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# Study: Domestic violence, a threat to Albanian-American women

The scale of domestic violence poses a serious threat to the lives of Albanian-American women, reports a team of researchers who conducted a study on this issue for the first time. According to the study, which involved 374 women, 89 percent were abused in their relationships. According to the study authors, the findings, which are published in the month of domestic violence awareness, are worrying because a large number of women, 81 percent, report that they suffer from emotional abuse.



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Although it has been years since the Albanian-American, originally from Montenegro, Suada Demiri ended her marriage with a partner who abused her, she says that she still continues to suffer the trauma caused by this 8-year relationship.

*"The abuse started at the beginning of the relationship. It started when I got engaged. Even though 10 years have passed since then, the trauma still exists. He was very controlling. I went to school, he showed up there. "I thought that after marriage everything would be fine," she said in an interview with VOA.*

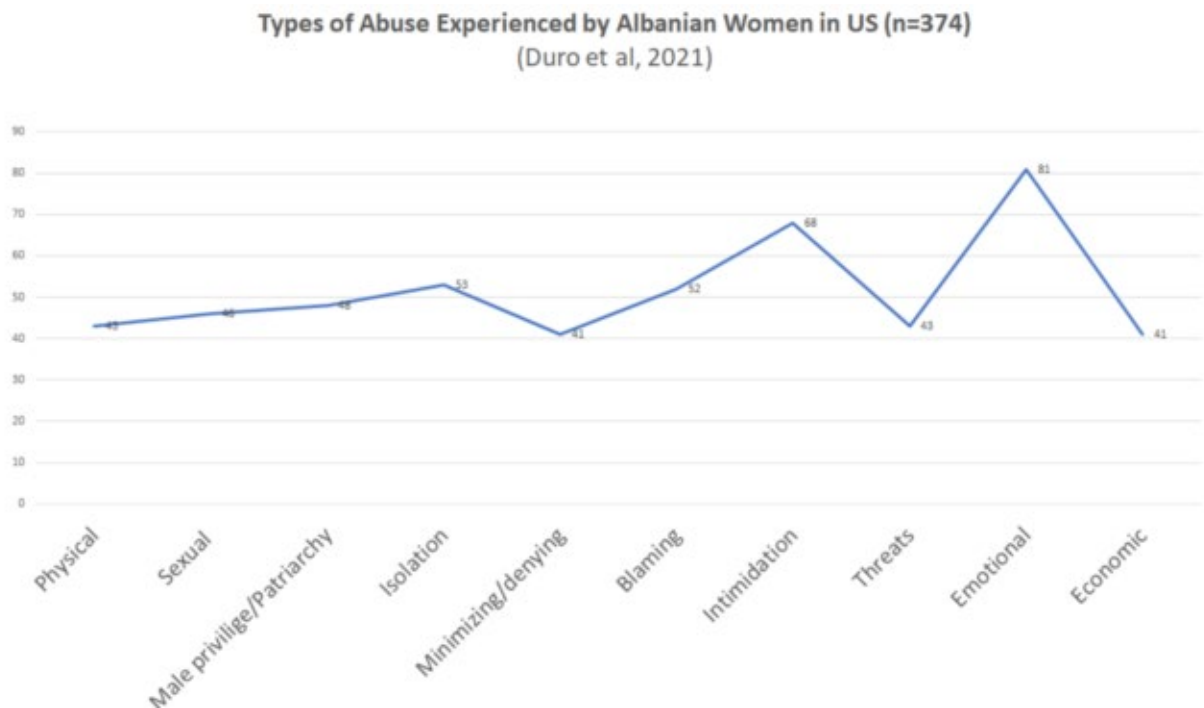
Suada further explains that after the marriage the situation worsened further.

*"As an Albanian, if I divorced after a week, I would live with the shame of what others would think of me. So I told myself I could not get a divorce now ... as time went on, my family got involved. I called her crying, she did this to me, she did that to me. It forced me to quit my*

*job. So he tried to control me mentally and manipulate me financially*  
"says Mrs. Demiri.

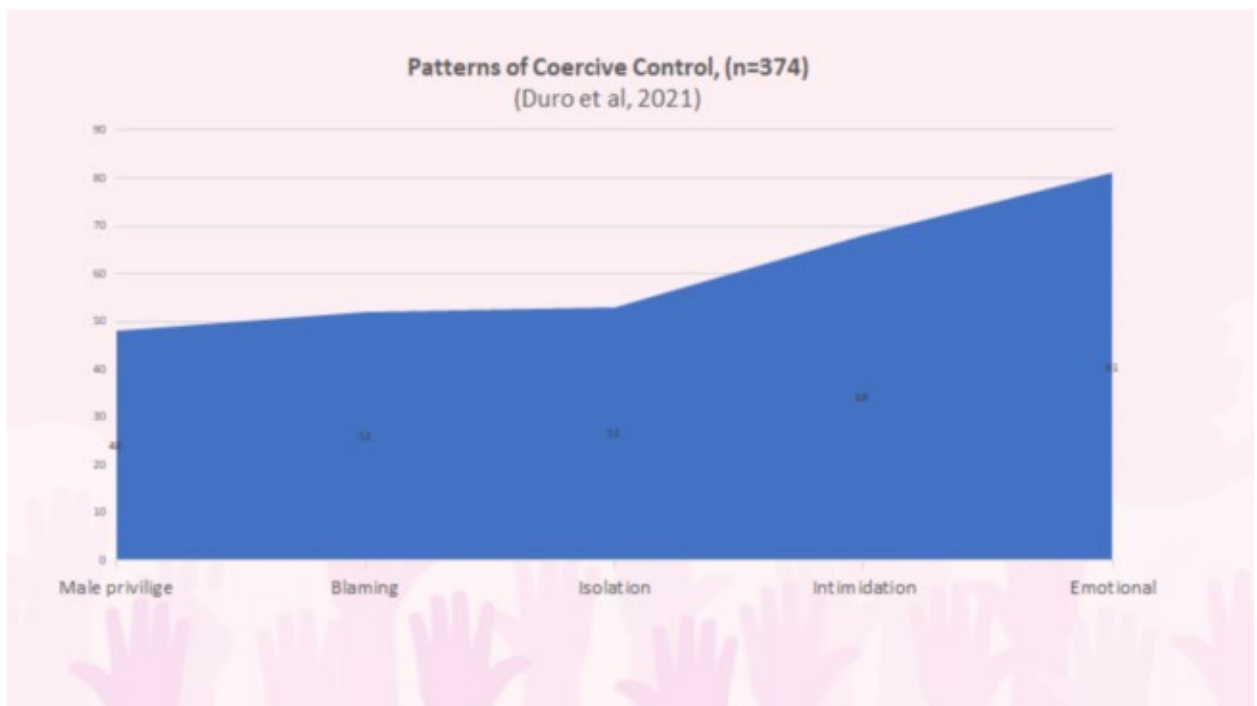
These circumstances prompted Suada to work hard for the future. She graduated from university and today is an independent woman, with a successful career in the financial sector. In addition, she is committed to domestic violence.

*"I had no control over my body. He wanted children, while I had no right to speak. We have two children one after the other. I went to school. He thought I would leave school because I spent the first and second year of my studies being pregnant. He tried to make it difficult for me, but I did not want to give up. "I knew how important it was for me to be educated, because I knew that one day I would find the strength to leave," she concludes.*



Of the 374 women who participated in this study, 89 percent of them report being abused. 43 percent report physical violence, while 46 percent report sexual violence and 9 percent are life-threatening.

*"We have heard stories that were very severe, how women were raped, shot, threatened with a gun or a knife, how women were physically beaten for more than three years and could not escape, women who did not have Family support to leave and women who did not have the support of the system," said study author Anila Duro, a professor at John Jay College in an interview with VOA.*

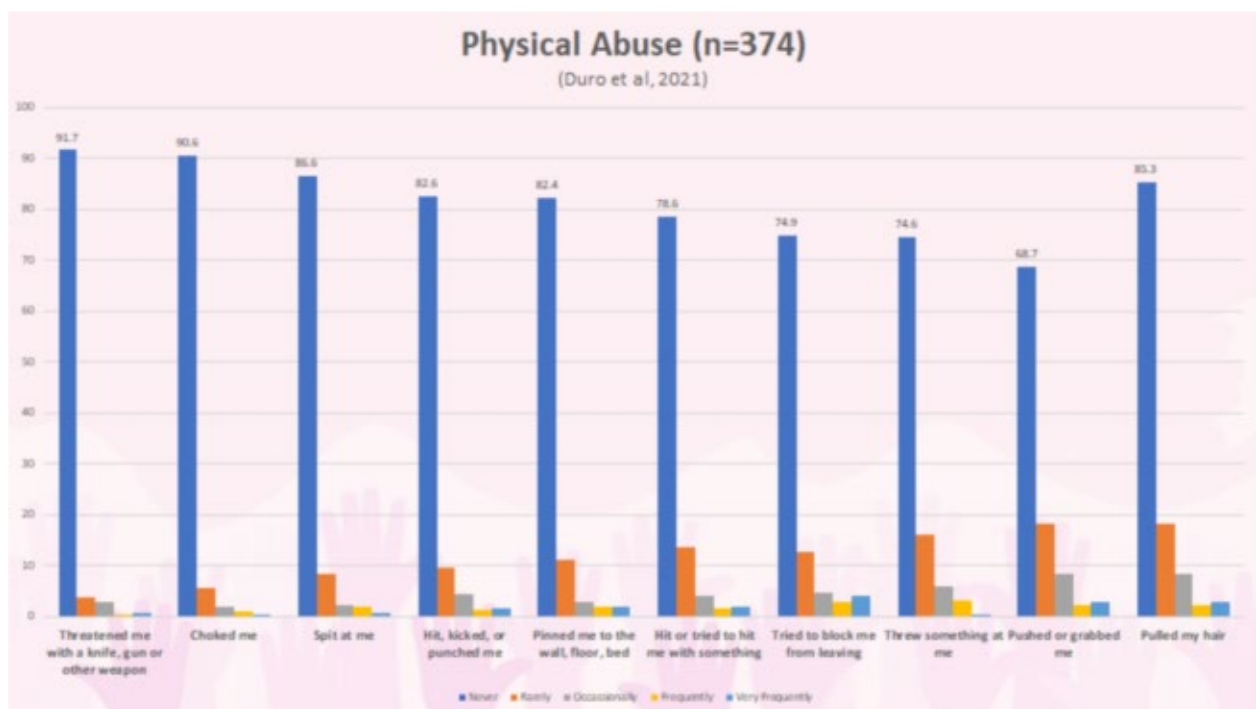


According to the study, 81 percent of women complain that their partners try to dominate them through psychological, verbal and emotional violence, which study author Anila Duro calls coercive control.

*"Because it is not physical, it is difficult to prove to our families that we are in an abusive relationship. And in most cases, coercive control is invisible to the eyes of our families and communities. It is very private, psychological and well planned. "If 81 percent of women report*

*emotional abuse, this is a great control of their partners," says Ms. Duro.*

*"In November we decided to have a conversation with the community and analyze and discuss how we can address this. Not only men and women are invited there, but also children."*



57 percent of the women who participated in the study are mothers. The activist from the Organization "Motrat Qiriazi," adds that it is necessary that while respecting the past, to begin the reform of those known as social norms.

*"If we want to make a difference in society, change starts with ourselves, change starts with the family. I am not talking only about men, but also we as mothers should educate our children from a young age that boys and girls are equal. We need to educate boys not only with the idea that the boy is right about something, but that he is equal just like the girl. "Both need to contribute to the family, both need to*

*take responsibility, both need to be educated,"* said Arjana Elezaj, a member of the Voice of America Sisters organization.

Most of the women participating in the study belong to the age group of 18 to 44 years and 78 of them are educated.

*"The more educated you are, the more chances you have to experience this form of abuse and control, because your husband is losing control over you. You are becoming freer and more independent. "You are fighting traditional norms, you are fighting patriarchy,"* said Ms. Duro.

According to the study 75 percent of women surveyed have not yet managed to leave their abusive partner.

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