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Domestic Violence Affects 1 in 3 Russians, Poll Says

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A rally 'For justice for women forced to defend themselves, and for a law on domestic violence,' August 2018 **Sergei Konkov / TASS**

Nearly one-third of Russia's population has come face-to-face with domestic violence in their own families or among acquaintances, according to an independent survey published Friday.

Russia decriminalized certain forms of domestic violence in 2017, a decision that top lawmakers have said was a mistake two years later. Activists say the absence of a domestic violence law leaves women vulnerable to abuse at the hands of their partners, which official estimates say happens to one in five women.

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According to the Levada Center polling agency, 31% of Russian respondents have encountered domestic violence — either in their social circles (19%), between their parents (7%) or in their

own families (5%).

“Given the sensitivity of the topic of [domestic] violence in an interview setting, we can assume that the share may be higher in both cases,” Levada said, referring to the 5% and 7% responses.

More than two-thirds (68%) said they’ve never heard of cases of abuse among people they know.

Respondents aged 40-54, respondents with lower education levels and women respondents were most likely to disclose cases of physical violence, the pollster said.

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Levada also asked respondents if they agreed with those who support three young sisters who allegedly murdered their abusive father in a case that has divided Russian society.

Forty-one percent of Russian respondents said they support the Khachaturyan sisters, while 29% didn’t support them. Women respondents were more likely to support them than men, with 47% of women and 33% of men saying they support the sisters.

Meanwhile, official figures provided to Russian media say the police have investigated more cases of repeat domestic violence last year than in 2017.

Levada conducted the survey among 1,608 respondents in 50 Russian regions on Aug. 22-28.

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