

Combating Gender-Based Violence



In spite of the progress made in the field of gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) - a comprehensive legal framework and enhanced specialised services for victims of domestic violence, discrimination and violence based on gender in both public and private spheres continue to be highly prevalent in BiH. Violence not only affects individual women but also undermines the well-being of the society as a whole.

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Mission) recognises that gender-based violence is an impediment to the security and safety of all citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Mission prioritizes efforts to strengthen institutional response to gender-based violence (GBV) in BiH - a widespread and underreported phenomenon.

Facts & figures ([OSCE-Led Survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women, 2019](#))
Prevalence:

- nearly one in two women in BiH have experienced some form of abuse since the age of 15.

- 84 per cent of the cases go unreported,

- 38 per cent women in BiH experienced psychological, physical or sexual violence,

- one in three women experienced [sexual harassment](#) and only 2.6 per cent reported case to the police,

- femicide data is inconsistent. number of cases is raising (from 16 in 2021 and 2022 to [35 cases in 2023 and 2024](#)). half of perpetrators are current or former partners.

Legal framework

BiH is a signatory to the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW) and [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) (Istanbul Convention).

BiH has developed a comprehensive legal framework for prevention and elimination of domestic violence. Both entities and Brčko District BiH (BD) have laws on the protection from domestic

violence. Improved FBiH Law on Protection from Domestic Violence and Violence against Women was adopted in 2025. Less attention is being given to other forms of GBV in legislative framework. Criminal Codes in Republika Srpska, FBiH and Brčko District BiH are largely harmonized with the Istanbul and [Lanzarote Conventions](#).

Both entities have adopted strategies to combat domestic violence, including the adopted FBiH Strategy for preventing and combating domestic violence 2024 – 2027.

- Patriarchal norms and stereotypes, reinforced by increased backlash against women's rights and gender equality;
- Fragmented legal and institutional system resulting in unequal access to protection and support services for survivors;
- Lack of standardization in responding to GBV across the regions, sectors and institutions;
- Lack of institutional capacity building policies on GBV mainly funded by donor funds;
- Lack of effective co-ordination among first responders, as well as lack of survivor-centred

approach including over-reliance on victim testimony leads to secondary victimization, which, along with lenient sentencing results in low trust of survivors in the system;

- Vulnerable groups at higher risk: women with disabilities, Roma women, women from national minorities, migrant women, and other women.

The Mission's Role

The role of the Mission is aligned with the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, stability and sustainable peace, and relevant OSCE commitments, including Ministerial Council decisions such as [Decision No. 4/18 on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women](#), the [2004 OSCE Gender Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality](#) and, it is based on the Mission's mandate.

Together with the institutions, parliaments, political parties, and civil society organizations the Mission works on enhancing the institutional response to ensure women are protected from violence and perpetrators held accountable. More concretely, the Mission:

- leads co-ordination of key stakeholders to [discuss and review progress](#) in implementation of the [commitments](#)

[for improvement of the institutional response](#);

- [partners with parliamentary commissions](#) to strengthen their oversight role

- develops analyses and provides comments to laws and policy documents to relevant ministries and institutions advocating for greater alignment of the legislative framework with international standards on prevention of violence against women;

- conducts research and develops knowledge products on GBV, including results of the monitoring of the proceedings of the cases of domestic violence before the courts across BiH;

- supports implementation of the legislation on local level through the field offices and with participation of the stakeholders at Cantonal, City and Municipal levels- where the response to violence is actually taking place- on both policy and practical level;

- conducts raising awareness activities especially in relation to the 16 days of activism on violence against gender-based violence campaign, and International Women's Day, using the two dates to campaign for gender equality, women's rights, prevention and response to GBV.

Commitments made during the co-ordination and review meetings and thematic sessions led to the [adoption of the new legislative solutions](#) and more inclusive consultative processes for development of the relevant bylaws.

For more information, scan the QR code.



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