



Immigrants & Refugees

GBV IN FOCUS

Seasonal Newsletter of the GBV-
MIG Canada Research Team

October 2024- Issue 15



Image retrieved from the European Commission website:
[European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations](#)

PROJECT NEWS

Violence against Women Migrants and Refugees: Analyzing Causes and Effective Policy Response takes an intersectional approach in analyzing the ways in which discriminations and inequalities based on gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and age, interact to make certain women more vulnerable to GBV and less able to access support and services for survivors than others. Our qualitative research in Canada involved in-depth interviews with "key informants" and migrant and refugee women survivors. Data collection and analysis have been completed at this point.

In the last year, the GBV-MIG Canada investigators have been busy analyzing, writing and publishing their project findings through various scholarly publication venues, presenting their work in conferences as well as making other invited public presentations. While academic publishing continues, a series of policy briefs is currently in the works, aiming at making knowledge produced more accessible to knowledge users and broader publics.

The GBV-MIG Canada research team would like to extend a warm welcome to this newsletter's new assistant editor, Sarah Delorme, and the editorial team working with her. As well, a warm welcome to new and returning members to the team.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Evie Tastsoglou.

Co-Investigators: Dr. Myrna Dawson, Dr. Catherine Holtmann and Dr. Lori Wilkinson

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Stay connected!



INTRODUCTIONS

NEW GBV-MIG Team Members



Busra Yalcinoz Ucan (she/her)

Busra Yalcinoz Ucan is a feminist qualitative researcher and clinical psychologist. She has specialized in intersectional gender-based violence (GBV) research across various socio-geographical contexts, and her work primarily focuses on the safety-seeking experiences of socio-economically disadvantaged women who have encountered GBV. Her research has been published in numerous peer-reviewed journals, including *Feminism & Psychology*, *Journal of Family Violence*, and *Feminist Media Studies*. She currently works as a Research Associate at Saint Mary's University as part of the Gender-Based Violence & Migration (GBV-MIG) Canada Research Program.



Hannah Muat (she/her)

Hannah Muat previously worked with the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection in Ghana. She is currently pursuing Women and Gender Studies at Saint Mary's University. As a passionate advocate for women and children, her project focuses on Female Genital Mutilation. Hannah is devoted to fighting all forms of gender-based violence.



Sharmin Akter Moyna (she/her)

Sharmin Akter Moyna, our new Research Assistant, is an international master's student in Women and Gender Studies at SMU. Originally, she is from Bangladesh, and she has completed her honours and master's in Development Studies. She aspires to be an academician. However, she would like to introduce herself as a humanitarian worker. Sharmin has almost 2 years of working experience with NGOs in Bangladesh. Her research interests are significantly on issues such as GBV, mental health, refugee and migration problems and disasters in South Asian countries.



Eva Kazakou (she/her)

Evangelia (Eva) Kazakou is a first-year Ph.D. student in Political Science and Global Development Studies at Saint Mary's University. She completed her B.A. in International, European, and Area Studies in 2018, and her M.A. in Gender, Society, and Politics in 2022, both at Panteion University in Athens. Eva worked as a research assistant on the SSHRC project "Gendering Violence and Precarity in Forced Migration: Asylum-Seeking Women in the Eastern Mediterranean." Her research looks at gender, violence, and migration, providing important insights to the academic community.



Sarah Delorme (she/her)

Sarah Delorme is the new GBV-MIG Newsletter Assistant. Transferring from Laurentian University, she is currently in her third year of the Bachelor of Arts program at Saint Mary's University. Majoring in Sociology and minoring in Political Science, Sarah is passionate about issues of inequalities with a particular interest in intersectionality. She enjoys getting involved in community work and is hoping to work in the humanitarian sector and NGOs once she graduates. Sarah is also hoping to attend graduate school and wants to continue doing research.



GBV-MIG CANADA TEAM ACTIVITIES



Fall 2023

Keynotes/Presentations

November 15–18th, 2023: Mitchell, A., Dr. Myrna Dawson, and D. Walters presented “Criminal Justice System Responses to Sexual Femicide in Ontario, 1974–2020” at the American Society of Criminology meetings in Philadelphia.

November 29th, 2023: Dr Myrna Dawson was invited as a keynote speaker to present “The role of recognition, accountability, and education in femicide prevention” at **Inclusive Voices, Collective Power: A Virtual Symposium on Innovation and Collaboration to Combat Gender-Based Violence**.

December 11th, 2023: Dr. Lori Wilkinson presented “Understanding the resettlement experiences of Afghan refugees as a human right” at the 75th Anniversary of the UN Declaration for Human Rights, Metropolis North America & SUNY, in New York.

Publications

Dr. Evie Tastsoglou and Dr. Jane Freedman co-authored the “Editorial: Gender, Violence and Forced Migration” in the Special Themed Issue they co-edited on Gender, Violence and Forced Migration of the open-access journal *Frontiers in Human Dynamics: Refugees and Conflict*.

Dr. Evie Tastsoglou guest edited *Gender and Violence in a Migration and Refugee Context: Agency, Resilience and Resistance*, a Special issue of *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 55.3, pp. 1–199. In it she wrote “Introduction. Gender and Violence in a Migration and Refugee Context: Agency, Resilience and Resistance”.

Dr. Sandy Petrinioti, Dr. Evie Tastsoglou and Dr. Chara Karagiannopoulou co-authored “Practicing Conformity, Resistance and Resilience to Gender-Based Violence: Women Asylum Seekers in the Eastern Mediterranean.” in the Special Issue on *Gender and Violence in a Migration and Refugee Context: Agency, Resilience and Resistance* of the journal *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, edited by E. Tastsoglou.

Dr. Catherine Holtmann, Dr. Evie Tastsoglou, Dr. Myrna Dawson, and Dr. Lori Wilkinson co-authored “Surviving Gender-Based Violence: A Social Ecological Approach to Migrant and Refugee Women’s Resilience” in the Special Issue on *Gender and Violence in a Migration and Refugee Context: Agency, Resilience and Resistance* of the journal *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, edited by E. Tastsoglou.

Dr. Chara Karagiannopoulou, Dr. Evie Tastsoglou, and Dr. Sandy Petrinioti co-authored “Gender and Asylum Seeking in a European Borderland: Intersectional Discriminations and ‘Lessened’ Citizenship” in the journal *Refuge*, Vol. 40, No 1, 1–17

Dr. Serperi Sevgur, Dr. Evie Tastsoglou and Dr. Eugena Kwon co-authored “A Matter of National Dignity: Protection of Slaves and Southern Refugees in Canada, 1844–1869” in the journal of *Canadian Ethnic Studies*.

Dr. Pallabi Bhattacharyya, Dr. Labe Songose and Dr. Lori Wilkinson co-authored “A New School and New Life: Understanding the Experiences of Yazidi Children and Youth” in *Ethics, Rights, Culture and the Humanization of Refugees*.

Spring 2024

Publications

Dr. Sally Ogoe and Dr. Lori Wilkinson co-authored “The right to work: rhetoric and reality for refugees in Canada” from the book *Forced Migration in/to Canada: From Colonization to refugee resettlement*.



TEAM ACTIVITIES

Summer 2024



Publications

Dr. Myrna Dawson co-authored “Identifying femicide using the United Nations statistical framework: Exploring the feasibility of sex/gender-related motives and indicators to inform prevention” in International Sociology.

Dr. Mia Sisic, Dr. Evie Tastsoglou, Dr. Lori Wilkinson, Dr. Myrna Dawson, Dr. Catherine Holtmann, and Dr. Chantelle Falconer collaborated to publish “The Continuum of Gender-Based Violence Experienced by Migrant and Refugee Women in Canada: Perspectives from Key Informants.” in the Special Themed Issue on “Gender and the Continuum of Violence in Migration,” in the open-access journal *Frontiers in Sociology*.

Conferences

June 19th, 2024: Dr. Evie Tastsoglou was invited to present “Beyond Western Gaze: Locating Subjectivities of Asylum Seeking Women in the Eastern Mediterranean” at the Canadian Sociological Association (CSA) meeting in Montreal, Canada.

August, 2024: Dr. Myrna Dawson was invited to co-present “Analyzing news coverage of intimate partner femicide using an intersectional feminist social ecological framework” at the annual American Sociological Association (ASA) conference in Montreal, Canada.

August 28th, 2024: Dr. Evie Tastsoglou was invited to present the “Locating Subjectivities of Asylum-Seeking Women: Feminist, Intersectional and De-Colonial Perspectives” at the European Sociological Association (ESA) in Porto, Portugal.

Coming up



Team member Catherine Holtmann has co-authored Sacred Snaps: Photovoice for Interfaith Engagement. Through the lens of the mobile phone camera, this book is an invitation to see and engage religion, diversity and inclusion.
Coming out in November.

Employment Opportunity!

The Faculty of Arts and the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre at the University of New Brunswick’s Fredericton campus are looking for a **SSHRC Tier 1 CRC in Intimate Partner Violence Responses, at the rank of Associate or Full Professor.**

Click [here](#) to learn more.



Safety and Resilience through Digital Technologies: Experiences of Gender-Based Violence for Migrant and Refugee Women in Norway

Written by: Busra Yalcinoz Ucan

My research titled *Safety and Resilience through Digital Technologies (SaRe-DiGT)* [1] was a two-year community-based qualitative research project that took place in Norway from September 2022 to September 2024. Throughout the project, I collaborated with a shelter organization and community mental health center, which both specialized in GBV services. The research has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement (No. 101029234).



The project aimed to examine the interconnectedness of gender-based violence (GBV) and digital technologies in the experiences of migrant and refugee women living in Norway. It mainly focused on understanding the significant implications of the pervasive nature of digital technologies in the lives of migrant and refugee women survivors of GBV. On the one hand, it primarily sought to answer how digital technologies can help migrant and refugee women mitigate harm caused by GBV and facilitate their processes of seeking and achieving safety from violence.

On the other hand, it also investigated the ways in which digital technologies intersect with GBV dynamics that women were already exposed to, creating more harm in women's lives, and hindering their ways to safety. Thus, informed by contemporary feminist theorization on technologies and previous scholarship on the GBV-technology relationship, I conceptualized this relationship as a two-way, cyclic interaction. I argued that digital technologies can become empowering and oppressive simultaneously in the experiences of women survivors of GBV.

In this project, I particularly focused on migrant and refugee women survivors because they have been reported as more likely to experience community-level and structural barriers when seeking help. GBV-related resources and services were documented as less available and accessible for migrant and refugee women mainly due to language barriers, lack of cultural competence of the services, distrust of authorities, as well as fear of further stigmatization and discrimination.

In this context, as we witness how technology-facilitated anti-violence advocacy and support practices are increasingly used and popularized in GBV service practices, I particularly aimed to explore if digital technologies can be used in creative and transformative ways to reduce the help-seeking barriers that migrant and refugee women often encounter.

The findings of the study primarily revealed the ambiguities regarding migrant and refugee women's experience with digital technologies in the context of GBV [2]. These ambiguities address the contrast between the presence and absence of technologies in women's lives as well as the harms and benefits they experienced.

[1] For detailed information regarding the project please visit the project webpage: <https://www.uis.no/en/research/safety-and-resilience-through-digital-technologies-sare-digt>

[2] A recent co-authored peer-reviewed project publication, titled "Conceptualising TechViolence Nexus: Experiences of ambiguities at the intersection of digital coercive control and (socio)digital inequalities" can be found at this link: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590291124003097>





One crucial finding was that many migrant and refugee women encountered inequalities in their access to and use of technologies, especially those who were from socio-economically disadvantaged and marginalized settings. Many of them have not had enough opportunities to access technological devices such as phones or computers, which has resulted in them not being able to develop their knowledge and competence in using technologies. Such inequalities experienced at the level of access and use also become a significant barrier for women in their access to available digital GBV-related resources. Similar to the barriers encountered in accessing in-person resources, online platforms that can be potentially useful for information-seeking and reaching out to supports were mainly experienced as inaccessible. What these findings mainly address is how digital inequalities intersect with migrant and refugee women's experiences of GBV and, thus, emerge as a factor hindering women's pathways to safety.

Furthermore, the study also demonstrated that the women's interaction with technologies was intensely monitored and controlled by the perpetrators in their lives. It was revealed nearly impossible for women to be able to freely, autonomously, and privately engage with technologies due to the coercive control of dynamics in their intimate relationships. More than being experienced as resources for information, connection, support, safety, and well-being, digital technologies were often experienced as distressing and troubling. GBV, particularly digital forms of violence, intersecting with precarious circumstances reinforced by migration processes, led to further isolation and harm in migrant and refugee women's lives. Neither offline nor online spaces were experienced as safe –social and digital isolation became interconnected in the experiences of women.

As the positive side of ambiguities that the women felt, the findings also illustrated how, at times, digital technologies were experienced as more beneficial and empowering. This, however, mostly occurred once after they separated from their violent partners –since before, none could afford to interact with technologies without risking their safety further. Despite the continuation of digital violence in their post-separation context, the findings revealed that the women were able to expand their space of safety while engaging with technologies as they had more chances and opportunities for free, autonomous, and private access and use of technologies. Through these chances and opportunities, they were able to develop their confidence and skills to safely engage with technologies in ways that make them feel less isolated, more connected, and independent. Their engagement with digital technologies, despite starting from scratch and facing ongoing threats of violence, has played a crucial role in their processes of rebuilding their well-being and belongingness.



To conclude, this study mainly revealed how women's interaction with technologies, including access and use, is shaped by the dynamics of GBV and the already existing socio-economic inequalities in the women's lives. What I observed through the findings was how the women's needs, interests, and priorities concerning the use of technologies were configured within the ever-shifting contexts of their everyday lives, where they both anticipate the risk of digital harm and imagine the possibilities of using technologies for seeking and achieving safety, well-being, and self-determination.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: What we Know about Women in and from Ukraine

Written by: Lori Wilkinson

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the [UNHCR](#) (2024) reports that at least 11,743 civilians have been killed and 24,614 injured, although the numbers are impossible to verify with any accuracy. In the now Russian-controlled city of Mariupol, at least 2,300 civilians have died and the UNHCHR considers that estimate as low ([Hinnant et al., 2022](#); [Human Rights Watch 2023](#); [UNHCR 2023](#)). Many of those wounded and killed are women.

There are no exact figures on the number of women in war who have experienced SGBV. It's been estimated that about 7% of women worldwide have been assaulted by someone who is not their intimate partner. Of these women, 6% of cases were perpetuated by a member of the military. This figure, however, is understood to be a gross underestimate of the problem and particularly inaccurate when discussing SGBV in war ([Garcia-Moreno et.al., 2013](#)).

This is not the first time Ukrainian women have experienced violence as a result of war. In the aftermath of the invasion of Crimea in 2014, Ukrainian women experienced higher rates of SGBV. Pre-2014, the reported rate of SGBV was 18.3%, post-invasion in Crimea, those rates increased to 22.5%. Ukrainian women who were displaced (either internally or externally as asylum seekers) experienced even higher rates of SGBV (15.3%) than those who were not displaced (5.3%) ([Capasso et.al, 2022](#)). Eight percent of violent incidents against displaced women occurred at checkpoints or reception centres, while another 20% of violent

incidents were perpetrated by military officials ([Capasso et al., 2022](#)).

In Ukraine, the UN Commission of Inquiry into Ukraine has documented multiple cases of rape and other sexual violence against women and men, including victims who are in detention. Research reported at the recent Ukrainian Women's Congress finds that 26% of refugee women have experienced sexual violence after leaving Ukraine ([Irish Aid and the European Union, 2023](#)) –a phenomenon that is, sadly, common. According to [Fernandez-Powell](#) (2023), reports of domestic violence to the Ukrainian National Police increased by 51% in the first half of 2023 compared with 2022 and 2021. In 2022, Ukraine ratified the Istanbul Convention, meant to address violence against women ([Amnesty International 2022](#)).



A feature article in a 2023 edition of Time Magazine describes the experiences of one woman in Kyiv:

“Oksana recalls waking up in the middle of the night to find her husband’s hands around her neck. Another time, he tried to stab her. Although they had been together for 16 years, he had episodes when he didn’t recognize her, she says. “We were sitting in the kitchen and I was trying to explain to him that I am your wife, and he was just telling me how he will kill me in a lot of detail because I am an enemy.” ([Williams, 2023](#)).

Oksana’s husband was drafted into the Ukrainian military in February 2022. He had previous experience fighting the Russians when they invaded Crimea in 2014. His trauma and PTSD increased after his unit was ambushed by Russian soldiers. The abuse started when he returned home after this event.

FROM THE RESEARCHER'S DESK

Research conducted in Ukraine prior to the Russian invasion revealed high rates of IPV. In 2018, 26% of women between the ages of 19 and 74 had reported sexual or physical violence from their partner ([CARE International 2023](#)). The same research indicates that the ongoing war has placed 59% of Ukrainian women at risk of exploitation because of their “willingness to accept risky offers abroad or in the Ukraine” ([CARE International 2023, 27](#)). These risks arise at several points in the migration process including in transit, border crossing, resettlement centres and bomb shelters. Many of the shelters lack sufficient locks and lighting and safe, private places to sleep. Pre-war, there was already an active human smuggling ring operating out of Ukraine that was duping Ukrainian women into sex trafficking under the guise of legitimate work abroad. Post-war has exacerbated an already active human smuggling ring focusing on sex trafficking of women and girls.

What are the outcomes of women exposed to SGBV during war? Research reveals that women who have been assaulted in war situations are 2.3 times to have alcohol use disorders and 2.6 times more likely to experience anxiety or depression ([Garcia-Moreno et.al., 2013](#)). In a qualitative study, [Horn](#) and her associates (2014) find that intimate partner violence increased during conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone.



They opined that IPV increased during times of war because the increased stress and fear during a conflict “caused” them to take out their fears on their partners. For other couples, IPV decreased during a war because women were more likely to be working or to be sheltering with families away from their partners (Horn et al., 2014). Winter and decreasing temperatures force people into smaller spaces where violence is more likely to occur (Fernandez-Powell 2023). It is likely safe to assume that SGBV rates do increase during war but that the reports that are lodged with officials grossly underestimate the magnitude of the problem because of the reluctance of women to report sexually based violence.

In summary, Ukrainian women are at risk of SGBV in Ukraine, during their flight and after their escape. Ukrainian authorities report skyrocketing rates of SGBV, so much so that local officials have set up temporary shelters and aid stations to assist women in recovery and escape from the country. Until the war ends, we can expect many more women to be victimized by SGBV.

Lori Wilkinson is a distinguished professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at the University of Manitoba



Resilience Amidst Trauma: The Experience of Gender-Based Violence Among Yazidi Refugee Women Resettled in Canada

Written by: Johnny Liu and Abdul-Bari Abdul-Karim

Violence, a persistent and significant social problem, has been deeply rooted in the fabric of all human societies. It occurs at both individual and group levels, eliminates and shortens lives, and inflicts multifaceted and intergenerational harm and suffering. With the advent of modernity, violence has now transformed into a stage of systematic destruction. In the contemporary era, violence has progressed from physical combat between military forces in interstate wars to a more sophisticated phase involving gendered conflicts and struggles against marginalized groups, particularly women and children. This includes issues such as “rape and sexual assault, trafficking, ‘honour’ crimes, femicide, and forced marriage” (Walby, 2012:99). Beyond these overt expressions, gender-based violence also persists symbolically. The stereotypical portrayal of the happy American housewife (Ahmed, 2010), for instance, reflects a cultural justification and reinforcement for the gendered division of labour, a concealed form of oppression against underprivileged women and the violence they may experience.

While men can also be victims of gender-based violence in specific contexts, such as in Thailand and other global southern sex work industries, substantial evidence indicates that the most vulnerable demographics, particularly women and children, are indeed the most affected ones, especially during contemporary armed conflicts. Leatherman (2011) notes that gender-related conflicts against marginalized communities like disadvantaged women and children often escalate and become increasingly extreme in crises like armed conflicts.

Her argument is compelling. The human trafficking report by the U.S. federal government demonstrates a rapid rise in this dehumanizing crime against Afghan women and children, a result of 26 years of war in Afghanistan (U.S. Department of State., 2024). Nadia Murad, now Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, was one of the over 6,000 women and girls kidnapped and held hostage by ISIS (Otten, 2017). Her mother and six of her brothers were killed by ISIS at the time of her kidnapping (Gopin, 2024). She was a hostage for three months, and “traded” throughout the ISIS networks before she escaped. And her experiences are not unique.

The magnification of gender disparity during war normalizes severe violence and, in turn, amplifies the incidence of gender-based conflicts perpetrated by civilians, even in times of peace (Leatherman, 2011). Data shows that in peaceful times, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates gender-based violence against women and children in the Middle East; this includes domestic violence, physical/psychological harm from non-intimate partners, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, and child and early marriage (World Bank Group, 2021). In some of the most severely impacted countries of the Middle East, approximately two-thirds of women and girls have reportedly experienced various forms of gender-based violence during their already challenging lives (United Nations Population Fund., 2024). Under these circumstances, it is not only women who are victims of gender-related violence positioned at the centre of the global crises; Children are also significantly affected.



Among the numerous tragic instances of gender-targeted violence in the Middle East, the persecution of Yazidi women and children and their subsequent migration and resettlement to Canada warrants particular attention. In a single month in August 2014, approximately between 3,000 and 5,000 Yazidis were killed, while nearly the same number of women and children were captured by Daesh, where they were subjected to rape, sexual slavery, and torture (Erdener, 2017; Foster & Minwalla, 2018). Of the refugees who entered Canada in 2017, 81% are Yazidi women and children (Harris, 2017; Wilkinson et al., 2019). In their country of departure, these refugee arrivals experienced several degrees of marginalization and physical/psychological violence on their bodies and minds (Porter, 2018; Vijanann, 2017). However, the resulting harmful effects of gender-based violence are imposed on these Yazidi women and children during armed conflicts in the sending country and continue to haunt them physically and mentally in the aftermath, even after resettling in Canada. It repeatedly conjures the horror of the initial violation during the armed conflicts throughout the lives of the Yazidi women and children and symbolically maintains and conveys the perpetrators' mental dominance over these vulnerable individuals. In Wilkinson et al.'s (2019) Yazidi resettlement report, a refugee shares the traumatized past:

"I am unable to sleep peacefully. Every time I close my eyes, I get flashbacks, even with the medications I'm taking. I go back to the times we have been raped over and over and over again with my children watching. I have witnessed the most horrid events. I have seen women raped and killed before my eyes. I have seen their one to three-year-old children beheaded before my eyes for defying the Muslims..." (Wilkinson et al., 2019:28).

The long-term harms caused by gender-based violence committed against women and girls from the Middle East do not end or disappear with concrete criminal punishment of the perpetrators, the cessation of armed conflict, or the physical departure from the violent state.

It continues to haunt resettled refugee women and girls and prevent them from integrating into the host society of the receiving country. The findings by Wilkinson and her team (2019) demonstrate Yazidi refugee women's critical challenges in seeking employment and daily communication after moving to Canada, as they are prohibited from going to school and receiving formal education in their country of origin at a young age. The low literacy, accompanied by their traumatized past that consists of the loss of family members and sexual assault, makes it extremely difficult for these female refugees to navigate their new lives in Canada. A refugee participant in this report shares her fear and concern about leaving the house to attend the language training programs alone, as in her country of origin, a female must always be escorted by a male outside of their home.

While the detrimental effects of gender-based violence against women from the Middle East persist even after resettling in Canada, we must not overlook their resilience. It manifests in how they try to adjust to independent living with minimal assistance from their male partners in a new environment in the Global North and many other aspects, such as learning about budgeting and financial literacy and using language- and employment-related settlement services (Wilkinson et al., 2019). Lastly, we invite and encourage readers to take a moment in their spare time to explore the Yazidi resettlement report by Wilkinson et al. (2019) to gain deeper insights into the experiences of these vulnerable yet resilient refugee women, men, and children before and after their arrival to Canada. Understanding the critical challenges faced by this group before and after migration is crucial because it can not only help mitigate gender-based violence against these vulnerable populations but also offer valuable insights into how we, as a society, can best support their resettlement and integration into their new homes.

The report can be accessed for free online [here](#).

Chenyu Liu (Johnny) and **Abdul-Bari Abdul-Karim** are both Ph.D. students in Sociology at the Department of Sociology and Criminology at the University of Manitoba.



Europe's Migration Crisis: A Complex Challenge

Written by: Eva Kazakou, Saint Mary's University

In recent years, Europe has faced its most significant migration challenge since World War II. In 2016, over 1.2 million first-time asylum seekers applied for protection in the EU, mirroring the record numbers seen in 2015, and marking a sharp rise from 2014, according to Eurostat. Tragically, more than 5,000 migrants also died crossing the Mediterranean that year, an increase from around 3,800 in 2015 and 3,300 in 2014, according to the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#) and UNHCR.

While the peak of the migration flows occurred in 2015 and 2016, Europe remains a key destination for refugees due to its geographic position and reputation for stability. However, the large influx has severely destabilized cooperation between EU member states, highlighting persistent challenges in managing asylum and immigration. In 2023, asylum applications surged to 1.14 million—the highest level since the 2015 crisis. Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, also reported the highest number of irregular entries into the EU since 2016, further underscoring the scale of the issue.

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum: A Step Forward?

In response, the European Parliament approved new migration rules on April 10, 2024, followed by the Council of the EU's formal adoption on May 14, 2024. The Pact on Migration and Asylum aims to create a unified system for handling migration across the EU, balancing efficiency with European values. A central component of this reform is the overhaul of the [Dublin Regulation](#), particularly "Dublin III," which has long governed the processing of asylum applications in the EU.



Established under the Dublin Convention of 1990, the Dublin Regulation was designed to prevent multiple asylum applications across different countries, assigning responsibility for each claim to a single member state. Over time, revisions such as Dublin II (2003) and Dublin III (2013) introduced more specific criteria, including family unification and the location of prior residence or entry into the EU. Despite these efforts, the rule most frequently applied is the "irregular entry" criterion, which places disproportionate pressure on southern European countries like Greece and Italy—countries that serve as primary points of entry for many migrants.

Balancing Solidarity and Border Control

The [Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) consists of several legal instruments aimed at managing both border security and responsibility-sharing among EU member states. It introduces:

- A mandatory border procedure to rapidly assess asylum applications at the EU's external borders.
- A solidarity mechanism requiring mandatory support from member states facing high migrant numbers. This support can be in the form of relocations, financial aid, or other contributions.
- Improved crisis management, allowing countries to temporarily deviate from certain rules (e.g. Reception Conditions Directive, Asylum Procedures Regulation, Dublin Regulation) in exchange for increased solidarity from other EU nations.



FROM THE RESEARCHER'S DESK

While the Pact aims to enhance border management, it retains elements of Dublin III, including the rule that the country of first entry is responsible for processing asylum claims. This has drawn criticism from international organizations and NGOs such as [Amnesty International](#) and the [European Council on Refugees and Exiles \(ECRE\)](#). They argue that the new regulations maintain the flaws of the current system, placing undue burdens on frontline states and potentially encouraging migrants to avoid detection in order to escape the first-entry rule.

A Difficult Path Forward

As Europe grapples with migration challenges, the effectiveness of the new Pact remains to be seen. While it attempts to address the dual needs of border control and humanitarian responsibility, critics fear that without more comprehensive reforms, the pressure on certain EU countries will persist, leading to further instability in the region. The road ahead will require careful balancing of solidarity, security, and Europe's commitment to upholding the values of human rights and humanitarianism.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

EU Court Recognizes Gender and Nationality as Grounds for Afghan Women's Asylum

On October 4, 2024, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled that Afghan women could be granted asylum in the European Union based solely on their gender and nationality. This landmark decision underscores the severe oppression Afghan women face under Taliban rule, including forced marriages and limited access to education.

The ruling was prompted by two cases in Austria, where Afghan women had been denied refugee status. Austria's supreme administrative court then sought clarification from the ECJ. One of the women, identified as AH, fled Afghanistan with her mother at the age of 13 or 14 after her father, struggling with drug addiction, attempted to sell her to support his habit. The second woman, FN, born in 2007, had never lived in Afghanistan; her family had been residing in Iran without legal status.

Since December 2022, several EU countries have granted refugee status to all Afghan women, recognizing the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. United Nations reports have also highlighted a sharp decline in women's rights, particularly their exclusion from public life.

In this context, the ECJ ruling sets a crucial precedent, affirming gender-based persecution as grounds for asylum. It strengthens EU efforts to protect Afghan women and underscores the urgent need for continued international attention to their plight under Taliban rule.

Reported by: Eva Kazakou



Conflicts in the Middle East: Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria

Reported by: **Sarah Delorme**

“The scale of devastation in Gaza remains unparalleled” said a UNFPA representative in Palestine. As the Palestinian-Israeli conflict continues to occur, other countries in the Middle East such as Syria and Lebanon are also facing devastating consequences. Escalations in these conflicts have led to, not only the massive loss of human lives, but it has also increased the number of displacements, as evacuation orders are forcing civilians, particularly women and children, to fly their homelands.

Since the attack of Hamas on Israel one year ago, an estimated 60,000 women have given birth in Gaza, with only 45,000 of those women being able to safely deliver their babies. Today, most healthcare facilities are barely functional or on the verge of shutting down, due to medical staff being unable to report to work, because they have to stay at home to fight or because they are being redeployed to southern regions to assist with the influx of displaced civilians.

[Read more here.](#)



Damage to Al-Shifa Hospital, in Gaza, seen in April of 2024. The hostilities have only escalated since then. © UNFPA / Dominic Allen

Women in Gaza:



+500,000

women face severe food insecurity



+10,000

women have been killed



+175,000

women face life-threatening health risks

Find out about UN Women's support in Gaza [here.](#)

Donate to the [Canadian Red Cross](#)

Donate to [Islamic Relief Canada](#)

Donate to the [United Nations Relief and Works Agency](#)

Donate to the [United Nations Population Fund](#)



How to Help?

Donate to the [Palestine Children's Relief Fund](#)

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Coercive Control

Reported by: **Sarah Delorme**



Coercive control refers to the continuing nuanced pattern of behaviour by a partner through subtle tactics of domination, intimidation, isolation and fear. This kind of control is often invisible to those outside of the family, which explains why it is difficult to identify. Introduced in 2024, Bill C-332 is an amendment to the Criminal Code that would criminalize coercive control in intimate relationships and send convicted individuals for up to 10 years in prison.

Similarly to intimate partner violence, the mandatory charging policies of coercive control could potentially be harmful to the victim-survivors they initially aim to protect (who are mostly women). Since the implementation of GBV policies, there has been an increase in the number of victim-survivors who have been arrested (sometimes instead of their violent partner). This has primarily occurred as the result of the women's defensive violence, which is sometimes not recognized as defensive according to the justice system.

Systemic factors like the patriarchal nature of the justice system, gender-neutral policies that overlook the gendered patterns of violence as well as the criminalization of survivors are all reasons why criminalizing coercive control is challenging. Additionally, marginalized groups such as Black women, Indigenous women and migrants/refugee women also tend to face more barriers, including racist and discriminatory behaviours from individuals working in the criminal justice system. Other factors like fears of the police, concerns about deportation or language barriers also contribute to worsen their experiences.

Critics argue that criminalizing coercive control is not the solution as the system is already failing at helping women affected by intimate partner violence or other gender-based violence. Instead, they suggest implementing trauma-and-violence-informed care (TVIC), which takes into account how interpersonal violence, systemic violence and structural inequities intersect to impact a person's life. This would help addressing institutional and systemic violence, as well as mandatory charging policies that perpetuate harm. By strictly using a criminal justice-based approach and overlooking the broader social context in which gender-based violence and coercive control take place, victim-survivors will continue to be harmed.



Read more about coercive control [here](#).

Check out Dr Dawson's co-authored paper on coercive control [here](#).



Women Migrant Workers in Nova Scotia

Reported by: **Sarah Delorme**

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, Nova Scotian immigrant women working in healthcare have been the backbone of essential sectors. During the pandemic's most acute phases, these women have made sure that Nova Scotians were taken good care of, were well fed, had medicine and that things were clean ([D'Entremont, 2024](#)).

Although these kinds of positions have been recognized as essential, the wages have not always reflected their crucial importance in our society, particularly during the pandemic ([D'Entremont, 2024](#)). Additionally, there seems to be a disconnection between the experience of immigrant women arriving in Nova Scotia with their wages. Often times, these women end up in low wage, precarious positions, even when they arrive with considerable expertise ([2024](#)).

Furthermore, because the majority of these immigrant women are racialized, most of them have experienced more physical, mental and emotional challenges as the work they performed became riskier during the height COVID-19 ([D'Entremont, 2024](#)). The report highlights that the pandemic reinforced existing stratifications in labour market, especially for newcomer immigrant and migrant, women and racialized people who make up a large portion of service and retail work ([Bryan and Yax-Fraser, 2024](#)).

Read more [here](#).

Read the report [here](#).



In the aftermath of the pandemic, even if essential sectors had gone “back to normal”, migrant and immigrant women continue to struggle today even when the labour they provided during COVID-19 have ensured the reproduction of Canadian families as well as the viability and profitability of these sectors ([Bryan and Yax-Fraser, 2024](#)). The report stresses how these women, who experienced challenges in securing a stable income, were now confronted with racism, exclusion and exploitation within their field ([2024](#)).

The report concludes with recommendations to remedy both the consequences of the pandemic in the lives of migrant and immigrant women and the ongoing devaluation of essential labour ([Bryan and Yax-Fraser, 2024](#)). One of the propositions emphasize the importance of a recovery plan that would seek to review Canada's approach to immigration and would ensure that societal and economic inclusions are properly addressed ([2024](#)). The report also suggests to create meaningfully inclusive and anti-racist workplaces, addressing income and job security, valuing essential reproductive labour, as well as ensuring the social and emotional well-being of migrant women as the main strategies for improving the overall working and living conditions of these women ([2024](#)).

COMMUNITY RESOURCES



Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)

Created in 1978, The Canadian Council for Refugees is a leading voice for the rights, protection, sponsorship, settlement, and well-being of refugees and migrants, in Canada and globally. It has come to be recognized as a key advocate for refugee and immigrant rights in Canada, educating the public and putting issues onto the national agenda.

Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS)

Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) is the leading immigrant settlement service agency in Atlantic Canada, serving 15,000+ clients annually in 100+ communities across Nova Scotia, through many kinds of services—language, settlement, community integration and employment—both in person and online.



Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA)



The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA) is a civil society, grassroots, feminist-led initiative that seeks social change to empower girls and women and to promote sex and gender equality. Preventing male violence against women and girls needs to occur if social change is to be achieved and the well-being of all Canadians ensured.

Immigrant Migrant Women's Association (IMWAH)

Immigrant Migrant Women's Association of Halifax (IMWAH) is a culturally diverse and feminist non-profit organization in Nova Scotia committed to the holistic integration of immigrant, migrant women and girls in the province.



YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth: Gender Based Violence Prevention for Service Providers

The Gender-Based Violence Prevention Project at the YMCA Centre for Immigrant Programs is funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The project began in September 2017 with a focus on working with newcomer children, youth, and families to raise awareness about gender-based violence, prevention programming and how to access available resources within their community.

