



Intrafamily violence against children during the COVID-19 health crisis

ENOC's synthesis report

IN
SCHOOLS

HEALTH-CARE

LOCAL COMMUNITIES

ADVERTISING

The years of the pandemic crisis have been particularly complicated and challenging for children on many levels

All the difficulties encountered relate to old and persistent systemic deficiencies and gaps and the absence of coherent child protection systems in many countries

Societies that have passed through austerity measures and fiscal restrictions that affected gravely their social tissue were even more challenged throughout the crisis

The increase in violence was not only observed in rates of domestic abuse, but also to rates of violence in other contexts

What happened?



The ENOC report

- Mapping of how Covid-19 emergency legislation has affected children’s rights and wellbeing and what are the lessons learnt to ensure better preparedness and capability.
- More than 74% of ENOC members participated in the survey
- For the analysis of the findings ENOC has applied the five interrelated principles of a Children’s Rights Approach

Embedding children's rights: children's rights should inform all decisions and actions

Equality and Non-discrimination

Empowering the child

Participation of children in decision making

Accountability to children:

Children's rights approach: the five principles

Emergency Measures have had a negative impact on violence against children

Significant concern that children were at increased risk of domestic abuse, online abuse, general abuse/neglect, sexual exploitation

Disabled children, children with additional learning needs and children in care are seen as being at greatest risk of abuse

Evidence suggests girls were at greater risk of increased violence or abuse

Data on violence against children are often inadequate

Many governments struggled to maintain services to protect children who may be at significant risk of harm

Increased time spent at home/away from school - means children were exposed to an increased level of violence

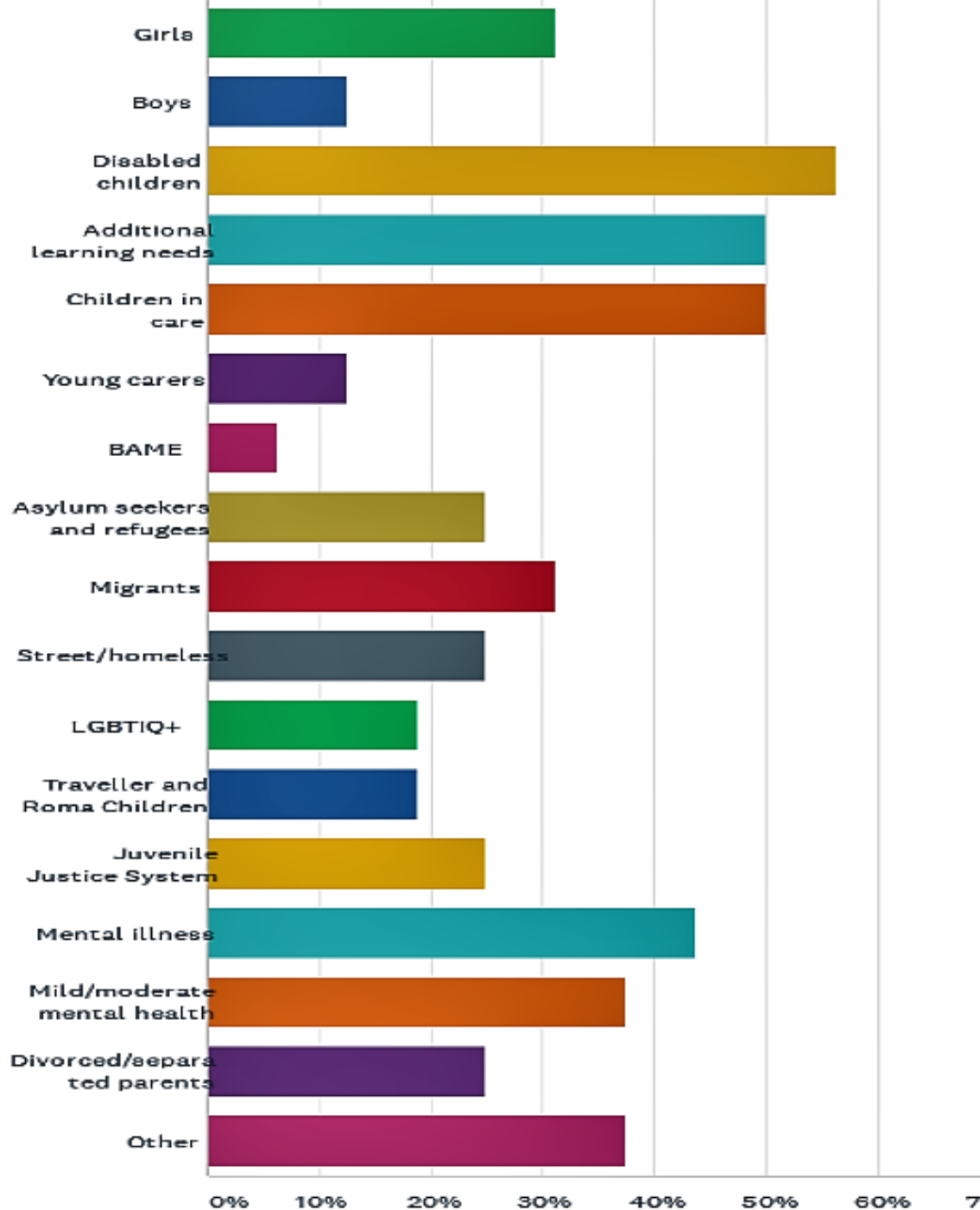
Children's use of internet during home confinement means children were exposed to increased risk of cyberbullying or online sexual abuse/exploitation

Telephone helplines/ online services crucial option for children at risk of abuse to seek help

Key findings

Children affected by the increase

- Disabled children, children with additional learning needs and children in care were seen as becoming more vulnerable
- Comments also confirm that -in the majority of jurisdictions- governments struggled to maintain services to protect children who may be at significant risk of harm (domestic abuse and neglect, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation)
- The problems caused by children being confined at home, and unable to access protection or support services was described by one respondent as 'double vulnerability'.



Ombudspersons mentioned

“**Insufficient protection**, significant increase of domestic violence and insufficient response from services.” (Greece)

“Reporting by children, identification by professionals and court decisions were affected by the measures.” (Cyprus)

“School closures led to fewer referrals due to a decrease in time that professionals are spending with children and families, thereby weakening protective measures.” (Jersey)

“Children are spending more time on-line which increased the risk of grooming and other abuse.” (Finland).

“No statistics.” (Luxembourg)



How important are schools to ensure that children are not put at increased risk of violence during a public emergency?

How does the availability of relevant and up-to-date data contribute to ensuring children are kept safe during a public emergency?

Recommendations

01

- Embed children's rights in legislative, policy and budgetary decision-making, so that children's rights are given priority in decision-making at all times, including at times of public emergency

02

- Ensure that decisions and actions at all levels do not adversely discriminate against children and/or specific groups of children at any time, including at times of public emergency.

03

- Enhance children's knowledge and understanding of their rights, through education and information so that children can exercise their rights, including in times of public emergency.

04

- Ensure that children's views are heard and given due weight in any decision-making process that directly or indirectly affects them, so that their views are fully taken into account in times of public emergency.

05

- Ensure that government at all levels and public organisations are accountable for how they comply with children's rights at all times, including in times of public emergency.

School psychologists should be involved for supporting students' emotional wellbeing. This will also empower children, help them identify violations and tackle feelings of guilt.

Support for families affected by domestic violence, including emotional support by social and mental health services

Police must protect children and young people in a public emergency, rather than seeing them as a problem. Police should be provided with training on how to communicate effectively with children and young people.

There should be an increase in training for teachers and other professionals working in schools on how to prevent situations of violence against children, how to identify abuse and how to respond appropriately

Governments should properly research the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable children and young people

There should be a strong advertising campaign through social media (especially on Instagram) to create awareness about national helplines for children that aim at providing emotional support to children who are victims of abuse

ENYA

recommendations

Other factors to be considered

Strict indicators are necessary to help us monitor our progress.

Sustainability, transparency and coherence are important

Staffing, training and coordination of schools and child protection and mental health services to address the overwhelming needs. Identifying the violation alone is not sufficient. We must build a system that protects children from secondary victimization.

Unemployment, grave economic consequences and a possible economic crisis will continue to affect families and expose children even more to risks of abuse and neglect

Hopefully, we will approach compliance to UNCRC in the future with the same consistency, determination, and commitment as we do with fiscal policies

