

MEASUREMENT BRIEF: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



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INTRODUCTION

This measurement brief is designed to give an overview of how domestic violence has been measured quantitatively in developing countries.

TERMINOLOGY and DEFINITION

Most surveys on the issue use one of two terms: “Domestic Violence” (DV) or “Intimate Partner Violence” (IPV). The usage varies depending upon the country, and has also changed over time. While “Domestic Violence” is more commonly used in developing countries, in Western countries, the preferred term has more or less evolved to “Intimate Partner Violence” as an acknowledgement of the fact that abuse can exist in any type of intimate personal relationship, regardless of sexual orientation, marital status, or gender.

Although men too can be victims of domestic violence, and violence takes place in same-sex relationships as well, women are overwhelmingly the victims, and men the

perpetrators. Therefore, IPV and DV mostly refer to male violence against female partners, especially in developing countries. The term ‘DV’ is usually not used for elder abuse and child abuse, though perhaps it should be.

Since in South Asia, abusers of women at home include in-laws (and not just the intimate partner), the term DV is more appropriate and commonly used than IPV.

Over time and around the world, domestic violence has been redefined to include non-physical abuse: emotional, verbal, and economic abuse. The Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), for instance, classifies domestic violence into physical, sexual, and emotional violence.

MAIN INTERNATIONAL DATA SETS

DATA SET	WEBSITE LINK
The Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)	https://dhsprogram.com/ http://bit.ly/2FTTOEI
WHO Multi-Country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women	https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/24159358X/en/
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, International Reproductive Health Surveys (CDC-RHS)	http://ghdx.healthdata.org/series/reproductive-health-survey-rhs
International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS)	http://ghdx.healthdata.org/record/international-violence-against-women-surveys-data-2002-2005

PREVALENCE RATES ACROSS COUNTRIES

The two main international surveys on domestic violence are the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and the World Health Organization (WHO) Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women. The DHS has collected data on domestic violence in 54 countries; and the WHO in 10 countries. Following are the respective prevalence rates as per the two surveys.

The Demographic and Health Survey

Percentage of women who reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence over their lifetime, based on the most recent data for the 54 countries surveyed by DHS

Country	Year	%	Country	Year	%
Cameroon	2011	62.5	Chad	2014	32.6
Gabon	2012	57.4	Togo	2013	32.3
Sierra Leone	2013	56.9	Moldova	2005	31.6
Congo Democratic Republic	2013	56.6	Benin	2017	30.5
Uganda	2016	55.5	Honduras	2011	30.3
Bangladesh	2007	53.3	Senegal	2017	29.7
Afghanistan	2015	53.2	Nigeria	2013	29.6
Liberia	2007	49.7	Pakistan	2017	28.4
Kenya	2014	47.4	India	2015	28
Zambia	2013	46.9	Dominican Republic	2013	27.8
Ghana	2008	44.5	Ethiopia	2016	26.3
Rwanda	2015	43.9	Mozambique	2015	25.1
Burundi	2016	43.6	Tajikistan	2017	24
Tanzania	2015	43.6	Nepal	2016	23.4
Mali	2012	41.8	Kyrgyz Republic	2012	23.3
Gambia	2013	41.7	Cambodia	2014	22.2
Malawi	2015	41.3	Guatemala	2015	22.1
Zimbabwe	2015	39.4	Jordan	2017	22
Peru	2012	38.3	Maldives	2016	21.8
Sao Tome and Principe	2008	37.2	Burkina Faso	2010	20.1
Colombia	2010	37.1	South Africa	2016	20.1
Cote d'Ivoire	2012	36.2	Philippines	2017	18.5
Egypt	2014	35.8	Ukraine	2007	18.3
Timor-Leste	2016	34.2	Comoros	2012	16.7
Haiti	2016	33.6	Myanmar	2016	16.1

WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women

Site	Physical violence		Sexual violence		Physical or sexual violence, or both		Total no. of ever-partnered women
	Ever %	Current*	Ever %	Current*	Ever %	Current*	
Bangladesh city	39.7	19.0	37.4	20.2	53.4	30.2	1373
Bangladesh province	41.7	15.8	49.7	24.2	61.7	31.9	1329
Brazil city	27.2	8.3	10.1	2.8	28.9	9.3	940
Brazil province	33.8	12.9	14.3	5.6	36.9	14.8	1188
Ethiopia province	48.7	29.0	58.6	44.4	70.9	53.7	2261
Japan city	12.9	3.1	6.2	1.3	15.4	3.8	1276
Namibia city	30.6	15.9	16.5	9.1	35.9	19.5	1367
Peru city	48.6	16.9	22.5	7.1	51.2	19.2	1086
Peru province	61.0	24.8	46.7	22.9	69.0	34.2	1534
Samoa	40.5	17.9	19.5	11.5	46.1	22.4	1204
Serbia and Montenegro city	22.8	3.2	6.3	1.1	23.7	3.7	1189
Thailand city	22.9	7.9	29.9	17.1	41.1	21.3	1048
Thailand province	33.8	13.4	28.9	15.6	47.4	22.9	1024
United Republic of Tanzania city	32.9	14.8	23.0	12.8	41.3	21.5	1442
United Republic of Tanzania province	46.7	18.7	30.7	18.3	55.9	29.1	1256

*At least one act of physical or sexual violence during the 12 months prior to the interview.

MEASURING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

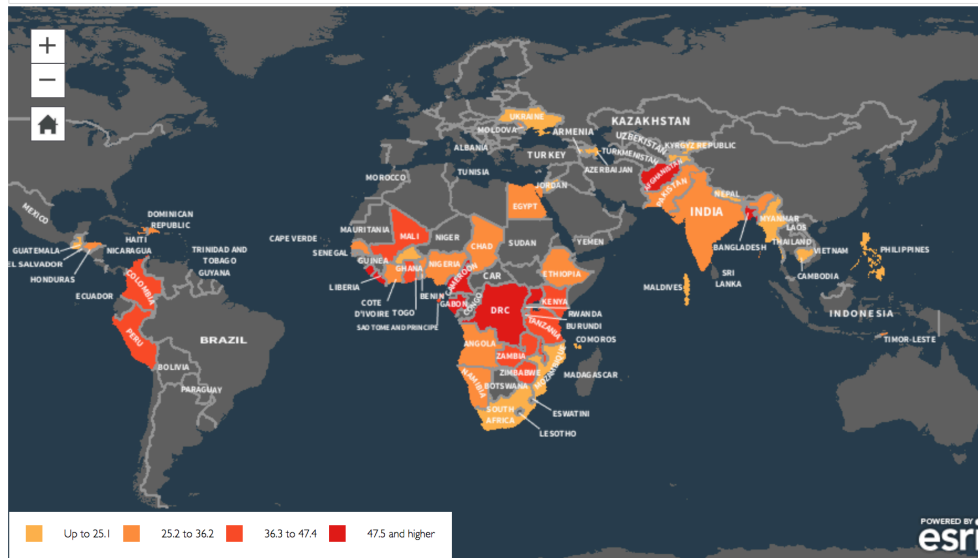
DHS

Following are the two main questions on DV asked in the DHS. The first measure captures physical and sexual violence; the second, emotional violence.

- I. (Does/did) your (last) husband ever do any of the following things to you:
 - a) Slap you?
 - b) Twist your arm or pull your hair?
 - c) Push you, shake you, or throw something at you?
 - d) Punch you with his fist or with something that could hurt you?
 - e) Kick you, drag you, or beat you up?
 - f) Try to choke you or burn you on purpose?
 - g) Threaten or attack you with a knife, gun, or any other weapon?
 - h) Physically force you to have sexual intercourse with him even when you did not want to?
 - i) Physically force you to perform any sexual acts you did not want to?
 - j) Force you with threats or in any other way to perform sexual acts you did not want to?
- II. (Does/did) your (last) husband ever:
 - a) Say or do something to humiliate you in front of others?
 - b) Threaten to hurt or harm you or someone close to you?
 - c) Insult you or make you feel bad about yourself?

Demographic and Health Survey

Percentage of women who experienced physical and/or sexual violence, based on most recent DHS data



If the respondents answer ‘yes’ to any of the above, they are asked about the frequency of the violence: “often”, “sometimes” or “not in the last 12 months”. The DV module of the survey has about 25 questions. The other questions are designed to capture data on the following:

- Control exerted by husbands/male partners over their wives/female partners;
- Injuries caused by the violence;
- Help sought by the respondents;
- Violence experienced by the respondent while she was pregnant;
- Violence perpetrated by other family members, non-family members, and previous partners;
- Violence initiated by women against their partners;
- Physical and sexual violence experienced during childhood;
- Partner’s alcoholism; and
- Violence perpetrated by the respondent’s father against her mother.

For the exact wording of the questions that seek the above information, see the Indian DHS questionnaire as an example:

<http://rchiips.org/NFHS/NFHS4/schedules/NFHS-4Womans.pdf> (pp. 84-91).

DHS Privacy

Before administering this module, interviewers are asked to ensure that there is no one within hearing distance of the interviewers. If privacy cannot be assured, then the section is skipped. Women who were victims of domestic violence were provided with a list of appropriate local organizations that they could contact if they wanted help.

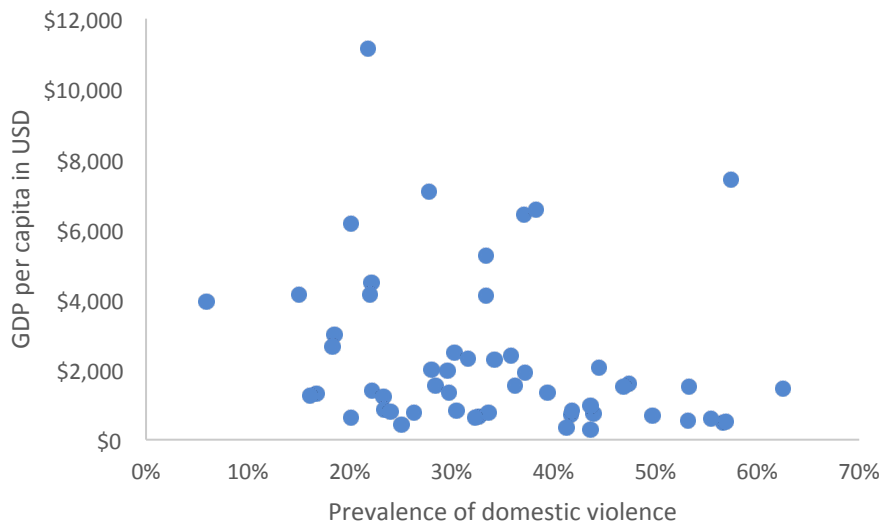
WHO

Many of the questions in the WHO survey are similar to those in the DHS, but WHO collected more in-depth information and had many more questions.

Following are the three main questions in the WHO survey that were used to study domestic violence, focusing on emotional, physical and sexual violence, respectively.

- I. I want you to tell me if your current husband/partner, or any other partner, has ever done the following things to you:
 - a) Insulted you or made you feel bad about yourself?
 - b) Belittled or humiliated you in front of other people?
 - c) Did things to scare or intimidate you on purpose (e.g. by the way he looked at you, by yelling and smashing things)?
 - d) Threatened to hurt you or someone you care about?

GDP per capita by domestic violence prevalence of the 54 DHS countries



LEFT: As the graph indicates there is no real correlation between GDP per capita and prevalence of domestic violence.

II. Has he or any other partner ever

- a) Slapped you or thrown something at you that could hurt you?
- b) Pushed you or shoved you?
- c) Hit you with his fist or with something else that could hurt you?
- d) Kicked you, dragged you or beaten you up?
- e) Choked or burnt you on purpose?
- f) Threatened to use or actually used a gun, knife or other weapon against you?

III. Has he or any other partner ever

- a) Physically forced you to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to?
- b) Did you ever have sexual intercourse you did not want because you were afraid of what he might do?
- c) Did he ever force you to do something sexual that you found degrading or humiliating?

If the respondents answered 'yes' to any the above questions, they were asked if the violence had happened in the past 12 months. If they said 'yes', they were asked to pick one of the following options: "once", "a few times", or "many times".

Besides the above questions, the survey has about 60 other questions on domestic violence, which cover:

- The amount of control exerted by husbands/male partners over their wives/female partner;
- Injuries caused by the violence;
- If respondents were forced to have sex immediately following the violence;
- Triggers that lead to the violence;
- If children witnessed the violence;
- If the respondents fought back or physically defended themselves;
- Help sought by the survivors; reasons for seeking or not seeking help;
- The help they received;
- Violence experienced while pregnant;
- Violence perpetrated by other family members, non-family members and previous partners;
- Violence initiated by women against their spouses;
- If respondents temporarily left home as a result of the violence; the reasons for leaving;
- Reasons for not leaving; reasons for returning home after incidents of violence;
- Physical and sexual violence experienced in childhood;
- Partner's alcoholism and drug use;
- Violence perpetrated by respondent's father against her mother, and the partner's father against his mother;
- Domestic violence experienced by the respondent's sister(s);

- Economic abuse and partner’s control of respondent’s earnings;
- Effect of the violence on the respondent’s work or income generating activities;
- Partner’s propensity to violence with men, his alcoholism and drug use;
- Respondent’s attitude towards the acceptability of domestic violence; and
- If the partner was himself a victim of abuse.

For the exact wording of the questions that seek the above information, see the WHO model questionnaire:

<https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/24159358X/en/> (pp. 147–161).

WHO Privacy

All the respondents were interviewed in private to ensure that the research would not lead to the participant suffering further harm. If the interview was interrupted, the interviewers were trained to either terminate the interview, or stop asking about violence and move on to another, less sensitive topic until privacy could be ensured. At the end of the interview, irrespective of whether the respondent had disclosed information on violence or not, the respondents were offered a card, leaflet, or booklet giving contact details about available health, support, and violence-related services, often coupled with information on other more general community services.

DHS vs WHO

Overall, the WHO survey captured data on domestic violence in greater detail. It had 64 questions versus DHS’s 25 questions. The difference may have to do with the fact that the WHO survey specializes in women’s health and domestic violence, and is administered in specific rural and urban sites. On the other hand, DHS is a large-scale nationally representative survey that covers many other aspects of family and health for both men and women, in addition to domestic violence.

Bangladesh was the only country where both DHS and WHO collected data on domestic violence. The prevalence rates of domestic violence according to both surveys, conducted about four years apart, vary slightly.

Bangladesh	WHO 2000-03	City	53.4%
		Province	61.7%
	DHS 2007	National	53.3%

SUGGESTED FUTURE WORK TO DEVELOP THIS INDICATOR

For a more comprehensive understanding of domestic violence, future surveys can include questions on the following issues:

- Killing of women by intimate partners and family members;
- Violence and murders of women committed in the name of honor;
- Violence specifically related to dowry; and
- Forced marriage.

See UN’s recommendations:

https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/IndicatorsVAW/IndicatorsVAW_EGM_report.pdf

SURVEY-RELATED ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Surveys on domestic violence often face challenges and ethical concerns, some of which are controversial or debatable. These challenges include:

- Merits and demerits of integration of questions on domestic violence in larger surveys versus fielding a specialized survey on domestic violence.
- Risk of survey interviews leading to further domestic violence despite precautions taken by interviewers.
- Ways to deal with a distressed respondent or interviewer.
- Difficulty ensuring privacy. Not all women selected for interviews are successfully interviewed. For instance, India’s DHS/National Family Health Survey (2015-16) was unable to interview 4.5 percent of women selected for the domestic violence module as privacy could not be ensured in these cases. These women may be particularly vulnerable to domestic violence.
- Problem of underreporting of domestic violence in surveys.
- Exclusion from the survey of those most seriously injured by domestic violence, who may have been hospitalized or dead at the time of the survey.



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FURTHER READING

Interviewer Training in the WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence

<https://journals-sagepub-com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/1077801204265554>

Violence against Women: A Statistical Overview, Challenges and Gaps in Data Collection and Methodology and Approaches for Overcoming Them

<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw-stat-2005/docs/expert-papers/Kishor.pdf>

Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women, pp. 91–92

https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/docs/guidelines_statistics_vaw.pdf

Putting Women First: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence against Women

https://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/knowledge/who_fch_gwh_01.1/en/

This brief is part of a series of measurement briefs prepared by *Women's Empowerment: Data for Gender Equality* (WEDGE) project undertaken by University of Maryland College Park. Enhancing women's economic empowerment is a key objective of many public policies and Sustainable Development Goals seek to measure progress in this arena. Measurement briefs developed by WEDGE seek to bridge the gap between theoretical literature on gender and women's lived experiences by evaluating survey based measures of women's economic empowerment and serve as a reference for national statistical agencies as well as students and survey designers.

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