

# Challenges in measuring Violence against women



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**Training course in  
Sexual Health research**

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World Health Organization

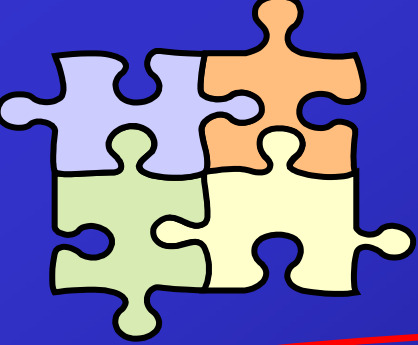
Gender, Women and Health



# Objective of this training session

- **To discuss some essential principles and challenges around measuring violence against women**
- **To give you access to the tools and resources that you may want to use...**





1. Sources of data on violence against women
2. Definitions: study population, violence
3. Development of questionnaire, including translation
4. Examples of questions, results and presentation of data (WHO VAW Study)



# Sources for data on prevalence of VAW



- Records from police, courts, hospital, etc
- Newspaper articles
- Population based surveys:
  - National crime victimization surveys
  - Demographic and reproductive health surveys
  - Focussed specialized surveys
  - Short module added to other surveys



Service based data do not represent the actual situation in the population ...



According to police records in Nicaragua, 3,000 women reported domestic violence in 1995

According to population based surveys 150,000 women suffered domestic violence in 1995



# Service based records are not easy to interpret...



- In 1997 more than 8,000 cases were reported
- Did rates of violence increase?
- During this period special police stations for women were opened throughout the country, and media campaigns carried out





More services and better quality of care



More women reporting violence

**KNOW WHAT YOUR  
DATA TELL YOU**



# What about population-based data on prevalence of violence?



- Prevalence figures on violence are highly sensitive to methodological issues
- Population-based research on violence raises major issues of safety and ethics
- Results useful for understanding the magnitude and characteristics of violence





# What is your objective?



- To raise awareness about the problem
- To influence policy

**Short  
module**

- To monitor trends
- To contribute to indicators at global level
- To compare between countries
- To understand more about violence, the associations, risk and protective factors

**Special  
survey**

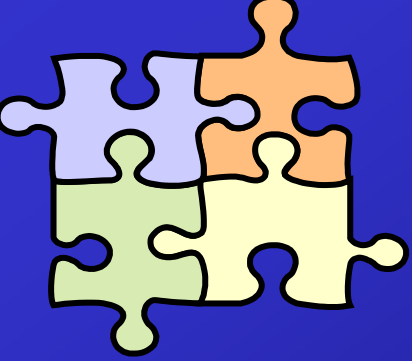


# Minimum conditions for using a short module



- Measures to protect safety of respondents and interviewers
- Crisis intervention and referrals to specialized services for respondents who need this
- Special training and emotional support and follow-up for interviewers





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# UN Definition of Violence against Women



- "Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering of women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or in private life".



# How common is violence against women?



## Definition of Prevalence

# women who have experienced **abuse** in a certain **period of time**

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**"at risk" women** in the study population



# Defining the study population



- Cutoff ages
- Marital / relationship experience
- Regional vs. national studies

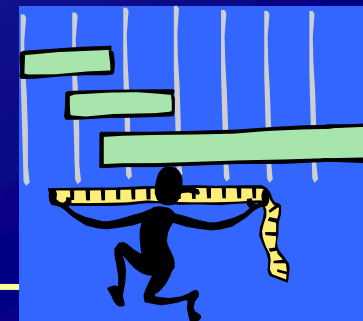




<b>Country</b>	<b>Study population</b>
Canada	Women > 18
Chile	Women 22-55 married for >2 years
Colombia	Women 15-49 currently married
Nicaragua (DHS)	Women 15-49 ever married
Philippines	Women 15-49 with pregnancy outcome



# WHO VAW study



<b>Country</b>	<b>Study population</b>
Bangladesh	Women 15-49 ever married
Peru	Women 15-49 ever married/cohabiting, ever dating
Serbia and Montenegro	Women 15-49 ever married/cohabiting, currently dating





# Effect of “study population” on reported prevalence estimates in Nicaragua



	<b>Current physical violence</b>
All women 15-49	20%
Ever partnered women 15-49	27%
Currently partnered women 15-49	30%



# Defining violence



- Who defines: the researcher or the respondent?
- Types of violence, severity
- Time frame
- Frequency
- Multiple perpetrators



# Researcher vs. Self-Defined Rates of Past Year Abuse (Japan)



<u>Type of Violence</u>	<u>Researcher</u> (percent)	<u>Self</u>
Any violence	45	27
Physical	14.7	11.4
Emotional	42	23.2
Sexual	8.5	4.7



# Studies have used:

- Any kind of physical, sexual, or emotional violence by any perpetrator at any time.
- One or more acts of physical violence by a partner at any time.
- Only physical violence of a certain level of severity, or which has been repeated a certain number of times.
- Only acts of partner violence occurring in the last year.
- Economic, as well as physical, sexual, or emotional violence.
- Any behavior that women themselves identify as abusive by virtue of its intent or effect



# Single versus multiple questions to measure abuse, Nicaragua



Since you were 15, has anyone ever hit or physically mistreated you? Who?

- 14% of women reported abuse by partner

Using a more detailed instrument that asked about occurrence and frequency of acts...

- 29% of women reported physical abuse by a partner





*“...In the first question, they would say that he didn't beat them, but when we got to the other questions, then they would say yes, sometime he beats me and kicks me or uses a gun, or whatever.”*

*(interviewer, Nicaraguan DHS)*



# Factors that affect disclosure



- How the questions are phrased
- Number of opportunities to disclose
- Context in which questions are asked
- Characteristics and skill of interviewers
- Social stigma attached to issue



"Because I belong to this Herero culture, I can speak to my family about any form of violence except sexual violence. I had the chance in this study to talk with a stranger about what I was suffering. It helped me a lot, it took a burden away"

Respondent in Namibia



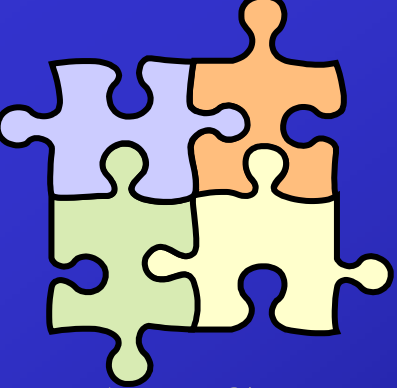


# Suggestions for measuring violence against women



- Define the study population broadly
- Use behaviorally specific questions: specific acts
- Specify discrete time frames (last year, ever)
- Give multiple opportunities to disclose
- Cue respondent to different contexts and perpetrators





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# Types of domestic violence in WHO study



- Partner violence: physical, sexual, emotional
- Violence in pregnancy
- Violence resulting in injuries
  
- Physical violence by others (>15)
- Sexual violence by others (>15)
- Childhood sexual abuse (<15)
- Forced first sex



# Questionnaire development (WHO VAW study)



- Result of a long process of discussion, consultation and consensus building
- Experiences of IRNVAW
- Formative research in first 5 countries
- Inputs from technical experts in specific areas, including VAW, reproductive health, mental health, drug & alcohol use
- Input from Expert Steering Committee
- Field test results from 7 countries



# Women's Health and Life Experiences - Questionnaire



**Section 1: Respondent and her community**

**Section 2: General Health**

**Section 3: Reproductive health**

**Section 4: Children**

**Section 5: Current or most recent partner**

**Section 6: Attitudes toward gender roles**

**Section 7: Respondent and her partner**

**Section 8: Injuries**

**Section 9: Impact and coping**

**Section 10: Other experiences**

**Section 11: Financial autonomy**

**Section 12: Completion of the interview**



# Translation of questionnaire (1)



- Professional translation into local languages.
- Use if possible formative research
- Professional back-translations are not a very reliable way to check the accuracy of questions on violence and its consequences.
- The translated questionnaire should in first instance be checked by local researchers involved in the study

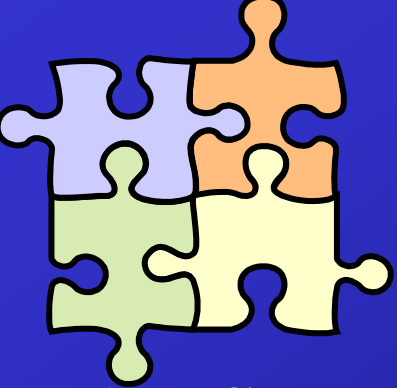


# Translation of questionnaire (2)



- **Oral back translation sessions, to identify differences in translations which could alter the meaning and to establish cognitive understanding of the items in the questionnaire.**
- **Having interviewers from various cultural backgrounds helps in ascertaining whether wording used is culturally acceptable. During the training: further revisions to the translation.**
- **During the field pilot final modifications to fine-tune the translated questionnaire.**





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# Introduction of Section 7 to ask about violence experience

*“ When two people marry or live together, they usually share both good and bad moments. I would now like to ask you some questions about your current and past relationships and how your husband / partner treats (treated) you. If anyone interrupts us I will change the topic of conversation. I would again like to assure you that your answers will be kept secret, and that you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to. May I continue?”*



Has your partner ever..... (in the last 12 months has this happened once, a few times, many times?)

WHO Study

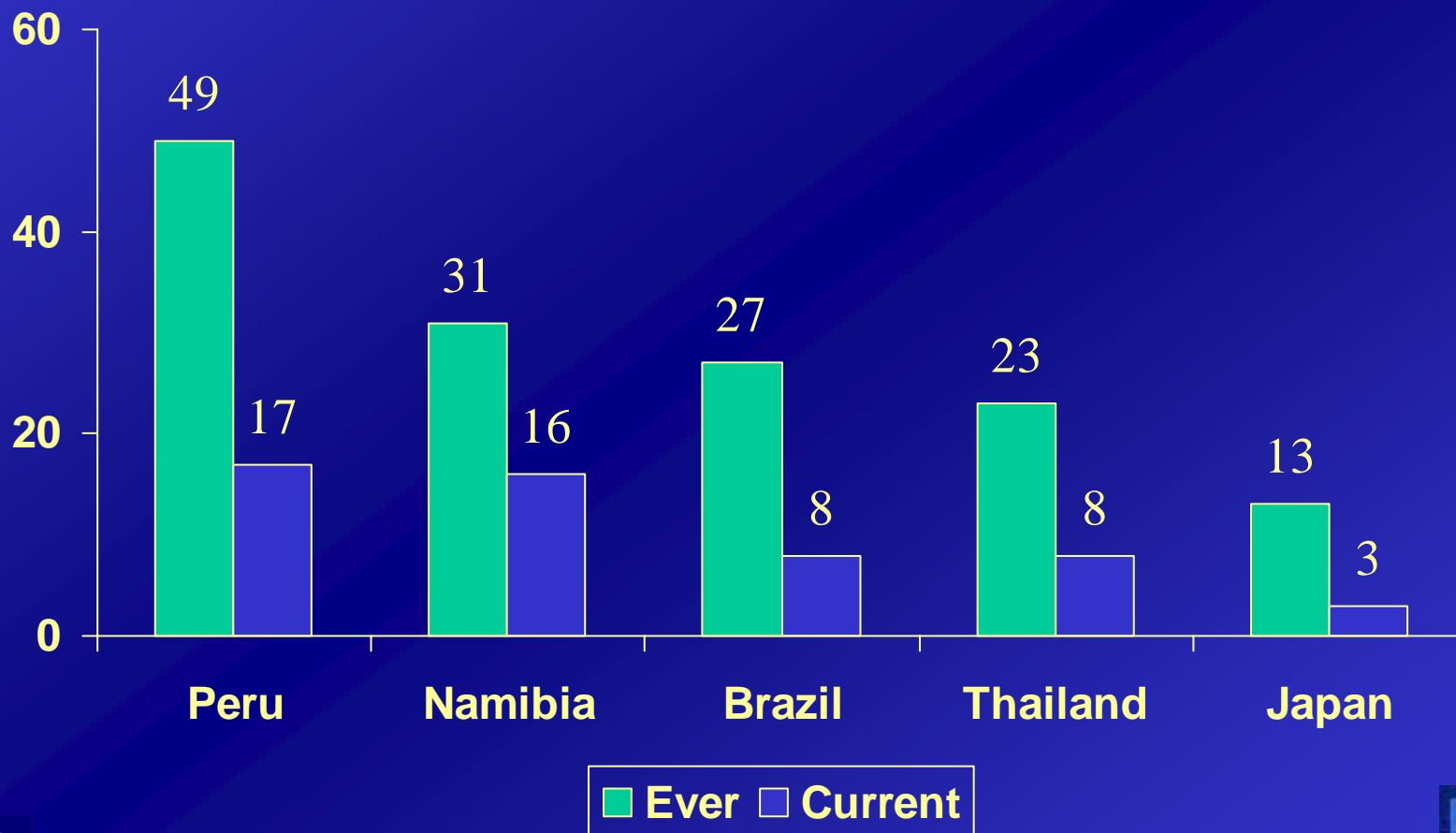
- Slapped or threw something at that could hurt you?
- Pushed or shoved you or pulled your hair?
- Hit with his fist or with something else that could hurt you?
- Kicked, dragged or beat you up?
- Choked or burnt you on purpose?
- Threatened to use or actually used a gun, knife or other weapon against you?

Moderate

Severe



# Lifetime and current physical partner violence



# Measurement of sexual violence by partner

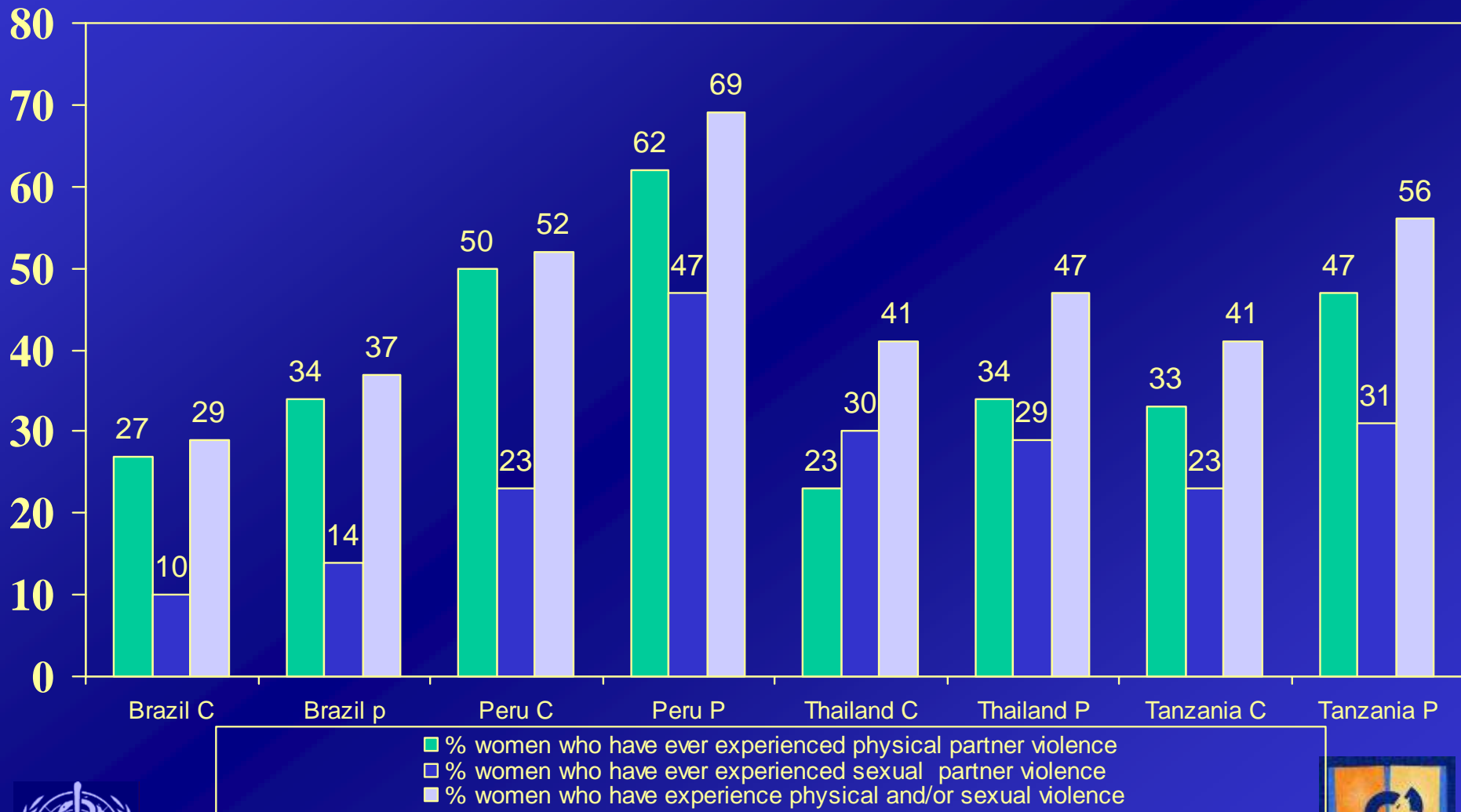
## WHO Study

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- Were you ever physically forced to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to?
- Did you ever have sexual intercourse you did not want because you were afraid of what he might do?
- Ever force you to do something sexual that you found degrading or humiliating?

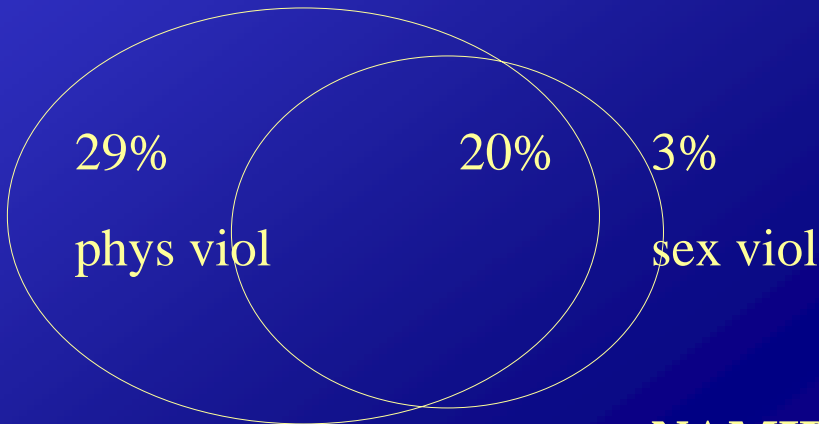


# Prevalence of physical or sexual partner violence

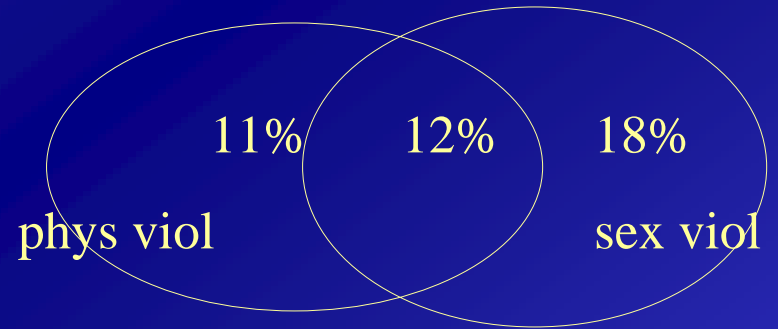


# Overlap lifetime physical and sexual violence

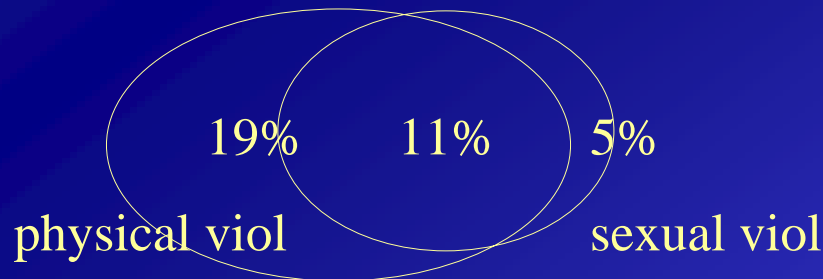
## PERU - CAP



## THAILAND - CAP



## NAMIBIA - CAP



# Measurement of Child Sexual Abuse

## WHO Study

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- Before the age of 15, do you remember if any one in your family ever touched you sexually or made you do something sexual that you didn't want to?
  - If yes, who did this to you?
  - How old were you when it happened for the first time?
  - How old was this person?
  - How many times did this happen? Once/twice; few, many?
- Probes: school, friend or family, neighbor; stranger or anyone else?

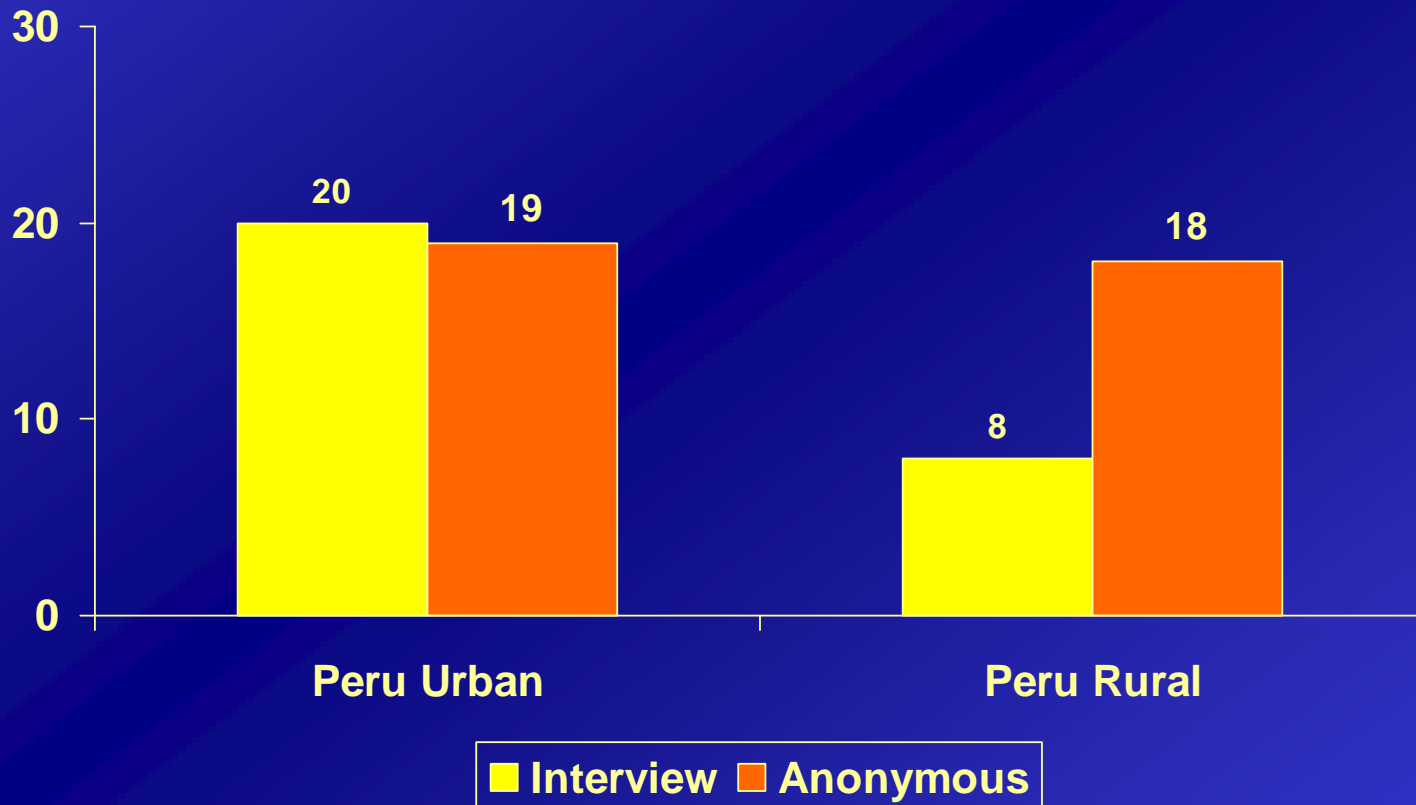


# Anonymous reporting of sexual abuse before age 15

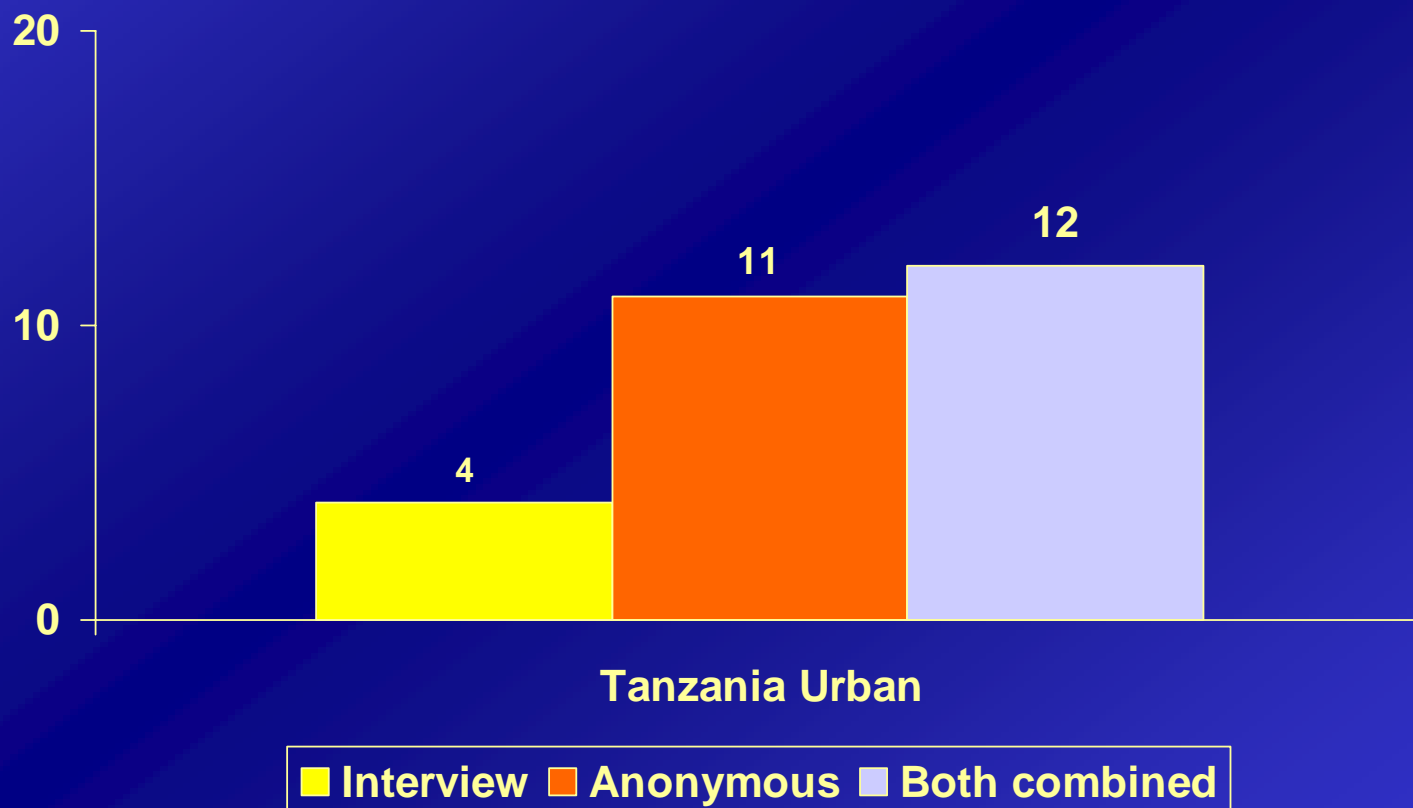




# Comparison of methods of measuring sexual abuse before age 15



# Percentage reporting sexual abuse before age 15, Tanzania



# CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Know your questions! Do you want to create awareness? Are there specific issues that need to be addressed: E.g. Crime prevention, health? From where is the demand coming?
- Find out what information already exists
- If you decide on a study: keep your objectives in mind.



- Ensure buy in of stake-holders, build local partnerships from the beginning
- Do not reinvent the wheel!
- Get technical advice, tools, manuals, support from those who have the experience
- Take all measures possible for safe and ethically sound data collection (including due attention to interviewer training!!...)
- ...and data interpretation and use!





THANK  
YOU

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World Health Organization

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