

## Intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence in Kazakhstan



## Key points

- In 2015, 17% of ever-partnered women in Kazakhstan reported having experienced at least one act of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetimes, and about 5% had experienced this form of violence in the previous 12 months.
- Women are likely to experience severe forms of physical partner violence, such as punching, kicking or having objects thrown at them.
- Women are more likely to report experiencing frequent violence; data from 2015 show that 57% of women who experienced intimate partner violence reported having frequently experienced violence in the past 12 months.
- Around half (51%) of women in 2015 reported that they had never told anyone about their experience of intimate partner violence. Among those who had told someone, only 8% told the police about their partner's behaviour, and only 3% told a doctor or other medical worker.
- Current laws do not specifically criminalize domestic violence, which promotes impunity and sends a message that domestic violence is tolerated.

## Background

In article 1 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by the General Assembly in 1993, violence against women is defined as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".<sup>1</sup>

Violence against women constitutes a violation of women's fundamental human rights, including the rights to health and to physical integrity. Gender-based violence is a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation 19).<sup>2</sup>

The economic and social costs of violence against women are significant. Data from countries all over the world show that violence undermines development at various levels, leading to the devaluation of physical, human and social capital.

Kazakhstan, like many other States Members of the United Nations, is party to major international commitments in the field of gender equality, including those contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,<sup>3</sup> as well as those set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,<sup>4</sup> target 5.2 of which specifically calls for the elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres.<sup>5</sup>

## Current situation

According to the results of the 2015 survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan,<sup>6</sup> approximately 17% of ever-partnered women reported having experienced at least one act of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetimes, and about 5% had experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months (see figure I).

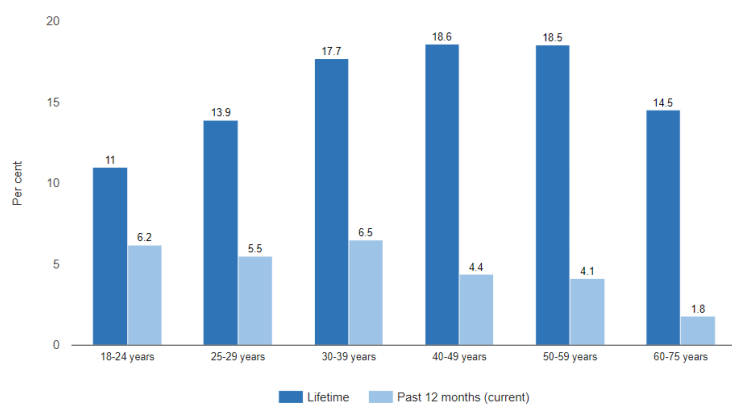
**Figure I** Lifetime and current prevalence of intimate partner violence among ever-partnered women aged 18-75 by form of violence, 2015 (Percentage)



Source: Final report of the sample survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan (2015), Astana, 2017 ([https://kazakhstan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Kazakhstan%20VAW%20report\\_final%2031-10-2017.pdf](https://kazakhstan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Kazakhstan%20VAW%20report_final%2031-10-2017.pdf))

Analysing the ages of women who have been subjected to violence, it is noted that the level of physical and/or sexual violence (in the past 12 months) by an intimate partner is highest among youth: women aged 18–39 are at higher risk of partner violence (see figure II).

**Figure II** Breakdown of physical/sexual intimate partner violence by age group and by time period, 2015 (Percentage)

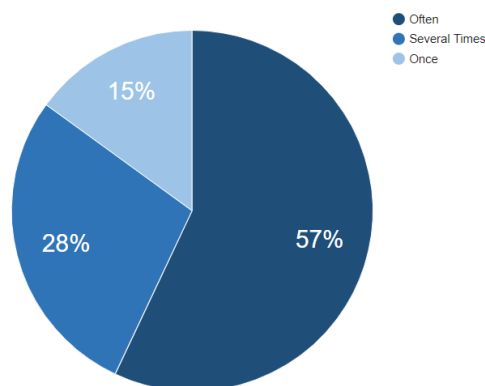


Source: Final report of the sample survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan (2015), Astana, 2017 ([https://kazakhstan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Kazakhstan%20VAW%20report\\_final%2031-10-2017.pdf](https://kazakhstan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Kazakhstan%20VAW%20report_final%2031-10-2017.pdf))

Moreover, women are likely to experience severe forms of physical partner violence, such as punching, kicking or having objects thrown at them.

Women were also more likely to report experiencing frequent violence; 57% of women who experienced intimate partner violence reported frequently experiencing violence in the past 12 months (see figure III).

**Figure III:** Frequency of intimate partner violence among women who experienced any physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence: 2015 (Percentage)



**Source:** Final report of the sample survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan (2015), Astana, 2017 ([https://kazakhstan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Kazakhstan%20VAW%20report\\_final%2031-10-2017.pdf](https://kazakhstan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Kazakhstan%20VAW%20report_final%2031-10-2017.pdf)).

The study also found that women who reported that their mother had experienced physical or psychological abuse were significantly more likely to report experiencing physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence themselves.

Factors that contribute to the likelihood of intimate partner violence include: personality profiles and current behaviours of the partners in a relationship; specific dynamics of the relationship, including levels of conflict, communication styles and power dynamics; household and community structures in which the relationship is embedded; and the macro-level and global-level forces that shape prevailing norms, access to resources and the relative standing of women versus men.

In Kazakhstan intimate partner violence is also driven by a range of factors at all levels of society. According to available data, in addition to the main underlying issue, gender inequality, other contributing factors include, inter alia:

1. Men's control over women in intimate relationships: one in three women reported that they had experienced at least one act of controlling behaviour by a partner in their lifetime;
2. Current laws do not specifically criminalize domestic violence, which promotes impunity and sends a message that domestic violence is tolerated;
3. Children witnessing intimate partner violence may be traumatized and or become accustomed to a learned pattern of behaviour and accept violence as normal.

Women who reported ever having experienced any physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetimes were asked follow-up questions about seeking support in response to their current or former partner's behavior, for example, if they had ever told anyone about it. Overall, around half (51%) of the respondents said that they had never told anyone, which means that, for many women, the study interviewer was the first person that they had ever talked to about their experiences.

Among women who had told someone about their experience of intimate partner violence, most had told their own parents (23%), their partner's parents (21%), their friends (14%) or other relatives (10%). Very few women said that they had talked to people in positions of authority — only 8% of women who experienced intimate partner violence had told the police about their partner's behaviour, and only 3% had told a doctor or other medical worker.

Addressing violence against women remains challenging: women are often ashamed to share their experiences with others and face a range of social prejudices, and moreover they may be unaware of their rights and lack information about existing support centres. Many women who shared their stories with interviewers were grateful for the opportunity to voice their concerns and ease their minds, as well as to obtain information about existing laws and institutions that support women living with the daily risk of violence in the home.

## The way forward

In 2016, the results of the survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan were presented to a wide range of stakeholders, including politicians and high-level deputies. In response, in the same year, the Government of Kazakhstan, taking into account the main principles and objectives of the SDGs, adopted a new strategic document in the field of gender equality, the "concept of family and gender policy until 2030", which aims to reduce the incidence of violence against women and children.

Furthermore, in 2017, the Government initiated a national strategy for the prevention and response to domestic violence within the framework of a pilot project entitled "Kazakhstan without domestic violence".

In 2018, in cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Government initiated a comprehensive programme to achieve gender equality and eliminate violence against women in Kazakhstan through the implementation of international commitments, in particular the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Human Rights Committee, including the commitments under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and those set out in the Sustainable Development Goals.

The national strategy to address violence against women includes: the harmonization of national legislation in accordance with international standards; the adoption and implementation of policies to eliminate violence against women; the strengthening of the national and the inter-agency response to gender-based violence; and the promotion of the rights of vulnerable women, in accordance with the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, "Leaving no one behind".

## Sources

- [United Nations, General Assembly, resolution 48/104, 20 December 1993, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women](#).
- [Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Eleventh session, 1992, general recommendation No. 19, Violence against women](#).
- [United Nations, General Assembly, resolution 70/1, 25 September 2015, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", Sustainable Development Goals](#).
- Concept of family and gender policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030, 2016.
- [Final report of the sample survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan \(2015\), Astana, 2017](#).

## About the data

### Definition

Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 and older who have been subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age.

### Coverage

Data from the survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan<sup>7</sup> covers women aged 18–75 by educational level and employment and at the rural, urban, national and subnational level.

---

## Footnotes

1. United Nations, General Assembly, resolution 48/104, 20 December 1993, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women .
2. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Eleventh session, 1992, general recommendation No. 19, Violence against women .
3. Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II .
4. United Nations, General Assembly, resolution 70/1, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", 25 September 2015 .
5. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 5.2.1 measures the percentage of ever-partnered women and girls who have experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months.
6. Final report of the sample survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan (2015), Astana, 2017 .
7. See final report of the sample survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan (2015), Astana, 2017 .