



World Health  
Organization

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

### Ethiopia

#### 1. Introduction

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

In Ethiopia, the Study was undertaken under the auspices of the Butajira Rural Health Program. The research team included members from the Department of Community Health and the Department of Psychiatry, Addis Ababa University; the Ethiopian Public Health Association; the Women's Lawyers Association, Addis Ababa; the Department of Public Health and Clinical Medicine, and the Department of Clinical Science, Umeå University, Sweden; and the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH), United States. Data collection in the field took place in 2002.

#### 2. Methods

In Ethiopia, the Study was carried out in the predominantly rural Meskan and Mareko District, 130 km south of Addis Ababa. Specially trained female researchers interviewed 3016 women between 15 and 49 years of age, with a mean age of 29 years. The majority (72%) were Muslim and 75% had at some time been partnered (defined as ever married, ever having lived with a man or currently having a regular sexual partner), with 66% being married at the time of the interview. Of the total, 76% were illiterate and 64% had no job outside the home.

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

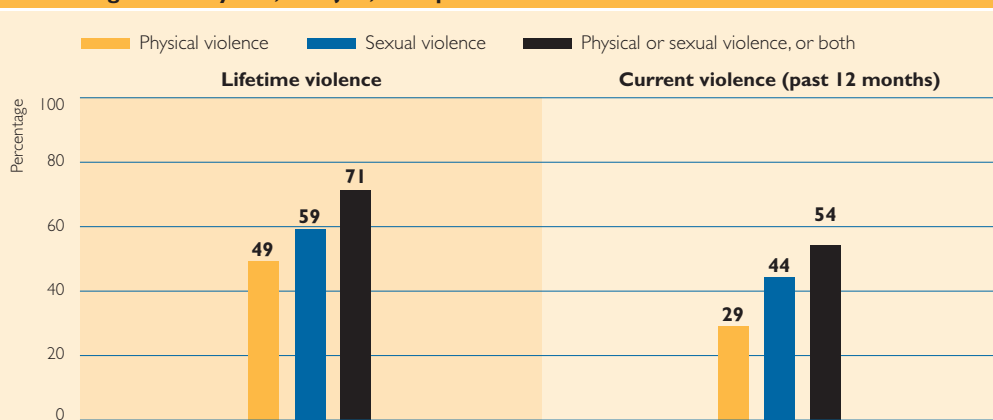
#### 3. Main findings

##### 3.1 Prevalence of partner violence

- Nearly one half (49%) of ever-partnered women experienced physical violence by a partner at some point in their lives, and 29% during the past 12 months.
- 59% of ever-partnered women experienced sexual violence at some point, and 44% during the past 12 months.
- Combining the data for physical and sexual violence, 71% of ever-partnered women experienced one or the other form of violence, or both, over their lifetime.
- 35% of all ever-partnered women experienced at least one severe form of physical violence



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



(being hit with a fist or something else, kicked, dragged, beaten up, choked, burnt on purpose, threatened with a weapon or had a weapon used against them).

### 3.2 Injuries inflicted by a partner

- Of women who had ever experienced physical violence by a partner, 19% had been injured at least once. Among the main injuries were abrasions or bruises (in 39% of women who had been injured), sprains and dislocations (22%), injuries to eyes and ears (10%), fractures (18%), and broken teeth (6%).
- One third of injured women were hurt badly enough to need health care.

### 3.3 Physical violence by a partner during pregnancy

- Of women who had ever been pregnant, 8% reported physical violence during at least one pregnancy.
- Among women ever abused during pregnancy, 28% had been punched or kicked in the abdomen.
- In 98% of cases of physical violence by a partner during pregnancy, the perpetrator was the father of the child.

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

- 5% of women had experienced non-partner physical violence since the age of 15 years. Fathers and other male family members were the main perpetrators.
- Less than 1% of women reported non-partner sexual violence since the age of 15 years.

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

- When interviewed face-to-face, less than 1% of women reported sexual abuse before age 15 years. In anonymous reporting however, using cards the women marked and put into envelopes themselves, 7% reported sexual abuse before age 15 years.
- About 17% of women reported that their first sexual experience was forced. In Ethiopia, unlike most other settings, there was no association with the age of sexual initiation.

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

- Women who experienced physical or sexual violence were twice as likely to report that their general health was fair or poor than non-abused women.
- Women who had ever been pregnant and who experienced violence also had more induced abortions than non-abused women.

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

- 39% of the women had never talked to anyone about the physical violence.
- Few abused women asked formal agencies or authorities for help. The most often mentioned were local leaders (by 15% of women who had experienced physical partner violence), health services (4%), police (2%) and the courts (1%).
- Among those women who did not seek help, 53% said they feared the consequences or had been threatened, and 37% said they considered the violence "normal" or "not serious".

#### For more information see

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

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