

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Target 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

[Indicator 5.2.1: Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older 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](#)

Institutional information

Organization(s):

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)

World Health Organization (WHO)

Concepts and definitions

Definition:

This indicator measures the percentage of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older who have experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner, in the previous 12 months. Definition of violence against women and girls and of the forms of violence specified under this indicator are presented in the next section (Concepts).

NOTE: Due to constraints related to feasibility (as noted in the Feasibility section below), this indicator currently globally reports only on the percentage of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 to 49 who have experienced *physical and/or sexual* partner violence.

Rationale:

Intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence that women and girls face globally. Given prevailing social norms that sanction male dominance over women, violence between intimate partners is often perceived as an ordinary/normal element of relationships, particularly in the context of marriage or other unions. Violence against women and girls is an extreme manifestation of gender inequality.

Prevalence data are required to measure the magnitude of the problem; understand the various forms of violence and their consequences; identify groups at high risk; explore the barriers to seeking help; and ensure that the appropriate responses are being provided. These data are the starting point for informing laws, policies, and developing effective responses and programmes. They also allow countries to monitor change over time and optimally target resources to maximise the effectiveness of interventions (especially in resource-constrained settings).

Concepts:

According to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993), violence against women is “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. Violence against women shall be understood to

encompass, but not be limited to, the following: Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family [...]”. See here for full definition: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>

Intimate partner violence against women includes any abuse perpetrated by a current or former partner within the context of marriage, cohabitation or any other formal or informal union.

The different forms of violence included in the indicator are defined as follows:

1. Physical violence consists of acts aimed at physically hurting the victim and include, but are not limited to acts like pushing, grabbing, twisting the arm, pulling hair, slapping, kicking, biting or hitting with a fist or object, trying to strangle or suffocate, burning or scalding on purpose, or threatening or attacking with some sort of weapon, gun or knife.
2. Sexual violence is defined as any sort of harmful or unwanted sexual behavior that is imposed on someone, whether by use of force, intimidation or coercion. It includes acts of abusive sexual contact, forced engagement in sexual acts, attempted or completed sexual acts without consent, non-contact acts such as being forced to watch or participate in pornography, etc. In intimate partner relationships, sexual violence is commonly defined as: being physically forced to have sexual intercourse, having sexual intercourse out of fear for what the partner might do or through coercion, and/or being forced to do something sexual that the woman considers humiliating or degrading.
3. Psychological violence consists of any act intended to induce fear or emotional distress caused by a person’s behaviour or act. It includes a range of behaviors that encompass acts of emotional abuse such as being frequently humiliated in public, intimidated or having things you care for destroyed, etc. These often coexist with acts of physical and sexual violence by intimate partners. In addition, surveys often measure controlling behaviours (e.g., being kept from seeing family or friends, or from seeking health care without permission).

For a more detailed definition of physical, sexual and psychological violence against women see *Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women- Statistical Surveys* (UN, 2014) and the *International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes ICCS* (UNODC, 2015).

Comments and limitations:

Comparability:

The availability of comparable data remains a challenge in this area as many data collection efforts have relied on different survey methodologies, used different definitions of partner or spousal violence and of the different forms of violence and different survey question formulations, used diverse age groups, or used different denominators, as well as the quality of interviewer training. Willingness to discuss experiences of violence and understanding of relevant concepts may also differ according to how the survey is implemented, and the cultural context and this can affect reported prevalence levels.

Regularity of data production:

Since 2005, only about 40 countries have conducted more than one survey on violence against women. Obtaining data on violence against women is a costly and time-consuming exercise, whether they are obtained through stand-alone dedicated surveys or through modules in other surveys. Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are conducted every 5 years or so and dedicated surveys, if repeated, are conducted usually with less periodicity than this. Monitoring this indicator with certain periodicity may be a challenge if sustained capacities are not built and financial resources are not available.

Feasibility:

This indicator calls for global reporting on three types of intimate partner violence: physical, sexual, and psychological. While there is global consensus on how physical and sexual intimate partner violence are generally defined and measured, psychological partner violence—which may be conceptualised differently across cultures and in different contexts—is still a Tear III sub-indicator. Since it is not yet feasible to report on psychological partner violence, this indicator currently reports on *physical and/or sexual intimate*

partner violence only. Efforts are underway by custodian agencies to develop a global standard for measuring and reporting on psychological intimate partner violence. This will enable reporting on the three stipulated types of partner violence in the future.

Similarly, this indicator calls for global reporting of violence experienced by ever-partnered women aged 15 years and above. However, a majority of data come from DHS, which typically sample only women aged 15-49, and there is a lack of consistency in the age range of sample populations across other country surveys. For those surveys that interview a sample of women from a different age group, the prevalence for 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. Efforts are underway by custodian agencies to address this issue and to better understand and measure partner violence against women aged 50 and above.

Methodology

Computation Method:

This indicator calls for breakdown by form of violence and by age group. Countries are encouraged to compute prevalence data for each form of violence as detailed below to assist comparability at the regional and global levels:

1. Physical violence:

Number of ever-partnered women and girls (aged 15 years and above) who experience physical violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months divided by the number of ever-partnered women and girls (aged 15 years and above) in the population multiplied by 100

2. Sexual violence:

Number of ever-partnered women and girls (aged 15 years and above) who experience sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months divided by the number of ever-partnered women and girls (aged 15 years and above) in the population multiplied by 100

3. Psychological violence:

Number of ever-partnered women and girls (aged 15 years and above) who experience psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months divided by the number of ever-partnered women and girls (aged 15 years and above) multiplied by 100

4. Any form of physical and/or sexual violence:

Number of ever-partnered women and girls (aged 15 years and above) who experience physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months divided by the number of ever-partnered women and girls (aged 15 years and above) multiplied by 100

5. Any form of physical, sexual and/or psychological violence:

Number of ever-partnered women and girls (aged 15 years and above) who experience physical, sexual and/or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months divided by the number of ever-partnered women and girls (aged 15 years and above) multiplied by 100

NOTE: To assist comparability at the regional and global level, countries are encouraged to *additionally* compute the above figures for ever-partnered women aged 15 to 49. Regional and global reporting on this indicator currently only includes data computed by countries for #4 above (i.e., *any form of physical and/or sexual partner violence*, and for the 15-49 age group). For further details, see Feasibility section above.

Disaggregation:

In addition to form of violence and age, income/wealth, education, ethnicity (including indigenous status), disability status, marital/partnership status, relationship with the perpetrator (i.e. current/former partner), geographic location and frequency of violence are suggested as desired variables for disaggregation for this indicator. Though disaggregated data by these variables is not yet feasible to report on at regional and global levels, countries are encouraged to report these levels of disaggregation in their national reports; and—whenever possible—include these data for the age group 15 to 49.

Treatment of missing values:

At country level

When data for a country are entirely missing, no country-level estimate is published.

At regional and global levels

No imputations are made in cases where country data are not available. Where regional and global figures are presented, clear notes on data limitations are provided. The number of countries included in the average is clearly indicated.

Regional aggregates:

Global aggregates are weighted averages of all the countries that make up the world. Regional aggregates are weighted averages of all the countries within the region. Weights used are the population of women and girls aged 15 to 49 from the most recent UN population prospects. Where data are not available for all countries in any given region, regional aggregates may still be calculated. The number of countries included in the average is clearly indicated.

It should be noted that regional and global figures should be interpreted with caution, as they do not necessarily represent with accuracy the region or world as a whole, especially for regions where population coverage is below 50 per cent.

Custodian agencies, in consultation with Member States, are currently in the process of producing up-to-date global, regional and country estimates, enhancing the quality and accuracy of 5.2.1 reporting and addressing the comparability challenges outlined above. New regional and global estimates are expected to become available in mid-2020.

Sources of discrepancies:

In most cases, only figures published by countries are used. However, in a small number of countries data may be recalculated to enhance comparability. Recalculation is done primarily to reflect the 15 to 49 preponderant age group, or to reflect the aggregate of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, for countries where this information is gathered but not published as such. Calculations are done using survey datasets made public by countries or using raw data available in published survey reports.

Methods and guidance available to countries for the compilation of the data at the national level:

Countries gather data on intimate partner violence through (1) specialized national prevalence surveys dedicated to measuring violence against women, (2) violence against women modules that are added to international/national household surveys, such as the DHS; and (3) victimization surveys

Although administrative data from health, police, courts, justice and social services, among other services used by survivors of violence, can provide information on violence against women and girls, these do not provide prevalence data, but rather incidence data or service use (i.e., number of cases received in/reported to these services). Many abused women do not report violence and those who do, tend to be the most serious cases. Therefore, administrative data are not recommended to be used as a data source for this indicator.

For more information on recommended practices in production of violence against women statistics see: *UN Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women- Statistical Surveys* (UN, 2014).

Quality assurance

The Interagency Working Group on Violence against Women Data, which comprises all custodian agencies for this SDG indicator, thoroughly reviews all country data, including its primary source when deemed necessary, to assess quality and comparability based on exclusion/inclusion criteria agreed upon a priori. These criteria refer to, inter-alia, survey population coverage, operational definitions, methodology, and time period. All data points have been discussed and a consensual decision made for every data point included/excluded from the current SDG Indicators Database.

Starting in 2020, a country consultation and validation process of data compiled by custodian agencies for this indicator will be undertaken, including with identified SDG indicators focal points and other relevant ministries.

Data Sources

Description:

The SDG 5.2.1 Indicator Database comprises namely data from population-based household surveys implementing an internationally standardised methodology. A significant proportion of data are gathered through the inclusion of a Domestic Violence Module in the DHS. In addition, some data come from dedicated surveys on violence against women in countries that have implemented, for example, WHO's violence against women survey methodology. Where available, other dedicated surveys are included if the data are deemed comparable. All sources date from 2005 onwards.

Collection process:

Data are collated by the Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Women Data from data published by National Statistics Offices or other relevant national entities. For efficiency, some data are collated using existing data compiling online platforms (e.g., DHS StatCompiler). For a few countries, data are recalculated for harmonization regarding age group (15 to 49) and type of intimate partner violence (any form of physical and/or sexual partner violence).

Data Availability

Description:

Since 2015, 139 countries had conducted violence against women national prevalence surveys or have included a module on violence against women in a DHS or other national household survey. However, not all these data are comparable and in many cases they are not collected on a regular basis.

Time series:

Time series are available for some countries. Global time series with comparable data not yet available.

Calendar

Data collection:

NA

Data release:

NA

Data providers

National Statistical Offices (in most cases) or line ministries/other government agencies that have conducted national surveys on violence against women and girls.

Data compilers

Data are compiled and reviewed by the Interagency Working Group on Violence against Women Data (UN Women, UNICEF, UNSD, WHO, UNFPA, UNODC).

References

URL:

<http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en>
data.unicef.org
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/default.html>

References:

1. United Nations, 2014. Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women- Statistical Surveys.
2. United Nations, 2015. The World's Women 2015, Trends and Statistics.
3. World Health Organization, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council, 2013. Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence.
4. UN Women. 2016. Global Database on Violence against Women. Available at: <http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en>
5. UNICEF Data portal: <http://data.unicef.org/child-protection/violence.html>
6. UNSD Portal on the minimum set of gender indicators: <https://genderstats.un.org/#/home>
7. UNSD dedicated portal for data and metadata on violence against women: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/vaw/>
8. UNODC, 2015. International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes.

Related indicators as of February 2020

5.2.2:

Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence

11.7.2:

Proportion of persons victim of physical or sexual harassment, by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months

16.1.3:

Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months

16.2.3:

Proportion of young women and men aged 18-29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18