

*medica mondiale & Medica Gjakova*

# Suffering, Strength, Acknowledgment and Support

A Study of the Long-Term Impact of War-Related Sexualised Violence in  
Kosovo

**Presenters:** **Mirlinda Sada** (Director of Medica Gjakova/Kosovo), **Kirsten Wienberg** (Head of the Evaluation and Quality Department at medica mondiale/Germany), **Dr. Barbara Umrath** (Interim Professor for Social Work and Society, University of Applied Sciences Darmstadt/Germany)



# PURPOSE AND RESEARCH DESIGN



## Purpose of the Study

To generate knowledge about

- Long-term impacts of war-rape in Kosovo
- Survivors' experiences of social acknowledgment
- Significance of the support provided by Medica Gjakova in order to further improve work with and on behalf of survivors

## Research Design

- Feminism, participation + stress- and traumasensitivity as key values and commitments
- Quantitative data from 200 survivors
  - Three well-established psychometric instruments: International Trauma Questionnaire (ITQ), Hopkins Symptom-Checklist (HSCL-25), Adult Resilience Measure – Revised (ARM-R)
  - Self-designed questionnaire (116 items)
- Qualitative interviews with 20 survivors



# RESULTS:

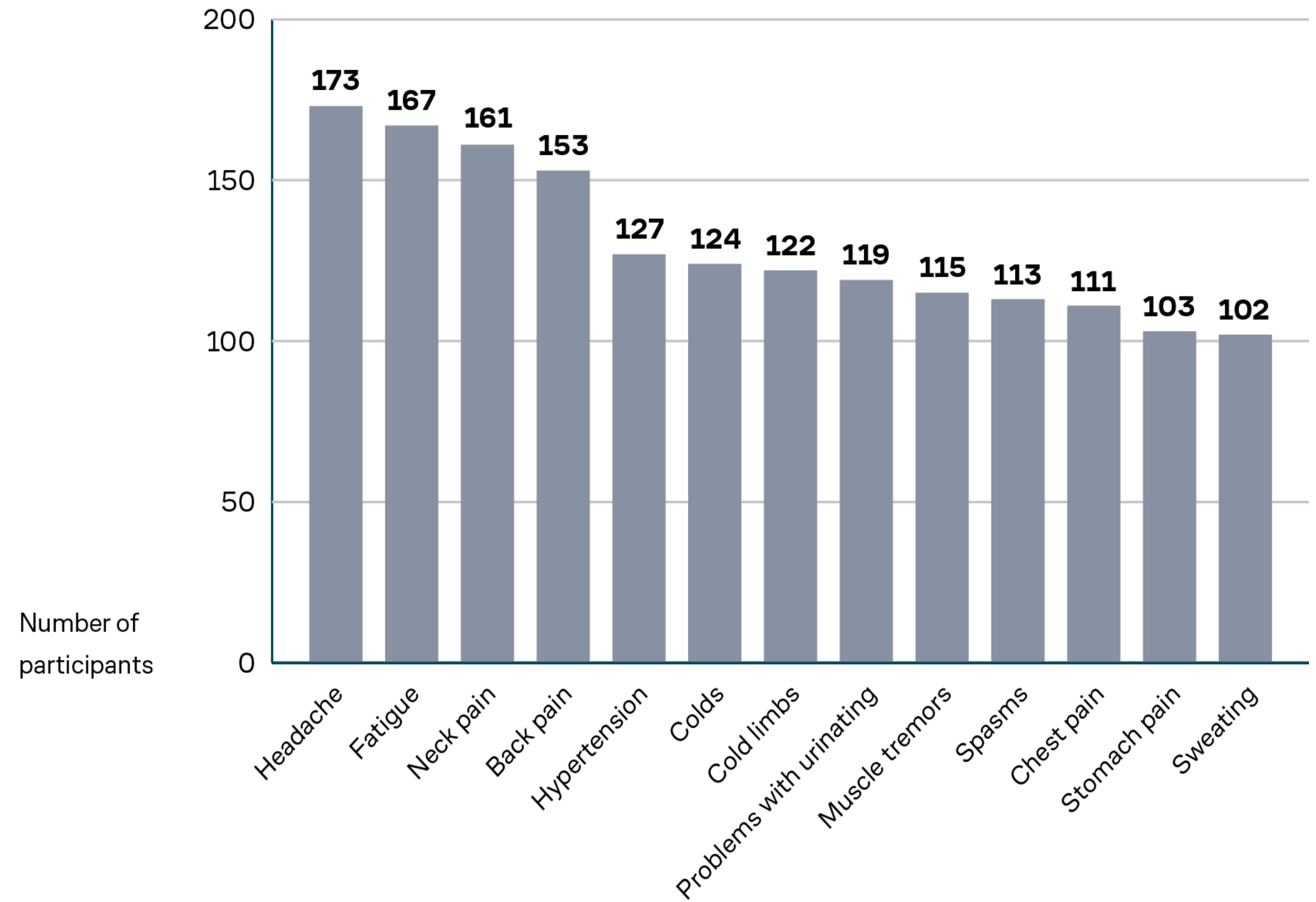
## Physical and psychological long-term consequences of war rape



### Survivors' physical health is seriously impacted:

- Most participants either described their overall health as 'bad' or 'fairly okay'
- The mean number of symptoms reported was 10.6
- **Sexual health and intimate life** were often negatively affected

Psychosomatic symptoms, most frequently reported



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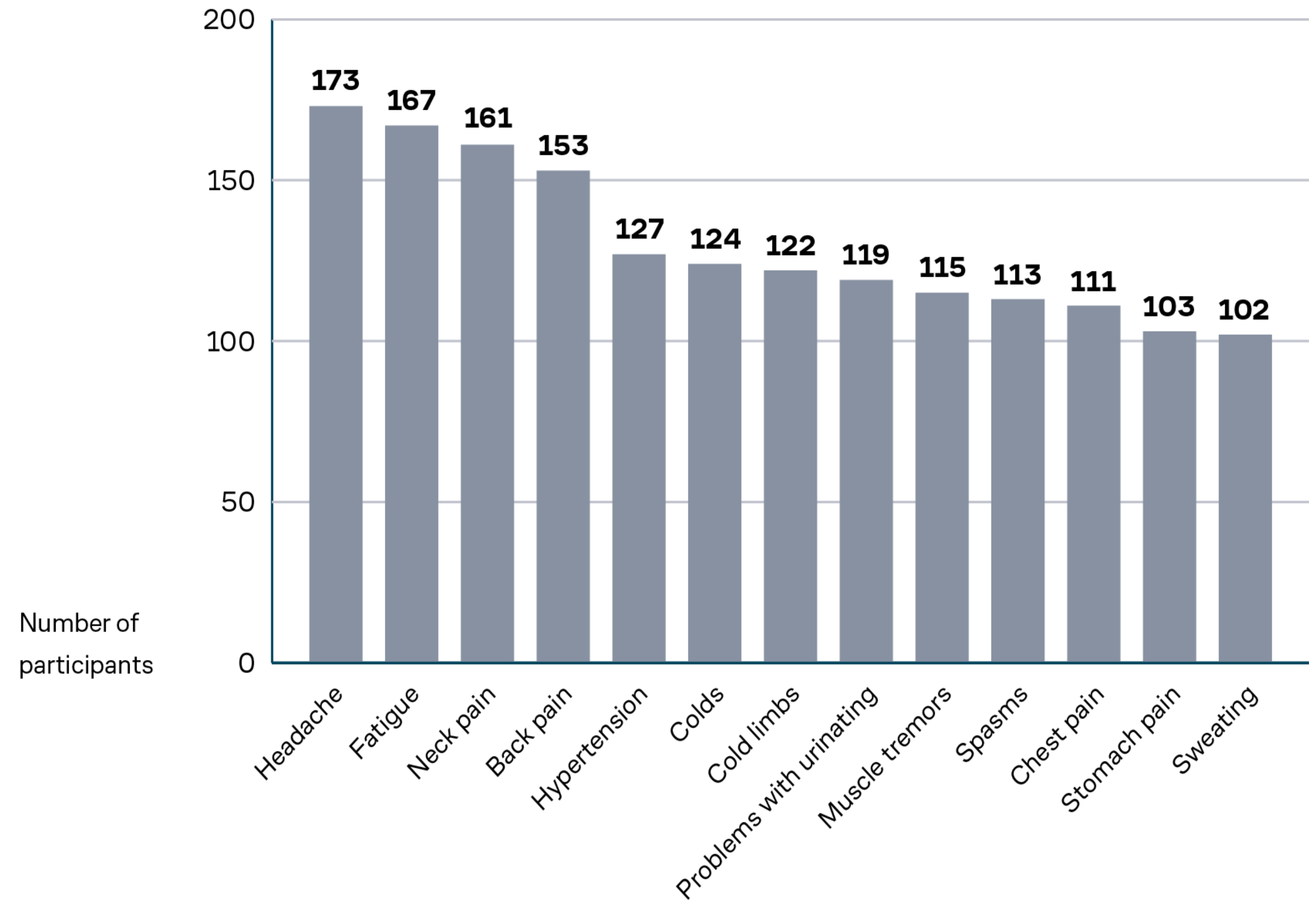
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### Alarming high prevalence of clinically relevant symptoms:

- **96%** show **high anxiety**
- **95.5%** meet criteria for **depression**
- **73%** meet criteria for **Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (C-PTSD)**, an additional **13%** for **PTSD**
- **Two thirds** report **difficulties with sleep**
- **59** participants reported **suicidal thoughts in the last week**

Psychosomatic symptoms, most frequently reported





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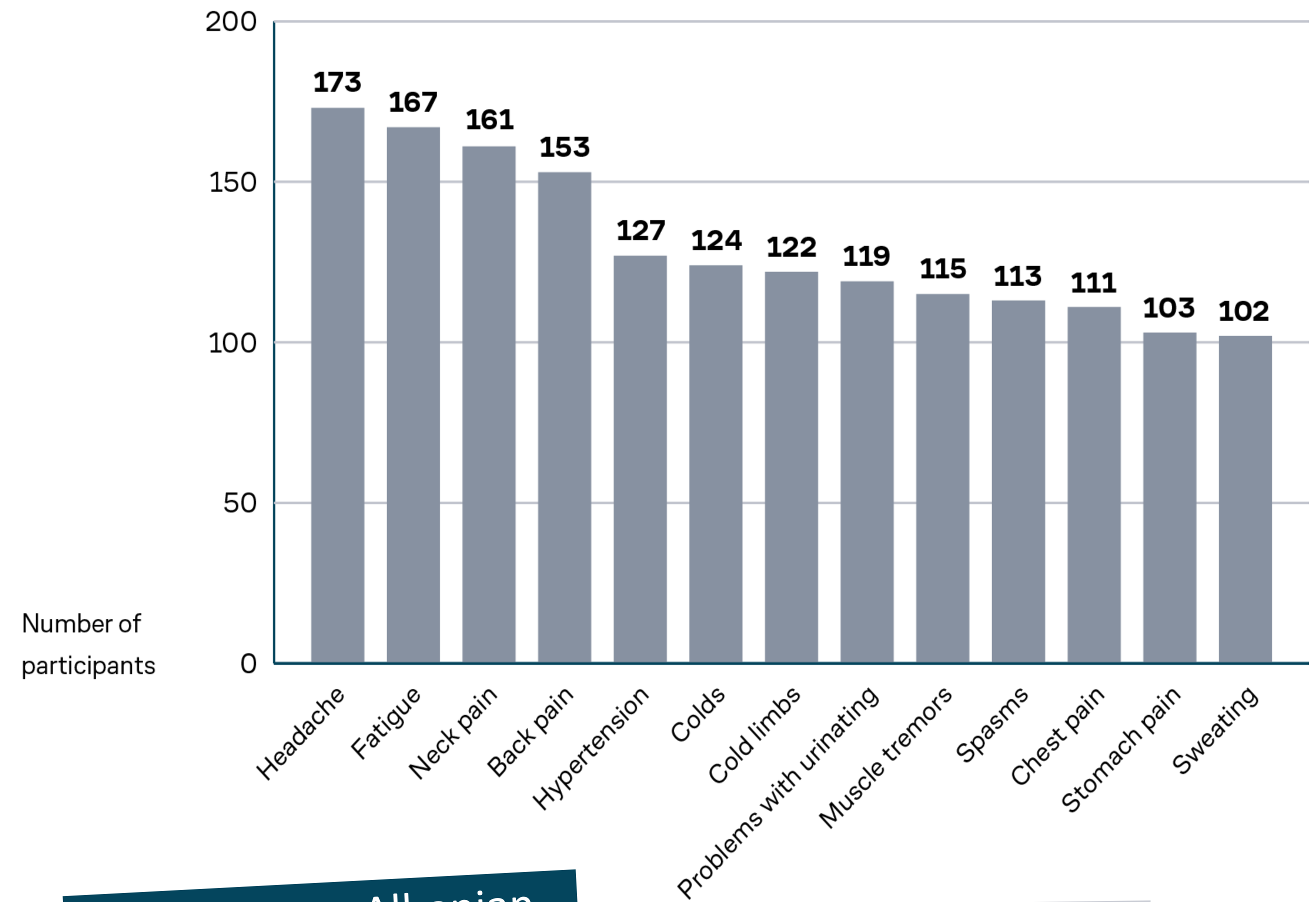
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At the same time, **79%** showed high levels of **resilience!**

Psychosomatic symptoms, most frequently reported



**#184 woman, Albanian**

"I faced all those maltreatments, I am a stronger woman."

# RESULTS:

Perceptions social acknowledgment, reparations and immediate environments

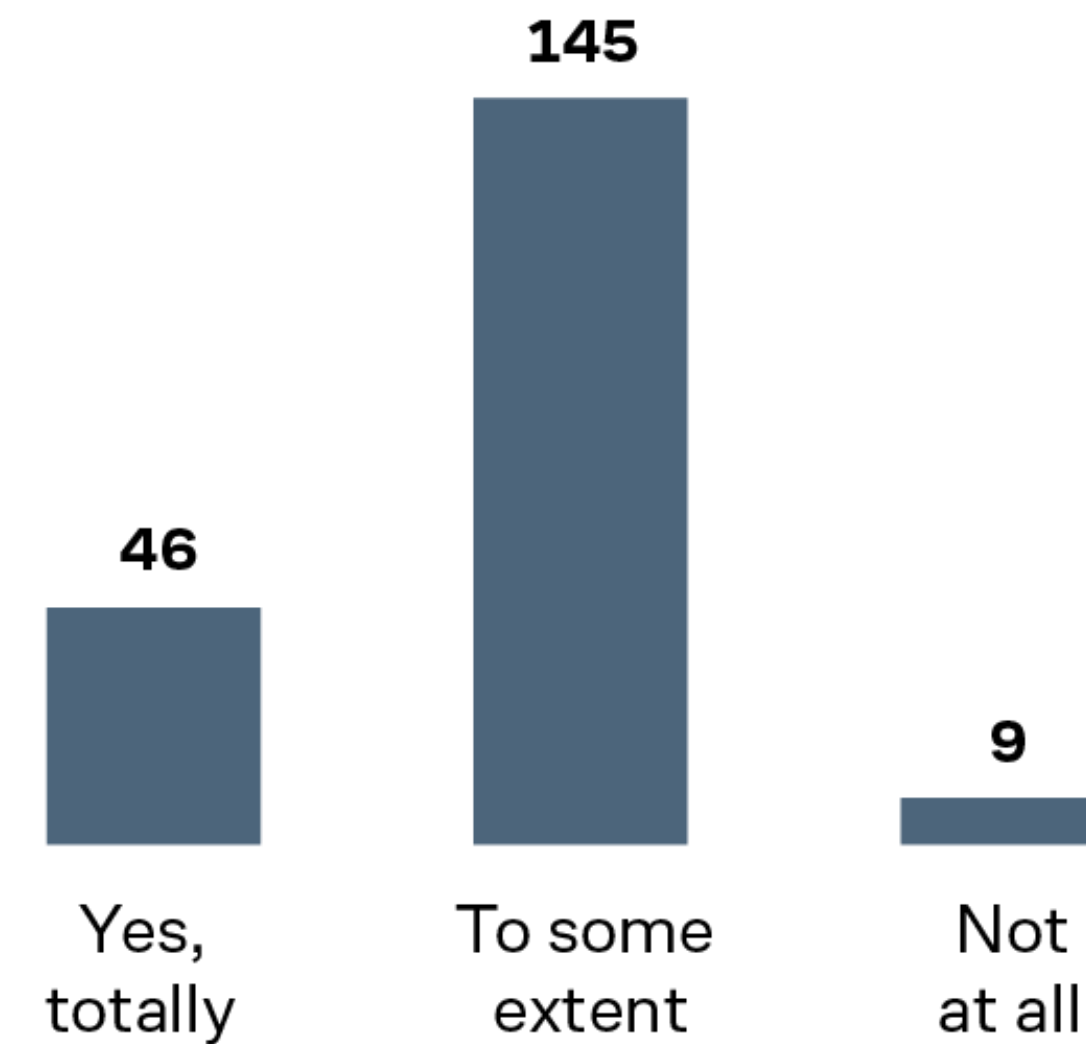
#7 woman, Roma, Ashkali, or Egyptian

“The government only talks about our obligations, that the children must go to school, but with the pension we cannot pay for the electricity, water, the drugs I need because I am sick.”

## Survivors recognize increased public acknowledgment ...

- **71.5%** believe **social acknowledgment has improved** over time
- Most frequent **markers of social acknowledgment**:
  - Support by civil society organizations (175)
  - Administrative reparations provided by the Kosovar state (131)
  - Support by public figures (124)
  - Media reporting (50)
- **83.5%** of participants **have claimed their right** to reparations as a ‘sexual violence victim of war’
- The **full acknowledgment potential** of reparations is **still to be realized**

Do you feel that survivors are nowadays acknowledged by society?



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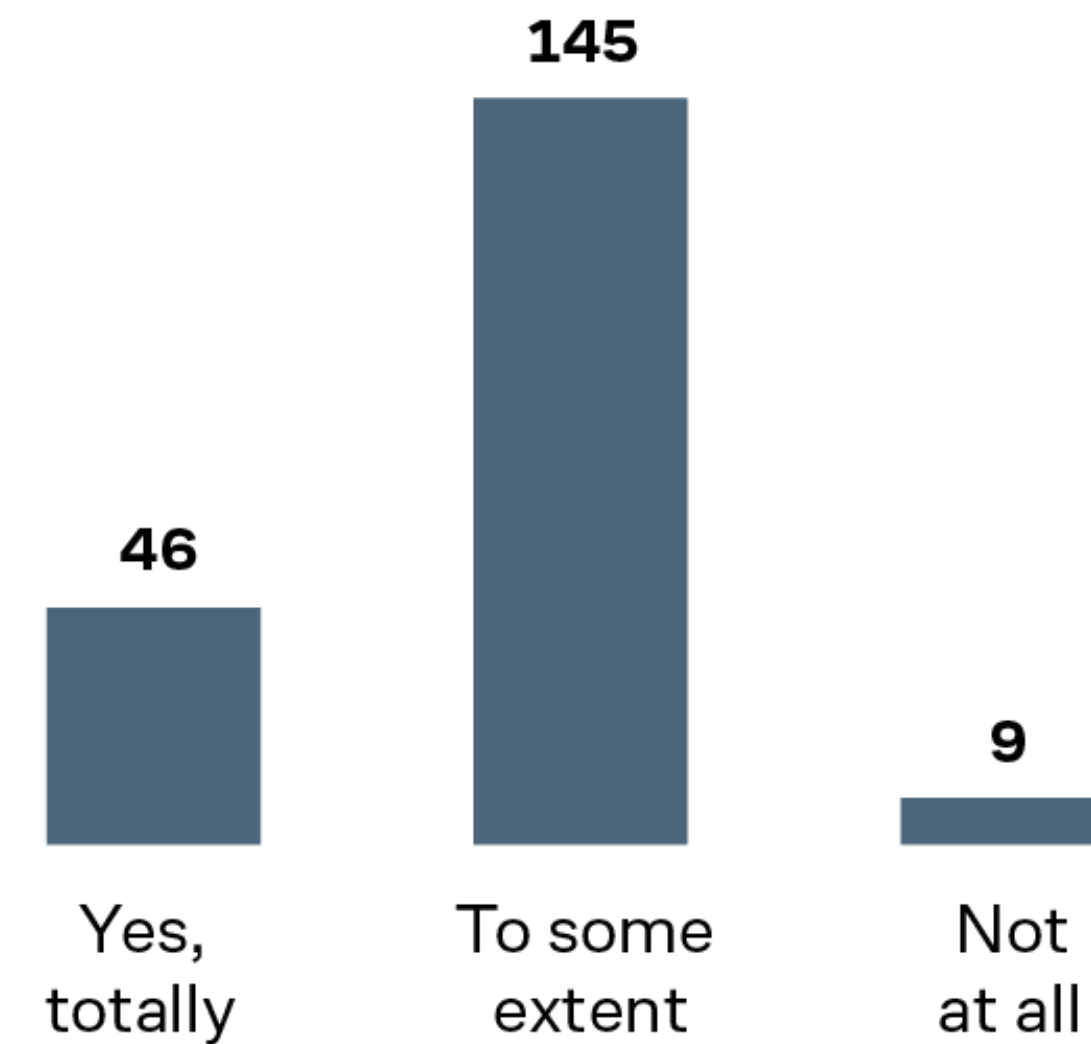
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... but also substantial devaluation at the everyday level:

- **Negative perceptions of survivors** are considered **widespread**
- Fear of bringing **shame** to the family (84.5%), of **ostracism** by neighbors (79.5%) and of being **abandoned** by their family (75.5%) are considered key reasons why some survivors do not talk about their experience



# RESULTS:

## The role of family and Medica Gjakova



### #73 woman, Albanian

“I live for my family and continue to live for them.”

### Family plays an ambivalent role as ...

- A **source of resilience**: Having a family and children is considered most crucial for continuing one's life
- **Affected** by survivors' rape experience: 96.4% perceive their family life as impacted, 81% their children
- A **source of devaluation** and suffering due to patriarchal norms

### #4 woman, Albanian

“If I got married and I wasn't a virgin, which I knew I wasn't, the burden would fall immediately on my father. And then, how were you to justify yourself to your father? I didn't have the courage to tell him that this had happened to me. Because, ok, you can sacrifice yourself, but your mother must live for the rest of her life in that house, and you have sisters; life is a chain.”



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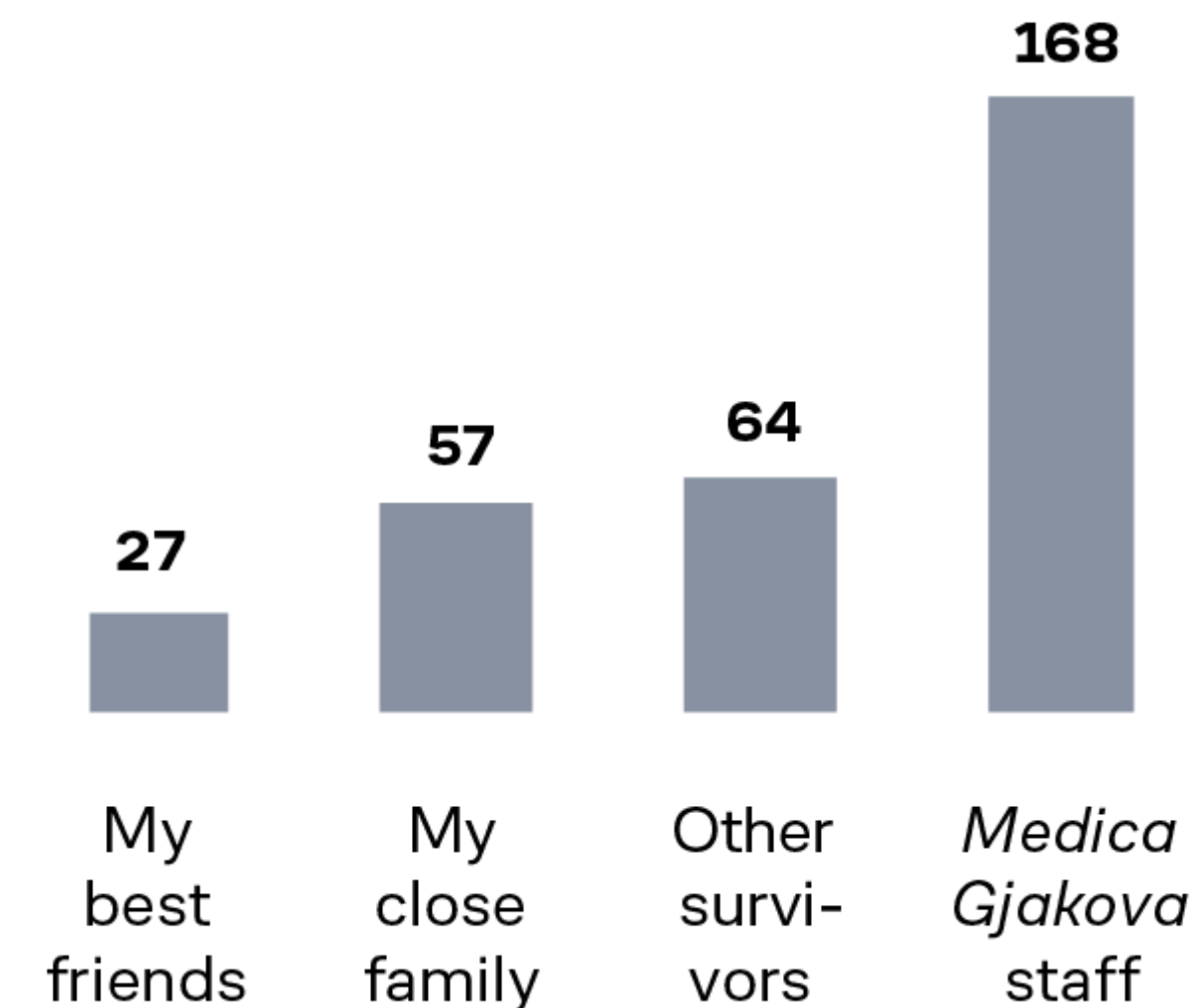
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### With whom do you talk about your experience? (multiple answers possible)



### Feminist NGOs as a vital, unambiguous source of support:

- Crucial for **talking** about the rape and for **continuing one's life**
- **80.1%** have used *Medica Gjakova's* services **consistently**
- Participants have used an **average of 4.8 services**
- Comparison of PTSD-scores for two subsamples suggest *Medica Gjakova* has helped **ease some of their traumatic burden**
- Providing a **general experience** of being accepted, supported, cared for and empowered

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## For national governments as well as international institutions and donors:

- Commit to **long-term funding** of high quality survivor-centered, context-sensitive support services
- **Strengthen** the position and capacities of and acknowledgement for organisations providing high quality professional support to survivors
- Foster the integration of **stress- and trauma- sensitive** and **survivor-centred** approaches into different sectors and state institutions

## For professional organisations providing direct services for survivors:

- Adapt, continue and broaden **active outreach strategies**
- Assess and further develop **interventions aiming for changing patriarchal norms** with a particular focus at the level of survivors' immediate environments
- Critically reflect on **patriarchal gender norms** in counseling sessions with survivors
- Advocate and lobby for **survivor-centered processes of reparation and social acknowledgment**





# ONLINE RESSOURCES



Full report of the study (English)



Summary of the report (Albanian)



Summary of the report (English)



Policy- and Press-Briefing Paper (German)





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