



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



# Country Findings

### Japan

#### 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 Japan, the Study was undertaken by a research team that included experts from the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, Tokyo; University of Michigan School of Social Work, Ann Arbor, MI, USA; Department of Social Psychology, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, Tokyo University, Tokyo; Faculty of Human Life and Environmental Sciences, Department of Social Sciences and Family Studies, Ochanomizu University, Tokyo; and Faculty of Human Sciences, Toyo Eiwa University, Tokyo. The fieldwork was carried out by a professional survey company *Chuo Chousa Sha* (Central Research Services, Inc.) in 2000–2001.

#### 2. Methods

In Japan, the Study involved individual interviews with a representative sample of 1 371 women aged between 18 and 49 years old in the city of Yokohama, the nation's second-largest city. In the Study in Japan, women were considered "ever-partnered" if they had ever been married, ever lived with a man or ever had a regular sexual partner. Most respondents (69%) were married at the time of the interview, while 6% had never been in a relationship with a man (never-partnered). On average, the respondents had 14 years of schooling, equivalent to completing one year of education beyond high-school graduation, and 59% were working at the time of the interview.

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

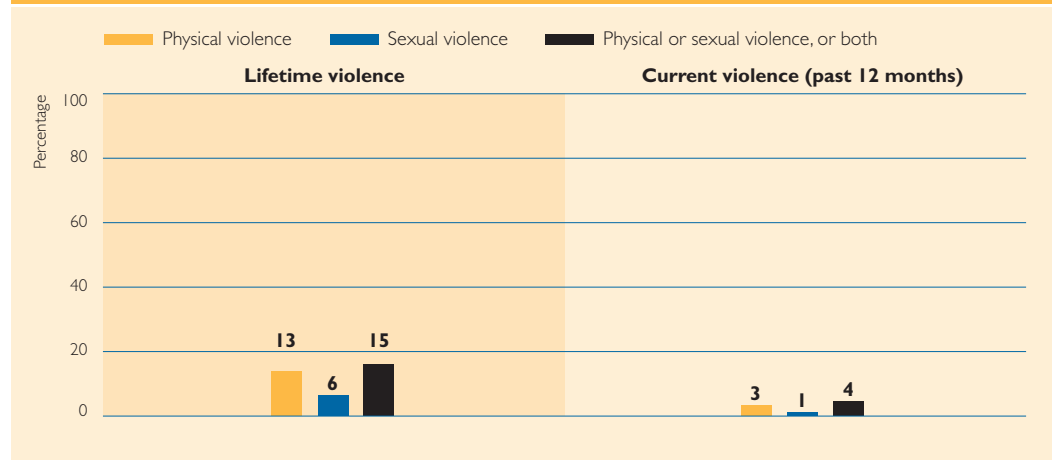
- 13% of ever-partnered women reported having experienced physical violence at some time in their life at the hands of an intimate partner.
- 6% of ever-partnered women had experienced sexual violence at some time in their life. Nearly two thirds of those who had experienced sexual violence also experienced physical violence.

##### 3.2 Injuries inflicted by a partner

- One quarter of women who had experienced physical violence reported having been injured



**Percentage of women who experienced violence by an intimate partner, among ever-partnered women aged 18–49 years, Yokohama, Japan**



as a result of the violence, and of these, 35% sustained injuries three or more times.

- The most common types of injuries included abrasions or bruises (in 88% of women who had been injured), followed by cuts, punctures or bites (15%), and ear or eye injuries (12%).

### 3.3 Physical violence by a partner during pregnancy

- Of the respondents who had ever been pregnant, 1% said they had been beaten or kicked by their husband or partner during at least one pregnancy. Among the women who had ever been pregnant and had also been physically abused in their lifetime, 8% reported being beaten or kicked during a pregnancy.

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

- 5% of all respondents had experienced physical violence at the hands of non-partners since age 15 years. Most of the perpetrators were fathers (mentioned by 52% who reported such violence). Others included strangers (19%), other male family members (14%), and male friends (11%), or people from work (8%).
- 4% of respondents reported sexual violence since age 15 years. Perpetrators were strangers (mentioned by 60% of women who reported such violence), followed by male friends (23%) or people from work (17%).

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

- When interviewed face-to-face, about 10% of women reported sexual abuse before age 15 years. However, in anonymous reporting, using cards the women marked and put into envelopes themselves, 14% reported sexual abuse before age 15 years.
- Less than 1% of all women who ever had sex reported that their first sexual experience was forced, and 21% indicated that they “did not want to have sex, but it happened anyway”.

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

- 15% of women who ever experienced physical or sexual violence reported at least some problems in performing usual work, study or household activities, compared to 9% of never-abused women. Similarly, 14% of ever-abused women reported problems with memory or concentration, compared to 7% of never-abused women.
- 32% of ever-abused women had thought about suicide compared to 11% of never-abused women.
- Of women who had ever been pregnant, 28% of ever-abused women had had an induced abortion, compared to 12% of never-abused women.

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

- Among women who experienced physical violence, about one third (32%) had never told anybody about the violence, 56% told friends and 29% told parents; only 4% told a health professional, 3% told a counsellor; and 2% told a neighbour.
- Even among women who had experienced injury as a result of partner violence, only 14% sought help from formal services or persons in a position of authority, such as the police and counsellors.

#### For more information see

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

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