

Fact sheet

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I)

Source:
National Assessment on VAWG in Iraq and the KR-I (2025)

Regional Observatory on VAWG,
EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI)

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01.
Study Overview

Objective

- Assess the prevalence, drivers and manifestations of VAWG.
- Identify legal, institutional and service gaps.
- Provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, civil society and international partners.

Methodology

Mixed-methods approach combining quantitative phase of survey questionnaire and qualitative phase of in-depth interviews.

Scope

Federal Iraq and the KR-I.

Sample Size

1,216 women respondents and **36** key informant interviews (KIIs).

Coverage

Four governorates in Federal Iraq (Baghdad, Najaf, Basra, and Anbar) and two governorates in KR-I (Erbil and Sulaymaniyah)

Implementing Parties

Regional Observatory on VAWG with a national research team.

02.
Key Findings

Prevalence and Forms of VAWG

55.7%

of surveyed women reported experiencing at least one form of violence in the last six months.

Physical violence 34.2%

Psychological abuse 28.4%

were the most common, followed by

Economic violence 15.8%

Forced marriage affects

10.7% of women.

Conflict-related **sexual harassment** affects

9.7% of women.

Cultural and Social Norms

18.5%

of respondents believe that **physical violence against the wife can be justified under certain conditions.**



Male guardianship is widely perceived as protective but reinforces women's dependency and restricts autonomy.

Access to Services

Only

33.7%

of respondents knew about a national hotline for reporting violence; fewer than 20% were aware of shelters.

Only

19.7%

of respondents in urban areas found access to healthcare to be "easy."

Only

6.9%

of respondents in rural areas reported that it is "easy" for women to access police services.



Services are largely concentrated in urban centres, leaving rural women up to four times less informed or served.

Impact of Armed Conflict

63.2%

of women believed **conflict has worsened VAWG.**



Displacement, family fragmentation and loss of income have **increased early marriage, sexual exploitation and trafficking.**



Displaced and refugee women face additional risks due to **insecurity in camps and a lack of protection mechanisms.**

Economic Dependence

71.1%

of women stated that economic dependency keeps them silent in the face of violence.



Limited access to credit, property rights and decent work **restricts women's ability to escape violence or rebuild livelihoods.**

Awareness and Prevention

59.9%

of women were unaware of any VAWG awareness campaigns.



Awareness levels are substantially lower in rural and marginalised communities.

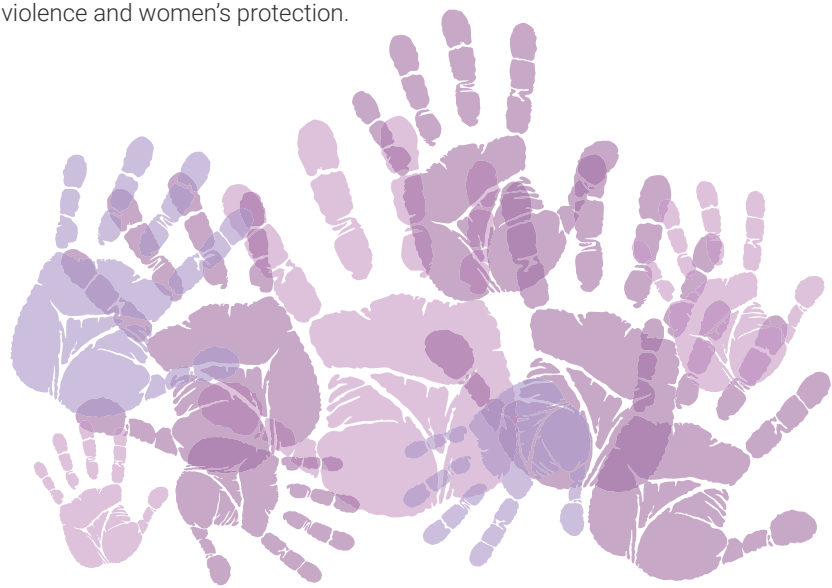


Policy Context

Area	Federal Iraq	Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I)
Legal Framework	No comprehensive law on VAWG; the draft Anti-Domestic Violence Law is under review.	Law No. 8 (2011) on Domestic Violence has been enacted.
CEDAW	Ratified with reservations on Articles 2, 16 and 29; the Optional Protocol has not been ratified.	Bound by federal ratification; no separate reservations.
Killing in the name of "honour crimes"	Penal Code Article 409 allows reduced sentences.	Mitigating circumstances were abolished under Laws No. 14/2002 and No. 3/2015.
FGM	Not criminalised but reported to be uncommon.	Explicitly prohibited under Law No. 8 (2011).
Marital Rape	Not criminalized.	Criminalised, under Article 2 of Law No. 8 (2011).
Minimum Marriage Age	18, but judicial exceptions allow marriage at 15 or below.	18, with limited exceptions for 16 or 15 in "extreme necessity."
Shelters and Services	No state-run shelters, but there are UN/NGO facilities and support centres.	Four official shelters and one temporary safe house managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.
National Strategies	National Strategy to Combat VAWG (2018–2030).	Regional Strategy to Combat VAWG (2017–2027).
Budgeting	No responsive budgeting addressing the needs of women. There are no budget lines dedicated to combating VAWG.	No responsive budgeting addressing the needs of women. There are no budget lines dedicated to combating VAWG.

Despite persistent challenges, Iraq and the KR-I have taken concrete steps toward advancing equality between women and men and addressing VAWG:

- Adoption of the National Strategy to Combat VAWG (2018–2030) and the National Strategy for Women (2023–2030) at the federal level. There is also the National strategy to combat VAWG (2017 -2027) at the KR-I level.
- Enactment of Law No. 8 (2011) in the KR-I, which remains the first dedicated domestic violence law in Iraq.
- Establishment of General Directorate for Combating Violence Against Women and the Family (DCVAW) with 9 directorates and 27 offices for combating violence against women and families in the governorates, independent administration, and districts of the KR-I.
- Establishment of family protection police units and VAWG focal points within security and judicial institutions in Federal Government.
- Expansion of collaboration between government, civil society and international partners.
- Growing public awareness and community dialogue in schools, universities and through media campaigns addressing equality between women and men.
- Increasing engagement of religious and tribal leaders in advocating non-violence and women's protection.



03. Key Recommendations

The government of Federal Iraq and the KRG are encouraged to institutionalise the 2024 Regional Index on VAWG as an essential monitoring and evaluation tool within their national frameworks for combating VAWG and promoting women's human rights.

By continuously tracking this Index, both governments can evaluate progress, identify emerging trends and formulate evidence-based policies that address the root causes of VAWG.

Additionally, ensuring that data collection and analysis are aligned with regional standards will enhance transparency, coordination and accountability.

This approach will ensure that national responses to VAWG are measurable and effectively focused on prevention and protection.

Federal Iraq



Enact a specific and comprehensive law on VAWG covering all forms of violence, alternatively, endorse the draft Anti-Domestic Violence Law and expand it to cover all forms of VAWG, provide protection and stipulate prevention and coordination among service providers.



Strengthen judicial and police capacities, with specialised units for VAWG in all governorates.



Establish a legal and institutional framework for government-run shelters nationwide, ensuring sustainable funding, integrated protection services, and coordination with civil society.



Remove CEDAW reservations and ratify the Optional Protocol.



Implement responsive budgeting addressing the needs of women supported by transparent monitoring mechanisms.



Institutionalise national referral pathways and 24/7 hotlines.

Kurdistan Region of Iraq



Enact a specific and comprehensive law on (VAWG) that covers all forms of violence; alternatively, expand the Domestic Violence Law No. 8 (2011) to encompass all forms of VAWG, ensure protection, and include provisions for prevention and coordination among service providers.



Expand multi-sectoral protection centres combining legal, psychosocial and medical services.



Ensure coverage of shelters in the whole KR-I, including those designed for women with disabilities.



Conduct regular prevalence surveys and integrate equality between women and men into education curricula.



Implement responsive budget in the Budget Law by the federal government that addresses the needs of both women and men, supported by transparent monitoring mechanisms.