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Quarterly Bulletin of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

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Vienna NGO Committee on the Family
VALERIA FOGLAR-DEINHARDSTEIN, M.Sc.
LIECHTENSTEINSTRASSE 111-115
1090 VIENNA
AUSTRIA
EMAIL: CONTACT@VIENNAFAMILYCOMMITTEE.ORG 

Dear Readers of 'Families International',

In this 127th issue of the Quarterly Bulletin 'Families International' (FI), you can find a wide range of family-related texts and resources, starting with the "UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons and UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants", which was presented by Dr. Claire Healy at the last International Forum on May 15th 2023.

Following this, a report on technology in relation to marital problems by the Institute for Family Studies can be found, as well as a policy brief entitled "Moving towards a culture of assessment for learning in Lao schools", which was provided by UNICEF Innocenti. What is more, the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family's member organisation Make Mothers Matter (MMM) has contributed a text about the importance of recognising and valuing unpaid care work.

Last but not least, a list of recent and upcoming events is provided at the end of this issue of 'Families International'.

Sincerely,
Karin Kuzmanov, M.Sc.
Executive Editor

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From the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family



UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons and UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants

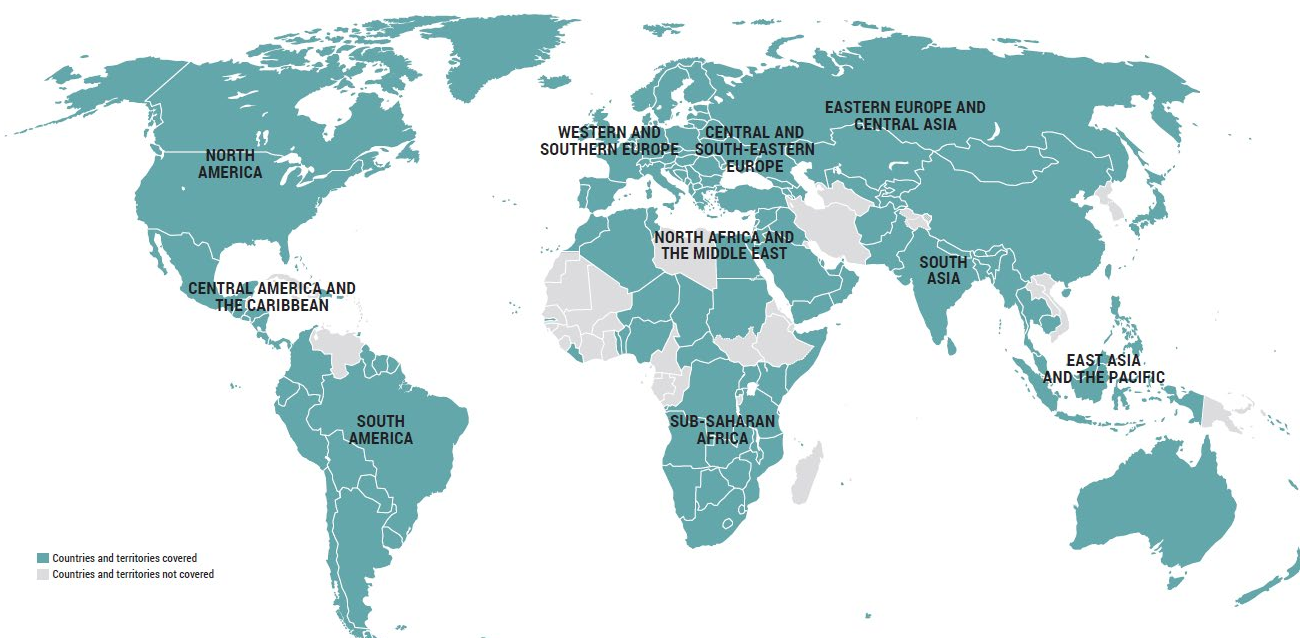
On 15 May 2023, Dr. Claire Healy, Research Officer at the Crime Research Section of the UNODC Research and Trend Analysis branch, presented to the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family the research findings of the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022* and of the UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants.

The *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* is published biannually, as the UN General Assembly in 2010 mandated "... the UNODC to collect information and report biennially ...on patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at the national, regional and international levels...." (Para 60, A/RES/64/293 – United Nations Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons). Since 2009, UNODC has conducted a yearly global data collection around the world to capture core indicators on trafficking in persons, including identification of victims and their profiles, arrests and prosecutions of alleged offenders, and convictions of traffickers.

Based on this data collection, UNODC has the largest dataset on trafficking in persons worldwide, covering the period 2003-2022 and containing anonymized details of over 450,000 identified victims and over 300,000 (alleged) offenders. The database also includes detailed court case narratives from over 800 trafficking court cases covering 4,365 victims and 2,525 (alleged) offenders.

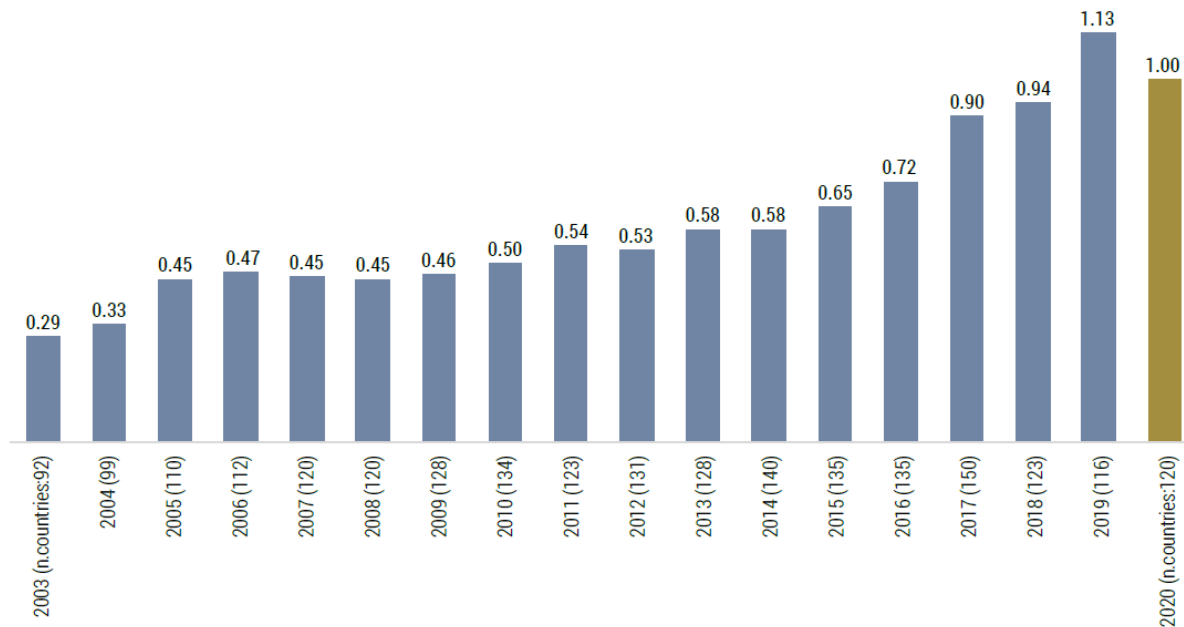
The *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022* (available at: www.unodc.org/glotip.html) is the 7th edition of the *Global Report* and covers 141 countries in all regions of the world (see map below).

Countries covered by the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*



Among the key findings of the report are that 2020, the year that the COVID-19 pandemic began, was the first year since data collection commenced that fewer trafficking victims (per population) were detected globally than the previous year (see graph below).

Total victims detected per 100,000 population, 2003-2020

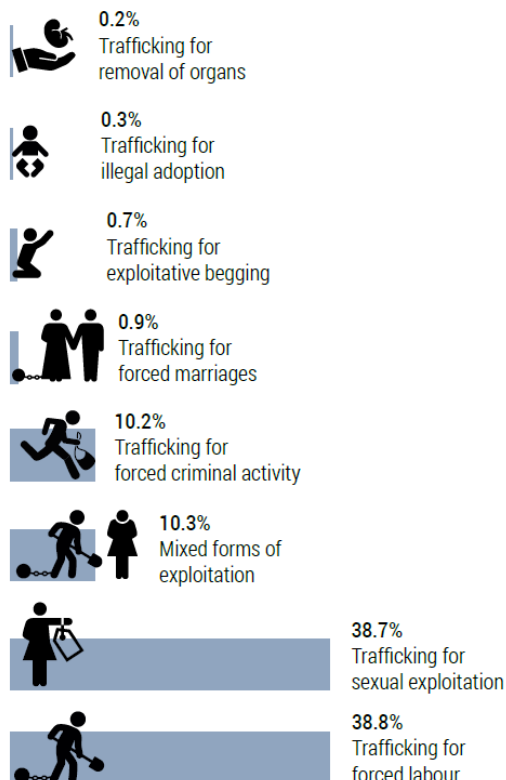
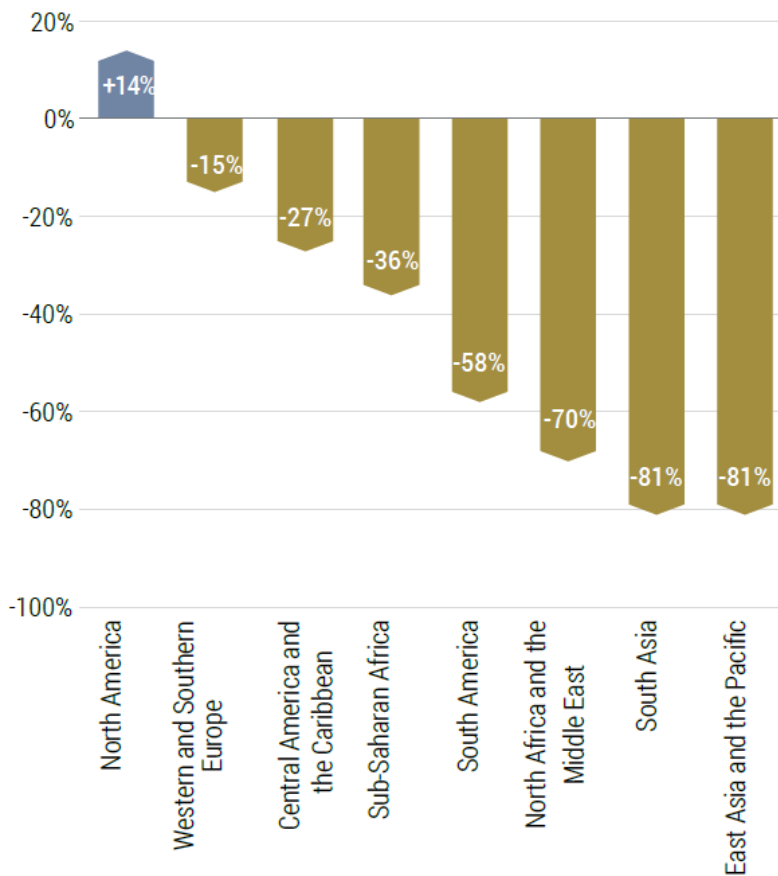


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

The evidence analyzed for the Report indicates that this decline is the result of a combination of three main factors: (a) during the pandemic, anti-trafficking responders had reduced capacity to identify victims of trafficking; (b) the pandemic-related lockdowns and restrictions offered fewer opportunities for traffickers to operate; and (c) victims of sexual exploitation were moved to more concealed locations.

Largely due to travel restrictions, cross-border trafficking detections declined 21%, while domestic trafficking (within one country) experienced a much less significant decline, of just 3%. When the rates of identification of foreign victims of trafficking in persons are examined per region, the largest declines in identification were in East Asia and the Pacific, South Asia, and North Africa and the Middle East (see graph below).

Percentage change in number of identified foreign victims of trafficking from 2019 to 2020, by region



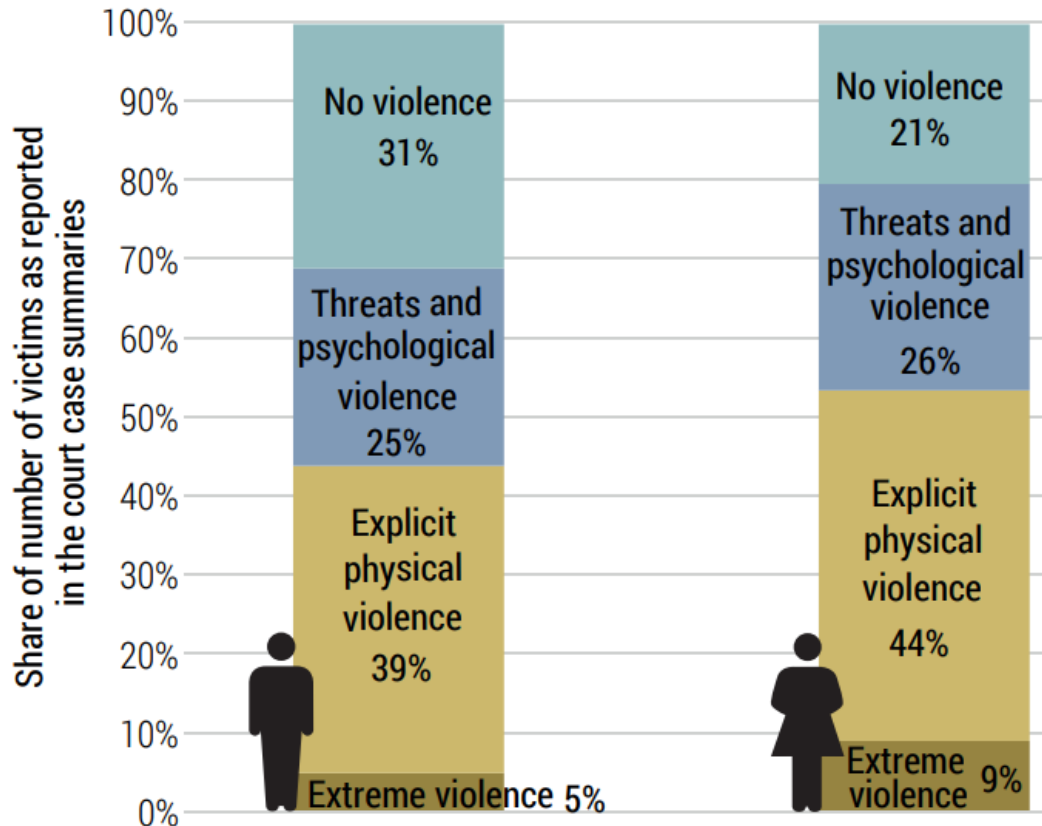
There was a more pronounced decline in the identification of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation from 2019 to 2020, of 24% globally. This was particularly the case in North Africa and the Middle East, East Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America. This is because trafficking for sexual exploitation was in many cases moved to more concealed and less safe locations, such as private apartments, private homes and hotels.

In terms of forms of exploitation, 2020 marks the first year since data collection began that trafficking for forced labor was detected in the same proportions as trafficking for sexual exploitation. There was also an increase in the identification of victims of trafficking for forced criminal activity, and mixed forms of exploitation (see graph).

Detected victims of trafficking, by form of exploitation, 2020

While the proportion of trafficking victims identified who were women has decreased significantly since 2004, from 74% to 42%, the proportion of men and boys has increased significantly, from 13% to 23% and from 35 to 17%, respectively. The number of girls identified has increased from 10% to 18%.

However, the report found that female victims are three times more likely to suffer violent forms of trafficking, with girls even more likely than women (see graph below).



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherlock Case Law Database.

Another concerning finding is that victims must rely on “self-rescue” in order to exit exploitation. According to court case summaries analyzed, 41% of identifications of victims were due to their own initial acting, 11% by their community or strangers, and 10% by their families; while 28% were due to action by law enforcement and 9% by other institutions or civil society.

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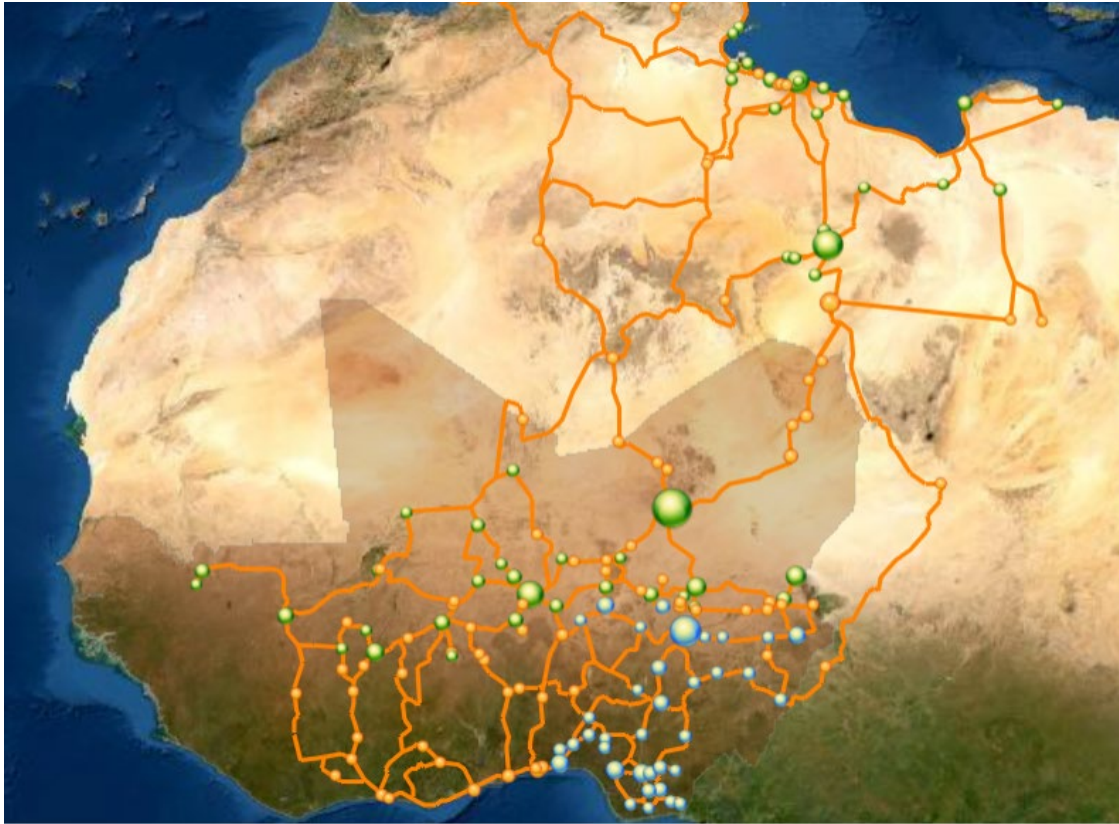
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Dr. Healy also presented the UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants, a data collection and research analysis initiative by UNODC that commenced in 2019 and was launched online in 2021 (www.unodc.org/res/som). The Observatory seeks to address the lack of robust administrative data on migrant smuggling and the need for an evidence base to guide counter-smuggling responses and protection

for migrants and refugees. The Observatory provides regularly updated, accurate and policy-relevant data and information about migrant smuggling on an online platform. The UN General Assembly in 2019 mandated UNODC to “systematically collect data and information from Member States on migrant smuggling routes, the modus operandi of migrant smugglers and the role of transnational organized crime” UNGA Resolution A/73/186 (29.01.2019).

UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants map of smuggling routes from Nigeria



The Observatory provides the evidence base to inform responses, as per the UN Smuggling of Migrants Protocol, to prevent and combat smuggling of migrants; to promote cooperation among States on counter-smuggling; and to protect the rights of smuggled people.

Image of the Observatory website

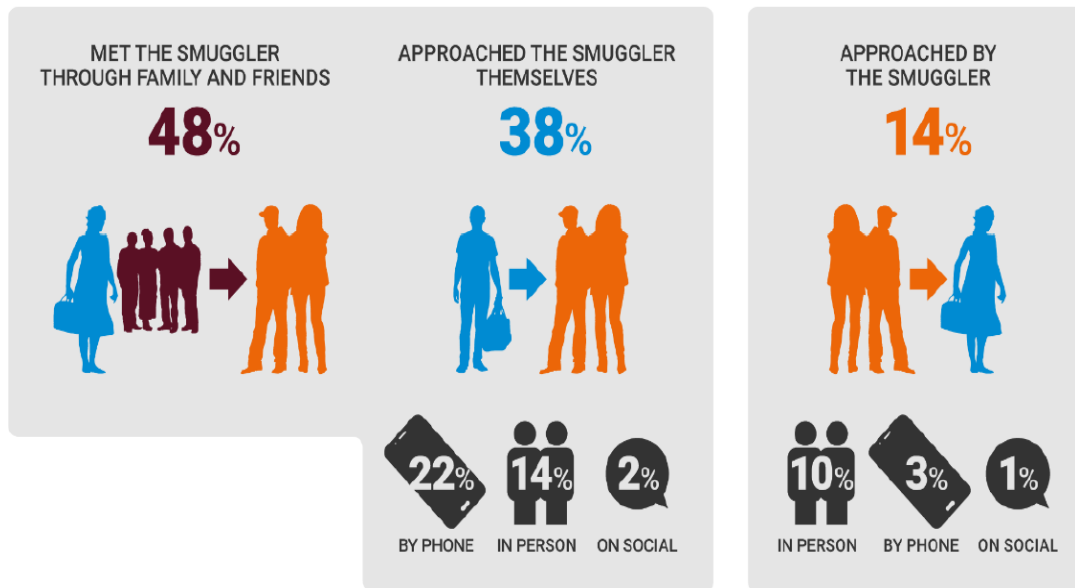


Current Observatory research presented online includes an analysis of four different sets of migrant smuggling routes originating in West Africa: West Africa, Libya and Central Mediterranean; Morocco and the Western Mediterranean route; Northwest African route (to the Canary Islands); and Migrant Smuggling from Nigeria. The Observatory also has ongoing research to be presented in the course of 2023, on migrant smuggling in Southeast Asia, and in the context of the war in Ukraine.

The Observatory analysis points to the drivers of migrant smuggling as: the motivation to migrate combined with a lack of legal migration alternatives; the perception that smuggling is cheaper and easier than independent travel; requests to people on the move for bribes by officials, and for protection money by non-state armed actors, which the smugglers pay on their clients' behalf.

Generally it is the potential client (migrant/refugee) who approaches a smuggler to request their services, rather than a smuggler "recruiting" a client (see infographic below).

FIRST CONTACT OF MIGRANTS WITH SMUGGLERS



Smuggling fees depend on the number of actors involved, their commissions, the risks of the journey, and the profiles and perceived wealth of the clients. Smuggling fees also include bribes and protection money to police, border guards, military or non-state armed groups. While some smuggled people are abused and exploited by smugglers, constituting aggravated smuggling offences, it is more common that smuggled people are abused by other actors, such as criminals, border officials, armed groups and military or police.

All of the detailed findings of the Observatory, based on each set of smuggling routes, can be accessed on the Observatory website.

From the Institute for Family Studies



MORE SCROLLING, MORE MARITAL PROBLEMS

Less sex, more divorce worries for couples distracted by phones

Wendy Wang and Michael Toscano



July 26, 2023

More Scrolling, More Marital Problems

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Wendy Wang is director of research at the Institute for Family Studies.

Michael Toscano is the executive director of the Institute for Family Studies.

Introduction

Smartphones and social media were supposed to bring us closer together. But the more we learn about their effects, the more we see that these tools come with a price. Research by Jean Twenge and others has shown that teens who use social media excessively are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and sleep deprivation. Recently, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy issued an advisory warning that social media are causing a profound mental health crisis among America's children.

Even though most research on excessive smartphone usage focuses on teens and young adults, it does not mean that older Americans are immune to this issue. In the recent IFS teen and tech report with Jean Twenge, about 1 in 7 parents of teens (15%) said they use their phones or other digital devices “almost constantly” during conversations, meals, or family events. And there is growing evidence that our closest, most important relationships, such as our marriages and dating relationships, are suffering as a result. Using a sample of 145 adults, James Roberts and Meredith David found that “phubbing” (prioritizing one's phone over people) among romantic partners leads to greater relationship dissatisfaction.

Reflecting on more than 25 years of practice, therapist Andrew Sofin recently observed:

Smartphones have caused more upheaval than anything I've seen in my career. We've normalized them being intrusive and taking precedence when people are lying in bed, playing Wordle or scrolling through TikTok rather than talking to each other.

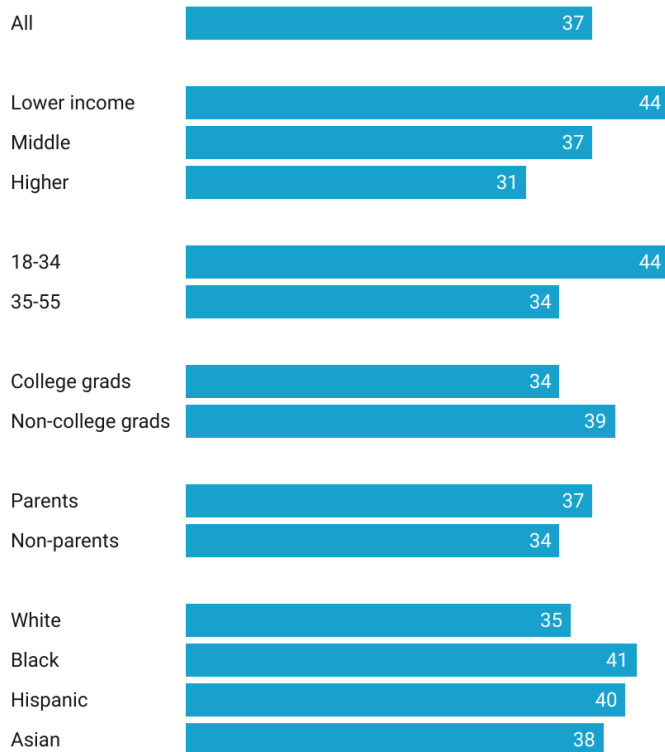
How prevalent is excessive smartphone usage in marriage? Do all marriages suffer from phone addiction equally? What is the link between smartphones and marital quality? We take up these and other questions here.

The Demographics of Phone Distraction

More than one-third of married Americans (37%) say that their spouse is often on the phone or some kind of screen when they would prefer to talk or do something together as a couple, according to a new Institute of Family Studies/Wheatley Institute survey of 2,000 married couples ages 18 to 55. The phone problem is even worse among lower-income couples, with 44% indicating that their spouse is distracted by phones while they desire quality time together, compared with 31% of higher-income couples.

Lower-income couples are more likely to be affected by excessive tech use

% saying their spouse is often on the phone, tablet, or computer when they want to talk or do something together



Based on married adults ages 18-55. Lower income refers to those with family income under 50K, and higher income is 100k or more.

Source: IFS/Wheatley State of Our Unions Survey, Sep 2022 • Created with Datawrapper

Younger couples are more likely to be distracted by their phone at home. A full 44% of married adults under age 35 say that their spouse is on the phone too much, compared with 34% of those aged 35-55. In addition, married adults without a college degree are more likely than college-educated adults to report that their spouse is distracted by their phone (39% vs. 34%).

[More Scrolling, More Marital Problems](#)

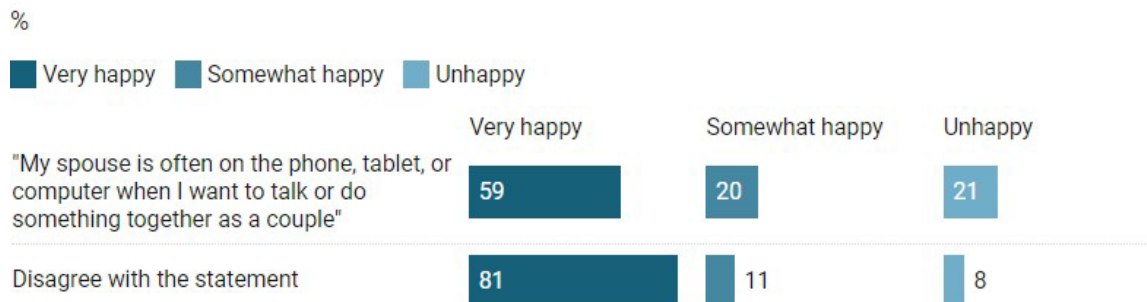
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Meanwhile, husbands and wives are just as likely to feel left out because of their spouses' overuse of a smart phone. Liberals and conservatives are equally affected, as are those who attend church regularly and those who do not.

Smartphones and Marital Quality

Excessive phone usage by a spouse leads to general frustrations, but it also is linked to more serious marital issues. In fact, couples who deal with excessive phone use are less happy about their marriage than others. Only about 6 in 10 married adults whose spouse is often on the phone (59%) say they are “very happy” with their marriage, compared with 81% of those who don't struggle with this issue. More so, 1 in 5 married adults (21%) with a spouse that overuses a phone say they are not happy with their marriage, compared with only 8% of couples who do not report a phone issue.

Excessive tech use is linked to lower marital happiness



Based on married adults ages 18-55

Source: IFS/Wheatley State of Our Unions Survey, Sep 2022 • Created with Datawrapper

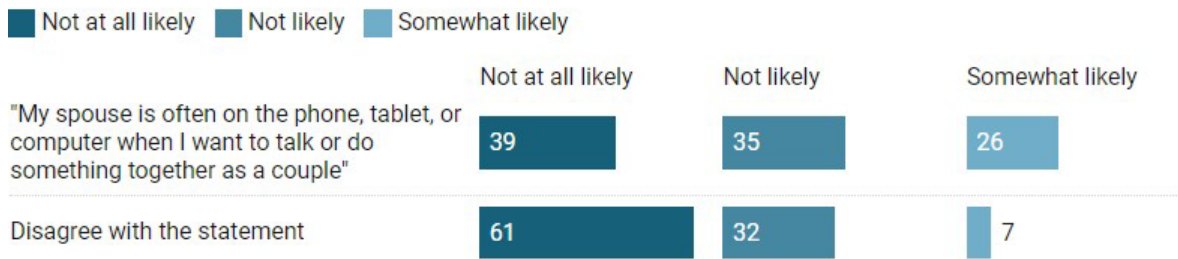
Moreover, excessive phone usage is linked to greater worries about divorce. About a quarter of couples who lack control over their phones (26%) say their marriages may end in a divorce in the near or distant future. Among couples without a phone issue, only 7% say they are pessimistic about their marriage.

[More Scrolling, More Marital Problems](#)

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Excessive tech use is linked to greater worries about divorce

% saying that their marriage is...to end in divorce



Based on married adults ages 18-55

Source: IFS/Wheatley State of Our Unions Survey, Sep 2022 • Created with Datawrapper

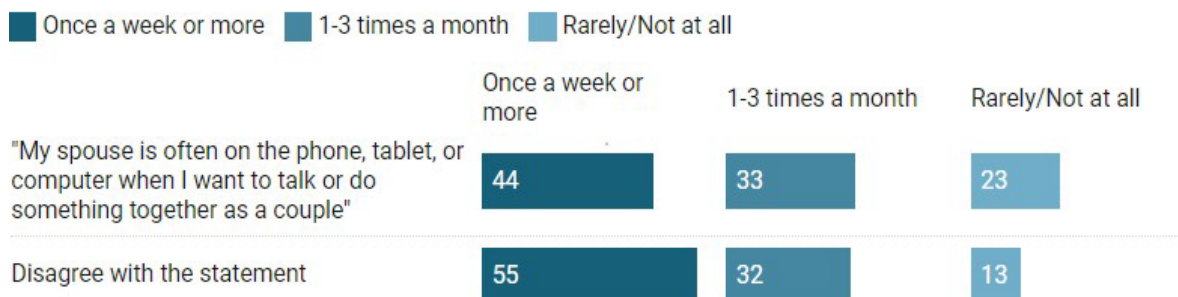
The link between smartphones and relationship quality remains significant in a multivariate model controlling for a range of factors such as age, gender, race, education, income, and whether couples have children. Holding all these factors constant, couples who experience phone distractions are about 70% less likely than other couples to be very happy with their marriage.

Moreover, the odds of a future divorce perceived by these couples is four times higher than it is among couples who do not have a phone problem.

Two things may be contributing to lower marital satisfaction among couples who have a phone problem: less sex and fewer date nights. Fewer than half of these couples (44%) have sex once a week or more often, and about 1 in 5 of these couples (23%) report that either they haven't had sex at all in the past 12 months (11%) or only once or twice (12%). In contrast, the couples with greater control over their phones are more likely to report more frequent sex.

More phone, less sex

% having sex during the last 12 months



Based on married adults ages 18-55

Source: IFS/Wheatley State of Our Unions Survey, Sep 2022 • Created with Datawrapper

[More Scrolling, More Marital Problems](#)

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Regular date nights are linked to happier marriages. Couples where one spouse is often on the phone, however, are less likely to go on dates. Nearly 6 in 10 of these couples (58%) say that they either do not have date nights or only have a date night a few times a year, compared to 48% of couples who do not have a phone problem.

Conclusion

It is difficult to determine for certain whether excessive phone use is the culprit of marital problems, given that addiction to phones may be an indicator of an already-unhappy marriage. Unhappy spouses might resort to using phones to escape and avoid communication with their partner. On the other hand, smartphones are engineered to be addictive. It is naïve to assume that adults would be totally immune to their design. The most likely scenario is that marital difficulty and addiction to smartphones are reinforcing each other, and that—without breaking out of the smartphone addiction—the underlying marital problems will be exacerbated to the breaking point and near impossible to address.

The fact that lower-income couples are more prone to distraction by phones at home is particularly troublesome. As we know, marriages are already more fragile for these couples and the marriage rate is much lower among lower-income and working-class Americans. The added strain of phone addiction further exacerbates the fragility of these marriages. Many troubled marriages have the potential to be healthier with some changes. Routine conversation, dates, and sex connect spouses and foster stability and happiness. A spouse spending more time on his or her phone will spend less time doing other things, such as reading a book, playing board games with the family, or connecting with family members. Addiction to smartphones crowds out the opportunity for couples to make time for one another. Time spent intentionally together is especially critical for low-income marriages, as the extended networks of such couples tend to be in a precarious state. In such a brittle social environment, spouses bear a greater psychological and relational load. Therefore, addiction to a device is a recipe for failure and, as we have seen, divorce.

In light of this, we recommend the following:

1. [Marriage and pre-marriage counselors should strongly urge couples to establish rules about the use of smartphones.](#)
2. [Couples should voluntarily use basic phones that are designed to limit their functionality to the essentials—talk, text, email—to put themselves in the best position to overcome the addictive qualities of these devices.](#)

3. Social media companies should re-design their platforms to root out their most addictive features, such as infinite scroll.
4. Community and national leaders should establish social norms around smartphones— e.g., at school, in church, throughout the media, and elsewhere—that frequent use in the company of others is unhealthy, except when necessary for technical purposes.
5. Public or privately sponsored public service announcements should be launched to inform Americans about the dangers of smartphone addiction to one’s relationships, with a special effort to ensure that low-income Americans are fully educated about the risks.

Marriage is the thread that holds society together. For the sake of their families and for the good of society, spouses should be empowered to resist the technological forces that threaten to fray the marital bond.

More Scrolling, More Marital Problems

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From UNICEF Innocenti



Key findings



Teachers in highly effective schools adopt several teaching strategies that are reflective of formative assessment and related to targeted instruction more frequently than teachers in less effective schools.



Teachers in highly effective schools report higher levels of confidence in their assessment knowledge and pedagogical skills.



Principals and teachers in highly effective schools report closer monitoring of lower performing students' learning and how it changes over time.



Principals and teachers in highly effective schools report providing significantly more frequent feedback to parents based on student learning assessments.

Context

Although the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) has made steady progress in expanding access to primary and lower secondary education, many children still finish primary school unable to read, write or do simple calculations. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, learning outcomes were low, with 50 per cent of Lao grade 5 students scoring in the lowest achievement band on the 2019 Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) regional assessment.¹ Despite this learning crisis, some schools are outperforming others, even in the most disadvantaged areas. The Data Must Speak (DMS) positive deviance research aims to identify these 'positive deviant' or 'highly effective'² schools and examine their practices and behaviours. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from school principals, teachers, students and parents at positive deviant and comparison schools to identify their behaviours and practices. In addition, Village Education Development Committee members and District Education and Sports Bureaux staff were also surveyed.³

This brief presents key findings on practices adopted by highly effective schools related to formative assessment and serves to further country-level policy dialogues on the use of formative assessment to improve student learning.



Research findings

Formative assessment, frequently referred to as 'assessment for learning' or continuous assessment, can provide valuable feedback for teachers and/or students that can be used to adjust the teaching and learning process and can inform instructional activities and remedial action.⁴ In the post-COVID-19 context, formative assessment can also play a critical role in accelerating learning recovery.⁵ International evidence suggests that formative assessments have strong potential to yield promising learning results, especially for lower performing students, if certain conditions are met.

In 2018, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) in Lao PDR introduced a learning assessment framework highlighting the importance of effective formative and summative assessments as a means of monitoring and improving students' learning.⁶ While Lao PDR's Education and Sports Sector Development Plan 2021–2025 builds on this framework by emphasizing the need for formative assessment in classrooms, the development of detailed guidelines on formative assessment is still under way and schools across the country have not systematically implemented formative assessment.

- 1 United Nations Children's Fund and Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, SEA-PLM 2019 Main Regional Report: Children's learning in 6 Southeast Asian countries, UNICEF and SEAMEO, Bangkok, 2020, <www.unicef.org/eap/media/7356/file/SEA-PLM%202019%20Main%20Regional%20Report.pdf>.
- 2 Highly effective schools are performing better in terms of student learning than other schools with similar characteristics, as measured through SEA-PLM and Department of Education Quality Assurance data.
- 3 More detailed information about the sampling methodology can be found in the [full report](#).
- 4 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 'Assessment for Learning: The case for formative assessment', OECD/CERI International Conference 'Learning in the 21st Century: Research, innovation and policy', 2008, <www.oecd.org/site/educeri21st/40600533.pdf>.
- 5 Global Education Monitoring Report Team, Global Education Monitoring Report 2020. Inclusion and education: All means all, UNESCO, Paris, 2020, <<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373718>>.
- 6 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization International Institute for Educational Planning, 'Formative Assessment', IIEP Learning Portal, UNESCO, Paris, 2023, <<https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/issue-briefs/monitor-learning/formative-assessment>>, accessed 18 April 2023.
- 7 United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and World Bank, Where Are We On Education Recovery?, UNICEF, New York, 2022, <www.unicef.org/media/117626/file/Where%20are%20we%20in%20Education%20Recovery?.pdf>.
- 8 Lao People's Democratic Republic, Ministry of Education and Sports, 'Ministerial Decree on the Assessment Framework for General Education' Ref. No. 9849/MOES, 2018.

This research suggests that highly effective schools in Lao PDR adopt practices relating to formative assessment in the classroom and focus more on students’ learning outcomes.

Teachers in highly effective schools adopt several teaching strategies that are reflective of formative assessment and related to targeted instruction more frequently than teachers in less effective schools.

Teachers in highly effective schools were more likely to check and correct students’ work on a regular basis and to track students’ results in their own records, which could inform related remedial action. Students in highly effective schools more frequently reported that their teachers continued to teach until all students understood. Survey results from teachers in highly effective schools corroborated these results (Figure 1). Teachers and school principals from highly effective schools also indicated more frequent support for students requiring extra help, with students from these schools agreeing that their teachers provide extra support when they need it.

In the qualitative data, teachers and school principals in highly effective schools also reported adopting some specific practices to support students’ learning based on their evaluation of students’ academic performance. One highly effective school installed ‘reading corners’ – areas of classrooms dedicated to books. One teacher at this school mentioned they would lend students storybooks to read at home. Teachers would then randomly pick an extract from a book for a student to read (e.g., some arranged letters, vowels, then words). If students could not do it, they would take the book back home with them and repeat the exercise the next day.

Teachers in highly effective schools report higher levels of confidence in their assessment knowledge and pedagogical skills. Teachers’ assessment knowledge and pedagogical skills may help them conduct formative assessment in classrooms. In highly effective schools, 66.8 per cent of teachers strongly agreed that they had good knowledge of assessment, compared with 50.5 per cent in less effective schools. Meanwhile, 51.3 per cent of teachers in highly effective schools strongly agreed that they had good pedagogical skills, compared with 43.1 per cent in less effective schools (Figure 2). This is in line with other results of the study underlining that teachers in highly effective schools have significantly greater knowledge of teaching content.

Principals and teachers in highly effective schools report closer monitoring of lower performing students’ learning and how it changes over time. Teachers in highly effective schools were more likely to monitor weaker students’ learning during classes. For example, teachers in one of these schools walked around the classroom to identify students who needed help in different areas. Teachers would then work with these students in the afternoon or the next day on that specific topic to improve their understanding of it. Another highly effective school reported summarizing the monthly results of all students and tracking how their performance had evolved during the month, with a specific focus on lower performing students.

Figure 1: Teachers’ self-reported teaching practices

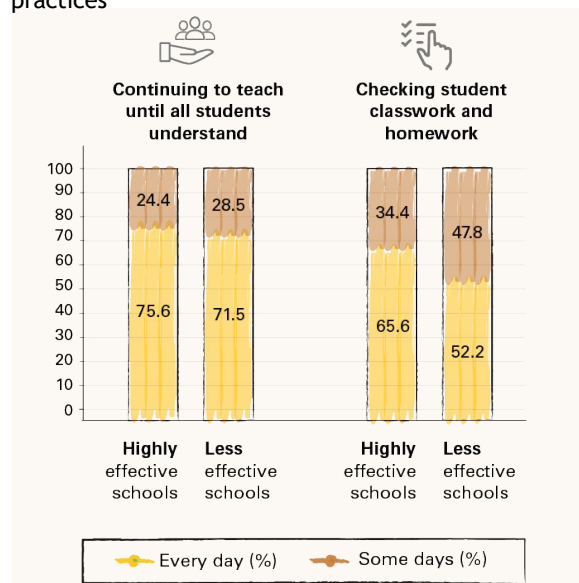
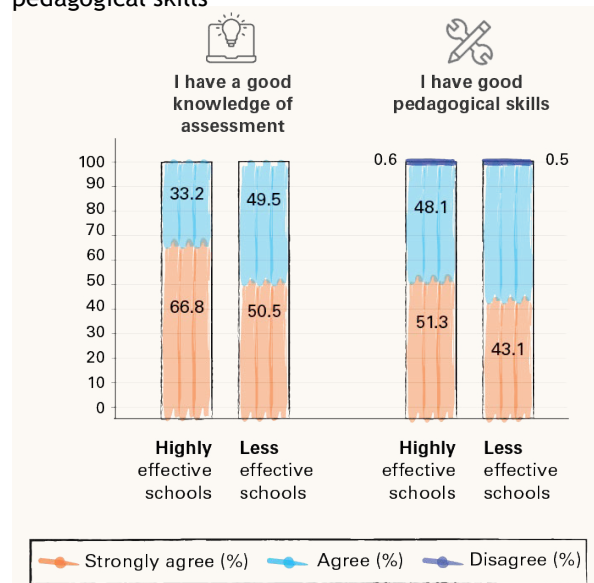


Figure 2: Teachers’ self-reported levels of confidence in their assessment knowledge and pedagogical skills

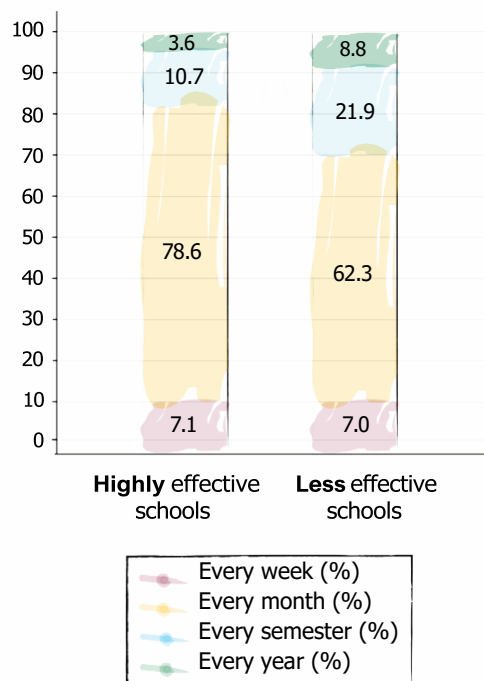
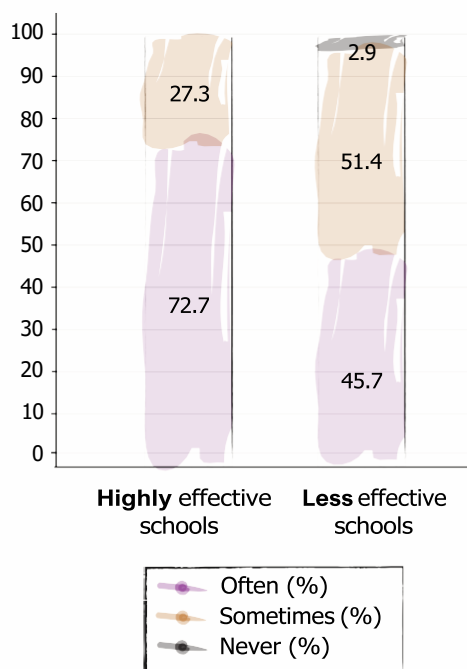


Source: Department of Education Quality Assurance, 2020/21.

Principals and teachers in highly effective schools report providing significantly more frequent feedback to parents based on student learning assessments. Approximately 73 per cent of principals in highly effective schools reported that they often engaged with teachers on providing feedback to parents based on student assessment and progress, compared with about 46 per cent in less effective schools (**Figure 3**). About 86 per cent of teachers in highly effective schools reported providing feedback to parents on a weekly or monthly basis, compared with about 69 per cent in less effective schools (**Figure 4**). Informing parents about assessment results, especially formative assessment results, provides them with the opportunity to understand and appreciate their children’s progress and achievements over time. It also gives them important information for engaging further with school staff and supporting their children’s learning at home.

Figure 3: School principals’ self-reported frequency of engaging with teachers to provide feedback to parents on student assessment and progress

Figure 4: Teachers’ self-reported frequency of providing feedback to parents on student assessment and progress



Source: Department of Education Quality Assurance, 2020/21.

Policy recommendations



Institutionalize formative assessment in teaching and learning practices, including through equipping school principals and teachers with the necessary skills and tools. At the systems level, this can include embedding formative assessment within sector planning, teacher education and professional development. It also requires equipping teachers with the skills and tools needed to better assess and monitor students’ learning levels through both pre-service and in-service professional development. The MoES could consider developing a toolkit of resources, including remedial, catch-up and accelerated practices and programmes designed for specific subjects, which could help teachers adapt their practices to different learning levels among students. The use of formative assessment is even more critical to target adequate remedial support to learners following COVID-19-related school closures.

About the Data Must Speak positive deviance research

The **DMS research on positive deviant schools** in Lao PDR was developed jointly by the Ministry of Education and Sports, local education partners, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Lao PDR country office, and UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight. This global research is being implemented in 14 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It is co-funded by the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) programme of the Global Partnership for Education/International Development Research Centre, the Hewlett Foundation, the Jacobs Foundation, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, the Schools2030 programme (led by the Aga Khan Foundation) and UNICEF internal resources, including UNICEF Lao PDR’s efforts under the European Union-funded Partnership for Strengthening the Education System.

Series of policy briefs

This brief is the fourth in a series of documents produced as part of the DMS research in Lao PDR. It presents key findings from Stage 3 of this research, exploring practices and behaviours at positive deviant schools. The **first policy brief** focuses on teachers’ capacity and the **second policy brief** examines the characteristics and practices of school principals, while the third policy brief explores school climate issues in Lao schools.

This series aims to inform policy dialogue and decision-making in Lao PDR and other countries interested in improving student learning outcomes. To access the full report, click [here](#).

For more information

- Panya Chanthavong, Deputy Director General, Department of Education Quality Assurance, Ministry of Education and Sports Lao PDR, panya.c@moes.edu.la
- Trine Petersen, Education Manager, UNICEF Lao PDR, tpetersen@unicef.org
- Jessica Bergmann, DMS Research Co-Manager, UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight, jbergmann@unicef.org

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Canada



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Make
Mothers
Matter

July 2023

**MMM ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE
MOTHERS' ROLE AND RIGHTS**

Recognizing and Valuing Unpaid Care Work: Promoting Social Justice for Mothers – MMM @ the 111th International Labour Conference

Social Justice

Speaking at the general discussion on social justice, Make Mothers Matter expressed its regrets that the concept of unpaid care work is so rarely mentioned and the word “mother” omitted when talking about social justice. The following is the full text of MMM’s statement:

At MMM, we believe that recognizing and valuing the unpaid care work performed by mothers is of paramount importance not just in itself, but also in helping to achieve social justice for all. Our goal is to shed light on the critical contributions made by mothers through their relentless dedication to caring for their families and communities without financial compensation.

Unpaid care work, predominantly performed by women, remains an underappreciated cornerstone of our societies. Mothers, in particular, undertake an immense responsibility of care work including childcare, household chores, and emotional support, which goes unrecognized and undervalued in economic and social spheres. This systemic devaluation and the inequitable distribution of this essential yet unpaid work restricts women’s full participation in the labour market. It is also a cause of economic injustice and hardship for women, perpetuating gender inequality and impeding progress towards achieving social justice.

Therefore, we propose the following measures to redress this injustice:

- **Recognition and Visibility:** Governments and other stakeholders must acknowledge and affirm the invaluable contributions of mothers in society. By raising awareness and highlighting the significance of unpaid family care work, we can challenge societal norms, get men more involved and combat the stigma associated with this work.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Policy frameworks should be developed to ensure the economic empowerment of mothers. This includes promoting flexible working arrangements, offering paid parental and other care leave to both men and women, establishing fair wages for care-related professions, and providing adequate financial and social support for caregivers, such as tax benefits or social security schemes.
- **Redistribution of Care Responsibilities:** To achieve social justice, it is essential to redistribute care responsibilities more equitably amongst all members of society. Redistribution between men and women is key. Governments should also invest in high-quality, accessible, and affordable childcare services, eldercare support, and other social infrastructure to help/assist mothers and other caregivers, and encourage a more balanced distribution of care work.
- **Education and Skills Development:** Encouraging the education and skills development of mothers is vital for their personal growth, the well-being of their family and their economic empowerment. Governments and employers should invest in programmes that enhance their knowledge, promote lifelong learning, and provide opportunities for career advancement. The skills that mothers develop through the work of caring for their children and managing a home are also valuable skills that must be recognized by the labour market – in particular when they come back from maternity leave.



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- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Achieving social justice for mothers requires collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, employers, and communities. By forging partnerships, sharing best practices, and engaging in dialogue, we can foster a supportive environment that values and respects the unpaid care work performed by mothers.
- “There is no such thing as a woman who does not work; there is only a woman who is not paid for a work” writes Caroline Criado Perez in her 2019 book *Invisible women*. **Unpaid care work IS work**, a fact which was recognized by a 2013 resolution of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians. Every unpaid caregiver, in particular mothers, should therefore benefit from inclusive social protection and security.
- Last but not least, mothers face specific discriminations linked to maternity. These relate to recruitment and access to employment, promotion and access to decision-making positions, and a motherhood wage gap which is even wider than the gender pay gap. Acknowledging and addressing this “**motherhood penalty**” in the world of work is also part of the policy package to recognize and support unpaid family care work.

By embracing these measures, we can create a more just and inclusive society that recognizes and values the tireless contributions of mothers. We need to work together to transform societal norms, eliminate gender disparities, in particular in accessing decent work, and build a future where unpaid care work is valued, equitably shared, and fairly compensated.

Labour Protection

Make Mothers Matter also participated in the recurring discussions on labour protection, stressing that unpaid care work is indeed work, which should be everyone's responsibility. MMM therefore called for labour protection to take a holistic approach to work, acknowledging that both paid and unpaid work are intertwined, in order to ensure that unpaid caregivers, in particular mothers, are adequately supported in their different roles and not penalized by their care responsibilities.

Read our full statement here: [Labour protection must take unpaid care into account](#)

MMM @ the 53rd Session of the Human Rights Council

Make Mothers Matter contributed to several discussions:

- Speaking during the interactive dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, MMM reasserted the crucial role of parents, mothers in particular, for both formal and informal education, which happens daily within families. MMM also drew attention to the fact that the varying degrees of parental involvement create inequalities in education, an issue which must be addressed. Read the full statement here: [Parents' role in education must be recognized and better supported](#)
- According to the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, a job guarantee could help solve the paradox of having an insufficient number of jobs on the one hand, and unmet societal needs on the other hand, which applies to the care sector, in particular. During the discussion following the presentation of his report, MMM welcomed this interesting proposal, as it could help address the lack of care services, support a redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work and thus redress the inequities of care work. However, MMM also highlighted the need for such a job guarantee to ensure that enough men take up care jobs.



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Read the full statement here: [MMM supports the idea of a job guarantee scheme to redress the inequities of care work](#)

- The annual report of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, addressing custody and violence against women as well as violence against children, criticizes the use of parental alienation in family courts. The report denounces the corresponding gender bias against mothers in rulings and its very harmful consequences in case of domestic violence and child abuse. While Make Mothers Matter welcomes this seldom addressed topic coming under the spotlight and fully supports the report's conclusions and recommendations, MMM's oral statement to the Council also stresses the importance of prevention.

Read the full statement here: [MMM calls for action against parental alienation in family courts](#)

- Speaking at the OHCHR Annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women, MMM once again drew attention to mothers' disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and care work, as well as the resulting social and economic injustice. As the need for a new social contract gains traction at the international level, MMM called for this new social contract to recognize and support the unpaid work of caring, to redistribute this essential work more equitably, and to make social security work for everyone.

Read the full statement here: [A new social contract must support the unpaid work of mothers and other caregivers](#)

Gender Pay Gap and the New EU Pay Transparency Directive

New rules to combat pay discrimination and help close the gender pay gap in the EU were adopted at the EU in the form of a new [Directive](#). The rules aim at strengthening the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms.

BACKGROUND OF THE LAW

The Directive is part of a more general strategy, the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, adopted by the European Commission to combat the gender pay gap and economically empower women. MMM has been following the different stages and actively contributing to the adoption of these new rules. In March 2021, the EU Commission published its proposal for a directive. In December 2022, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, led by the Czech Presidency, reached a political agreement. And in March 2023, the European Parliament adopted the directive at its plenary.

Other measures endorsed at the EU level include: the Work-life Balance Directive, which entered into force in August 2019; and the Women on Boards Directive of November 2022 (introducing transparent recruitment procedures in companies, so that at least 40% of non-executive director posts or 33% of all director posts are occupied by women).

THE PAY TRANSPARENCY DIRECTIVE

The agreement establishes new rules that will increase pay transparency, enforce the equal pay principle between men and women and make justice more accessible for victims of pay discrimination. These rules will reduce the financial vulnerability of women and mothers, who are at an increased risk of poverty and pay discrimination.



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The Directive on Pay Transparency has several key elements which can be broken down into **pay transparency measures** and access to **justice for victims of pay discrimination**.

PAY TRANSPARENCY MEASURES

Pay transparency for jobseekers and employees: The rules ensure transparency before employment even begins. It requires employers to provide information about pay levels or ranges before the job interview. Employers will also be banned from asking applicants about their pay history. Once employment has begun, employees will be entitled to access information about average pay levels, broken down by sex for employees doing work of equal value.

Reporting on gender pay gap: Companies with more than 100 employees will be required to publish information about the pay gap between male and female employees. If these reports reveal a pay gap of more than 5% and the difference cannot be explained by gender neutral factors, employers will have to work with workers' representatives to carry out a pay assessment.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF PAY DISCRIMINATION

If an employer is accused of pay discrimination, it will be their responsibility to meet transparency requirements and provide evidence that there was no discrimination. In such legal or administrative proceedings, equality bodies and workers' representatives may act on behalf of workers. Victims of pay discrimination will be able to receive compensation including back pay and bonuses. Furthermore, Member States will have to establish penalties and fines that directly address violations of the equal pay rule.

NEXT STEPS

EU countries will have up to three years to "transpose" the Directive by adapting their national legislation to take account of the new rules. Two years after the transposition deadline, the requirement to report gender pay information every three years will be extended to companies employing over 100 workers (initially, the reporting obligation will only apply to companies with 150 or more employees).

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MOTHERS?

Women and mothers in Europe are one of the groups most vulnerable based on the gender pay gap. These rules will give mothers more access to information about the pay gap at their place of work and put them in a better position to advocate for their right to equal pay for equal work.

MMM welcomes this Directive as it is an important tool to close the gap, because the gender pay gap cannot be tackled unless made visible. But this is only part of the solution. The fact that women, especially mothers, perform the largest share of unpaid care work has a strong effect in perpetuating women's lower labour force participation over the life course and women's disproportionate participation in precarious employment, reinforcing the gender gap in pay and pension. This is an issue that Make Mothers Matter has been advocating for since its foundation in 1947, and MMM continues calling upon the governments to adopt policies which recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work to combat one of the root causes of economic injustices experienced by mothers.

Find [more information](#) on the EU Pay Directive.



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Maternal Mental Health within the New EU Mental Health Proposal

MMM welcomes the European Commission's new proposal addressing mental health and bringing a much-needed focus on various aspects of mental well-being. The proposal's emphasis on mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention demonstrates a proactive approach to tackling mental health challenges in the EU before they escalate.

Recognizing the significance of mental health among **youth** and **vulnerable groups, such as single mothers in poverty**, is crucial as these populations often face unique difficulties and require targeted support. By prioritizing their mental well-being, the proposal acknowledges the importance of inclusivity and equity in mental health services.

The Commission's recognition of the higher prevalence of depression among women underscores the importance of prioritizing women's mental health. In particular, MMM believes that the only way to create a more supportive and equitable society is by acknowledging and demanding that **postnatal depression, pregnancy-related mental health issues, and the broader challenges that women face are addressed urgently**. Promoting mental health from the very start for all human beings is the right approach if we want to impact future generations and if Europe wants to avoid the continued €600 billion expenditure on mental health every year.

As MMM highlighted in its contribution of February 2023 responding to the EU Commission's Call for Evidence on Mental Health:

Nearly 1 in 5 women worldwide will develop mental health problems during pregnancy or within the first year postpartum. Despite these numbers, the provision and integration of quality mental health services into a comprehensive package remains inadequate and underrealized across the EU.

Leaving maternal health problems untreated has long-lasting detrimental effects on the mother (e.g., increased risk of further clinical episodes), **the mother-child relationship** (e.g., bonding) **and the child** (e.g., socio-emotional, and cognitive development).

The EU proposal's emphasis on improving mental health systems and breaking the stigma surrounding mental health issues is laudable. It highlights the need for robust mental health infrastructure, including accessible services and resources, to ensure that individuals have the support they require. By addressing stigma, society can create an environment where people can feel comfortable seeking help and discussing mental health openly.

The recognition that mental health support should extend beyond medical settings is noteworthy. Embedding mental health resources and support systems within schools, workplaces and other community settings can increase accessibility and facilitate early intervention.

In summary, the proposal's comprehensive approach to mental health, encompassing prevention, access to services, breaking stigma and adopting a global perspective, reflects a commendable effort by the EU executive. It underscores the importance of mental health and well-being as fundamental components of overall health and advocates for a society that is supportive, inclusive, and proactive in addressing mental health challenges.

MMM now calls on the EU and Member States to set concrete targets, allocate the appropriate funding and develop monitoring programmes to ensure mental health support for all. In particular, MMM recalls



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the importance of recognizing and prioritizing the very first start of all lives, early childhood, if we want healthy societies.

Read our [full article](#).

See also our contribution to the EU Call for Evidence: [Why maternal mental health matters](#)

Compiled by Irina Pálffy-Daun-Seiler, MMM Representative to the United Nations in Vienna, with input from Valérie Bichelmeier, Vice-President and Head of MMM UN Delegation, and Johanna Schima, Vice-President and Head of MMM European Delegation.

Recent & Upcoming Events

August

09.: International Day Of The World's Indigenous Peoples 2023 (New York, USA); <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/events/international-day-of-the-worlds-indigenous-peoples-2023>

12.: International Youth Day 2023 "Green Skills For Youth: Towards A Sustainable World" (Online, UN Headquarters, New York, USA); <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/youth/events/international-youth-day-2023>

September

11.—12.: ICFS 2023: 17. International Conference on Family Studies (Amsterdam, Netherlands); <https://waset.org/family-studies-conference-in-september-2023-in-amsterdam>

11.—12.: ICMFT 2023: 17. International Conference on Marriage and Family Therapy (Santiago, Chile); <https://waset.org/marriage-and-family-therapy-conference-in-september-2023-in-santiago>

October

02.: 2023 UNIDOP On "Fulfilling The Promises Of The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights For Older Persons: Across Generations" (ECOSOC Chamber, UNHQ, New York, USA); <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/ageing/events/2023unidop>

November

06.—07.: ICFSC 2023: 17. International Conference on Family Studies and Community (Nicosia, Cyprus); <https://waset.org/family-studies-and-community-conference-in-november-2023-in-nicosia>

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VALERIA FOGLAR-DEINHARDSTEIN, M.Sc.
LIECHTENSTEINSTRASSE 111-115
1090 VIENNA
AUSTRIA
EMAIL: CONTACT@VIENNAFAMILYCOMMITTEE.ORG

Web: <http://www.viennafamilycommittee.org>

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