



Considering doing research on domestic violence against women?

Read what WHO has to offer

Why is WHO involved in a multi-country study on violence against women?

Violence against women has been identified as a major public health and human rights problem in the world today. Since much of this is hidden inside the home, it is difficult to document and to prevent. In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action of the UN Conference on Women identified the lack of reliable data on the root causes, magnitude and consequences of violence against women as a major obstacle in the search for solutions to address this problem. It is for these reasons, among others, that the World Health Organization developed and implemented *the Multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence* which commenced in 1998.

This study is the first to provide comparable data from culturally diverse countries on:

- ◆ the prevalence and frequency of different forms of violence against women
- ◆ the health consequences of violence by intimate partners
- ◆ risk and protective factors for intimate partner violence
- ◆ strategies and services used by women experiencing domestic violence.

How is the study being done?

The study is policy and action oriented. At the country level the study has been carried out in partnership with local research institutions and/or national ministries and women's organizations working on issues related to violence. The expertise of women's organizations has been critical in the implementation of the research and, together with the establishment of a steering committee, helps to ensure that the findings are used for intervention development and policy change.



Woman being interviewed, Tanzania, 2001
Photograph: Henriette Jansen, WHO

The full study methodology combines qualitative and quantitative research methods. The quantitative component consists of a household survey conducted in two sites. In most countries these sites are the capital (or a large city) and one province with rural and urban populations. In each of these sites a representative sample of some 1500 women aged from 15 to 49 is selected for interview. Prevalence estimates for various forms of violence are obtained by asking respondents direct questions about their experiences of specific acts of violence in a highly sensitive and respectful fashion. Particular attention is paid to ethical and safety issues associated with research on intimate partner violence. Ensuring women's safety is of paramount concern in the study. See *"Putting Women First: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women"* (WHO/FCH/GWH/01.1).

For a more detailed overview of the study and its' impact in the first eight countries where data have been collected, please refer to the brochure *"WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women"* (WHO/FCH/GWH/02.2).

How was the methodology developed?

Work on the study methodology was initiated in 1997. The questionnaire and protocol were developed together with the first group of implementing countries, experts on violence issues, as well as experts on methodology. The questionnaire was developed using information collected through formative research in five culturally diverse countries and was tested and validated in the same countries. Subsequently, between 1999 and 2002 eight countries implemented the full methodology using version 9 of the questionnaire and the accompanying field materials: Bangladesh, Brazil, Japan, Namibia, Peru, Samoa, Thailand and the United Republic of Tanzania. Version 9 of the questionnaire is now available in Afrikaans, Bengali, Damara-Nama, English, Japanese, Kiswahili, Oshierero, Oshiwambo, Portuguese, Quechua, Samoan, Spanish, and Thai. To date some 500 persons worldwide have been trained in some or all aspects of implementing the study. Based on the lessons learned in the first group of countries the questionnaire has been improved and the current version (version 10) has been translated and used in a second group of countries, that includes New Zealand and Serbia and Montenegro.

Why consider using the WHO methodology for doing research on violence against women?

WHO welcomes the growing interest in carrying out research on violence against women. These studies could save valuable resources by using existing methodologies, such as that developed by WHO, that have been already validated, cross-culturally tested and provide comparable and consistent information. We encourage researchers starting in this area to use the WHO materials and technical support that WHO and its partner researchers all over the world can offer. Conducting new studies using this approach is an important way to expand the existing database with data from new countries and to enhance the growing body of consistent and comparable information on this problem..

What does WHO have to offer to those interested in implementing the study?

WHO is willing to make its wide range of documents and other materials available:

- ◆ Study protocol
- ◆ Ethical and safety guidelines for doing research on violence against women (available in English, French and Spanish)
- ◆ Study questionnaire (available in an increasing number of languages)
- ◆ Manual with question by question explanation of the questionnaire
- ◆ Facilitator guidelines and Power Point slideshow, in particular for training on gender and violence issues
- ◆ Interviewer, supervisor and field editor manuals
- ◆ Example of a "dummy questionnaire" (to change subject when interviewer is interrupted)
- ◆ Example of quality control questionnaire (for supervisors)
- ◆ Data processor manual
- ◆ Data entry programme (EpiInfo6 and EpiData) with interactive consistency and error checking
- ◆ Code book with all variables and values and their labels
- ◆ Data analysis recode and syntax files for standardized analysis in SPSS.

The Department of Gender and Women's Health can also provide technical support through the members of the core research team (experts in WHO, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and Program for Appropriate Technology in Health, Washington DC) and/or trained researchers from country teams that have implemented the study. WHO appreciates that researchers make their data available for cross-national analysis and/or further methodological research. Data remain the property of the implementing researchers and will be used for further analysis only after contact with the responsible investigators and clearance by the participating country. Individuals, countries and donors interested in either reproducing the WHO study or producing comparable prevalence figures are encouraged to use the existing materials and contact WHO as early in their research planning process as possible.

**Requests for further information on the Study or to use the methodology should be directed to:
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