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Working Paper

Domestic violence legislation: Awareness and support in Latvia, Russia and Ukraine

SITE Working Paper, No. 58

Provided in Cooperation with:

Stockholm Institute of Transition Economics (SITE), Stockholm School of Economics

Suggested Citation: Perrotta Berlin, Maria et al. (2022) : Domestic violence legislation: Awareness and support in Latvia, Russia and Ukraine, SITE Working Paper, No. 58, Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm Institute of Transition Economics (SITE), Stockholm

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Stockholm Institute of Transition Economics

WORKING PAPER

June 2022

No. 58

Domestic violence legislation
Awareness and support in Latvia, Russia and Ukraine

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Domestic violence legislation

Awareness and support in Latvia, Russia and Ukraine ^{*}

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May 30, 2022

Abstract

A large literature, that received further momentum during the Covid-19 pandemic, evaluates legislative initiatives to combat domestic violence. For legislation to induce a reduction in crime, information and awareness among the population are in many cases necessary. This study investigates the factors that correlate with awareness and support for domestic violence legislation in three countries that introduced recent reforms. We find that men, younger cohorts, married and less educated people are less well-informed, as well as minority language speakers. Studies of legislation awareness are important to motivate and target information campaigns.

Keywords: *Domestic violence; legislation awareness; reforms; norms.*

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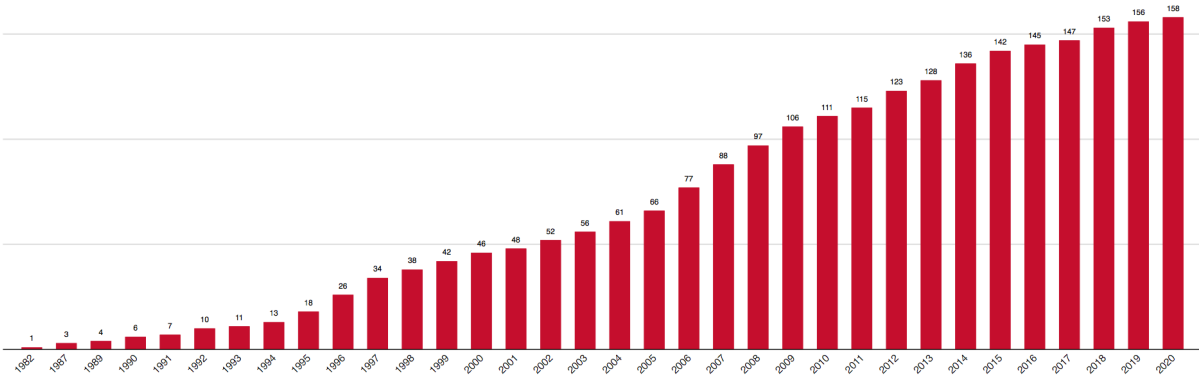
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1 Introduction

The UK ‘Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act’ of 1976 is considered the very first piece of legislation dedicated to combating domestic violence. Before that, domestic violence was either explicitly allowed, albeit within limits of method (e.g. the common law “rule of thumb”, stating that it was legitimate for a husband to discipline his wife using a rod not thicker than his thumb) and circumstances (e.g. the curfew between 10pm and 7am introduced in London in 1895, so as not to disturb the neighbors’ night rest), or, at least after the 1948 UN declaration of universal human rights, assimilated to other forms of violence and abuse. During the last four decades, though, changes accelerated in this respect around the world, as shown in Figure [1](#). Legislative measures have been introduced in many countries that cover different aspects of preventing, protecting against and prosecuting various forms of violence and abuse that might happen within the marriage or the family. Research strives to offer evaluations on what legal provisions are most effective, in a setting in which statistics and information are still far from perfect, and as a consequence of the dearth of strong evidence, the public debate on the matter is often lively.

Depending on the type of provision, the effect of legislation on the prevalence of domestic violence may work through different pathways. Measures that separate perpetrator and victim(s) physically, such as restrictive orders or prison sentences, will have an immediate and mechanical effect. A more indirect effect goes through the threat of punishment, or *deterrence*. Legislating on a phenomenon also shines the statistics spotlight on it, by mandating or encouraging documentation and follow-up over time. The issues

Figure 1: NUMBER OF DV LAW COUNTRIES



Notes: The figure plots the number of countries that have legislation specifically addressing domestic violence, over time. Source: Women, Business and the Law Data for 1971-2021 (World Bank).

with under-reporting remain, of course, but at least more efforts can be expected in this direction.

The most indirect, but arguably most powerful and long-lasting effect of legislation is though its potential to change norms of behavior (Hoff and Walsh, 2019). Social norms change over time, and norms around domestic violence are no exception. Figure 2 shows a substantial, though not geographically uniform, progress between the earliest and latest available wave of the DHS survey, a popular source of information on attitudes in this area for many countries in the developing world. There is some evidence that norms can even be

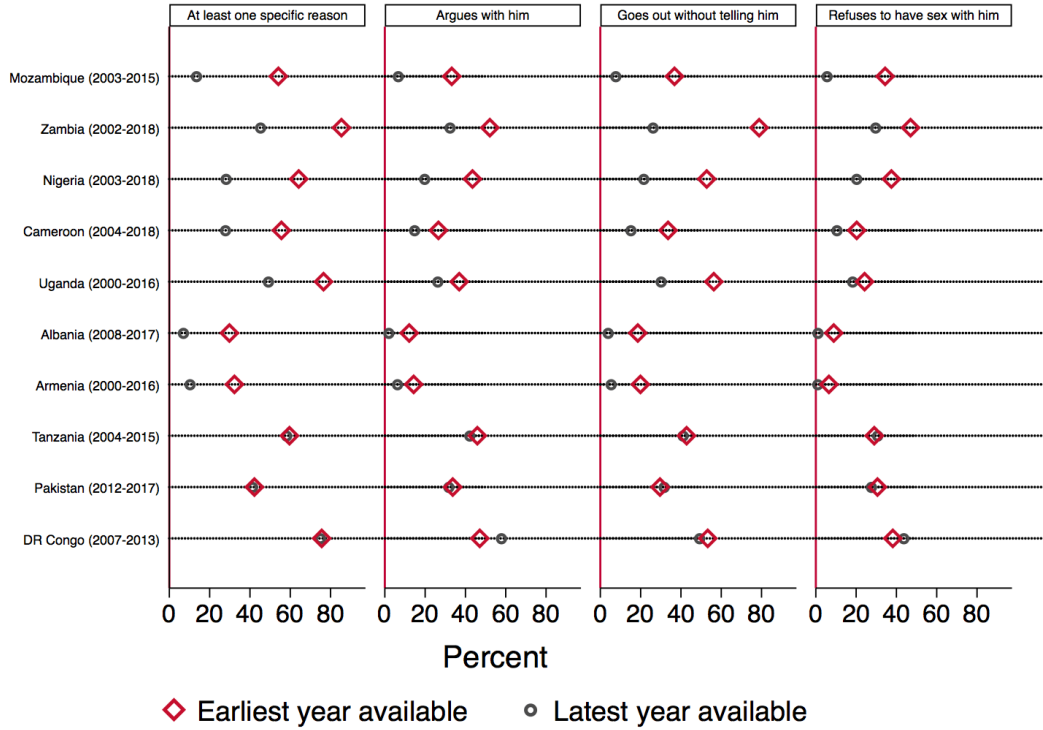
changed intentionally by policy.¹ However, the role of legislation in shaping norms, and as a consequence affecting behavior, is not straightforward to ascertain. In theory we may expect legislation to have such an influence by virtue of its many functions in society: the function of coordinating mechanism in cases where multiple equilibria exist (think driving to the left or to the right, [Hadfield and Weingast \(2014\)](#)); the symbolic function of explicating the shared values of a society ([Bénabou and Tirole, 2011](#)); and most importantly the basis for “decentralized enforcement” in the case of private or hidden behaviors ([Pomeranz, 2015](#); [Kleven et al., 2016](#); [Naritomi, 2019](#)), that require people to police themselves, victims or witnesses to report, such as the case of domestic violence.

With the exception of the first channel, it is clear that these effects require awareness and information about the current legislation. Deterrence cannot be achieved if it is not generally known what the sanctions are, nor can private behaviors coordinate and norms be shaped if people are not aware of a legal provision on the matter. The evidence on this is unfortunately quite scarce. A survey of criminology studies on deterrence ([Nagin, 2013](#)) identifies it as a major knowledge gap. A few studies are suggestive of a link between awareness and behavior, showing evidence that awareness of legal prescriptions is higher among relevant populations, variously defined.² In economics, a large literature investigates how economic decisions are affected by information (e.g. [Chetty and Saez, 2013](#); [Liebman and Luttmer, 2015](#)), as well as its salience (e.g. [Chetty et al., 2009](#); [Finkelstein, 2009](#))

¹Some examples on development policy interventions are [Kim et al. \(2007\)](#); [Pulerwitz et al. \(2015\)](#); [Dhar et al. \(2018\)](#); [Kiplesund and Morton \(2014\)](#); [Munshi and Myaux \(2006\)](#).

²For example, [Hjalmarsson \(2009\)](#) shows a discrete jump in information about penalties for auto theft around the age of criminal majority.

Figure 2: ATTITUDES ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AROUND THE WORLD



Notes: The figure plots the share of DHS respondents who believe that a husband is justified to beat his wife, by reason. Source: DHS, various waves.

and complexity (Hastings and Weinstein, 2008; Bettinger et al., 2012; Kling et al., 2012). However it is unclear to what extent this might apply to violent crimes.

When it comes to studies of the effectiveness of legislation against domestic violence (DV legislation), to the best of our knowledge the only study that explicitly focuses on the role of awareness is Li et al. (2021). They find that police officers become less tolerant of domestic violence when informed about the current legislation. The mere existence of DV legislation has been associated with a decrease in women-to-men adult mortality ratio in a cross-country study by Amin et al. (2016). However in this setting it is hard to claim a causal relationship. There are of course a number of studies that focus on specific details

of the legislation in different contexts. Iyengar (2009) focusing on mandatory arrest laws, Garcia-Hombrados and Martínez-Matute (2021) on specialized courts, and Amaral et al. (2021) on the new Indian women police stations are just few examples. The study of reforms is potentially an attractive setting to identify, under certain conditions, the causal effect of a legislative prescription. But once again, in order to translate into behavioral change, the legislative reform needs to be known by the general population.

Awareness campaigns have been a popular intervention around the globe as a means to fight the increases in domestic violence observed during the Covid pandemic. An important reason for focusing on explaining awareness is just this: the motivation and targeting of awareness campaigns. When a lack of information is identified in a group at risk, the need for policy interventions becomes more salient, and at the same time the intervention can be targeted with higher precision towards those who would benefit the most or need it the most.

The focus of this study is awareness of and support for DV legislation in three countries that recently introduced reforms. Our aim is to explain the variation in awareness and support on the basis of a broad range of socioeconomic factors as well as a number of attitudes, perceptions and experiences among the respondents. In chronological order, the reforms we study are: a decriminalization of first-time minor domestic offences in Russia (2017); an extension of criminalization to cover not only physical, but also economic and psychological abuse in Ukraine (2019); amendments to the Law “On the Police” in Latvia (2022), allowing the police to separate the victim from an abuser even without the victim’s application. The reforms are described in more details in the next section, together with the background in which they were put forward.

To elicit measures of awareness and support for DV legislation and the recent reforms, as well as the socioeconomic background and the other indicators that we correlate with them, we conducted a survey. This is described extensively in Myck et al. (2022), and Section 3 gives a short overview. In Sections 4 and 5 we then turn to our analysis of factors explaining support for legislation and awareness about the reforms, respectively. We conclude with policy recommendations.

2 Background - the three reforms and the debate around them

In this section we describe in more details the three reforms, one by one in chronological order, as well as the context of domestic violence in each country and the related debate.

2.1 Russia

Measuring the prevalence of domestic violence is often difficult, but the existing statistics suggest that this is a rather pervasive phenomenon in Russia. According to Human Right Watch, in 2017 over 36,000 Russian women and 26,000 children faced daily domestic violence and abuse (HRW, 2017), and in 91% of the cases the aggressor was the woman's husband (ANNA Report, 2015). In early 2017 the Duma decriminalized some forms of domestic violence: first-time minor domestic offenses now bear an administrative

rather than criminal penalty.³ They are punishable by a maximum of 15 days of administrative arrest, a fine of 5,000 to 30,000 rubles (about 80 to 480 USD at the time), or up to 120 hours of a community service. Previously, these offences, considered criminal offences, carried a maximum jail sentence of two years. Russian feminist groups and human right advocates, as well as international media, have suggested that the legal change could decrease the reporting of domestic violence from victims and increase its occurrence. Others claimed, to the contrary, that the reform was meant to facilitate and increase reporting. Since many victims are economically and/or emotionally dependent on the perpetrators, they might have an easier time accepting an administrative punishment rather than jail sentences implying separation, split of the family, loss of income, and higher risk of retribution. More ideological voices, such as representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, campaigned for the state to simply keep out of what is traditionally considered private family business.

2.2 Ukraine

The question of violence against women and possible ways of fighting it became more salient in the context of Ukraine's European integration, which requires appropriate changes in legislation to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. An OSCE study on violence against women conducted in the spring and summer of 2018 confirmed the high level of domestic violence prevalence in Ukraine and low level of rights

³A recent case in the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation declared unconstitutional this provision making the punishment for battery a criminal offence only after the first occurrence is considered an administrative offence, effectively because administrative punishments expire after one year. No changes have as of yet been implemented, however.

and legislation awareness⁴. It showed that gender-based violence is a concern for 64% of Ukrainian women, while 67% of women stated that they have experienced psychological, physical, or sexual violence from a partner or non-partner since the age of 15. However, 26% of women considered domestic violence a private matter. The study also revealed that one of the significant barriers to addressing domestic violence is a lack of trust in institutions and a low level of awareness of rights and opportunities for victims. According to the study, women are not sufficiently aware of where to seek help or what to do in case of violence: 48% of women reported that they did not feel well informed or would not know what to do at all if they were to experience violence.

Despite Ukraine signing the Istanbul Convention on November 7th 2011, the Ukrainian legislation did not contain a specific definition of violence against women and domestic violence. According to Article 173-2 dating back to 1984, the only one containing any provision on domestic or gender-based violence, the maximum penalty for these offences was a fine of 20-40 non-taxable minimum income units, public works for 40-60 hours, or administrative arrest up to 15 days.

This situation changed significantly on the 7th of December 2017, when the Law on Prevention and Counteraction to Domestic Violence and the Law on Amendments to the Criminal and Criminal Procedure Codes of Ukraine were signed in the Ukrainian parliament. These laws were published on the 11th of January 2018 and came into force after one year, on the 11th of January 2019.

⁴Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Well-Being and Safety of Women: OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Ukraine, 2019. URL: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/3/4403120.pdf>

The new law defines domestic violence as taking the form of physical, psychological, or economic violence. By the introduction of Article 126-1 in the Criminal Code, the legislative reform also criminalized domestic violence offenses.⁵ Further additions to the Criminal Code include Article 91-1 providing restrictive measures applicable to persons who have committed domestic violence⁶ and Article 390-1 providing several measures against persons who do not comply voluntarily with the restrictive measures.

In contrast to the debate in Russia, representatives of various Ukrainian churches (members of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches) supported unanimously the reform and the need to combat domestic violence, and especially violence against women and children.⁷

2.3 Latvia

As of February 2022, Latvia is one of six European Union countries⁸ that have signed the Istanbul Convention⁹ but not ratified it yet in the Parliament. A majority of political parties, as well as leaders of the main confessions (Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist,

⁵More in detail, Article 126-1, defines the crime of domestic violence as the systematic occurrence of at least one of the three forms of violence for the third time, resulting in at least one of the following consequences: 1) physical or psychological suffering (pain, torment, anxiety); 2) health issues; 3) disability; 4) emotional dependence; or 5) deterioration of the victim's life quality.

⁶These include prohibition for the perpetrator to be in the place of cohabitation with the victim; restriction of communication with the child in the place where domestic violence act was committed; prohibition of correspondence, telephone conversations with a person who has suffered from domestic violence; as well as the referral for a program for offenders or a probation program

⁷However, the influence of some Council of Churches members also lead to the concepts of "gender", "gender identity", "gender-based violence", "gender stereotypes" and "sexual orientation" to be removed from the text of the law. As the main argument, they pointed that "the concept of *gender* threatens the Ukrainian family".

⁸The others are Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, and Slovakia.

⁹The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, better known as the Istanbul Convention.

and Orthodox), opposed the ratification, arguing that the Convention might put traditional family values at risk. The Ministry of Justice famously made the point that the Convention contradicts the Latvian Constitution, where, in Article 110, it declares that the state ‘shall protect and support marriage, defined as the union between a man and a woman.’

Nevertheless, the Convention’s principles and proposed solutions have been consistently taken into account in order to ensure better protection for victims, as well as punish perpetrators of domestic violence. In February 2022, the Latvian Parliament (Saeima) supported the amendments to the Law “On the Police”, which give the police the right to separate the victim of violence from the perpetrator, even without the victim’s request. These changes apply to the case of immediate threat from a violent person, either inside or near a dwelling, to the life, freedom, or health of the dwelling’s permanent resident(s). Until February 2022, an intervening police officer could make a decision on separation only on the basis of a written application from the victim of violence. However, it is very often the case that victims are not free and able to write such an application: they are living in fear for their health and life, and under the justifiable worry that the relations with the violent person will worsen further should they proceed with such an application. To give a sense of scale, in 2021, the police identified a risk of violence in more than 4,000 cases out of 10,000 registered family conflicts. Only around 400 violent persons have been separated from their victims after receiving the victim’s application. Since 2018, a criminal case against an offender who is in a close relationship with the victim could be initiated without application by the victim, but only if the incident constituted a criminal offence. The legislative change represents therefore a tangible improvement in the protection of the

victims of domestic violence, in particular since it allows separation without application even *before* any criminal offence has happened, if the police deems the risk to be high.

3 The survey

We conducted an international survey with the help of Kantar, Kantar Polska and CESSI (The Institute for Comparative Social Research) between September 1st and October 5th, 2021 through telephone interviews. The survey was presented to respondents as being part of a study aimed at exploring different dimensions of inequality, “to better understand how people at different stages of their lives, living in urban and rural areas, both men and women, experience and evaluate the environment around them.” The questionnaire, answered anonymously, included 49 questions for the whole sample, focusing, besides socio-economic background, on perceptions of, attitudes towards and experiences of domestic violence. It also included two questions about intimate partner violence (IPV) legislation, asking whether the respondent thinks that their country has (*Awareness*) or should have (*Support*) specific legislation aimed at punishing IPV. Two additional questions were asked only to respondents in Latvia, Russia and Ukraine, focused on the recent legislation changes described above. The first question asks whether the respondent has heard about this recent reform. If yes, the second question asks respondents in Russia and Ukraine to choose which of three alternatives better describes the content of the reform, and respondents in Latvia to rate their expectations about the effectiveness of the reform. The text of the questions is reported in the Appendix.¹⁰

¹⁰A more comprehensive description of the survey can be found in Myck et al. (2022).

Table 1 reports summary statistics of the covariates we use in our analysis. Higher than secondary education is more common among Latvian respondents, as is labor force participation. Latvians are less likely to be married and to live in urban areas and have more comfortable economic margins. Finally, the experience of differential treatment of women and the perception that IPV is common are most prevalent in Ukraine, while Latvians are the least likely to state that IPV is private business. The three samples are quite similar in other respects.¹¹

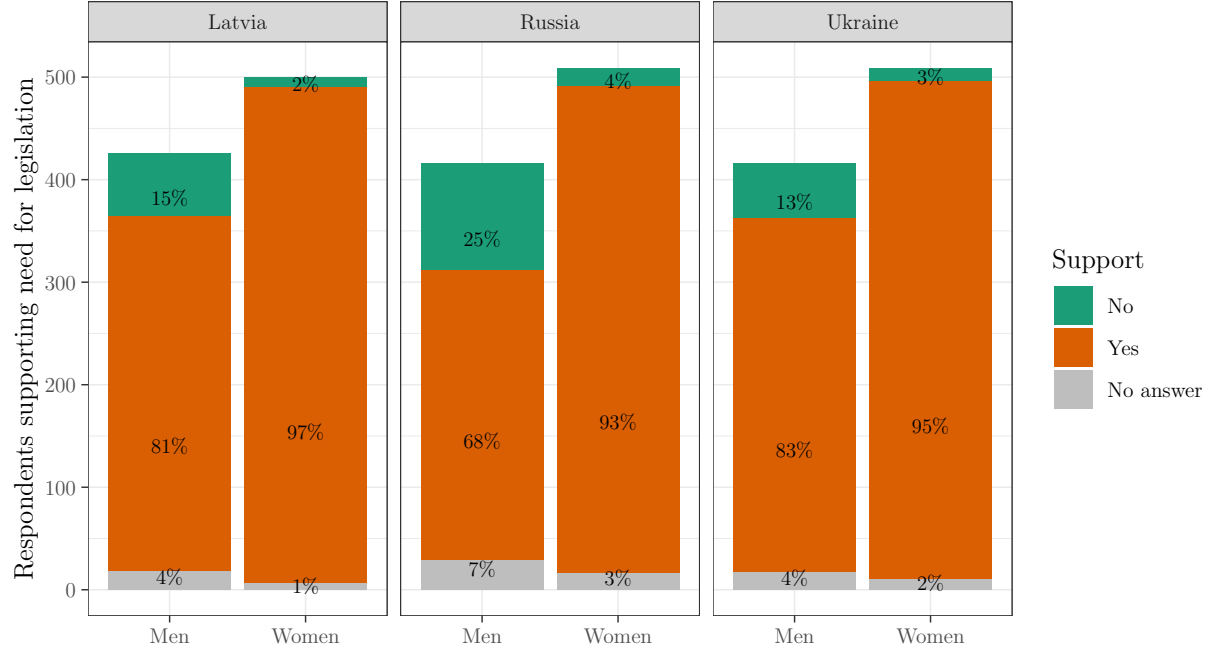
Figures 3 to 6 display the distribution of the variables of interest. Most respondents agree with the opinion that their country should have legislation addressing domestic violence. The lower bound in this respect is represented by Russian men. Less than one third are, instead, aware of the recent reforms to such legislation, in all three countries, and even fewer are able to identify the correct description of the content of the reform when presented with three alternatives, in particular in Russia. Latvian respondents have moderate expectations in terms of the effectiveness of the legal change.

¹¹(The survey sample is compared to national statistics in Tables A1-A3 in the Appendix.

Table 1: Summary Statistics

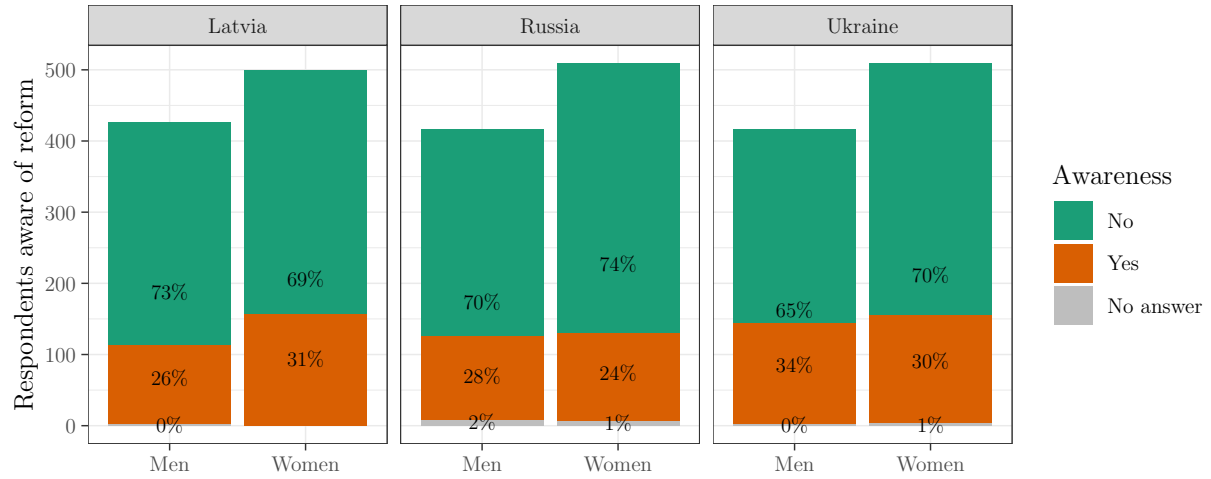
Country	Latvia			Russia			Ukraine		
Variable	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Gender	656			755			816		
... Men	285	43.4%		315	41.7%		361	44.2%	
... Women	371	56.6%		440	58.3%		455	55.8%	
Education	656			755			816		
... Less than higher education	335	51.1%		486	64.4%		535	65.6%	
... Completed higher education	321	48.9%		269	35.6%		281	34.4%	
Language	656			755			816		
... Latvian	512	78%		0	0%		0	0%	
... Russian	144	22%		755	100%		325	39.8%	
... Ukrainian	0	0%		0	0%		491	60.2%	
Marital status	656			755			816		
... Married	309	47.1%		362	47.9%		432	52.9%	
... Living separated	14	2.1%		8	1.1%		16	2%	
... Never married	189	28.8%		184	24.4%		177	21.7%	
... Divorced	79	12%		113	15%		107	13.1%	
... Widowed	65	9.9%		88	11.7%		84	10.3%	
Religious	656	0.456	0.498	755	0.482	0.5	816	0.615	0.487
In labor force	656	0.77	0.421	755	0.612	0.488	816	0.604	0.489
Budget	656			755			816		
... Easily making ends meet	418	63.7%		326	43.2%		270	33.1%	
... Difficulty making ends meet	238	36.3%		429	56.8%		546	66.9%	
Age group	656			755			816		
... 18-39	261	39.8%		310	41.1%		300	36.8%	
... 40-54	176	26.8%		185	24.5%		207	25.4%	
... 55-99	219	33.4%		260	34.4%		309	37.9%	
Has children	656	0.742	0.438	755	0.725	0.447	816	0.755	0.43
Location	656			755			816		
... Rural	219	33.4%		424	56.2%		474	58.1%	
... Urban	437	66.6%		331	43.8%		342	41.9%	
Area with crime	656	0.13	0.432	755	0.109	0.311	816	0.127	0.334
Witnessed differential treatment	656	1.434	1.674	755	1.604	1.994	816	1.929	1.973
Perception: IPV common	656	0.556	0.497	755	0.574	0.495	816	0.647	0.478
IPV is private business	656	0.095	0.293	755	0.148	0.356	816	0.132	0.339

Figure 3: SUPPORT FOR LEGISLATION ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



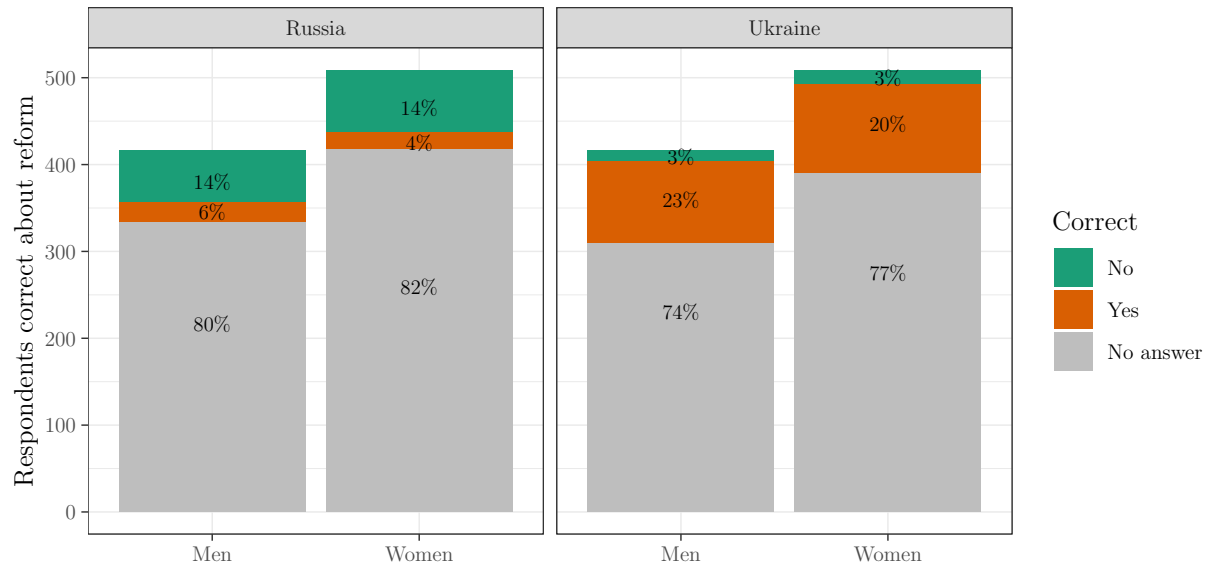
Notes: The figure plots the number and share of survey respondents who answer "Yes" to the question "Do you think that the State should have specific legislation aimed at punishing intimate partner violence?"

Figure 4: AWARENESS OF RECENT LEGISLATION REFORM



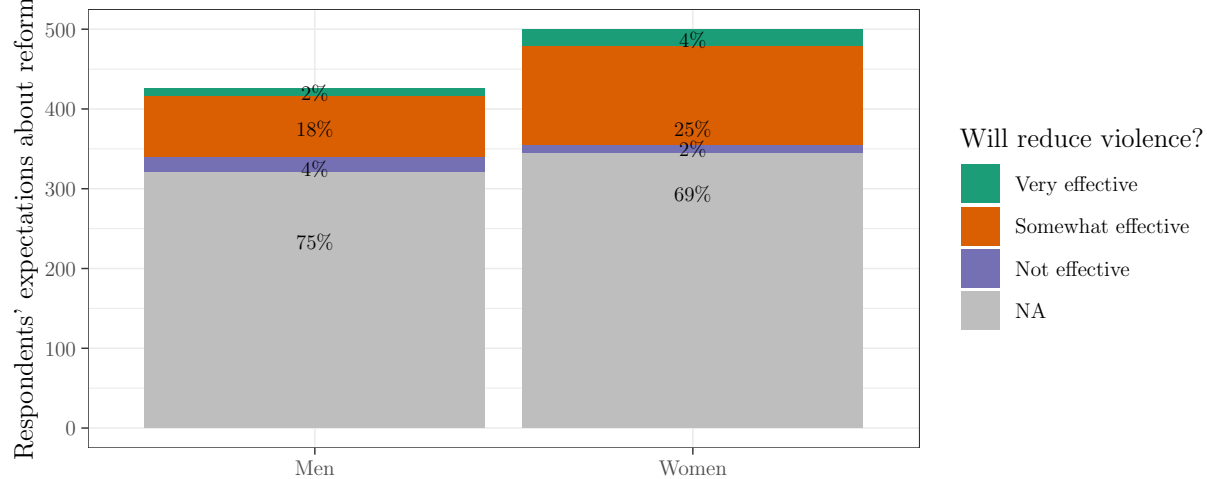
Notes: The figure plots the number and share of survey respondents who answer "Yes" to the question on whether they were aware of recent reforms recently implemented or proposed in their country (2017 in Russia, 2019 in Ukraine, 2021 in Latvia). The exact formulation of the question is reported in the Appendix.

Figure 5: CORRECT INFORMATION ABOUT RECENT LEGISLATION REFORM



Notes: The figure plots the number and share of survey respondents who answer correctly to the multiple choice question about the content of the reform recently implemented in their country (2017 in Russia and 2019 in Ukraine). The exact formulation of the question is reported in the Appendix.

Figure 6: EXPECTATIONS ABOUT PROPOSED LEGISLATION REFORM



Notes: The figure plots the number of survey respondents by their expectations of how effective the reform proposed in Latvia in 2021 will be at reducing intimate partner violence. The exact formulation of the question is reported in the Appendix.

4 What explains support for IPV legislation?

We start by examining the likelihood to support the existence of IPV legislation, testing the importance of some basic socioeconomic characteristics, at the individual, household, and living area level. In particular, we consider gender, age, education, employment status, household characteristics, economic margins, urban setting, and religiosity. The latter is considered because of the very active role that the national churches had in the debate about legislation in all three countries albeit in different directions, as detailed above.

Table 2 analyzes the Russian sample. The Russian Orthodox Church was very supportive of the decriminalisation, on the argument that the State should not meddle in the family, and legislation was upsetting the domestic peace. Nevertheless, being very religious is, when considered by itself, associated with higher support for the need for legislation. However, the inclusion of gender reveals that this is mainly due to a correlation: it is women, albeit perhaps religious women, that support legislation. Gender and family situation (marital status and presence of children) have the strongest and most stable explanatory power. Having higher than secondary education and being part of the labor force play no role once controls are added for having tight economic margins and living in an urban context, although none of these factors show a significant influence.

Finally, in the last column we consider the role of experiences, perceptions and attitudes. Respondents who are more sensitive to identifying differential treatment of women (*ExpDiscrim*) and abuse (*PercAbuse*) are more likely to support the enactment of legislation, while respondents who believe intimate partner violence (IPV) to be a private

matter (*IPVprivate*) are not surprisingly less supportive.¹² Interestingly, once controlling for these, having tight econ margins has a (significant) negative effect. This implies that people with tighter economic margins are less likely to believe that DV is private matter and more likely to observe differential treatment of women around them.

Table 3 reports the same analysis on the Ukrainian sample. The conclusions are similar in that gender and family situation again play the larger role in supporting the need for legislation. The same is true for the opinion that IPV is a private matter, however perceptions of discrimination and abuse do not play a role. Interestingly, being religious affects positively the support for legislation, and this might reflect the support that representatives of various Ukrainian churches expressed to the reform and the need to combat domestic violence. Respondents with tight economic margins are also more likely to support the need for DV legislation, and those of the opinion that IPV is a private matter less so. All in all, though, this model has much lower explanatory power in Ukraine.

Explanatory power is somewhat in between for the case of Latvia, shown in Table 4, but the broad conclusions are similar: also here gender and family situation are important, as is the opinion that IPV is a private matter. New elements here are the fact that respondents with higher education and Russian speakers are less supportive of the need for legislation. This was not true for the Russian-speaking minority in Ukraine. 11,2% of Latvian population are non-citizens, mostly Soviet-era immigrants who were not entitled

¹²These variables are defined based on responses to the following questions: i) "In your day-to-day life, in the last year how often have you witnessed any of the following things happen to a woman?" (Answers "Sometimes" to "Very often" aggregated over 7 different situations, ranging from "A woman has been treated with less courtesy than men", to "A woman has received unwanted sexual advances from a man she doesn't know."); ii) "How many times per month do you think a husband (intimate partner) beats, slaps, or acts physically violent towards his wife in your country?" (Answers "Once a month" or more frequently); iii) "Can you please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: If a woman is beaten by her partner, she does not need help, it is their own business" (Answers in agreement).

Table 2: Support for IPV legislation - Russia

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	b/p	b/p	b/p
Female	0.235*** (0.000)	0.234*** (0.000)	0.221*** (0.000)
Religious		0.004 (0.881)	0.020 (0.420)
LaborForce		-0.029 (0.244)	-0.019 (0.440)
HigherEduc		-0.032 (0.189)	-0.037 (0.148)
Age40-54		-0.005 (0.885)	-0.009 (0.794)
Age55-99		0.010 (0.736)	0.012 (0.714)
Children		-0.059** (0.049)	-0.062* (0.062)
TightEcon		-0.040 (0.120)	-0.063** (0.021)
Urban		-0.031 (0.186)	-0.026 (0.269)
Divorced		0.071** (0.011)	0.070** (0.014)
ExpDiscrim			0.009* (0.075)
PercAbuse			0.007 (0.768)
IPVprivate			-0.163*** (0.000)
Adj. R-Square	0.112	0.124	0.161
Observations	880	847	726

Table 3: Support for IPV legislation - Ukraine

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	b/p	b/p	b/p
Female	0.109*** (0.000)	0.103*** (0.000)	0.089*** (0.000)
Religious		0.037* (0.058)	0.038** (0.049)
LaborForce		0.004 (0.864)	-0.008 (0.707)
HigherEduc		-0.020 (0.325)	-0.016 (0.445)
Age40-54		-0.017 (0.555)	-0.018 (0.541)
Age55-99		0.009 (0.740)	0.008 (0.778)
Children		0.062** (0.012)	0.051** (0.041)
TightEcon		0.038** (0.022)	0.029* (0.088)
Urban		-0.018 (0.350)	-0.020 (0.324)
Divorced		0.002 (0.942)	0.026 (0.273)
RussianLang		-0.015 (0.441)	0.005 (0.772)
ExpDiscrim			-0.002 (0.609)
PercAbuse			0.020 (0.285)
IPVprivate			-0.063* (0.061)
Adj. R-Square	0.042	0.052	0.050
Observations	898	867	794

to automatic Latvian citizenship and who have chosen not to undergo a process of naturalization in order to obtain it. 69% of these non-citizens are over 51, do not have voting rights, and as a consequence have much lower interest to follow the political life as well as legislative initiatives. They are also to a large extent following Russian rather than Latvian media channels. Since younger generations even among the Russian ethnic minority are more likely to be fluent in the national language, it is possible that respondents who chose to take the survey in Russian are part of this rather different group.¹³

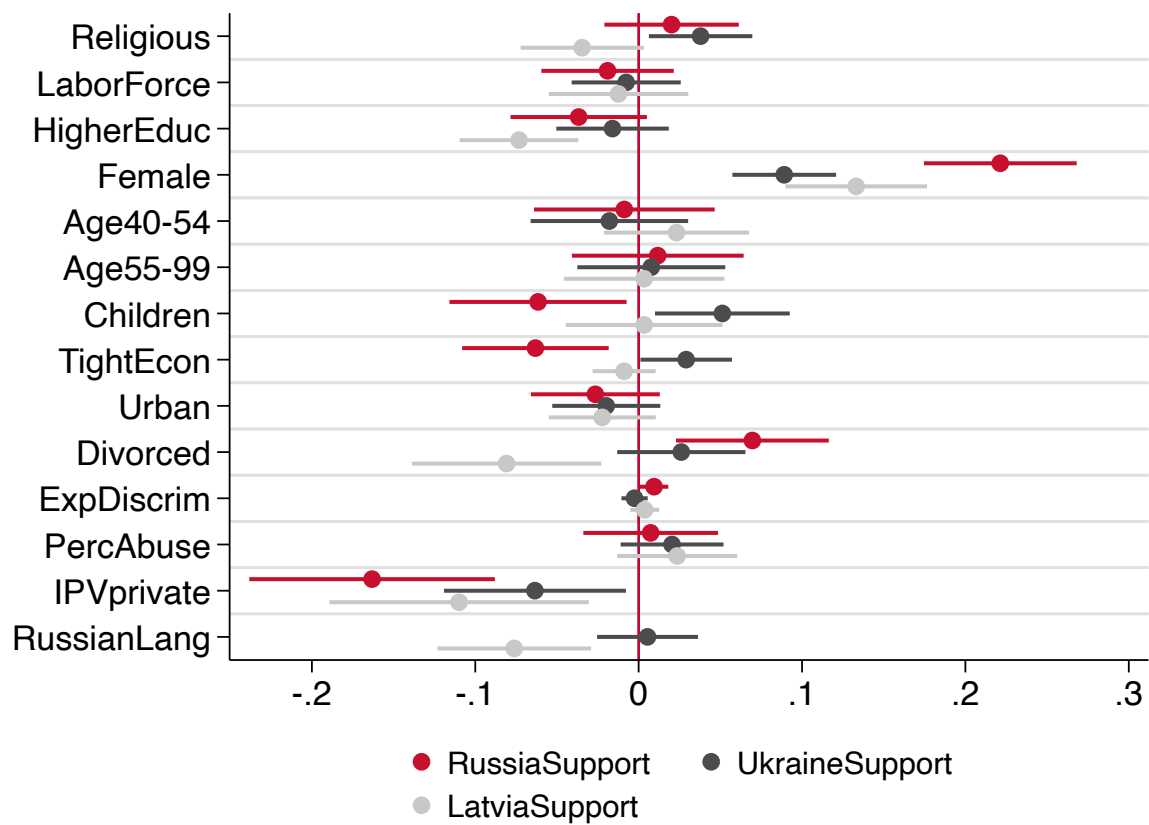
Figure 7 puts together the coefficients from column (3) in the three tables, highlighting broad consistency in the influence of the covariates. Besides the opinions of Russian-speaking minorities and religious respondents, the effect of marital status goes in different directions across the three countries: divorced respondents are less supportive of IPV legislation in Latvia but more in Russia, and insignificantly so in Ukraine. Conversely, respondents with children are less supportive in Russia but more in Ukraine. Some of these differences can potentially be explained by an imperfect representativeness of our survey samples as compared to the national population in some dimensions (see the Appendix).

¹³The share of respondent who chose Russian in our survey is much smaller than the share of Russian speaker in the Latvian population, 23.5 vs 38.7%, supporting the hypothesis that this is a more selected group. Moreover, respondent who chose Russian in our survey are over-represented in the age band 55-99, 50% vs 38.5% of Latvian speakers.

Table 4: Support for IPV legislation - Latvia

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	b/p	b/p	b/p
Female	0.132*** (0.000)	0.141*** (0.000)	0.133*** (0.000)
Religious		-0.006 (0.772)	-0.035 (0.131)
LaborForce		0.007 (0.742)	-0.012 (0.634)
HigherEduc		-0.063*** (0.001)	-0.073*** (0.001)
Age40-54		0.023 (0.345)	0.023 (0.390)
Age55-99		-0.004 (0.883)	0.003 (0.910)
Children		0.019 (0.438)	0.003 (0.907)
TightEcon		-0.005 (0.545)	-0.009 (0.448)
Urban		-0.002 (0.918)	-0.022 (0.264)
Divorced		-0.047* (0.080)	-0.081** (0.022)
RussianLang		-0.065*** (0.008)	-0.076*** (0.008)
ExpDiscrim			0.004 (0.487)
PercAbuse			0.024 (0.291)
IPVprivate			-0.110** (0.023)
Adj. R-Square	0.057	0.074	0.096
Observations	902	901	653

Figure 7: SUPPORT FOR IPV LEGISLATION - LATVIA, RUSSIA AND UKRAINE



Notes: The figure plots the coefficients from column (3) of Tables 2 to 4.

5 What explains awareness and knowledge of the reform?

In Table 5 we examine reactions to the 2017 legislation change in Russia. In columns (1) and (2), the dependent variable is an indicator for the respondent having heard about the reform. Women are interestingly less likely to have heard of the reform, while they were more likely to support legislation. More educated people, as well as people who observe more discrimination of women around them, are more likely to have heard about the reform. Respondents with tight economic margins and who believe IPV to be a private matter are less well-informed. Holding the opinion that DV legislation is necessary (*Support*) is uncorrelated with having heard about the reform.

When we move to columns (3) and (4), the dependent variable is an indicator for reporting correctly the content of the reform - as opposed to not having heard about the reform at all or answering wrong about its content. In this case, again respondents who have higher education and more experiences or perceptions of discrimination are more likely to know the content of the reform. Women are not more likely to be correct, and parents less likely. Respondents who think that IPV is a private matter are less likely to be correct and also significantly more likely to be wrong, given that they heard about the reform. In fact this is the only significant factor in column (5), where the dependent variable is an indicator for being wrong about the content of the reform, having reported to have heard about the reform. This sample is very small, however.

From Table 6 we may conclude that many more factors are relevant to explain understanding and knowledge of the 2019 reform in Ukraine. Women are similarly less

Table 5: Knowledge about recent reform - Russia

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Heard	Heard	Know	Know	Wrong
	b/p	b/p	b/p	b/p	b/p
Female	-0.040 (0.173)	-0.086** (0.024)	-0.018 (0.199)	-0.020 (0.335)	0.078 (0.273)
Religious		0.039 (0.257)		-0.009 (0.565)	
HigherEduc		0.076** (0.037)		0.038** (0.027)	
LaborForce		-0.061 (0.131)		0.012 (0.465)	
Age40-54		0.044 (0.323)		0.020 (0.335)	
Age55-99		0.024 (0.612)		0.028 (0.156)	
Children		-0.037 (0.379)		-0.041** (0.049)	
TightEcon		-0.097*** (0.006)		-0.006 (0.732)	
Urban		0.008 (0.810)		0.010 (0.507)	
Divorced		-0.046 (0.275)		-0.011 (0.545)	
ExpDiscrim		0.033*** (0.000)		0.012** (0.015)	0.008 (0.621)
PercAbuse		0.043 (0.206)		0.028** (0.049)	-0.085 (0.247)
IPVprivate		-0.081* (0.086)		-0.034** (0.025)	0.184* (0.078)
Support		-0.013 (0.811)		-0.007 (0.785)	
Adj. R-Square	0.001	0.034	0.001	0.031	0.006
Observations	911	722	925	726	204

likely to know about the reform, as well as respondent with tighter economy. Older and more educated people are better informed, and attitudes play a role in the same direction as before. Support for legislation has in this case a positive and significant coefficient, while the choice of answering the survey in Russian has a negative impact.

The same socioeconomic factors play a role even for the likelihood of describing the reform in correct terms, with few exceptions. Urban respondents are correct to a larger extent, while economic margins become insignificant. The perception of IPV being common is the only factor with a significant (negative) correlation with reporting the wrong description of the reform, in column (5).

In Table 7 we report the estimation of the determinants of the respondents' awareness about the forthcoming (at the time) legislative changes in Latvia. The picture here is very similar to what described in Ukraine: more educated and older people know more (and have more positive expectations) about the reform, as well as respondents who are more sensitive to discrimination; Russian speakers and those who think IPV is a private matter know and expect less.

Figure 8 summarizes the factors that are found to be of relevance for awareness of the reform, highlighting a broad overlap between the three countries.

Figure 9 highlights similarities and differences between Russia and Ukraine in terms of factors that correlate with having correct information about the content of the reform.

Finally, Figure 10 reproduces graphically column (4) of Table ??, explaining positive expectations in Latvia.

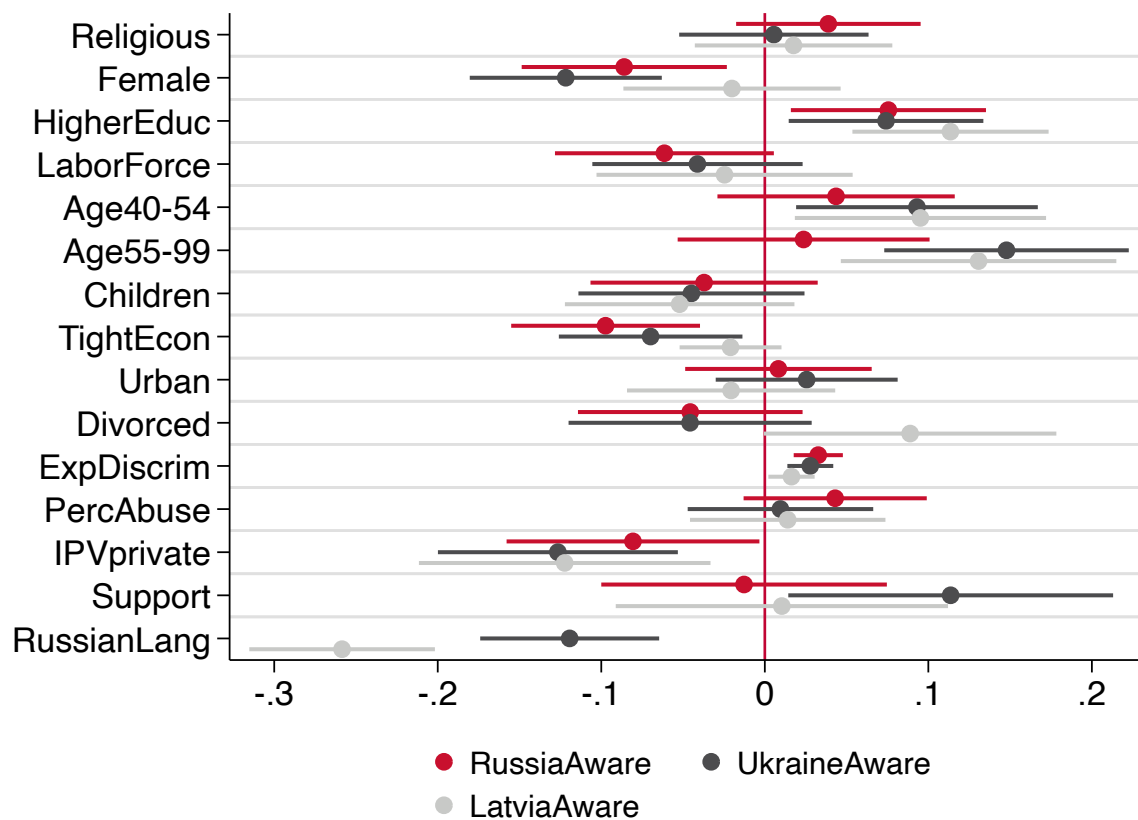
Table 6: Knowledge about recent reform - Ukraine

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Heard	Heard	Know	Know	Wrong
	b/p	b/p	b/p	b/p	b/p
Female	-0.043 (0.170)	-0.122*** (0.001)	-0.026 (0.340)	-0.101*** (0.002)	
Religious		0.006 (0.875)		0.005 (0.874)	
HigherEduc		0.074** (0.041)		0.086*** (0.007)	
LaborForce		-0.041 (0.292)		-0.058 (0.100)	
Age40-54		0.093** (0.038)		0.101** (0.013)	
Age55-99		0.148*** (0.001)		0.078* (0.055)	
Children		-0.045 (0.286)		-0.049 (0.188)	
TightEcon		-0.070** (0.041)		-0.043 (0.163)	
Urban		0.026 (0.449)		0.058* (0.057)	
Divorced		-0.046 (0.312)		-0.049 (0.209)	
RussianLang		-0.119*** (0.000)		-0.097*** (0.001)	
ExpDiscrim		0.028*** (0.001)		0.025*** (0.002)	0.012 (0.262)
PercAbuse		0.010 (0.781)		0.052* (0.083)	-0.110* (0.055)
IPVprivate		-0.127*** (0.005)		-0.074* (0.055)	-0.071 (0.231)
Support		0.114* (0.060)		0.092* (0.080)	
Adj. R-Square	0.001	0.058	-0.000	0.054	0.016
Observations	920	792	925	794	205

Table 7: Knowledge and expectations about recent reform - Latvia

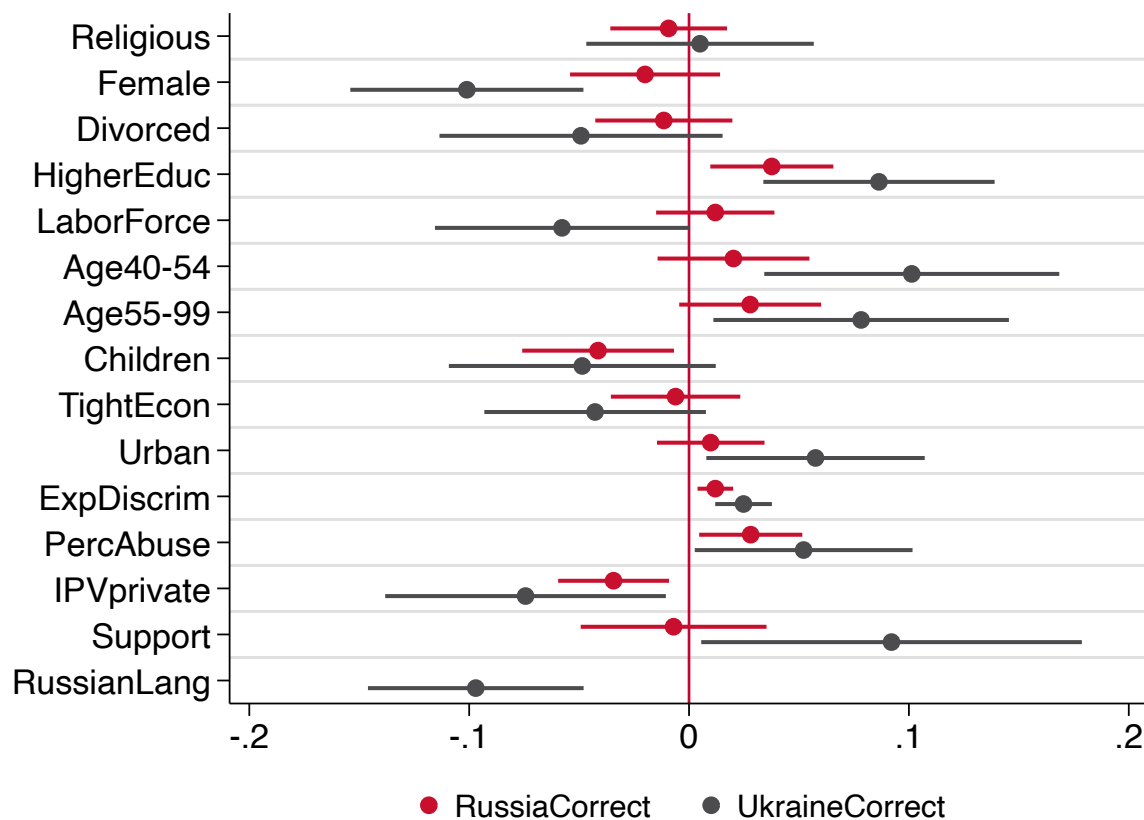
	Heard about reform		Have positive expactations	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	b/p	b/p	b/p	b/p
Female	0.050*	-0.020	0.086***	0.014
	(0.092)	(0.619)	(0.002)	(0.731)
Religious		0.018		-0.007
		(0.632)		(0.834)
LaborForce		-0.025		-0.032
		(0.605)		(0.486)
HigherEduc		0.114***		0.115***
		(0.002)		(0.001)
Age40-54		0.095**		0.091**
		(0.042)		(0.048)
Age55-99		0.131**		0.082*
		(0.011)		(0.097)
Children		-0.052		-0.043
		(0.222)		(0.297)
TightEcon		-0.021		-0.023
		(0.268)		(0.204)
Urban		-0.021		-0.029
		(0.594)		(0.448)
Divorced		0.089		0.025
		(0.102)		(0.632)
RussianLang		-0.258***		-0.237***
		(0.000)		(0.000)
ExpDiscrim		0.016*		0.020**
		(0.058)		(0.017)
PercAbuse		0.014		0.013
		(0.700)		(0.717)
IPVprivate		-0.122**		-0.160***
		(0.024)		(0.001)
Support		0.010		-0.009
		(0.866)		(0.875)
Adj. R-Square	0.002	0.089	0.009	0.086
Observations	924	653	926	653

Figure 8: HEARD ABOUT THE REFORM - LATVIA, RUSSIA AND UKRAINE



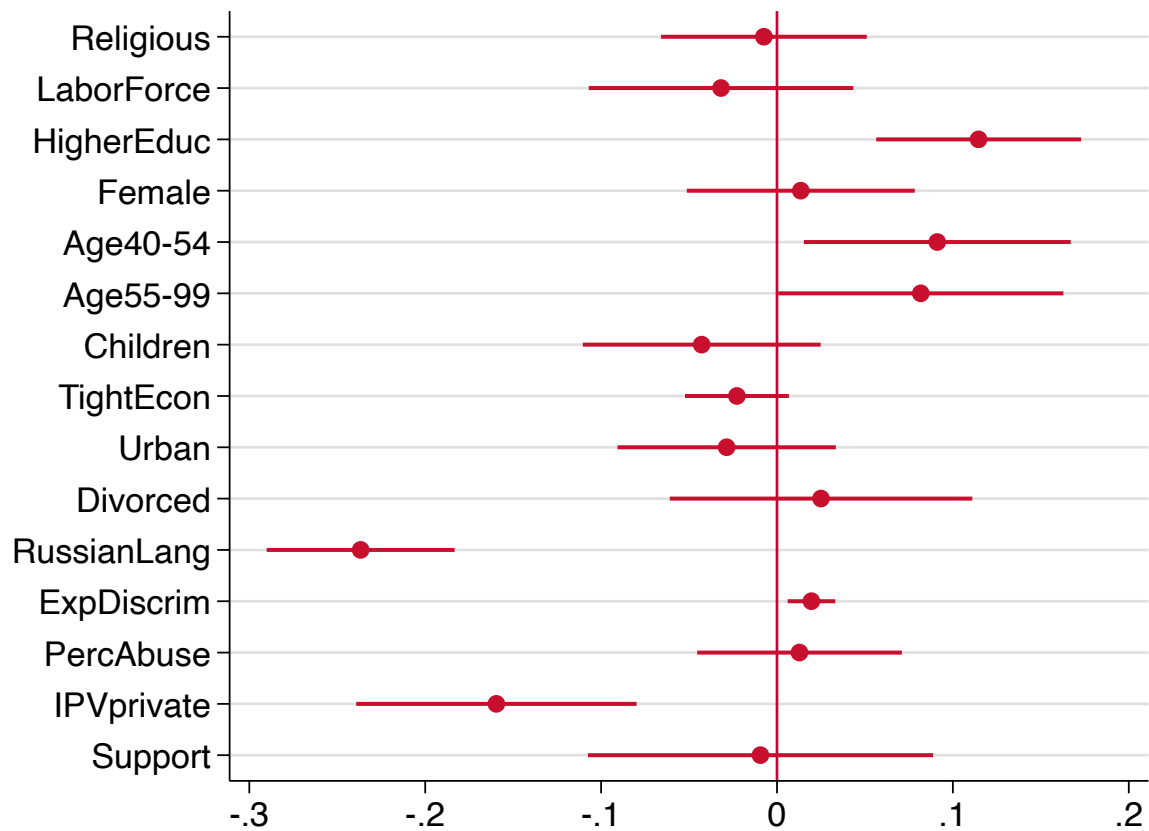
Notes: The figure plots the coefficients from column (1) and (2) of Table 5 in red and grey, respectively.

Figure 9: CORRECT ABOUT THE CONTENT OF THE REFORM - RUSSIA AND UKRAINE



Notes: The figure plots the coefficients from column (4) of Tables 5 and 6.

Figure 10: EXPECTATIONS ON REFORM - LATVIA



Notes: The figure plots the coefficients from column (4) of Table 7 in red and grey, respectively.

6 Conclusion

Research and policy interest surrounding domestic violence (DV) and intimate partner violence (IPV) has been growing since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the devastating events happening in Ukraine, many gender experts are also voicing concerns about the implications of war for women involved, in direct conflict zones as well as on the run. While made more acute by crises and conflicts, violence against women, of which by far the largest share is accounted for DV and IPV, is an endemic phenomenon, which harvests victims in their hundreds and thousands every day.

Information and awareness about the legislation on domestic violence are crucial to shape norms and behavior, and eventually the occurrence of violence. For how can deterrence occur if potential perpetrators are not aware of the sanctions? And how can report be encouraged if victims do not know their rights? Besides studying the impact of alternative legislative measures to combat DV and IPV, we need to understand more about awareness of such legislation. Studies of how well-known and well-understood legislation is in the population are important to fill a gap in academic knowledge and most of all for policy, to motivate and target interventions.

In our three countries of interest, Latvia, Russia and Ukraine, we identify groups within the population that could be potential targets for information campaigns. Men, younger cohorts, married and less educated respondents are less well-informed about current legislation, as well as minority language speakers.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for comments and suggestions received at presentations within the FREE Network and at CRED, Paris II. Research assistance by Hanna Anisimova and Svante Strömberg has been precious. The authors acknowledge financial support from The statements made herein are solely the responsibility of the authors, and all errors and omissions are the authors' own.

Declaration of interest statement

All authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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Appendix

A Survey questions

- (*Support*) Do you think that the State should have specific legislation aimed at punishing intimate partner violence? [YES/NO]
- (*Awareness*) Does your country have specific legislation aimed at punishing intimate partner violence? [YES/NO]
[ONLY in RUSSIA and UKRAINE]
- In 2017/2019 [the Russian Federation/Ukraine] changed its legislation on violence against close family members (so called domestic violence). Have you heard about this change? (Awareness of reform) Please tell me which of the following statements about this legislative change on violence against close family members is true (Awareness of content):
 - The reform strengthened the punishment for systematic violence against family members.
 - The reform weakened the punishment for non-aggravated battery against family members.
 - The reform weakened the punishment for any violence against family members.[ONLY in LATVIA]
- In August 2021, in Latvia, the Cabinet of Ministers supported the amendments to the legal act (note: the Law “On the Police”), which stipulates that in the future the police will have the right to separate the protected person from an abuser without the application of the protected person. Have you heard about these changes? (Awareness of reform) Please tell me which of the following statements about this legislative change do you consider to be true (Expectations on effectiveness):
 - The reform will be very effective in reducing violence.
 - The reform will slightly reduce the level of violence.
 - The reform will not be effective in reducing violence.

B National representativeness of survey sample

Table A1: Summary Statistics VS National Population in Russia

Variable	N	Survey		National Pop		Deviations in the definition
		Mean	SD	Mean		
Gender	755					
... Men	315	41.7%		46,4%		
... Women	440	58.3%		53,6%		
Education	755					
... Less than higher education	486	64.4%		69,8%		
... Completed higher education	269	35.6%		30,2%		
Marital status	755					
... Married	362	47.9%		67,9%		Including living separated
... Living separated	8	1.1%				
... Never married	184	24.4%		24,9%		
... Divorced	113	15%		11,2%		
... Widowed	88	11.7%		13,5%		
Religious	755	48.2%	0.5	86%		From 2021 survey "believe in god (any)"
In labor force	755	61,2%	0.488	51,5%		
Budget	755					
... Easily making ends meet	326	43.2%		63,2%		National statistical HH survey Mar 2022
... Difficulty making ends meet	429	56.8%		26,8%		
Age group	755					
... 18-39	310	41.1%		32,3%		
... 40-54	185	24.5%		20,4%		
... 55-99	260	34.4%		29,6%		
Has children	755	72,5%	0.447	44,2%		Non comparable (minors in HH, Census 2010)
Location	755					
... Rural	424	56.2%		25,3%		
... Urban	331	43.8%		74,7%		

Table A2: Summary Statistics VS National Population in Ukraine

Variable	N	Survey Mean	SD	National Pop Mean	Deviations in the definition
Gender	816				
... Men	361	44.2%		46,3%	
... Women	455	55.8%		53,7%	
Education	816				
... Less than higher education	535	65.6%		70,3%	
... Completed higher education	281	34.4%		29,7%	
Language	816				
... Russian	325	39.8%		29%	Communication at home, Non comparable both
... Ukrainian	491	60.2%		53%	
				15%	
Marital status	816				
... Married	432	52.9%		64,6% (men) 54% (women)	Including living separated
... Living separated	16	2%			
... Never married	177	21.7%		24,3% (men) 16,1% (women)	
... Divorced	107	13.1%		6,8% (men) 10,4% (women)	
... Widowed	84	10.3%		3,9% (men) 19,2% (women)	
Religious	816	61,5%	0.487	67,8%	
In labor force	816	60,4%	0.489	61,8%	
Budget	816				
... Easily making ends meet	270	33,1%		51,9%	2017 (pre-covid) HH survey
... Difficulty making ends meet	546	66,9%		48,1%	
Age group	816				
... 18-39	300	36.8%		29,3%	
... 40-54	207	25.4%		21,2%	
... 55-99	309	37.9%		31,4%	
Has children	816	75,5%	0.43	37,8%	Non comparable (minors in HH)
Location	816				
... Rural	474	58.1%		31,9%	
... Urban	342	41.9%		68,1%	

Table A3: Summary Statistics VS National Population in Latvia

Variable	N	Survey Mean	SD	National Pop Mean	Deviations in the definition
Gender	656				
... Men	285	43.4%		46.2%	(2021)
... Women	371	56.6%		53.8%	
Education	656				
... Less than higher education	335	51.1%		72.5%	
... Completed higher education	321	48.9%		27.5%	
Language	656				
... Latvian	512	78%		60.8%	Mother tongue 2017,
... Russian	144	22%		36%	Non comparable
Marital status	656				
... Married	309	47.1%		36.5%	Including
... Living separated	14	2.1%			living separated
... Never married	189	28.8%		42.6%	
... Divorced	79	12%		12.5%	
... Widowed	65	9.9%		8.5%	
Religious	656	45.6%	0.498	60%	Registered organizations
In labor force	656	77%	0.421	75.8%	
Budget	656				
... Easily making ends meet	418	63.7%		42.4%	Share of
... Difficulty making ends meet	238	36.3%		57.6%	households
Age group	656				
... 18-39	261	39.8%		34.5%	
... 40-54	176	26.8%		24.0%	
... 55-99	219	33.4%		41.5%	
Has children	656	74.2%	0.438	43.2%	Non comparable (minors in HH)
Location	656				
... Rural	219	33.4%		31.8%	
... Urban	437	66.6%		68.2%	