

Impact of COVID-19 Lockdown on women

As countries around the world are announcing lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, more and more women around the globe are being subjected to physical, mental, sexual, socio-economical violence and discrimination. Similarly, in Bangladesh, study shows that lockdown has put women's lives at risk by escalating the pre-pandemic domestic violence throughout the country. Pandemic and economic fallout is creating mental pressure on both men and women, however, because of the gender power relationship, women are facing the consequences in the form of domestic

violence perpetrated by intimate partners and family members. While home was already the “most dangerous place” for women to be, they are now trapped with their abusers and cannot reach out for help.

IID has conducted a rapid survey in May, 2020 to see the impact of COVID-19 on the urban educated women. While different studies show that poverty and lack of education are important underlying factors of domestic violence, this study shows urban educated women are also being impacted due to the ongoing confinement resulted from COVID-19 pandemic.

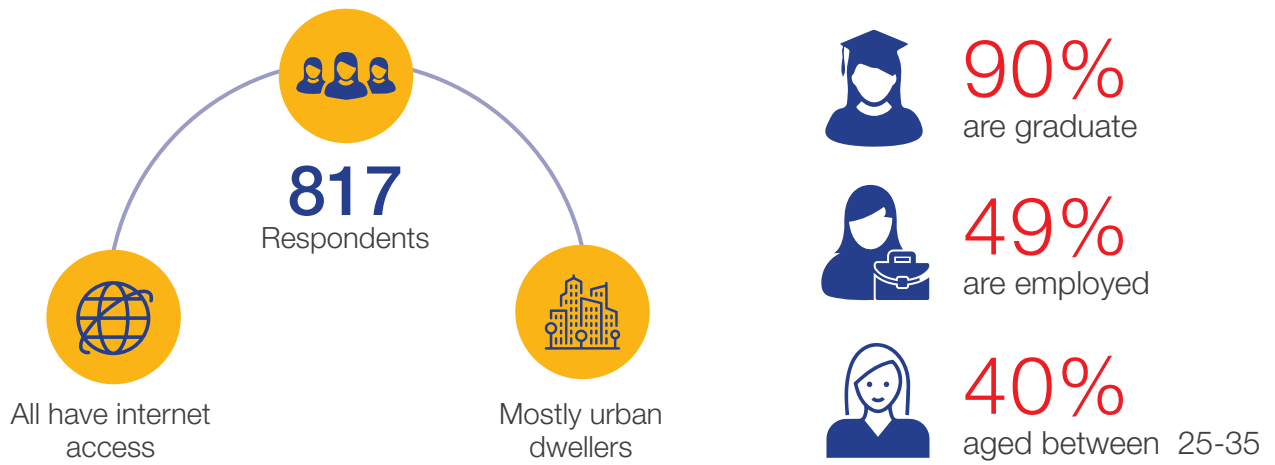
Methodology

The study was conducted through a rapid online survey. To ensure the effectiveness of the study objective, IID followed the snowball sampling method. The questionnaire was shared through text messages using social media apps among women who were identified to meet the criteria of the target respondents and they were asked to further share it among their peer women.

4 takeaways

1. Existing unequal distribution of household and caregiving works increased during lockdown
2. Cases of domestic violence intensified as women are staying with their perpetrators twenty-four hours
3. Women are at high-career risk compared to men due to increased household responsibilities
4. Most women are not being able to report violence, as on the one hand they are staying with the abusers and on the other hand, lockdown has shattered the support systems.

Women who were surveyed



Increased Household Chores

Numerous research shows women bear most of the household responsibilities, especially caregiving, raising children, cooking and cleaning. Our study also shows that this long period of staying at home has further intensified the burden of household chores on women and girls.



72% women said frequency of preparing snacks for family increased during lockdown



63% women reported they need to spend more time on cooking now



53% women said their husband and family members help in cleaning and organizing home



21% women reported their husband and family members complain more about cleaning and organizing home

“
I have been asked to do all the chores without arguing since there's no domestic help now.

-A survey respondent ”

“
My husband washes our clothes but avoids going to the rooftop to dry them. Because if neighbors see, that will hurt his male ego.

-A survey respondent ”

Effect on Mental Health

Emerging studies show that women are experiencing more emotional brunt than men due to COVID-19 pandemic. Our study also found that a major portion of women think that their mental health is being affected due to lockdown. They are staying more occupied with home-schooling of children, care giving and cooking than before, since the lockdown started. Data also suggests that the workload on homemakers increased more compared to the women who are employed and working from home.



32%

women reported they get **less leisure time** than before



42%

Work at home
(Homemakers)



33%

Work from home
(Employed women)



54%

women said that **family relationships improved** during lockdown



62%

mothers spend **more time on children's education** than their husband and family members



46%

women think they have become **more ill-tempered**



39%

women reported that their family members have become **more ill-tempered**

“
I am a single mother. My children nowadays fight with each other that they never used to before the lockdown. It upsets me.

-A survey respondent ”

“
Nobody at my in-laws helps me in doing chores. I am the last person to sleep and first to wake up as everything should be done before others wake up.

-A survey respondent ”

Impact on Economic Life

Economic lives of women are being disproportionately affected than men as women globally have less job security, suffer wage gap and hold major share of the informal sector. Due to the power dynamics, women's careers are more vulnerable than men's when it comes to prioritizing household roles. This particular study found a significant portion of women think they might be required to quit their jobs due to family responsibilities.



84%

of the employed women said they **get support from husband/family** to work from home



90%

of the married working women think between her and her husband, if one needs to **quit job due to household responsibilities**, it will be her

“
Men lack the sense of emergency and patience.

-A survey respondent ”

“
I always avoided power games but it has only given me stress.

-A survey respondent ”

Rise in Domestic violence

Data shows that even before the pandemic, around 72 percent of women faced violence by their partners while only around 1 percent sought police help. While home was already the “most dangerous place” for women to be, they are now trapped with their abusers and cannot reach out for help. Our study found that mental abuse and rude behavior are the major forms of violence both married and unmarried women are facing, while the perpetrators might vary. Married women also reported facing sexual violence and marital rape during the lockdown.

Out of **817** women **28%** reported
of facing **violence during the lockdown**



69% women marked mental abuse as the most prevalent form of violence



56% women reported facing rude behavior, while the percentage is higher among unmarried women (**61%**) than married women (**53%**)



7% women said they were subjected to physical abuse



Among the married women, **12%** were subjected to marital rape and **2%** reported about sexual abuse



Continuous mental abuse and negligence made up my mind for divorce.

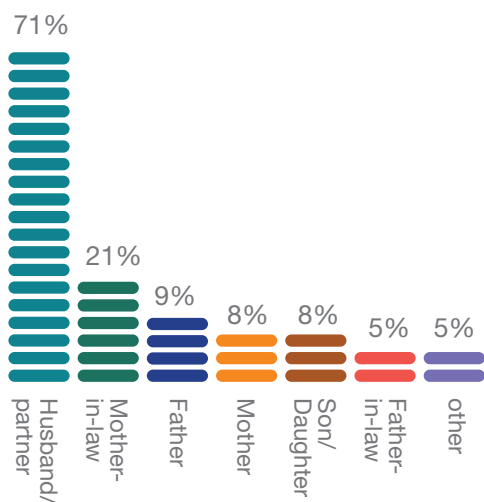
-A survey respondent



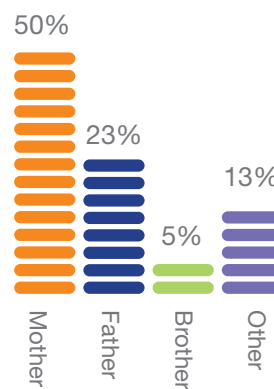
I overheard dad saying, there should be rule a for beating up the wife.

-A survey respondent

71% of married women reported **husband/partner** as the perpetrator



50% of unmarried women reported **mother** as the perpetrator



“My husband uses unspeakable vulgar language with me.”
-A survey respondent

“It mentally upsets me as my mother keeps scolding me about chores.”
-A survey respondent

“Since I and my father talk more now, I am shocked after learning about his patriarchal traits.”
-A survey respondent



64% of women who faced violence **did not take any step** against it

“My father threatened to kill me when I protested his abusive behavior.”
-A survey respondent

Preferred method for lodging complaints

Lodging complaints against domestic violence has become more difficult as women are living with the perpetrators and their mobility is also more restricted than before. In the survey, women suggested the following mechanism that might work during this shutdown period-



44%

Women support center's helpline



24%

Govt./Police helpline



22%

Informing friends/close relatives



15%

Online reporting



14%

Text message reporting



9%

Outbound call from authority

“

Should I file a case? You know in which country and culture we are in, right.

-A survey respondent ”

“

No support system is working right now other than phone consultation. Many women are living with their perpetrators, hence cannot access the shelter they need.

-A survey respondent ”

Recommendations



Create advocacy and awareness around increased domestic violence, harmful masculinity, increased household work burden and financial insecurities of women



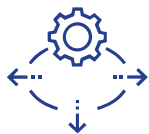
Ensure criminal justice related to domestic violence cases through virtual court hearings



Enhance online psychological counselling for women and girls



Introduce a safe and simplified mechanism to seek urgent help, such as online chats, text message and using code words with first responders



Strengthen support systems, including shelters, helplines and fast response to address gender based violence

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