



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



# Country Findings

## Samoa

### 1. Introduction

The Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women, sponsored by the World Health Organization, between 2000 and 2003 collected data from over 24 000 women in Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Namibia, Peru, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Thailand, and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Study assessed women's experiences of violence using a questionnaire developed and validated for cross-cultural use, with a special focus on violence by intimate partners. It also investigated how such violence is associated with ill-health and injury, and the strategies that women use to cope with the violence.

In Samoa, the Study was carried out as part of the Pacific Multi-site Study of the Effects of Violence against Women on Family Health and Safety, a joint research initiative of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the United Nations Population Fund. The research was carried out with the assistance of the Samoan Ministry of Women Affairs. Data collection in the field took place in 2000.

### 2. Methods

In Samoa, a nationwide representative sample of 1 640 women aged between 15 and 49 years was interviewed. In Samoa, women were considered "ever-partnered" if they had ever been married or ever lived with a man. Almost three quarters had been married or had lived in a relationship with a man, and of these 72% were married at the time of the interview. A total of 82% had attained a secondary education.

In the Study, the following definitions of partner violence were used. *Physical violence* meant the woman had been: slapped, or had something thrown at her; pushed or shoved; hit with a fist or something else that could hurt; kicked, dragged or beaten up; choked or burnt; threatened with or had a weapon used against her. *Sexual violence* meant the woman had: been physically forced to have sexual intercourse; had sexual intercourse because she was afraid of what her partner might do; been forced to do something sexual she found degrading or humiliating.

### 3. Main findings

#### 3.1 Prevalence of partner violence

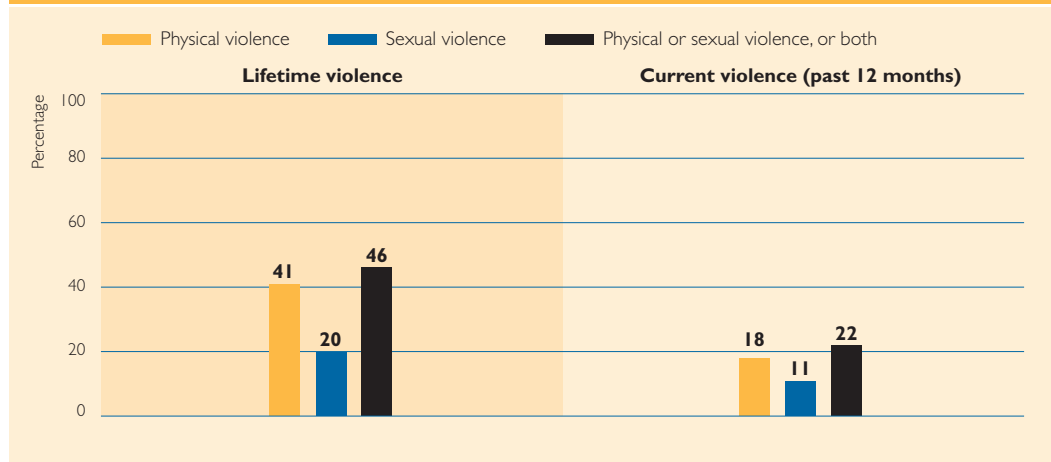
- 41% of ever-partnered women had experienced physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner and 20% had experienced sexual violence in their lifetime.
- The combined prevalence for physical or sexual violence by a partner for ever-partnered women was 54% for those with primary education, 45% for those with secondary education, and 35% for those with higher education. Violence was also less common for women living in urban areas and for women with higher income levels.

#### 3.2 Injuries inflicted by a partner

- 30% of the women who experienced physical violence by their partners reported having been injured. Almost half of these women had been injured three or more times.



**Percentage of women who experienced violence by an intimate partner, among ever-partnered women aged 15–49 years, Samoa**



- The most common injuries reported included abrasions and bruising (in 74% of women who had been injured), damage to eyes and ears (30%) and cuts, punctures and bites (29%).

### 3.3 Physical violence by a partner during pregnancy

- 10% of women who had ever been pregnant were beaten during at least one pregnancy.
- Among the ever-pregnant women who were also ever physically abused, 24% were beaten during pregnancy.
- In over 96% of cases, the perpetrator was the father of the child the woman was carrying.

### 3.4 Non-partner physical and sexual violence since the age of 15 years

- Overall, 65% of all respondents reported violence by someone other than a partner since the age of 15 years. 62% had been physically abused, while 11% reported sexual abuse.
- The main perpetrators of physical violence were female family members (reported by 63% of all interviewees), fathers (58%) and teachers (30%). The main perpetrators of sexual violence were boyfriends (46%) and strangers (24%).

### 3.5 Sexual abuse of girls under 15 years of age and forced first sex

- When interviewed face-to-face, 2% of women reported sexual abuse before age 15 years.
- 8% of women who had ever had sex reported that their first sexual experience was forced. If first sex was under age 15 years, 35% of women was reported it to have been forced.

### 3.6 Impact on women's health of violence by a partner

- Women who had been physically or sexually abused were significantly more likely to report pain (29%) than never-abused women (22%), and more likely to report dizziness (55% versus 44%), and vaginal discharge (4% versus 2%).
- Women who had experienced partner violence more frequently contemplated suicide (15% versus 8%).
- Abused women who had ever been pregnant were significantly more likely to have had stillborn children (16% versus 10%) and miscarriages (15% versus 8%).

### 3.7 Help-seeking by women experiencing physical violence by a partner

- 54% of physically abused women – particularly rural women – had not disclosed their experience to anyone, 25% confided in their parents, 12% in friends, 7% in siblings, and 5% in neighbours. Less than 2% told medical staff or police.
- 85% of women physically abused by their partner had never asked any formal agency for help. Of those who did, police and medical facilities were the most frequently mentioned.
- The main reasons given for seeking formal help were that they could no longer endure the violence (mentioned by 65% who sought help), had been badly injured (27%), their partner had threatened to kill them (7%), or the children were suffering (7%).
- 86% of physically abused women who did not seek help stated that they had not done so because they thought such abuse “normal”, or not serious enough to seek help.

**For more information, see**

<http://www.who.int/gender/violence/en/>

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