

TURNING KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION

Addressing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Under Rapidly Changing Circumstances

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is one of the most widespread forms of violence against women. In [Latin America and the Caribbean \(LAC\)](#), [one out of three](#) ever-partnered women has been physically or sexually abused by their partners. In the Americas, between 2017 to 2020, [40% of women's homicides](#) were perpetrated by a family member or an intimate partner.

During the pandemic, economic-related stress and social distancing measures encouraging people to stay at home [increased several forms of IPV and risk factors associated with it](#). It is imperative to target policy efforts to address the interpersonal, social, and institutional factors underlying this problem.

Here, we share new research findings on IPV and initiatives that can address it during rapidly changing circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Start from Identifying the Problem: How to Detect Changes in IPV?

The COVID-19 pandemic underlined that, despite the urgent need to address IPV, accurate data to identify and target policy efforts are rarely available in rapidly changing contexts. In middle- and low-income countries, [administrative records on IPV are scarce](#) due to rampant underreporting to service providers. The pandemic added further challenges, such as a pause on statistical operations that would inform about changes in risk factors associated with violence.

While increasingly considered a solution in rapidly changing contexts, remote sensing data may not provide an accurate source of information.



A recent [study](#) authored by LACGIL researchers and academics investigates the usefulness of night lights and air pollution measures in capturing changes in economic circumstances brought by the pandemic, such as income losses, and the extent to which the variation in income captured by remote sensing data is associated with IPV. The researchers do this by comparing the data from remote sensing sources with a retrospective panel that asks participants about income changes and IPV incidence during the pandemic. The results show that while remote sensing data may help study changes in income, they may be inadequate for studying behavioral responses like IPV, possibly due to a lack of granularity. In turn, [income and IPV data collected through rapid phone surveys](#) did exhibit strong associations.

Innovations to Address IPV

Boosting public awareness and outreach. Public awareness campaigns about the risk of violence and options for survivors using digital and social media, such as [CuentaNos](#) in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, can be part of [key initiatives to make services available under rapidly changing circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic](#). In addition, traditional avenues of communication, such as [hotlines, print, and radio, should be available to reach women lacking digital access](#). During the pandemic, **innovations in reporting mechanisms**, such as IPV-specific mobile applications and non-traditional ways for survivors to seek help confidentially, including code words and signals in the case of [Argentina](#), have been shown to be useful.



Fostering economic agency. Given the demonstrated link between economic stressors ([such as the pandemic](#)) and the increased risk of IPV, assistance programs can help to reduce the risk of violence. Measures to support survivors, such as [direct assistance in the form of general or targeted food or cash transfers](#) and [ensuring that social service providers have adequate resources to cope with increased demand](#), can help to reduce the risk of IPV. For the latter, considering flexible enrolment and eligibility criteria allowed CCT programs in [Brazil and Argentina](#) to reach a large share of informal and previously uncovered or unregistered beneficiaries.



This Knowledge to Action Note was prepared by Javier Romero and Angela Rocio Lopez Sanchez under the direction of Ximena Del Carpio and Jacobus Joost De Hoop. The team is grateful for the support from Kavell Joseph, Diana Jimena Arango and Manuel Contreras Urbina. The Latin America and the Caribbean Gender Innovation Lab (LACGIL) supports impact evaluations and inferential studies to find out what works to close gender gaps in human capital, economic participation, social norms, and agency. The LACGIL works in partnership with units across the World Bank, aid agencies and donors, governments, non-governmental organizations, private sector firms, and academic researchers.

This work has been funded in part by the [World Bank Group's Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality \(UFGE\)](#), a multi-donor trust fund administered by the World Bank to advance gender equality and women's empowerment through experimentation and knowledge creation to help governments and the private sector focus policy and programs on scalable solutions with sustainable outcomes. The UFGE is supported by generous contributions from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.