



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE STUDY METHODOLOGY

NATIONAL STUDY ON VIOLENCE  
AGAINST WOMEN IN VIET NAM  
2019

*Note: This document supplements the main study report and responds to common questions about the study methodology. For supplementary information about the key results, please see the accompanying documents: Factsheets 1 & 2, and Key Messages.*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEED AND USE OF PRODUCING DATA



### **1. WHY DO WE NEED DATA ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (VAW) WHEN WE ALREADY KNOW IT HAPPENS? HOW DOES VAW DATA HELP TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS?**

- Data are needed to understand the extent and the nature of the problem of VAW, as well as related risk factors for violence, and consequences of violence in particular settings. This is essential to develop effective, evidence-based policies and programmes to prevent and respond to violence against women.
- This second national study provides new prevalence data to monitor trends and measure the effectiveness of policies and interventions for prevention and response efforts.
- Data are also needed to track progress towards the 2030 agenda: to monitor the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators on violence against women and girls (Goal 5). Without addressing the issue of violence against women, it will not be possible to achieve the SDGs by 2030 or to ensure that no one is left behind in the country's development process.

*Note: Data should never be collected for the sake of it, “because we can” or “for statistical purposes”, particularly when we collect data on sensitive issues which can put people at risk. Moreover, it is important that stakeholders be engaged from the outset to ensure data collection and analysis informs effective policy and programme interventions.*



## **2. WHY SPEND ALL THIS MONEY ON DATA ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WHEN YOU COULD BE FUNDING SERVICES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS?**

Data on violence against women provides the evidence base to inform policy makers and planners where to focus their available and limited resources, so as to meet the needs of women whose lives are affected by violence, and to develop effective programs to prevent and eliminate violence. Robust data can help to prioritise policy, programme interventions, and budgets. Some examples:

- Data can help identify which women and girls are most vulnerable, such as the regions in which they live, and/or which groups of women (e.g. younger women, women with disabilities, ethnic minorities) are most at risk of violence.
- Data can help reveal the underlying factors that put women most at risk of violence so that prevention and response efforts can focus on the real causes and drivers of this violence.
- Data helps identify “what works”, that is what is most effective in helping women: prevention and response programmes; ideal location of, and access to services; gaps in service availability; and programmes/interventions that are more or less effective.
- Data on attitudes to gender roles and norms provide insights into where violence against women may be perceived as normal and where changes in attitudes are happening.
- Data on health impact and economic costs of violence can raise awareness of the immense impact of violence on families, communities and the country, and thus urge policy makers to take immediate and targeted actions.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MEASURING VIOLENCE**



## **3. HOW IS PREVALENCE DATA COLLECTED?**

Using best practice methodologies, such as the methodology designed for the ‘*World Health Organization Multi-country study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women*’ ensures data collection that is safe and results in reliable data. The methodology further enables monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, as well as global comparison of data on violence against women.

Data are collected by interviewing a representative sample of women in the population in a population based survey. The results are used to estimate the proportion

in the whole population of women who have experienced certain types of violence.

This is done with a well-designed questionnaire, using well trained interviewers. In this survey, every woman in a selected age range (in the 2019 survey, it was women aged 15-64) has the chance to be selected, but for safety reasons, only one woman per household is randomly selected to be interviewed. For the selected women, it is not known in advance if they have experienced violence. All women are asked the same questions, using the same techniques, by interviewers who received intensive training to carry out the survey.

Ethical and safety procedures are followed to ensure the confidentiality, privacy and safety of the women interviewed. Other special measures

include: all women receive information on support services and women who need help will be referred to appropriate services. Use of this robust methodology will keep women safe and results in quality data.



#### **4. WHY ARE YOU FOCUSING ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN? AREN'T MEN ALSO EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE?**

Indeed, men also experience a wide range of forms of violence, including those experienced outside the domestic context, and perpetrated by other men. Statistics show, however, that women experience violence from their intimate partners at a far higher rate than men from their female partners. This is largely due to differences in power dynamics in relationships. Not only do more women than men suffer violence in intimate relationships, women also suffer more frequent and more severe violence. Many more women live in fear of their husbands<sup>1</sup> than the other way around.

We do, however, not ignore men's experience and we also collect data from men as part of the work on VAW data collection, not only to understand their experience of violence but also to understand the reasons why men perpetrate violence and whether and how they think men can change. The opinions and perspectives of men are more commonly solicited through qualitative methods.

*Note: Another reason to interview only women in most VAW prevalence surveys is to maximize women's safety. There are ethical and safety issues associated with interviewing women and men in the same household or community, because this could potentially put a woman at risk of future violence by alerting her husband to the nature of the questions being asked, and/or if he thinks she has disclosed the violence she is experiencing.*

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1. The use of the term 'husband' includes current or former husbands as well as other male intimate partners with whom a woman has a couple relationship without being married. Nearly all (97 per cent) women in this survey who had a current or former husband/intimate partner had been married.



#### **5. WHAT TYPES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ARE YOU FOCUSING ON?**

This study focuses on different forms of violence in women's lifetime, in the last 12 months prior to the interview (referred to as "current" or "in the last 12 months"), and in their childhood, perpetrated by a husband and by others who are not husbands.

The types of violence by husbands included in these surveys are:

- Physical violence such as: being slapped, pushed, kicked, hit, shoved, choked, burned, or threatened with a gun, knife or other weapon.
- Sexual abuse such as: being forced to have sexual intercourse; having sexual intercourse because of fear of what he may do; or being forced into humiliating or degrading sexual acts.
- Emotionally abusive acts (a form of psychological violence) such as: insulting, belittling or humiliating women in front of others; scaring or intimidating her on purpose; or threatening to hurt her or someone she cares about.
- Controlling behaviours (a form of psychological violence) such as: preventing her from seeing her family and friends; or insisting on knowing where she is at all times.
- Economic abuse such as: prohibiting her from working; taking her earnings against her will; refusing to give her money needed for household expenses; expecting her to ask his permission before buying anything.

The types of violence by someone other than a husband included in these surveys are:

- Physical violence since the age of 15 such as: being slapped, pushed, kicked, hit, shoved, choked, or threatened with a gun, knife or other weapon.
- Sexual abuse since the age of 15 such as: being forced to have sexual intercourse or engage in other sexual acts she did not want, or the attempt to force her to have sex against her will.

- Sexual abuse or harassment *at any age* such as: being asked to perform sexual acts against her will in return for something like a job or to pass an exam, being groped in a public space such as on public transport, and/or receiving electronic messages with sexual content that made her feel uncomfortable.
- Physical violence *before* the age of 15 such as: being slapped/spanked, kicked, tied up, hit with a stick or something else.
- Emotionally abusive acts *before* the age of 15 such as: being insulted, humiliated or regularly scolded and cursed at.
- Sexual abuse *before* the age of 15 such as: being sexually touched against her will, doing something sexual that she didn't want to, e.g. touching of breasts or private parts; making her touch their private parts; having sex or trying to have sex with her.

Asking women to recall experiences of sexual abuse as a child provides an estimate of the rate of child sexual abuse without asking children under the age of 15 directly about their experiences. Child sexual abuse was asked two times: using a set of questions during the interview, and in a concealed (anonymous) way, at the end of the interview by having her mark a picture of a smiling or sad face (the latter indicating she had experienced such abuse).

## 6. ARE YOU ALSO COLLECTING DATA ON OTHER FORMS OF VIOLENCE, SUCH AS VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN, VIOLENCE AGAINST THE ELDERLY, TRAFFICKING AND FORCED PROSTITUTION? IF NOT, WHY NOT?

All these forms of violence are important, and several are also considered as forms of gender-based violence against women. All forms of violence should be measured, and all survivors/victims of violence should have a voice.

Different methodologies are used to measure different types of violence. The methodology

used for the 2019 national study does not lend itself to measure some important forms of violence against women, such as trafficking and forced prostitution. Women in these situations are often not easily located in households, and therefore specially targeted studies are required as opposed to household surveys of a representative sample of the population.

The study methodology is suitable only to measure violence against women from age 15 and has a large focus on intimate partner violence and domestic violence. Measuring violence against any other specific age cohort, such as child abuse or elder abuse, would require different sampling methods and different questions.

It should be noted that methodologies for measuring violence against women have evolved over the years, and methodological developments are currently underway to measure other types of violence, especially within the context of measuring progress towards the SDGs.



## 7. THE ECONOMIC COSTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SEEMS VERY HIGH. HOW IS IT MEASURED AND HOW ACCURATE IS IT?

Estimates of the economic costs of violence by a husband are critical to advocate for the need to intervene and eliminate violence. The economic costs of violence highlight financial and economic losses, as well as the gains that can be realized if violence against women is reduced or eliminated.

The economic impacts of violence by husbands are multiple and range from physical and psychological harm, inability to do paid or unpaid work (absenteeism), the loss of quality of life due to chronic pain and suffering, loss of productivity, and reduced labour force participation of women. In addition, children growing up in violent homes are at risk of intergenerational loss such as lower educational achievement affecting their future income potential.



Obtaining a full and complete measure of the economic costs associated with violence by every victim would not be realistic, and therefore, the economic costing exercise had to be carried out with certain assumptions, focusing on the immediate and direct impacts of violence in order to establish an estimate of the annual cost incurred by ever-married women due to the experience of physical and/or sexual violence by a husband in the last 12 months.

The measure of the cost of violence in this study included: 1) out of pocket expenses such as health care, transport costs and property damage; 2) indirect costs such as days lost from paid or unpaid work; and 3) productivity loss which is the income difference between women who experienced violence and those who had not.

It should also be noted that measuring the economic costs of violence is very complex, involving not only direct and immediate costs but also indirect and medium/long term costs. In addition, women may not recall all their expenses or time off from work at the time that the study is conducted. It is, therefore, it is safe to conclude that the costs of violence against women are substantially *underestimated*.



## **8. NOT EVERYBODY OR EVERY WOMAN IN THE STUDY WILL HAVE THE SAME DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE. HOW DO YOU COMPARE A LIGHT SLAP IN THE FACE DURING AN ARGUMENT WITH BEATING BY FISTS AND BOOTS?**

Data on violence is collected using questions on specific behavioural acts, without using the word violence. Many of these acts have been listed above under question 5. One of these questions is indeed about whether a woman has been slapped by her husband; other questions ask about acts such as kicking, burning, strangling, etc. Women are also asked about the frequency of these different acts of violence and whether they have been injured as a result of violence. When calculating VAW prevalence rates, we combine the answers to

questions on specific acts of violence. The data show that it is rare for women who experience violence from their husband to have suffered a single slap. Most women who disclose violence experience a combination of different types of violence, and it occurs multiple times over prolonged periods.



## **9. HOW CAN YOU BE SURE THAT THE WOMEN ARE NOT LYING OR EXAGGERATING?**

Being a victim/survivor of violence carries a huge stigma, so the rates disclosed in VAW prevalence surveys are most likely to be an *underestimate*. In all VAW surveys that have been done, a common finding is that many women have told no one about their situation before being interviewed in the survey.

The most severe cases of violence against women are not captured in these surveys, such as: women who have been killed; women who are incapacitated or institutionalized because of the injuries caused by violence; women who are locked up, prohibited to talk to interviewers and women who are scared that more violence will occur if she answers the questions honestly and therefore does not disclose her experiences.

A well conducted survey will get the best possible picture of the situation in the general population; however, the real situation is likely to be worse than what the data show.



## **10. WHY ARE THE FINDINGS FROM SURVEYS DIFFERENT/BETTER THAN THE OFFICIAL FIGURES BASED ON POLICE RECORDS OR WOMEN'S SHELTERS?**

Only a very few women who experience violence seek help from different agencies, including the police, and usually only do so when the violence is severe and when they cannot endure it any longer. Many women do not seek help because they perceive what is happening to them to

be normal, are afraid of bringing shame to the family, or having to endure the consequences of asking for help.

National surveys provide the opportunity for women who do not report to service providers/ authorities (such as health services or police) to talk about the violence they experience. Agency reports (such as from police and shelters) only reflect those women who do come forward and

this is usually the tip of the iceberg, hence the huge difference in the figures between different data sources.

*Note: The 2019 study findings confirm that most women (90.4 per cent) who ever experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a husband/ partner did not seek help. Just 4.8 per cent had ever sought help from the police.*

**General Statistics Office of Viet Nam**  
Website: <http://www.gso.gov.vn>  
Email: [xahoimoitruong@gso.gov.vn](mailto:xahoimoitruong@gso.gov.vn)  
Phone: (+84) 24 7304 6666

**Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs**  
Website: <http://www.molisa.gov.vn>  
Phone: (+84) 24 3825 3875

**United Nations Population Fund**  
Website: <http://vietnam.unfpa.org>  
<http://www.facebook.com/unfpa.vietnam/>  
Phone: (+84) 24 3850 0100



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