

COVID-19 & GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Globally, 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence (**IPV**) by any perpetrator in their lifetime.

According to the WHO, children who grow up in families where there is violence may suffer a range of behavioural and emotional disturbances. These can also be associated with perpetrating or experiencing violence later in life.

Reports globally have indicated an **increase** in domestic abuse

25% of the NFGMC cases have featured **domestic abuse**

30% of the NFGMC cases have featured **mental health**

IPV can have **severe impacts** on a woman's physical, psychological and emotional health and wellbeing

The odds of **IPV increases** when a woman has undergone **FGM**

Violence against women **increases** during emergencies, including **pandemics**

Social Isolation

As people are encouraged to stay at home, the risk of intimate partner violence increases, and the likelihood that children will be exposed to this also increases. Perpetrators of abuse may use restrictions due to COVID-19 to exercise power and control over their partners. The likelihood of mental health issues increasing could also be a factor, particularly for women who have already experienced trauma, such as FGM

Access to Fundamental Services

Access to vital services, such as charities which provide support, refuges, helplines, specialist health providers such as de-infibulation clinics for survivors of FGM, legal aid or advice and protection services may be reduced in response to controlling the outbreak of COVID-19, reducing access to the few sources of help that women in vulnerable relationships may require access to.

Access to vital sexual and reproductive health services

Access to vital sexual and reproductive health services for women subject to intimate partner violence will likely become more limited with the outbreak of COVID-19 which is problematic given the health impacts of IPV can be sexually transmitted infections, HIV, and unplanned pregnancies

Stress & Disruption

Increased stress and pressure contained in the household, and the decrease in access to social networks and services can exacerbate the risk of violence for women. Contributing factors include job loss, financial constraints and school closures. There is some evidence of a link between IPV & FGM, FGM & CALFB, and both of which can be exacerbated in times of public emergencies - professionals and wider communities must be aware of this

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

PROFESSIONALS: ask every patient/service user about their home-life; in the current pandemic, asking every patient/service user will help you identify vulnerable individuals who need support

COMMUNITIES: Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and with the closure of schools, communities now have an even greater role to play in protecting children from abuse. If you are concerned about a child or vulnerable adult, contact your local social care team or the police. In an emergency, **always contact 999**. The police are still working to keep communities safe.



Developing excellence in response to FGM and other harmful practices



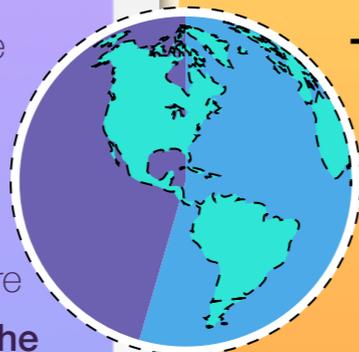
Funded by Department for Education



COVID-19 & Female Genital Mutilation

What Can You Do?

- Women currently have virtual access to counselling and advocacy support via the [NHS FGM support clinics](#), however, non-urgent physical health needs are not being met during COVID-19 due to government guidance. To support women, you can use the Centre's [pregnant women leaflet](#) or [health infographic](#).
- [FGMPO's](#) can still be obtained during the pandemic and whilst social distancing measures are enforced.
- If schools have had any concerns for girls prior to closures, contact children social care for advice; and **keep these students on the radar** for when the school re-opens.
- **Communities must come together** in response to COVID-19. If you are concerned about a girl or vulnerable adult, contact your local children's social care team or the **police**. In an emergency, always contact **999**.

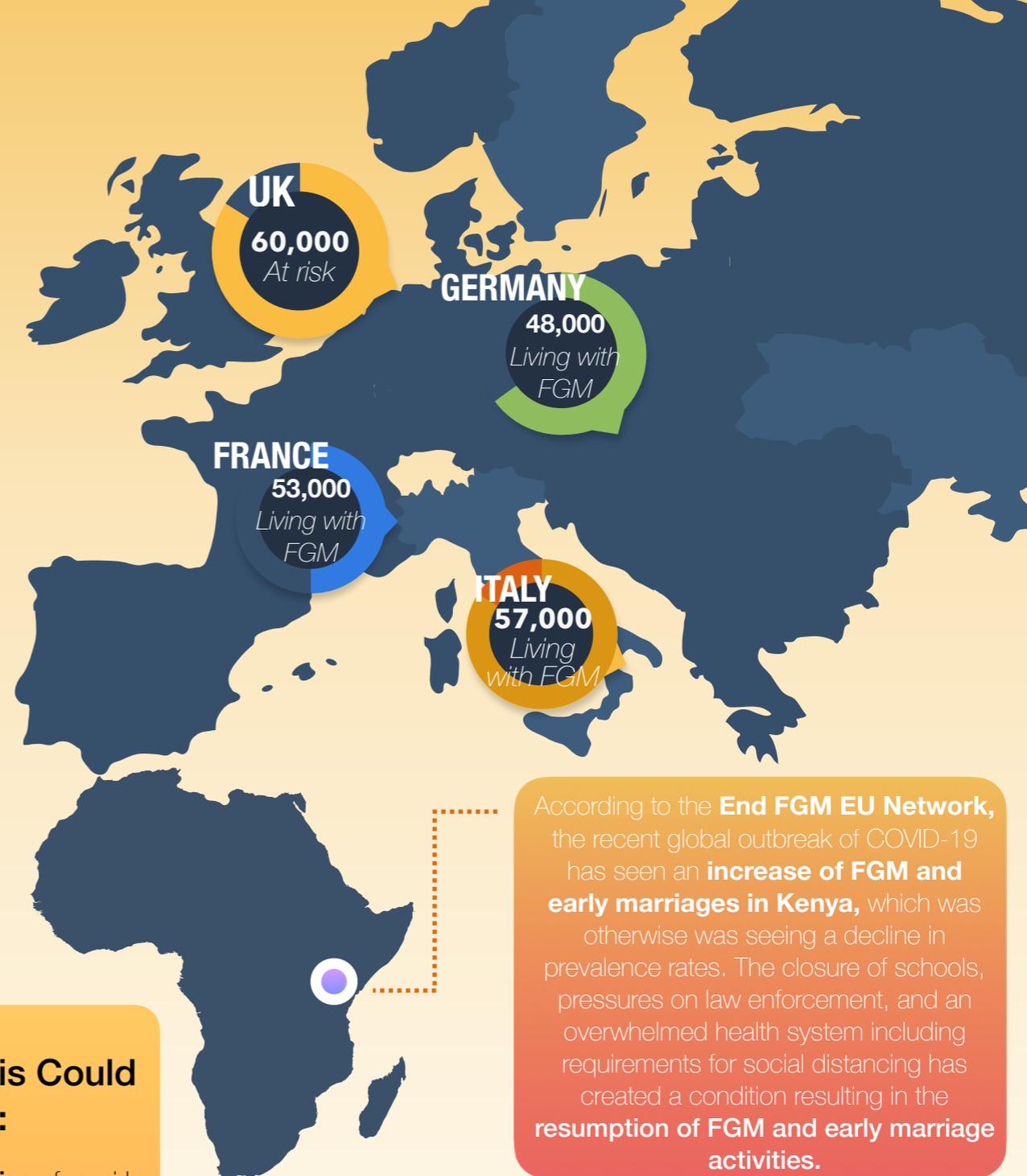


500,000

Women living in Europe are estimated to have **undergone** FGM

180,000

Girls and Women living in Europe are estimated to be at **risk** of FGM every year



According to the **End FGM EU Network**, the recent global outbreak of COVID-19 has seen an **increase of FGM and early marriages in Kenya**, which was otherwise was seeing a decline in prevalence rates. The closure of schools, pressures on law enforcement, and an overwhelmed health system including requirements for social distancing has created a condition resulting in the **resumption of FGM and early marriage activities**.

The Current Crisis Could Result in:

- **Reduced protection** for girls from affected communities
- **Reduced access** to specialist services for survivors
- **Limited access** to psychological support; leading to a possible increase in survivors with mental health needs
- **Increased risk** of girls potentially being cut in the UK

What is Female Genital Mutilation? (FGM)

The partial to total removal of the external genitalia for non-medical reasons



Developing excellence in response to FGM and other harmful practices



COVID-19 & Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief

NATIONAL FGM CENTRE Developing excellence in response to FGM and other harmful practices

Believe in children Barnardo's

Funded by Department for Education

Local Government Association

NPCC National Police Chiefs' Council

METROPOLITAN POLICE



The Current Crisis Could Result in:

- **A rise in accusations** against vulnerable children and adults who could be labelled as being witches or possessed, if they have either contracted COVID-19 or have been accused of bringing it into the household - some may believe that the cause has a **spiritual explanation**, and contracting the virus is a misfortune and thus blame a vulnerable individual for causing it.
- The subsequent **abuse of children** or vulnerable adults, particularly women, within the household who have been accused.
- Those who have contracted COVID-19 or who are showing symptoms may not seek medical help and instead seek spiritual help which could mean result in a **rise in exorcisms or deliverances** to 'drive out' evil spirits associated with COVID-19.
- Faith leaders making claims that they can cure COVID-19 through various means, such as cleansing oils. This could result in **people attending faith settings** and being **exposed to the virus**.

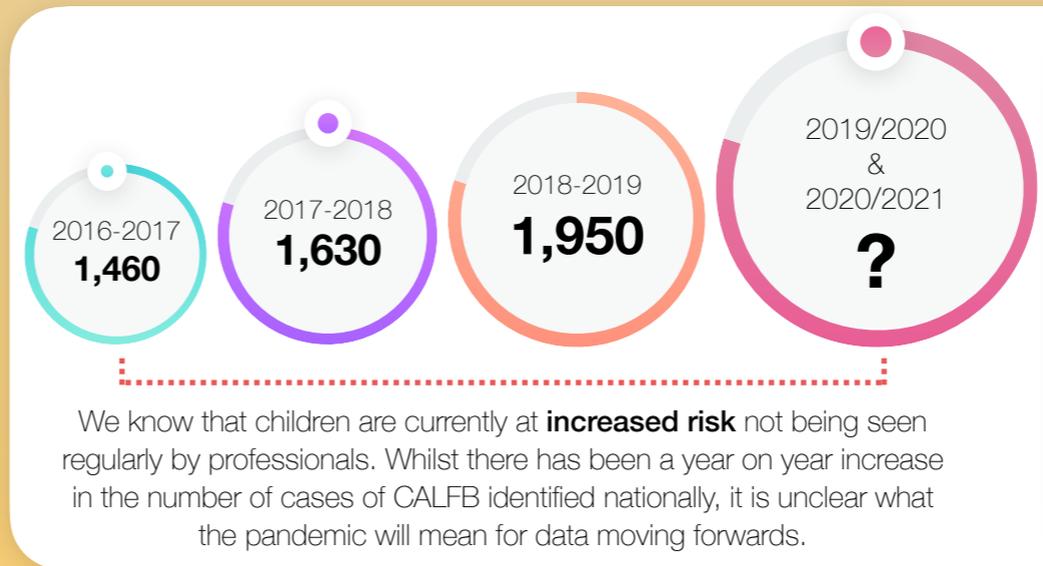
What is Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief?

Belief in concepts of:

- **Witchcraft** and **spirit possession**, demons or the devil acting through children & adults or leading them astray
- The **evil eye** or **djinns** (evil spirits) acting through children or adults & leading them astray
- **Ritual** or **muti murders** where the killing of children & adults is believed to bring supernatural benefits or the use of their body parts is believed to produce potent magical remedies;
- Use of belief in **magic** or witchcraft to **create fear in children or vulnerable adults** to make them more compliant when they are being **trafficked** for **domestic slavery or sexual exploitation**.

What types of 'misfortunes' can cause an accusation?

Unemployment, Death, Disability, Illness, Domestic Abuse, Financial Strain



What Can You Do?

- If you are aware of local faith establishments still offering non-essential services, including to congregate, **report to your local police**
- **Be aware** of people accessing or being advised to access alternative remedies from faith or other organisations instead of seeking medical attention
- **Public emergencies heighten the risk of financial exploitation**; be aware of individuals accessing alternative remedies which claim to cure or alleviate illnesses