

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN DURING COVID-19

Service use and strategies and actions implemented
in response across the European Region

Nadia Butler
Research Fellow, Public Health Institute,
Liverpool John Moores University





RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN AND CHILDREN DURING
COVID-19

Impact on service provision, strategies
and actions in the WHO European Region

STUDY OBJECTIVES

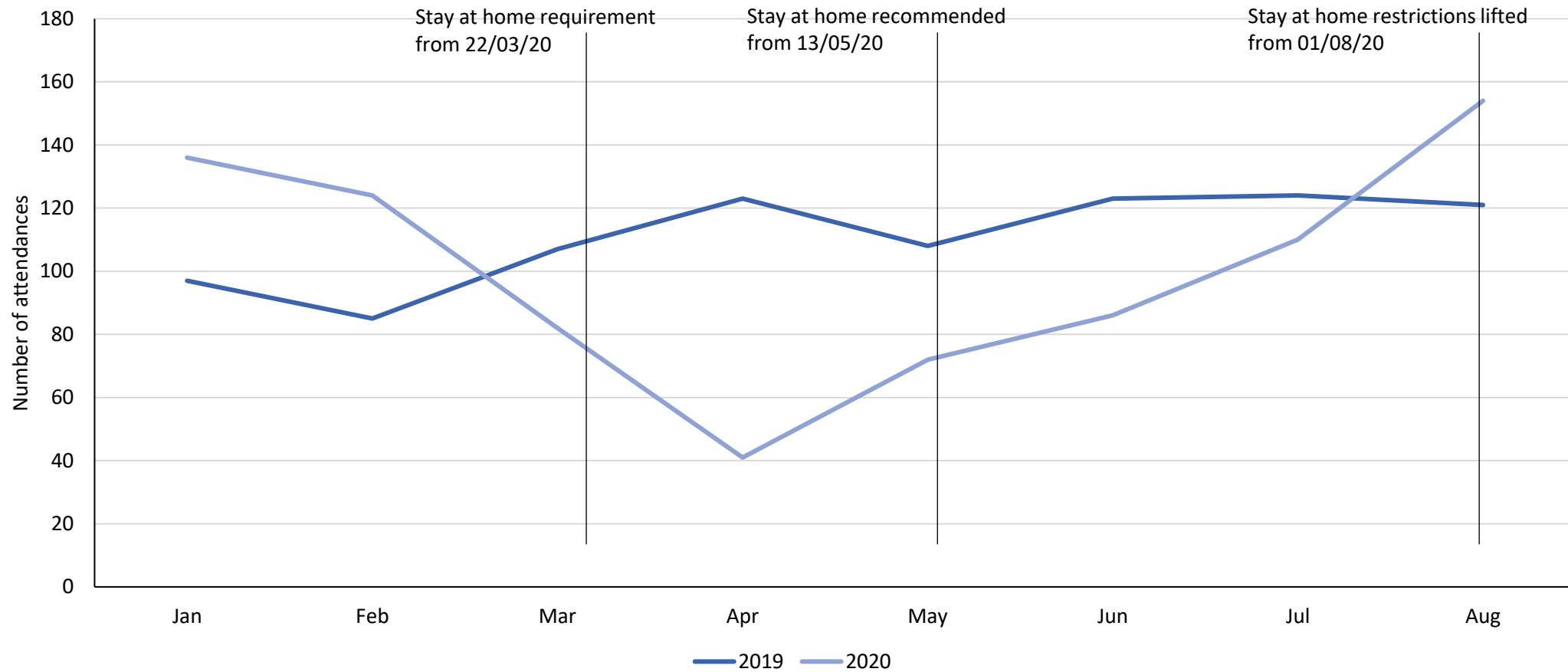
- 1. Explore changes in service demand related to VAWC during the COVID-19 pandemic across WHO European Region
- 2. Examine measures taken by countries to prevent and respond to VAWC during the COVID-19 pandemic

METHODOLOGY

- Mixed methods design
- **Survey** with representatives from WHO European Healthy Cities Network and national violence and injury prevention focal points (*n=36 representing 21 Member States*)
- **Interviews** with service providers and experts in violence prevention (*n=12 representing 9 Member States*)
- **Scoping review** of media reports (*n=452*), grey literature (*n=158*), and academic literature (*n=25*) in English and Russian

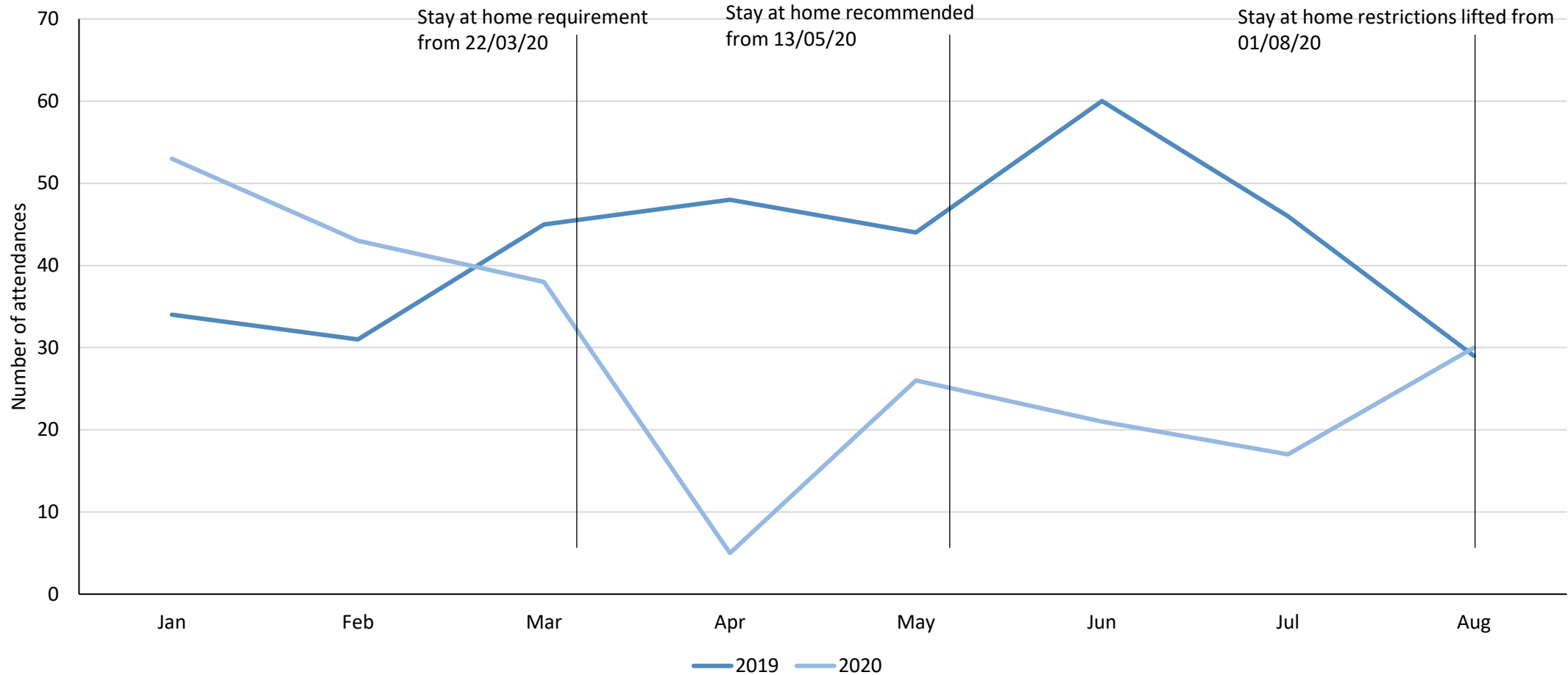
Decrease in health service demand relating to violence against women

Female (adult) assault emergency department attendances, monthly trends 2019 and 2020, Merseyside, UK



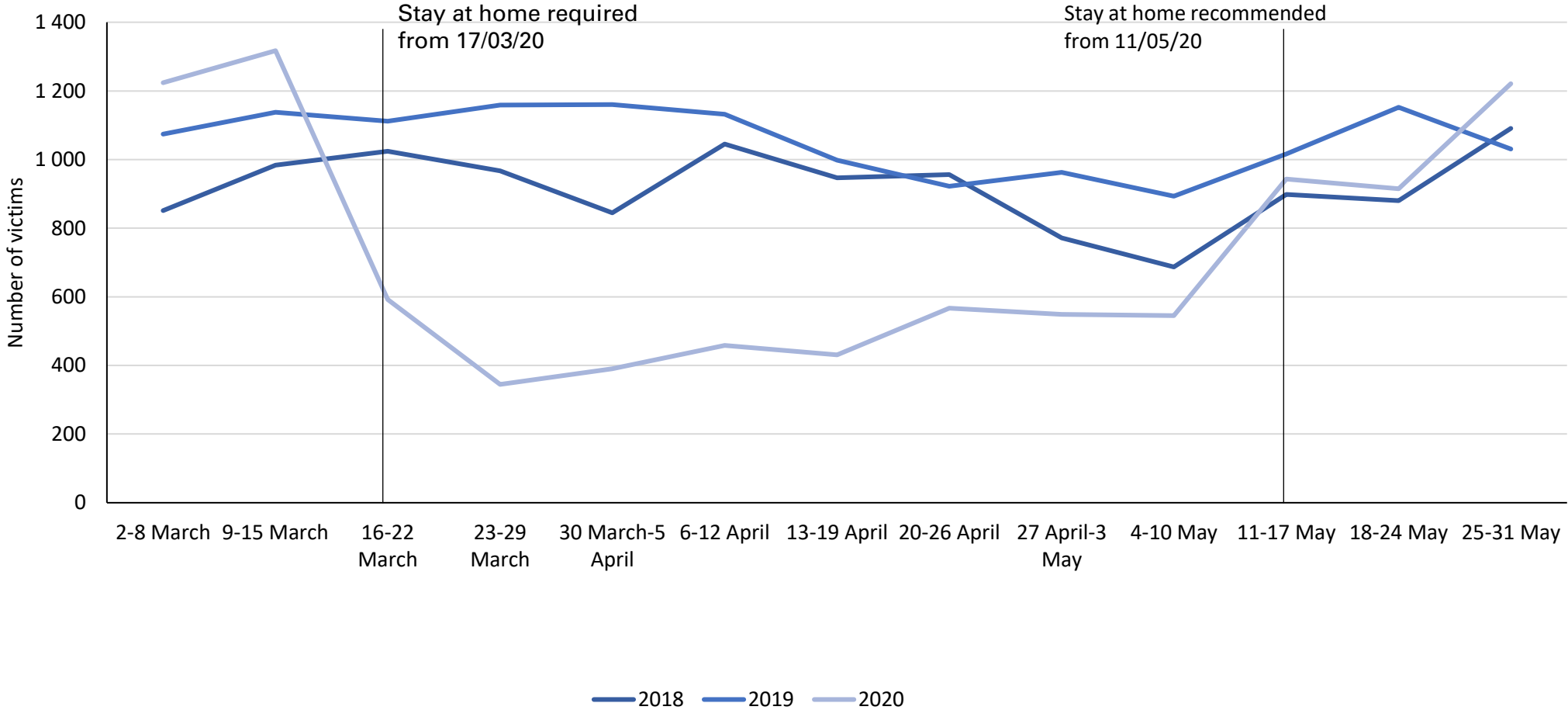
Decrease in health service demand relating to violence against children

Child (0-17 years) assault emergency department attendances, monthly trends 2019 and 2020, Merseyside, UK



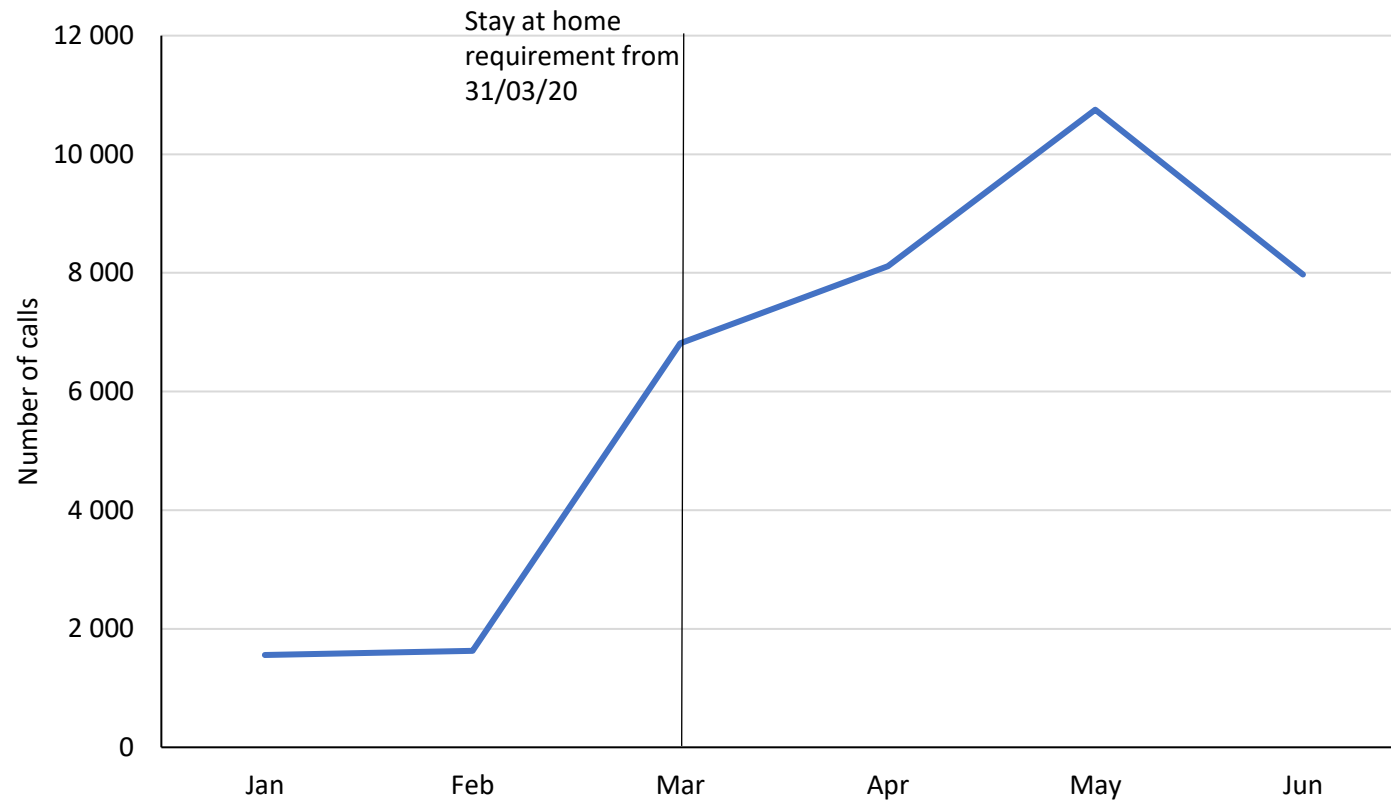
Decrease in police service demand relating to sexual violence

Police-recorded victims of sexual violence, weekly trends 2018, 2019 and 2020, France



Increase in NGO demand relating to violence against children

Calls to National Child Toll-free Helpline, monthly trends 2020, Ukraine



“In March 2020 we have had 6812 calls on violence against children – in one month. In February 2020 we had 1629. So, there was a six times increase in number of calls from children.”

- La Strada, Ukraine

OVERALL CHANGES IN SERVICE USE DURING COVID-19 ACROSS EUROPEAN REGION

20.3% increase
in VAWC service utilisation during
COVID-19



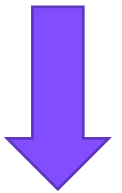
NGOs: 48%



Law enforcement: 6%



Health and social care: 8%



MEASURES TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO VAWC

4 Key Areas

1. Adapting response services
2. Awareness and outreach
3. Legal support and official guidance
4. Service coordination

Responses from governments and NGOs to violence against women and children (VAWC) during COVID-19 in the WHO European Region:



EXAMPLES OF ACTIONS BY GOVERNMENTS AND NGOS IN 2020*:

- ▶ Austria, Georgia, Malta and Slovakia posted flyers and informative posters in pharmacies and/or supermarkets on how to seek help if facing abuse.
- ▶ In Poland, a fictitious online cosmetic store was set up through Facebook where VAWC survivors could request help by pretending to order goods.
- ▶ The French organization "Association L'Enfant Bleu" used the gaming platform Fortnite to provide a communication route for children and young adults facing abuse to report it and access support.
- ▶ The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in Wales and the mobile telephone provider O2 worked in partnership to offer free 30-minute awareness raising webinars.
- ▶ The Ukrainian television show "Early Swallows" was uploaded to YouTube to help children and young adults to find information on how they can be affected by violence and how to seek help.
- ▶ Public Health Scotland worked with third sector partners and women with learning disabilities to provide easy-to-read, accessible VAWC resources.
- ▶ In Croatia, the Ministry of Justice partnered with the City of Zagreb Child and Youth Protection Clinic to conduct a "Behind the Door" campaign to prevent VAWC during the pandemic.
- ▶ The Irish Department of Justice Equality collaborated with frontline services to develop TV, radio and social media advertisements on their continued support for those subjected to abuse.
- ▶ In Poland, NASK, a state-owned research institute under the Ministry of Digitalization, published online articles on how to stay safe online during COVID-19.
- ▶ An online awareness campaign "Stopfisha" was launched in France through social media as a response to the suspected rise in revenge porn during lockdown.
- ▶ The Andorran Government actively broadcasted information regarding VAWC services through its Department of Communication.
- ▶ In Spain, the Ministry of Equality published guidelines for women experiencing GBV.
- ▶ The Federal Office for Public Health in Switzerland launched a new platform for mental health support and information, with information on domestic violence.
- ▶ In Slovenia, the city of Ljubljana distributed leaflets containing NGO contact numbers for VAWC and broadcasted violence hotline numbers on public display screens.
- ▶ At the regional level, municipalities in Finland, such as the City of Tampere, launched websites to provide contact information for GBV survivors, and the Spanish regions of Gijón and Madrid conducted information dissemination campaigns.
- ▶ The Union of Women Association of Heraklion in Greece ensured a constant presence on television shows, news channels and radio commercials to spread awareness on GBV.
- ▶ In Wales (United Kingdom), "Dewis Choice", a project by Aberystwyth University focusing on elder abuse, developed an online training for professionals to support them in identifying and protecting older people at risk of or experiencing elder abuse.

Response Services

Open air F2F appointments
Extra funding for NGOs
Financial/goods support
Shelter expansion/maintain
Helpline expansion/maintain
Move resources online
Proactive contact with survivors
VAWC App
EU funding
Testing for survivors
Emergency mobile teams
Monitor past perpetrators

Immediate rent payments for victims of domestic abuse granted

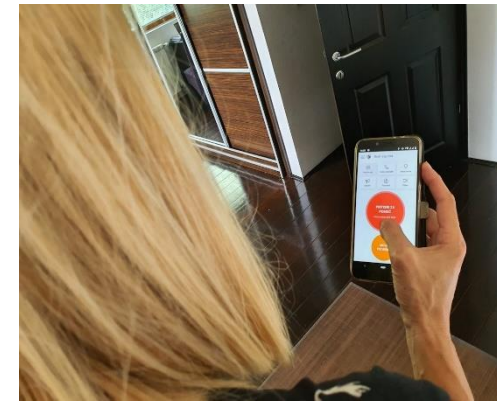
Those fleeing violence will not have to undergo means test for three months

© Sun, Jun 14, 2020, 15:35

Marseille football club hosts women victims of domestic violence during lockdown



https://www.irishtimes.com/... - 14 04



Awareness and Outreach



Advocacy



Community/corporate fundraising

Media campaign/Info dissemination



Creation of taskforce



Legal Support and Official Guidance

Alcohol ban

Police prioritise DV cases

Exempt from lockdown measures

Official guidance/policy

Fast track/prioritise/extend legal processes

Eviction of perpetrators

Alcohol sales banned in Greenland capital during lockdown

Move aims to cut violence against children during coronavirus confinement

- [Coronavirus - latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Service Coordination

Police codeword
Childcare provision

Free transport Shop help point

Pharmacy help point

Raise police awareness

Postman check in
Dentist guidelines updated



Mascarilla-19

If you are suffering domestic violence or sexual harassment, go to the chemist's and ask for a face mask that can save your life.



Ask for "Mascarilla-19"
At the chemist's they will know they need to phone 112.

100 años de la Independencia de Colombia
UN
ICI Instituto Colombiano de Investigación Científica
Gobierno de Colombia



LESSONS FOR FUTURE POLICY AND PRACTICE

- Relevant in event of future COVID-19 measures but also to violence prevention work in other emergencies or prolonged periods in the home
- Highlighted lack of reliable data on VAWC
- Importance of NGOs – accessibility and trusted relationship
- New technologies and innovative ways to reach and support victims – but digital divide
- National and international media attention drawn to issue of VAWC
- Reopening of night-time economy and reappearance of violence in public spaces – focus on hidden forms of violence in private spaces should not be lost

THANK YOU!

Full study report available here:

<https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289056403>

Links to associated peer reviewed papers:

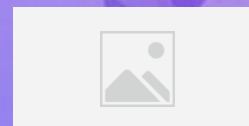
<https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-022-12644-9>

<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/11/4/e045872>

Nadia Butler
n.i.butler@ljmu.ac.uk

BMJ Open Emerging responses implemented to prevent and respond to violence against women and children in WHO European member states during the COVID-19 pandemic: a scoping review of online media reports

Isabelle Pearson,¹ Nadia Butler,² Zhamin Yelgezekova,³ Åsa Nihlén,³ Isabel Yordi Aguirre,³ Zara Quigg,² Heidi Stöckl¹



BMC Public Health BMC Series

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Impact of COVID-19 and Associated Measures On Health, Police and Non-Government Organisation Service Utilisation Related to Violence Against Women and Children

Nadia Butler, Zara Quigg, Isabelle Pearson, Zhamin Yelgezekova, Åsa Nihlén, Mark A Bellis, Yongjie Yon, Jonathon Passmore, Isabel Yordi Aguirre, Heidi Stöckl