



NATIONAL SURVEY ON PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS SEXUAL CRIMES AND LEGAL REFORM (CHAPTER 7)

SUMMARY



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands



O1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality has recently submitted a draft law to amend Chapter 7 of the Lebanese Penal Code, aiming at changing its title and introducing the following reforms: **(1)** remove discriminatory language around “honor” and reframe crimes as violations of bodily integrity and dignity; **(2)** strengthen protection of women and children; and **(3)** increase penalties for sexual crimes. In this context, ABAAD contacted a research institute to conduct a national survey to measure public awareness, attitudes, and support toward these reforms, in order to inform advocacy, communications, and policy engagement strategies.

CRI carried-out the implementation and analysis of the National Survey.

O2 METHODOLOGY

In accordance with the project’s objectives, the study comprised of a quantitative face-to-face research methodology, covering a sample size of 1,500 National adults (aged 18+) residing in Lebanon, through a representative sample, taking into consideration the diversity within the Lebanese society, stratified by gender, age, and region of residence. The fieldwork was conducted during October 2025.

The National survey consisted of the following three phases:

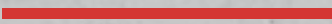
- **The first phase** is a preparatory phase, which included the development of technical tools for the fieldwork (in English and Arabic), the programming of the questionnaire on KOBO, the production of a sampling methodology and the selection and training of surveyors and data enumerators.
- **The second phase** comprises of a fieldwork management phase, which included the following:
 - Conducting 1,500 F2F interviews in all regions through a Nationally representative sample;
 - Managing the team of researchers during field work, under daily supervision, field coordination and quality control measures; and
 - Coding and data cleaning at the end of the fieldwork.
- **The third phase** consists of a detailed statistical analysis, repo of the findings, presenting the outcomes, and the validation process.

THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE NATIONAL SURVEY ARE AS FOLLOWS:

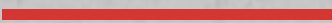
1- AWARENESS & KNOWLEDGE:

The level of awareness of the current Chapter 7 of the Penal Code was found to be low, and especially very low in peripheral areas of Lebanon. Moreover, the general public almost lacks knowledge of the amendments to sexual crimes listed under Chapter 7 of the Penal Code. However, the opinion poll deemed the current penalties against perpetrators – as currently stated in the Penal Code – to be insufficient to provide protection from sexual violence and crimes.

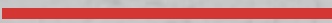
KEY RESULTS

56% 

of Lebanese women and men believe that the Lebanese Penal Code currently criminalizes sexual violence.

85% 

of Lebanese women and men have not heard about the recent proposed amendments to sexual crimes under Chapter 7 of the Penal Code.

81% 

of Lebanese women and men believe that the current penalties for sexual crimes are insufficient.

2- ATTITUDES & BELIEFS:

It was found that the general public perceived as a crime, every act of forcing a wife into sexual relations without her consent. In the same sense, a majority believe that the “perpetrator” is most often blamed for an incidence of sexual violence. Also, a majority disagreed with the statement that says “reporting sexual violence brings shame to the family”.

Yet, when it comes to the issue of the so-called “honor”, it was found that this remains a sensitive matter for more than half of the general public, who believe that it should still affect how sexual crimes are reported.

KEY RESULTS

78%

of Lebanese women and men believe that forcing a wife into sexual relations without her consent should be considered a crime.

55%

of Lebanese women and men believe that the so-called “honor” should affect how sexual crimes are reported.

68%

of Lebanese women and men believe that the perpetrator is most often blamed when sexual violence occurs.

51%

of Lebanese women and men believe that reporting sexual violence brings shame to the family.

3- BEHAVIOR & EXPERIENCE:

The National Survey revealed that sexual harassment, assaults and violence still prevail to a certain extent. Some declared that they are acquainted to someone who has experienced sexual assault, the vast majority of those who survived sexual assault were females and children. Whereas, few others admitted having experienced sexual harassment or violence themselves (especially, females and middle-aged people).

Unfortunately, less than 1 in every 4 cases of sexual harassment or violence were reported (males did not report at all). These incidents of sexual harassment or violence were mostly reported to family members, and less so to law enforcement agencies and to state authorities. In fact, half of those who refrained from reporting such incidents lacked trust in the law enforcement agencies and the judiciary bodies. Another main reason for not reporting was due to fear of stigma and because they felt ashamed of it.

However, a vast majority of the general public would indeed encourage a person close to them to report in case of sexual assault (this was more evident amongst females).

KEY RESULTS

84% 

of Lebanese men and women personally don't know a person who have experienced sexual assault.

96% 

of Lebanese women and men haven't experienced sexual harassment or violence in their life.

79% 

of Lebanese women and men would encourage others to report if they were assaulted.

3- SUPPORT FOR REFORM:

Indeed, the public opinion in Lebanon granted a clear greenlight to the efforts towards reforming Chapter 7 of the Lebanese Penal Code, and approved of the general direction and main content of the draft law submitted by ABAAD, especially with regards to the organization's call for reframing under "sexual crimes" and introducing stricter penalties.

In light of the frail satisfaction with the Lebanese state's current efforts to provide protection of women and children from sexual violence; the general public finds it 'very important' for Lebanon to reform its sexual crimes law to better protect survivors. Also, the public poll results revealed an overwhelming majority in favor of increasing the punishments for perpetrators of sexual crimes.

The general public also supported the following two proposed amendments for Chapter 7 of the Lebanese Penal Code: (a) the elimination of any discrimination whether the survivor is a virgin or not; and (b) the removal from guardianship when the perpetrator is himself the guardian.

KEY RESULTS

71% of Lebanese women and men support changing the legal terminology from "crimes against morals" to "sexual crimes."

95% of Lebanese women and men support increasing the penalty for sexual intercourse with a minor from 5 years of hard labor to 20 years of hard labor.

98% of Lebanese women and men support increasing punishments for perpetrators of sexual crimes.

78% of Lebanese women and men believe that the Lebanese state is currently not doing enough to protect women and girls from sexual violence.

86% of Lebanese women and men support increasing the penalty for those who force others, through violence or threats, to have sexual intercourse from 5 years of hard labor to 20 years of hard labor.

95% of Lebanese women and men consider it very important for Lebanon to reform its sexual crimes law to better protect survivors.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In view of the findings of this National Survey, the recommendations address three different lines of actions: (i) developing awareness campaigns; (ii) enhancing protection of women and children; and (iii) advancement forward with the call for legal reform.

1.1. AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

1. The existing sexual crime laws and regulations (generally, targeting: females, young people and regions of the North, South and Bekaa), especially in terms of:

a. The traditional and outdated content, approach and used terminologies. The communication campaign should target the following currently integrated notions within the Penal Code (Chapter 7):

#	Topic	Main Targeted Segments
1	The so-called “honor” issue	This is still highly disputed, in comparison to other issues, it is recommended that the communication campaign targets the general public, with special focus on: - The elderly; - North region; - Bekaa region; and - Mount Lebanon.
2	Victim-blaming	- The elderly; - The South; and - Mount Lebanon.
3	Social stigma and “shame”	- Females; - Young people; - Beirut; - Bekaa region; and - The South

- b. Exposure of the loopholes it continues to maintain, such as:
 - i. Marriage exemption for perpetrators;
 - ii. The issue of guardianship of perpetrators, etc.

2. The proposed legal amendments (generally, targeting: females, young people and regions of the North, Bekaa and South) with special focus on the critical need to:

- a. Strengthen protection measures for women and children against sexual harassment and violence;
- b. Remove discriminatory language around "honor";
- c. Reframe crimes as violations of bodily integrity and dignity.

3. The importance of encouraging reporting sexual crimes, and reduction of barriers to report them, in terms of:

- a. The social norms and traditions (familial and tribal relations);
- b. The cultural values, such as "honor", social stigma and shame, victim-blaming and the issue of virginity, and
- c. The weak institutional practices on behalf of the law enforcement agencies and judiciary bodies).

The findings also revealed the need to develop an advocacy campaign, with regards to introducing these reforms, targeting enhancing awareness of the following socio-demographic profiles (without totally neglecting the other segments, depending on the topics raised):

- Females;
- Youth and middle-aged people;
- The peripheral regions, such as the North, Bekaa and South.

1.2. ENHANCING PROTECTION

As the National Survey proved that sexual harassment, assaults and violence still prevail, it is recommended to intensify the efforts on the following three domains:

1. Reforms of legal provisions leading to strengthening protection of women and children, including increasing punishments to perpetrators, as suggested by the draft law submitted by ABAAD.

2. Encourage survivors to report sexual crimes.

3. Work on enhancing the institutional level, especially with regards to best-practices of establishments, such as the law enforcement agencies and judiciary bodies.

For the purpose of enhancing protection, advocacy campaigns should target the general public, as well as legislators, in addition to targeting the institutional levels of law enforcement and the judiciary. However, such actions and campaigns should take into consideration the bottom-up approach and processes, in order for a broader impact on beliefs, behaviors, and social norms and traditions. This approach implies the need to apply such campaigns at the societal level, involving the participation of key stakeholders at the regional dimension, such as local authorities and municipalities, community leaders, women's cooperatives, youth organizations, cultural associations, in addition to CBOs and local NGOs, etc.

1.3. ADVANCING WITH LEGAL REFORMS

Indeed, the National Survey findings illustrated a great support for the reforms concerning Chapter 7 of the Lebanese Penal Code, and a very high level of approval for the most important details of the draft law amendments submitted by ABAAD. This huge endorsement of ABAAD's legal reforms by the general public should foster the organization's actions and advocacy campaigns to gain agreement on amendments of Chapter 7 by legislators.

Indeed, the National Survey may serve as an efficient tool for achieving this purpose, throughout lobbying activities and agenda. Hence, ABAAD should work on a communication campaign, utilizing the National Survey results, towards the following two targets:

1. Creating a broad consensus among the general public concerning the reform of the Lebanese Penal Code (Chapter 7), in the following two themes:

- a- The “importance” of the suggested amendments for providing a better protection for women and children; and
- b- The “urgency” (or “immediacy”) of the proposed legal reforms for combating sexual crimes.

2. Enhancing the lobbying campaign targeting legislators, at different levels:

- Starting at the personal level, addressing – individually – those who are most in support of the reforms, aiming at cooperating with them to convince the others and widen the lobby in favor of the suggested revisions. This should end with at least ten PMs who apply an official request demanding the amendments for Chapter 7 of the Lebanese Penal Code.
- Then, the lobbying campaign should target the different parliamentary blocs, either through the Head (leader) of each bloc, or – in best case scenario – the entire members of each bloc. This requires demanding meetings with them, in order to present the submitted amendments by ABAAD.
- Additionally, the lobbying campaign might target the political parties of the legislators and/or their affiliations. This might provide a chance for a broader advocacy campaign and a wider endorsement of the reform.
- Finally, the advocacy may attempt for a direct dialogue with the Speaker of the Parliament, or his closest associates (if needed).

It should be noted that the lobbying campaign amongst the legislative body and PMs should be directed towards the aspect of enhancing “protection” of women and children against sexual crimes, rather than the topic of “modernization” of the laws and regulations.