



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



Country Findings

Serbia and Montenegro

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 Serbia and Montenegro the Study was conducted by the Autonomous Women's Center, a feminist nongovernmental organization with more than 10 years experience in domestic violence, and Strategic Marketing, a professional survey agency. The consultative committee to the Study consisted of representatives of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade City Assembly – Department of Health, and Belgrade University School of Medicine. The Study was funded by Trocaire, Ireland. The data collection in the field took place in 2003.

2. Methods

In Serbia and Montenegro, the Study involved individual interviews with 1456 women aged between 15 and 49 years in the Serbian capital, Belgrade. A total of 91% of the women interviewed were "ever-partnered" (defined as ever having been married, ever having lived with a man or currently with a regular sexual partner) and, of those, 90% were in current relationships. While 51% of the women had completed college or university, 46% had completed secondary school only.

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, shoved, or had her hair pulled; 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

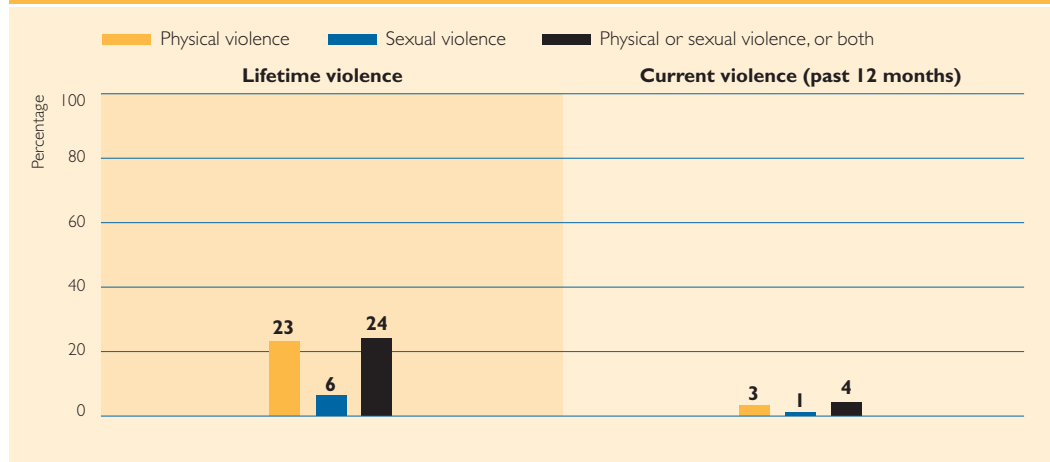
- 23% of ever-partnered women reported having experienced physical violence, and 6% reported having experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner. Combining these data, 24% of ever-partnered women had experienced physical or sexual violence; 4% had experienced such violence during the past 12 months.
- Violence was about one third more frequent among women with only primary (33%) and secondary education (28%) than those who had graduated from college or university (20%).

3.2 Injuries inflicted by a partner

- 30% of the women who had experienced physical violence by their partners reported having been injured, with 36% reporting being injured in the past year. The most common forms of



Percentage of women who experienced violence by an intimate partner, among ever-partnered women aged 15–49 years, Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro



injuries reported included: abrasions and bruising (in 85% of women who were injured); cuts, punctures and bites (19%), and fractures (12%).

3.3 Physical violence by a partner during pregnancy

- 3% of the ever-pregnant women interviewed were beaten during a pregnancy by their partner. Of these women, 45% had been punched or kicked in the abdomen.
- 48% of those women had also been beaten before pregnancy, thus implying that in more than half of the cases the physical violence started during pregnancy.

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

- 10% of respondents reported that someone other than a partner had been physically violent towards them since the age of 15 years. The perpetrators were most frequently fathers (36%), female family members (22%), boyfriends (20%) or strangers (19%).
- 4% of respondents reported sexual violence by someone other than a partner. The perpetrators were most frequently strangers (43%) and boyfriends (32%).

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

- 4% of women reported sexual abuse before age 15 years. The perpetrators were most frequently strangers (mentioned by 39% who reported such violence) and male family members (21%).
- Less than 1% of all women who ever had sex reported that their first sexual experience was forced.

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

- 9% of women who experienced physical or sexual violence rated their general health as poor or very poor compared to 4% of never-abused women.
- Women who had ever been pregnant and who experienced partner violence had more induced abortions (65% versus 46%) and were more likely to have had a child who died (5% versus 2%).
- 22% of women who had experienced partner violence had ever thought of committing suicide, compared to 7% of those who had not.

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

- 27% of physically abused women told no one about the violence, while 53% confided in friends, 28% in their parents and 26% in siblings. Far fewer told police (5%), medical staff (4%), or any other formal service or authority.
- 78% of physically abused women had never asked any formal agency for help. Only 12% went to the police and 10% visited medical facilities. Between 6% and 9% sought help from a social or legal service or court, but none reported visiting a shelter.
- The main reasons for seeking help were that they could no longer endure the violence (mentioned by 63% of women who sought help), had been badly injured (30%), or the children were suffering (12%). Some sought help after their partners threatened to kill them (8%) or threatened or hit the children (5%).
- Two thirds of physically abused women did not seek help 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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