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Designing and analyzing research for sexual and intimate partner violence (with focus on survey methodology)

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Example (country X)

- 2006 VAW survey measuring 11 types of VAW: physical, psychological, rape, forced abortion, forced prostitution, other sexual violence, neglect, forced labour, prevented to work, other economic violence, human trafficking…
- Findings: 3% of women victimized

Issues with this survey

- Questions in survey on another topic
- Use of the word ‘violence’ in the questions
- Women not interviewed in private
- Interviewers were both male and female
- Interviewers were not trained to deal with sensitive issues (safety, confidentiality, support)

A paradigm shift is needed!

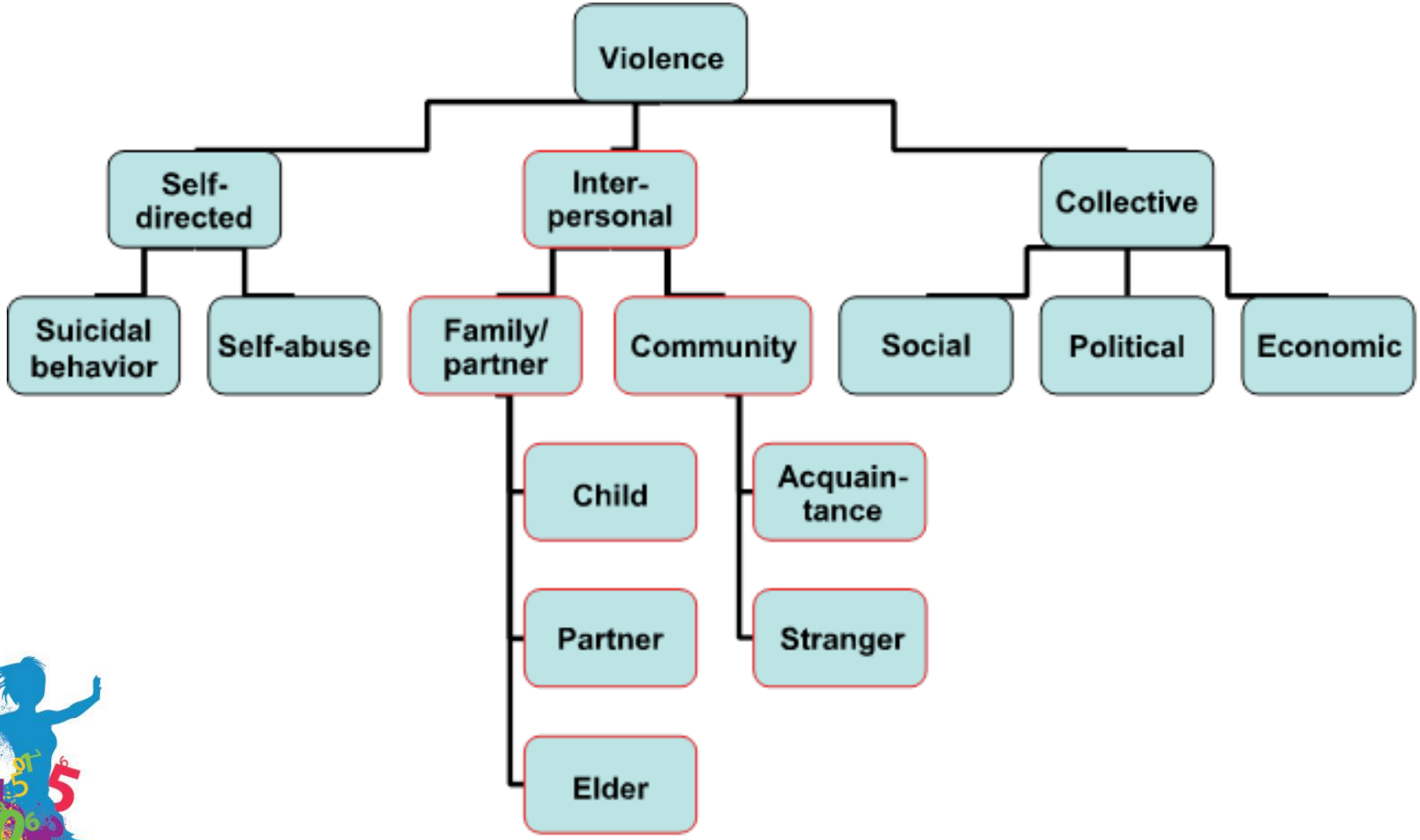
- Methodological complexities and subsequent issues with comparability
- These issues also affect the safety of participants
- If not done rigorously and sensitively, surveys tend to result in misleadingly low rates of disclosure of violence and thus underestimate the problem
- Bad data worse than no data

Topics

1. What is violence against women?
2. Sources of data on VAW
3. Prevalence/incidence/severity
4. Interpreting reference periods
5. What influences disclosure?

6. Ethics and safety
7. Training of field workers
8. Research as intervention

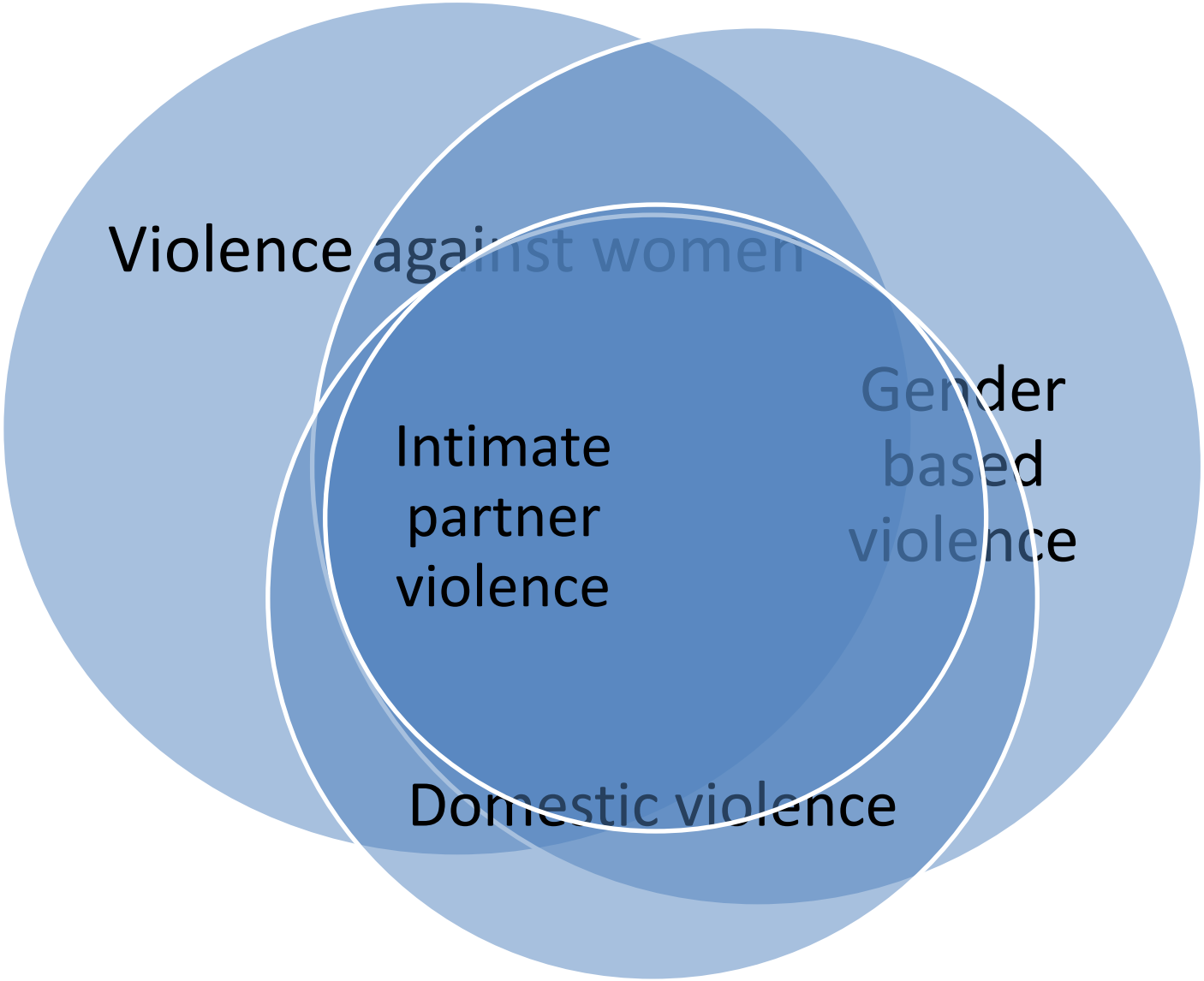
Typology of violence



What is violence against women?

“ 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 private life".

(United Nations, 1993)


Violence against women
Intimate partner violence
Gender based violence
Domestic violence

Violence against women includes:

- partner abuse
- sexual abuse of girls
- rape, including marital rape
- dowry related violence
- female genital mutilation
- trafficking in women
- forced prostitution
- sexual harassment at the workplace
- violence condoned or carried out by the state (i.e. rape in war)

Definition of domestic violence

- Used by adults or adolescents against family members (domestic context), most commonly against their current or former intimate partners
- A pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors
- Including physical, sexual and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion

Common types of abusive behaviors

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Use of economics

Examples of physical abuse

- Slapping
- Shaking
- Beating with fist or object
- Strangulation
- Burning
- Kicking
- Threats with knife or gun

Examples of sexual abuse

- Coerced sex through threats or intimidation
- Coerced sex through physical force
- Forcing unwanted sexual acts
- Forcing sex in front of others
- Forcing sex with others

Examples of psychological abuse

- Isolation from others
- Excessive jealousy
- Control her activities
- Verbal aggression
- Intimidation through destruction of property
- Harassment or stalking
- Threats of violence
- Constant belittling and humiliation

Examples of economic abuse

- With-holding funds
- Spending family funds
- Making most financial decisions
- Not contributing financially to the family
- Controlling the victim's access to employment, etc.

Intimate partner violence: Physical violence usually occurs together with sexual and emotional violence

- Globally, one-third to one-half of all physically abused women also report sexual violence

- Almost all physically abused women also experience severe emotional abuse

Intimate partner violence: a product of gender subordination

Issues associated with societies with high levels of partner violence:

- norms of male entitlement/ownership of women
- male control of wealth in the family
- notions of masculinity tied to male dominance/honor
- male control of decision making

Cultural differences in the meaning of partner violence:

- In large parts of the developing world, wife beating is seen as a form of “correction” or chastisement
- Beating is acceptable as long as it is for “just cause”
- In some cultures not acceptable for married women to say they want sex
- Acceptability depends on who does what to whom, for what reason

Sources of statistics on VAW
An exercise!!

- List major sources of data on VAW
- STRENGTHS: For each of these sources describe what the data tell you/ what can they be used for?
- LIMITATIONS: For each of these sources describe what are some of the limitations?

Organize your work as follows:

SOURCE OF DATA ON VAW	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
A.		
B.		

Sources of data on Violence against women

- Administrative records
  - police, courts, hospital, etc.
- Population based surveys:
  - National crime victimization surveys
  - Demographic and reproductive health surveys
  - Focussed specialized surveys
  - Short module added to other surveys

Administrative records

+

- Gives data on use of services, procedures
- Generally measures incidents (not people)

-

- Does not reflect magnitude of problem in the population
- Tip of the iceberg (injuries/crimes)
- Perpetrator data often lacking
- Does not say anything on quality of services
- Gender bias
- Issues with double counting

Population based surveys

+

- Measures prevalence: magnitude of problem in population, measures people not incidents
- Potential to get deeper understanding, e.g. perpetrator data, risk factors, consequences, reasons for seeking and NOT seeking help

-

- Highly sensitive to methodological issues
- Raises major issues of safety and ethics

To whom do woman talk about physical partner violence?

1. Many women never tell anyone about partner violence
2. Very few women talk to a formal agency or person in authority.

Service based data do not represent the actual situation in the population …AN EXAMPLE:

According to police records in Nicaragua, 3,000 women reported domestic violence in 1995

According to population based surveys 150,000 women suffered domestic violence in 1995

Service based records are not easy to interpret…

- In 1997 more than 8,000 cases were reported
- Did rates of violence increase?
- During this period special police stations for women were opened throughout the country, and media campaigns carried out

More services and better quality of care

More women reporting violence

KNOW WHAT YOUR DATA TELL YOU

Why surveys?

- Only source of data that allows you to find out magnitude of problem in the population;
- Opportunity to get data on other characteristics, for deeper understanding….

But…

- 1. Highly sensitive to methodological issues
- 2. Ethical and safety issues

Challenges around measurement issues

- Prevalence, incidence, frequency and severity
- How to define violence?
- Who is in your study population?
- Representativeness, underreporting, biases
- Interpretation issues

Prevalence:

- Pefers to number of persons experiencing a certain event at a specific point of time or in a certain reference period
- Is needed to know which proportion of the population is affected in the reference period

How common is violence against women? = How many women experience violence?

This is reflected by prevalence rates

$$\frac{\text{\# women who have experienced violence in a certain period of time}}{\text{"at risk" women in the study population}}$$

Defining the study population

- Cutoff ages
- Marital / relationship experience
- Regional vs. national studies

Country	Study population
Canada	Women > 18
Chile	Women 22-55 married for >2 years
Colombia	Women 15-49 currently married
Nicaragua (DHS)	Women 15-49 ever married
Philippines	Women 15-49 with pregnancy outcome
Turkey	Women 15-59 ever married
Viet Nam	Women 18-60 ever partnered (including dating partners

WHO VAW study

Country	Study population
Bangladesh	Women 15-49 ever married
Peru	Women 15-49 ever married/cohabiting, ever dating
Serbia	Women 15-49 ever married/cohabiting, currently dating

Effect of “study population” on reported prevalence estimates in Nicaragua

	Physical violence in the past 12 months
All women 15-49	20%
Ever partnered women 15-49	27%
Currently partnered women 15-49	30%

Researcher vs. Self-Defined Rates of Past Year Abuse (Japan)

Type of Violence	Researcher	Self
Any violence	45%	27%
Physical	14.7%	11.4%
Emotional	42%	23.2%
Sexual	8.5%	4.7%

Studies have used:

- Any kind of physical, sexual, or emotional violence by any perpetrator at any time.
- One or more acts of physical violence by a partner at any time.
- Only physical violence of a certain level of severity, or which has been repeated a certain number of times.
- Only acts of partner violence occurring in the last year.
- Economic, as well as physical, sexual, or emotional violence.
- Any behavior that women themselves identify as abusive by virtue of its intent or effect

Single versus multiple questions to measure abuse, Nicaragua

Since you were 15, has anyone ever hit or physically mistreated you? Who?

- 14% of women reported abuse by partner

Using a more detailed instrument that asked about occurrence and frequency of acts...

- 29% of women reported physical abuse by a partner

"…In the first question, they would say that he didn't beat them, but when we got to the other questions, then they would say yes, sometime he beats me and kicks me or uses a gun, or whatever."

(interviewer, Nicaraguan DHS)

Incidence/frequency

- Incidence (in epidemiology) refers to the number of new cases in a specific reference period
- It looks at events rather than at people
- When measuring VAW it reflects the number of violent events that a women experiences in a certain period
- Incidence in addition to prevalence is important to reduce the gender bias

Gender bias

- Community based prevalence rates from surveys bias towards a symmetry in the rates women and men are perpetrators or victims of certain forms of domestic violence
- Service based statistics tend to show that men commit almost all violence and overestimate women as victims of domestic violence

Domestic Violence: incidents and gender (British Crime Survey)

	Women	Men	% against women	Ratio: Women: men
Victims	657,000	356,000	35%	1.8
Average number incidents per victim	20	7		2.9
Total incidents	12.9 million	2.5 million	84%	5.2

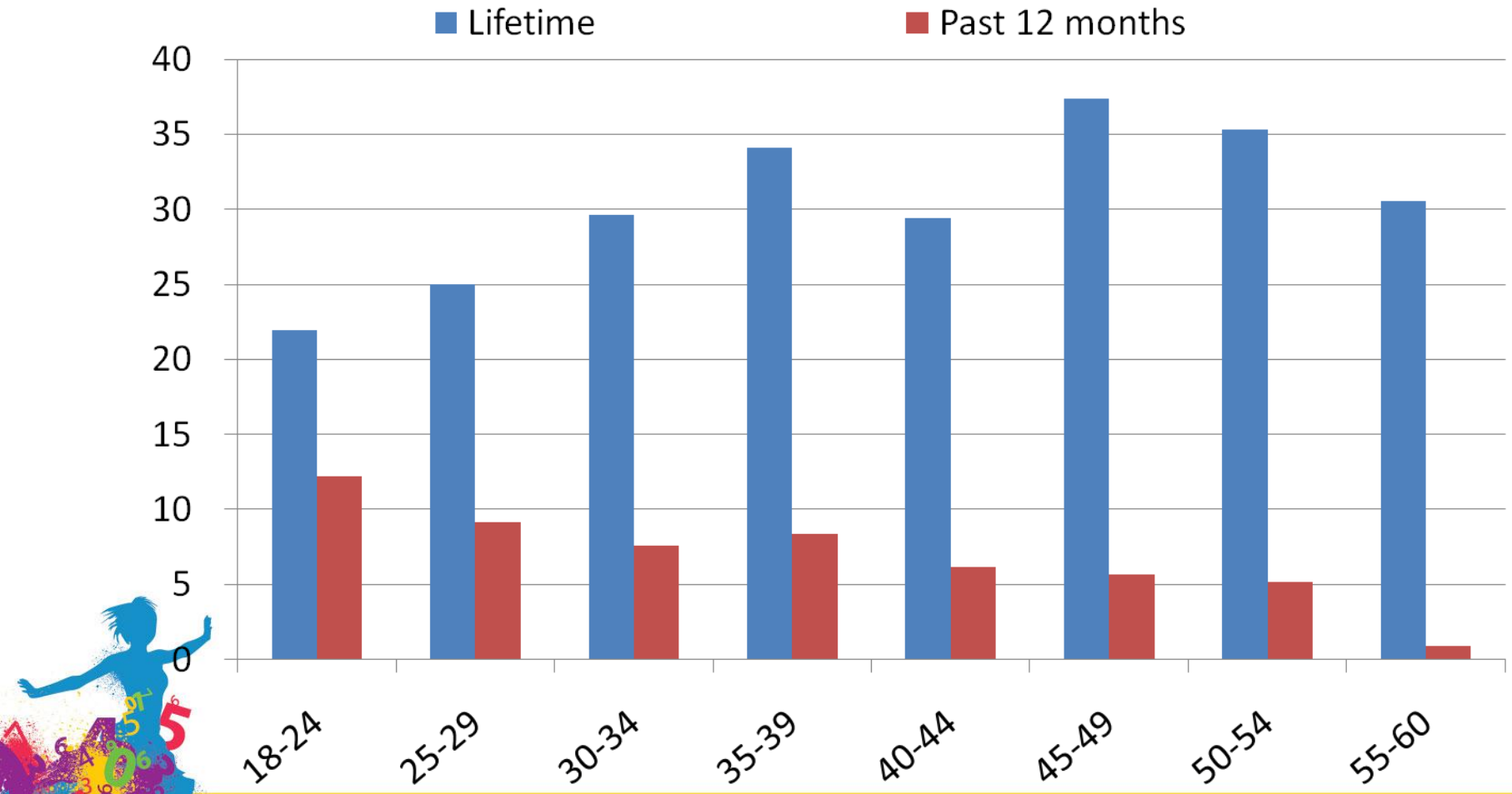
- Prevalence rates as reflected by counting persons rather than acts might mean that a series of 20 incidents may count only as one crime, thereby underestimating the proportion of violent crime that is gender-based violence, thereby skewing the gender composition towards image of symmetry
- Including frequency (incidents) and severity (injuries) show better the gender differences

DISCUSSION!

- Many surveys measure violence for two reference periods: in the past 12 months and during lifetime.

1. Explain for each of the reference periods how the results should be interpreted (what do they tell us).
2. Describe for the results of these reference periods how (for what purpose) they could be used.

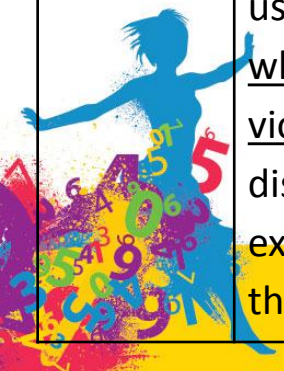
Prevalence of physical violence by husband, among ever-married women, by age, Viet Nam 2010 (N=4561)



	Interpretation	Use
12 month		
Lifetime		

Forum – possible answers

	Interpretation	Use
12 months	This is about recent physical violence by a partner or ongoing violence at the time of the interview, it could have just started, or it could have been ongoing since many years but the prevalence rate shows the proportion of women who experienced one or more acts of physical violence on or close to the point of time of measurement. The distribution by age shows us how the violence experience in a relationship changes over time.	These data are very important for planning services because it shows how many women are living with violence at a certain point in time and who may be in need of services. Over time the 12 m prevalence is useful to show the effectiveness of a policy or programme.
Lifetime	This is about the experience of physical violence by a partner at any time in a woman's life (equivalent to lifetime prevalence). As with 12 month prevalence it does not tell us how long it lasted or how often, it just tells us if it ever happened. The prevalence rate shows us the proportion of women in the current population who ever experienced one or more acts of physical violence by a current or former partner. The distribution by age shows us the cumulative experience over time (and they include the experience that is also measured in 12-m prevalence).	These data are very important for advocacy purposes and awareness campaigns because it shows the proportion of women who ever in their life have experienced violence. [the lifetime prevalence is not useful to measure effectiveness of a policy or programme because it is not sensitive enough to measure change]



Factors that affect disclosure

- How the questions are phrased
- Number of opportunities to disclose
- Context in which questions are asked
- Characteristics and skill of interviewers
- Social stigma attached to issue
- Technology

Many women told me that they never talked about this with anyone, not even with the neighbors, friends or relatives, 'because if I tell her, she might tell her husband or her mothers, and word will get around and might reach my husband, which would be terrible. If he found out he would kill me.'

(female interviewer, Nicaragua)

"Because I belong to this Herero culture, I can speak to my family about any form of violence except sexual violence. I had the chance in this study to talk with a stranger about what I was suffering. It helped me a lot, it took a burden away"

Respondent in Namibia

Reducing non-response

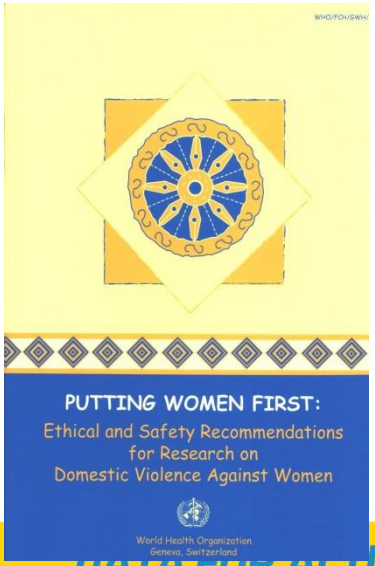
http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/drive/Swimming_Against_the_tide.pdf

"We met with an angry man who did not want us to interview his wife. We made a plan with the respondent to hide. We met at the sport complex. We finished the interview because the husband did not find us. This is a difficult way to do the work, but we always managed to finish every interview."

Interviewer in Kiribati

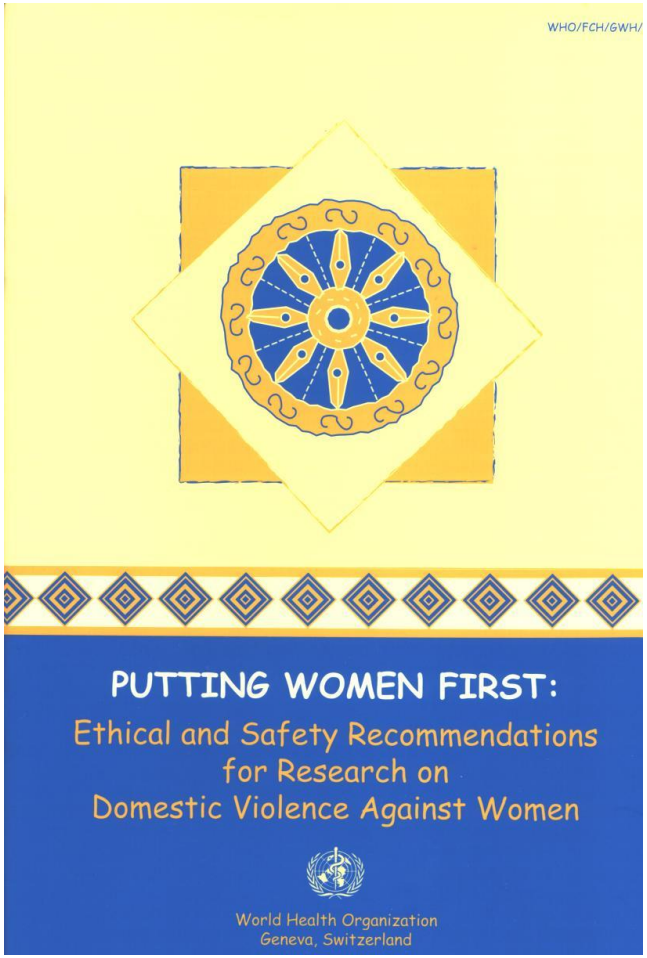
Suggestions for measuring domestic violence in surveys

- Define the study population broadly
- Use behaviorally specific questions: specific acts
- Specify discrete time frames (last year, ever)
- Include frequency and severity/injuries
- Give multiple opportunities to disclose
- Cue respondent to different contexts and perpetrators
- WHO ethical guidelines for violence research



Break!!

Group work

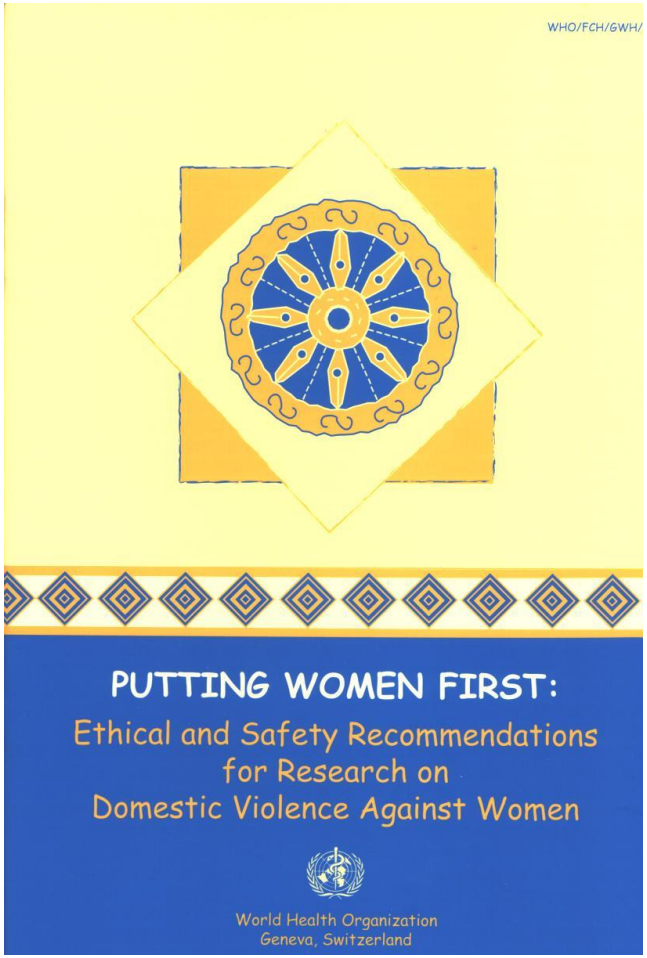

WHO/FCH/GWH/
PUTTING WOMEN FIRST:
Ethical and Safety Recommendations
for Research on
Domestic Violence Against Women
World Health Organization
Geneva, Switzerland

Group 1. What are risks for women to participate in violence against women surveys?

List ways to keep them safe and to provide support.

Group 2. What are risks for field workers/ researchers to participate in violence against women studies? List some strategies to deal with this.

Ethical and safety measures



Putting women's safety first in violence research

- 1. Safety of respondents and research team
- 2. Studies need to be methodologically sound
- 3. Confidentiality for safety and data quality
- 4. Selection and training of team members
- 5. Actions to reducing distress to respondents
- 6. Possibilities of referral, support mechanisms
- 7. Proper interpretation and use of study results
- 8. Violence questions in other surveys

1. Safety of respondents and research team

- Interviews only in a private setting, participant should feel free to reschedule or relocate
- Frame the study not in terms of violence (but further information should be give as part of consent procedure)
- Only one woman per household
- Train interviewers to handle interruptions (e.g. Dummy questions, rescheduling)
- Logistics and budget planning should consider safety

2. Studies need to be methodologically sound

- Ethically it is unacceptable to conduct a poorly designed study that cannot address the aims
- Practically too: too low estimates can be used to question the importance of violence
- Avoid loaded terms as abuse, rape, violence
- Give attention to wording, length of interview, multiple opportunities for disclosure, etc.
- When results unexpected, discuss findings with key informants, community groups before dissemination

3. Confidentiality for safety and data quality

- Address this in training of interviewers; no interviewers working in their own community
- Confidentiality procedures, consent process
- Handling of names, informed consent not signed by respondent
- Presentation of findings: no one community or individual can be identified
- Handling of photograph

Fieldwork

Brazil

4. Selection and training of team members

- Sex, skill, attitude and training of interviewer
- Training should include introduction on gender and violence
- Training as opportunity for research staff to come to terms with own experiences
- Role of interviewers: Not counselling, not trying to "save" respondents
- Addressing emotional needs of team members

5. Actions to reducing distress to respondents

- Ask all questions in supportive and non-judgemental manner
- Train interviewers to deal with distress
- Train when and how to terminate interview (if woman does not want to continue or if continuing would be detrimental)
- All interviews should end in a positive manner

- *"Somehow it made me feel good, because it was something that I had never told anyone before. Now I've told someone"*.
- --Respondent, Brazil

6. Possibilities of referral, support mechanisms

- If possible meet prior to field work with potential providers of support
- Develop information sheet and offer to all respondents – either small enough to be hidden or include a range of other services
- For-warn potential service providers
- Where few resources exist, consider having a trained counsellor or women's advocate accompany the teams

7. Proper interpretation and use of study results

- Research findings should be fed into ongoing advocacy, policy-making and intervention activities
- Involve advocacy and service groups etc from the beginning as part of research team or advisory committee. Also in use and advocacy
- Researchers need to be proactive in ensuring that research findings are interpreted appropriately by public and media

8. Violence questions in other surveys

- Be aware of the challenges of ensuring data quality and ensuring respondent safety
- It makes sense only of research team is willing and able to address basic ethical and methodological guidelines.

”We were so naïve. When we first added questions on violence into our survey on contraceptive use we did nothing special…it never occurred to us that we would have problems. Later we found out that three women had been severely beaten for participating in our survey. We felt awful and realized then that we were in over our heads..

(Researcher from Mexico)

Minimum conditions for using a short module

- Measures to protect safety of respondents and interviewers
- Crisis intervention and referrals to specialized services for respondents who need this
- Special training and emotional support and follow-up for interviewers

Selection and training of interviewers

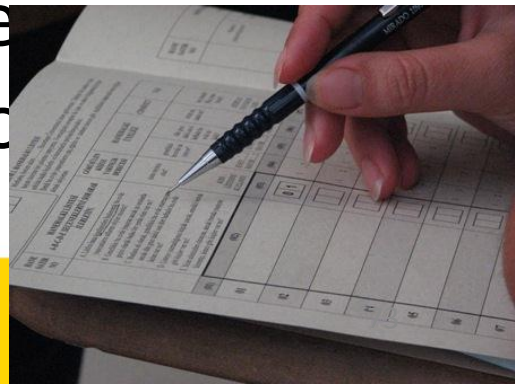
Selection of interviewers

- Female interviewers and supervisors
- Good interviewers and supervisors are critical to the success of the study
- Selection process very important - consider criteria, base selection on attitudes as well as competency
- Over - sample for interviewers
- Trust your gut feelings – if you think there may be a problem with someone, get rid of them
- Ask peers who would be good supervisors

Lubna

Goals of interviewer training

- To increase sensitivity of participants to gender and violence issues;
- Opportunity for team to come to terms with own experiences
- Address emotional needs of team members
- Role of interviewers: Not counselling, not trying to "save" respondents
- To understand the goals of the study/module;
- To learn skills for interviewing, taking into account safety and ethical guidelines
- To become familiar with the questionnaire module (and protocol)



Example of training schedule

Week 1

- Sensitization to concepts of gender and violence
- Presentations from advocacy groups/NGOs
- Exposure to support options for women living with violence
- Aim and overview of the study questionnaire
- Interviewing techniques and safety measures

Week 2

- Detailed question by question explanation of questionnaire
- Role-plays on approaching the household and using the complete questionnaire, practice how to respond if interview interrupted or if respondent becomes distressed and other difficult situations

Week 3

- Sampling procedures, including repeated visits to reduce non-response
- Pilot testing of questionnaire/module and all field procedures, including logistics, safety measures, supervisory procedures, debriefing and feedback sessions
- Final adjustments to questionnaire and field procedures

Interviewer training

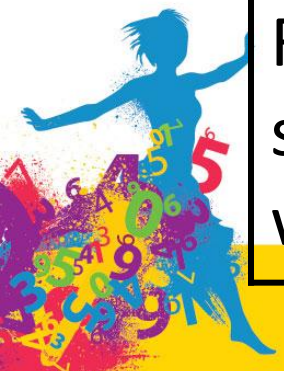
Use multiple training techniques:

- Group work, brainstorming, presentations, discussion, role plays, games, energizers, film, demonstration, involving others (‘victims’, psychologists/councellers)

Pilot test - field

Evidence of importance of training: Special training vs professional interviewers (dedicated survey, Serbia, 2003)

	Inexperienced, 3 week training	Professional, 1 day training
Response rate	93%	86%
Disclosure rate	26%	21%
Respondent satisfaction – with violence	46%	29%
Respondent satisfaction – without violence	46%	38%



Survey as intervention

"My husband slaps me, has sex with me against my will and I have to conform. Before being interviewed I didn't really think about this. I thought this is only natural. This is the way a husband behaves."

Woman interviewed in Bangladesh

"Maybe I was mediating by listening to her for half an hour, and it was worth the world when at the end she thanks me and tells me she felt worthy."

Interviewer in Turkey

“Before doing this work we did not know we have the same rights as men. Now we voice our problems. In the past we whipped our children to teach them. Now we know there are limits.”

Interviewer in Solomon Islands

"As government statistician with lots of experience in many surveys I was convinced this would fail. But to my surprise it was very successful. This was due to the way the interviewers were well trained... The training was very different from other training, also very long...."

Government statistician

in Kiribati

Final comments

- In many places no experience, capacity
- Issues around translation of questionnaires
- Measuring frequency important, but hard to do
- Issues around measuring change
- Surveys only good for certain types of VAW
- Qualitative research needed for other types of violence and vulnerable groups

- Importance of proper interpretation and understanding of data
- Only collect data if it gets used
- Political will needed at all levels, multiple stakeholders involvement in all stages
- Linkages and partnership with national statistics offices and women NGOs, etc. are crucial

Country X?

Thank You!

Photos: henriette.jansen