

Violence against women and the girl child

Intimate partner violence



Key points

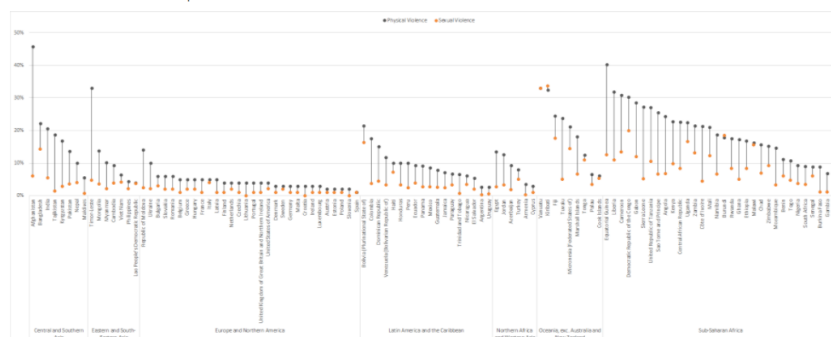
- Women across the world, regardless of income, age or education, are subjected to physical and sexual violence perpetrated by current or former intimate partners.
- One in three women will experience physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in her life.
- 18% of women and girls have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months.
- The prevalence of intimate partner violence in the previous 12 months varies widely between countries, from 2% to 46%.
- Regional differences in the rates of intimate partner violence also persist, with women in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa regions at greatest risk.
- Younger women (aged 15–29) are also at increased risk of experiencing intimate partner violence.
- In terms of trend analysis, 58% of countries have recorded a decrease in intimate partner violence since 2005.
- The periods of lockdown called for in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have put women and girls at increased risk of experiencing intimate partner violence.
- Forthcoming international estimates accounting for methodological differences between studies will improve the cross-country comparability of data on violence against women perpetrated by intimate partners.
- As at 2020, at least 153 countries have passed laws on domestic violence.

Background

Violence against women and girls is an extreme manifestation of gender inequality and intimate partner violence, is one of the most common form of violence faced by women and girls worldwide. One in three women will experience physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in her life.¹ Given prevailing social norms that sanction male dominance over women, violence between intimate partners is often perceived as an ordinary and/or normal element of relationships, particularly in the context of marriage or other unions.

Based on the latest available data for 112 countries during the period from 2005 to 2018, it is estimated that, worldwide, 18% of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15–49 have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence during the previous 12 months. Based on data from 112 countries, 14% of women have experienced physical violence and 6% of women have experienced sexual violence at the hands of intimate partners during the previous 12 months. As shown in figure I, this proportion varies widely across regions and countries.

Figure I: Proportion of women and girls aged 15-49 who experienced intimate partner physical or sexual violence in the previous 12 months: 2005 - 2018 (latest available)



Source: Compiled by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, from various sources, including national surveys and demographic and health surveys.

Regional differences in the rates of intimate partner violence persist, with women in the Pacific, Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa regions at greatest risk. In Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, the average 12-month prevalence rate for intimate partner violence was 35%. The rates of intimate partner violence in Southern Asia (23%) and sub-Saharan Africa (22%) were above the global average of 18%. In contrast, the prevalence rate of recent intimate partner violence is lower, in Latin America and the Caribbean, at an average of 12%, and lower still in Europe, where the 12-month prevalence rate is 6%.

Focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean, population-based evidence confirms that intimate partner violence against women remains a widespread public health and human rights problem, with a reported prevalence of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence during the previous 12 months across countries ranging from 3% to 27% of women and girls.

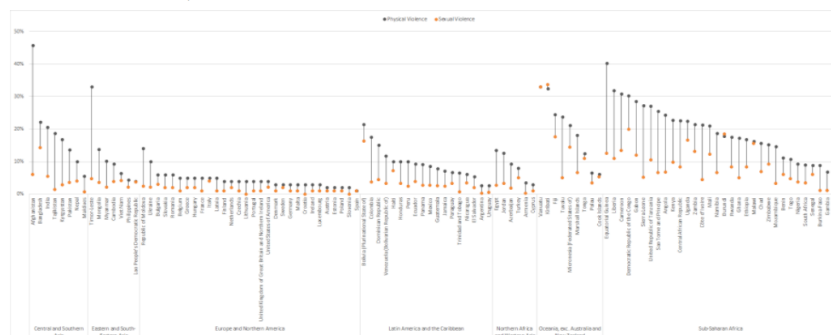
A survey carried out in Europe in 2019, led by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and covering seven countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, found that 6.7%² of women had been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months. Prevalence rates over the 12-month period ranged from 3.1% in Republic of North Macedonia to 9.4% in the Republic of Moldova.

Although many countries collect information on violence against women, direct comparisons are often difficult to make because of differences in data collection methodology.³ In particular, some developed countries regularly publish statistics on intimate partner violence based on victimization surveys and complement these statistics with the number of cases reported to the police in order to measure prevalence of violence as well as coverage of reported cases. While these sources provide valuable information, they can not be used to produce comparable prevalence rates.

Since 2010, among countries with comparable data (47 countries),⁴ the proportion of women and girls experiencing intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence in the past 12 months ranged from 3.5% in Armenia (2015–2016) to 46.1% in Afghanistan (2015).

Some issues with comparability persisting to the absence of agreed international definitions in historical data, as well as inconsistent age ranges used in different surveys. Putting these differences to one side, available data for the 112 countries up to 2018 show that the proportion of women experiencing intimate partner physical or sexual violence in the past 12 months ranged from 2.0% in Spain (2012) and Slovenia (2012) to a rate of 46.1% in Afghanistan (2015).

Figure I: Proportion of women and girls aged 15-49 who experienced intimate partner physical or sexual violence in the previous 12 months: 2005 - 2018 (latest available)

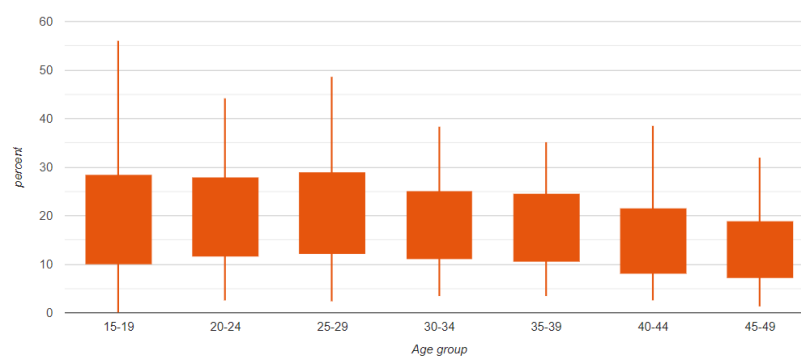


Source: Compiled by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, from various sources, including national surveys and demographic and health surveys.

Survey data from 63 countries indicate that the prevalence of intimate partner violence generally decreases with age. Based on available data disaggregated by 5-year-age groups, younger women (aged 15–19, 20–24 and 25–29) are at the greatest risk of experiencing intimate partner violence, although rates of intimate partner violence by broad age group vary widely across countries (see figure II).

Between 2005 and 2017, 36 countries conducted more than one survey to measure the prevalence of intimate partner violence in the 12 months prior to the survey. Evidence of the magnitude of change in the level of intimate partner violence is mixed, with 21 countries (58%) recording decreases in intimate partner violence and 10 countries (28%) recording increases. The trend was unclear in five countries (14%).

Figure II Proportion of women and girls who experienced intimate partner physical or sexual violence in the previous 12 months, by age: 2005 - 2017 (latest available)



Source: : Source: SDGs database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>) (accessed in July 2020).

COVID-19

The lockdowns resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic have confined many women and girls to their homes, sometimes with abusive partners, putting them at greater risk of domestic violence. Reports from several countries reveal an increase in reported cases of domestic violence to helplines, women's shelters and the police. In some countries, however, there has been a decrease in the number of reported incidents of domestic violence, possibly owing to the fact that women and girls confined in the home with an abusive partner have limited privacy and may lack access to mobile phones or to the Internet, making it difficult for them to reach out for help.

While as yet there is no solid evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on the percentage of women and girls subjected to intimate partner violence, past evidence has shown that violence is more severe and frequent for those already in abusive relationships when intimate partners spend more time at home (for example, during the holidays). While robust statistics on the impact of COVID-19 are still being produced, there are reasons to believe that the pandemic is likely to increase the risk that women may experience different forms of violence, specifically intimate partner domestic violence: 15 years of survey data show that the great majority of women survivors of violence never report it to the police, helplines or other service providers.

Laws on domestic violence

As of 2020, at least 153 countries have passed laws on domestic violence. Developed countries, including countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Oceania, have the highest coverage, with over 90% of countries in these regions having laws on domestic violence: this stands in stark contrast to the situation in countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Northern and Western Asia, less than 65% of which have specifically criminalized domestic violence.

Vulnerable groups

Rates of domestic violence against indigenous women are often significantly higher than the rest of the population. Surveys to measure violence against women must include these populations in order to ensure no one is left behind. In 2016, in analysis carried out by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre in the Australian state of Victoria⁵ it was reported that Aboriginal women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalized from family violence⁶ and almost 11 times more likely to be killed as a result of violent assault.

Older women are also at risk of family violence⁷ and are often not included in the population covered by surveys on the topic. One country that reports on violence against senior women is Canada, where risk of being the victim of a violent crime generally decreases with age. As a reflection of this overall pattern, seniors had the lowest rates of police-reported violent crime, regardless of whether violence was perpetrated by a family member or someone outside the family network. However, senior victims of family violence are more likely to sustain injuries than other victims of family violence.⁸ The Canadian data suggest that, as women age, they are at greater risk of experiencing violence at the hands of their grown children while still at risk of violence from their domestic partners. In 2010, 36% of perpetrators of violence against seniors aged 65–69 were their grown children, followed by their spouses (30%).

Data on the prevalence of violence against women and girls is often still lacking for women and girls with disabilities, ethnic minorities, migrant workers and older women. Even where such data exist, comparability between countries and within countries remains challenging.

Countries in focus

Intimate partner violence is often unreported. In [Kazakhstan](#), 51% of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence have never shared the information with anyone.

Based on data from 2016, intimate partner violence in [Mexico](#) remains a significant issue, with almost one out of four women 15 and older (23.9%) reporting having experienced violence in the previous 12 months (a slight reduction from 24.7% in 2011).

About the data

Coverage

Women and girls aged 15–49.

Availability

Data on the proportion of women and girls who have experienced physical or sexual violence in the previous 12 months (2005–2018) is available for 112 countries (31 developed countries and 81 developing countries), including 36 countries with multiple data points, allowing for trend analysis.

Oceania (excl) refers to Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand throughout the publication.

Definitions

- Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 5.2.1.⁹ 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. While physical and sexual intimate partner violence are generally well defined and measured, this is not the case with psychological partner violence, which may be conceptualized differently across cultures and in different contexts. Therefore, this indicator currently reports on the global level of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence only. A majority of data come from demographic and health surveys, which typically sample only women and girls aged 15–49. There is a lack of consistency in the age range of sample populations across country surveys: in the case of surveys that interview a sample of women and girls from a different age group, the prevalence for data on the 15–49 age group is often published or can be calculated from available data. The global indicator therefore currently reports violence experienced by ever-partnered women and girls 15–49 years of age.
- Physical violence consists of acts aimed at physically hurting the victim and include, but are not limited to, pushing, grabbing, twisting the arm, pulling the hair, slapping, kicking, biting or hitting with the fist or object, trying to strangle or suffocate, burning or scalding on purpose and/or threatening or attacking with some sort of weapon, gun or knife.
- Sexual violence is defined as any sort of harmful or unwanted sexual behaviour that is imposed on someone. It includes acts of abusive sexual contact, forced engagement in sexual acts, attempted or completed sexual acts without consent, incest and/or sexual harassment. In intimate partner relationships, sexual violence is commonly defined as being forced to have sexual intercourse, having sexual intercourse out of fear for what the partner might do and/or being forced to do something sexual that the woman or girl considers humiliating or degrading.

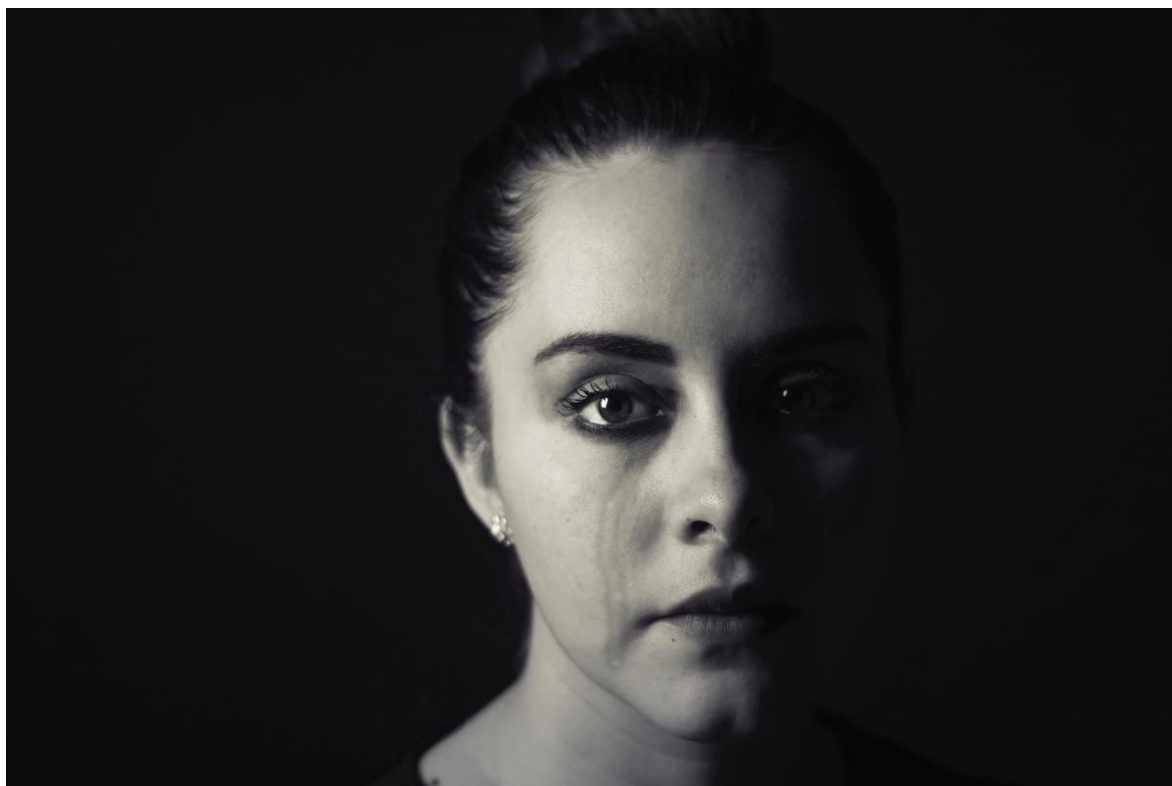
Sources

- [United States Agency for International Development \(USAID\), Demographic and Health Surveys program, STATcompiler](#) (last accessed 15 August 2019).
- [European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Survey on violence against women in the European Union, 2012.](#)
- [Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, Intimate Partner Violence in the Americas: Data and Action.](#)
- [Sustainable Development Goals database](#) (last accessed July 2020).
- [Organization for Security and Cooperation \(OSCE\), OSCE-led Survey on Violence Against Women, 2019 .](#)
- [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development \(UNDESA\), Statistics Division, master file on violence against women surveys.](#)

Footnotes

1. [World Health Organization \(WHO\), Global and regional estimates of violence against women](#) .
2. Including psychological violence, the rate is 20%: psychological violence, which is defined as acts which cause psychological harm to an individual, can take many forms, including coercion, defamation, verbal insult and/or harassment.
3. [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) metadata for indicator 5.2.1](#).
4. Demographic and health surveys.
5. Australian Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2014*, Canberra, 2014.
6. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Family Violence Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*, Canberra, 2006.
7. Family violence refers to violence committed by spouses, children, siblings and members of the extended family.
8. [Statistics Canada, 2012, "Family violence against seniors"](#) .
9. Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15-49 years subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age (Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.2.1).

Intimate partner and family-related homicide



Key points

- Worldwide, 137 women are killed by a member of their own family every day.
- In 2017, 87,000 women were intentionally killed. More than half (58%) were killed by intimate partners or family members, an increase over the share (47%) reported in 2012.
- Although women and girls account for a far smaller share of total homicides than men (20%),¹ they bear by far the greatest burden of both intimate partner/family-related homicides and intimate partner homicides (82% of deaths recorded as intimate partner homicides are women).
- Women run the greatest risk of being killed by their intimate partners or by family members in countries in Africa.

Current situation

An estimated 87,000 women were intentionally killed in 2017. More than half of them (58%) were killed by intimate partners or family members, meaning that, worldwide, 137 women were killed every day by intimate partners or members of their own family. More than a third (30,000 or 34%) of the women intentionally killed in 2017 were killed by their current or former intimate partners, that is, someone they would usually have trusted.

These figures translate into: a global female homicide rate of 2.1 women killed for every 100,000 women in the population in 2017; a global female intimate partner/family-related homicide rate of 1.3 per 100,000; and a female intimate partner homicide rate of 0.8 per 100,000.

The estimated number of women killed by intimate partners or family members in 2012 was 48,000 (47% of all female homicide victims), compared with 58% in 2017. From these rising percentages, it appears that the annual number of female deaths worldwide resulting from intimate partner/family-related homicide is on the increase.

Intimate partner/family-related homicide

Worldwide, the largest number of women killed by intimate partners or family members in 2017 was in Asia (20,000), followed by Africa (19,000), the Americas (8,000), Europe (3,000) and Oceania (300).

Adjusting for the population size in each region, data show that women run the greatest risk of being killed by their intimate partners or family members in countries in Africa (3.1 per 100,000 female population), while in Europe (0.7 per 100,000 population) women are least at risk.

The intimate partner/family-related homicide rate was also high in the Americas in 2017, at 1.6 per 100,000 female population, as well as in Oceania (1.3 per 100,000) and Asia (0.9 per 100,000).

Further insights into gender based killing in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean can be found in the story on [femicide](#) produced by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean,² which highlights that the risk women face varies significantly by country. In El Salvador and Guyana the rate of femicide in 2017 was very high (6.8 and 8.8 per 100,000 women) compared to rates reported in 14 other countries and territories³ in the region (less than 1 per 100,000 women).

In 2017, more than two thirds (69%) of all women killed in Africa and more than a third (38%) of those killed in Europe were killed by intimate partners or family members.

Figure I: Share of women victims among total homicides, intimate partner/family related homicides and intimate partner homicides: 2017

Although women and girls account for a far smaller share of total homicides than men, they bear by far the greatest burden of intimate partner/family-related homicide, and intimate partner homicide.



Source: Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Global study on homicide: Gender-related killing of women and girls, Vienna, 2018 (https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/GSH2018/GSH18_Gender-related_killing_of_women_and_girls.pdf).

Intimate partner homicide

When looking solely at the proportion of women killed by intimate partners (not including other family members) in 2017, the regions with the largest shares were Asia and Africa (11,000 each), followed by the Americas (6,000), Europe (2,000) and Oceania (200).

In 2017, Africa was also the region with the highest rate of females killed by intimate partners in 2017 (1.7 per 100,000 female population). The Americas had the second-highest rate per 100,000 female population (1.2), followed by Oceania (0.9), Europe (0.6) and Asia (0.5).

Oceania was the region with the highest share of female homicides attributable to a woman's intimate partner, at 42%, while Europe reported a lower yet still significant share of 29%, compared to a global average of more than a third (34%).

Total homicides, intimate partner / family-related homicides and intimate partner homicides

Only one out of every five victims (20%) of homicide at the global level is a woman,⁴ yet women and girls make up the majority of homicides by intimate partners and family members (64%). Women also bear the greatest burden in terms of intimate partner violence. The disparity between male and female victims of homicide perpetrated exclusively by an intimate partner is even larger: roughly 82% female victims versus 18% male victims.

Country in focus / vulnerable groups

Data from Canada show that aboriginal and indigenous women and girls experience much higher levels of violence than non-aboriginal women, both in terms of victimization and lethal violence. In 2014, the rate of homicide among indigenous females was six times higher than the rate among non-aboriginal people (3.64 per 100,000 versus 0.65 per 100,000).⁵

Related stories

Related stories

- [Intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence against women and girls](#)

Sources

- [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Global study on homicide: Gender-related killing of women and girls, Vienna 2018](#)
- [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database, indicator 16.1.1 \(Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age\)](#)

About the data

Definitions

- **Total estimated number and rate of intentional homicides perpetrated by intimate partners/family-members, disaggregated by sex:** Latest statistics on different measures of intentional homicides perpetrated by intimate partners or family members that have been considered in the context of the gender-related killing of women or "femicide".
- **Femicide:** The term "femicide" was coined several decades ago to define the gender-related motivation associated with the killing of women and girls. Although the term has attracted attention to the extent that it is now used by some Governments and a wide range of stakeholders, at the global level there is no commonly agreed definition as to what constitutes "femicide". What is observable, however, is a plurality of definitions stemming from different legal and sociological approaches, which indicate the elements that may contribute to labelling a crime "femicide".

Availability

Data from 2017 on intentional homicide by sex is available for 93 countries.⁶ Data availability on male and female rates of intimate partner homicide is very limited across regions; the highest rate of coverage is reported in Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean.⁷ There are serious limitations in terms of data availability for male and female rates of intimate partner/family-related homicide, and, when reported, such figures may indicate an under recording of victims.⁸

Footnotes

1. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Global study on homicide: Gender-related killing of women and girls, Vienna, 2019.
2. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), "At Least 2,795 Women Were Victims of Femicide in 23 Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in 2017", press release, November 2018.
3. Bahamas, British Virgin Islands, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).
4. In 2017, global rate of female intentional homicide was 2.14 per 100,000 females, compared with the male intentional homicide rate of 9.70 per 100,000 men (Global SDG Indicators Database, indicator 16.1.1).
5. Statistics Canada, Victimization of Aboriginal people in Canada, 2014, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2016.
6. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (indicator 16.1.1) (accessed on 25 August 2020).
7. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Global study on homicide: Gender-related killing of women and girls, Vienna, 2019.
8. Ibid.

Violence against women and the girl child

Femicide in Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC]



Femicide, the most extreme expression of violence against women

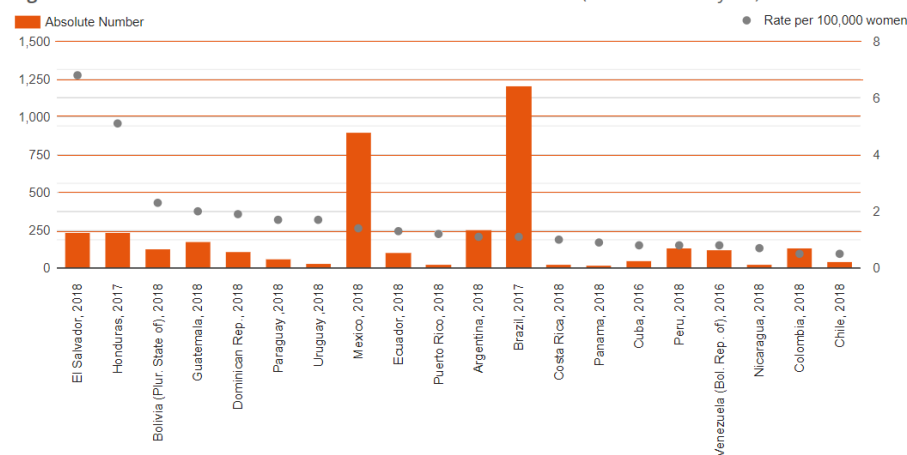
Structural discriminatory, violent and patriarchal cultural patterns sustain gender inequality in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. Despite progress over recent decades, gender-based discrimination and violence against women remains a serious problem, which manifests itself in various areas and in multiple forms. **Femicide¹**, described as the most dramatic and extreme form of violence against women, represents an attack on women and their human rights on a daily or exceptional basis in two settings: (a) violence in relationships, whether in a union or not (intimate femicide); and (b) violence inflicted by other persons, whether relatives, people from a woman's social environment or strangers, which may derive from situations of social conflict or crime.

Current situation

Progress made in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean regarding the codification of femicide as a criminal offence and its statistical visibility have not been effective in reducing this expression of extreme violence against women. According to the information for the most recent year, as provided by 33 countries in the region to the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean,² more than 3,800 women were killed because of their gender.

The incidence of femicide in some countries in Central America remains an acute and worrying problem (see figure I). In 2018, four of the five highest rates of femicide were recorded in Central America: in El Salvador (6.8 femicides per 100,000 women); Honduras (5.1 femicides per 100,000 women); Guatemala (2.0 femicides per 100,000 women); and the Dominican Republic (1.9 femicides per 100,000 women).

Figure I Total number and rates of femicide in Latin America: 2018 (latest available year)

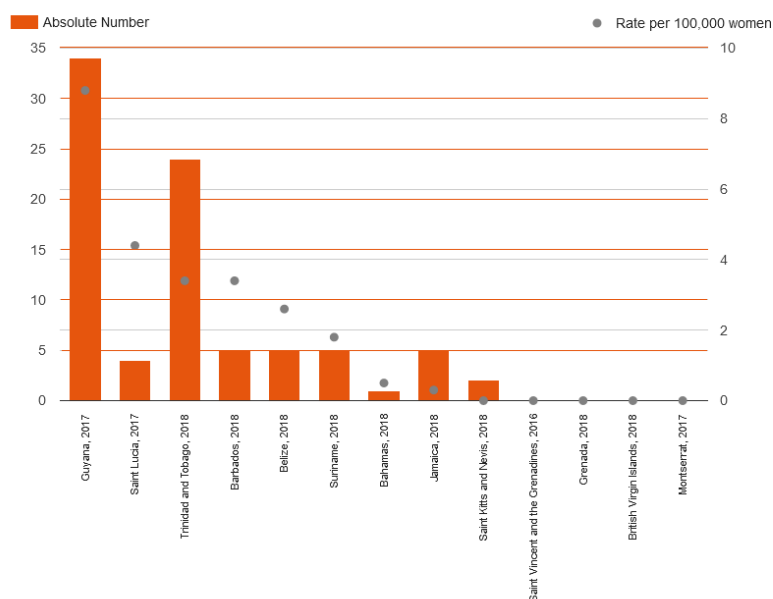


Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (<https://oig.cepal.org/en>). Data are available for 20 countries.

Note: Data refer to femicide, except in the case of the Colombia, Chile, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Puerto Rico, which only report on cases of intimate femicide (committed by a current or former partner).

In the Caribbean, Guyana and Saint Lucia both recorded at least 4 deaths per 100,000 women according to the data provided for the latest available year (see figure II).

Figure II Total number and rates of femicide in the Caribbean: 2018 (latest available year)



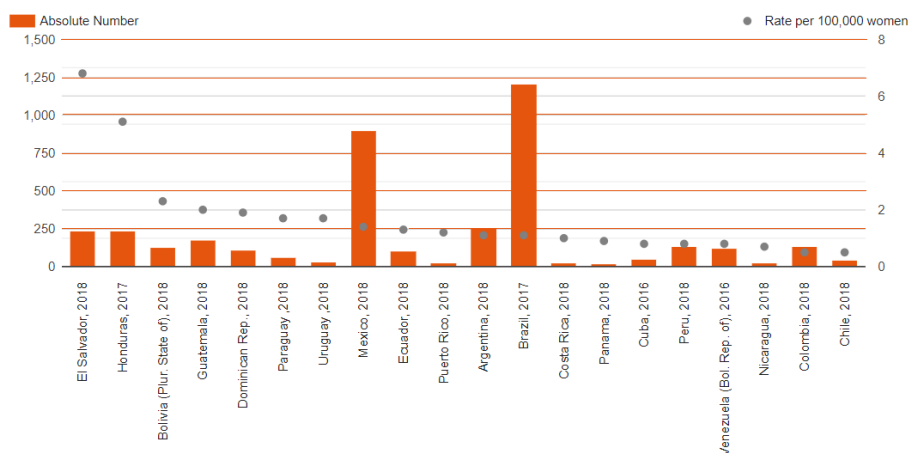
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (<https://oig.cepal.org/en>). Data are available for 13 countries.

Note: Data refer to femicide, except in the case of the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname, which only report on cases of intimate femicide (committed by a current or former partner).

The calculation of the rate per 100,000 women for the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat and Saint Kitts and Nevis is not possible owing to the lack of population estimates. The British Virgin Islands and Montserrat reported no femicides in the most recent years for which data are available (2017 and 2018); Saint Kitts and Nevis recorded two femicides in 2018.

In some countries of the region, in the majority of instances, the murders of women are cases of femicide. For example, in El Salvador, three out of five murders of women were recorded as femicides in 2018 – in other words, 60% involved a component of “hate or contempt for women”, as codified in article 45 of the comprehensive Law for a Life Free of Violence against Women passed by the legislature in 2011.

In most countries of the region, 25% to 33% of women have experienced an episode of physical or sexual violence inflicted by a partner. Those figures are higher in certain countries, such as the Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (58.5%), Colombia (33.3%), Costa Rica (35.8%) and Ecuador (35.5%), where data show that more than one third of women have been subjected to **physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner**.

Figure I Total number and rates of femicide in Latin America: 2018 (latest available year)

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (<https://oig.cepal.org/en>). Data are available for 20 countries.

Note: Data refer to femicide, except in the case of the Colombia, Chile, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Puerto Rico, which only report on cases of intimate femicide (committed by a current or former partner).

In the past few years, social demands relating to ending violence against women and girls have come to the fore. Across Latin America, several countries have experienced a resurgence of social and feminist movements against old and new forms of violence against women.

This indicates the need to link femicide with other forms of violence that are still not included among policy priorities. These various forms of violence persist because they are based on social, political and economic structures that are marked by discriminatory and violent patriarchal patterns in countries in Latin American and the Caribbean.

About the data

Coverage

Data covers the murder of women (femicide) in 33 countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

Definitions

- Femicide rate: Quantification of the murder of women killed because they are women, expressed in absolute numbers at a rate per 100,000 women. Under national laws, this type of murder is called femicide or aggravated homicide due to gender.

Footnotes

1. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Regional progress report on the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 (United Nations publication, LC/CRM.14/5), Santiago, 2019.
2. Gender Equality Observatory for Latin American and the Caribbean.

Kazakhstan: intimate partner violence



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".¹

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).²

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,³ as well as those set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,⁴ 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.⁵

Current situation

According to the results of the 2015 survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan,⁶ 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).

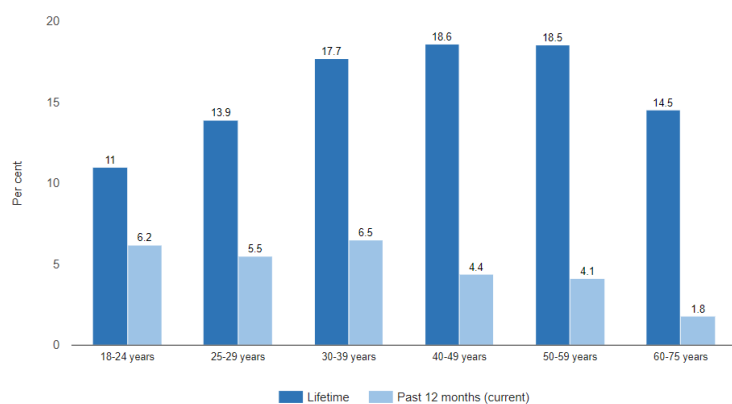
Figure I Lifetime and current prevalence of intimate partner violence among ever-partnered women aged 18-75 by form of violence, 2015 (Percentage)



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)

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)

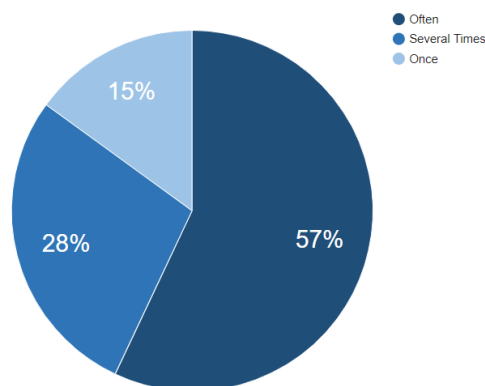


Source: Final report of the sample survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan (2015), Astana, 2017 (https://kazakhstan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Kazakhstan%20VAW%20report_final%2031-10-2017.pdf)

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).

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 Kazakhstan⁷ 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 . ([back to text](#))

Violence against women and the girl child

Mexico: intimate partner violence



Key points

- Violence against women by their intimate partners is rooted in the structural inequality that affects women.
- Violence against women, which has implications for their health, also affects the community and the State.
- Younger women are more likely to be subjected to intimate partner violence.
- Among the three types of violence against women, physical, sexual or psychological, the most common type is psychological violence.
- Almost one in four women suffered at least one occurrence of physical, sexual or psychological violence during the 12 months prior to the survey.

Background

Violence against women represents a serious problem in countries throughout the world, with long-lasting consequences for women and for society at large. Violence against women by their intimate partners impacts their physical, sexual and psychological health, and has repercussions in terms of family and community development. The risk for women, together with the costs associated with health care, keeps this issue at the top of the national policy and social agenda.

Violence against women, which is rooted in the unequal power relationship between the sexes, is based on gender norms that establish socially acceptable roles for women and men and that may be used by men as a social justification for violence against women, in particular their intimate partners.

The collection of statistical information allows professionals to measure, characterize and determine the prevalence of violence against women, which is fundamental in the design of public policies that aim to prevent, address and eliminate it. In Mexico, information on violence against women is collected through the National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships, which has been conducted four times (2003, 2006, 2011 and 2016).

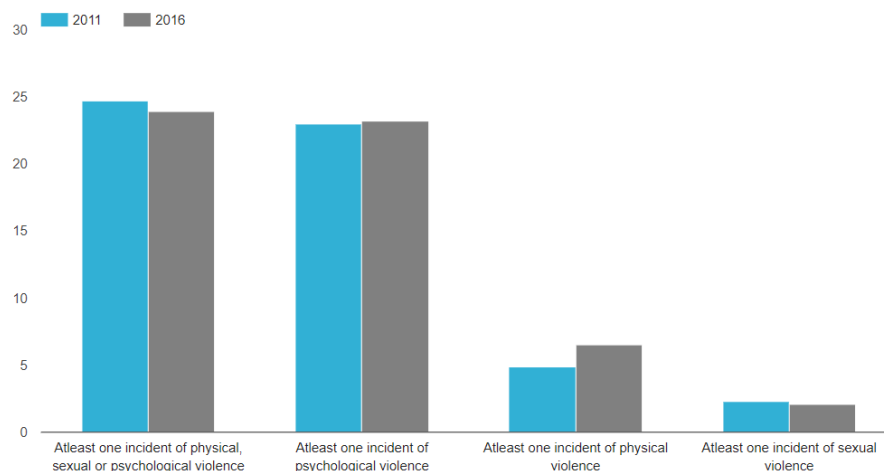
Since the very first survey in 2003, one of its main objectives has been to ascertain the level of violence against women in the context of intimate relationships, where the highest prevalence of violence has been reported. Women are at the greatest risk of being victims of violence in intimate partnerships, given the private nature and complex dynamics between couples.

Current situation

In the course of the 2016 National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships in Mexico,¹ almost one in four women (23.9%) aged 15 and older reported having suffered at least one occurrence of physical, sexual, or psychological violence during the 12 months prior to the survey. There was no significant change with respect to the results of the 2011 survey, when the prevalence of intimate partner violence was estimated at 24.7% (see figure I).

Among the three types of violence against women, the most common was psychological violence, measured at 23.2% in 2016, a level that was very close to that recorded in 2011. The level of physical violence increased from 2011 to 2016, from 4.9% to 6.5%, although it is possible that the increase may be due to a better measurement of the two types of violence in the 2016 survey. Sexual violence, reported at 2.1% in 2016, was the least prevalent, although far from the least critical, among the three types of violence against women.

Figure I Proportion of Mexican women aged 15 and older who experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the last 12 months by type of violence: 2011 and 2016

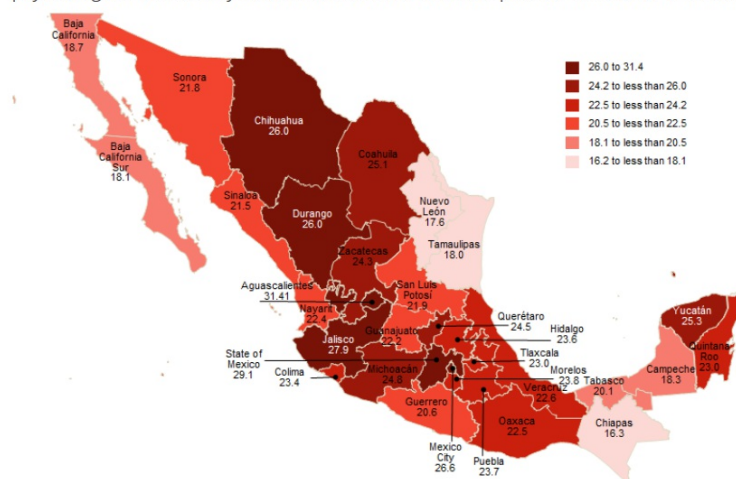


Source: National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships (2011 and 2016).

Note: The indicator includes women aged 15 and older who have or have had an intimate partner relationship.

At the subnational level, the highest proportions of women who reported that they had suffered at least one type of violence were in the north-centre states (Chihuahua and Durango), in the capital (Mexico City) and in some of the central states (Mexico, Jalisco and Aguascalientes), with levels from 26.0% to 31.4%, above the national average (see figure II). On the other side of the spectrum, the states of Baja California Sur, Tamaulipas, Nuevo León and Chiapas registered the lowest prevalence, ranging from 16.2% to 18.1%, with levels below the national average.

Figure II Proportion of Mexican women aged 15 and older who experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the last 12 months by state: 2016



Source: INEGI, National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships, 2016 (<https://en.www.inegi.org.mx/programas/endireh/2016/>).

Note: The indicator includes women aged 15 and older who have or have had an intimate partner relationship. The reference period corresponds to the last 12 months prior to the conduct of the survey, that is from October 2015 up to the time of the interview for the survey.

It is important to make use of statistical data on violence against women to promote the design of prevention and service programmes to address this critical issue. Among the many costs associated with violence against women are those linked to health, including unwanted and high-risk pregnancies, maternal mortality, sexually transmitted diseases (such as HIV/AIDS), physical and psychological injuries, suicide and femicide.

Violence against women has costs for the community and the State as such violence: reduces the ability of victims/survivors to make productive contributions to family, economy and public life; absorbs the resources of social services, the judicial system and health-care institutions; and reduces overall educational achievements, mobility and the potential of victims, their children and even those who have committed such acts of violence.

Younger women are more likely to be subjected to intimate partner violence

The proportion of women in Mexico who reported at least one occurrence of physical, sexual or psychological violence inflicted by a current or former intimate partner in the last 12 months was higher among young women aged 18–19 (30.9%).²

Legal framework

Progress has been made to address violence against women in the national legal framework, including, notably, the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free from Violence,³ and the inclusion of violent acts, such as femicide, into the national and subnational penal codes.

Related stories and further reading

- [Intimate partner violence](#)

About the data

Definitions

Percentage of women and girls aged 15 and older who report having experienced at least one occurrence of physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner during the 12 months previous to the survey.⁴

Coverage

Women in Mexico aged 15 and older who have ever had an intimate partner: reporting at both the federal and state levels.

Availability

Information necessary for the computation of this indicator is available at the webpage of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI).⁵

Footnotes

1. INEGI, National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships, 2016.
2. INEGI, National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships, 2016.
3. General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence, 2008.
4. National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships, 2016.
5. INEGI website.

Violence against women and the girl child

Sexual violence by non-intimate partners



Key points

- Worldwide, 7% of women have experienced sexual violence by a non-partner since age 15
- Most sexual violence is perpetrated by a person known by the victim. While 49% of women who have experienced sexual violence since age 15 reported that the perpetrator was their current husband or partner, 6% reported that the perpetrator was a stranger. Friends or acquaintances were reported as perpetrators by 5% of the women.
- In 14 out of 46 countries with data, between 1% and 5% of women aged 20-29 reported experiencing sexual violence perpetrated by a non-partner since age 15. In the remaining countries the rate was less than 1%.
- International estimates on non-partner violence "in the previous 12 months" are being produced for the first time. Recent national estimates point to a risk of sexual violence by non-partners as being between 0.1 and 3.1%.

Lifetime prevalence

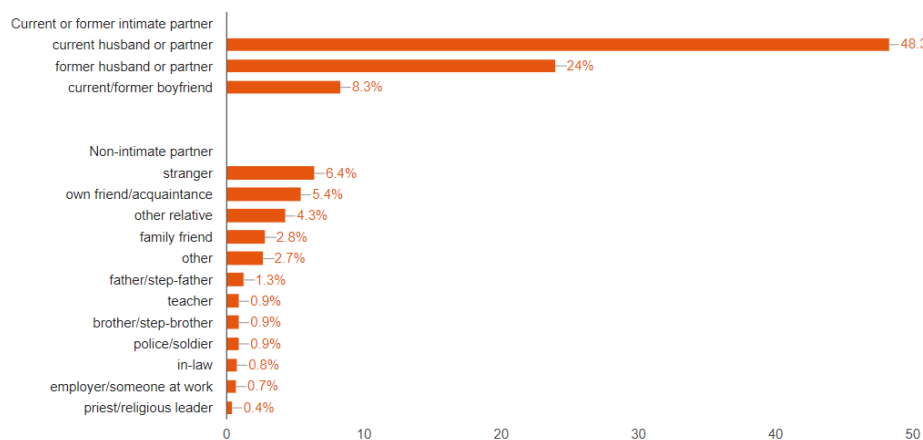
Sexual violence can be perpetrated by **women's intimate partners** or by others. According to WHO estimates in 2013,¹ worldwide, 7.2% of women have experienced sexual violence by a non-partner since age 15.

The majority of sexual violence is committed by intimate partners or someone known to the victim (see figure I). Based on data between 2005 and 2018, of those women who were subjected to sexual violence during their lifetime, almost half (48.6%) were victims of their current husband or partner; almost a quarter (24.2%) experienced violence at the hands of a former husband or partner; and 8.2% were victims of their current or former boyfriend. **This suggests that 8 out of 10 victims were subjected to sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner or boyfriend.**

On average, over 90%² of women subjected to sexual violence knew the perpetrator (see figure I), including 5.3% who reported that the perpetrator was a friend or acquaintance. Conversely, around 10% of women subjected to sexual violence did not know the perpetrator, including 6.3% who explicitly reported that the perpetrator was a stranger.

Even after excluding current and former intimate partners from the analysis, the majority of women subjected to sexual violence knew their perpetrator. At least 62%³ of non-partner sexual violence is committed by a person known to the victim, while 23%⁴ of sexual violence is committed by a complete stranger.

Figure I: Share of women 15 and older who have been subjected to sexual violence since age 15, by type of perpetrator: 2005 - 2018 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: Calculated by UNDESA, Statistics Division, based on data from Demographic and Health Surveys for 46 countries (accessed in March 2020)

Prevalence in the past 12 months in selected countries

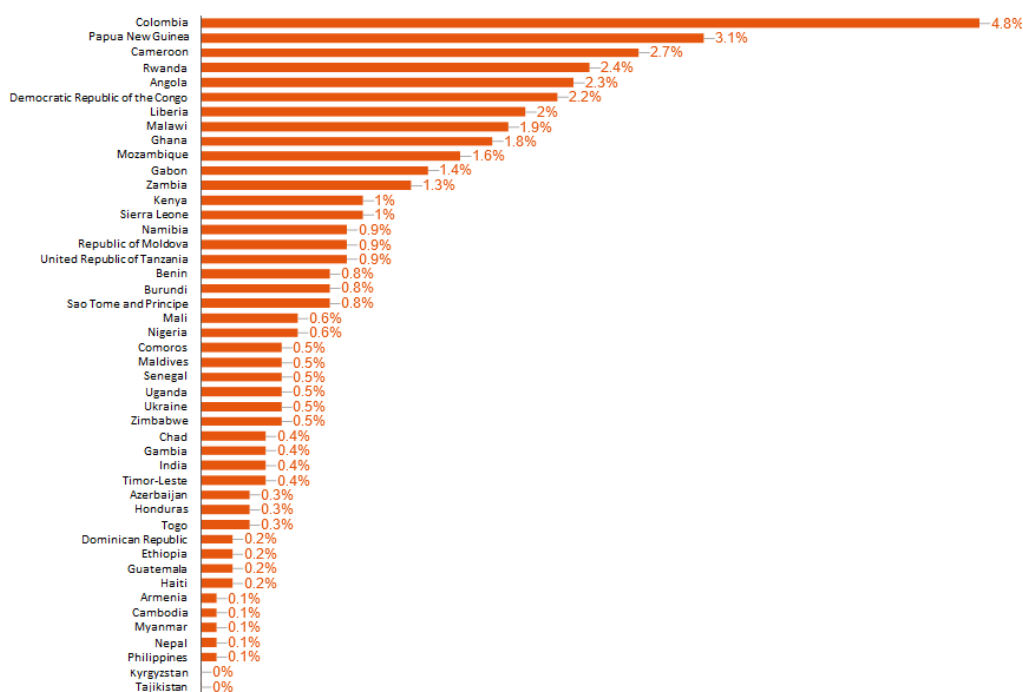
In reporting on sexual violence in the previous 12 months in eight countries in Eastern and South Eastern Europe participating in the 2019 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women,⁵ 0.8% of women reported sexual violence by a non-partner during the previous 12 months. Country estimates ranged from 0.1% in North Macedonia to 1.0% in Ukraine.⁶

In general, data availability on sexual violence is higher for dedicated studies on intimate partner violence. However, in recent years, several national statistical offices⁷ have conducted surveys of violence against women and produced estimated rates of sexual violence perpetrated by non-partners. For example, results from a personal safety survey carried out in Australia in 2016 found that 1.8% of women had experienced sexual violence by a non-partner in the past 12 months, and the 2017 national study on gender-based violence in Mongolia pointed to a proportion of 3.1%.

When looking at sexual violence by age group it is clear that younger women face a greater risk of sexual assault. According to data from justice systems and rape crisis centres in Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Peru and the United States of America, the incidence of certain forms of sexual violence is closely associated with the age of the victim, in particular violence taking place in schools and colleges.⁸ The proportion of women aged 20–29 who have ever experienced sexual violence by a non-partner since age 15 is an important indicator of non-partner sexual violence.

In the 46 countries for which data are available (see figure II), the proportion of women aged 20–29 who have experienced sexual violence perpetrated by someone other than an intimate partner since age 15 ranged from less than 1% in Tajikistan (2014) and Kyrgyzstan (2015) to 4.8% in Colombia (2016).

Figure II Proportion of women aged 20-29 who have ever experienced sexual violence by a non-partner since age 15: 2005-2018 (latest available)



Source: Compiled by UNDESA, Statistics Division, based on data from Demographic and Health Surveys and other sources (last accessed in March 2020).

Data availability and measurement challenges

The availability of data on sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner is much lower than that for intimate partner violence.

Furthermore, to collect such data, surveys have relied on different methodologies, used different definitions of sexual violence, formulated different questions and sampled diverse age groups. In addition, willingness to discuss experiences of violence and understanding of relevant concepts may also differ according to cultural context, a factor that can affect reported prevalence levels and the overall comparability of international data.

A further challenge is the formulation of the time frame of "previous 12 months" in SDG indicator 5.2.2. This is a problem for two reasons: firstly, far fewer countries have measured non-partner sexual violence in the preceding 12 months compared with sexual violence over the lifetime; secondly, in surveys it is often reported that the rate of past-year sexual violence for an aggregate age group of women aged 15 and older is close to zero. This very low point estimate of prevalence makes the assessment of changes over time difficult, particularly when data are presented disaggregated by age.

These factors make monitoring trends at the country, regional and international levels difficult.

Efforts are ongoing to develop international estimates of sexual violence by non-partners that account for methodological differences between studies, which will improve comparisons between countries, and enable the monitoring of trends and inform policies.

Sources

- World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Observatory, (data repository), Violence against Women
- USAID, Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) Program, STAT compiler.
- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women: Well-Being and Safety of Women, 2019.

About the data

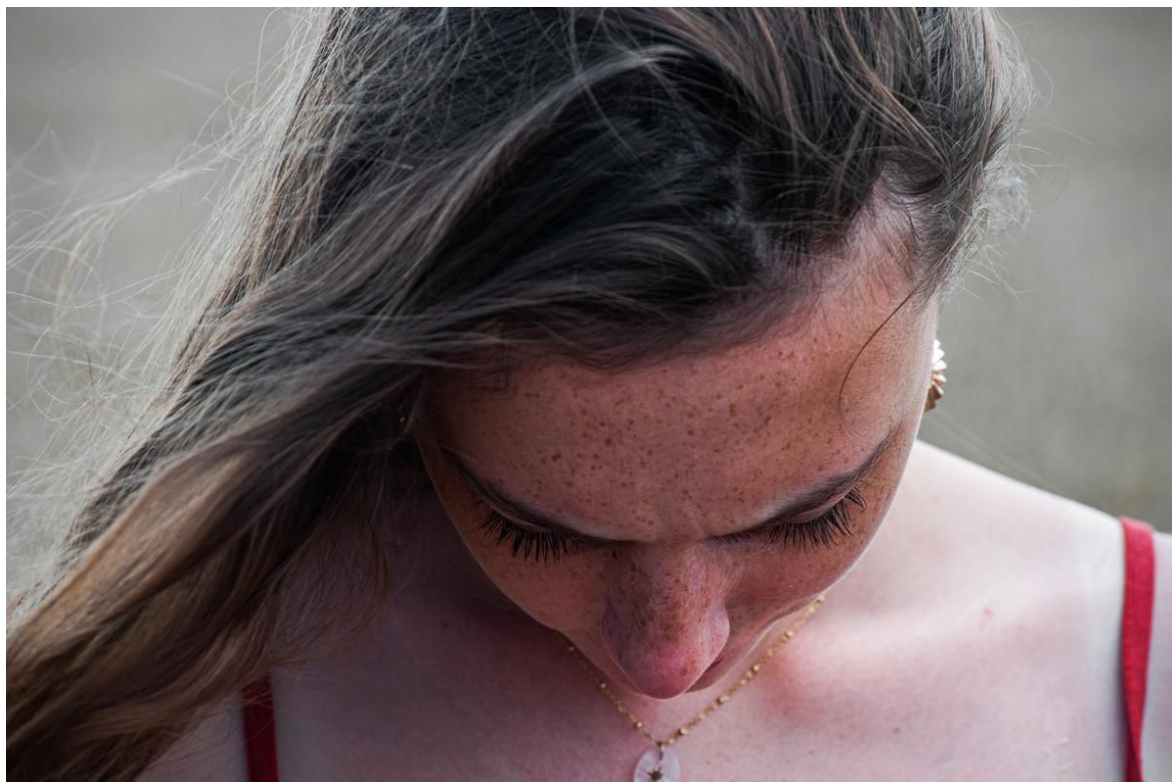
- **Sexual violence:** Any sort of harmful or unwanted sexual behaviour, including acts of abusive sexual contact, forced engagement in sexual acts, attempted or completed sexual acts without consent, incest and sexual harassment.
- **Non-partner sexual violence:** For the purpose of the analysis of non-partner sexual violence, non-partner sexual violence covers violence committed by someone other than current or former husbands, partners or boyfriends. The analysis also focuses on whether or not the perpetrator is known to the victim. Far fewer countries have measured non-partner sexual violence in the preceding 12 months compared with sexual violence since age 15.
- **Prevalence of non-partner violence:** The World Health Organization (WHO) defines the prevalence of non-partner violence as the "percentage of women in a given population who have ever experienced sexual violence by someone other than a partner".⁹
- The Demographic and Health Surveys programme has an indicator on the percentage of women who have ever experienced sexual violence and an additional indicator showing the percentage of women who have experienced sexual violence committed by, inter alia: current husbands or partners; former husbands or partners; current or former boyfriends; fathers or stepfathers; brother or stepbrothers; in-laws; own friends or acquaintances; family friends; an employer or someone at work; a stranger; or other.¹⁰
- For the purpose of the analysis of DHS data on non-partner sexual violence, non-partner sexual violence covers violence committed by someone other than current or former husbands, partners or boyfriends. The analysis also focuses on whether or not the perpetrator is known to the victim.
- Far fewer countries have measured non-partner sexual violence in the preceding 12 months compared with sexual violence since age 15.

Footnotes

1. [WHO, Global Health Observatory \(data repository\), Non-partner sexual violence prevalence](#) and [WHO, Global Health Observatory \(data repository\), Non-partner sexual violence](#).
2. Assuming "priest/religious leader, police/soldier other perpetrator" are unknown to the victim.
3. Includes friends, relatives and in-laws, teachers and/or someone at work.
4. Violence committed by persons other than current husbands/partners, former husbands/partners and/or current/former boyfriends.
5. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.
6. [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe \(OSCE\), OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women: Well-Being and Safety of Women, annex 6, 2019](#) (accessed on 27 July 2020).
7. Including national statistical offices in Australia (2016), Mongolia (2017), Mexico (2016), Trinidad and Tobago (2017) and the Philippines (2017). Other countries have also produced older estimates of "non-partner sexual violence in the past 12 months" in conjunction with their national statistics offices (including Laos (1.0%, 2014) and Bangladesh (0.8%, 2011)).
8. [WHO, World report on violence and health, chapter six, Geneva, 2002](#).
9. [World Health Organization \(WHO\), Global Health Observatory, \(data repository\), Non-partner sexual violence prevalence](#).
10. [Demographic and Health Surveys \(DHS-7\), Guide to DHS Statistics DHS-7, Persons committing sexual violence](#).

Violence against women and the girl child

Sexual violence in childhood



Key points

- In more than 1 in 4 countries with comparable data, at least 5% of young women aged 18–29 reported experiences of sexual violence in childhood.
- While children of both sexes can be the target of sexual violence, girls are at a heightened risk. Girls are 4 to 5 times more likely than boys to experience sexual violence.
- There is a strong correlation between childhood sexual abuse and sexual abuse after age 15, which may suggest that among children, adolescent girls are at higher risk of experiencing sexual violence.

Background

Experiences of sexual violence in childhood hinder all aspects of development, physical, psychological/emotional and social. Apart from the physical injuries that can result from sexual violence, researchers have consistently found that sexual abuse of children is associated with a wide array of mental health consequences and adverse behavioural outcomes in adulthood.¹ The psychological impact of sexual violence can be severe due to the intense shame, secrecy and stigma that tend to accompany it.²

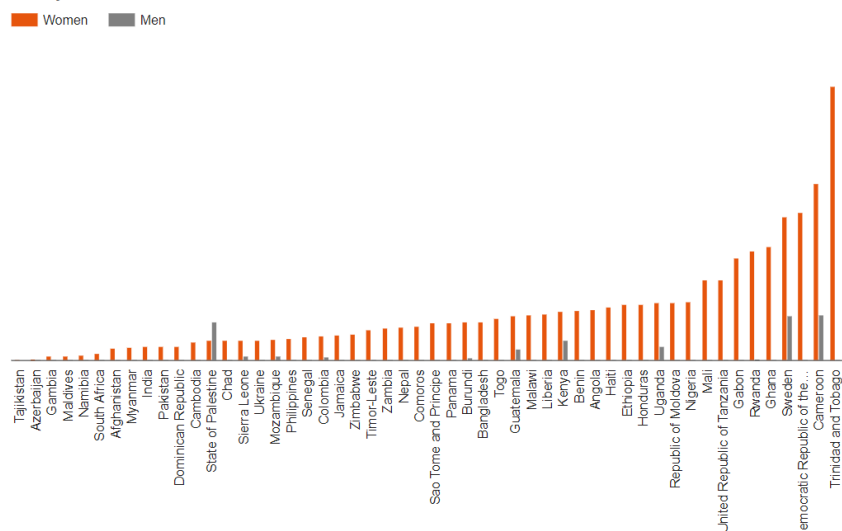
Current situation

Sexual violence against children, which occurs in all countries at all levels of income and development, can affect children at all ages and in different settings. While both sexes can be victimized, data suggest that girls are generally at heightened risk, although there is a lack of data documenting the experiences of sexual violence among boys. The absence of such data may have led to the erroneous perception that boys are relatively immune from this form of violence.

In slightly more than 1 in 4 countries with comparable data at least 5% of women aged 18–29 reported experiencing sexual violence in childhood. In five countries (Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Sweden and Trinidad and Tobago), more than 10% of women reported experiencing sexual violence during childhood.

Comparable data on sexual violence in childhood among men aged 18–29 are available for only 11 countries, and figures are lower than those reported among women in 10 of those countries, with reported rates of sexual violence perpetrated against boys under 18 years old, on average, between 4 and 5 times lower than that experienced by girls under 18 (see figure I). Care should be used when interpreting these gender differences due to the differing types of stigma faced by young women and men when reporting childhood sexual violence.³

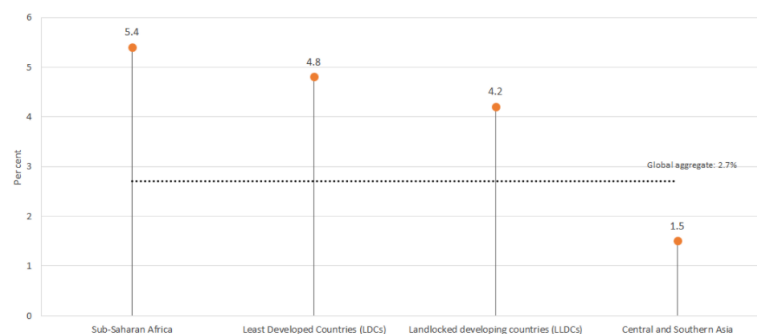
Figure I Percentage of women and men aged 18 - 29 who experienced sexual violence by age 18, by country: 2005 - 2019 (latest available)



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>) (accessed July 2020).

Regional averages for the proportion of young women aged 18–29 who experienced sexual violence by age 18 are available only for countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia: data show a higher prevalence of sexual violence against young women in countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Estimates are also available for the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries (see figure II).⁴ Based on data collected up to 2019, the global estimate of sexual violence in childhood for women aged 18 to 29 is 2.7%,⁵ although great care should be taken when interpreting this figure as there are significant data gaps for countries in many regions of the world.

Figure II: Proportion of women and girls aged 15–49 who experienced intimate partner physical or sexual violence in the previous 12 months: 2005 - 2018 (latest available)

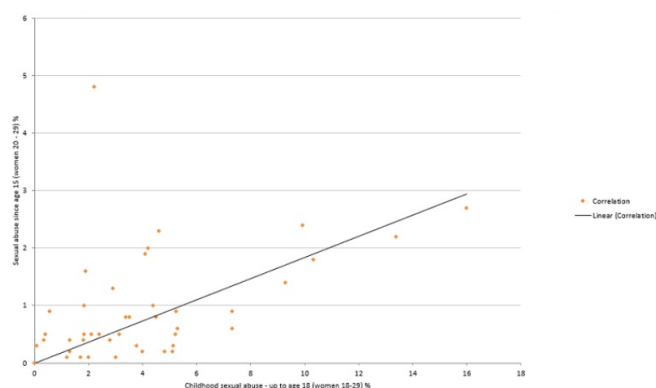


Source: UNDESA, Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>) (accessed July 2020).

There is a correlation between the rates of childhood sexual abuse and sexual abuse among young women

There is a strong correlation between the proportion of women aged 18-29 who have experienced sexual violence by age 18 (SDG indicator 16.2.3) and the proportion of women aged 20 – 29 who have experienced sexual abuse since age 15. While there is some overlap between the age groups used in these two indicators,⁶ the correlation suggests that in countries where there is a higher risk of childhood sexual abuse, young women also face an increased risk of sexual abuse after the age of 15. In addition, the correlation suggests that girls aged 15–18 are more likely to be victims of childhood sexual abuse than during earlier stages of childhood, thus confirming that the highest risk of sexual abuse is among adolescents. Figure III shows this correlation among the 43 countries with data for both indicators.

Figure III: Correlation between sexual violence in childhood and sexual abuse since age 15, 2005-2019 (latest available)



Source: Based on analysis by UNDESA, Statistics Division, of SDG indicator 16.2.3 and the proportion of women aged 20 - 29 who have experienced sexual abuse since age 15.

Vulnerable groups

Although children of every age can be affected, adolescence is a period of pronounced vulnerability, especially for girls.

Country in focus: Cameroon

Around 1 in 6 young women compared to 1 in 25 young men reported childhood experiences of sexual violence in Cameroon.

Sources

- [United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs \(UNDESA\), Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database](#) (accessed July 2020).
- [United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\), latest data \(2012 – 2019\)](#)
- [UNICEF, Together for Girls: Sexual Violence Fact Sheet, July 2012](#)

About the data

Definitions

- **Proportion of young women and men aged 18–29 who experienced sexual violence by age 18 (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 16.2.3):** Sexual violence during childhood is often used as an umbrella term to cover all types of sexual victimization. According to general comment No. 13 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,⁷ sexual violence against children "comprises any sexual activities imposed by an adult on a child against which the child is entitled to protection by criminal law". In the absence of comparable and available data, a more narrow operational definition, which refers to sexual intercourse or any other sexual acts that were forced, physically or in any other way, is used herein for purposes of reporting on this indicator.

Availability

The availability of comparable data remains a serious challenge in this area: study methodologies and designs, definitions of sexual violence and the samples and questions used to elicit information have not been consistent across data collection efforts. Nationally representative and comparable data are currently available for women from 52 countries and for men from 11 countries.

Footnotes

1. Brown, J., et al., "Child Abuse and Neglect: Specificity of Effects on Adolescent and Young Adult Depression and Suicidality", *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, vol. 38, Issue 12, December 1999; Dinwiddie, S., et al., "Early sexual abuse and lifetime psychopathology: A co-twin-control study", *Psychological Medicine*, vol. 30, Issue 1, January 2000; Widom, Cathy Spatz, "Childhood Victimization: Early adversity, later psychopathology", *National Institute of Justice Journal*, January 2000
2. Pinheiro, Paulo Sérgio, *World Report on Violence against Children*, United Nations, Geneva, 2006; United Nations study on violence against children (General Assembly document A/61/299).
3. Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), Barriers for men reporting childhood sexual violence (see <https://www.rainn.org/articles/sexual-assault-men-and-boys>).
4. Where enough data in a region is available, the regional average is applied to those countries within the region with missing values for the purposes of calculating regional aggregates only, but these are not published as country-level estimates. Regional aggregates are only produced when at least 50% of the regional population is covered by the available data.
5. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development (UNDESA), Statistics Division, *Global SDG Indicators Database*.
6. The two measures are not independent of each other, for example, a 25-year-old woman who experienced sexual abuse at age 16 would be covered under both measures.
7. Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 13, *The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence* (CRC/C/GC/13).

Violence against women and the girl child

Female genital mutilation



Key points

- According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), at least 200 million girls and women have undergone FGM based on recent data from 31 countries.^{1, 2}
- FGM is slowly declining in some countries and subregions where the practice is prevalent.
- Despite recent progress, the prevalence of FGM remains alarmingly high in parts of Northern Africa, Eastern Africa and West Africa.³
- Because COVID-19 is interrupting programmes to end FGM, progress may be threatened.
- Progress in the elimination of FGM is not universal, and where it is taking place it is not fast enough.⁴ Even in countries where the practice has become less common, progress would need to be at least 10 times faster to meet the global target of its elimination by 2030.
- Based on the latest available data, in six countries⁵ at least 3 out of every 4 women and adolescent girls aged 15–19 have undergone FGM.

Background

Female genital mutilation is a violation of the human rights of girls and women that affects girls and women worldwide. There is a large body of literature documenting the adverse health consequences of female genital mutilation over both the short and long term: the practice is a direct manifestation of gender inequality, which "constitutes irreparable, irreversible harm and is an act of violence against women and girls".⁶

While the practice is most concentrated in countries in Africa, from the Atlantic coast across to the Horn of Africa, it is also practiced in countries in the Middle East, such as Iraq and Yemen, in some countries in Asia, and also in some communities in Australia, Europe and Northern America.⁷

Female genital mutilation is condemned in international treaties and conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the Cairo Declaration for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation.

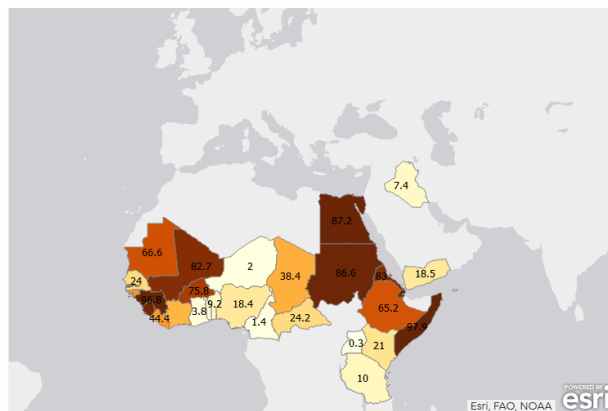
Furthermore, since FGM is regarded as a traditional practice prejudicial to the health of children and is, in most cases, performed on minors, it violates the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In many countries national legislation includes an explicit ban on the practice.

Current Situation

With its inclusion under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.3, which is aimed at the elimination of this harmful practice by 2030, FGM holds a prominent position on the global development agenda. Although the practice has persisted for centuries, it is becoming less common, with a marked decline reported in countries such as Egypt where it was once universal, as well as in countries such as Kenya, where the practice is restricted to specific ethnic communities.

Prevalence rates of FGM vary significantly by country. The latest available data on the proportion of adolescent girls aged 15–49 years who have undergone FGM or cutting are shown by country in figure I, which highlights the fact that, despite recent progress, the prevalence of FGM remains alarmingly high in parts of Northern Africa and West Africa.⁸ Moreover, the onset of COVID-19 has interrupted programmes to end FGM, which could threaten progress towards the elimination of the practice.

Figure I Proportion of adolescent girls and women who have undergone female genital mutilation or cutting in selected countries: 2010-2018 (latest available)



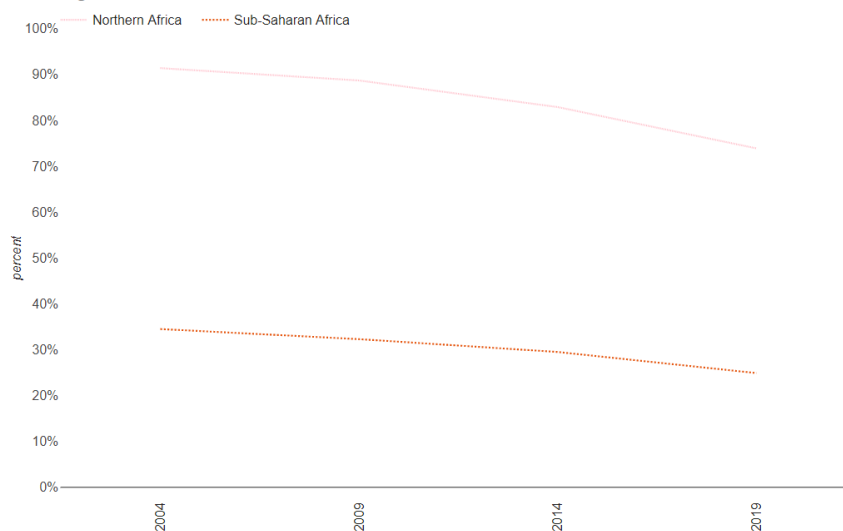
Source: SDG indicator 5.3.2, SDG database (accessed July 2020).

Note: Latest available data between 2010 and 2018, with the exception of Cameroon (2004), Djibouti (2006) and Somalia (2006).

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this and other maps throughout this publication do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Such declines at the country level have contributed to a reduction in regional rates over the past 15 years. In Northern Africa, the proportion of adolescent girls aged 15–19 years who have undergone FGM or cutting decreased by 17.5%, from 91.4% in 2004 to 73.9% in 2019. In sub-Saharan Africa, its prevalence decreased by 9.6%, from 34.5% to 24.9%, over the same time period (see figure II).

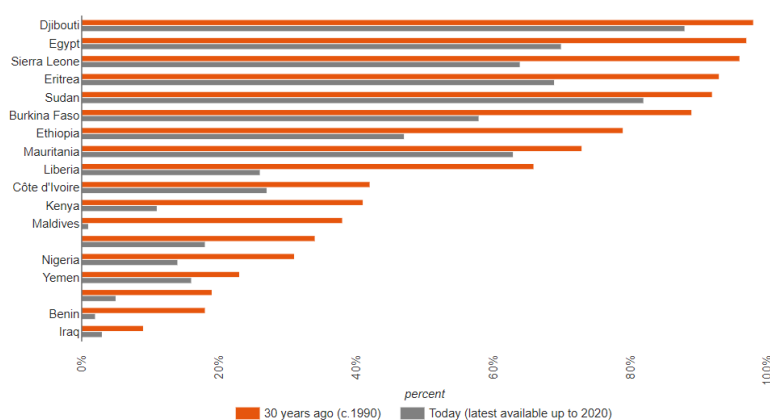
Figure II Proportion of adolescent girls aged 15-19 years who have undergone female genital mutilation or cutting: 2004 to 2019



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, statistical annex to the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2020/57) (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs>); and UNICEF global databases, 2020.

Figure III shows data for the 18 countries with a decline in the percentage of adolescent girls who have undergone FGM over the course of the past 30 years.

Figure III Percentage of adolescent girls aged 15-19 years who have undergone FGM in countries with a declining prevalence: 1990 and 2020

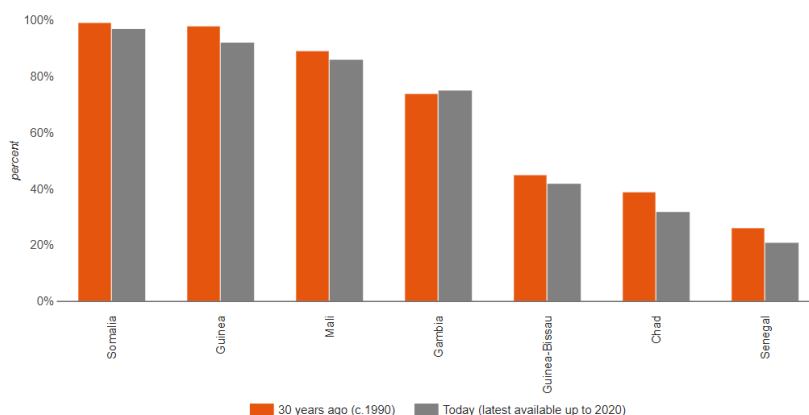


Note: Countries included in this chart have a significantly lower prevalence of FGM today compared to 30 years ago. The chart excludes countries with a national prevalence below 5%. Trend data are not available for Indonesia.

Source: UNICEF, Female Genital Mutilation: A New Generation Calls for Ending an Old Practice, New York, 2020.

Figure IV highlights the seven countries where the prevalence of FGM either remains persistently high or where no significant decline has been observed over the same time period.

Figure IV Percentage of adolescent girls aged 15-19 years who have undergone FGM in countries with a universal prevalence and/or without a significant decline: 1990 and 2020



Note: Figure IV includes countries without a significant decline in prevalence, and those for which prevalence among the cohort aged 15-19 years is 90% or higher. This chart excludes countries with a national prevalence below 5%.

Source: UNICEF, Female Genital Mutilation: A New Generation Calls for Ending an Old Practice, New York, 2020.

Progress has been extremely slow in Guinea and Somalia, where the practice remains almost universal and where at least 9 in 10 women and adolescent girls aged 15-19 years have been cut. Based on the latest available data, in six countries⁹ at least 3 out of every 4 women and adolescent girls aged 15-19 have undergone FGM.

Progress in the elimination of FGM is not universal, and where there is progress it is not fast enough. Even in countries where the practice has become less common, progress would need to be at least 10 times faster to meet the global target of its elimination by 2030.¹⁰

Legislative environment

FGM is widely condemned in both international treaties and conventions as well as under national legislation in many countries.

Vulnerable groups

The risk faced by women and adolescent girls aged 15–19 of undergoing FGM is highly dependent on context, with ethnicity playing a particularly strong role in determining whether they will be cut.¹¹

Country in focus

In Kenya, where the practice has been banned under law since 2011, 4 in 10 women and adolescent girls have undergone FGM, although the variation across ethnic groups is dramatic; the practice is still prevalent among some ethnicities (for example, among the Somali population, where it is estimated to be 94%), but almost non-existent among others (including both the Luhya and Luo ethnicities, where it is less than 1%).

About the data

Coverage

Girls and women aged 15–49.

Availability

Global reporting covers 31 countries in which the practice is concentrated and which have data on national prevalence.

Definitions

- Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM) (Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.3.2) refers to "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons".

Footnotes

1. [United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\), February 2020.](#)
2. [World Health Organization \(WHO\), 2020.](#)
3. [United Nations Population Fund \(UNFPA\), 2020.](#)
4. See report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2020/57), para. 51.
5. Djibouti, the Gambia, Mali, the Republic of Guinea, Somalia and the Sudan.
6. General Assembly resolution 73/149.
7. UNICEF, Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A global concern, New York, 2016.
8. [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(UNDESA\), Statistics Division.](#)
9. Djibouti, the Gambia, Mali, the Republic of Guinea, Somalia and the Sudan.
10. UNICEF, Female Genital Mutilation: A New Generation Calls for Ending an Old Practice, New York, 2020.
11. UNICEF, Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A statistical overview and exploration of the dynamics of change, New York, 2013.

Violence against women and the girl child

Women judges



Key points

- In 2017, the proportion of women among judges was estimated to be 40%, up from 35% in 2008.
- If recent trends continue, the share of female judges will reach parity by 2035.
- The region with the largest proportion of women judges is Europe and Northern America (57%), while in some countries in Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, less than 5% of judges are women.

Background

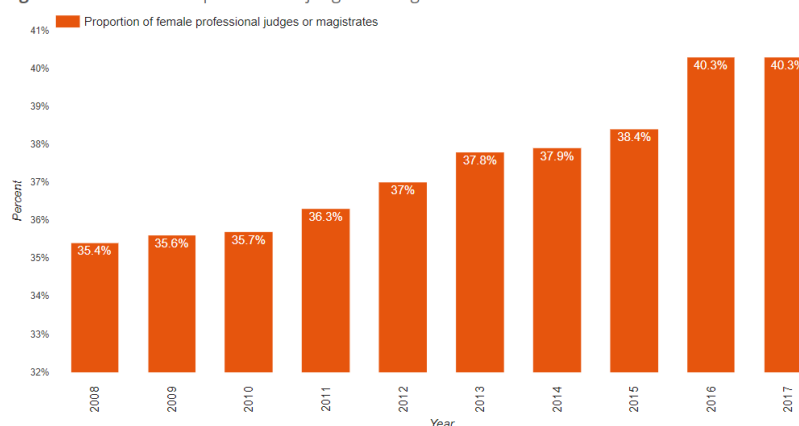
The entry of women judges into judiciary positions from which they have historically been excluded has been a positive step in ensuring that judiciaries are perceived as being more inclusive and representative of the people whose lives they serve and affect. By their mere presence, women judges enhance the legitimacy of courts, sending a powerful signal that they are open and accessible to those who seek recourse to justice.

Women judges contribute much more than improving gender balance within the judiciary, they also contribute significantly to the quality of decision-making, and thus to the quality of justice itself.¹

Current situation

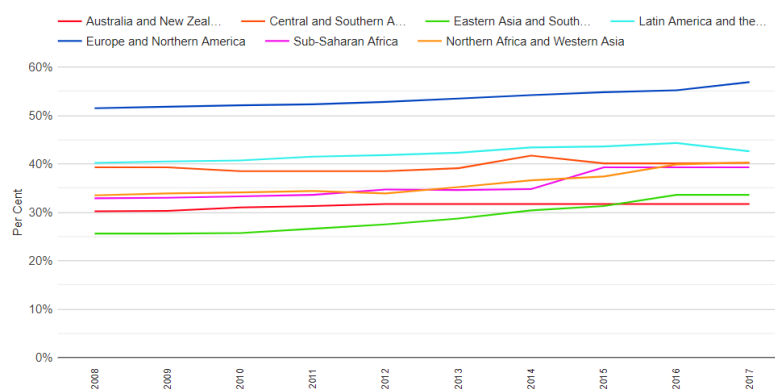
Data on judges and magistrates are collected in the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, which is issued every second year by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Over the past decade, the proportion of women judges or magistrates has increased steadily year after year, at an average of approximately half a percentage point (0.54%). In 2017, the share of women judges was estimated to be 40%, up from 35% in 2008 (figure I). If recent trends continue, the share of female judges will reach parity (50%) by 2035.

Figure I Share of female professional judges or magistrates: 2008-2017



Source: Data provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (correspondence on 21 May 2020).

As evidenced from data at the regional level, there is a significant variation in the share of women professional judges or magistrates in different parts of the world (figure II), although the overall share of women judges and magistrates increased in all regions during the period from 2008 to 2017.

Figure II Share of female professional judges or magistrates: 2008-2017

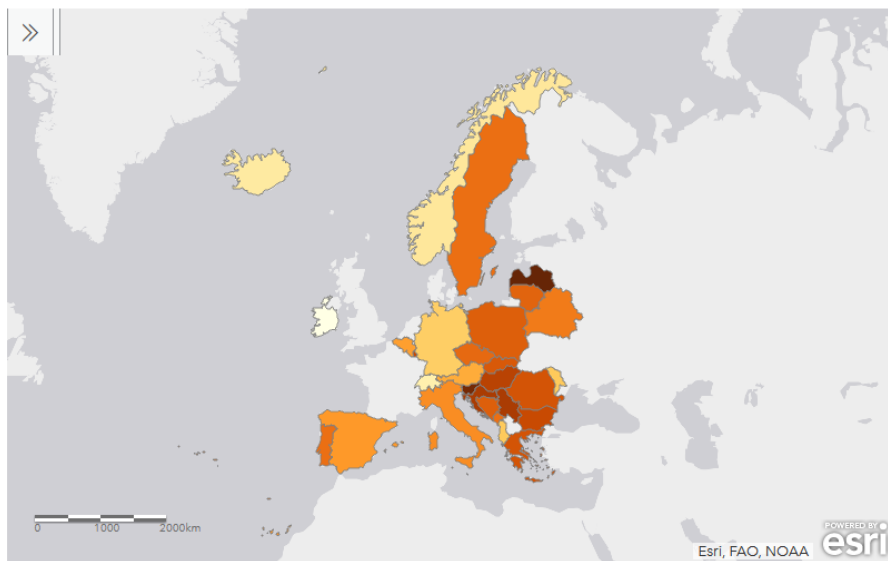
Source: Data provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (correspondence on 21 May 2020).

Based on available data up to 2017, the region with the largest percentage of women judges is Europe and Northern America (57%), largely owing to the fact that the proportion of women in the judiciary in countries in Eastern and Southern Europe has already reached and/or surpassed parity in 16 out of 21 countries.²

In Latin America and the Caribbean, women make up 43% of the judiciary, followed by 40% in sub-Saharan Africa, 40% in Central and Southern Asia, 40% in Northern Africa and Western Asia, 34% in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and 32% in Australia and New Zealand.

In its 2015 report on gender equality, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, while acknowledging the general lack of quantitative data for countries in the Pacific, reported that in some countries in Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, less than 5% of judges are women.³

Figure III Share of female professional judges or magistrates in European countries: 2019 (Percentage)



Source: [United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators](#) (last accessed in July 2020).

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this and other maps throughout this publication do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

About the data

Coverage

Women professional judges and magistrates worldwide.

Availability

Trend data on professional judges or magistrates by sex are globally available for 85 countries, covering almost half of the world population. In general, it is considered that national capacity to supply such data is adequate.

Oceania (excl) refers to Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand throughout the publication.

Definitions

- Share of female judges is the proportion of women among all judges.
- Professional judges or magistrates means both full-time and part-time officials authorized to hear civil criminal and other cases, including in appeal courts, and to make dispositions in a court of law. It may also include authorized associate judges and magistrates. Data refer to "female professional judges or magistrates at the national level".

References

- [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, regional estimates: data portal.](#)
- [United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators](#) (last accessed July 2020).
- [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "The Role of Women Judges and a Gender Perspective in Ensuring Judicial Independence and Integrity", 2019.](#)
- [United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 2015.](#)

Footnotes

1. See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Doha Declaration: Promoting a Culture of Lawfulness*, 2019.
2. *United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators*. (accessed July 2020)
3. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Asia and the Pacific*, Bangkok, 2015 .

Violence against women and the girl child

Women in the police



Key points

- Women still account for a small percentage of police officers. Between 2004 and 2017, the share of women police officers worldwide increased from 10.1% to 12.9%.
- The largest percentage of women police officers in 2017 was reported in Australia and New Zealand (31.5%); in countries in the Northern Africa and Western Asia region the reported percentage was the lowest (4.1%).

Background

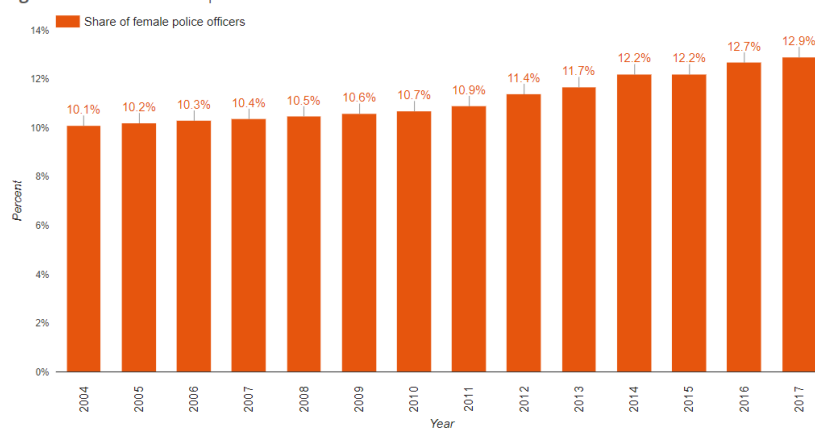
Women play a vital role in policing and contribute, as much as their male colleagues, to providing safe and inclusive communities. Female police officers act as role models for gender equality, inspiring women and girls to advocate for their own rights and to pursue careers in law enforcement. Moreover, female police officers provide a greater sense of security to women and children and improve access and support from law enforcement agencies to all members of the community.

Women police officers utilize a style of policing that relies less on physical force, are better at defusing potentially violent confrontations, are less likely to become involved in the use of excessive force and are more likely to respond effectively to violence against women.¹

Current situation

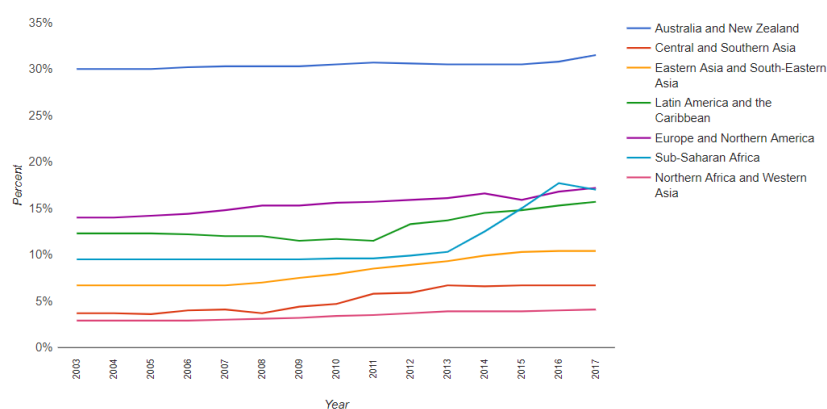
There has been a slow evolution in the gender composition of police forces around the world towards the inclusion of female officers: globally the share of women police officers increased from 10.1% in 2004 to 12.9% in 2017 (see figure I).

Figure I Share of women police officers: 2004 to 2017



Source: Data provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (correspondence on 21 May 2020)

Since the beginning of the century, the percentage of women police officers has increased globally (see figure II). In 2017, the largest percentage of women police officers was reported in Australia and New Zealand (31.5%), followed by countries in the Europe and North America (17.2%), Latin America and the Caribbean (15.7%), Sub-Saharan Africa (17.0%), Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (10.4%), Central and Southern Asia (6.7%) and Northern Africa and Western Asia regions (4.1%).

Figure II Share of women police officers by region: 2004 to 2017

Source: Data provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (correspondence on 21 May 2020).

Based on the latest available data, in 2017 in five European countries the share of women police officer was greater than 30% (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Sweden). Although the proportion of women police officers in those countries is higher than in other countries, there are still challenges in ensuring that women are represented at higher levels of management. The Nordic-Baltic Network of Policewomen continues to ask the question: why are women underrepresented in the top and middle management positions and in operational positions in the police force?²

The United Nations Department of Safety and Security has made increased efforts to mainstream gender into its policies and programmes, working with the partners of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network to develop and improve gender sensitivity and responsiveness in all aspects of the United Nations Security Management System and its security risk management processes.³

As a result of these efforts, the number of female police officers deployed with the United Nations increased from about 900 (7% of 12,000 police) in 2009 to 1,300 officers (10% of 13,000) in 2016. More needs to be done, however, to address the gender imbalance, as reaffirmed by the Security Council in its resolution 2242 (2015), in which it mandated that the Organization double the numbers of women in military and police contingents of United Nations peacekeeping operations by 2020.⁴

About the data

Coverage

Female police officers worldwide.

Availability

Trend data on police personnel by sex are available for 98 countries, covering over half of the world's population. The capacity of countries to supply such data is generally considered adequate.

Oceania (excl) refers to Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand throughout the publication.

Definition

- Proportion of women among police personnel. Police personnel comprise workers in public agencies whose principal functions are the prevention, detection and investigation of crime and the apprehension of alleged offenders.

Sources

- [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime database.](#)
- [United United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(UNDESA\), Statistical Division, Minimum Set of Gender Indicators.](#)
- [United Inclusive Security, "Breaking the Brass Ceiling: Policewomen Around the World", 2014.](#)
- [United Nations Police, UN Police Gender Initiatives.](#)
- [Nordic-Baltic Network of Policewomen, website.](#)

Footnotes

1. According to the [National Center for Women & Policing](#) (a Division of the Feminist Majority Foundation, Los Angeles, United States of America).
2. [Nordic Council of Ministers, "Women in the Police – Changes and Challenges", Nordic-Baltic Seminiar, 31 May–6 June 2017, Riga.](#)
3. [United Nations Department of Safety and Security, "Gender & Security"](#) .
4. [United United Nations Police, "Police Gender Initiatives"](#) .

Violence against women and the girl child

Attitudes towards physical violence against women



Key points

- Acceptance of wife-beating is generally higher in countries in Africa, Asia and Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, and lower in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe.
- Intimate partner violence is becoming less acceptable. During the 8-year period from 2012 to 2019, women's acceptance of physical violence by their partners decreased in almost 75% of countries with trend data.
- Younger men view physical violence against their partners as more acceptable than older men.
- Although it may be assumed that wife-beating is more widely justified by men than women, in the 53 countries with data on the attitudes of women and men, reported acceptance rates were actually lower among men than women in 40 countries.

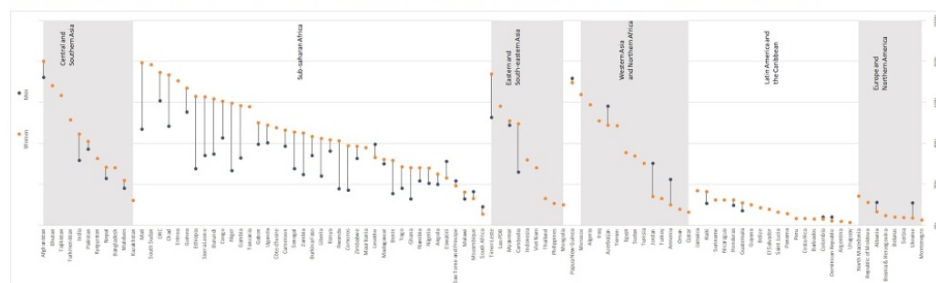
Background

Although it should be universally understood that physical violence is never an acceptable practice, unfortunately, in many parts of the world both men and women still believe that wife-beating is justifiable and/or acceptable under certain circumstances. Specific survey questions on wife-beating¹ are designed to capture the social justification of violence as a disciplinary action when a woman does not comply with certain expected gender roles.

Current situation

In some countries and cultures, wife-beating is seen as justifiable and/or acceptable in a wide range of contexts, a fact that makes it difficult to change behaviour patterns and creates a challenging situation for women victims of domestic violence who want to talk to someone about their experiences and/or to ask for help. Research indicates that perpetration of and victimization by violence is higher among those who accept or justify such abuse than those who do not.²

Figure I: Percentage of women and men who consider that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under at least one of the five specified circumstances: 2012-2019 (latest available)



Source: Compiled by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on demographic and health surveys (DHS), multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and national surveys (some surveys have different reasons for justifying wife-beating).

Note: Most data cover the period 2012-2019, with the exception of 16 countries with data prior to 2012. Ranking of countries is for presentation purposes only.

Wife-beating remains acceptable in some countries throughout the world: reported levels of acceptance were generally higher in countries in Africa, Asia and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and lower in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe. Levels of acceptance among women ranged from 2% in Uruguay (2013) to 80% in Afghanistan (2015). Among men, levels of acceptance ranged from 4% in Colombia (2015) and the Dominican Republic (2013) to 72% in Afghanistan (2015) and Papua New Guinea (2017).

It should be noted that it is difficult to compare reported levels of acceptance of wife-beating across countries and contexts because willingness to talk about violence and attitudes towards it vary, a factor that can affect individual response rates. Although it might be assumed that wife-beating is more widely justified by men than women, in the 53 countries with data on the attitudes of both women and men, reported acceptance levels were actually lower among men than women in 40 countries.

Evidence also suggests that attitudes are changing. In 2019, women generally viewed domestic violence as being less acceptable than they had in 2012. Between 2012 and 2019, 15 countries conducted multiple surveys and provided multiple data points for trend analysis on women's attitudes towards physical violence: in 11 countries levels of acceptance of wife-beating had decreased, while in the other 4 countries levels of acceptance had increased.

Trend data on men's attitudes towards physical violence against women is not widely available, which makes comparable trend analysis challenging. It is possible, however, to look at the differences between the attitudes of adolescents and adult men to see whether attitudes differ across age groups within a given country. Worryingly, data suggest that young men view physical violence against women as more acceptable than older men whereas differences in attitudes by age are less pronounced among women (see table).

Comparing the attitudes of adolescent males with adult men towards physical violence against women reveals higher levels of acceptance among younger males than among older men: reported levels of acceptance are higher in 40 out of 46 countries (87% of countries with data). In contrast, the attitudes of women towards physical

violence against women appear to vary less by age: reported levels are higher among younger women in 45 countries (54% of countries with data) and lower in 38 countries (46% of countries with data).

About the data

Coverage

Women and men aged 15–49 worldwide.

Availability

For the years between 2000 and 2019, 99 countries have data on the attitudes of women towards wife-beating, and just over half of those countries (53) also have data on the attitudes of men. Between the years 2012 and 2019, 83 countries collected data on the subject, and 15 of those countries conducted multiple surveys during that same time period.

Oceania (excl) refers to Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) throughout the publication.

Definition

- The percentage of women and men aged 15–49 who think a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under at least one of the following circumstances: (a) she goes out without telling him; (b) she neglects the children; (c) she argues with him; (d) she refuses to have sex with him; or (e) she burns the food.

Sources

- Demographic and health surveys (DHS)
- Multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- National surveys
- World Bank

Related stories and further reading

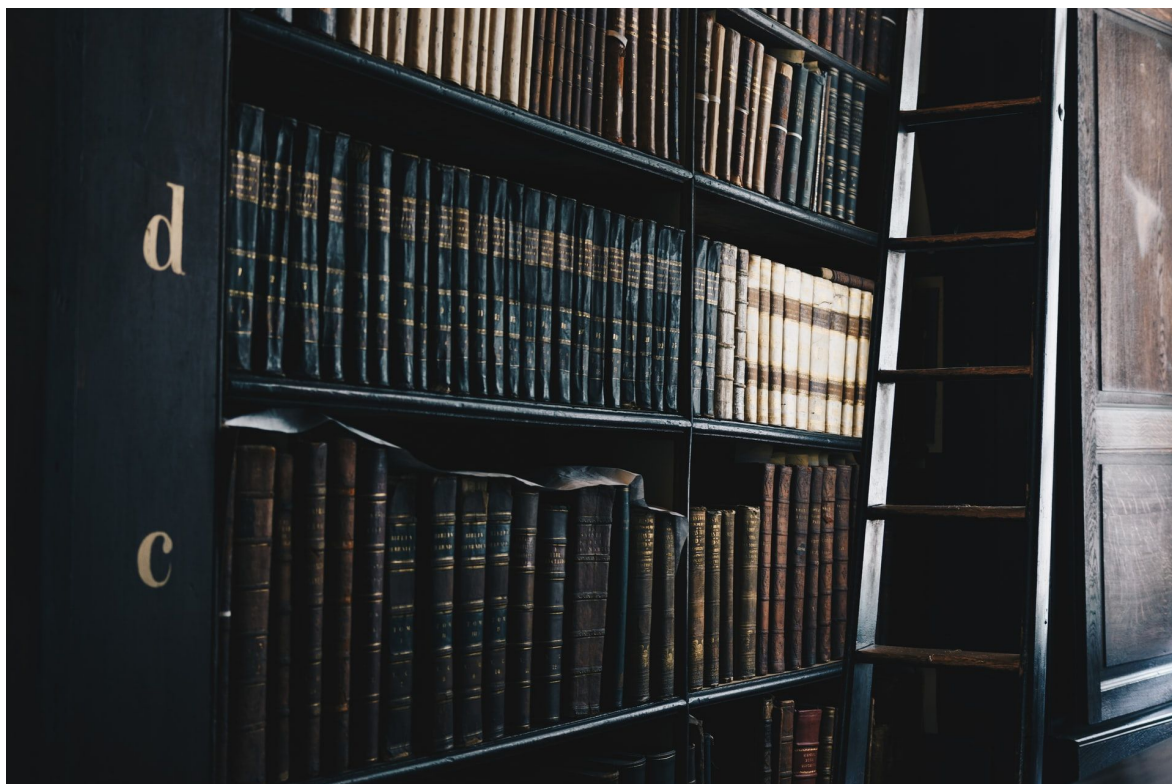
- [Intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence](#)

Footnotes

1. Data from multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) and demographic and health surveys (DHS).
2. World Health Organization (WHO), 2005; and Instituto Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women, *Evolving Men: Initial Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey*, 2011.

Violence against women and the girl child

Laws on domestic violence



Key points

- Over one-third of countries in Northern Africa and Western Asia (43%) and sub-Saharan Africa (35%) do not have laws on domestic violence.
- The majority of developed countries (96%) as well as countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (97%), Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (93%) and Oceania (90%) have laws on domestic violence.
- Although domestic violence laws are almost universal in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, fewer countries in the region (64%) have laws on sexual harassment.
- Few countries (27%) have laws explicitly criminalizing marital rape: even in the case of developed countries and countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, less than half have explicitly criminalized marital rape.
- As at 2020, 153 countries have laws on domestic violence; 106 countries have laws on sexual harassment; and 45 countries have laws on marital rape.

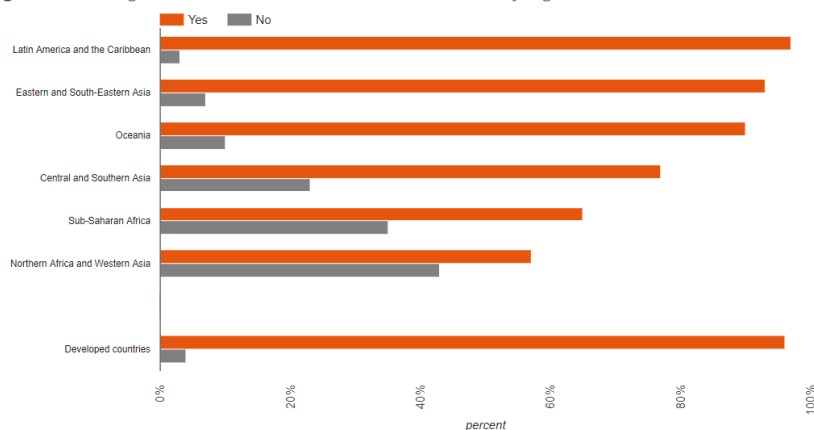
Background

Not all countries have laws criminalizing or containing provisions on violence against women, and when such laws are in place, authorities are often more focused on responding to cases of domestic violence through criminal justice processes rather than on ways of preventing its occurrence by providing support and resources to women at risk of abuse. Furthermore, even when domestic violence laws exist, they are not necessarily implemented, or implemented in a form that helps the victims in substantive ways.

In many cases, victims and survivors of domestic violence are economically dependent on their intimate partners and the conviction and/or imprisonment of perpetrators often leaves victims deprived of their one source of economic support. In the light of these factors, domestic violence laws need to be implemented in tandem with measures for the economic empowerment of women, including, in particular, appropriate social support mechanisms for those who take the difficult step of seeking legal recourse.

Laws on domestic violence

As of 2020, at least 153 countries have passed laws on **domestic violence**, 106 have laws on sexual harassment and 45 have laws on marital rape. As shown in figure I, developed countries as well as countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) have the highest coverage; over 90% of countries in those regions have laws on domestic violence. This is in stark contrast to the situation in countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Northern Africa and Western Asia, where less than 65% have laws specifically criminalizing domestic violence.

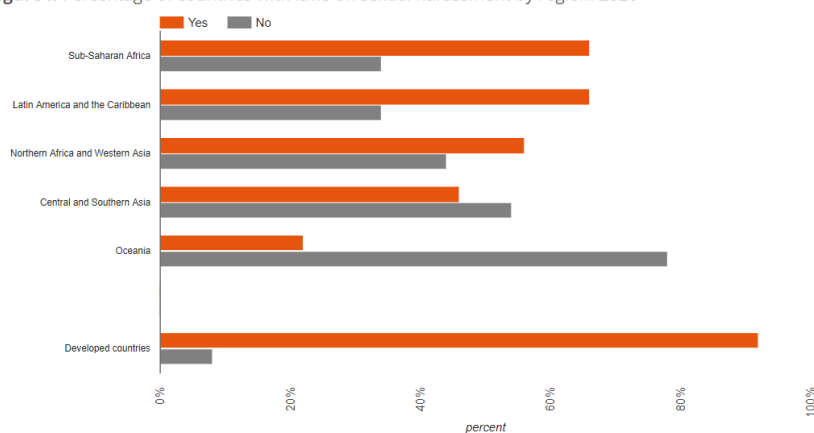
Figure I Percentage of countries with laws on domestic violence by region: 2020

Source: Compiled by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, based on data in the [United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators](#) (accessed July 2020) and data from the World Bank (<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=283&series=SG.LEG.DVAW>) (accessed July 2020).

Note: The "No" category includes countries where data is not available or where contradictory data sources exist.

Laws on sexual harassment

As of 2020, 106 countries have passed laws on sexual harassment, and the regional distribution is broadly similar to that observed with respect to laws on domestic violence (see figure II). However, there is one noticeable difference: in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, while the majority of countries have laws on domestic violence (97%), far fewer have laws on sexual harassment (64%).

Figure II Percentage of countries with laws on sexual harassment by region: 2020

Source: [United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators](#) (accessed July 2020).

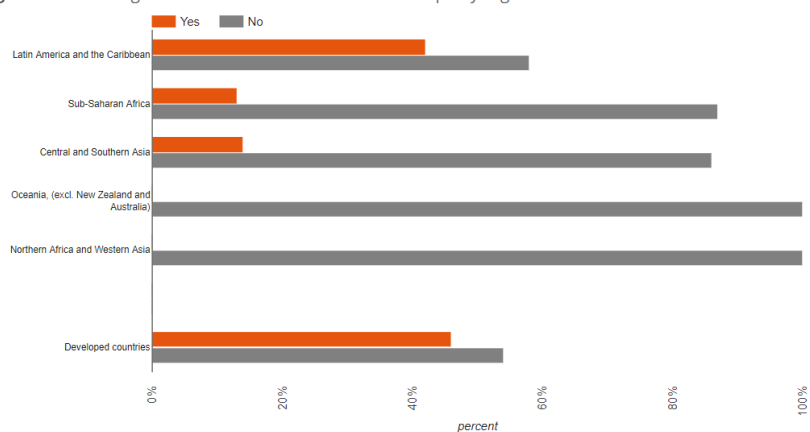
Note: The "No" category includes countries where data is not available or where contradictory data sources exist.

Laws on marital rape

In many parts of the world legislation does not adequately protect women from marital rape. As of 2020, only 45 countries have adopted laws on marital rape; only 46% of developed countries have laws on marital rape; and fewer than 14% of developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Central and Southern Asia, Northern Africa and Western Asia and Oceania (excluding Australia

and New Zealand) have such laws (figure III).

Figure III Percentage of countries with laws on marital rape by region: 2020



Source: [United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators](#) (accessed July 2020).

Note: The "No" category includes countries where data is not available or where contradictory data sources exist.

Sources

- [United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators: Human rights of women and girl children; Existence of laws on domestic violence.](#)
- [World Bank, databank on gender statistics.](#)

About the data

Coverage

Adult and adolescent women worldwide.

Availability

As of 2020, the United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators contains data on the existence of: laws on domestic violence from 187 countries; laws on sexual harassment from 153 countries; and laws on marital rape from 166 countries.

Oceania (excl) refers to Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) throughout the publication.

Definitions

Existence of laws in countries in relation to broad categories of violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual harassment and marital rape (United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators).

- **Domestic violence:** Includes a range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by a current or former intimate partner, without her consent.¹ Data refer to instances where domestic violence is specifically criminalized or where provisions for protection orders are in place.
- **Sexual harassment** is defined as any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment may occur in the workplace or in connection with work. While typically involving a pattern of conduct, sexual harassment may take the form of a single incident. In assessing the reasonableness of expectations or perceptions, the perspective of the person who is the target of the conduct shall be considered.² Data refer to whether countries have laws in place that prohibit sexual harassment: voluntary guidelines or policies are not counted.
- **Marital rape:** Also called spousal rape, is non-consensual sex where the perpetrator is the victim's spouse.³

Footnotes

1. General Assembly document A/61/122/Add.1, para. 113.

2. [UN system model policy on sexual harassment](#), 2018.

3. In general, while rape laws (except where the exemption of a spouse is explicitly stated) do not preclude a spouse from being prosecuted, data refer to instances where laws explicitly criminalize marital rape without qualifications, for example, by providing that sexual assault provisions apply irrespective of the nature of the relationship between the perpetrator and complainant, or that no marriage or other relationship shall constitute a defense against a charge of sexual assault under the law. In other instances, a marital (or equivalent) relationship may be explicitly cited in the law as an aggravating factor. Explicit criminalization of marital rape is recommended as best practice by, among other bodies, the Council of Europe.