	8,0
Ignoring basic healthcare needs	2,5	13,1
I find it difficult to answer	2,0	1,4

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

The results of the mass survey also reveal regional differences. The highest levels of moral and psychological violence were recorded in the Karaganda (88,7%) and Aktobe (87,5%) regions, as well as in the Zhetysu region (81,3%). Despite differences in economic structures, these regions exhibit a high sensitivity among the population to conditions of verbal and emotional abuse.

Significant indicators of travel restrictions are observed in the Atyrau region (60%), the Ulytau region (41,7%), and the North Kazakhstan region (40%). This is a concerning warning, particularly for the Atyrau region, where high levels of various forms of violence, including neglect of basic needs, have also been documented.

The Pavlodar region is notable for recording comparatively low levels of all types of violence. For example, only 19% of respondents reported economic abuse within families they knew, 7,1% reported restrictions on mobility, and 52,4% reported psychological abuse, which is lower than the national average. Although these figures do not imply that the problem does not exist, they may suggest a high level of social trust, institutional support, and/or effective forms of self-regulation within the family. However, we cannot dismiss the possibility that respondents underestimate the issue, particularly if the topic of violence is not part of open public discourse in the region.

Table 2.1.3.

Breakdown of answers to the question: "How did the cases of domestic violence you know about manifest in the families you know?", by region, in %

Regions	Economic abuse, such as denying someone the ability to manage their own finances	Moral and psychological abuse, insults, blackmail, threats	Travel restrictions	Monitoring devices, tracking location	Ignoring basic food needs	Ignoring basic medical needs
Abay region	24,0	60,0	20,0	16,0	12,0	12,0
Akmola region	12,5	75,0	18,8	25,0	0,0	0,0
Aktobe region	29,2	87,5	0,0	4,2	12,5	4,2
Almaty region	12,0	68,0	28,0	28,0	0,0	8,0
Atyrau region	20,0	80,0	60,0	20,0	20,0	20,0
WKR	27,0	54,1	24,3	13,5	0,0	0,0
Zhambyl region	46,2	53,8	30,8	7,7	7,7	23,1
Zhetysu region	18,8	81,3	6,3	6,3	0,0	0,0
Karaganda region	30,2	88,7	15,1	11,3	5,7	1,9
Kostanay region	23,3	63,3	16,7	20,0	16,7	6,7
Kyzylorda region	0,0	30,0	10,0	20,0	0,0	0,0
Mangystau region	11,1	44,4	22,2	44,4	11,1	11,1
Pavlodar region	19,0	52,4	7,1	11,9	0,0	0,0
NKR	20,0	70,0	40,0	50,0	0,0	0,0
Turkestan region	22,2	29,6	37,0	13,6	2,5	17,3
Ulytau region	50,0	66,7	41,7	33,3	0,0	0,0



Regions	Economic abuse, such as denying someone the ability to manage their own finances	Moral and psychological abuse, insults, blackmail, threats	Travel restrictions	Monitoring devices, tracking location	Ignoring basic food needs	Ignoring basic medical needs
EKR	13,8	31,0	20,7	24,1	6,9	0,0
Astana	48,6	78,4	18,9	27,0	0,0	0,0
Almaty	35,2	57,8	18,8	23,4	3,9	6,3
Shymkent	55,6	66,7	35,2	42,6	22,2	5,6

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

The large-scale survey results suggest that returning to abusive relationships is generally driven by structural vulnerability and limited options, rather than emotional attachment or forgiveness.

The main reason given by respondents was fear of condemnation from relatives and others around them, cited by 41,7% of those surveyed. This highlights the important role of social expectations and public pressure. In conservative communities, family breakdown is seen as a personal failure, while enduring violence is regarded as "wisdom" and "feminine resilience." The victim is caught in a double trap: she endures suffering from the abuser and, at the same time, fears rejection by her community. This factor is especially significant among women with children, as social status and support from relatives are vital.

The second key factor is fear of the offender – this was noted by 29,4% of respondents, while another 28,7% indicated fear of persecution and revenge by the abuser.

Another critical factor is the lack of own housing, reported by 29,3% of respondents. In situations where the victim has nowhere else to turn, particularly with children, going back to the abuser's home is often the only choice available. Additionally, 23,4% of respondents cited a lack of support from family and friends, depriving victims of the opportunity to depend on their social network. This may be due to both the physical distance of relatives and their emotional or financial inability to help.

The victim's low self-esteem also plays a significant role, as shown by 18,8% of survey participants. Extended exposure to psychological stress makes the victim feel guilty, insecure, and reliant on the abuser. Moreover, 12,2% reported psychological dependence and addiction to abusive relationships, which result from the cyclical pattern of violence and reconciliation. An abuser who switches between threats and "remorse" fosters false hope for change in the victim, especially if this is combined with brief periods of attention, care, or persuasion to "start over".

Therefore, the survey clearly demonstrates that reconciliation between the victim and the abuser is not a voluntary decision, but rather the outcome of fear, dependence, and a lack of systemic support. This decision is not founded on emotional weaknesses, but rather on significant legal, material, and cultural obstacles, the removal of which should become a responsibility for the state and public policy.

Table 2.1.4.

Breakdown of answers to the question: "Why do you think victims of domestic violence often seek reconciliation?", in %

Answer options	%
Fear of judgment from relatives and people around	41,7
Fear of an abusing offender	29,4
Fear of persecution and revenge by the abuser	28,7
Ineffectiveness of punishment measures and the impunity of the abuser	27
Not having own housing	29,3
Lack of support from family and loved ones	23,4
Pressure from relatives and society	13,7
Low self-esteem of the victim	18,8
Psychological reliance on the abuser and becoming accustomed to violent relationships	12,2
The obligation to support the family, since the abuser is the only breadwinner.	13,9
Because of the children	0,8
They feel sympathy	0,1
Because of love	0,2
Save the family	0,3
They both drink	0,1



Answer options	%
Mentality	0,2
Afraid of being left alone	0,1
I find it difficult to answer	3,8

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

Of particular interest are the survey findings relating to respondents' personal encounters with covert forms of violence. Nearly 63% of respondents replied negatively when asked about experiencing physical or psychological abuse in childhood. 6,1% reported isolated incidents of such abuse, while 16,9% experienced repeated instances of these types of violence. Additionally, 10,9%, or one in ten respondents, indicated that they had been subjected multiple times to physical or psychological violence.

Table 2.1.5.

Breakdown of answers to the question: "Did you experience physical or psychological violence from adult family members during your childhood?", in %

Answer options	%
Once	6,1
Several times	16,9
Repeatedly	10,9
Never	62,9
I find it difficult to answer	3,1

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

The results of a large-scale survey show that many types of violence, especially psychological and economic abuse, are often not recognised as violence despite their potential to cause harm. Some respondents acknowledge the act exists but do not regard it as violent (Table 2.1.6.). This suggests the acceptance of certain types of abuse within the family setting.

The answer option "constant criticism on various occasions" provoked polarised opinions. Almost 26% of respondents acknowledged that this had occurred in their family, with nearly half of them (12,1%) seeing it as a form of violence, while 14% did not perceive constant criticism as violent behaviour. This may reflect existing cultural norms in which excessive criticism is seen as an acceptable way to parent or interact within families.

A significant proportion of respondents recognised actions such as prohibiting communication with others, insults, humiliation, shouting, threats, and intimidation. At the same time, most of them already recognise such behaviour as violence. For example, 14,1% view insults and bullying as a form of abuse, while only 5% disagree. A similar pattern is seen with physical violence – both in its "mild" form (13,4%) and in the case of beatings (12,9%) – which shows that clear, obvious signs of aggression are more easily recognised and condemned.

The situation remains less clear-cut regarding forms of violence such as monitoring personal correspondence and phone calls, prohibiting work or study, refusing financial support, or controlling one's income – all these forms of pressure are recognised as facts, but are much less frequently regarded as violence. This is especially true of economic and digital violence, which, despite being restrictive and degrading, are seen as "normal" or "acceptable" actions within the family hierarchy.

Data on sexual and reproductive violence should be emphasised separately. Despite their sensitive and traumatic nature, awareness of acts such as violence remains relatively low. Therefore, only 10,6% of respondents (who have experienced sexual violence within the family) recognise it as violence, and 1,7% do not view it as a violation of boundaries. Only 9,4% of respondents see coercion to have an abortion as violence. This may reveal profound socio-cultural barriers to recognising such situations within families.

Thus, the table shows not only how common different types of violent behaviour are, but also how much they are seen as acceptable in public awareness. The fact that respondents are willing to recognise the existence of a particular act but do not see it as violence highlights the need to expand the understanding of "violence" in public discourse. This is especially relevant to psychological and economic pressure, as well as sexual coercion within family relationships. The results emphasise the importance of awareness-raising and educational efforts with the community, focused on increasing sensitivity to such forms of violence, encouraging a culture of non-violent communication, and advocating for the values of personal boundaries and equality within the family.



Table 2.1.6.

Breakdown of answers to the question: "Did the following actions occur in the family?", in %

Answer options	Yes, but I don't consider it violence	Yes, I consider it violence
Constant criticism on various occasions	14	12,1
Prohibition of communication with other people	8,3	13,6
Insults, humiliation, bullying	5	14,1
Yelling, threats, intimidation, forced confinement	3,2	12,6
Verbal threats of physical violence	2,5	12
Driving someone to suicide or attempted suicide	2,6	10,3
Invasion of personal space, surveillance of personal correspondence and phone calls	4,9	11,7
Prohibition or coercion to work or study	4,7	8,2
Refusal to provide financial assistance for essential items	4,3	9,7
Deliberate deprivation of food, clothing, shelter	2,5	9,6
Obstruction in obtaining necessary services	2,8	9,2
Prohibition on managing personal finances, including control of income and expenditure	3,5	11
Physical violence in a "mild" form	3	13,4
Beating, assault	1,9	12,9
Cruel punishment of children	2,3	12,1
Blackmailing with children	2,9	11,2
Sexual abuse	1,7	10,6
Forced abortion	2,2	9,4

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

The results of in-depth interviews show that victims face various forms of psychological abuse, including constant insults, humiliation and verbal attacks, accompanied by sarcastic and hurtful remarks aimed at deliberately causing emotional pain.

"Fortunately, there was no physical violence against children. However, constant insults, humiliation, and psychological pressure were present in our lives. The children became unwitting witnesses to scandals, and this, of course, left its mark on their psyche". (Female victim of DFV, 53 years old, Russian, higher education, married, East Kazakhstan region)

"He has a very sharp tongue. He stings with his words. My brain was boiling from his words". (Female victim of DFV, 37 years old, Kazakh, secondary education, Zhetysay region)

Experts highlight the significance of psychological violence, emphasising that it is the most common form of DFV, yet it often remains unseen and underestimated by both victims and those around them. The lack of physical marks, such as bruises or contusions, means that victims do not always recognise what is happening as violence, perceiving insults, humiliation, or verbal pressure as "something insignificant" or "normal" in family relationships. This is often accompanied by deep psychological dependence on the abuser and their manipulations, which causes victims to forgive and return to toxic relationships, contributing to the recurrence of violence and making it difficult to break free.

"Today, psychological violence is the most common form of violence. However, people rarely seek help for it because it leaves no physical marks – no bruises, no injuries, no visible pain. People simply endure it in silence, swallow it, and go on with their lives, unaware of the extent of the damage to their mental health". (Expert 7. Representative of law enforcement agencies)

"We recently visited the regional centre and conducted assessments. Many women are unaware that they are experiencing psychological abuse. Some believe that if he said something hurtful or insulted her, it is not so serious. Economic abuse also exists, but not to the same extent as physical violence. Sexual violence is similar to psychological violence; many think that, since they are married, it is somehow normal. Therefore, these information campaigns are helping women to recognise this". (Expert 5. President of the Women's Support Centre)



"The main reason for repeated incidents is probably psychological dependence and manipulation by the abuser. Abusers often manipulate, and the victims are psychologically dependent on them. He manipulates her, and she is psychologically reliant on him. She forgives him anyway, he returns, and it all happens again; she goes back. That is, she cannot believe it; a woman cannot believe she can do it herself. And she comes back, and it all happens again".
(Expert 3. Representative of law enforcement agencies)

In the context of psychological abuse, it is also important to recognise social abuse, which involves isolating the victim from their external environment – family, friends, colleagues, support systems. This can happen through communication bans, discrediting, reputation manipulation, or by imposing a social role that restricts the right to independent action. Such forms of isolation heighten the victim's vulnerability and diminish their capacity to seek help. Special attention should be given to the practice in which material and social support, formally viewed as a benefit, becomes a means of control. For instance, offering housing, "measured" support in raising children, or registering property in the partner's name can act as leverage, while giving the appearance of care.

During in-depth interviews, victims of violence shared instances of social violence.

"He checks my phone to ensure no one calls me. I explain to him that clients contact me. I work and earn money. No, he doesn't care about that. He seems fine when he's sober. As soon as he has a drink, he becomes like that. I take my daughter and run away to my friends and neighbours. I spent the night there. When he sobers up he becomes normal".
(Female victim of DFV, 40 years old, Kazakh, secondary specialised education, Ulytau region)

During in-depth interviews, the abusers themselves note that the reason for monitoring and prohibiting family members is a manifestation of jealousy.

"Jealousy, I think, most likely. That's the main reason. What if she's talking to someone there? Yes, if they're attending some sort of event there, I forbid it. For example, if there are some strange people there or if they are going to stay late".
(Aggressor, male, 43 years old, Russian, higher education, single, Temirtau)

"Yes, I do control my wife. She doesn't really go anywhere. And if she does plan to go somewhere, both my child and my wife ask for permission in a compulsory manner: they ask if they can visit someone or go somewhere. If, for instance, it's a birthday or some kind of event, she consults me and asks if she can go".
(Aggressor, male, 48 years old, secondary education, married, Kostanay)

Economic abuse

The WHO does not explicitly emphasise the term "economic abuse" in its core documents, but this concept falls within the scope of controlling behaviour and is widely recognised by experts as a component of "intimate partner violence". Economic abuse involves controlling a partner's resources: access to finances, earnings, loans, property, or preventing them from working, studying, or spending money without consent. Research also indicates a significant link between economic abuse and various outcomes, including mental and physical health, financial well-being, parent-child relationships, and overall quality of life¹⁶. In such circumstances, the economic dependence of one partner on the other becomes a means of maintaining power and limiting independence. For example, when a woman cannot leave an abusive relationship due to a lack of housing, means of subsistence, or threats to lose her children.

Some studies suggest that economic abuse deteriorates economic conditions and reduces economic stability: employment declines, and financial vulnerability increases¹⁷. Several studies explain how economic abuse fosters financial dependence and creates a "hostile" economic environment (such as forced spending, debt, and denial of access to resources), which leads to poverty, and poverty, in turn, heightens vulnerability to further violence¹⁸.

Research by UN Women indicates that even when there is income, economic abuse takes place across all sectors of society: violence and harassment in the workplace affect women regardless of their age, location, income, or social status. In other words, high personal income does not guarantee protection, particularly if your partner controls the resources¹⁹.

The long-term effects of economic abuse pose a threat to victims. Researchers observe that victims persistently associate with depression and anxiety disorders, a decline in quality of life, conflicts within the parent-child relationship, financial struggles, and debt burdens. WHO experts regard economic abuse as a form of intimate partner

¹⁶ Johnson, L., Chen, Y., Stylianou, A. et al. Examining the impact of economic abuse on survivors of intimate partner violence: a scoping review. *BMC Public Health* 22, 1014 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-13297-4>

¹⁷ Mellar BM, Fanslow JL, Gulliver PJ, McIntosh TKD. Economic Abuse by An Intimate Partner and Its Associations with Women's Socioeconomic Status and Mental Health. *J Interpers Violence*. 2024 Nov;39(21-22):4415-4437. doi: 10.1177/08862605241235140. Epub 2024 Mar 4. PMID: 39380255; PMCID: PMC11465629

¹⁸ Antai D, Oke A, Braithwaite P, Lopez GB. The effect of economic, physical, and psychological abuse on mental health: a population-based study of women in the Philippines. *Int J Family Med*. 2014;2014:852317. doi: 10.1155/2014/852317. Epub 2014 Nov 27. PMID: 25525517; PMCID: PMC4265545.

¹⁹ Facts and figures: Economic empowerment. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-economic-empowerment?>



violence, resulting in serious short- and long-term health effects and significant socio-economic costs for families and society²⁰.

Economic abuse causes victims to become financially dependent on their partner, restricts access to funds and documents, and diminishes financial independence, which hinders recovery and raises the risk of repeating victimisation. These effects may continue even after the partners have separated, as it is necessary to recover income and repay loans amid psychological and material exhaustion. This emphasises the extent of the problem of hidden forms of DFV and calls for further research and the development of response measures.

Analysis of the results of a sociological survey. A significant proportion of respondents in a large-scale survey (29,4%) reported instances of economic abuse within families they knew, such as restrictions on access to personal or family finances and deprivation of the ability to dispose of their own funds (Table 2.1.1.). This highlights the current use of financial control as a means of domination and subjugation within a family.

In urban settings, latent forms of violence are more common and more often recognised by respondents. Thus, 31,8% of city residents noted economic abuse in the families of acquaintances, compared to 24,4% in rural areas (Table 2.1.2.). This may be due to both the increased economic independence of women in cities and, accordingly, the greater number of attempts to control their finances, as well as the heightened awareness among city dwellers about what constitutes economic abuse. In cities, women are more frequently engaged in the formal labour market and have access to personal finances, which may lead partners to employ economic pressure as a form of subjugation.

An analysis of respondents' answers by region shows notable differences in the prevalence and perception of various forms of latent DFV, reflecting the socio-cultural, economic, and infrastructural specificities of particular territories. These differences emphasise the importance of region-specific policies to prevent violence.

One of the key findings is the high levels of economic abuse in such urbanised and administratively significant centres as Shymkent (55,6%), the Ulytau region (50%), and Astana (48,6%) (Table 2.1.3.). This is especially notable given that metropolises are traditionally associated with higher levels of education, better access to the labour market, and well-developed social protection institutions. Nevertheless, the presence of economic pressure in these situations may suggest deeply embedded patriarchal attitudes, where economic dependence persists even when women are formally employed. This may include banning the disposal of personal income, regulating expenditure, and restricting access to bank accounts or communication channels, which is especially relevant in the context of high social expectations and competition in cities.

An analysis of respondents' answers in a mass survey on the reasons for ongoing family violence reveals deep-seated socio-economic and psychological factors that prevent the breakdown of violent relationships and reinforce patterns of violence within the family environment.

42,4% of respondents noted that domestic violence often persists because the victim is afraid of the abuser. According to respondents, a key factor is the victim's financial dependence on the abuser – this was selected by 35,2% of those surveyed. This result suggests that, according to a significant part of the population, the economic vulnerability of victims is a key factor in their inability to end violent relationships, even when the violence is obvious.

Table 2.1.7.

Breakdown of answers to the question: **"Why does violence continue in families you know?",** in %

Answer options	%
Not seeking help because of fear of the abuser	42,4
Inaction by authorised state bodies	21,0
Distrust of state protection	28,0
Social condemnation	19,4
Lack of support from relatives, friends, colleagues	26,8
Financial dependence of the victim on the abuser	35,2
The violence has ceased; I don't know if it is still ongoing.	16,2
Because of the children	0,2
Bad manners	0,2
They drink together	0,3
Love	0,2
Psychological disorder	0,2
Mentality	0,2
I find it difficult to answer	5,9

Source: KIPD sociological research. Sample – 3 000 respondents.

²⁰ Violence against women. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women?utm_source=chatgpt.com



The results of **in-depth interviews** with victims of violence show that they face various kinds of economic abuse, which include not only the complete or partial loss of financial resources but also limited access to necessary goods and services, control over income, property, and expenses, the creation of debt obligations in the victim's name without their approval, and the deliberate fostering of economic dependence on the abuser. Such practices are often accompanied by elements of social isolation and complete control – prohibitions on communication, restrictions on the use of social networks, and monitoring of telephone calls and correspondence. In some cases, economic abuse worsens when a partner abuses alcohol, spending a significant part of the income on alcohol and neglecting the family's needs, which further worsens financial instability and increases the victim's dependence.

"This also manifests itself through economic and financial pressure on individuals. For example, even if a family has money, there are restrictions on purchasing medicines and other essential health items. Additionally, there were signs of social isolation: I was told not to socialise with friends, to avoid frequent contact with acquaintances, and not to keep in touch through social media. It came from the spouse's side. There was also a phone check – he examined it, monitoring who was messaging and what they were saying. It was also a form of control". (Female victim of DFV, 25 years old, secondary specialised education, Zhetysu region)

"We bought a house and took out a loan in my name, but the house was registered in my father-in-law's name. He has a sister, and the three of them – he, his sister, and his father – agreed that if this woman left, she would take the house with her. So they forced me to take out a loan and registered the house in his father's name". (Female victim of DFV, 37 years old, secondary specialised education, Abay region)

"When my second child was born, I couldn't work. He kept things to himself, hid his actions. He spent money on alcohol and brought home much less. I said: food, this, that. And he wrote everything down, go and get it at the shop. I don't have it, like, it's not enough". (Female victim of DFV, 38 years old, incomplete secondary education, Pavlodar region)

The results of in-depth interviews with victims of violence also confirm that women's economic dependence on their partners fosters the development of unequal and abusive relationships, where men feel dominant, while the woman's role in managing the household and caring for children is undervalued. This situation further consolidates the cycle of power and subordination within the family.

"The main reason for violence is that women stay at home, do not earn money, and therefore depend on men, see them as a source of income, cannot argue with them, and cannot cross a certain line". (Female victim of DFV, 37 years old, secondary specialised education, Abay region)

One reason victims stay in violent families is that they believe they have no other options for where to live.

"I realised that I couldn't live with my parents (note: "with my parents after leaving my husband"). Because my parents argue and criticise me. Emotionally and psychologically, I couldn't bear it, and it was eating me up inside. I couldn't even tell my own brother about it". (Female victim of DFV, 37 years old, secondary specialised education, Abay region)

At the same time, some women, despite their economic independence, still find it difficult to leave a family where violence happens.

"Well, I don't know, it's probably just a habit. I don't feel like I'm financially dependent on him or anything. I am confident I can manage on my own. I'll raise the children myself. It's just that I have this habit, that when I'm missing something, we've lived together for so many years – fifteen years, well, most likely, it's a habit". (Female victim of DFV, 32 years old, secondary education, Akmola region)

Experts also stress the scale and significance of economic abuse, highlighting that it is a fundamental form of DFV and often underpins other types of DFV. They emphasise that reducing economic dependence, including by supporting employment and access to social services, is a key factor in preventing and overcoming DFV.

"Economic abuse occurs when an abuser restricts your communication with family, loved ones, neighbours, or others. He keeps and counts the money himself. Even if he gives her money, he does so under compulsion. When she returns home, he insists on counting how much she has spent and how much remains. If nothing is left, he questions where it went and what she spent it on. In other words, the victim's economic dependence means she knows he is wrong but cannot oppose him because she fears severe consequences". (Expert 2. Psychologist of the crisis centre)



"Some men hold all the money in their hands and control every tenge. For example, they say: "Why did you spend extra money? Why do you need this unnecessary item? Why did you buy milk? Why do you need bread when you still have yesterday's?" – and they don't let you spend a tenge more than necessary. Since he has the money, he starts to exert economic abuse". (Expert 6. Director of the crisis centre)

"When a person's access to resources is limited, when they are forbidden from spending money on essential items, or when obstacles are placed in the way of their development, education, or employment, all of this constitutes economic pressure. Such actions weaken personal independence and become a tool for complete control. However, even in these situations, victims rarely report what is happening and do not seek support". (Expert 7. Police Department)

"She is dependent on him. That is, she cannot help but forgive him. He earns money, convinces her that he is so great, and she returns to him because she cannot support herself or her children. A woman is controlled if she is financially dependent on her partner. In other situations, if she is economically independent, I think she can leave". (Expert 3. Representative of law enforcement agencies)

The responses from participants in **in-depth interviews** indicate that abusers may employ various forms of covert violence alongside physical violence.

"Well, I've been beaten before, and I've also been the victim of an attempted murder. I've filed reports more than once, but then he would ask me, swear, beg me, promising it would never happen again. I forgave him and withdrew the statement, but then it all happened again, and he smashed my head. He forbade me from going anywhere or communicating with anyone. He also forbade me from going to work. He constantly controlled everything – money, finances, where I spent, and why I paid it. That's all there is to it, and he didn't really allow the children to go anywhere either. They were told to stay at home and do this or that. But they're children; it is their childhood – they want to play". (Female victim of DFV, 32 years old, secondary education, Akmola region)

This conclusion is also supported by the results of **expert interviews**, where they note that latent forms of violence often overlap and abusers practise merging different types.

"Some people from good families behave in an economically vulgar manner towards their partners because they start counting money, controlling them, and forcing them not to communicate with relatives or friends. This is economic abuse. Essentially, these areas – psychological, physical, and economic – overlap. However, regarding physical and mental abuse, from a psychologist's perspective, I argue that psychological abuse is even worse than physical abuse because where there is psychological and moral pressure, the partner then loses their health, you understand? Psychologically, morally, it puts pressure on her health. He can push her so hard that she may develop psychosomatic symptoms. Psychosomatic symptoms are very difficult to treat". (Expert 2. Psychologist of the crisis centre)

During the interviews, experts were also asked for recommendations on recognising latent forms of DFV. The main instruments are systematic public information, preventive efforts, and encouraging an active civic stance. According to experts, all types of violence are inherently latent, as victims often deliberately hide the facts of abuse due to shame in front of relatives and neighbours, fear of condemnation, or reluctance to involve children. Experts emphasise that recognising hidden forms of violence requires active participation from society: citizens must respond to warning signs, and social and law enforcement agencies should have established channels of communication with the community. An example of this is the practice in Astana, where, due to high noise levels in apartment buildings and the presence of district inspectors in building chat rooms, citizens can quickly report suspicious situations. Even if the information is unconfirmed, such reports act as a warning to place the family under preventive supervision, enabling timely intervention and preventing potential recurrence of violence.

"This is just information and prevention. If we ran an awareness campaign, someone might call, come, or find out about us and contact us. Otherwise, domestic violence – all types – remain hidden. Even if a woman has bruises, in most cases, not all of course, she will still try to hide or cover them up, because it is embarrassing in front of relatives or neighbours. I even know families who argue in whispers. We had a woman who said that when her husband beat her, she didn't scream because she was afraid her children or neighbours would hear. That's why I believe all types of violence are hidden". (Expert 5. President of the Women's Support Centre)

First and foremost, we must help those who are weaker. Secondly, if this happens at home, then, for example, I don't know how it is in other cities, but in Astana, the acoustics are very good – the walls are thin, and you can hear everything. If a child is crying in the neighbouring flat, we receive a call: "There's a child crying, please check it out."



There is a local police inspector in the chat rooms of every apartment building. There is even an information sheet with the necessary telephone numbers at the front door. If you simply call the number provided, he will come and check. Sometimes the facts are confirmed; other times, the information proves false. But even if the information is false, it still acts as a signal for us, and we continue to observe such families". (Expert 7. Representative of law enforcement agencies)

Thus, latent forms of DfV– constitute a systemic problem with different "manifestations" across areas and regions. An effective response requires tailored measures: education on the signs of psychological, economic, and digital abuse; developing accessible support (psychological, legal, social) that considers rural constraints; enhancing victims' economic independence; and improving procedural safeguards and screening procedures.

The consequences of latent violence are long-term. It diminishes psychological resilience, damages self-esteem, fosters learned helplessness, and plays a role in the intergenerational transmission of violence patterns. At the family level, such forms of interaction disrupt the balance of partnership and mutual respect, contribute to the breakdown of emotional ties, and sometimes escalate into physical violence. On a macro scale, they weaken the foundations of family stability and escalate social tensions, particularly where access to support systems is limited.

2.2. The influence of developing information and communication technology on domestic violence

The development of digital technologies and the widespread use of smartphones, messengers, and social network apps have significantly transformed the way people communicate, which has impacted the forms of violence in family and personal relationships. On the one hand, latent forms of violence using modern technologies started to appear: stalking the victim, monitoring them through various tools, and so on. On the other hand, widespread reporting of DfV cases, followed by public outrage and public education about the penalties for such crimes, may foster intolerance towards DfV in society.

Technology-facilitated abuse UN Women emphasises explicitly the term "technology-facilitated abuse", which comprises the following components:

- digital control (access to phones and accounts, geolocation tracking, password enforcement, covert surveillance via annexes or IT devices);
- stalking (persistent, repeated online/offline surveillance that causes reasonable fear);
- stalking following a breakup (including threats, discrediting, blackmail, and ongoing control after the separation)²¹.

Some studies suggest that technology-mediated violence against women is often directly connected to offline violence, and women frequently alter how they use information and communication technologies (or cease using them entirely) due to the risks involved. In other words, in some cases, this type of violence against women worsens the gender digital divide, limits access to information and services, and breaches women's rights to engage in public life.

The issue is worsened by low public awareness that digital control, stalking, and harassment after a break-up are forms of violence. Although a new Article 115-1 "Stalking" has been added to the Penal Code, the general public still remains unaware that "unlawful persecution of a person, expressed in actions aimed at establishing contact and/or tracking a person against their will, not accompanied by violence, causing significant harm" is recognised as a crime²². It can be assumed that a significant number of victims do not seek help because they do not consider these forms to be serious violations, especially when there is no physical threat involved.

According to certain data, one in ten women in the EU has faced some form of cyber violence since turning 15²³. The 2024 EU Directive sets out the responsibilities of member states to prevent and address online abuse²⁴. This emphasises the scale and importance of systemic measures.

A review of international experience indicates that the issue of technology-mediated violence is substantial in scope. According to a study conducted in Australia, 1 in 2 adults had experienced at least one form of this violence; a quarter admitted to committing such acts. In 36,7% of cases, the last episode happened in a relationship with a current or former partner. At the same time, 34% of victims did not report the latest incident to anyone; the vast majority did not contact the police or report to the platforms²⁵.

According to the Pew Research Centre (USA), online harassment is especially common among young people on the internet, and they are particularly susceptible to more serious forms of harassment. Approximately two-thirds of adults under 30 (64%) have experienced some form of online harassment. At the same time, around half of people aged

²¹ Technology-facilitated Violence against Women: Taking stock of evidence and data collection. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/Technology-facilitated-violence-against-women-taking-stock-of-evidence-and-data-collection-en.pdf?>

²² Stalking in Kazakhstan has Become a Crime, the –Prosecutor General's Office explained. August 20, 2025. [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://www.zakon.kz/obshestvo/6487949-stalking-v-kazakhstan-stal-prestupleniem--razyasnenie-genprokuratury.html> (date of access: 12.11.2025)

²³ Cyber violence against women. <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/cyber-violence-against-women?>

²⁴ Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF>

²⁵ Technology-facilitated abuse: National survey of Australian adults' experiences. Research report. Asher Flynn, Anastasia Powell, Sophie Hinds. <https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/technology-facilitated-abuse-national-survey-of-australian-adults-experiences/read/>



30 to 49 had experienced online harassment. A smaller proportion of people aged 50 and older (26%) had experienced at least one of these behaviours²⁶.

Coverage of DFV issues in the information space. Analysis of **expert interview** results shows that the assessment of the impact of the information space, including social networks, the media, and local information campaigns, on the issue of DFV is ambiguous.

"Information technology can both worsen the situation and aid in further investigation". (Expert 3. Representative of law enforcement agencies)

"Unfortunately, negative news currently dominates the information landscape. Reports of violence, scandals, lawsuits, and tragedies are prevalent. When a person continually encounters such negativity, they develop a bleak, pessimistic view of reality. They start to believe that violence– is an inevitable part of life". (Expert 4. Psychologist of the crisis centre, Astana)

"On the one hand, this has a positive impact, as people become aware of this issue and learn about organisations and government programmes aimed at protecting victims of domestic violence. On the other hand, it can have negative effects; social media can disseminate disturbing information, such as reports of someone being murdered or beaten, highlighting cases of domestic violence. Such content could potentially serve as a guide for some abusers". (Expert 5. President of the Women's Support Centre)

Table 2.2.1.

Advantages and disadvantages of media coverage of DFV

Advantages	Disadvantages
- the significant potential of the media to raise public awareness of the problem of violence, existing support organisations, and government protection measures. Social media and the media can disseminate information about available resources, protection methods, legal mechanisms, and promote ideas of non-violent relationships; - open discussion of the problem breaks the silence, reduces taboo, and can encourage victims to seek help.	- the prevalence of sensational and adverse news (murders, beatings, high-profile court cases) shapes the audience's pessimistic perception of reality and convinces them that violence is an unavoidable aspect of life. This can heighten emotional stress and feelings of hopelessness among victims, and for some abusers, it can act as a kind of "guide to action", encouraging them to imitate what they have observed; - spreading unverified or distorted information fosters false stereotypes and public condemnation, which is especially hazardous for victims in vulnerable situations, as it elevates psychological stress and can even lead to suicidal thoughts; - in the media, examples of successful resolution of family conflicts, relationship restoration, and searching for compromises are rare. Instead, the emphasis is on the problem itself rather than on methods to resolve it.

Some experts point out that social media helps DFV cases gain public attention and acts as a tool to instil fear in potential abusers.

"Social media is not the leading cause of domestic violence; instead, it is society's reactions to violence that are important. For example, if a well-known person experiences violence, the case is made public. Then, everyone feels sympathy either for the victim or, on the other hand, for the abuser. However, if an ordinary woman or child suffers from violence but chooses not to go on social media... If every act of violence were punished, people would be less likely to humiliate others publicly". (Expert 1. Candidate of Law, teaching professor)

The issue of punishment for technologically mediated violence stands out.

"Most of a stalker's actions are entirely legal. He simply writes a message or makes a phone call. As long as he does not resort to insults, there is no crime in this. If he sends parcels or gifts to a woman, these are expressions of respect, love, and courtship. However, if proven, he can, of course, be held liable for violating the secrecy of correspondence, privacy, home, and so on". (Expert 1. Candidate of Law, teaching professor)

Another aspect of the issue concerns the accessibility of information. Despite the efforts of crisis centres and NGOs, some members of the target audience, predominantly low-income and socially disadvantaged families, do not access this information through the media and official channels. Word of mouth is effective only when information is shared among acquaintances or neighbours, suggesting limited reach and highlighting the need for more targeted communication strategies.

²⁶ The State of Online Harassment. Pew Research Center. 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/01/13/the-state-of-online-harassment/>



"Disadvantaged and overwhelmed by family problems, they neither read newspapers nor watch television. They are often unaware of such announcements. Although our centre has been operating in this area for five years, many people still have not heard of us. Despite travelling to all the villages, gathering people, holding meetings in schools, distributing advertisements, and talking about our work, some remain unaware. I believe they do hear about us, but they simply do not pay attention. They do not understand what we are discussing; they do not take it seriously. However, if their neighbour tells them, they start to understand. Many have come and said: "I think I heard about it, but I didn't realise such a place existed. Only when my neighbour told me did I understand." Some respond to our advertisements, but most often it is low-income families in need –who ignore information from the media". (Expert 6. Director of the crisis centre)

An effective response necessitates reviewing legislative and preventive measures, recognising digital abuse as a form of domestic violence, and fostering digital literacy and a culture of responsibility for online behaviour. It is crucial that victims can recognise the threat promptly and access protection, and that law enforcement and judicial authorities possess adequate competence to classify such incidents.



CHAPTER III.

MECHANISMS FOR COUNTERING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

3.1. Legislative measures and their enforcement

The legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan concerning domestic and family violence (DFV) establishes a comprehensive regulatory framework, including the Constitution, constitutional laws, various codes (civil, penal, administrative, family, social, health care, etc.), as well as laws aimed at preventing violence, safeguarding the rights of women, children, and families, providing social services, and guiding the work of law enforcement agencies.

Apart from the main laws, there are many subordinate acts – presidential decrees, ministerial orders, and joint regulatory documents – that specify procedures for providing special social services, interdepartmental cooperation, accounting, preventive supervision, and the activities of family support centres and the 111 contact centre.

Judicial practice is based on explanations contained in the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan's regulatory resolution on the classification of crimes, the protection of children's rights, the specifics of adoption, administrative supervision, and other issues.

State policy in the area of DFV prevention is implemented through strategic and programme documents – the National Development Plan until 2029, the Concept of Family and Gender Policy, the Action Plan in the Field of Human Rights, the Comprehensive Plan for the Protection of Children from Violence, etc.

Moreover, Kazakhstan is guided by the provisions of international agreements ratified by the Republic of Kazakhstan, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and others, which, in accordance with Article 4 of the Constitution, take precedence over national laws.

The principal legislative Acts establishing liability for DFV are the Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Administrative Infractions" (hereinafter referred to as the 'COI') and the Penal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (hereinafter referred to as the 'PC of the RK').

The COI of the RK establishes administrative liability for illegal actions in the scope of family relations (Article 73), violation of a protective order (Article 461), and breach of specific behaviour requirements for offenders set by the court (Article 669).

The Penal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan establishes penalties for more serious offences, including those related to DFV. These include murder (Article 99), murder of a newborn by its mother (Article 100), murder committed in a state of passion (Article 101), incitement to suicide, inducement to commit suicide or assisting in the commission of suicide (Article 105), intentional infliction of grievous harm to health (Article 106), intentional infliction of average-gravity harm to health (Article 107), intentional infliction of minor injury to health (Article 108-1), battery (Article 109-1), torment (Article 110), infliction of harm to the health in affective state (Article 111), threats (Article 115), stalking (Article 115-1), rape (Article 120), violent acts of sexual nature (Article 121).

The most important and eagerly anticipated legislative amendments were adopted in spring 2024: Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 72-VIII ZRK of 15 April 2024, titled "On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Ensuring Women's Rights and Child Safety"²⁷, and Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 73-VIII ZRK of 15 April 2024, titled "On Amendments and Additions to the Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan on

27 "On amendments and additions to some legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan to ensure the rights of women and the safety of children": The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated April 15, 2024, No. 72-VIII ZRK [Electronic resource] // Adilet IS – Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z2400000072> (date of access: 07/29/2025).



Administrative Infractions concerning Issues of Ensuring Women's Rights and Child Safety"²⁸ (hereinafter referred to as the law on the criminalisation of DFV).

On 8 December 2023, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan approved the Plan on Human Rights and the Rule of Law, comprising 41 measures, including a separate set aimed at eliminating discrimination against women. This includes tightening criminal legislation related to domestic and family violence (DFV); adopting a law that introduces social and psychological correction practices for preventing crimes and offences associated with domestic violence; establishing a specialised unit within the Ministry of Internal Affairs to combat DFV, with a focus on involving female employees; incorporating target indicators for the prevention of violent crimes against individuals, including women and children, into local authority development plans; and enhancing labour legislation – notably, defining the concept of "sexual harassment in the workplace" in line with international norms and standards, and providing effective procedures for filing and reviewing complaints, legal remedies, and sanctions²⁹.

The scientific and expert community played a crucial role in the reform, offering scientific justification for the necessity of criminalisation through an evidence-based approach. Thus, the 2021 National Report on Combating Domestic Violence argued and provided evidence that decriminalising battery and causing non-grave harm to health in 2017 was incorrect, and recommended criminalising the relevant offences³⁰.

The decriminalisation model introduced in 2017 contained significant flaws and errors, which led it to inadvertently accelerate serious forms of violent crime in the area of DFV. Statistics show that decriminalising assault and intentional infliction of non-grave harm to health, due to the self-perpetuating nature of domestic crime in the form of escalation and cyclicity, has become a specific accelerator (growth stimulator) of DFV in the country. It has long been recognised in criminology that inadequate punishment, through overly lenient sanctions, inevitably results in the accumulation of criminal potential that can later develop into more dangerous behaviours³¹.

The law criminalising DFV has been highly praised by the international community, including the UN: "The new law marks a significant step towards eradicating all forms of gender-based violence. This legislative decision emphasises Kazakhstan's commitment to upholding human rights, especially the protection of women, children, and vulnerable groups from domestic violence. By establishing criminal liability for domestic violence, Kazakhstan clearly signals that such behaviour is unacceptable and that offenders will be prosecuted under the law"³². On 22 October 2024, Kazakhstani human rights activists presented the law criminalising DFV during the 79th session of the UN General Assembly, at an event centred on civil society's role in criminalising domestic violence in Kazakhstan³³.

The laws of 15 April 2024 include 70 amendments, categorised into five main areas.

1. Criminalisation of violence, including not only the criminalisation of assault and intentional infliction of non-grave harm to health under the COI of the RK, but also entirely new offences: sexual harassment of persons under the age of 16 and the promotion of suicide.

- A new Article 313-1 has been introduced into the Penal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan – propaganda of suicide:
 - deliberate spread of information encouraging suicide;
 - punishment – a fine of up to 200 MCI or correctional labour;
 - if the actions led to suicide, there is a deprivation of liberty for a period of 3 to 5 years.
- The concept of "crimes involving violence against minors" has been introduced (14 articles of the PC of the RK):
 - no mitigation of punishment shall apply (Article 55 of the PC of the RK);
 - exemption from liability through reconciliation between the parties (Article 68 of the PC of the RK) is not allowed, except when the offender is a minor.
- A new criminal offence has been introduced (Article 121-1 of the PC of the RK) – indecent acts of a sexual nature against persons under the age of 16:
 - touching, sexual propositions;
 - punishment – correctional labour or community service for up to 200 hours, arrest for up to 50 days, deprivation of the right to hold certain positions for up to 3 years.

²⁸ On amendments and additions to the Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan on administrative infractions regarding the protection of women's rights and child safety: Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated April 15, 2024, No. 73-VIII ZRK [Electronic resource] // Adilet IS Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z2400000073> (date of access: 29.07.2025).

²⁹ On the Action Plan in the field of Human Rights and the Rule of Law: Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated December 8, 2023, No. 409. [Electronic resource] // Adilet IS – Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U2300000409> (date of access: 07/29/2025)

³⁰ On Countering Domestic and Family Violence in the Republic of Kazakhstan: National Report // KIPD – Kazakhstan Institute of Public Development – Astana, 2021. – 100 p. [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://ru.kipd.kz/article/o-protivodeystvii-semeyno-bytovomu-nasiliiu-v-respublike-kazakhstan> (date of access 07/30/2025)

³¹ Zhubandiykova, L. A. Criminal Law and Criminological Aspects of Combating Violence in Family and Domestic Relations // Dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the speciality "Jurisprudence". Kostonay, 2024. pp.15, 115–116.

³² Kazakhstan: The UN welcomes the adoption of a new law criminalising domestic violence. [Electronic resource] // UN News Official website – Access mode: <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2024/04/1451316> (date of access: 29.2025)

³³ The Saltanat case and the criminalisation of domestic violence in Kazakhstan: human rights activists call for stricter laws. [Electronic resource] // UN News Official website – Access mode: <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2024/10/1457616> (date of access: 07/29/2025)

2. Strengthening administrative responsibility, which is expressed both in increasing the size of administrative penalties for existing administrative offences and in introducing completely new offences.

New forms of administrative liability have been introduced.

1) for bullying (cyberbullying) of a minor (new Article 127-2 of the COI of the RK), for which a warning or a fine of 10 MCI is provided; and if committed by a minor between the ages of 12 and 16, such actions shall result in a warning or a fine of 10 MCI for the parents or persons replacing them;

2) for forcibly removing a person under the age of 16 from public transport who is travelling unaccompanied by their parents and/or legal guardian (new part 1-1 of Article 593 of the COI of the RK), a fine of 5 MCI shall be imposed³⁴;

3) repeated violation of a protective order issued by an internal affairs authority (new part 1-1 of Article 461 of the COI of the RK) shall lead to an administrative arrest for a period of 20 days.

The scope of administrative infractions for failing to meet the responsibilities of parents or other legal guardians towards minors (Article 127 of the COI of the RK) has been expanded to include cases of failing to implement safety measures. The reason for this addition was the rising number of tragic incidents involving children falling from windows of high-rise buildings, burns, poisoning, and other similar accidents. According to preliminary data, there were 142 cases of children falling out of windows in the summer of 2024 alone, 32 of which were fatal. Analysis shows that the primary cause of children falling is insufficient adult supervision, as most falls occur when children lean on mosquito nets, which collapse under their weight³⁵.

3. Offence prevention, which includes a variety of measures aimed at stopping offences, working with domestic abusers, and correcting their behavioural patterns.

- Article 98-3 of the Penal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been introduced, establishing specific requirements for individuals who have committed a criminal offence and received a custodial sentence of between 3 months and 1 year.

- The court may impose the following prohibitions and obligations:

- prohibition on searching for, pursuing, visiting the victim, or making any contact with them;
- prohibition on the possession and use of weapons;
- prohibition on the use of alcohol, narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances;
- obligation to undergo psychological counselling.

- In exceptional cases, a ban on living with the victim may be imposed for up to 30 days.

- There is an obligation to report to the internal affairs authorities for preventive interviews 1-4 times a month (for convicts and persons who have reconciled with the victim).

- When committing assault or inflicting non-grave harm to the health of minors or dependent persons, the court is required to schedule preventive counselling sessions once to four times a month.

- The COI of the RK (Part 2-1 of Article 54) introduces additional requirements for individuals who have committed administrative infractions within the realm of family and domestic relations, including mandatory psychological counselling.

These measures will help reduce recidivism and rehabilitate abusers, break the vicious cycle of violence, and help aggressors realise their destructive and dangerous behaviour not only through punishment but also through psychological assistance. Psychological counselling with the abuser and systemic prohibitions establish conditions for breaking the habitual cycle of violence, supporting the development of responsibility and awareness of the seriousness of the acts committed. This approach emphasises preventing recidivism and supporting long-term social rehabilitation, setting it apart from the traditional punitive system, which is not always effective at addressing domestic violence.

Such measures are a form of so-called "restorative justice" technology, which concentrates on the victim's interests and resolves the conflict by making the abuser aware of the negative consequences of their actions³⁶.

The requirement for the offender to have accommodation when a measure prohibiting residence– with the victim is imposed has been removed (Part 2 of Article 54 of the COI of the RK).

- The court may issue a restraining order of up to 30 days to safeguard the victim and their family.

³⁴ The provision prohibiting the forced removal of minors from public transport is outlined in the new paragraph 4 of Article 22 of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Motor Transport".

³⁵ On the Situation of Children in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2024 : State Report – Astana, 2025. – p.29.

³⁶ See more details: Aaron, S. M., & Beaulaurier, R. L. (2017). *The need for new emphasis on batterers intervention programs*. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 18(4), 425–432; Barocas, B., Avieli, H., Shimizu, R., Yang, S., Uday Patankar, K., & Al Neyadi, L. (2024). *Restorative Justice for Domestic Violence: The Meaning of Community in Circles*. *Victims & Offenders*, 19(6), 984–1002; Зеп X. *Restorative Justice: A New Perspective on Crime and Punishment*: Translated from English./Edited by M. Karnozova. Comments by L. M. Karnozova and S. A. Pashina – Moscow : Center for Judicial and Legal Reform NGO, 2002; p. 328; V. A. Shakina *Women as a Victim of Domestic Violence in Marital Relationships: Problems, Causes, Prevention* // Thesis for the Degree of Candidate of Legal Sciences. Irkutsk, 2003; Karnozova L. M. *Introduction to Restorative Justice (Mediation in Response to Crime)*. – M., 2016. – p.384

Article 138-1 of the Social Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been introduced, which provides measures for the early identification of families in difficult life situations:

- coordination by the authorised body;
- participation of entities – involved in education, healthcare, and internal affairs;
- the akimats evaluate the effectiveness, maintain records, and analyse and monitor such families.

Article 12-1 of the Law "On Prevention of Infraction among the Minors and Prevention of Child Neglect and Homelessness" has been enacted, outlining the responsibilities of educational organisations:

- immediately notify law enforcement agencies of unlawful acts;
- offer psychological and pedagogical support to students;
- maintain internal school records and offer prompt support to children who need extra attention.

Paragraph 8-1 has been added to Article 144 of the Entrepreneurial Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, allowing unannounced inspections without prior notice:

- in boarding schools, educational institutions, child protection agencies and agencies providing social services to persons with disabilities;
- the Act regarding the inspection shall be sent to the authorised body on the next working day.

4. Protection and rehabilitation of victims of violence.

An additional type of social leave has been introduced for victims of domestic violence (new clause in the Labour Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan): employers are now obliged to grant employees unpaid leave for up to 30 calendar days while they are at organisations providing specialised social services to victims of domestic violence. Such leave is granted upon receipt of a written notification from the employee specifying its duration and providing a copy of the Agreement for the provision of special social services.

The basis for the activities of the 111 contact centre concerning issues related to the family and the protection of the rights of women and children is enshrined in law (the Code on Marriage (Matrimony) and the Family). The 111 Contact Centre offers information and referral advice, organisational and psychological support on issues related to family and the protection of women's and children's rights, informs central government agencies and local authorities about incoming requests, and provides citizens with updates on the status of their enquiries. The activities of the 111 contact centre are organised and managed by the authorised body responsible for informatisation (MDDIAI of the RK), which also develops and approves the rules for its activities and its interaction with central government and local executive bodies. Central government bodies and local executive authorities collaborate on issues related to the family and the protection of women's and children's rights, and provide the 111 contact centre with information on measures taken following appeals.

5. Institutional measures and infrastructure development to support families and safeguard victims of DFV.

An integrated support model for families facing difficult life situations has been introduced (new provisions of the Social Code). Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan coordinates interdepartmental cooperation and efforts to reach and support such families.

Akimats are responsible for coordinating efforts to provide comprehensive support within the competence of state authorities; to develop and approve territorial programmes and action plans for the socio-economic support of individuals (families) in difficult life situations and other assistance, as well as to develop and approve indicators of the effectiveness of early identification and organisation of support for individuals (families) in difficult life situations.

Family support centres established at local social protection and employment agencies:

- offer a variety of services to families and victims of violence;
- form mobile teams for early detection and support;
- interact with education, healthcare, and internal affairs authorities.

Psychological support centres are being established under the education authorities.

Maslikhats are responsible for approving target indicators to strengthen the family institution and for providing socio-economic support to families.

The Children's Rights Commissioner oversees the operation of the 111 contact centre regarding issues relating to families and the protection of women's and children's rights. A regional network of children's rights ombudsmen is being set up to safeguard and restore children's rights at the local level.

Two new types of licences have been introduced under the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Permits and Notifications": one for providing educational and health services to minors (valid for 1 year) and another for offering

special social services (valid for 3 years). The tightening of requirements for providers of such services is due to identified systematic violations and repeated instances of poor service quality.

It is important to emphasise that the listed amendments are systemic and institutional in character, addressing a broad spectrum of issues. They have become the foundation for the further development of civil society and aim to shape a new, modern model of social relations in citizens' minds, one in which human rights and personal dignity are central.

A significant legislative change was the **large-scale amendments to criminal law** dated 16 July 2025³⁷, which criminalised stalking and coercion to marry, something that human rights activists and experts had been advocating for over a long period.

Despite increasing awareness of various forms of violence, stalking remains an understudied and often underestimated phenomenon, which makes it challenging to identify and prevent in a timely manner.

Stalking, according to the new Article 115-1 of the PC of the RK, is defined as unlawful harassment of a person, manifested through actions aimed at establishing contact and/or monitoring a person against their will, without involving violence, causing substantial harm, and punishable by a fine of up to 200 MCI, corrective labour of the same value, community service for up to 200 hours, or arrest for up to 50 days.

The main characteristics of this criminal offence, as outlined in academic literature on criminal law, are of significant practical importance: 1) systematic persecution or obsessive behaviour: such behaviour is not a one-off incident, but occurs repeatedly or persists over a period of time; 2) targeted at a specific person or their family members: stalking can be directed not only at a particular victim but also at their loved ones; 3) manifested through unwanted attention, surveillance, or harassment, including various forms such as unwelcome contact, watching the victim, or following them in public or online; 4) instils fear or a sense of threat to safety: stalking must cause the victim to fear for their own safety or that of their loved ones; 5) results in a significant disturbance to the victim's mental state or lifestyle – this defines the level of harm required for the behaviour to be regarded as a criminal offence. This may include anxiety, depression, insomnia, the need to relocate or change jobs, etc.³⁸

We believe that the above signs of stalking should be incorporated into the relevant provisions of the Penal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan or the Normative Act of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which clarifies how legislation is applied in judicial practice.

Furthermore, it is essential to hold perpetrators accountable not only when significant harm is inflicted on the victim of stalking but also for the act of stalking itself, regardless of the consequences. This can be accomplished by establishing administrative liability for unlawful persecution. This will enhance the amendment's human rights protection and provide more reliable safeguards for victims of stalking.

Another significant amendment is the introduction of a new offence, **"coercion into marriage"**, commonly referred to as bride kidnapping. Back in 2024, the Head of State emphasised that some people in our country, under the guise of national traditions, try to impose the practice of bride kidnapping: "Such blatant obscurantism cannot be justified and runs counter to the ideals of a progressive society in which the dignity, rights and freedoms of every person are of absolute value. I believe that such facts require not only moral condemnation, but also a legal assessment"³⁹. The government has resolved this matter – such practices will now be punishable by law.

The new Article 125-1 of the Penal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan states: "Coercion into marriage, that is, compelling a person to enter into marriage under threat of violence or destruction or damage to property, or by means of blackmail, including under threat of disclosing or spreading information discrediting the victim or his or her relatives, or other information, the disclosure or dissemination of which may cause substantial harm to the interests of the victim or his or her relatives, shall be punished by a fine of up to two thousand monthly calculation indices, or by correctional labour in the same amount, or by restriction of liberty for a term of up to two years, or by deprivation of liberty for the same term."

The same act, if committed with violence; against a person known to be a minor; through the use of the victim's material or other dependence; by a group of persons or through a conspiracy; or with the use of one's official position, shall be punishable by a fine of up to five thousand monthly calculation indices, or by correctional labour of the same amount, or by community service for up to one thousand two hundred hours, or by restriction of liberty for a period of three to seven years, or by deprivation of liberty for the same term. Acts provided for in parts one or two of this article, if they have negligently caused grave consequences, shall be punished by deprivation of liberty for a term of five to ten years.

³⁷ On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Optimising the Criminal Legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan: Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated July 16, 2025, No. 210-VIII SAM. [Electronic resource] // Adilet IS – Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z2500000210> (date of access 07/31/2025).

³⁸ *ibid.* Pp. 84–85

³⁹ Speech by Head of State Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at the 3rd session of the National Kurultai "Adal Adam – Adal enbek – Adal tabys" on March 15, 2024. [Electronic resource] Access mode: <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/vystuplenieglavny-gosudarstva-ktokaevana-tretem-zasedaniinacionalnogo-kurultaya-1525116> (date of access: 07/31/2025).

Another significant legislative change is the widening of the list of administrative penalties to include community service. The Law of 10 January 2025 introduced a new Article 49-1, "Community Service," to the COI of the RK, which states that such administrative penalties are enforced by the court against individuals and are imposed, with the consent of the person who committed the administrative infractions. Community service involves an individual subject to administrative liability performing unpaid, socially beneficial work that does not require specific qualifications, organised by local executive authorities in public places within their area of residence. Community service is measured in hours and scheduled for 10 to 100 hours. Community service must be carried out in free time, outside of work and studies, for at least 1 hour and no more than 4 hours each day. The total duration of community service shall not exceed four months⁴⁰.

Accordingly, several articles of the COI of the RK were supplemented with alternative sanctions, such as community service. Thus, Article 73 of the COI of the RK ("Illegal actions in the scope of family relations") now stipulates community service of 20 hours as an alternative to a warning or arrest for up to 5 days. Also, if there are aggravating circumstances – such as a repeat offence within a year of the administrative penalty being imposed – the community service term, as an alternative to arrest, is doubled to 40 hours.

Regarding content, community service is among the most effective forms of punishment, as it keeps the rights of the convicted individual to a minimum. Thus, the convicted individual remains connected to society, retains their job or place of study, maintains contact with family members, and does not incur a financial burden, thereby causing no financial strain on the family budget, etc. Conversely, the convicted individual carries out community service voluntarily, does not gain employment experience, is required to complete their sentence on weekends or during annual leave, and, most importantly, recognises that they are doing this work as a consequence of their unlawful actions. This generally results in the correction of the behaviour of the convicted in⁴¹.

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules, 1990) recommend this type of punishment.

An effective mechanism and preventive element in this type of punishment is the threat of escalating the sentence to a more severe one, up to and including arrest. Thus, according to Part 1 of Article 669 of the COI of the RK, non-fulfilment of a court sentence, court decision or other judicial Act (including evasion of community service) is punishable by a fine of 5 MCI or administrative arrest for up to 5 days. This structure of the inevitability of punishment guarantees the conscientious enforcement of the imposed penalty.

The outcome of the aforementioned legislative measures is reflected in the overall statistics on domestic violence reports: according to data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, there is a positive trend towards a decrease in the number of reports (in 2022 – 115 526, in 2023 – 99 026, in 2024 – 75 004). In 2025, the number of appeals fell by a further 20% (34 449 in the first five months of 2024, compared to 27 358 in the first five months of 2025).

At the same time, despite the legislative measures put in place, the high rate of domestic violence continues to be a pressing issue year after year.

A sociological survey reveals that 39% of respondents are unaware that in 2024 Kazakhstan enacted a law to protect women's rights and child safety, including stricter penalties. It is notable that 30% of respondents believe that in cases of domestic violence, one should seek help from relatives and friends rather than the police.

The answers to the question "Why does violence continue in families you know?" reveal possible reasons for the persistent patterns of violence: failure to seek help due to fear of the abuser (42%); the victim's financial dependence on the abuser (35%); distrust of state protection (28%); lack of support from relatives, friends, colleagues (26%); and inaction on the part of authorised state bodies (21%).

Of particular concern is the proportion of the population that supports corporal punishment of their children – 30% of respondents agreed that parents using violence against their children for educational reasons can be justified.

The nature of administrative offences – unlawful acts within family and domestic settings – is a source of concern. These offences include: profanity, offensive harassment, humiliation, damaging household belongings, and other actions that show disrespect towards persons in family and domestic relations, disturb their peace, and are committed within the home. The indicated offenses reached their historical peak in 2024, with 74 296 cases registered – an increase of 56% compared to 2023. Moreover, data for the first 6 months of 2025 show a troubling trend: the number of such offenses reached 41 553, which is nearly equal to the total for all of 2023. These trends indicate insufficient effectiveness of the DFV prevention system and a high level of aggression within Kazakhstani families. These trends suggest that the system for preventing DFV is insufficient and that there is a high level of aggression within Kazakhstani families.

The latency of crime within the family and domestic sphere remains high, suggesting that the true extent of domestic violence greatly exceeds official statistics. The rise in calls to crisis centres and helplines shows increased public awareness, but also that the issue remains important⁴².

40 On amendments and additions to the Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Administrative Infractions: Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated January 10, 2025, No. 155-VIII ZRK. [Electronic resource] // Adilet IS Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z2500000155#z11> (date of access: 3 1/07/2025)

41 On Countering Family and Domestic Violence in the Republic of Kazakhstan: A National Report // Kazakhstan Institute of Social Development – Astana, 2021. – 100 p. [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://ru.kipd.kz/article/o-protivodeystvii-semeyno-bytovomu-nasil'iyu-v-respublike-kazakhstan> (date of access 07/30/2025).

42 Tagaybek K. T. Criminological characteristics of victims of domestic violence (based on the materials of the city of Almaty) // Dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the specialty "Jurisprudence". – Almaty, 2025. – p. 5.

Over the past 11 years (2013-2024), Kazakhstan has consistently recorded a high number of domestic violence reports filed with law enforcement agencies. No significant changes are observed in criminal offence trends from 2019 to 2024. Most offences in the family and domestic sphere are medium- to serious-level crimes that endanger individuals' lives and health. The issue of domestic conflicts caused by alcohol abuse continues to persist⁴³.

There has been a noticeable overall rise in the number of criminal offences within the realm of family and domestic relations over the past three years, in light of the recent criminalisation of several offences (Figure 3.1.1).

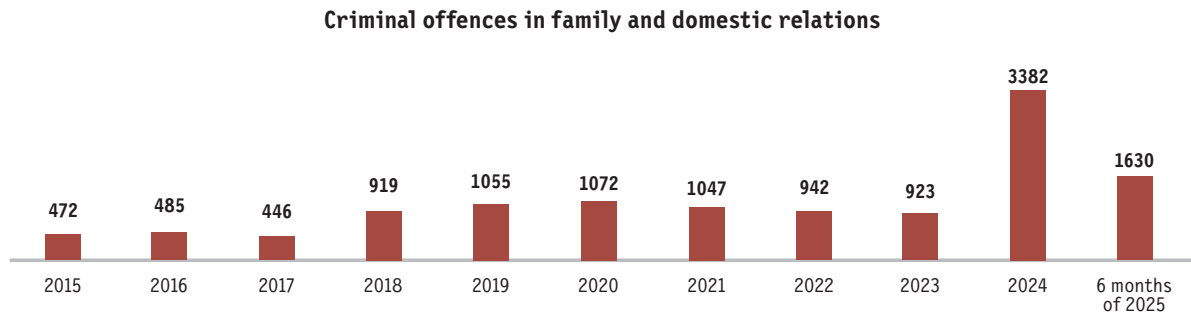


Figure 3.1.1. Statistics on criminal offences committed within the family and domestic context, 2015-2025.

Source: CLS&SR GPO RK

In this regard, the patterns of criminal offences by severity (category) are more apparent, starting with crimes of moderate severity, as the newly introduced categories of criminal offences and minor crimes naturally show a significant rise in 2024 and 2025 compared to previous years due to criminalisation (Figure 3.1.2.). The number of serious crimes in family and domestic relations in 2024 hit a historic low for the past seven years (since decriminalisation in 2017), dropping by 20% compared to 2023, with 278 cases. In the first six months of 2025, there was also a noticeable decrease of 113 crimes, which is less than one-third of the 2024 figure. At the same time, medium-level and particularly serious crimes continue to show high rates, with a slight increase in 2024: by 16% and 9%, respectively, compared to 2023. Meanwhile, the situation improved significantly in the first half of 2025: only 15 medium-severity crimes were recorded (which is a quarter of the 2024 figure) and 170 particularly serious crimes (which is 40% of the 2024 figure).

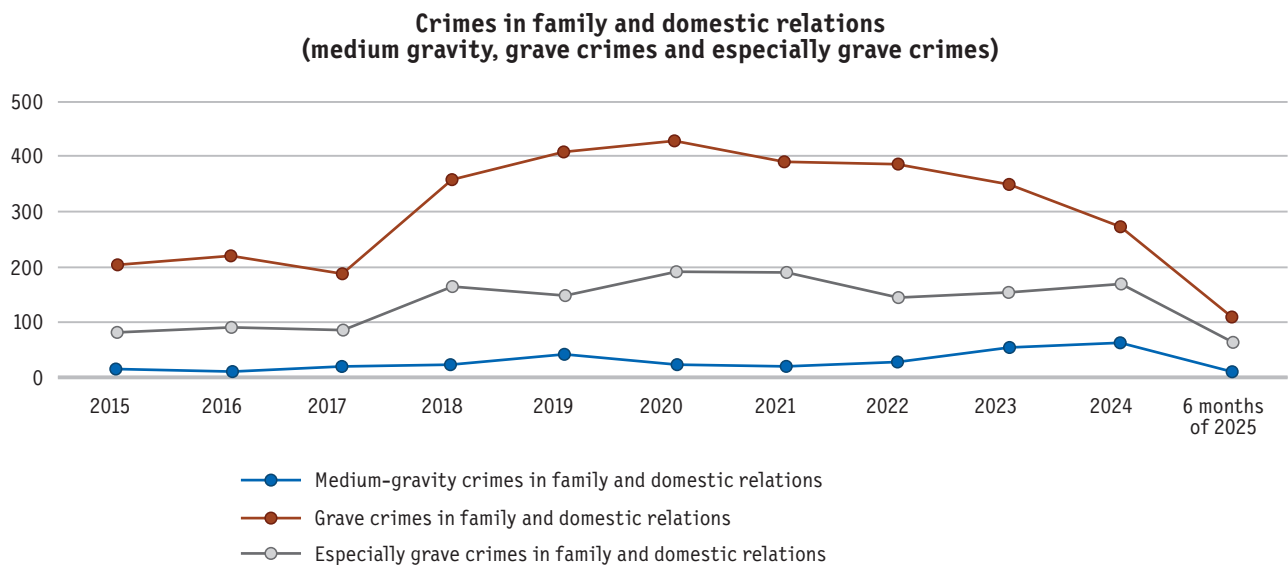


Figure 3.1.2. Statistics on criminal offences within the family and domestic sphere, categorised by severity, 2015-2025.

Source: CLS&SR GPO RK

The most serious crimes within family and domestic relations are murders. Although the number of murders in these areas, according to Article 99 of the Penal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, has decreased significantly over the past five years – from 141 in 2021 to 101 in 2024 – the number of murders committed in a state of passion within the family and domestic sphere has risen sharply from 1 in 2022 to 16 in 2024 (Figure 3.1.3.).

43 *ibid.* P. 34

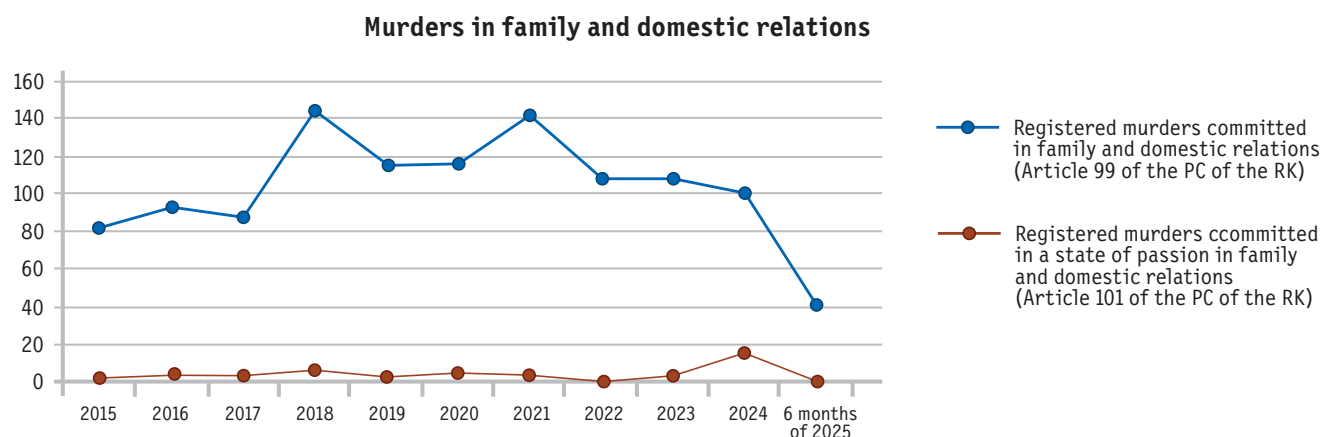


Figure 3.1.3. Statistics on murders committed within the family and domestic sphere, 2015-2025.

Source: CLS&SR GPO RK

At the same time, the graph clearly shows that the peak of murders committed within the family and domestic sphere occurred in 2018 and 2021, when 144 and 141 murders were committed, respectively. This growth may be related to changes in legislation and socio-economic factors, including the effect of the 2020-2021 coronavirus pandemic.

Before the criminalisation of assault and causing non-grave harm to health, all types of murders committed within the family and domestic sphere (Articles 99-103 of the Penal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan) accounted for 11-17% of the total offences in this domain (2018 – 17%, 2019 – 12%, 2020 – 11%, 2021 – 14%, 2022 – 12%, 2023 – 12%). In other words, nearly every 6-9 offences in the family and domestic sphere are murders registered under Articles 99-103 of the Penal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

A concerning trend in recent years has been the rise in the proportion of murders carried out within families and domestic settings, as a percentage of total murders (2018 – 18%, 2019 – 16%, 2020 – 19%, 2021 – 25%, 2022 – 22%, 2023 – 23%, 2024 – 24%). Over the last three years, this indicator has remained at 22-24%, whereas in 2018-2020, it was 16-19%. This indicator may be linked to the decriminalisation of violence in 2017, the withdrawal of the bill on combating DFV in 2020, and systemic issues in state policy in this area.

Given that the main theme of the 2024 reform was the criminalisation of assault and intentional infliction of non-grave harm to health, it is worth examining the statistics for these offences in more detail. If we compile all the indicators from the COI of the RK and the Penal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the specified offences over the past five years, we can observe a notable downward trend in the number of cases of intentional infliction of non-grave harm to health, as shown in diagram (Figure 3.1.4.): in 2024, their total number decreased by 32% compared to 2023, while the number of assaults remained roughly at the same level – about 10 000 cases annually. However, by the end of the first half of 2025, there was a significant decrease in offences under both articles of the Penal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan: the total numbers fell to 7-9% of the 2024 figure. This trend may suggest either a genuine improvement in the situation and the deterrence of abusers from violence, or the reluctance of victims to report violence to the police due to fear, social pressure, and other factors.

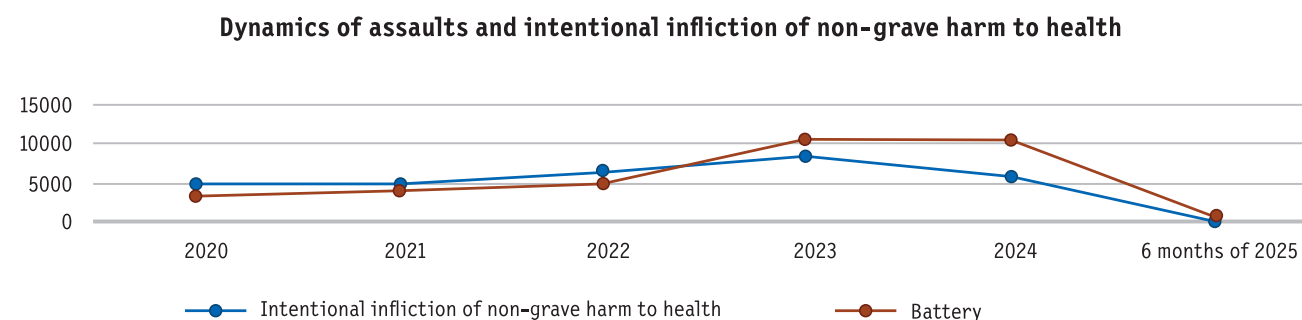


Figure 3.1.4. Statistics on the intentional infliction of non-grave harm to health and assaults committed within the family and domestic sphere, 2020-2025.

Source: CLS&SR GPO RK

The practice of criminal prosecution for the specific criminal offences (Articles 108-1 and 109-1 of the Penal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan) during the period when the relevant provisions of the Penal Code are in force is shown in Table 3.1.2.

Table 3.1.2.

Statistics on criminal offences under Articles 108-1 and 109-1 of the PC of the RK,
for 5 months and 14 days in 2024 and for 6 months in 2025

Indicators/Period	2024 (from 16.06.2024)	2025 (6 months)
Article 108-1. Intentional infliction of minor injury to health		
Total registered cases	2513	1800
Terminated on non-rehabilitating grounds, cases	1374	890
Submitted to the court, cases	633	507
Convicted, persons	467	554
Justified, persons	0	0
Persons against whom criminal proceedings (criminal prosecution) have been discontinued by the court.	202	195
including reconciliation of the parties	198	179
Article 109-1. Battery		
Total registered cases	4338	3008
Terminated on non-rehabilitating grounds, cases	2587	1469
Submitted to the court, cases	1142	914
Convicted, persons	267	373
Justified, persons	0	2
Persons against whom criminal proceedings (criminal prosecution) have been discontinued by the court.	458	349
including reconciliation of the parties	457	338

Source: CLS&SR GPO RK

According to the CLS&SR GPO of the RK, a total of 4 313 criminal offenses under Articles 108-1 and 109-1 of the Penal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan were registered during the period of 5 months and 14 days of 2024 and 6 months of 2025. Of these, 3 501 cases (52%) were terminated on non-exonerating grounds, only 1 140 cases (26%) proceeded to trial, and 397 criminal cases (28% of all defendants) were dismissed in court, the majority due to reconciliation of the parties. As a result, 1 021 individuals were convicted. The overall pattern, as before criminalisation, is that half of all cases involving assault and intentional infliction of non-grave harm to health are dismissed before trial. In court, cases against 28% of defendants for intentional infliction of non-grave harm to health and 56% in assault cases are dismissed.

These figures demonstrate a high level of impunity, which diminishes the deterrent effect of criminal liability and heightens the risk of repeat offences, especially in the area of family and domestic relations. Victims, seeing no protection from the state, may refuse to make statements, fearing retaliation or lacking faith in the effectiveness of the system. This promotes a lasting culture of acceptance of violence and weakens the principles of justice and the rule of law.

A sociological survey reveals that 42% of respondents believe victims of domestic violence often reconcile with their abusers because they fear condemnation from relatives and others around them. Additionally, 29% do so out of fear of the offender, persecution, and revenge. Another 29% stay because they lack their own housing, 27% due to the ineffectiveness of punishment measures and the impunity of the abuser, and 23% because they lack support from family and loved ones.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan attributes these facts to procedural particularities and challenges in investigating criminal offences. Whereas a case concerning an administrative offence previously comprised about 10 pages, criminal cases often exceed 120 pages. This is due to the need to meet additional procedural requirements: conducting forensic examinations, interrogations, confrontations, involving defence lawyers, interpreters, experts, coordinating with the prosecutor, and, in the case of minors, the obligatory participation of legal representatives, teachers, and psychologists. Proving guilt is especially challenging when the suspect denies the allegations, particularly in cases of domestic violence, which occurs in a private setting without witnesses, as any doubts tend to be interpreted in favour of the offender. As a result, there has been a decrease in the investigation and prosecution of criminal offences involving assault and infliction of non-grave harm to health, despite the significant latency and public danger of such acts. Due to the lengthy investigation process, many criminal cases have been discontinued, with the decisions approved by the prosecutor's office. Furthermore, preventive detention is seldom employed as a restrictive measure. The reason is the lack of judicial prospects. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, administrative legislation is more flexible and permits the immediate detention of a "troublemaker" for 24 hours, preventing more serious consequences.



In this respect, it is necessary to streamline the conduct of criminal proceedings for criminal offences by making suitable amendments to the CPC of the RK, while prioritising the rights and legitimate interests of victims of DFV.

As experts observe, when reviewing cases involving violent crimes driven by domestic issues or personal grudges between the perpetrator and the victim, courts do not always thoroughly examine and investigate the domestic and personal relationships that led to the crime. Instead, they often concentrate solely on proving the charges and accurately assessing the act from a legal standpoint. Meanwhile, clarifying these circumstances might provide the court with a basis for appropriate decisions. The courts must establish whether the defendant committed violence before being held criminally responsible, whether the victims filed complaints, which authorities they contacted, whether preventive assistance was provided, how effective it was, and what preventive measures were applied to the perpetrator, among other factors⁴⁴.

A significant legal gap in criminal law is that the PC of the RK lacks a clear definition and application of the concept of "family and domestic relations". Unlike the COI of the RK, these are not used in the categorisation of violent criminal offences. This creates significant obstacles to effectively protecting victims of domestic violence under criminal law, which is particularly evident in practice.

In the COI of the RK, the concept of family and domestic relations is applied when considering cases of administrative offences related to domestic violence and includes a broad range of persons living together or in family relationships, regardless of whether there is material or other dependence between them. In doing so, the legislator recognises domestic and family ties as factors that increase the victim's vulnerability and enhance the public danger caused by the unlawful act.

In contrast, in criminal law, an act can only be considered committed against a person who is dependent on the perpetrator (e.g., under articles on violent crimes against the person) if there are indications of material or other dependence. This definition is too narrow and fails to cover the full spectrum of real-life situations where violence occurs within the family or domestic environment, particularly when there is no direct dependency between the parties, such as when the victim has an independent income, property, or other sources of support.

Thus, a paradoxical situation emerges where a victim of domestic violence may be protected during administrative proceedings (under the COI of the RK), but once the case proceeds to criminal prosecution, they remain outside the scope of aggravating circumstances that increase criminal liability. This not only breaches the principle of consistency and logical coherence in legislation but also considerably undermines the system designed to safeguard individuals' rights and freedoms from family and domestic violence.

An extra complication is the high evidentiary threshold for establishing "material or other dependence." Confirming the existence of such a dependency can be difficult due to social pressure, psychological trauma to the victim, and the absence of formal evidence like joint accounts, agreements, or witness statements. As a result, criminal prosecution does not establish aggravating circumstances, despite the evident particularity of the family and domestic situation.

In this regard, it is urgent to incorporate the legal concept of "family and domestic relations" into the PC of the RK as a factor that qualifies the commission of violent crimes against individuals. This would include a broad range of cases involving violence between spouses, former spouses, relatives, and cohabitants, regardless of whether they depend on each other.

This innovation will extend criminal law protections by including all forms of violence within domestic and family relationships, regardless of the victim's financial status. It will also streamline law enforcement processes by removing the requirement to prove the often ambiguous category of "dependence", thereby speeding up classification and evidence gathering in criminal cases. Additionally, it aims to reduce delays in addressing domestic violence by fostering greater trust among victims towards state authorities, who will consider their situations within the full context of family and domestic realities.

This definition could be included in the General Part of the PC of the RK as part of the concepts used to classify criminal offences, and it might also be incorporated into the Special Part as a qualifying feature in crimes against the person (e.g., causing harm to health, murder, threats, etc.).

DFV is characterised by its latent nature and socio-cultural barriers that prevent victims from reporting it to law enforcement agencies promptly. In this regard, the statistics do not accurately portray the true state of DFV, so the government must continually monitor this issue. Therefore, given the severity of the issue, it is now appropriate to **recognise domestic violence as a threat to national security**.

As highlighted by the Human Rights Commissioner in Kazakhstan, the threat of DFV must not be underestimated. Its danger extends beyond causing harm or death to individuals, orphanhood, and trauma to children; it also weakens the institution of the family and social bonds, and diminishes the value of fundamental human principles – human beings, their lives, health, and integrity. Family life significantly influences social structure and, consequently, overall progress and development⁴⁵.

44 Yurchenko R. N. Application by courts of the Provisions of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On the Prevention of Domestic Violence": Commentary to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On the Prevention of Domestic Violence". [Electronic resource] – Access mode: https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/T090000214_ (date of access: 01.08.2025)

45 On Countering Domestic Violence: A Special Report. // Commissioner for Human Rights in the Republic of Kazakhstan. – Astana, 2024. p. 106 – p. 3.

It should be recognised that domestic violence has a devastating impact on women and children, and underestimating its consequences leads to serious issues within the family, society, and social structures. The immediate harm caused by domestic violence to the state is, first and foremost, immense human suffering that cannot be measured in monetary terms. DFV has significant long-term financial and economic repercussions that strain the state budget.

However, studies have measured the financial losses incurred by the state due to DFV. Thus, in 2021, expenditures reached 45 billion KZT, of which only 765 million KZT (17%) were allocated to specialised social services for victims of domestic violence and socially significant projects aimed at preventing domestic violence⁴⁶.

Despite arguments highlighting the importance of countering DFV for national security, health, and safety, government policy in this area currently faces a new challenge from within the state itself, or more specifically, from government authorities.

In April 2025, a draft law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Offence Prevention", prepared by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, was submitted to the Mazhilis of Parliament for consideration. The law consolidates five existing laws, including the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On the Prevention of Domestic Violence", which will cease to be in force upon the adoption of the new unified law. This approach weakens the domestic violence prevention framework established in Kazakhstan by the aforementioned law and strengthened by the 2024 laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan on safeguarding women's rights and child safety.

The draft unified law on offence prevention includes only one article that explicitly addresses domestic violence prevention, focusing on types of domestic violence and special measures to prevent it.

Although the law sets out general measures for offence prevention, which also apply to domestic violence, there remains a significant risk that the specific characteristics of domestic violence will not be adequately considered in these broad prevention strategies. Meanwhile, most countries worldwide have particular laws on domestic violence due to the sensitive nature of such offences.

For reference: Ninety countries worldwide have legislative provisions on domestic violence, 60 of which have enacted specific laws against domestic violence and seven against violence towards women. In the post-Soviet space, a regulatory and legal framework for the prevention of DFV was established during the 2000s. Eight countries have enacted specific laws to protect against domestic (gender-based) violence: Georgia (2006), Moldova (2007), Azerbaijan (2010), Tajikistan (2013), Ukraine (2017), Kyrgyzstan (2017), Armenia (2017), and Uzbekistan (2019).

The legal method of dividing laws is not merely a formality. Thus, Kazakhstan has enacted separate laws on fighting corruption, terrorism, extremism, and money laundering. At the same time, these laws exist separately and should be unified, taking into account the public danger and the specific nature of the offences involved. There is also a separate Law 'On the Status of Teachers', despite the existence of a consolidated Law 'On Education'; there is a Law 'On the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan', despite the existence of the Code on Marriage and the Family. The existence of a separate law on the prevention of domestic violence shows that this is not a routine issue, but a major social threat that demands a comprehensive government policy.

Furthermore, the loss of the law will create the risk of a regression in legal and social consciousness. It is crucial not to repeal the existing law, but to strengthen it by establishing a modern, separate **law on combating domestic violence** based on it, in accordance with advanced international standards. This issue must remain a priority for state protection and not be overlooked among the multitude of offences.

Here, it is essential to distinguish between the concepts of preventing domestic violence and combating domestic violence, which are related as specific and general.

The term "domestic" does not fully capture the relationships that develop between individuals in family and domestic settings. "Everyday events are those that regularly happen in people's normal daily lives"⁴⁷. The term "family and domestic" is suitable in the circumstances under review. The concept of "DFV" appears suitable and better captures the nature of the violence being examined⁴⁸. Supporting this view and recognising that consistent use of terminology is essential for law enforcement practice, it is proposed that violence committed against participants in family and domestic relationships be recognised as DFV⁴⁹.

46 Aitenova Sh. *Estimating the Costs of Combating Domestic Violence in Kazakhstan* / Sh. Aitenova, A. Nurkeeva, Z. Baissakova. – Almaty, 2022 – 24 p.

47 Explanatory Dictionary by S.I. Ozhegov. [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <http://www.terminy.info/russian-language/explanatory-dictionary-ozhegova/bytovoy> (date of access: 07/31/2025)

48 S.M. Rakhmetov *Challenges in Improving Kazakhstan's Legislation on Combating Domestic Violence* // *Journal of the Institute of Legislation and Legal Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan*. – No. 5 (63). – 2020. – Pp. 127–134.

49 Tagaybek K. T. *Criminological characteristics of victims of domestic violence (based on the materials of the city of Almaty)* // *Dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the speciality "Jurisprudence"*. – Almaty, 2025. – p. 16.

Regarding the broader category of "countering domestic violence" (as opposed to preventing it), this term should be understood as a system of measures implemented by specialised entities aimed at stopping domestic violence, supporting the victim, repairing the harm caused, and thoroughly investigating cases of domestic violence to ensure justice and encourage behavioural reform within the bounds of legal norms. In this interpretation, "combating domestic violence" forms a subsystem within the "combating crime" framework, as well as a general concept for the category "prevention of domestic violence"⁵⁰.

Another significant issue is the specific vulnerability of children in cases of DFV. Children often witness domestic violence. The commission of any criminal offence in front of minors has a harmful impact on their mental health and normal spiritual and emotional growth. Adult offenders, through their example of criminal behaviour, have an adverse educational influence on adolescents, who often imitate what they have observed during childhood or as adults.

According to data from Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in 2025, 84% of women temporarily stayed in crisis centres with their minor children, while only 16% were accommodated individually. On average, three people from each family stayed in the facilities temporarily. 22% were women with one child, 32% with two children, 22% with three children, 15% with four children, and 9% with five or more children. Therefore, minors (under 18) make up 67% of all those temporarily staying in shelters for victims of domestic violence. The data shows that, despite the prevailing public perception of women as the main victims of domestic violence, a significant proportion of victims are individuals under the age of 18.

Based on the above, as noted by the Human Rights Ombudsman in the Republic of Kazakhstan, it is necessary to recognise the commission of a criminal offence in the presence of minors as an aggravating circumstance and punishable by a more severe penalty. To this end, it is proposed to supplement Part 1 of Article 54 of the Penal Code, which states: "committing a criminal offence in the presence of a minor"⁵¹.

With regard to minors, a separate decision is also required in situations where they become victims of domestic violence by family members. Under current criminal procedure legislation, minors involved in criminal proceedings (as suspects, defendants, or victims) must be represented by adults to ensure their interests are protected. Therefore, in accordance with Part 2 of Article 76 of the CPC of the RK, "in order to protect the rights and legitimate interests of victims who are minors, do not speak the language of the proceedings, or are unable to independently defend their rights and legitimate interests due to their physical or mental condition, their legal representatives and authorised representatives shall be mandatory participants in the proceedings." According to Part 1 of Article 215 of the CPC of the RK, when questioning a minor witness under 14 years old, and at the discretion of the person conducting the pre-trial proceedings, a teacher and/or psychologist shall be summoned if the minor is under 18. In turn, according to Part 1 of Article 371 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, when questioning a minor who is a witness or victim, his or her legal representative and teacher shall participate. At the same time, considering the patterns of DFV, it should be recognised that when a violent criminal offence is committed against a minor by a family member, there is a risk that another family member (mother, or other relatives, especially those of the suspect or accused) may exert pressure on them to prevent them from telling the truth during questioning about the violent incident that occurred⁵².

Another equally serious problem is the issue of exceeding the limits of necessary defence in cases of domestic violence. A review of 100 criminal cases where all the signs of necessary defence are present shows that none of them were terminated under Article 32 of the PC of the RK, nor was any person exempted from criminal liability under Article 66 of the PC of the RK.

Professor I. S. Borchashvili proposes "to abandon the concept of exceeding the limits of necessary defence because law-abiding citizens are at a disadvantage compared to aggressors. He argues that while the legislator grants the right to defend oneself, this right, under threat of criminal prosecution, also requires that defenders not exceed necessary limits. Therefore, he believes it is correct to completely discard the notion of exceeding these limits". Furthermore, Borchashvili highlights covert corruption in Article 66 of the PC of the RK, where the legislator uses the phrase "may be" regarding exemption from criminal liability. He suggests replacing "may be" with "shall be", as is done in Part 1 of Article 67 of the PC of the RK, titled "Exemption from criminal liability in connection with reconciliation"⁵³.

In this regard, according to scientists, to enhance protection for victims of DFV in criminal proceedings and to obtain reliable data on the criminal offence committed, Part 1 of Article 217 of the CPC of the RK should be amended to include a new circumstance: "the existence of a danger to the life and health of the witness or victim." Generally, it can be applied to other situations (not related to family and domestic relations), but the segment of crime under investigation is most suitable for this method of obtaining and recording evidence⁵⁴.

50 Akimzhanov, E. S. *Administrative and Legal Protection from domestic violence in the Republic of Kazakhstan*. Almaty: ADAL KITAP, 2024, p. 38.

51 *The report of the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020*. [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/ombudsman/documents/details/166034?lang=ru> (date of access: 02.08.2025)

52 Zhubandykova, L. A. *Criminal Law and Criminological Aspects of Combating Violence in Family and Domestic Relations // Dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the speciality "Jurisprudence"*. Kostanay, 2024. pp.144–145.

53 *ibid.* P. 85.

54 *ibid.* Pp. 135–136.

Therefore, there is a clear need to further strengthen legislation on combating DFV.

– The legislative amendments passed in 2024–2025 are fundamental and lay the groundwork for future reforms aimed not only at preventing any violent offences but also at establishing a comprehensive system to address all forms of violence and safeguard individuals and families facing difficult life circumstances.

The law on protecting women's rights and ensuring children's safety marks a shift from an exclusively punitive approach towards individuals who have committed violent offences to the integration of measures aimed at preventing recidivism, rehabilitating the abuser, and safeguarding victims' rights. This approach enhances the preventive capacity of criminal and administrative law, fosters the protection of victims, and lays the groundwork for a more humane and effective justice system that prioritises rehabilitation over punishment alone.

– An analysis of legal statistics reveals that the number of serious crimes related to family and domestic relations in 2024 has reached a historic low for the past seven years (since decriminalisation in 2017), decreasing by 20% compared to 2023. At the same time, medium-level and particularly serious crimes continue to show high rates, with slight increases in 2024: 16% and 9%, respectively, compared to 2023. The high level of conflictogenicity within the family and domestic sphere remains a concern, highlighted by high-profile cases of brutal murders and harm to the health of DFV victims.

Data analysis reveals that over half of criminal cases involving intentional infliction of non-grave harm to health and assault do not go to court. This indicates that over half of the reported cases of physical violence under the newly criminalised articles of the PC of the RK do not proceed to full criminal prosecution and court proceedings.

Only a quarter of all cases go to court: 26% involve intentional infliction of non-grave harm to health, and 28% involve assault. This confirms a systemic tendency towards ineffective prosecution, which may undermine citizens' faith in the possibility of fair justice and genuine protection from violence.

Even in cases that go to court, the proportion of criminal prosecutions that are discontinued remains high: 28% in cases of intentional infliction of non-grave harm to health and 56% in cases of assault. The main reasons for discontinuation relate to the reconciliation between the parties, which, despite being a legally recognised procedure, in cases of violent crimes, may suggest coercion, pressure on victims, or a minimisation of the offence's severity by the court.

The overall conclusion is that even after criminalising the relevant acts (especially under the article on assault), the common pattern seen during the decriminalised period persists: most cases are resolved before trial or during trial, and only a small number of offenders face actual penalties. This indicates that amendments to criminal law have not led to notable improvements in investigative practices or justice in cases involving DFV.

– The recognition of DFV as a threat to national security is justified. The scale and latency of domestic violence cause long-term effects: trauma in children, decreased work capacity of victims, increased social aggression, and repeated violence. Domestic violence violates the most basic human values – life and health, which are recognised by the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan as the highest values of the state. In this regard, despite the development of a draft unified law on offence prevention that does not take into account the specificity, multifaceted nature, and vulnerability of DFV, it is necessary to pass a separate law to combat domestic violence. This law will not only establish preventive measures but also organise the instruments of state policy, measures to address this phenomenon, the full range of protection and social support for victims, and psychological correction of abusers' behaviour. This law will not duplicate but rather supplement the general law on offence prevention, while maintaining the integrity of the system and focusing on protecting the most vulnerable groups within the population.

3.2. Family support systems and frameworks for safeguarding victims of domestic violence

In the context of widespread incidents and the scale of domestic and family violence (DFV), particularly against women and children, ensuring victim protection and supporting families has become a top priority. In recent years, Kazakhstan has taken notable steps in developing family support infrastructure and creating mechanisms to protect victims of DFV, with a particularly important role played by the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Ensuring Women's Rights and Child Safety adopted on 15 April 2024.

The Law introduced an integrated model of comprehensive support for individuals (families) in difficult life situations (hereinafter – DLS). This model combines organisational and functional approaches and provides for the participation of government agencies under the coordination of an authorised state body in order to strengthen interagency cooperation.

The system of public administration bodies in the field of family support and countering DFV includes: 1) the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan; 2) the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan; 3) the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan; 4) the authorised body in the field of state family policy (the Ministry

of Culture and Information – MCI); 5) the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan and regional departments for protecting women from violence; 6) the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan; 7) the authorised body in the field of healthcare Ministry of Healthcare – MH); 8) the authorised body in the field of labour and social protection of population (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population – MLSP); 9) the authorised body in the field of preschool, secondary, technical and vocational, post-secondary, and additional education, and child protection (the Ministry of Education – MoE); 10) the authorised body in the fields of digitalisation, personal data and their protection, communications, public service delivery, and data management (the Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry – MDDIAI); 11) local representative and executive bodies and their departments (social protection, education, healthcare, internal policy, guardianship and trusteeship authorities, etc.).

Consultative and advisory bodies also operate in this field, including: 1) the National Commission on Women's Affairs and Family and Demographic Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and corresponding regional commissions under akimats; 2) the Commission on Human Rights under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan; 3) interdepartmental commissions on crime prevention under regional akimats; 4) commissions on minors' affairs and the protection of their rights under regional akimats (17 regional, 41 city-level, and 182 district-level commissions).

In addition, the following officeholders are authorised in this field: 1) the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Republic of Kazakhstan; 2) the Commissioner for Children's Rights in the Republic of Kazakhstan; 3) the Commissioner for the Rights of Socially Vulnerable Groups under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The infrastructure for family support, assistance, and protection of victims of domestic violence includes: 1) family support centres (FSCs) and mobile teams operating under their coordination for the early identification of and support for individuals (families) in DLS; 2) primary health care organisations (PHC); 3) temporary accommodation facilities (crisis centres, social assistance centres, shelters for victims of domestic violence); 4) the Unified Contact Centre 111; 5) psychological support centres under education departments; 6) youth health centres; 7) centres for the adaptation of minors; 8) centres supporting children in need of special social services; 9) psychological and pedagogical support services (PPSS) in educational institutions.

A significant innovation is the introduction of the digital family card – an integrated information platform that tracks indicators of social well-being, generates and segments lists of families (individuals) by levels of social well-being, and automatically identifies families at risk. This tool enables early detection of the need for social support or intervention by the relevant services.

At the institutional level, a network of 131 family support centres (FSCs) has been established. Operating under akimats and funded by local budgets, FSCs coordinate support measures for individuals and families in DLS among government agencies, advisory bodies, educational and healthcare institutions, the police, volunteers, and NGOs. Between 2025 and 2027, the number of FSCs is planned to increase to 208.

The functions of FSCs include: 1) implementing measures of state family policy, including those aimed at marriage and family preservation and resolving family conflicts; 2) coordinating the efforts of government agencies within their competencies to provide support to individuals (families) in DLS; 3) facilitating the provision of social, legal, and psychological assistance to individuals (families) in DLS; 4) conducting information and awareness-raising activities about the directions and measures of state family policy; 5) monitoring and analysing trends in state family policy, among other functions.

Despite the fact that the provisions on establishing FSCs entered into force on 16 June 2024, the past year has already shown a clear regional disparity in their distribution: 131 FSCs have been created across 228 cities of regional significance, districts in the regions, the capital, and cities of republican significance. For instance, no FSC has been established in the Ulytau region, while all western regions of the country (Aktobe, Atyrau, Mangystau, and West Kazakhstan), as well as Kyzylorda and Turkestan regions, are fully covered. The Almaty region is almost fully equipped. Insufficient coverage is observed in Abay, Akmolá, Zhambyl, Karaganda, Kostanay, Pavlodar and East Kazakhstan (EKR) regions. In the capital and the cities of republican significance, Almaty and Shymkent, only one FSC has been established, although under the law, one must be created in each city district.

Table 3.2.1.

Number of FSCs in the regions of the republic, including districts and cities

No.	Regions	Number of cities of regional significance and districts, including districts within cities of republican significance (capital)	Number of Family Support Centres	Note
1	Akmola region	20	7	No FSCs in Kokshetau, in 12 districts out of 17
2	Aktobe region	13	13	Fully equipped



No.	Regions	Number of cities of regional significance and districts, including districts within cities of republican significance (capital)	Number of Family Support Centres	Note
3	Almaty region	11	11	No FSCs in Balkhash district
4	Atyrau region	8	8	Fully equipped
5	Almaty	8	1	Only 1 FSC operates for the whole city
6	Astana	6	1	Only 1 FSC operates for the whole capital
7	Shymkent	5	1	Only 1 FSC operates for the whole city
8	EKR	13	1	No FSCs in Ridder and all 11 districts
9	Zhambyl region	11	7 (2 in Taraz)	No FSCs in 5 out of 10 districts
10	WKR	13	12	Fully equipped
11	Karaganda region	13	7	No FSCs in Priozersk, Abay, Aktogay, and Shet districts
12	Kostanay region	20	2	No FSCs in Kostanay, Arkalyk, and all 16 districts of the region.
13	Kyzylorda region	9	9	Fully equipped
14	Mangystau region	7	7	Fully equipped
15	Pavlodar region	13	2	No FSCs in Yekibastuz and 9 districts out of 10
16	NKR	14	13	No FSC in 1 district out of 13
17	Turkestan region	17	17	Fully equipped
18	Abay region	12	3	No FSCs in 9 out of 10 districts
19	Zhetysay region	10	9	No FSCs in Taldykorgan, Aksu, Koksuy districts
20	Ulytau region	5	-	No FSCs in has been established at all
TOTAL		228	131	

Source: Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan

To organise its activities and interdepartmental cooperation, the FSCs use the FSM Social information system, which ensures effective process management, enables immediate responses to changes, and guarantees complete transparency and accessibility of information for all interested parties. When contacted, the system automatically creates a profile and generates a digital portrait of the family based on information from the Digital Family Card, which includes all the data necessary for assessment and support planning. An individual work plan (IWP) is then prepared and sent to the state authorities. As part of the IWP, the system automatically creates tasks for the relevant government agencies with clear deadlines for completion. The whole process is monitored via this system, which is also accessible as a mobile extension. Implementors receive tasks on their mobile app, enabling them to monitor the required actions, mark their completion, and attach supporting documents or photographs. As of today, more than 44,5 thousand requests from citizens have been registered through the FSM Social system. About 20 thousand families have received legal, psychological, and social counselling, and 15,4 thousand families are under ongoing monitoring and support by specialists. Among them, 164 families affected by domestic violence are currently receiving support. A total of 256 children within these families have received assistance.

The FSCs implement the following measures to support individuals showing signs of domestic violence: 1) informational, legal, and psychological assistance; 2) support in finding employment, vocational training, re-skilling, and professional development; 3) help in obtaining a guaranteed amount of free medical care; 4) advice on state support measures; 5) temporary accommodation for up to one month.

To identify individuals showing signs of domestic violence, the FSC refers them within two working days to organisations providing specialised social services for victims of domestic violence. When individuals with minor children apply to the FSC, they are admitted together with their children, and within 24 hours, they must inform the law enforcement authorities and the authorities responsible for guardianship and custody in writing. Temporary accommodation for individuals showing signs of domestic violence is provided at public expense based on referrals from district (municipal) authorities responsible for social protection, employment, healthcare, and internal affairs at the person's (or family's) actual place of residence, as well as on personal applications submitted directly to the FSC.

To coordinate and implement projects aimed at enhancing the operations of centres under the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan, a project office has been established to improve the activities of the FSCs.

The FSCs organise the work of mobile teams to support individuals (families) in temporary accommodation by providing early identification and support. The mobile teams consist of representatives from education, health and internal affairs authorities, coordinated by local executive bodies responsible for social protection and employment. The composition of mobile groups is approved by order of the district Akim or the city district Akim for a period of one calendar year. When there is information about an immediate threat to a person's or family's life and health, the FSC involves mobile groups to develop immediate response measures. The response plan outlines comprehensive support measures and designates local executive and territorial bodies and organisations responsible for their execution.

A total of 2 324 mobile groups have been established across Kazakhstan on a pilot basis. When they visit the family, the completion of tasks is also recorded in the FSM Social system via a mobile app, including photo and video reports, the exact time, and the task completion geolocation. In total, in 2025, rapid response teams identified 64 243 families in DLS. 15 337 people received assistance in completing paperwork; 23 087 people found employment; 111 953 families received assistance with TSA paperwork.

Furthermore, there is a single contact centre 111 that children, women, and other persons needing assistance can contact. The centre guarantees anonymity, operates 24/7, and manages interaction with emergency services. Each school has QR codes that children can use to quickly and confidentially report their condition or issues, including bullying, violence, or suicidal thoughts. This enables us to offer prompt support and ensure the child does not face their problems alone.

The next significant infrastructure facility is temporary accommodation designed to offer specialised social services during continuous stays of up to one year. Such organisations function as crisis centres, social assistance centres, and shelters for victims of domestic violence within the public sector in cities of republican importance, the capital, cities of regional significance, and cities of district significance with populations exceeding 100 000. In settlements, districts, and rural districts with populations of 50 000 or more, it is permissible to establish a temporary stay organisation at the district level by decision of the local executive authorities.

The temporary accommodation facility offers: identification of victims of domestic violence; urgent social assistance and support to service users; and specialised social services tailored to the individual needs of service users, aimed at enhancing their personal development and social and occupational integration.

According to data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1 886 people sought help from crisis centres in the first half of 2025, including 587 women, 1 296 children, and 3 men.

Table 3.2.2.

Indicators for providing special social services (SSS) to victims of domestic violence
for 2022–2024 and the first half of 2025

Indicator/Year	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number of SSS provided to victims of domestic violence, persons	3 766	4 223 +12%	4 656 +10%	1 886
Amount of funding for providing SSS to victims of domestic violence, million KZT	1 126,5	2 282 +100%	2 966 +30%	2 944

Source: Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan

As of August 2024, 48 crisis centres were operating, with 17 run by the state and 31 by non-state organisations.

There are currently 32 crisis centres in operation, of which 18 are state-run and 14 are non-state-run. There are no crisis centres in the Turkestan region; nine regions have one crisis centre each, seven regions have two crisis centres each, and three regions have three crisis centres each.

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, some regions require additional crisis centres due to the high number of requests.

- In the Mangystau Region – 674 cases (there are two crisis centres with shelters), but in the district centre of Beineu, located 473 km from Aktau, there is not a single crisis centre.

- In the Kostanay region, there were 2 306 cases (there are two crisis centres with shelters and one FSC), but in the Zhetikara district, located 230 km from Kostanay, not a single crisis centre exists.

- In the Akmola region, there were 772 cases, as there are two crisis centres with shelters, but in the Arshaly district, located 71 km from Astana, there is no crisis centre.

- In the Atyrau region, there were 1 267 cases, and one crisis centre with a shelter is available, but there is no crisis centre in the Kyzylkogyn district, which is 300 km from the city of Atyrau.

The decrease in the number of non-governmental crisis centres is due to the licensing of activities for the provision

of special social services (hereinafter referred to as SSS). According to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 15 April 2024, which came into effect on 1 January 2025, many organisations that had long provided assistance to victims of domestic violence were not given sufficient time to prepare. Licensing has become mandatory for all organisations operating in the field of social protection, including crisis centres, shelters, day care centres, and other institutions. The purpose of licensing was to enhance the quality of services provided, standardise requirements, and ensure transparency in the activities of SSU providers.

For example, in the first 11 months of 2024, 167 inspections were conducted, 148 entities received orders to rectify identified violations, and 15 fines were levied, totalling 1 750 000 000 KZT⁵⁵. However, in practice, this innovation has caused a number of issues:

1) The timing of the introduction of licensing was not accompanied by a transition period and was not synchronised with the launch of financing mechanisms. As a result, many NGOs that successfully completed the licensing process found themselves without funding for seven months of 2025, as the per capita funding programmes (Unified Budget Categorisation) and government orders were not approved promptly.

2) Licensing criteria often emphasise material and technical requirements rather than the content and effectiveness of the services provided. One of the key requirements was the availability of separate buildings to ensure the quality of SSU provision. This automatically excludes many shelters and crisis centres that rent premises, including in residential and administrative buildings, from the licensing process. This requirement unfairly limits the ability to offer help in rural and remote areas. As a result, access to assistance is diminished, particularly in the regions where it is most essential. The rigidity and lack of differentiation in licensing policies do not recognise the specific nature of the non-governmental sector or the real conditions under which organisations work, particularly those serving vulnerable groups.

The minimum staffing levels for temporary accommodation facilities for victims of human trafficking and domestic violence are established at 10 employees (for up to 20 service users) and 14 employees (for 20-50 service users), including an occupational therapy instructor (vocational training teacher) and a cultural organiser⁵⁶.

3) The lack of a differentiated approach to various organisation types and categories of beneficiaries (such as crisis centres for women and children, shelters for the homeless, and day social services) leads to uniform requirements that neglect the distinct aspects of their work. This means that crisis centres, which offer urgent 24/7 support to victims of violence, face the exact same requirements as other organisations, without extra funding or methodological assistance. For example, the funding does not cover employees' night shifts.

Therefore, without comprehensive revisions to the social services licensing policy – such as introducing a flexible approach, linking licensing to the stages of budget planning, developing specialised standards for different types of institutions, and ensuring licensing is accessible to NGOs – the existing support network risks being dismantled. Licensing reform requires inter-agency coordination, NGO participation in decision-making, and genuine consideration of the specifics of working with vulnerable groups, especially in countering DFV.

The situation is worsened by the absence of essential updates to the standards for providing special social services. Although the centres have been operating on a 24-hour basis since 2016, with temporary accommodation, permanent night staff, and technical personnel, the per capita funding standards introduced in 2025 only cover daytime assistance. This means that the costs of providing 24-hour security, out-of-hours reception, childcare, sanitation, and security services are not covered by the state, adding an extra burden on NGOs.

The issue of tariff policy requires special attention. The current rate at the crisis centre is 6 500 KZT per day per client, while for persons without a fixed residence, it is 10 000 KZT, despite offering a similar scope and nature of services. This approach clearly underestimates the specific nature of support for victims of violence and questions the prioritisation of their protection within the social policy system. The difference in tariffs also creates conditions for financial discrimination against NGOs compared to state institutions, which, in addition to direct funding, receive funds for capital repairs, modernisation, and other needs, while NGOs are forced to cover these themselves.

Therefore, the per capita funding scheme for licensed NGOs should include temporary accommodation, night duty, and technical staff services, while removing discriminatory differences in tariffs between state and non-state service providers. Otherwise, as highlighted by the Kazakhstan Association for Sexual and Reproductive Health, Kazakhstan risks losing the most effective part of its infrastructure – non-governmental crisis centres, without which no family protection strategy can be complete.

However, despite increased financial investment in building crisis centres, tougher criminal policies, expansion of the FSC network, and other infrastructure elements, the anticipated socio-economic impact of these measures may remain limited unless state and departmental policies on social worker training are also adjusted.

⁵⁵ *Licensing of Social Services in Kazakhstan: What will Change from January 1, 2025.* [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://www.zakon.kz/obshestvo/6459391-lit-senzirovaniye-sotsialnykh-uslug-v-kazakhstane-cto-izmenitsya-s-1-yanvarya-2025-goda.html>. (date of access: 0 08/5/2025).

⁵⁶ *On approval of the Rules of Activity of Organizations Providing Special Social Services : Order of the Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated June 22, 2023 No. 230.* [Electronic resource] Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V2300032875> (date of access: 0 07/5/2025).

There is a risk that FSC will exist only in name, without the necessary staffing, which will make it impossible to carry out its key function – working closely with each family using case management techniques.

Today, over 40 000 employees, including medical and teaching staff and social workers, deliver specialised social services in the field of social protection. The total number of social workers is 12 235, with 1 251 employed in the non-governmental sector.

At the same time, this sector is facing a significant staffing crisis, caused not only by low wages and inadequate social protection but also by the lack of prestige associated with this profession among the population, as well as the absence of educational institutions and scientific organisations that train specialists and carry out research in this field.

Social work training is offered at 14 universities and 17 technical and vocational education institutions across 10 regions of the country. The state allocates just 350 grants each year for training social work specialists. Doctoral programmes in social work are available at only one university in the country.

It is essential to recognise that social work is not just a professional activity but also a vital element in promoting social stability. Social workers engage daily with individuals facing challenges: the impoverished, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and children experiencing hardship. Each successful case of assistance (case management) not only resolves an individual problem but also reinforces a sense of social justice and fosters citizens' trust in the state and social institutions.

Social workers contribute to the development of social capital: they encourage horizontal links among citizens, bringing them together to solve shared issues; they endorse values like mutual support and empathy.

The main principle and commitment under the SDGs – "Leave no one behind" – cannot be fully realised without engaging and activating the potential of social work. To achieve the SDGs in Kazakhstan, it is essential to foster a healthy social work ecosystem through a nationwide, cross-sectoral approach that generates a ripple effect across all sectors and the entire social policy system, including women and children. Therefore, it is essential for Kazakhstan to expand social services, not only in quantity but also in quality. To accomplish this, the profession's prestige in society must be raised.

In this regard, it is proposed to declare 2027 the Year of the Social Worker and to enact a separate law "On the Status of Social Workers".

The strategic development plan of the authorised body in the field of state family policy must include the key task of supplying all FSCs with qualified social work specialists. Practice shows that existing FSCs often function more as referral agencies rather than as centres providing comprehensive support to families. This occurs despite the existence of methodological recommendations for implementing case management technology and for establishing permanent social worker roles.

It should be noted that social workers employed by the FSCs are a unique resource, as they possess legally granted powers to visit families. Thanks to this, through regular visits and in-depth home consultations, they can not only identify cases of violence early but also effectively strengthen parenting skills and develop solutions for vulnerable families in crisis. This affirms the legitimacy and effectiveness of the home-based social patronage model as a key tool for primary prevention of DFV.

International practice also confirms that women's empowerment is closely connected to the quality and reach of professional social work. For example, in Scandinavian countries and Canada, the institutionalisation of social workers across the education, family, and medical sectors has significantly reduced gender-based violence, increased women's participation in the economy, and stabilised intra-family relations.

In this regard, Kazakhstan should consider making a social worker position mandatory in every secondary school to help prevent the social vulnerability of girls as future women and mothers. This is especially significant in rural areas and regions where cultural acceptance of early marriage endures. A school social worker can play a vital role in the early detection of girls experiencing poverty, psychological stress, violence, or hardship, and support them until they overcome the crisis. This will establish conditions for a more secure future, prevent long-term vulnerability, and promote gender equality through education, support, and social protection.

Generally, it is essential to broaden the scope of social work to include all other sectors – education, healthcare, police, judicial system, prisons, children's homes, the army, and so on. It is here that professional bias develops among employees of these institutions, and their clients themselves require support from social workers. This is especially significant for the socialisation of convicts and former orphanage residents.

Healthcare organisations are crucial in the system for safeguarding and supporting victims of domestic violence.

When identifying the risk of abuse, medical organisations that have documented cases of physical violence against women and children provide medical care, including psychological support, to victims on both an outpatient and an

inpatient basis. Additionally, on the day the information is received, they notify the internal affairs authorities and local executive bodies about the facts of domestic violence. PHC organisations operate on the principle of family-based care, providing medical and social support, including services from psychologists and social workers. Psychological assistance is provided, and psychological correction work is conducted with victims of DFV, as indicated. According to the 2024 results, 1 553 psychologists are employed in healthcare organisations nationwide.

Important infrastructure facilities are the psychological support centres established in all regions under the education authorities, which provide not only psychological but also legal and social assistance aimed at improving the well-being of children and their families. In 2025, psychological support centres assisted approximately 250 000 schoolchildren and their families, including 149 072 minors and 97 029 teachers and parents.

This work is especially significant because, according to international experts, "the early stages of life are particularly important: it is at this stage that mental health can be strengthened and mental disorders prevented, given that up to 50% of cases of mental disorders in adults occur before the age of 14". Children and adolescents with mental disorders must receive early support through evidence-based psychosocial and other non-pharmacological interventions. This work should be undertaken within the local community, avoiding placement in specialised institutions and the use of medication⁵⁷.

In 2025, psychological and pedagogical support services for students in educational institutions (PPSSEI). These are collegial bodies of educational organisations responsible for safeguarding students' psychological well-being, including children with special educational needs, fostering their academic motivation and performance, fostering creative self-realisation and professional orientation, and providing psychological and pedagogical support to those involved in the educational process. The PPSSEI, approved by the head of the educational organisation, includes deputy heads, educational psychologists, social educators, special educators, teaching assistants, and career guidance counsellors. The activities of PPSSEI specialists include diagnostic, consultative, developmental (corrective), psychological and pedagogical education, as well as organisational and methodological guidance⁵⁸.

The system for organising social support and adaptation for children comprises the Centre of Adaptation of Minors (CAM)⁵⁹, **Child Support Centres (CSC)**, and organisations that provide specialised social services to minors who require them⁶⁰.

Child support centres for children in need of special social services are organisations under the jurisdiction of educational authorities that provide these services with permanent or temporary (day) accommodation, as well as through the provision of information, consulting and mediation services to legal entities whose activities are related to the implementation of measures to prevent the need for special social services.

Centre of Adaptation of Minors are organisations under the jurisdiction of educational authorities that provide reception and temporary accommodation for neglected and homeless children aged between three and eighteen years old in order to establish their parents or other legal representatives, children left without parental care or persons replacing them, if it is impossible to place them in a timely manner, children removed from their parents (one of them) or other persons caring for them by the guardianship and trusteeship authority due to an immediate threat to their life or health, children referred to special educational organisations, as well as children in need of special social services due to abuse leading to social maladjustment and social deprivation.

The difference between them is that the CAM is an emergency facility for short-term placement and protection of children in socially dangerous situations (violence, neglect, running away, loss of housing or documents). The CSC is a facility that provides rehabilitation and long-term support, typically day or semi-residential, for children with disabilities, developmental disorders, behavioural or psychosocial difficulties. There are currently **10 CAMs** operating in Kazakhstan. According to data from the Ministry of Education, between 2021 and the end of 2025, 12 126 children were admitted to the CAMs, including those requiring special social services due to abuse, causing social maladjustment and social deprivation (including domestic violence).

The infrastructure supporting families and victims of violence also includes youth health centres (hereinafter referred to as YHCs), where minors and young people receive comprehensive medical and preventive care, as well as psychosocial and legal services. YHCs are formed in areas with a population of at least 40 000 people aged 10–29. According to information from the National Centre for Public Health of the Ministry of Healthcare, more than 140 such centres are operating in the country. In 2024, 838 859 individuals sought assistance from specialists at the centres.

57 On the Situation Of Children in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2024 : State Report. – Astana, 2025. – p. 43.

58 On approval of the Rules of Operation of the Psychological and Pedagogical Support Service in Educational Organizations: Order of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated April 29, 2025 No. 92. [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V2500036047> (date of access: 08/11/2025).

59 On Approval of the Rules and Conditions of Detention of Minors in JCentre of Adaptation of Minors and Children Support Centres for those in need of special social services : Order of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated April 29, 2025 No. 89. [Electronic resource] Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V2500036046> (date of access: 08/11/2025).

60 On Approval of Standards for the Provision of Special Social Services in the field of Education and Protection of Children's Rights : Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated June 12, 2023 No. 165. [Electronic resource] Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V2300032760#z159> (date of access : 08/11/2025).



The most significant proportion of applicants was in the 15–18 age group (43,6%). Representatives of the target group primarily sought help from a psychologist (32,1%)⁶¹.

YHCs provide comprehensive medical and psychosocial support for adolescent health issues, grounded in the principles of voluntariness, accessibility, friendliness, and trust. The duties of the YHC include providing medical assistance to victims of abuse, as well as sexual, physical, and psychological violence; organising and/or offering psychotherapeutic support (individual and group) for maladjustment, disorders caused by various stress factors, difficult life situations, and other adverse influences, as well as addressing existing risk factors and risky behaviour.

In settlements with a population of fewer than 40 000 people aged 10–29, the functions of the YHC are performed by structural units (**youth health rooms**) within healthcare organisations that provide primary medical and health care.

The activities of the YHC are governed by the Regulations for the Organisation of Medical Care for the Reproductive and Mental Health of Minors Aged 10 to 18 and Young People⁶², as well as the Standard for the Organisation of Medical Care for the Reproductive and Mental Health of Minors Aged 10 to 18 and Young People⁶³.

Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan for 2013–2030. The WHO emphasises the need to enhance mental health and well-being across all stages of life⁶⁴.

The WHO plan highlighted strengthening effective leadership and governance in mental health as a priority, which involves developing effective mental health policies and plans that are financially sustainable and evidence-based, with a particular focus on equity, respect for the dignity of people with mental and psychosocial disorders, human rights, and the protection of vulnerable and marginalised groups. It is emphasised that actions will be more effective and efficient if mental health measures are strongly incorporated into national health policies and plans. Moreover, to clarify the guidelines, a separate policy and plan for mental health should be developed. Mental health legislation, whether as a separate legal instrument or integrated into other laws on health and legal capacity, should establish, by law, the core principles, values, and objectives of mental health policy. For example, it should create legal and oversight mechanisms that uphold human rights and promote the development of accessible health and social services within the community.

Simultaneously, analysis of legislation in this area has revealed its fragmented nature, departmental divisions, and the absence of a unified systematic approach to the legislative regulation of the mental health care system, as well as the lack of a consistent conceptual framework. Such fragmentation impedes coordination of efforts, diminishes the effectiveness of prevention and treatment, and restricts the population's access to quality psychological and psychiatric services.

To overcome these barriers and develop a comprehensive system, it is proposed to include a dedicated chapter on mental health in the Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Public Health and the Healthcare System". It should establish: 1) basic principles of mental health protection; 2) the range of entities and their competencies; 3) mechanisms for interdepartmental cooperation; 4) guarantees of accessibility and quality of services; 5) procedures for monitoring, recording, and evaluating performance; 6) instruments for protecting the rights and interests of persons with mental and psychosocial disorders; 7) a system for training, retraining, and deploying personnel, including measures to encourage specialists to work in priority regions.

There is a need to establish a national system of continuing professional education for psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers, and specialists in related fields; to introduce educational standards that include modern, scientifically based methods of diagnosis, treatment, and psychosocial rehabilitation. It is important to provide mechanisms for staff motivation, including fair pay, opportunities for career advancement, and professional certification. Particular attention should be paid to training specialists for rural and remote areas, where access to mental health services is especially limited.

Such regulatory consolidation will facilitate a shift from fragmented, departmentalised practices to a cohesive national mental health system that aligns with WHO standards and Kazakhstan's international human rights commitments.

One of the key areas in tackling domestic violence is working not only with victims but also with the **abusers** themselves. International practice indicates that sustained success in reducing repeat incidents of violence can only be achieved if, alongside measures to protect victims, compulsory programmes are introduced to modify the behaviour of those who have committed violent offences.

61 About the Activities of Youth Health Centres. [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://hls.kz/ru/%d0%bc%d0%be%d0%bb%d0%be%d0%b4%d0%b5%d0%b6%d0%bd%d1%8b%d0%b9-%d1%86%d0%b5%d0%bd%d1%82%d1%80-%d0%b7%d0%b4%d0%be%d1%80%d0%be%d0%b2%d1%8c%d1%8f> (date of access 08/11/2025).

62 On Approval of the Rules for the Organisation of Medical Care for the Protection of Reproductive and Mental Health of Minors Aged Ten to Eighteen Years and Youth : Order of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated December 20, 2020, No. KR DSM-285/2020. [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V2000021846> (date of access: 08/11/2025).

63 On Approval of the Rules for the Organisation of Medical Care for the Protection of Reproductive and Mental Health of Minors Aged Ten to Eighteen Years and Youth : Order of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated January 24, 2023 No. 12 [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V2300031762> (date of access: 08/11/2025).

64 Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan for 2013–2030 [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://www.who.int/ru/publications/i/item/9789240031029> (date of access 08/11/2025).



The law of 15 April 2024 introduces a provision for a court-ordered psychological correction for individuals who have committed an administrative or criminal offence (ICACO) within the scope of family and domestic relations. The relevant Regulations were approved by order of the Ministry of Healthcare of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 29 June 2024⁶⁵.

Providing psychological assistance to individuals with ICACO aims to achieve the following objectives: 1) understanding the causes of destructive (violent) behaviour; 2) fostering motivation to change destructive (violent) behaviour; 3) recognising the administrative, social, and economic consequences of destructive (violent) behaviour for oneself and others; 4) psychological correction of destructive (violent) behaviour. Psychological correction aims to address psychological or behavioural deficiencies through specialised psychological techniques; 5) teaching methods for coping with stress and developing emotional regulation skills; 6) fostering alternative problem-solving and conflict resolution skills that do not involve violence.

Psychological correction consists of three main components: 1) preparatory – encouraging the desire to interact, alleviating anxiety, boosting self-confidence, fostering the desire to cooperate with the psychologist and make changes in one's life; 2) correction – harmonising and optimising the personality, acquiring new (non-violent) ways of interacting with society and oneself, addressing psychological issues; 3) assessment of the effectiveness of corrective measures – evaluating (tests, methods) the progress of the psychological state, the development of positive (non-violent) behavioural attitudes, reactions, and experiences, and stabilising the psycho-emotional state.

In 2025, 280 psychologists from primary healthcare organisations received phased training in offering psychological support to victims of violence and individuals who have committed administrative and criminal offences. Regional health authorities have identified 258 PHC organisations that provide psychological support (orders and lists of medical providers offering psychological assistance have been prepared for this purpose).

Table 3.2.3.

Data on psychological assistance provided to persons who have committed offences, for the first half of 2025

No.	Regions	Number of medical organisations offering psychological support	Total psychologists	Including trained	Psychological assistance provided by court order
1	Akmola region	25	25	25	-
2	Aktobe region	1	35	26	-
3	Almaty region	13	62	12	32
4	Atyrau region	-	1	1	4
5	Almaty	-	74	74	-
6	Astana	43	85	6	1
7	Shymkent	3	8	4	-
8	EKR	25	41	14	1
9	Zhambyl region	-	5	5	2
10	WKR	-	41	41	-
11	Karaganda region	5	38	1	-
12	Kostanay region	30	1	1	1
13	Kyzylorda region	-	2	2	-
14	Mangystau region	4	33	15	-
15	Pavlodar region	33	23	-	6
16	NKR	-	26	25	-
17	Turkestan region	-	-	-	-
18	Abay region	2	3	3	-
19	Zhetysu region	10	50	40	2
20	Ulytau region	17	23	1	-
TOTAL		211	576	296	49

Source: Ministry of Healthcare of the Republic of Kazakhstan

⁶⁵ On the Approval of Rules for Providing Psychological Assistance to Persons Who Have Committed Administrative or Criminal Infractions Involving Violence in Healthcare Organisations: Order of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated June 29, 2024 No. 48. [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V2400034678> (date of access: 0 08/5/2025).



Despite legislative changes, courts remain hesitant to impose mandatory psychological treatment on offenders.

Since the start of 2025, out of 10 000 special requirements for offender behaviour imposed by courts, psychological behaviour correction measures have been applied in only 52 cases, with 35 of these (48%) in the Kostanay region. The reason is that the healthcare system is not prepared to deliver these services (due to staff shortages and funding shortages).

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, courts rarely order psychological assistance because relevant healthcare organisations have not been identified in several regions. The situation is worsened by the limited number of psychologists who have completed specialised training.

A significant obstacle to the effectiveness of such measures is the lack of their mandatory enforcement on a large scale: although the law grants the court the authority to refer the abuser for correction, this measure is not consistently implemented and, in most cases, is limited to administrative penalties or criminal sanctions. At the same time, international guidelines (including those of the Council of Europe and UN Women) emphasise the importance of behavioural change to prevent reoffending.

Active use of this tool to prevent family and domestic conflicts requires interdepartmental cooperation (by referring the concerned persons for psychological behaviour correction). Although the Regulations for the Provision of Psychological Assistance outline the principles for developing an individual psychological assistance programme aimed at the psychological correction of destructive (violent) behaviour in persons with SUD, there is no detailed methodology for conducting correction and evaluating its effectiveness.

Furthermore, there are issues related to inadequate monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness: there are no centralised statistics on recidivism rates after completing programmes, and long-term behavioural changes in abusers are not tracked, which hampers decision-making about scaling up or modifying methodologies.

Kazakhstan remains the only CIS country where a **dedicated police unit has been established and is operating to protect women from violence** (1999).

By Order No. 739 of the Minister of Internal Affairs dated 4 October 2024, a department dedicated to combating domestic violence was established within the central apparatus of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan as part of the Administrative Police Committee (comprising seven units).

Since January 2025, on the instructions of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, specialised police units to combat DFV have been established across all regions of the country. The staff has been expanded to 1 000 people (from 256).

The division's unique focus is on addressing long-standing systemic issues in countering DFV. Employees of this division, working across all regional, city, and district internal affairs agencies, conduct activities to counter DFV.

Main functions: coordinating all internal affairs agencies to ensure high-quality and prompt consideration of DFV reports; early detection, monitoring, and rapid response to any signs of DFV; safeguarding and supporting victims and witnesses of DFV, including ensuring their safety; assessing the risk of repeat DFV; establishing mechanisms for dealing with abusers; publicising information and promoting zero tolerance towards DFV; conducting analytical work and providing information; and enhancing the system for protecting women from criminal attacks. Additionally, the division actively works with government agencies and NGOs on issues related to helping victims and resocialising offenders.

In 2021, a specialisation was introduced for female investigators to focus on violent crimes of a sexual nature against women and minors (280 female investigators were included in the investigative and operational teams across the country).

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan conducted a pilot project to implement the ODARA international domestic violence risk assessment tool from March 2023 to January 2025. ODARA is an international domestic violence risk assessment tool (Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment) developed in Ontario, Canada.

The essence of the method: the responsibility of re-educating the abuser is assigned to representatives of civil society. Resolving conflicts based on DFV facts is not aimed at the unconditional deprivation of the abuser's freedom, but rather at their reintegration into a full life and reconciliation with the injured party.

The ODARA tool, a questionnaire with 13 questions, can be used to evaluate the likelihood of reoffending or assess the current risk of repeat violence. The forecast boasts an accuracy rate of 72% and is scientifically validated.

Thanks to the experience gained during the pilot project, the number of repeat appeals from citizens was reduced from 15% to 7.9%, and effective cooperation was established among all relevant government agencies and NGOs regarding domestic violence.

Based on data collected during the pilot project, the Kazakh standard for evaluating the risk of domestic violence (Order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs No. 50 of 22 January 2025) was developed and approved. This tool enables the identification of individuals at a high risk of reoffending in the area of family and domestic relations.

Under the new standard for evaluating the risk of domestic violence, over 5 500 surveys have been conducted since the start of the year, identifying 148 individuals likely to commit DFV. Of these, 41 individuals voluntarily consented to participate in a psychological correction programme.

In all identified risk cases, petitions have been submitted to the courts as part of administrative proceedings. In 52 of these cases, the court granted the petitions and ordered compulsory psychological treatment for the abusers.

Scientists note that the maximum duration of the protective order, which is 30 days, may lapse before the completion of pre-trial proceedings in the case, creating a gap in the subsequent resolution process. This occurs before the case is considered in court with a decision on imposing restrictions in accordance with Article 98-3 of the PC of the RK. The length of the pre-trial investigation does not ensure the victim's protection when the offender remains free (i.e., no preventive measure, such as detention, has been imposed), because a significant amount of time may elapse before the court delivers a verdict. In other words, until a decision is made regarding the mandatory distancing of the perpetrator, they have an extremely undesirable spatial and temporal resource to commit repeated acts of violence against the same or other family members. This aspect demands the most attention, as the severity of the punishment that may (or may not) be imposed cannot guarantee the victim's protection immediately after a violent incident. It is precisely for this reason that researchers often highlight the danger of the victim and perpetrator continuing to live together, as this has two negative consequences: either the victim will not seek help at all, or, after seeking help, there is a risk that the perpetrator will commit the act of revenge and resort to violence again⁶⁶.

According to data from the MIA of the RK, 60% of DFV incidents occur under the influence of alcohol or drugs, with 97% of domestic abusers being hospitalised in drug treatment centres, indicating their alcohol (drug) addiction and the need for compulsory treatment⁶⁷.

In most areas, the shortage of Temporary Adaptation and Detoxification Centres (TADC, "sobering-up stations") prevents proper isolation of intoxicated abusers for a reasonable period, forcing the police, limited by a 3-hour detention cap, to release them, which leads to repeated acts of domestic violence and individual tragedies.

TADCs are set up by decisions of local executive bodies, operate 24/7 as guarded facilities, and assist individuals with moderate alcohol intoxication. Starting in 2023, minimum capacities will be set at: at least 20 beds in cities of republican importance, at least 15 beds in regional centres, and at least 5 beds in cities of regional importance, district centres, and cities of district significance.

In 2023, the country had about 35 TADCs with 780-880 beds. In 2023, more than 140 000 individuals with moderate alcohol intoxication were delivered. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 32 additional TADCs are required, particularly in single-industry towns and rural areas⁶⁸.

TADC creates a sanitary-medical "pause" where malicious behaviour does not escalate, allowing the police and social services time to formalise protective measures, notify the victim, impose restraining orders, and organise shelter. The patient is discharged by a psychiatrist (narcologist) on a scheduled basis once their condition improves and no longer requires further observation and treatment at the TADC, within 24 hours of admission. Without the TADC, the actual limit of administrative detention of the abuser is a maximum of 3 hours.

In this respect, it is essential to increase the number of TADC, particularly in rural areas and single-industry towns.

The widespread practice of victim blaming within the information space – accusing victims of the violence they have endured – is a matter for concern. It manifests itself in blaming victims for the violence they have suffered, for example, because of their clothing, behaviour, returning home late, or not conforming to stereotypical notions of a "proper victim." Victim blaming leads to psychological (and sometimes physical) additional trauma. Given the current extent of social media use and the fact that almost everyone is involved in virtual communication, DFV victims may also become targets of information intervention, which can only worsen the consequences of acts of violence. In this regard, particular attention should be paid to the media, as well as to various bloggers and the owners of internet channels that broadcast a specific ideology to a wide audience. A typical example: in high-profile cases of sexualised violence against women, journalists or officials make comments suggesting that the victim was "to blame", "provoked" or "could have avoided" the violence, which leads to secondary traumatising and diminishes the motivation to report violence⁶⁹.

According to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Mass Media" (Part 3 of Article 23), propaganda or agitation promoting the cult of cruelty and violence results in the suspension or termination of the production or distribution of mass media or mass media products; Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Article 25 sets out grounds for refusing to register

66 Zhubandykova, L. A. *Criminal Law and Criminological Aspects of Combating Violence in Family and Domestic Relations* // Dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the speciality "Jurisprudence". Kostanay, 2024. pp.144-145.

67 Zulkhairov, R. V. Presentation of the pilot project "Partnership as a Tool for Preventing Domestic Violence" // Materials of the annual forum "Partnership as a Tool for Preventing Domestic Violence", February 9, 2023, Astana

68 Kazakhstan lacks 32 detoxification centres – the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://inbusiness.kz/ru/latest/kazahstanu-ne-hvataet-eshe-32-vytvezhivatelya-mvd-rk/> (date of access: 0 08/5/2025).

69 Zhubandykova, L. A. *Criminal Law and Criminological Aspects of Combating Violence in Family and Domestic Relations* // Dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the speciality "Jurisprudence". – Kostanay, 2024. – p. 128.

foreign mass media if the materials of a foreign television or radio channel contain propaganda or agitation promoting the cult of cruelty and violence. Part 4 of Article 67 prescribes liability for violating Kazakhstan's legislation on mass media by distributing messages and materials that promote the cult of cruelty, violence, and pornography, regardless of their origin. The relevant provision establishing administrative liability for the manufacture, storage, import, and transport of products with the above content within the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan is contained in Article 453 of the COI of the RK.

Despite the broad interpretation of the concept of "violence", domestic and family violence (DFV) remains a distinctive area of social relations with its own sources of vulnerability and specific impact on public opinion. The rise in negative attitudes in this area poses greater risks. At the same time, individual statements by government officials often contradict state policy, justifying the abuser or blaming the victim, which relates to differences in mentality and social attitudes across various regions of the country⁷⁰.

Underestimating the role of information influence in escalating certain types of criminal behaviour often leads to negative consequences. In particular, this led to the addition of Article 217-1 "Advertising of Financial (Investment) Pyramids" to the CC of the RK in 2022, as administrative and legal measures proved insufficient to curb the rapid growth of such activities⁷¹. In international practice, combating victim blaming has become a significant focus of efforts to reduce violence. EU Directive 2012/29/EU on establishing standards for the rights, support, and protection of victims of crime states that victims have the right to respectful, sensitive, and non-violent treatment by all public services, rejecting an accusatory approach⁷². In the United States⁷³ and the Philippines⁷⁴, there are so-called rape shield laws – legal provisions banning the use of a victim's past sexual history during legal proceedings. This aims to eliminate a common defence tactic – accusing the victim of "improper behaviour" or "provocation" – thereby directly reducing the risk of victim-blaming in the legal system.

In 2024, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) in the United Kingdom published comprehensive guidance on the unacceptability of victim-blaming in police actions. The document explicitly prohibits phrases that might shift responsibility onto the victim (e.g., "Why did you go there?") and recommends alternative, supportive communication scenarios⁷⁵. In the United Kingdom, the Home Office was compelled to withdraw a campaign aimed at preventing violence involving students in 2024 after facing criticism for elements of victim-blaming (for example, the advice "don't drink too much" was seen as shifting the blame onto the victim). This has resulted in the introduction of new communication standards, focusing on the actions of the abuser rather than the behaviour of the victim⁷⁶.

It is crucial for Kazakhstan to adopt comprehensive measures to eliminate victim-blaming by drawing on international experience where legal, institutional and ethical mechanisms have already been tested. Countering victim blaming should become a compulsory element of violence prevention policy. Without removing this barrier, even well-designed infrastructure might prove ineffective if victims are too afraid or ashamed to seek help.

Currently, **interdepartmental cooperation** in combating DFV has increased significantly in the regions compared to previous periods. This is due to the creation of family support centres that serve a coordinating role, the work of mobile groups for early identification of individuals (families) in DLS, and the functioning of interdepartmental committees on offence prevention and on juvenile affairs and the protection of their rights at regional akimats. Meanwhile, a similar level of interdepartmental cooperation remains lacking at the national level. There is no interdepartmental commission for the prevention and combating of DFV, nor has a unified monitoring system or integrated index been established in this area.

International practice affirms the significance of centralised coordination. For example, Australia established the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission to ensure a unified strategic approach, develop national indices and indicators, and submit annual analytical reports assessing progress to the government and parliament⁷⁷.

The fragmentation of legislative regulation concerning the tasks and functions of entities negatively affects both the quality of legislative regulation of legal relations within the area and the practical operations of state bodies⁷⁸.

The introduction of a national interdepartmental commission in Kazakhstan, endowed with powers for strategic planning, monitoring, and coordination – as well as the development of a national index for combating DFV – would ensure comparability of statistics and a uniform reporting format across regions; identify systemic problems and enable timely adjustments; strengthen the accountability of state bodies and improve policy transparency; and coordinate the efforts of law enforcement, social, educational, and medical organisations.

70 Ibid. pp.130–131.

71 Ibid. pp.132–133.

72 Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CEL-EX%3A32012L0029> (date of access: 06.08. 2025).

73 Federal Rules of Evidence [Electronic resource] – Access mode: https://www.law.cornell.edu/rules/fre/rule_412?utm (date of request: 0 08/6/2025).

74 Rape Victim Assistance and Protection Act of 1998 [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/2/4777> (date of access: 0 08/6/2025).

75 Ending victim blaming in the context of violence against women and girls. Why language, attitudes, and behaviours matter [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/IOPC-ending-victim-blaming-guidance-Feb-2024.pdf> (date of access: 0 08/6/2025).

76 Rewrite "victim-blaming" drink-spiking campaign, UK civil servants told [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/sep/22/rewrite-victim-blaming-drink-spiking-campaign-uk-civil-servants-told> (date of request: 0 6.2025).

77 The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://www.dfsvc.gov.au> (date of access: 08/11/2025).

78 On Countering Domestic Violence : A Special Report. // Commissioner for Human Rights in the Republic of Kazakhstan. – Astana, 2024. p. 106 – p. 51



In most regions, key target indicators for strengthening the institution of marriage and family, socio-economic support, identification, and organisation of comprehensive support for persons (families) in DLS have not yet been approved; territorial programmes and action plans for socio-economic support for persons (families) in DLS and other assistance; indicators of the effectiveness of early identification and organisation of support for persons (families) in DLS. Although the relevant functions of Maslikhats and akimats were enshrined in the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 15 April 2024. This is also caused by the insufficient oversight from central authorities and the absence of mechanisms to monitor the enforcement of laws by local and self-government bodies.

Statistical monitoring of domestic violence prevention is a vital tool for fighting DFV, ensuring the collection and analysis of data on domestic relations. It should be based on information from the public prosecutor's office, central and local executive authorities, and relevant organisations.

A similar recommendation is outlined in the Concept: to develop effective state policies to prevent violence in society, it is essential to continue building a database of empirical data on the trends, causes, and effects of violence against women and children, as well as on the effectiveness of measures implemented in this field⁷⁹.

Thus, in 2022, the Child Wellbeing Index⁸⁰ was introduced to evaluate child welfare and the effectiveness of national policies that create favourable conditions for children across sectors. The index comprises the following indicators: the number of children in difficult life situations per 1 000 children; the proportion of children aged 10–18 who have been bullied or harassed, including through social media; the number of crimes against children per 100 000 children; and the number of crimes against the sexual integrity of minors per 100 000 children.

However, the index does not include indicators related to DFV involving children, the number of children who have been victims of DFV, or those who have suffered due to their parents or other legal guardians' failure to meet their responsibilities.

An analysis of state planning documents has shown that the National Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2029⁸¹, which acts as the main strategic guideline for the country's development, does not even mention issues related to combating violence or strengthening the institution of the family. A similar situation can be observed in the Concept of Legal Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030⁸².

79 On the Approval of the Concept for Ensuring Public Safety in Community Partnership for 2024–2028 (in the field of offence prevention) : Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated December 29, 2023 No. 1233 [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P2300001233> (date of access 08/11/2025).

80 On Approval of the Child Welfare Index : Decree of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated February 1, 2022 No. 21–R. [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/R2200000021> . (date of access 08/10/2025).

81 On Approval of the National Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2029 and Invalidation of Certain Decrees of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan : Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated July 30, 2024 No. 611. [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U2400000611#z967> (date of access: 08/11/2025).

82 On Approval of the Concept of Legal Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030 – Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated October 15, 2021 No. 674. [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U2100000674> (date of access: 08/11/2025).



CHAPTER IV.

APPROACHES AND PRACTICES FOR PREVENTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

4.1. Theoretical aspects of domestic violence

When analysing manifestations of violence – crimes, offences, acts of aggression – we often focus solely on the mechanics of the act, neglecting its meaning and context. However, the scientific community has long agreed that human behaviour is influenced not by a single cause but by a complex interplay of biological, psychological, social, historical, and cultural factors. It is a kind of "multi-level cocktail" where neurons, hormones, early experiences, genetics, gender socialisation scenarios, economic status, intergenerational trauma, and personal circumstances interact. None of these components can be identified as the exclusive cause of violence. There is no such thing as an "aggression gene", a "violence centre" in the brain, or a specific cultural environment that would determine behaviour with absolute certainty⁸³.

As in mathematics, where one must first identify what is already known to discover the unknown, analysing the origins of violence requires defining the boundaries of what is feasible and establishing a foundation. And if we accept that a complete explanation of the phenomenon as it is may be impossible, it is reasonable to focus on the component that often escapes analysis but is of great importance – the socio-cultural component. It is especially pertinent in cases where we are not dealing with isolated incidents but rather with recurring patterns across society.

Secondly, it is essential to remember that, etymologically and semantically, violence is neutral. It gains an evaluative valence (positive or negative) depending on the context. For example, violent practices such as wars, duels, and harakiri are also forms of violence, but in their cultural context, they are not condemned; on the contrary, they are seen as honourable and heroic acts. This leads us to the second key principle: violence is deeply contextual. Therefore, the mechanical copying of successful foreign practices (policy borrowing) must be complemented by careful adaptation to local realities, for instance, through the implementation of pilot projects. Otherwise, there is a high likelihood of "latent dysfunctions" (according to R. Merton) or, in medical terms, iatrogenesis, when the initial good intentions of intervention lead to unforeseen consequences or collateral damage.

Therefore, to propose effective measures to combat DFV, it is first essential to address the question: "What is happening in Kazakhstan?" or "What are the local preconditions, cultural norms, institutional weaknesses, and mechanisms of violence reproduction?" Only after these questions are answered can potential intervention strategies be identified.

Crisis of masculinity as a cultural prerequisite for violence in Kazakhstan

During the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence became a major topic in Kazakhstan's public and media discourse, especially in light of high-profile cases like the "Bishimbayev case". At the same time, public discourse most often attributes the causes to the following: alcoholism, gambling addiction, drug addiction, and weak law enforcement measures. These reasons are significant, but they do not encompass the full complexity of the phenomenon. The discussion often neglects the socio-cultural factor – the view of violence as a consequence of dynamic shifts in the social system, including those related to gender roles. According to the study⁸⁴, men are the abusers in 58,3% of domestic conflicts. This should not serve as a basis for stigmatisation, but it could act as a starting point for deeper analysis: why are a significant proportion of acts of violence within Kazakhstani families committed by men?

From a sociocultural perspective, the overarching idea explaining aggressive behaviour among men in families can be seen as the "masculinity crisis" – a phenomenon where traditional views of male conduct no longer work in times of social change. The crisis of masculinity does not solely assign personal responsibility to men when they display

⁸³ Sapolski, R. *Biology of Good and Evil. How Science Explains Our Actions*. Moscow : Alpina Publishing House, 2018. 776 p.

⁸⁴ On Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence in the Republic of Kazakhstan : A Sociological Study by KIPD, 2025

violence in the sense of "the man is to blame because he is a man." The concept of the "masculinity crisis" suggests that social responsibility also plays a crucial role in the act of violence. It should be noted that we are not shifting responsibility for offences from "men with toxic masculinity" onto society. We approach this from the perspective of common sense, recognising that individual consciousness and social consciousness are interconnected. Or, as Karl Marx said: "One cannot live in society and be independent of it."

As is widely recognised, Kazakhstan is regarded as a transitional society based on socio-economic development criteria. Kazakhstan is a marginal society where traditional views have lost their complete hegemony, but modern or postmodern values have not yet gained legitimate status quo. During periods of transition, everyone endures hardship – social institutions, groups, and the entire social system – until they establish their initial foundations of stability. The "masculinity crisis" is a concept that highlights the increasing insecurity, confusion, or tension that modern men face due to shifts in traditional roles, norms, and expectations linked to male identity.

Raven Connell, an Australian sociologist and well-known figure in men's studies, described the crisis of masculinity as the outcome of hegemonic masculinity or the established "global gender order" becoming unsustainable. Due to shifts in social dynamics, men worldwide are beginning to lose their patriarchal privileges (such as access to lucrative economic opportunities, power, social capital, and dominance over women), which results in feelings of loss, anxiety, and resistance⁸⁵. At the individual level, this manifests as hypercompensation – aggressive behaviour, violence or displaced aggression. The established pattern of domination is not fully realised in the real world, and abuse towards others acts as a form of adaptation.

In other words, today's men, shaped by hegemonic masculinity, confront a conflict between expectations and reality. In situations of transitional adaptation or cultural anomie, violence often serves as a substitute form of self-assertion for some men, targeted at those who are clearly more vulnerable: women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

Therefore, DFV cannot be attributed solely to individual pathology or deficiencies in the legal system. This is a social symptom of the profound transformations occurring in institutions, norms, gender roles, and identities. Strategies to combat violence must consider not only the need to protect victims and punish offenders, but also broader efforts involving the social environment, including ingrained ideas of masculinity and prevailing models of male behaviour within the context of modern realities. Considering that previous reports on combating DFV for 2021⁸⁶ and 2023⁸⁷ focus on measures to protect victims of violence and punish abusers, we will focus on recommendations for changing perceptions of gender roles through institutional influence.

However, before moving on to recommendations, it is essential to address the question: how were modern gender norms created and ingrained, in which dominance, strength, and aggression were established as "natural" aspects of masculinity? How does the assimilation of a particular pattern of masculinity take place?

Socialisation as a mechanism for transmitting violence

It is understood that the internalisation of normal, acceptable behaviour takes place during the process of socialisation. The socialisation of children and adolescents is especially important. The primary institutions of socialisation are social groups and organisations where children spend most of their time. Traditionally, this is a family and a school. In other words, the way male and female roles, relationships between men and women, and the values of both genders are portrayed influences how children will adopt this vision in their adult lives. Kazakh society is patriarchal. And the patriarchal perspective is clearly reflected in the content that Kazakhstani children receive at school. For example, research by Zhazira Bekzhanova and Naureen Durrani⁸⁸ demonstrated that history textbooks for grades 7-11 clearly favour male figures over female ones, both in the text and the illustrations.

Table 4.1 Textual representation of national icons along the gender binary

Grade level	domains							
	Leadership		Science		Art		Other*	
	men	women	men	women	men	women	men	women
Grade 7	111	1	55	0	4	0	0	2
Grade 8	103	4	52	1	67	2	4	0
Grade 9, Part 1	69	9	21	2	50	6	1	0
Grade 9, Part 2	123	3	31	0	40	5	1	0

⁸⁵ R.W.Connell, 2005. *Masculinities*

⁸⁶ National Report on Combating Domestic Violence in the Republic of Kazakhstan. // Kazakhstan Institute of Social Development. – Astana – 2021 – p.300

⁸⁷ National Report on Combating Domestic Violence in the Republic of Kazakhstan. // Kazakhstan Institute of Social Development. – Astana – 2023 – p.360 .

⁸⁸ Zhazira Bekzhanova and Naureen Durrani . *The Intersection of Gender and National Identity in History Textbooks in Kazakhstan*

Grade 10	96	2	29	0	36	3	1	0
Grade 11, Part 1	36	0	30	0	5	1	6	0
Grade 11, Part 2	35	0	60	3	13	0	3	0
Total	573	19	278	6	215	17	16	2

Note: "Other" domain included sports and business.

Furthermore, according to the authors, the discourse on nation-building in history textbooks portrays the Kazakhstani nation as a patriarchal society centred on wars and conflicts. At the same time, there is virtually no emphasis on peaceful conflict resolution. This, in turn, has serious effects on normalising violence in society⁸⁹. Elements of cultural education and folklore also reinforce the gender regime of masculine hegemony through corresponding narratives in folk proverbs and sayings⁹⁰.

Interviews with abusers reveal enduring beliefs about the acceptability and even necessity of physical violence in certain situations, particularly against women whose behaviour exceeds patriarchal expectations. Violence is justified as a means of education, to bring someone into line for deviating from social roles.

Thus, when the interviewer asks whether the use of violence can be justified, one of the informants states:

"A husband has a healthy lifestyle, for example. A wife comes home all the time. A husband works, looks after, and takes care of things. If the wife drinks, of course, you can slightly hit her. Just to stop her a little, to calm her down. That's what I can say. If she torments the child, His wife, for example, can also be steadied down." (Aggressor, male, 40 years old, Russian, single, higher education, Rudny)

This statement illustrates several culturally significant assumptions: the husband serves as the carrier of "normality," while the wife is perceived as a possible threat to family order. Violence here is seen not as an act of aggression, but rather as a way of restoring women to their role. The quote exemplifies a social norm that grants men the moral right to use force.

Another informant-abuser voices himself even more sharply:

"To be honest, if she's been unfaithful, then yes, not just beat her... Beat her and throw her out." (Aggressor, male, 34 years old, married, secondary education, Karaganda)

This statement shows a blend of hypermasculine narrative and an absence of a critical view on violence as unacceptable behaviour. Women are seen as assets that have diminished in value and are therefore subject to "disposal." Such rhetoric demonstrates not only a personal destructive attitude but also a socially transmitted image of women as guardians of the family's reputation, which men can spifflicate in the event of "disgrace."

Such narratives showcase how norms are systematically internalised and perpetuated, where violence against women is deemed acceptable. Eliminating these issues requires not only legal and protective measures but also deep work to change cultural codes, norms of masculinity, and ideas about what is acceptable in interpersonal relationships.

Therefore, based on the above, it can be concluded that the acceptability of violence in Kazakh society is deeply embedded in the public consciousness. This entrenchment and subsequent reproduction happen through daily practices and socialisation mechanisms, beginning in early childhood. We focused on the process of transmitting social norms to both trace the development of the normalisation of current ideas and offer guidance on how to act and precisely where to focus efforts to reshape existing norms. Therefore, our aim is to intervene through the primary agents of socialisation: school and culture. Once the "area of influence" has been identified, it is essential to determine what will serve as the "weapon", which means it can be employed to alter the rules of the game, and what form the influence should take to be both effective and sustainable.

Pathway to Reducing Violence: Humanisation, Education, and a Culture of Empathy

The debate surrounding the crisis of masculinity aligns with William Goody's popular resource theory of power, which explains that individuals utilise power and control in close relationships when other forms of influence are limited. The fewer resources a person has (cultural, economic, symbolic, social), the higher the likelihood that they will resort to violence. In other words, if an individual lacks finances, education, status, or social support, they compensate for

89 Bekzhanova, Z. (2023) Uncovering gender, language, and intersected asymmetries in history textbooks. In N. Durrani & H. Thibault (Eds.), *The political economy of education in Central Asia. The Steppe and beyond: Studies on Central Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-8517-3_7

90 Igissinova, A. S., Mamyrkhanova, Zh.T. Masculine Stereotypes in Kazakh Culture. // *Eurasian Journal of Philology: Science & Education*, Vol. 191 (2023-07-01), Issue 3, p. 13-21.



their lack of power through aggression, displays of violence, or outright violence. In other words, violence becomes a tool for compensating for a lack of power. This resource is utilised by authorities when more "civilised" means are unavailable: persuasion, authority, respect, money, social connections, charisma, etc.

If a person lacks access to cultural, economic, symbolic, or social capital, they might resort to violence and control as a last resort in relationships, especially during times of crisis, loss of status, or frustration.

A quote from an interview with a victim of violence illustrates this mechanism:

"The reason for the domestic violence in my case was that my husband started abusing alcohol; that's how it was in our family. When we first married, he didn't abuse alcohol. He worked as a coach at a sports school and had a university degree. Everything was fine. But at some point, he started drinking. I stayed at home while he worked and earned money, but everything changed when he had a conflict with students at work. He was laid off, and he began drinking, which led to him taking it out on me and being aggressive in the family. He wanted to open his own school and tried to get a job at private sports centres, but he couldn't hold down a job for long – about a month or two, and then he'd go back to binge drinking. He couldn't teach; he came home with beer and couldn't work in the mornings, often oversleeping. I kept hoping that he would change, get his act together, and that we could save our family." (Female victim of DFV, 35 years old, secondary specialised education, Aktoke region)

Such stories emphasise the importance of engaging with the social context in which violence takes place. A key aspect of violence prevention is broadening access to non-violent sources of power and influence – through education, social support, psychotherapy, professional fulfilment, and the development of communication and self-regulation skills.

Analysis of interviews with victims of domestic violence also exposed a concerning pattern. When women assume financial responsibilities such as taking out loans, purchasing a car, or becoming the primary breadwinner, there are often disruptions to previously peaceful relations and an increase in violence from their partner. This may be connected to the decline of the traditional male role as "breadwinner" and feelings of vulnerability. When a man experiences a loss of control and dependence on a woman, it can result in increased aggression as an attempt to restore his symbolic status and self-esteem. This mechanism can be explained both through the prism of the crisis of masculinity and from the perspective of the resource theory of power: the lack of accessible forms of influence increases the likelihood of violence as a surrogate means of self-realisation and power within the family.

Neither men nor women in Kazakhstan are used to living in conditions of economic equality or female leadership. This is not about personal attitudes, but rather about a broad socio-cultural framework in which a "woman breadwinner" is seen as a violation of the norm. This model lacks stable social legitimacy. Moreover, in a patriarchal culture, women's economic initiatives may be viewed as a threat to male identity rather than as a contribution to the common good. This highlights the need to redefine gender roles and introduce new social scenarios in which women's economic leadership does not damage relationships but is seen as an acceptable form of partnership.

At the same time, the theory points out that both men and women can be perpetrators of abuse. Due to biological factors, physical strength is the most accessible tool for men. At the same time, women, although not limited to it, more often resort to "subtle" forms of aggression – psychological pressure, control and threats through children, sarcasm, and passive aggression. In short, theoretically, neither partner is deprived of the tools to exercise power and control in the family. And if desired, the cycle of violence can be perpetual. But then the question arises: why? Philosophers have long proposed an answer through the idea of the senselessness of the situation of "War of All Against All." Therefore, societies evolved to the point where they began forming social agreements, as conflicts caused only damage and loss and contributed to the degeneration of the population on both sides.

And what to do about it? Based on the resource theory of power, the most suitable recommendation is to establish equal and fair access to non-violent resources of power and influence. First and foremost, these include education, access to suitable niches, psychological support, communication skills, and self-regulation. Schools and families must promote a different language of influence – the language of cooperation, negotiation, and care. In other words, they should teach children how to negotiate, manage anger, and reinforce the idea that power can be cooperative, egalitarian, and caring.

This idea was expressed quite succinctly at the macro level by Canadian scientist Steven Pinker in his book "The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined"⁹¹. Based on a broad historical analysis, Pinker argues that global violence has declined significantly as society has become more humane. According to the scholar, humanisation became achievable through a cumulative effect – the rise of a centralised state, free trade, and the "development of reason".

91 Pinker S. *The Better Angels of Our Nature*. – New York : Penguin Random House, 2011. – 832 p.

One of the methods for "building up" was the spread of literacy and the growth of a reading culture. According to Pinker, reading helped expand the "circle of empathy" – the capacity to see the well-being of others as equal to one's own. Books allow us to see the world through others' eyes – they develop the skill of perspective-taking, promote reflection, and foster empathy and understanding of other people's experiences. With the growth of reading culture, people begin to see, in vivid colours, experiences that are inaccessible to them personally, and they expand their understanding to recognise that another consciousness belongs to a person just like you, with feelings, reason, and a subjective point of view different from their own. As a result, the habit of regular reading broadens a person's outlook, thereby enhancing their understanding of others' perspectives⁹². Where understanding exists, there is less disagreement, conflict, aggression, and violence. In a more widely recognised interpretation, this phenomenon has been termed the Flynn effect⁹³. Later studies also demonstrate a connection between low literacy levels, reading difficulties, and a higher likelihood of committing crimes⁹⁴.

Theoretical analysis of DFV manifestations underpins government policy, expanding the scope of impact. The ideas proposed enable violence to be seen not as a consequence of individual problems or flaws in law enforcement, but rather as a sign of the country's socio-cultural evolution. Within this framework, the primary spheres of influence for DFV policy are socialisation institutions – such as the family, school, media, and cultural environment – where ideas about the acceptability or unacceptability of violence are developed. Therefore, a practical suggestion for reducing violence is to broaden the circle of moral empathy within society. When citizens cease dividing the world into "us" and "them", society's reliance on violence as a form of control decreases. Enhancing society's intellectual and cultural levels, developing philosophy, science, and art, and encouraging reading are vital to preventing violence, as understanding others can reduce aggression, conflict, and the desire to resort to violence. "Mind build-up", including through the promotion of reading, can be regarded as an effective measure for reducing domestic violence.

Therefore, theoretical analysis proposes an approach where preventing DFV requires a thorough change in social norms and gender roles that perpetuate violence in society. Addressing culture, socialisation institutions, and public perceptions will promote a lasting decrease in violence and foster an environment where violence is socially condemned.

4.2. Analysis of the implementation of foreign practices within the context of Kazakhstani society

Countering violence is a complex challenge, rooted in the socio-cultural fabric of society. The tendency to commit violence against women, children, the elderly, and vulnerable individuals is not an innate characteristic but rather a socially learned behaviour supported by norms and expectations. Therefore, the key measure in combating DFV is to change public awareness, primarily perceptions of acceptable behaviour among men as the leading group of abusers. The main aim today is to establish social norms where the use of physical force, economic pressure, and psychological abuse is unacceptable. This is possible during the socialisation process – primary (from birth to school age, when fundamental beliefs and behaviour patterns are formed) and secondary (throughout life, as we face new challenges and environments)⁹⁵. Socialisation creates a framework of rules that guide how a person interacts with society. It is carried out through structures, people with whom we regularly interact – family, educational institutions, the professional community, media, culture, and the state.

As indicated in 4.1, DFV results from a variety of factors. Focusing on the socio-cultural aspect, we believe that domestic violence is connected to a crisis of masculinity – a conflict between traditional expectations of men and modern social conditions where these expectations become unworkable and impossible to meet. This creates a dual objective: to cultivate in children and young people a mindset of non-violent behaviour and to reshape discriminatory attitudes in adults into ones of equality and empathy. Changing perceptions of what is normal can be challenging, but it is achievable through consistent cross-sector collaboration and institutional support. To achieve this, effective policies and interventions should be implemented, focusing on key institutions involved in primary and secondary socialisation.

Therefore, the norm of non-discriminatory behaviour and freedom from violence towards others must be established in the family, within primary and secondary education institutions, in the media sector, and through industrial relations. We will not focus on changes in legislation, as this falls under the state's jurisdiction and is discussed separately in Chapter 3. However, it should be emphasised that the implementation of all the policies listed below largely depends on the state, as it is the decision-making centre responsible for allocating available resources, redistributing attention, funds, and institutional influence.

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ *The Flynn Effect: Increased IQ Scores and greater respect for rational arguments stimulate the activity of the mental state model, the ability to understand another person's point of view.*

⁹⁴ Gross, Jean, Colin Hudson, and Daniel Price, 2009. *The Long Term Costs of Literacy Difficulties*. KPMG Foundation

⁹⁵ Kostin, R. A., Klimanova, A. E. *Secondary Socialization: the Concept, Challenges and Development Trends*. [Electronic resource] – Access mode: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/vtorichnaya-sotsializatsiya-ponyatie-problemy-i-tendentsii-razvitiya/viewer> (date of access: 14.11.2025).



As mentioned in section 4.1, following S. Pinker's ideas, one recommended measure to prevent violence is to invest in rationality and empathy. In this regard, social policies that enhance society's cognitive and empathic abilities need to be introduced. This policy will promote the growth of social and emotional skills, or soft skills, in children, adolescents, and adults. Discourse on the importance of empathy and soft skills is quite common, but it is not always clear what exactly constitutes soft skills.

A USAID⁹⁶ literature review summarised studies on the relationship between soft skills and violence and concluded that the following skills have the strongest evidence base.

Table 4.2.1

Social-emotional skills matrix

Skill description		Research data
1. Self-regulation	This skill is also known as low impulsivity, which involves inhibiting reactions, delaying gratification, self-control, emotion regulation, and behaviour management.	Out of the 54 studies included in the review, 36 demonstrate a strong connection between self-regulation and non-violent behaviour.
2. Social skills	Ability to develop positive interpersonal relationships and effective communication. The ability to utilise prosocial approaches to conflict resolution and to perceive others' intentions positively.	Numerous correlational studies associate developed social skills with reduced levels of aggressive behaviour, group violence, and serious crime.
3. Empathy	The capacity to feel and understand another person's experiences. It includes not only recognising other people's emotions but also the ability to see the situation from their point of view and respond to those feelings (comfort, support, do no harm).	Empathy is a key skill in non-violent communication. People with well-developed empathy are less likely to resort to aggression, are more effective at finding compromises, and can build more stable and respectful relationships.
4. Higher-order thinking skills (HOTS)	Cognitive skills that enable a person to analyse information effectively, make informed decisions, and act strategically and purposefully, rather than simply reproducing what they have learned. These include critical thinking, problem-solving, behavioural planning, and decision-making.	Research shows that individuals with advanced HOTS are less prone to impulsive behaviour, better at managing their emotions, more able to understand the consequences of their actions, and more likely to choose non-violent methods to resolve conflicts.
5. Positive self-concept	This is a realistic and accurate understanding of oneself, including one's abilities, strengths, and potential.	This skill has a dual effect. In 10 out of 25 studies, a positive self-image is associated with a reduction in violence. No statistically significant effect was detected in 9 studies. In five studies, high self-esteem was linked to increased aggression. In 1 study, the effect was mixed. In other words, both low and high self-esteem can predict a tendency to use violence. Therefore, it is important to develop not a sense of superiority but self-awareness, the ability to admit mistakes, inner stability, modesty, and self-acceptance. These qualities represent the – golden mean between high and low self-esteem.
6. Other skill of agility	There is a proven link between qualities such as honesty, ethics (a "moral system of beliefs"), and the absence of violent behaviour. There is also evidence that resilience and communication skills – serve as protective factors against violence.	A correlation between ethical beliefs and violence was identified in nine studies reviewed by Gates et al. (2016).

The social and emotional skills listed in Table 4.2.1 are crucial for an individual's likelihood of resorting to violence. However, it is important to recognise the existing limitations and therefore avoid making broad generalisations about their link with specific behavioural outcomes. Often, all of the skills listed above are interconnected, can intertwine during behaviour, reinforce each other, and depend on age, context, and the structure of the skills themselves. Therefore, any interventions in the social environment must consider its complexity, interdependence, and nonlinearity⁹⁷.

An analysis of academic and practice-oriented literature provides an overview of effective international practices aimed at changing gender attitudes, preventing violence and transforming social norms, and suggests the following cases as potential policies to counteract DFV.

Culture

As a bearer of symbolic order and a channel for shaping everyday norms, the social institution of culture holds great potential to prevent DFV by promoting values such as empathy, respect, reflection, and non-violent interaction.

⁹⁶ Gates, S., L. Lippman, N. Shadowen, H. Burke, O. Diener, and M. Malkin, 2016. *Key Soft Skills for Cross-Sectoral Youth Outcomes*.

⁹⁷ Belfield, Clive, A. B. Bowden, Alli Klapp, Henry Levin, Robert Shand, and Sabine Zander, 2015. *The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning.* *Journal of Benefit-Cost Analysis*

One promising area of cultural policy involves supporting initiatives that foster a culture of reading and a humanistic worldview. Therefore, in the Kazakhstani context, it is advisable to develop and implement public campaigns to promote a culture of empathy, including Living Library formats; support school and extracurricular public reading initiatives, such as public reading aloud competitions; and expand reading challenges that engage children, teenagers, and adults in regular reading, joint discussion, and literary creativity.

As international practice illustrates, such formats help broaden empathy, enhance communication skills, decrease prejudice, and foster peaceful social interactions, thereby indirectly lowering the risk of violence.

Therefore, Kazakhstan needs a policy to promote a culture of reading in Kazakh society. The triumph of reason and empathy can be realised through campaigns promoting a culture of understanding, such as those listed below.

Living Library programmes are a type of *living library* where real people with unusual experiences (victims of violence, people with disabilities, migrants, representatives of ethnic minorities, etc.) serve as "books". Based on the contact hypothesis⁹⁸, the programmes aim to reduce prejudice, foster empathy, and develop social skills that lower the risk of violence. Research shows that even a brief dialogue with a "book" significantly enhances positive attitudes towards a specific social group, reduces fear, and increases understanding about it^{99,100}.

Public *reading competitions and reading challenges* are also effective. An example of the former is the Les Petits Champions de la Lecture programme in France, a public reading competition that encourages children's love of reading, oral expression, and self-confidence through public performances of selected book excerpts. By taking part in the competition, children enhance their oral communication skills, develop a greater interest in reading, and build stronger bonds with their peers through social interaction and team spirit¹⁰¹. Research shows that most pupils have formed a habit of reading thanks to the use of reading aloud techniques¹⁰².

An example of a reading challenge is the practice of the United Kingdom¹⁰³. The *Summer Reading Challenge* is an annual initiative organised by public libraries that began in 1999. It aims to motivate children to read over the summer holidays, retain the skills they have gained during the school year, and enjoy reading. It is organised by The Reading Agency with the support of libraries nationwide. The mechanics of the challenge are as follows:

- 1) children select books on their own from the library or from home,
- 2) the goal of the campaign is to read six books during the summer,
- 3) the student earns stickers, certificates, badges, and other rewards for each book read,
- 4) the challenge ends with medals and certificates.

In 2006, a report on the programme's impact was published. The report revealed that 60% of children involved in the campaign started reading more¹⁰⁴.

Similar literacy campaigns are also carried out in partnership with the parent community. For example, the Family Literature Program in Canada¹⁰⁵. This project aims to strengthen family bonds through joint learning between parents and children, foster peaceful communication within the family, and promote the social and emotional stability of family members.

The *family-oriented programme* comprises several modules tailored to various age groups and needs (Table 4.2.2).

Table 4.2.2

Family Literacy Program (FLTP) Modules in Canada

Component	Goal
Books for Babies	Parents learn to read to their children from birth to foster attachment and develop speech.
Book Buddies Literacy Programme (BBLP)	Combining school and home reading, parents act as mentors
Books Offer Our Kids Success B.O.O.K.S.	Reading, writing, and creative activities for parents and pre-school children
Adult Tutor Prog.	Individual tuition for adults with low literacy skills
Classroom on Wheels (C.O.W.)	Mobile library and education for remote communities
Learning Together	Intensive 9-month training for parents and children twice a week
Rhymes that Bind	Developing speech in young children through songs and movement
Storysacks	Creating props and stories for reading together, including community versions

98 Allport, G. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

99 Anna Handke, 2017. University of Groningen. Master Thesis. *Turning the Invisible visible with words: Exploring Refugees' Narrative Identity in Storytelling in the Netherlands*

100 Öykü Cantürk Radboud University Nijmegen, 2023. *Reading Between the "Lives": A Living Library Impact Study on Measuring Spreading Gained Insights and Attitudes*

101 <https://www.sne.fr/promotion-de-la-lecture/les-petits-champions-de-la-lecture/>

102 Naomi Dalila Malou et al. *The Effect of Reading Aloud Strategy for Developing Reading Habits*

103 Website of the challenge. Access mode: <https://summerreadingchallenge.org.uk/>

104 Goulding, Anne (2006). *Public libraries in the 21st century: defining services and debating the future*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

105 <https://www.unl.unesco.org/en/litbase/family-literacy-programmes-training-and-services-canada?>



According to 2008 data, 2 057 adults and 4 109 children participated in the C.O.W. programme, while 1 004 parents and 1 203 children participated in Rhymes that Bind. Over 60 partner organisations and a network of trained facilitators are implementing the project. As the post-project analysis revealed, joint training programmes not only help broaden participants' empathy but also reduce parental stress, strengthen peaceful conflict-resolution skills, and promote emotional engagement in parenting. All of this contributes to lowering the risk of domestic violence.

Programmes aimed at preventing violence by working on values, communication skills, and family relationships can serve as an additional guide for Kazakhstan.

SASA! programme case study

The SASA! programme adopts a comprehensive approach focused on transforming social norms that endorse gender-based violence. The SASA! programme was created and initially introduced in Uganda by Raising Voices in partnership with the Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP). It combines public campaigns, street theatre, discussion groups, work with opinion leaders, and training for specialists. The main aim of the programme is to involve the whole community in rethinking power and gender roles.

An international assessment of SASA!'s effectiveness revealed that after two years of implementation, the level of physical violence within families had nearly halved, and the number of men condemning violence had risen. The programme operates by gradually promoting new norms: from small groups to entire communities¹⁰⁶.

For Kazakhstan, adapting SASA! could emphasise engaging local authorities, NGOs, and cultural centres in delivering regional information and education campaigns. This will facilitate the development of new social norms for interaction rooted in respect, mutual aid, and non-violent conflict resolution.

The IMAGE program case

IMAGE (Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity) combines economic and educational projects through microfinance schemes for women, along with training on gender equality and rights. Women gain access to loans to start businesses and receive training on rights, health, and non-violent communication.

An evaluation of the programme in South Africa published in *The Lancet* showed a 55% reduction in intimate partner violence among participants after two years. The analysis revealed that participating in economic activities, along with increased legal literacy and social support, decreases women's vulnerability and enhances social connections, communication skills, leadership, and a sense of protection within the community¹⁰⁷.

For Kazakhstan, adapting IMAGE could involve microgrants for women from vulnerable groups, supported by mandatory training in financial literacy, rights, and peaceful conflict resolution skills. This will reduce economic dependence and promote a culture of non-violent communication at the same time.

These policies either directly or indirectly promote the development of empathetic and critical thinking, the expansion of moral solidarity, and a decrease in the willingness to participate in violent actions.

Education

As a primary institutional avenue for transforming social norms, the education system plays a vital role in shifting the population's mindset from violent, hierarchical patterns to values of non-violence, equality, and empathy.

Considering the Kazakhstani context and international survey indicators, it seems appropriate to: update the inclusion of the subject "Ethics" in the school curriculum; integrate the principles of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) into pedagogical practice; encourage teachers at all levels to practise game formats based on cooperation rather than competition; and consider banning or strictly limiting the use of smartphones in schools.

Incorporation of an ethics module or an "Ethics" subject into school and university curricula. Modern society, including Kazakhstani society, faces increasing levels of anxiety and conflict, along with a decline in shared understanding of issues such as good and evil, justice, respect, personal boundaries, and responsibility. Within educational institutions, where children are engaged daily, it is essential to convey not only knowledge but also moral values and to promote civic responsibility. Currently, these tasks are performed as part of educational activities. However, it is advisable to systematically teach children the skills of peaceful coexistence, dialogue, critical thinking and empathy. This can be achieved by incorporating the subject of "Ethics" into the school curriculum. The objectives of the subject are:

- development of moral thinking, capacity for self-reflection,
- teaching respect for diversity,

¹⁰⁶ Abramsky, T., Devries, K., Kiss, L. et al. Findings from the SASA! Study: a cluster randomised controlled trial to assess the impact of a community mobilisation intervention to prevent violence against women and reduce HIV risk in Kampala, Uganda. *BMC Med* 12, 122 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-014-0122-5>

¹⁰⁷ Pronyk, Paul M et al. Effect of a structural intervention for the prevention of intimate-partner violence and HIV in rural South Africa: a cluster randomised trial. *The Lancet*, Volume 368, Issue 9551, 1973–1983.



- strengthening a sense of responsibility towards oneself, others, and society
- awareness of the limits of personal and social responsibility.

Through role-playing games, practical case studies, project activities, group work, and the introduction of a reflection journal, the younger generation will consider moral dilemmas and different perspectives. This issue is especially relevant today, as clichéd, tunnel-vision thinking, along with living in isolated cultural bubbles, increasingly restricts the inclusion of other perspectives in one's worldview.

Interviews conducted by KIPD¹⁰⁸ with abusers highlight the importance of developing constructive conflict resolution skills in children.

"Interviewer: How did your parents resolve conflicts and reach a decision? In what way?"

Informant: How should I know? I didn't get involved in their business. My father immediately said: Go to your room, that's it, and sit there. I left and sat there, and that was it.

Interviewer: So you didn't even hear anything?

Informant: I heard yelling and noise there; they were discussing something.

Interviewer: Afterwards, for example, none of your parents spoke to you about the situation?

Informant: No, no one talked about it". (Aggressor, male, married, higher education, Temirtau)

Such narratives partly explain why Kazakhstani people, when faced with crisis situations, do not know how to act and resort to suppression, silence, or, in the worst case, violence. Children learn to manage emotions such as anger, fear, or misunderstanding by observing and imitating adults. But if parents or schools do not demonstrate constructive ways of resolving disputes or discuss what is happening, he will grow up without the tools for regulation and peaceful interaction.

Ethics is a compulsory subject in many countries, including Austria¹⁰⁹, Germany¹¹⁰, Croatia, Greece, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Finland, Norway¹¹¹, and others, where students do not attend religious education classes.

However, the need to introduce "Ethics" is motivated not only by international recommendations to promote a culture of non-violence, but also by specific incidents in the lives of Kazakhstani citizens. An informant from among the abusers described a situation that illustrates the vicious cycle of family misunderstanding.

"...like some little thing. I just came home, a bit drunk, lay down, thinking, I'll rest, I'll keep quiet. No, the local police officer is already knocking on the door. She already called the local police, and that's that. And then everything escalated, and here we are. Of course, I'm angry, of course, it hurts. As for me, right now, I'm missing work; I'm officially employed. What am I supposed to say at work? And surely everyone already knows that I'm in prison, and so on. I don't know, maybe they'll fire me now. And then she gets offended at me. Why are you changing jobs like that? Of course, if I'm sitting here, who's going to wait for me for 20 days? They'll find someone else." (Aggressor, male, 40 years old, Russian, single, higher education, Rudny)

This case demonstrates how a domestic conflict escalates into a cycle of institutional punishment that fails to address the real issue. Neither side has the tools to comprehend their own feelings, accept accountability, or participate in dialogue.

Such cases highlight the importance of early teaching in emotional reflection, non-violent expression of feelings, conscious choice of behaviour in conflicts, and understanding the connection between personal actions and social consequences. Including an Ethics course in the school curriculum is a structured move to prevent violence: it provides individuals with a language to articulate complex emotions, an understanding of boundaries and respect, and helps shape the values of dialogue.

Therefore, the introduction of the Ethics course will serve as a foundation for developing moral stability, respect for others, ethical decision-making in everyday choices, and preventing aggression, domestic violence, and other harmful interactions.

SEL (Social-Emotional Learning)

An alternative to including the Ethics course in the school curriculum could be to integrate elements of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) into the current school programme.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) – is a method aimed at developing self-regulation, empathy, emotional management, relationship skills, and peaceful conflict resolution in schoolchildren through cognitive-behavioural therapy, role-playing, collaborative game-based activities, discussion, and collective situation modelling.

¹⁰⁸ KIPD sociological study "On the Prevention of Domestic Violence in the Republic of Kazakhstan", 2025

¹⁰⁹ https://www.bmb.gv.at/en/Topics/school/ev_sl/tfas/ethics.html?

¹¹⁰ <https://www.nelson-mandela-schule.net/en/secondary-7-10/all-subjects-7-10/ethics.html?>

¹¹¹ See the materials by country. – Access mode: <https://ethics.community/regions/?>



SEL programmes are carried out through a sequence of lessons and exercises designed to:

- developing emotional intelligence (recognising and expressing emotions),
- the development of a positive self-image and self-confidence,
- training in co-operation skills, active listening, empathy,
- learning strategies for managing anger, stress, and aggression.
- developing decision-making skills and peaceful conflict resolution.

An important aspect is the training of the teachers themselves, who act not only as educators but also as emotional models of safe behaviour. Some programmes include a parental component, classroom management training, and school-wide events.

According to international research, SEL helps reduce aggression and anxiety, while also promoting trusting relationships among participants. Programmes like PATHS, Second Step, Life Skills Training, and Becoming a Man have demonstrated consistent success in reducing violence and enhancing prosocial behaviour¹¹².

In Kazakhstan, SEL can be integrated into the curriculum in two ways:

1) as a separate subject – development and introduction of a dedicated course on SEL (e.g., "Emotional Intelligence," "Life Skills", "Communication Ethics", etc.);

2) integraton of SEL competencies into existing subjects: literature, history, homeroom periods, and after-school programmes.

For example, history classes can serve as an essential platform for fostering social responsibility and shaping students' values of peace and non-violence. History teachers can incorporate SEL elements by discussing moral dilemmas and historical decisions, such as whether historical leaders had alternatives. Could violence have been prevented? Studying non-violent movements, such as the struggle for human rights led by M. Gandhi, Martin Luther King, N. Mandela, as well as the diplomatic tactics of Abylai Khan, enables us to discuss which emotional and social qualities helped these leaders bring about change. Project assignments, such as "Lessons of Tolerance in the 20th Century," encourage a thorough understanding of the effects of violence and the value of peaceful resolutions. Additional possible SEL integration techniques are shown in Table 4.2.3.

Table 4.2.3.

Possible methods of SEL integration into humanities subjects

Method	What it develops	Example
"Hot chair" (role of a hero or historical figure)	Empathy, the ability to see another point of view	The student speaks on behalf of N. Mandela or Genghis Khan
The essay "What would I do?"	Self-reflection, decision-making	What would I have done if I were Attila?
Role plays	Communication skills, respect for others' opinions	Debates between the protagonists of the conflict
Emotion Map	Emotional intelligence	Draw and discuss what feelings the character experiences in different scenes

As a result, introducing SEL elements into the school education system could be an effective structural measure for preventing domestic violence. It is essential that integration is supported by teacher training, psychological assistance, and the engagement of the parent community.

Supplementary education organisations in shaping non-violent behaviour patterns

In the process of internalising updated gender norms, supplementary education organisations can also serve as a resource. In global practice, there are examples where coaches at boys' sports clubs teach them what it means to be a man and the various forms of masculine behaviour. For example, the Coaching Boys into Men (CBIM) project in the USA is implemented by Futures Without Violence, a non-profit organisation. The project originated from the media campaign "Raising Boys to Become Men" (2001), which encouraged men to speak to teenagers about respect and non-violence, and evolved into a comprehensive sports programme (2004) aimed at youth team coaches. CBIM provides them with tools for weekly sessions on topics such as respect, non-violence, and healthy relationships. The programme has international scale-ups in South Africa, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, and research has demonstrated its effectiveness. Participants in the experimental group showed a stronger intention to intervene and exhibited more active bystander behaviour in risky situations¹¹³. However, at the next stage, a slight decline in willingness to intervene was observed. This indicates that, without targeted education on domestic violence, adolescent athletes start to avoid being active witnesses because the prevailing norms of male behaviour in the adolescent environment conflict with this.

¹¹² USAID (2021) Evidence review: The effect of education programs on violence, crime, and related outcomes

¹¹³ Elizabeth Miller et al. (2012) "Coaching Boys into Men": A Cluster-Randomized Controlled Trial of a Dating Violence Prevention Program



Restrictions on smartphone use in educational institutions

An indirect yet important way to promote a culture of nonviolent communication among the younger generation could be to restrict or ban smartphone use in schools. Paradoxically, despite the increasing technologization of society and the rising popularity of social networks, which were meant to unite humanity across borders and continents, people are becoming more distant from each other. Alienation is growing, the depth of human connections is diminishing, and loneliness and anxiety are increasing, especially among young people.

American sociologist Sherry Turkle emphasises that modern technologies create the illusion of communication without genuine engagement, offering comfortable privacy without the risk of real contact. But it is precisely in genuine solitude, rather than digital isolation, that the capacity for deep, authentic relationships and empathy is cultivated¹¹⁴. With constant engagement in the digital world, children and teenagers miss out on developing live communication skills, and the quality of verbal and emotional interaction diminishes.

Schools, as the key institutions for socialisation, are threatened by digital fragmentation. Using smartphones during classes and breaks reduces the number and quality of face-to-face interactions among students, harms concentration, and diminishes emotional intelligence. Considering international studies that establish a link between time spent on social media and levels of aggression, anxiety, and depression in adolescents, it can be argued that restricting smartphone use in schools is a justified and effective preventive measure. This measure helps create a favourable educational environment, develop sustainable non-violent communication skills, reduce emotional tension, and promote the development of empathy as a key factor in preventing future violent behaviour.

Institutional navigation for adults

After considering institutional environments (culture, education), it is essential to focus on a less addressed but critically important aspect of violence prevention – helping adults rethink gender roles and develop non-violent behaviour skills.

As we noted in section 4.1, contemporary Kazakh society, like many others, is experiencing a crisis of masculinity. Changing gender roles, rising economic and social independence of women, economic instability, and the breakdown of traditional social structures are making men feel disoriented, anxious, and aggressive. Unlike children and young people, adults have very limited access to institutional guidance – such as schools, educational programmes, mentoring, and preventive initiatives. If a pupil or student has a point of entry into the system (a teacher, coach, or parent), adults are left in the dark. Without universal cultural guidance, adults seek alternatives such as coaches, psychologists, transformative games, spiritual practices, blogs, and podcasts. However, these forms are not always accessible, ethical, or scientifically valid. In this regard, institutional support and social maturation are essential, especially amid increasing social tensions and violence.

Kazakhstan needs a systemic infrastructure that offers adults access to safe, scientifically and ethically sound spaces for reconsidering gender roles, sharing experiences, reflecting, and developing non-violent interaction skills.

In interviews with the abusers, the men highlighted the importance of such support. One of the respondents noted:

"I believe that if I had relatives, or if my father or mother had suggested that I could do things differently... There is a lack of family support, as we say, to help me escape conflict situations. To give advice. But they have lived longer, gone through this..." (Aggressor, male, married, higher education, Temirtau)

This comment emphasises the demand within Kazakh society for an institution of life navigation that could address the gap in intergenerational transfer of experience, moral authority, and emotional support during challenging life situations. In traditional Kazakh society, this role was fulfilled by aksakals, senior relatives, and the community council. Today, such mechanisms can be revived and adapted to contemporary times through new institutional frameworks. This may include *father's clubs and men's support communities*. An example of this initiative is Rwanda's experience, where experimental studies have confirmed the programme's effectiveness.

Thus, the Bandebereho programme is a successful example of transforming gender roles. In Rwanda, the programme was aptly named, as it means "role model" in Kinyarwanda, because its goal was to transform perceptions of masculinity by demonstrating positive models of fatherhood. The Bandebereho intervention was carried out among expectant fathers and fathers of young children (aged 21–35), including their wives, across four districts in Rwanda (approximately 1 200 couples in total).

The programme was built on a structured plan for engaging men in maternal and child health. The programme included a training course for fathers and couples, materials for training medical staff, and scenarios for awareness campaigns. Men attended up to 15 sessions (maximum 45 hours), women up to 8 sessions (maximum 24 hours) on topics such as gender and power, fatherhood, couple communication and joint decision-making, intimate partner violence (IPV), caregiving, child development, and men's involvement in reproductive and maternal health. Nurses and police officers conducted sessions on topics such as pregnancy, family planning, and local legislation. As a result of the

¹¹⁴ Sherry Turkle, 2011. *Alone together*



programme, partnerships have greatly improved, violence levels have decreased, and equality in family decision-making has increased¹¹⁵. The study also revealed that the effects were long-lasting: the decrease in domestic violence, the reduction in children's punishment, and the enhancement of interactions between spouses persisted for 6 years after the study was conducted¹¹⁶.

Interviews with victims and abusers of DFV show that many family conflicts have an economic root. Among the most often cited triggers are redundancies, long-term unemployment, unstable income, debt burden, and a general sense of economic vulnerability. In traditional role divisions, a man's job loss is often seen as a sign of loss of social status and personal worth, which heightens emotional strain and the risk of aggressive responses.

A telling example is the experience of Career Navigators, which is integrated into the adult education system in the United States. Trained navigators assist participants in developing career paths, setting development priorities, and overcoming barriers such as a lack of digital skills or resources. Research conducted by the Institute of Educational Sciences¹¹⁷ confirms the high effectiveness of this approach: participants are more likely to complete courses, find employment, and demonstrate greater social activity, forming lasting connections and optimism.

The experience of the Career Readiness Training Program (CRTP)¹¹⁸ in New York is equally valuable. Its approach is unique because it combines professional training with therapeutic support, mentoring, and employment assistance. The programme's participants are primarily women who have suffered domestic violence. They develop skills that are sought after in the labour market and receive psychological support that helps them rebuild their self-esteem and confidence for the future. Research by the Urban Institute (2019) indicates that CRTP graduates secure employment and enhance their financial independence, which directly lowers the risk of returning to abusive relationships. An important specific feature of the programme is its emphasis on a comprehensive approach: from addressing traumatic experiences to taking practical steps in one's career.

Among institutional support for growing up, *programmes to prevent gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) in the workplace are also an essential tool for preventing violence*. The workplace is one of the few environments where many adults participate, making it an effective platform for changing attitudes.

GBVH trainings aim to raise awareness of equality principles, foster gender-sensitive thinking, challenge gender stereotypes, and develop skills for non-discriminatory interaction in professional and social settings. In addition, these trainings:

- equip people, including witnesses, with the necessary tools to respond;
- shift the emphasis from individual responsibility to a collective safety culture;
- reduce tolerance for violence and promote stronger "intolerance of silence".

It is particularly important that these training courses go beyond just formal lectures and include ethical discussions, role-playing exercises, analysis of real-life cases, and emotional work. In international practice, mandatory introductory training upon hiring, annual refresher courses, facilitation, an internal trainer, the implementation of gender policies, and reporting procedures have proven to be effective¹¹⁹.

However, institutional measures must be supported by public opinion engagement. In a KIPD survey¹²⁰, when asked why violence persists, 40% of respondents said victims do not seek help because they fear their abuser, while 35% selected the answer "the victim's financial dependence on the abuser". A significant proportion also cited social factors as reasons: public condemnation, distrust of state protection, inaction by authorities, and a lack of support from relatives, colleagues, and friends.

Furthermore, 42% of respondents stated that reconciliation with the abuser happens because of fear of condemnation from relatives and those around them.

Interviews with victims of DFV reveal that one reason for tolerating violence is its perception as a widely accepted norm, along with the fear of condemnation and ostracism. That is, in the eyes of public opinion, it is not the act of violence itself that is viewed as deviant, but the resistance to it.

"All my friends had families – with husbands. Even those whose husbands, like mine, were violent. I looked at them and thought, 'Well, if they can live like that, so can I. I'll endure a little longer; maybe everything will work out.'"
(Female victim of DFV, 35 years old, secondary specialised education, Aktobe region)

¹¹⁵ Doyle, K., et al., 2018. Gender-transformative Bandedereho couples" intervention to promote male engagement in reproductive and maternal health and violence prevention in Rwanda

¹¹⁶ Research protocol, 2021. Bandedereho randomized controlled trial: a six-year follow-up

¹¹⁷ Assessing Evidence of Effectiveness in Adult Education: Study of Career Navigator Training

¹¹⁸ Marina Duane et al., 2021. An Evaluation of a Workforce Development Program for Domestic Violence Survivors. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/105178/an-evaluation-of-a-workforce-development-program-for-domestic-violence-survivors.pdf>

¹¹⁹ Get to Know Sexual Harassment Policies and Training Around The World <https://smitheyaw.com/get-to-know-sexual-harassment-policies-and-training-around-the-world>

¹²⁰ On Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence in the Republic of Kazakhstan : A sociological study by KIPD, 2025



"Yes, as I just mentioned, my mum and sisters all knew. But then, for some reason, they blamed me, stopped speaking to me, and after that, only my friend remained. She found this place, brought me here, and still talks to me." (Female victim of DFV, 27 years old, secondary education, Zhambyl region)

Based on the survey results and interview narratives, it can be concluded that the principles of collectivist culture partly maintain violence within Kazakhstani families. Social expectations and the attitude that "you shouldn't wash your dirty linen in public" serve to perpetuate disrespectful behaviour among family members. Therefore, the key areas here are:

- information campaigns, including via television, blogs, series, and podcasts;
- working with the media and journalists to shift the discourse from blaming the victim to recognising the structural nature of the problem;
- public cases of victim support;
- involving men in discussions about non-violent masculinity.

In this context, illustrative are cases from an international perspective that have proven effective in shifting public discourse and norms that promote tolerance of violence.

One striking example of how social norms have changed is the Bell Bajao ("Ring the Bell") media campaign launched by Breakthrough in 2008. This is India's first multimedia campaign that directly involves men and boys as partners in the fight against violence. The campaign encouraged neighbours who heard the argument to politely ring the doorbell under the pretext of a domestic matter, thereby disrupting the abuser's sense of impunity and demonstrating that society was responding. Wide coverage through the media, street campaigns, and training of opinion leaders has made Bell Bajao part of the national discourse on personal responsibility: over 130 million viewers, millions engaged through street theatre, games, and quizzes. The assessment revealed a rise in actual interventions and referrals to support services, along with a decrease in tolerance of domestic violence within the target groups¹²¹. According to pre- and post-test data, prior to the campaign, around 15,8% believed that "victims of violence should remain silent" was justified, whereas after the campaign, this figure decreased to 5,7%¹²².

The South African Soul City project shows that effectively designed mass communication can simultaneously shape perceptions of violence among millions of people. The project is a comprehensive media campaign that includes television and radio programmes, print materials, and community outreach. In the stories, the characters experience violence, discuss it openly, and seek help, which demonstrates safe ways for the viewer to respond. Based on the assessment results of the fourth season of the project, the audience reach was 86% on television and 65% on radio; awareness of support services increased (41% had heard of the hotline), and the proportion of people disagreeing that "violence is a private family matter" rose by 10 percentage points. In this way, Soul City became both an educational tool and a means to reinforce the regulatory framework by transforming the discussion of violence from a taboo into an openly debated topic¹²³.

Both programmes demonstrate that the concept of "norm" is subject to change. Soul City demonstrated that mass narratives can legitimise discussion of the issue, while Bell Bajao showed that safe, socially acceptable methods of intervention can be embedded in culture. For Kazakhstan, adopting such models could shift from the rhetoric of "don't wash your dirty linen in public" to the norm of "we respond because we care." Such measures will help reduce violence and enhance social solidarity.

Thus, alongside culture, education, and support for development, the workplace and public opinion are essential resources that can be utilised to alter perceptions of violence and strengthen zero tolerance towards it. A sustainable violence prevention system in Kazakhstani society can only be built through collaboration across all levels – macro, meso, and micro.

¹²¹ Bell Bajao: Ringing the bell to stop violence in India <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2011/4/bell-bajao-ringing-the-bell-to-stop-violence-in-india>

¹²² Changing the narrative on Violence against Women in India <https://sogicampaigns.org/portfolio/changing-the-narrative-on-violence-against-women-in-india>

¹²³ S Usdin et al., 2005. Achieving social change on gender-based violence: a report on the impact evaluation of Soul City's fourth series

CONCLUSIONS

Domestic Violence in the Republic of Kazakhstan: Current Situation

An analysis of the scale, forms, and risk factors of DFV in Kazakhstan has revealed its persistent, systemic nature, affecting various social groups and reflecting a complex interweaving of legal, cultural, and socio-economic conditions that hinder effective responses prevention:

- DFV in Kazakhstan continues to be widespread and ingrained, impacting women, children, older adults, and persons with disabilities regardless of income or location.
- The 2024 legislative reform, which moved several administrative offences into the criminal domain, caused an increase in recorded cases, particularly for minor bodily harm and assault, reflecting greater detection rather than an actual decline in the situation.
- Physical and psychological abuse are the most common forms; economic pressure, social isolation, and control are less common, but often accompany and reinforce other forms.
- Key risk factors for DFV include alcohol and substance abuse by the abuser, financial instability, patriarchal attitudes, experiences of violence in the parental family, and the involvement of the abuser's relatives (including mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law) in the conflict.
- Violence against children is characterised by consistently high levels of sexual offences, a substantial proportion of justifications for violence being used for educational purposes (37,5%), and documented intergenerational transmission of violent behaviours.
- DFV within the family poses a risk factor for severe psychological and emotional consequences in children, such as depression, aggression, substance misuse, suicidal thoughts, and attempts. At the same time, the increasing number of suicide attempts among minors highlights the extent of undiagnosed psychological problems.
- The elderly and persons with disabilities remain the least studied and most hidden group of victims of DFV: there are no official statistics on this group, which makes assessing the scale of the problem difficult. Meanwhile, according to the survey, one in four Kazakhstani citizens has heard of cases of violence against elderly people or those with disabilities.
- The practice of forced marriages and bride kidnapping continues in several regions; although most people oppose it, a significant number of respondents tolerate it or do not report bride kidnapping to the police, reflecting the persistence of traditional norms and low confidence in protecting rights.

Domestic violence: hidden aspects and indirect consequences: latent forms of violence and the influence of advances in information and communication technology on domestic violence.

- Public opinion is gradually moving away from violence, and victim blaming is declining. However, cultural stereotypes and societal tolerance of certain types of violence still obstruct effective prevention of DFV in Kazakhstan.
- The results of a large-scale survey reveal a significant "visible" proportion of non-physical practices within families known to respondents: moral and psychological pressure – 59,6%; economic restrictions – 29,4%; control over gadgets and location tracking – 20,9%; restriction of movement – 22,3%. These forms frequently precede or accompany physical violence.
- Psychological abuse exists across all levels of society: material well-being alone does not assure protection.
- Digital technologies have bolstered control tools (such as device verification and tracking), which require digital hygiene and measures to protect human rights in the online space.

- Differences across areas are notable: moral and psychological abuse (63,2% versus 52,1% in rural areas) and digital control (22,8% versus 16,9%) are more frequently observed and recognised in cities; in rural regions, neglect of basic needs such as food and medical care is more commonly reported, often linked to infrastructural vulnerability and poverty.
- The regional picture is varied: high levels of moral and psychological pressure are observed in the Karaganda, Aktobe, and Zhetysay regions; the most significant restrictions on freedom are in the Atyrau, Ulytau, and North Kazakhstan regions. There are regions with relatively low indicators (for example, the Pavlodar region).
- The normalisation and "invisibility" of latent forms are confirmed by the gap between the act itself and its recognition as violence (some respondents do not consider constant criticism, economic restrictions or digital control to be violence).
- According to the population, the main reasons for continued violence are: fear of the abuser (42,4%), financial dependence (35,2%), and distrust or perceived ineffectiveness of protection (21-28%). Reasons for reconciliation include – social condemnation (41,7%), fear of persecution and revenge (29%), lack of housing (29%).
- The results of in-depth interviews show that psychological violence frequently occurs in front of children, heightening intergenerational risks and worsening family members' mental health.
- Economic abuse involves controlling access to resources such as money, credit, property, and documents; forbidding work, study, or spending; micromanaging expenses; imposing debts on the victim; and depriving them of basic goods and services.
- Economic abuse is linked to declines in mental and physical health, poorer quality of life, worsening parent-child relationships, and increased social vulnerability.
- The "vicious circle" effect. Economic pressure results in less employment and financial insecurity, leading to dependency and poverty; in turn, poverty heightens susceptibility to further violence.
- Income is not equal to protection. Violence occurs across all population groups: having a high personal income does not provide protection if a partner controls key resources and financial decisions.
- 29,4% of respondents reported experiencing economic pressure (restricting access to and control over personal or family funds) – financial control is commonly utilised as a means of domination.
- Economic abuse is more frequently reported in cities (31,8% versus 24,4% in rural areas), reflecting both women's greater economic independence (and, consequently, attempts to suppress it) and increased awareness of such practices.
- There is regional heterogeneity in the prevalence of economic abuse. High levels were recorded in Shymkent (55,6%), the Ulytau region (50%) and Astana (48,6%).
- Economic abuse frequently occurs alongside psychological and social violence (such as isolation and communication bans) and digital control (like checking devices and tracking locations); it is often accompanied by physical violence.
- Alcohol increases the risk. Alcohol addiction by a partner increases financial pressure: family resources are diverted from essential needs, and the victim's instability and dependence escalate.
- Lack of housing and income, debt bondage, fear of losing children, and social condemnation turn economic dependence into a tool for maintaining power and "returning" the victim to a violent relationship.
- Even victims who are economically independent do not always leave. Attachment, "habit", psychological dependence, and prolonged manipulation can keep you in a relationship even when you have your own job and income.
- Economic abuse erodes psychological resilience, fosters learned helplessness, and perpetuates intergenerational cycles of subjugation, undermining family units and heightening social tensions.
- Technologically mediated violence is a component of DfV: besides digital control, stalking, and harassment after separation, it includes economic and psychological impacts (such as monitoring expenses and accessing documents or accounts), which heighten the victim's dependence.
- Online and offline violence are interconnected: violence involving ICTs often occurs in cases of DfV and coexists with psychological coercion and control; after separation, the risk of stalking and threats increases.
- The extent of the issue has been confirmed internationally: in the EU, it is estimated that one in ten women has encountered some form of cyber violence since turning 15.
- Young people are a high-risk group for online harassment: in the United States, 64% of adults under the age of 30 have experienced online harassment; the proportion of victims decreases with age, but remains significant in older age groups.
- Public awareness remains inadequate: some victims do not recognise digital control or stalking as violence and therefore do not seek help, which sustains the "latent" nature of this form of DfV.
- It is essential to recognise technologically mediated violence as a form of DfV, including indicators of digital control and cyberstalking in surveys and statistics; implement rapid protective measures (such as digital contact bans); establish standards for recording digital evidence; and develop digital safety programmes.

- Information campaigns and training for professionals (police, social services, courts) should reduce the "normalisation" of digital control, increase awareness and referral to support services, especially during periods of separation between couples with signs of DFV.

Mechanisms for countering domestic violence

- At the regional level in Kazakhstan, notable progress has been made in inter-agency cooperation to combat DFV, but at the national level there is no unified coordinating body, monitoring system, or integrated index, resulting in fragmented and inconsistent measures. International practice, such as Australia's experience with a national committee and uniform indicators, demonstrates that centralised coordination improves policy effectiveness.

- An important tool of state policy is systematic statistical monitoring, which includes the collection, processing, and analysis of data submitted by central state and local executive bodies, as well as organisations working in this field; in this regard, central authorities should oversee departmental statistical monitoring and send information to the authorised body on family issues, while local authorities should provide the centre with regular information in standardised forms.

- Today, FSCs have become key state structures in the implementation of family policy. The effective work of these centres helps prevent social orphanhood, resolve family conflicts, and reduce major social issues, supporting families in overcoming various difficulties and creating conditions for their well-being.

- Despite progress, several systemic issues still persist that hinder the effectiveness of support infrastructure and protection mechanisms for victims of DFV.

- Firstly, infrastructure as a whole remains unevenly developed.

- There is an obvious uneven distribution of FSC across regions. Thus, not a single FSC has been established in the Ulytau region, while all western regions of the republic (Aktobe, Atyrau, Mangystau, West Kazakhstan), the Kyzylorda and Turkestan regions are fully staffed, and the Almaty region is almost fully staffed (except for one district). The Abay, Akmola, Zhambyl, Karaganda, Kostanay, Pavlodar, East Kazakhstan, and North Kazakhstan regions are understaffed. Only one FSC has been established in the capital and the cities of national importance, Almaty and Shymkent, although according to the law, one should be established in each district of the city. It is advised that the local authorities in the specified regions strengthen their efforts to establish FSC in districts and cities.

- FSC employees are not covered by Resolution No. 1193 of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 31 December 2015 "On the remuneration system for civil servants, employees of organisations funded from the state budget, and employees of state-owned enterprises", and therefore, they do not receive additional payments for hazardous working conditions. This significantly lowers their level of remuneration and reduces their attractiveness to qualified specialists. In this regard, it is recommended that the MF and the MLSPP of the RK make appropriate additions to the aforementioned regulatory legal act.

- Crisis centres are mostly located in cities and regional centres, while rural areas still lack shelters, psychologists, social workers, and immediate response mechanisms. Help from such areas is often difficult to obtain, and the chance of immediate intervention is limited.

- Secondly, there is a lack of qualified specialists. Despite efforts to formalise social work in Kazakhstan, the number of professional social workers and psychologists remains limited. Not all centre staff have received the required training to work with vulnerable groups. This diminishes the quality of support and damages the trust of victims of violence.

- Thirdly, the issue of social stigma remains significant. In many communities, domestic violence is seen as a "private family matter," especially regarding psychological, economic, or sexual abuse. Such forms of violence are often hushed up, and victims do not seek help.

- The development of crisis centre infrastructure and the strengthening of criminal policy in combating DFV will not yield sustainable results without a systemic transformation of human resources in social work. A severe shortage of professional social workers, the profession's low prestige, weak educational foundations, and limited academic programmes hinder the potential of case management and restrict opportunities for in-depth support to vulnerable families.

- In its Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2030, the WHO highlights effective leadership, integrating mental health into national policies, safeguarding human rights and the rights of vulnerable groups, and developing accessible medical and social services as key priorities. An analysis of Kazakhstani legislation uncovered fragmentation, interdepartmental disunity, and the absence of a unified systematic approach, which diminishes the effectiveness of prevention and treatment, including in relation to both the causes and consequences of DFV, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental disorders.



Theoretical Aspects of Domestic Violence and International Strategies to Combat Violence

- Social inequality and resource scarcity heighten the likelihood of violence. The lack of economic, cultural, and social opportunities leads some individuals to resort to force to assert themselves and compensate for a loss of control.
- Prevention of violence should focus on humanising society through education, nurturing emotional intelligence, fostering a culture of dialogue, encouraging reading, and expanding empathy. These tools encourage understanding, tolerance, and non-violent ways of interacting.
- The main focus of prevention is not only to protect victims and punish abusers, but also to work deeply with social attitudes, norms, and mechanisms of violence transmission in order to make violence socially unacceptable.
- International experience shows that developing social and emotional skills (such as empathy, self-regulation, critical thinking, and moral resilience) directly reduces the likelihood of aggression and enhances the ability to engage in constructive interaction.
- Cultural policy should focus on fostering humanistic values through initiatives such as promoting a reading culture, projects like Living Library, family education programmes, and reading challenges. These practices enhance mutual understanding and diminish prejudice in society.
- Supplementary education organisations and sports clubs can shape adolescents' gender attitudes by encouraging boys to act respectfully and non-violently (see, for example, the Coaching Boys into Men programme).
- Restricting smartphone use in schools can be a useful measure to reduce the impact of aggressive content and encourage live communication and the development of emotional intelligence.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Analysis of the data has resulted in the following recommendations to enhance the support and protection system for victims of domestic violence, as well as to reinforce measures for its prevention:

To the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Improvement of legislation. Strengthen the legislative framework for combating domestic violence, safeguarding children's rights, and eradicating the practice of forced marriages. If necessary, implement further amendments (e.g., liability for psychological abuse, prevention of forced care for dependent relatives), ensuring compliance with international human rights standards.

Parliamentary hearings and dialogue with society. Hold parliamentary hearings on domestic violence and child protection, involving experts and NGOs. This will facilitate ongoing public dialogue, enable monitoring of government policy outcomes, and allow adjustments to be based on scientific data and civil society's opinions.

It is recommended to add a dedicated chapter on mental health care to the Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Public Health and the Health Care System," establish a unified mental health care system with clear principles, define entities and mechanisms for interagency cooperation, ensure service quality guarantees, and include legal protection measures. Additionally, it should create a system for training, retraining, and motivating personnel, including specialists for rural areas, and work alongside systems for protecting victims of DFV and rehabilitating abusers. This will facilitate a shift from fragmented practices to a comprehensive state system that aligns with WHO standards and Kazakhstan's international commitments.

To the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan

National Interagency Program. Develop and implement an action plan, tentatively titled "Childhood without Violence," to unite the efforts of all relevant departments. The programme should establish clear key performance indicators (KPIs) for reducing instances of domestic violence and suicide among minors, as well as defining mechanisms for coordination and reporting on their progress.

A unified database of violent incidents. Create a unified interdepartmental database on cases of domestic violence and suicide attempts among minors. This will facilitate the collection of data from the education system, healthcare, law enforcement agencies, and social services, enabling quick analysis of trends and planning preventive response measures.

Systematic training of specialists. Organise regular training and professional development for all specialists involved in identifying and preventing violence. As part of the state order, deliver training programmes for teachers, doctors, psychologists, social workers, police, and prosecutors on the early recognition of signs of violence, effective interagency cooperation, and providing support to victims without re-traumatisation.

It is recommended that social work development be recognised as a priority in state policy: in the short term, by increasing the number of educational grants, introducing full-time social workers in schools and FSC, and legislating their status; in the medium term – by adopting the law "On the Status of Social Workers" and declaring 2027 the Year of the Social Worker; and in the long term – by institutionalising social work across all sectors of social policy. These

steps will ensure a multiplier effect in achieving the SDGs, strengthen social justice, and create a sustainable system for primary violence prevention.

Budgetary support for prevention programmes. Ensure that adequate funding is allocated in the state budget for programmes to prevent violence and suicidal behaviour among children and young people. This includes funding the training of more school psychologists, establishing emergency psychological support services, developing crisis centres, and running information campaigns.

To the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan

- Introduction of violence prevention modules. Include mandatory modules on violence prevention and emotional literacy in school and pre-school curricula. As part of these modules, teach children non-violent communication skills, how to recognise dangerous situations (such as bullying, harassment, domestic violence), and how to seek help from trusted adults or support services.
- It is proposed to introduce an elective course titled "Ethics and Socio-Emotional Development" within the framework of the "Adal Azamat" Program. The course would include topics such as human rights, gender equality, and the inadmissibility of "alyp qashu" (bride kidnapping) as a violation of individual rights, using project-based and discussion-based activities to develop students' value-based and moral competencies.
- Engage supplementary education organisations and sports clubs in the gender socialisation of adolescents (for example: Coaching Boys into Men, USA).
- Implement campaigns to foster a culture of empathy among children and adolescents, with the participation of parent communities (for example, the Family Literacy Programme in Canada).

Strengthening psychological support services in schools. Expand the network of school psychologists and social educators, especially in rural areas, to reduce each specialist's workload. Provide them with regular training on recognising the signs of domestic violence, bullying, depression, and suicidal tendencies in children. Each school should be advised to develop a psychological service work plan that includes both preventive classes and individual support for students from at-risk groups.

Interagency response algorithm. Develop and approve an interdepartmental protocol for responding to cases of violence against children or signs of suicide risk. Such an algorithm should define a clear sequence of actions: upon detecting warning signs, the school or kindergarten immediately notifies the police and the Juvenile Affairs Commissions, after which, in cooperation with internal affairs and social protection authorities, measures are taken to ensure the child's safety and provide the family with the necessary support.

Monitoring students' psychological and emotional well-being. Introduce regular monitoring of children's and adolescents' psychological well-being in educational institutions. Conduct anonymous surveys, screening tests, or questionnaires at least once a year to identify hidden issues (such as depressive moods, signs of abuse, or suicidal thoughts). Use the monitoring results for targeted work by school psychologists and, if necessary, pass information to the competent authorities, while maintaining confidentiality.

- It is advised to incorporate collaborative game formats into teaching practices at all levels.
- Raising awareness among educators. Organise training courses and methodological workshops for teaching staff on early identification of the risks of forced marriage among female students. Teachers and counsellors should be required to notify the school administration and social worker of any noticeable signs, such as a girl suddenly stopping her studies, talk of an imminent "unexpected" marriage, or complaints of pressure from her family, so that preventive measures can be taken.
- Protocol for school screening and referral (via a psychologist) when there are signs of DFV within the family.
- Collaborating with parents and parent committees to identify hidden forms of DFV.

To the Ministry of Healthcare of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Specialised psychological support services. Establish specialised emergency psychological support services for children and adolescents in crisis situations. Ensure their 24/7 operation both online (chatbots, mobile applications, video consultations) and offline (helplines, mobile crisis teams). These services should employ trained child psychologists and psychiatrists who are capable of providing prompt support to children who have experienced violence or are showing suicidal thoughts.

Protocol for identifying violence for medical staff. Establish a standard protocol for paediatricians, family doctors, and nurses when performing preventive examinations of children (as well as elderly people and individuals with disabilities) to identify potential signs of violence or emotional trauma. Medical staff should be trained to recognise physical indicators such as bruises and burns in unusual locations, as well as behavioural signs of distress,



including anxiety, detachment, and signs of neglect, particularly when there are clear indications of disregard for the physical, psychological, and other needs of a child or dependent family member. When suspicions arise, doctors are obliged to report them to law enforcement agencies or social services, in accordance with an interdepartmental response protocol.

Mandatory post-crisis care for children. Ensure that every child who has experienced violence or attempted suicide receives mandatory post-crisis psychological and medical-social support. Create a long-term support plan for families: after emergency aid, the child and their parents (or guardians) should be overseen by a psychologist or psychiatrist, receive counselling to restore emotional well-being and develop positive parenting skills, and, if needed, get financial assistance to stabilise the situation.

Availability of child psychiatrists and clinical psychologists. Enhance access to qualified psychiatric and psychological care for children and adolescents across all regions. Increase the target state order for training child psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and psychotherapists. Encourage them to work in rural areas and small towns by offering bonuses and company housing, ensuring each region has enough specialists.

Supporting the mental health of vulnerable groups. Develop specific recommendations for primary healthcare workers on recognising signs of emotional burnout in those caring for elderly and seriously ill relatives. When such cases are identified, ensure that these families are referred to psychological support services (through polyclinics or mental health centres) to prevent violence caused by stress and fatigue.

Introduce brief screening for psychological and economic abuse in women's clinics; ensure safe referral pathways.

Establish standards for medical documentation of non-physical forms of violence (such as codes and templates for conclusions).

Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Preventive supervision of families. Enhance the system for proactively detecting cases of domestic violence in the regions, particularly in families with children. Arrange regular preventative visits by local police inspectors to disadvantaged and registered families, as well as respond rapidly to reports from schools, medical organisations and neighbours. The goal is early intervention before violence escalates, through protective orders issued to the abuser or preventive discussions held in the initial stages of the conflict.

Mandatory reporting of violence. Establish a rule where the police immediately notify the Juvenile Affairs Commission and social welfare authorities of every confirmed case of DFV involving children (even if they were not direct victims). Such interdepartmental notification will enable taking the family into supervision, providing psychological assistance to the children, and, if necessary, removing them from a dangerous environment.

Specialisation and training of personnel. Enhance the skills of investigators, interrogators, and local police officers in working with minors who are victims and witnesses of violence. Introduce mandatory training on child-friendly interviewing techniques that avoid causing additional trauma, as well as on documenting cases of violence against children, considering age-specific psychology. Furthermore, increase the staff in units responsible for protecting women and children from violence so that investigations into such cases are carried out by personnel with suitable training.

Mandatory programs for correcting the behaviour of aggressors. Develop and implement mandatory behaviour-correction programmes for individuals convicted or charged with DFV offences, including training in anger management, non-violent communication, and stress management. Implement the "Programmes for Abusers" project in pilot regions, following international examples (Batterer Intervention Programmes), with mandatory attendance monitoring and assessment of effectiveness. Allow courts to prescribe such programmes as an alternative or supplementary measure of punishment for less serious forms of violence.

Specialised investigative teams. Establish specialised investigative and operational teams in districts and regions with a high prevalence of bride kidnapping. Provide them with the necessary resources (transport, means of communication) and enable them to collaborate closely with the public prosecutor's office in investigating cases of forced marriage. Such groups will accumulate expertise, thereby enhancing transparency and quality in similar cases.

Support for witnesses of violence. Expand the initiative, launched in 2025, that offers support to witnesses of domestic violence – including children, elderly individuals, and persons with disabilities who have experienced

psychological trauma as a result of domestic violence. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, together with social protection authorities, must ensure that such victims can access psychologists or crisis centres, even if they are not formally considered victims in the case. This will help break the vicious cycle of violence and prevent it from being handed down through generations.

Implement measures to enhance the effectiveness of legal protections against stalking. It is advised to add a new administrative offence to the COI of the RK, called "Unlawful persecution," which states: "Unlawful persecution of a person or members of their family, demonstrated through actions aimed at establishing contact and/or tracking a person against their will, not involving violence, if these acts do not exhibit signs of a criminal offence, shall be punishable by a fine of thirty monthly calculation indices, community service for thirty to sixty hours, or administrative arrest for up to fifteen days." The introduction of additional liability measures for stalking is due to the fact that the PC of the RK stipulates the material composition of a criminal offence, under which liability arises only when socially dangerous consequences occur. Simultaneously, in line with the zero-tolerance policy towards violence, the very act of stalking should be punishable regardless of the outcomes (i.e., the formal composition of the offence), and this can be enforced within the framework of the COI of the RK. This measure will enhance criminal liability measures proactively, without causing significant harm to the victim.

To Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Public accountability and transparency. Maintain open records on cases of bride kidnapping and other types of forced marriage, as well as on domestic violence in general. It is recommended that the Prosecutor General's Office publish summary data at least once a year on the number of registered cases referred to court and on the measures taken to punish those responsible. Such transparency will enhance the law's preventive impact and show society how seriously the fight against these offences is.

To the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Positive role models. Highlight real stories of individuals who have escaped violence or overcome a serious crisis in the media and online. Films, documentaries, essays, and interviews with women and teenagers who have received help and started a new life free from violence. Showing such positive role models will help instil hope in victims and encourage them to seek support, while prompting society to show zero tolerance towards abusers.

Countering dangerous online content. Enhance collaboration with IT companies, internet providers, and social media administrators to monitor and prevent the spread of harmful content that endangers children's lives and health. It concerns the so-called "death groups", suicide missions and communities that encourage violence or self-harm. The Ministry should establish mechanisms to swiftly block such content and encourage alternative, positive material that enhances adolescents' mental well-being.

Campaigns against forced marriage. Conduct separate targeted media campaigns explaining the illegality and harmfulness of the practice of "qyz alyp qashu". Through television and radio programmes, talk shows, series and social media, emphasise that forced marriage violates human rights, causes psychological trauma, and is punishable by law. Develop social advertising for this topic, targeting regions where the tradition is strongest.

Engaging influencers. Actively engage well-known and respected public figures – such as popular actors, singers, athletes, bloggers, and religious leaders – to create and share educational content. With their participation, record videos, hold meetings, and organise online broadcasts condemning domestic violence and bride kidnapping. Special focus should be placed on influencers in rural areas and traditional communities to challenge stereotypes within their respective environments directly.

Conduct training sessions for journalists on how to report on cases of violence properly, shifting the focus from blaming the victim to identifying structural causes.

To Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Development of a network of crisis centres. Expand the network of state-operated and state-funded crisis centres and shelters for victims of domestic violence. Ensure that there are sufficient shelter places in each region to accommodate women with children, as well as girls who have been abducted for forced marriage. Particular attention must be given to remote and rural areas where such services are currently not available. Ensure that crisis centres offer a comprehensive range of assistance: psychological rehabilitation, legal support (including court representation), and social aid (such as temporary accommodation, food, and clothing).

Social workers from the FSC should be included in the list of civil service roles within social protection and included in the standard qualification profiles for managers, specialists, and other staff of social protection and employment organisations.

Support for families caring for dependent family members. Develop and implement support programmes for families caring for elderly people or relatives with disabilities to help prevent burnout and abuse. Establish a "respite care" system providing carers or temporary accommodation in a nursing home where those in need of care can stay for a period, thereby easing the burden on families. Establish self-help groups and courses for carers to access psychological support and practical care skills.

Accessibility of care for the elderly and people with disabilities. Ensure that the elderly and persons with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence are not left without support. Adapt crisis centres and support services to meet their needs: provide ramps and specialised facilities, and train staff in communication skills with elderly people and those with disabilities. Deploy mobile teams of social workers to visit elderly and disabled individuals who have experienced violence at home, providing necessary support or evacuating them to a safe location.

Implement economic-stability programmes to prevent family conflicts caused by unemployment and financial hardship (e.g., Career Navigators, USA; Career Readiness Training Programme, New York; IMAGE, South Africa).

Develop and implement programmes to prevent gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) in the workplace, including response protocols and employee training.

Juvenile Affairs Commissions

Case management for families at risk. Develop interdepartmental case management programmes to assist families affected by domestic violence or child abuse. Juvenile Affairs Commissions, along with education, police, and social protection authorities, should develop an individual plan for working with each family, from addressing parental behaviour (through counselling and participation in responsible parenting programmes) to overseeing the child's living conditions. This approach enables extending support beyond a one-off preventative conversation to offer long-term assistance to the family, helping to prevent repeated incidents of violence.

Analysis of the relationship between violence and suicide. Maintain statistical records of family and domestic issues related to suicide attempts among children from these families. At district and regional levels, the Juvenile Affairs Commissions must analyse data on how many children living in violent environments have attempted suicide or exhibit self-harming behaviour. Based on this analysis, implement preventive measures – for example, refer such children to psychologists for counselling, establish mentoring programmes, and conduct corrective work with parents.

Local executive bodies

Regional programmes for working with abusers. Establish centres for working with abusers that offer psychological counselling, addiction treatment, and social support. Launch regional information campaigns for men and women about available services to help manage aggressive tendencies or family conflicts before they escalate into violence.

Regional plans for the prevention of forced marriages. Develop and implement specific action plans at the regional and city levels to prevent the practice of forced marriages and bride kidnapping. Take into account the ethno-cultural specificities of the region: in areas where the tradition of "qyz alyp qashu" is deeply rooted, allocate more resources to educating the population, working with opinion leaders (elders, imams), and monitoring vulnerable situations. The plan should include both informational campaigns (through local media, meetings in rural districts) and specific measures, such as training local police officers to handle such cases and establishing working groups at local government offices to investigate each instance of a girl being abducted.

Support for NGOs and civic initiatives. Provide organisational and financial support to non-governmental organisations and initiative groups working to protect women and children from violence. It is recommended that local authorities collaborate with NGOs through social procurement, grants, or public-social partnerships to deliver services locally: managing crisis centres, providing training in rural communities, and offering counselling to the public via hotlines. Special attention should be given to projects in rural areas and small towns where access to public services is limited.

- Establish and support fathers' clubs and men's communities that focus on promoting positive fatherhood issues (example: Bandedereho, Rwanda).
- Launch local media campaigns and zero-tolerance-for-violence projects tailored to the regional context, using street theatre, podcasts, TV series, and public discussions.

- Launch regional hotlines, chats, and information campaigns titled "This is also violence."
- Anonymous support channels for latent forms of DFV.

To Maslikhats

The problem is a priority on the local agenda. Include issues of preventing domestic violence and protecting minors' rights on the agenda of Maslikhats meetings. Initiate discussions during sessions on the current situation regarding these issues, such as hearing annual reports from law enforcement, the education department, and the health department on violence levels and the measures implemented. Such public discussion will raise the profile of the issue and encourage executive bodies to work more actively to resolve it.

Control and budget provision at the local level. Approve regional programmes for family support and violence prevention, and oversee their implementation. It is essential for Maslikhats to ensure that the local budget allocates sufficient funds for social services, including maintaining crisis centres, funding school psychologists' salaries, and organising educational activities. When preparing the budget, demand that local authorities justify expenditure for these purposes and increase it if needed.

Interaction with the public and NGOs. Encourage ongoing community feedback on family dysfunction issues. Members of local Maslikhats can organise meetings in their constituencies and open days for citizens, where residents can report problematic families or cases of violence. Deputies must pass on the information they discover to the appropriate authorities and ensure that action is taken. Moreover, Maslikhats can serve as intermediaries between NGOs and akimats, advocating for the expansion of social orders and the successful implementation of public initiatives within state institutions.

Central government bodies, LEB, NGO sector

Approve the interdepartmental protocol for identifying and routing latent forms of DFV (psychological, economic, digital);

To the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan

It is advisable to consider the scientific advances of domestic researchers in criminal law and criminology related to DFV issues to improve the Republic of Kazakhstan's legislation and law enforcement practices.

- Include in the COI of the RK a new Article 453-1, which shall be worded as follows:

1. The dissemination of information and public statements that justify domestic violence, including blaming the victim, gender-based discriminatory statements, and any other form of distortion, regardless of the purpose of the activity in question...

2. An act referred to in part one of this article, committed repeatedly within a year after the imposition of an administrative penalty, as well as by a person authorised to perform public functions or a public opinion leader...

Note. For the purposes of this article, an influencer is defined as a person who, through their professional activities and other circumstances, is able to exert informational influence on a significant group of people.

Include psychological and economic abuse in the list of offences; extend the scope of protective orders to cover digital channels.

Introduce electronic protective orders and prohibit "reconciliation" in cases of repeat offences or high risk.

To clarify the subject of proof of latent forms (messages, transactions, digital logs).

Introduce risk assessment at initial contact (checklist for psychological, economic abuse and control signs).

Develop and implement methodological guidelines for classifying technologically mediated violence and assessing the admissibility of electronic evidence (screenshots, technical reports).

• It is advised that separate statistics be maintained on criminal offences committed within the family and domestic sphere, encompassing not only registered offences but also the number of cases referred to court, discontinued on non-rehabilitative grounds, and the number of persons convicted and acquitted.

• Given the negative educational impact on the child's psyche, it is advisable to consider establishing the commission of a criminal offence in the presence of minors as an aggravating circumstance for criminal liability and punishment, with amendments to Article 54 of the PC of the RK.

• Consider amending Chapter 55 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan to clarify procedures for criminal offences, aiming to simplify the investigation process, including for offences related to family and domestic incidents. The number of procedural actions and documents should be reduced, as with administrative infractions, to enhance the efficiency of investigations and reduce the number of cases terminated at the pre-trial and trial stages.

To the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Healthcare of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Review the recommendations of the Kazakhstan Association for Sexual and Reproductive Health (KASRH):

- Address the funding problem for licensed non-governmental crisis centres swiftly by implementing the model.
- Make adjustments and additions within the per capita funding framework (Unified Budget Categorisation) for temporary accommodation, night shifts, and technical staff.
- Ensure equal tariffs for organisations providing identical services and eliminate discriminatory differences between state-owned enterprises and non-governmental organisations.
- Statistics clearly show that psychological correction work with abusers is not being conducted actively enough. It is essential to develop corrective programmes for working with abusers, which are part of a comprehensive and holistic approach to preventing and fighting violence against women. To enhance the effectiveness of DFV prevention and incorporate this measure into the mental health care system, it is essential to ensure:
 - developing and approving a national standard for programmes to rehabilitate abusers, considering international practices and adapting them to Kazakhstan's socio-cultural context;
 - introduction of mandatory referral to psychological treatment as a measure alongside administrative or criminal sanctions, particularly in cases of repeated violence;
 - introduction to the Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Public Health and the Healthcare System" of mechanisms for coordination between courts, internal affairs bodies, healthcare institutions, and social services;
 - establishment of a state system to monitor programme effectiveness, including feedback from victims, analysis of participant behaviour, and recidivism rates.

The challenge of protecting victims in the early hours after acts of DFV, especially when the offender is intoxicated, is exacerbated by the three-hour detention limit and the lack of suitable temporary adaptation and detoxification centres (TADC). These restrictions hinder the justice process by preventing the abuser from being isolated and obstruct efforts to prevent more serious outcomes. In this regard, *a set of infrastructure measures must be implemented*, including opening at least 32 more TADC, prioritising single-industry towns and regions, and ensuring adequate levels of provision and funding.

To ensure comprehensive protection for victims of DFV, *systematic measures to eliminate victim blaming must be put in place*, drawing on international experience where legal, institutional and ethical mechanisms have already been tested.

- introduce legal provisions that limit references to the victim's behaviour during the examination of violence cases (similar to rape shield laws);
- review training standards for police officers, education, health care, and social services, ensuring the compulsory inclusion of an anti-victim-blaming module;
- introduce rules for ethical conduct and communication with victims in state institutions (based on the British IOPC guidelines);
- develop media standards that exclude accusatory rhetoric towards victims;
- establish administrative liability for public statements containing signs of victim blaming, especially by officials and bloggers.

Ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) and ILO Convention No. 190 on eliminating violence and harassment in the workplace to implement and further reinforce international human rights standards, ensure the supremacy of the principle of "law and order", and uphold zero tolerance for violence.



Appendix 1

Sample population, 3 000 respondents

	Total	Men	Women	Urban	Rural
Republic of Kazakhstan	3000	1425	1575	1903	1097
Abay region	95	46	49	58	37
Akmola region	128	62	66	72	56
Aktobe region	138	66	72	104	34
Almaty region	222	109	113	36	186
Atyrau region	98	47	51	54	44
WKR	108	52	56	61	47
Zhambyl region	172	84	88	76	96
Zhetysu region	103	50	53	46	57
Karaganda region	186	87	99	153	33
Kostanay region	142	67	75	89	53
Kyzylorda region	115	57	58	54	61
Mangystau region	104	50	54	49	55
Pavlodar region	125	58	67	90	35
NKR	92	43	49	46	46
Turkestan region	276	139	137	67	209
Ulytau region	33	16	17	26	7
EKR	124	58	66	83	41
Astana	218	99	119	218	0
Almaty	356	158	198	356	0
Shymkent	165	77	88	165	0

Source: Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, early 2025

ПАЙДАЛАНҒАН ӘДЕБИЕТТЕР ТІЗІМІ

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