



DCS Canada



Frequently Asked Questions on the Women's Wellbeing Survey 2019

Sri Lanka National Survey on Violence Against Women

This document is a summary of the methodology and other areas extracted from the main report.

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I'm still surprised that I'm alive. I didn't think escaping him was possible. He wielded so much power... I thought that would be the rest of my life.

Why does Sri Lanka need this data?

The 2019 Women's Wellbeing Survey (WWS) is Sri Lanka's first national survey on violence against women and girls, using an internationally recognized standardized methodology. The survey was administered by the Department of Census and Statistics. Sri Lanka has never collected data on the prevalence of violence against women with a focus on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) at the national level. IPV is defined as physical, sexual, economic, emotional or other forms of harm perpetrated by a current or former partner or spouse.

The survey provides insight to the violence perpetrated by intimate partners and those other than partners on women and girls and the impact it has on their lives. The survey quantifies and gives data on the consequences; risk to children; protective and risk factors; help seeking behaviour which will support in formulating national and sub – national level policies and interventions to address the issue.

Data is needed to identify the extent of the consequences and causes on intimate partner violence given that most often it is a hidden and very personal issue.



Someday I want to become a lawyer, so that I can ensure that more laws are in place to protect women and children against sexual violence. No one deserves that kind of pain.

- Shelter worker and survivor

Why was a specific survey on violence against women and girls conducted?



I went to a shelter for pregnant mothers where the youngest was 11 and the oldest was 16. The girls in this shelter were victims of incest and other forms of GBV. The 11-year-old could barely stand from all the violence she had faced. This is when I realized that this is the job for me. I had to do something.

- Public Official

The main objective of the survey was to obtain reliable data on the prevalence of different forms of violence against women by intimate partners and non-partners to support in the advocacy and implementation of interventions to minimize sexual and gender-based violence. Violence against women and girls impedes equal status of women and girls in a given community. It is often not disclosed and difficult to measure and prevent.

Given the sensitive nature of the survey unlike other surveys special standard and accepted safety and ethical protocols were used to ensure the confidentiality of the information shared and the safety of the respondent and enumerator. The training for the enumerators were conducted for 2 weeks due to the sensitive nature of the issue. Further, the survey questionnaire itself was designed in a manner to obtain not only the prevalence rates but to “understand the associations with health outcomes and the conditions under which violence against women are likely to occur and to find out linkages with social, economic, demographic, cultural, and other correlates”¹.

The data was also obtained to support SDG indicators 5.2.1 and 5.2.2. To meet these objectives, violence against women by both partners and non-partners needs to be measured, as well as violence experienced as a child (before the age of 15) and after the age of 15. It is vital that data is available to measure the sustainable development goals to ensure that no one is left behind in the development agenda.

¹ Study Protocol Guidance, (tool for use with methodology of the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence Questionnaire Version 12) "National Women's Health and Life Experiences Study" [Use 'safe name'] Prepared by: Dr Henrica A.F.M. (Henriette) Jansen ©UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Regional Office

Sri Lanka has many studies; How is this survey different to the others conducted?

The studies done so far are limited in scope which focus only on certain sections of the community, geographic locations or a chosen subset which is very limited. They have been conducted at the sub-national level or targeting very specific groups of people or determinants of violence against women and girls. UNFPA has conducted an analysis of the available literature and annotated bibliography on sexual and gender-based violence that has been conducted so far.

The methodology for the survey is tried and tested and has been adopted for use in many countries in the Asia Pacific region. It is the first study that will provide comparable data on the prevalence and frequency of the different forms of violence against women from a national level sample covering all 25 districts.

What is the difference between the data collected from this survey when compared to data collected from helplines, shelters, Legal Aid and police records (administrative data)?

Administrative data is only the tip of the iceberg, in other words only women who cannot endure the violence any further would report to relevant authorities. Most often women and girls feel it is a natural consequence of the relationship and blame themselves for the violence that occurs within their homes and outside. The data that is collected through the different institutions and organizations are not consistent at the national and sub-national level and there is a greater chance of duplication. As the data is collected for different reasons inconsistencies prevail and cannot be compared across the varied sources. Further, it does not cover the issue as a whole and will not provide an accurate measurement to the magnitude of the problem. It is a weak source of information to estimate prevalence as the purpose is for service provision and is useful for referrals, identifying gaps in services and efficient resource allocations.

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I met a woman once who had been married for 10 years, and within these years, she had faced it all. She had been raped by her husband, she had been thrown into a well, she had been forced to abort against her own will, twice! She wasn't allowed to interact with any friends or family, and she even had to look after another woman her husband had impregnated during his many affairs. Despite all of this, this 35-year-old woman, had suffered in silence for an entire decade.

- Counsellor

How was the data collected?

The data was collected using a tried and tested survey methodology, the WHO Multi Country Study on Women's Health and Life Experiences questionnaire (dated July 2018). The questionnaire was adapted to the local context and translations were tested among the enumerators to overcome any challenges in obtaining the relevant information. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first was the administrative, demographic and housing questionnaire, and the second consisted of the individual women's questionnaire. The women's questionnaire commenced with a more accurate description of the intended purpose of the survey and obtained verbal consent to be interviewed. Consent was only sought after the interviewer and respondent were in a private setting.

The collection of data was based on a sample based on the sampling frame of the 2012 Census of Population and Housing where one eligible woman or girl above the age of 15 was selected from each enumerated household randomly. A multi stage sampling strategy was used and 2520 households were selected.

Who consisted of the team that collected the data?

The survey was conducted by 13 teams with male and female senior statisticians as supervisors. The enumerators were very experienced statistical officers, statistical assistance and development officers. Further officers from the sample survey division and the ICT divisions supported the team on the field.

What type of data on violence against women and girls was collected through the survey?

The survey collected data for two reference periods: lifetime and the past 12 months in the lives of women and girls.

- The lifetime prevalence rate – proportion of women in the current population who had experienced one or more acts of violence at any time in her life even if it was only once.
- The 12-month prevalence rate - proportion of women who experienced one or more acts of violence in the past 12 months. The experience could have stopped during the past 12 months or still be ongoing.

The types of violence that women experienced from an intimate partner collected through the survey were:

- Physical violence: being slapped; throwing something; pushed or shoved; hit with a fist or something else; kicked, dragged, beaten; choked; burnt on purpose; threatened with or used a gun, knife or other weapon.
- Sexual violence: being forced to have sexual intercourse when she did not want to because she was afraid of what her partner might do; forced to have sexual intercourse when she did not want to; forced to perform a degrading or humiliating sexual act.

- Emotional abuse: if the partner insulted her or made her feel bad about herself; belittled or humiliated her in front of other people; done things to scare or intimidate on purpose (e.g. by the way he looked at her, by yelling and smashing things); verbally threatened to hurt her or someone she cares about.
- Controlling behaviour: trying to keep her from seeing her friends; restricting contact with her family of birth; insists on knowing where she is at all times; prevents her from using social media; gets angry if she speaks with another man; is often suspicious that she is unfaithful among others.
- Economic violence: prohibits her from getting a job, going to work, earning money or participating in income generating projects; takes the earnings from her against her will; refuses to give her money needed for household expenses even when he has money for other things (such as alcohol and cigarettes).

The types of violence that women experienced from someone other than an intimate partner collected through the survey were:

- Physical violence since the age of 15 and before the age of 15 such as: slapped, hit, beaten, kicked or done anything else to hurt; something thrown at her; pushed or pulled by her hair; choked or burnt her on purpose.
- Sexual violence since the age of 15 and before the age of 15: This was measured by asking if the respondent had any experience of forced sexual intercourse or any other acts of a sexual nature committed against her will. The survey also collected the information on who committed such acts.

Women and girls were asked to recall any experiences of sexual abuse as a child (before the age of 15). Given the particularly sensitive nature of the topic, women were asked about it twice during the interview. Once during the interview and again at the end of the interview they were offered a second opportunity to anonymously report it through a visual presentation of a happy and sad face card.

There are other forms of violence such as forced prostitution, conflict related sexual violence, violence against children, trafficking, sexual harassment in the workplace, sexual bribery and elder abuse, why were these not collected through this survey?

Gender-based violence consists of a broad range of harm committed due to a person's gender. Whilst all types of violence have long term harmful impacts on the survivor; specific studies need to be designed based on the target groups when measuring these different types of violence. The WWS is designed to measure women and girls within households and those that have been in an intimate relationship.

The context and circumstances of some of the forms of violence against women, girls and children can vary in different degrees as such questionnaires need to be developed to provide the best possible evidence.

Why was data on men who experience violence not collected?

It is known that both men and women alike use violence and are victims of violence. However, men experience more interpersonal violence than women and this is most often outside the home and not within a household. Global evidence has highlighted that women experience violence within the household and this is mainly due to the power dynamics among the genders.

Further, the research methodology is predominately designed to understand the violence faced by women stemming from childhood experiences to coping mechanisms for violence.

What were the limitations and challenges faced when conducting the survey?

There was a need to ensure that all those collecting data were properly sensitized given that most enumerators were exposed to the issue for the first time during this survey. The data being collected was very personal information to the respondents which had not previously been disclosed to anyone. In order to ensure quality of the data collected UNFPA supported the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) to conduct a 2-week training for all the enumerators and supervisors assigned to the survey. The training included interviewer training, sensitization of the topic, translation checks of the questionnaire, the use of tablets, familiarizing with the skip patterns embedded in the questionnaire and how they would address the challenges if the interview was disrupted by a partner etc.

Further, in order to ensure we had support mechanisms for the enumerators and the respondents, UNFPA commissioned Women in Need counselors for the period of the survey to exclusively support the enumerators given the very emotional nature of the information collected. Additionally, the respondents were supported with booklets that provided them with all the information on the support lines and services available at national and sub national levels. This was done in the form of a diary to ensure perpetrators would not get suspicious.

**Every human being has a
right to live a life free from violence
and no one has the right to
use violence to intimidate or coerce
someone on the basis of gender!**

If you or anyone you know is facing any form of violence please don't be in denial.



The national helpline: 1938

Women in Need hotline: 077 5 67 65 55

To access the full survey visit:
<https://bit.ly/WWS-19>



