

Challenges in measuring **Violence against women**



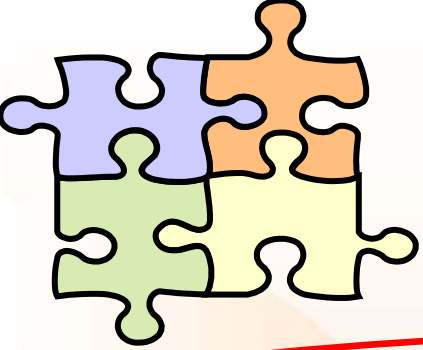
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Department of Reproductive Health and Research

**Training Course in Sexual and Reproductive Health Research
Geneva, February 2009**

Objectives 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

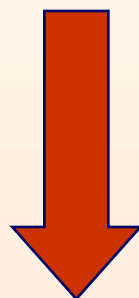
Service based records are not easy to interpret...



- 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?



**Short
module**

- To raise awareness about the problem
- To influence policy

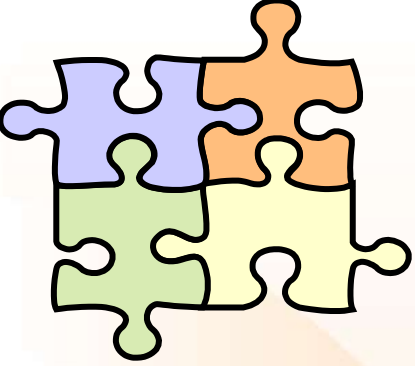
- To monitor trends
- To contribute to indicators at global level
- To compare between countries
- To understand more about violence, the associations, risk and protective factors

**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 violence in a certain period of time

"at risk" women in the study population

Defining the study population



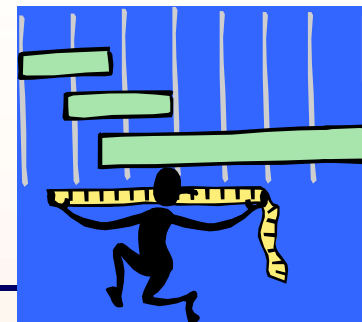
- Cutoff ages
- Marital / relationship experience
- Regional vs. national studies



Country	Study population
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

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WHO VAW study



Country	Study population
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



	Current physical violence
All women 15-49	20%
Ever partnered women 15-49	27%
Currently partnered women 15-49	30%

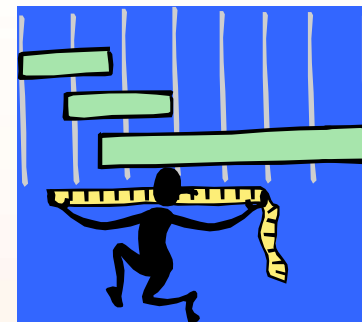
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Defining violence



- 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)



Type of Violence

Researcher

Self

(percent)

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"

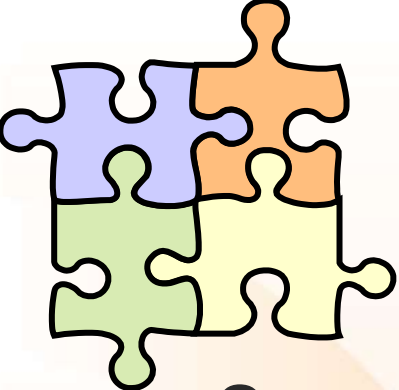
Respondent in Namibia



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)

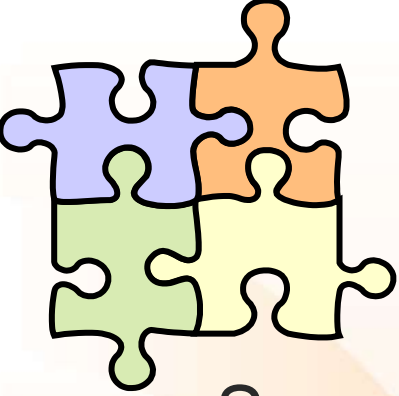


- Professional translation into local languages.
- Use if possible formative research
- Professional back-translations are not a very reliable way to check the accuracy of questions on violence and its consequences.
- The translated questionnaire should in first instance be checked by local researchers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

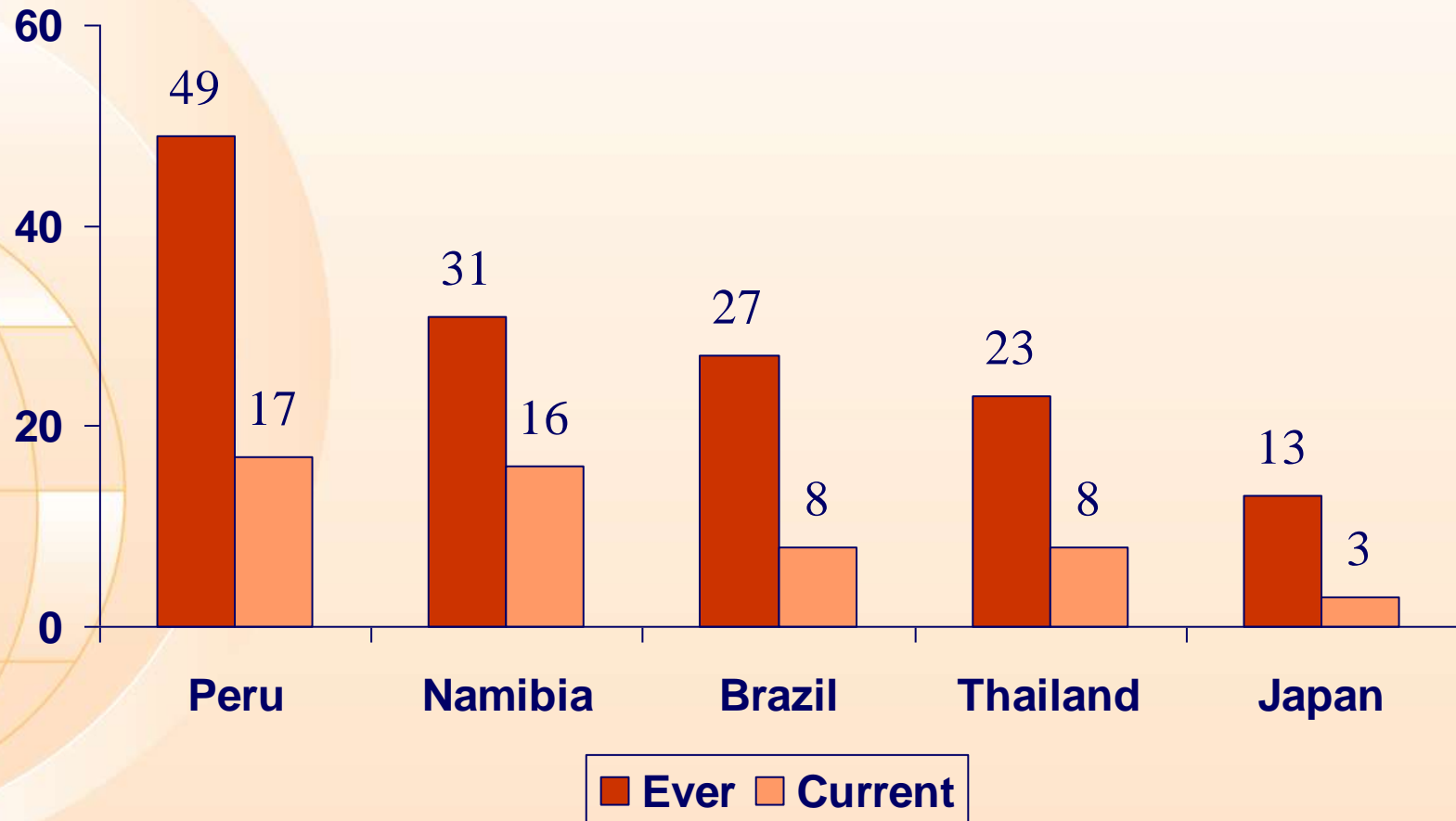
WHO Study

- 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

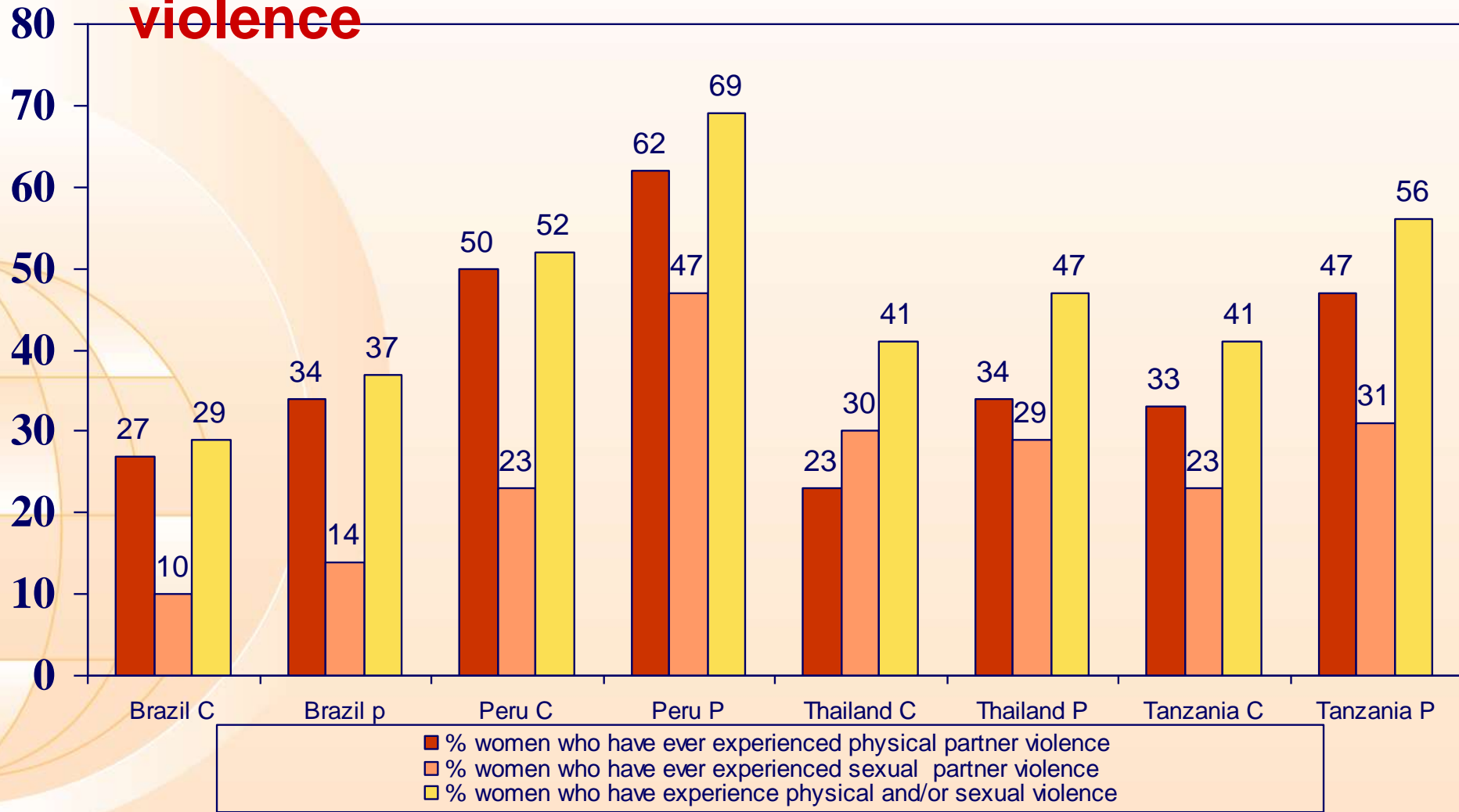


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Measurement of sexual violence by partner WHO Study

- 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?

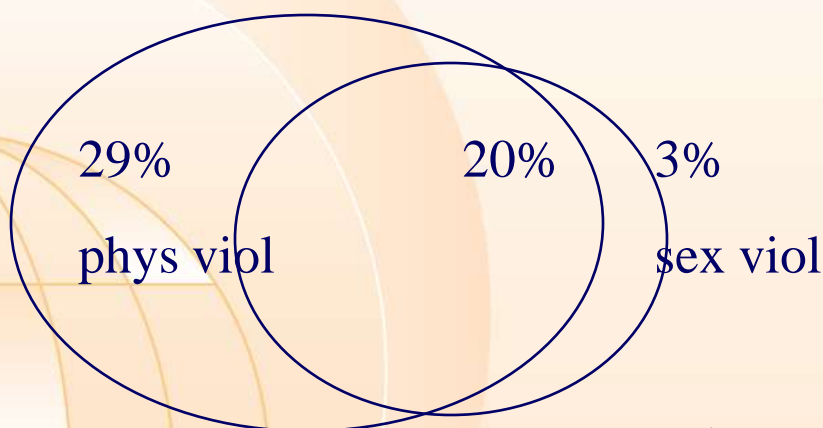
Prevalence of physical or sexual partner violence



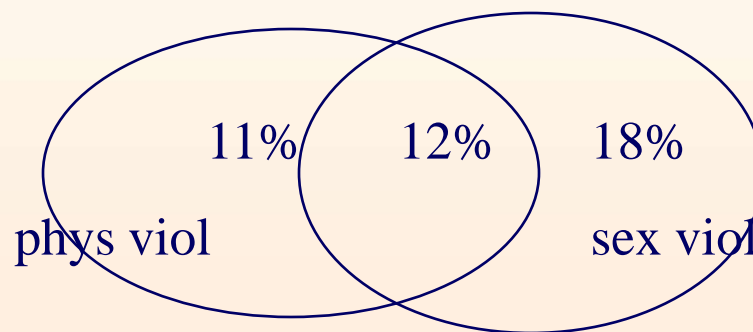
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Overlap lifetime physical and sexual violence

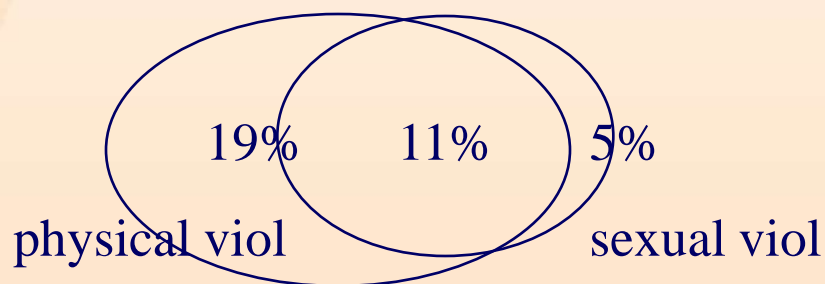
PERU - CAP



THAILAND - CAP



NAMIBIA - CAP



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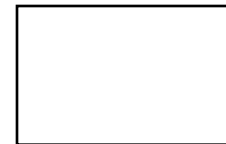
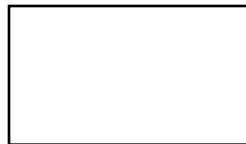
Measurement of Child Sexual Abuse

WHO Study

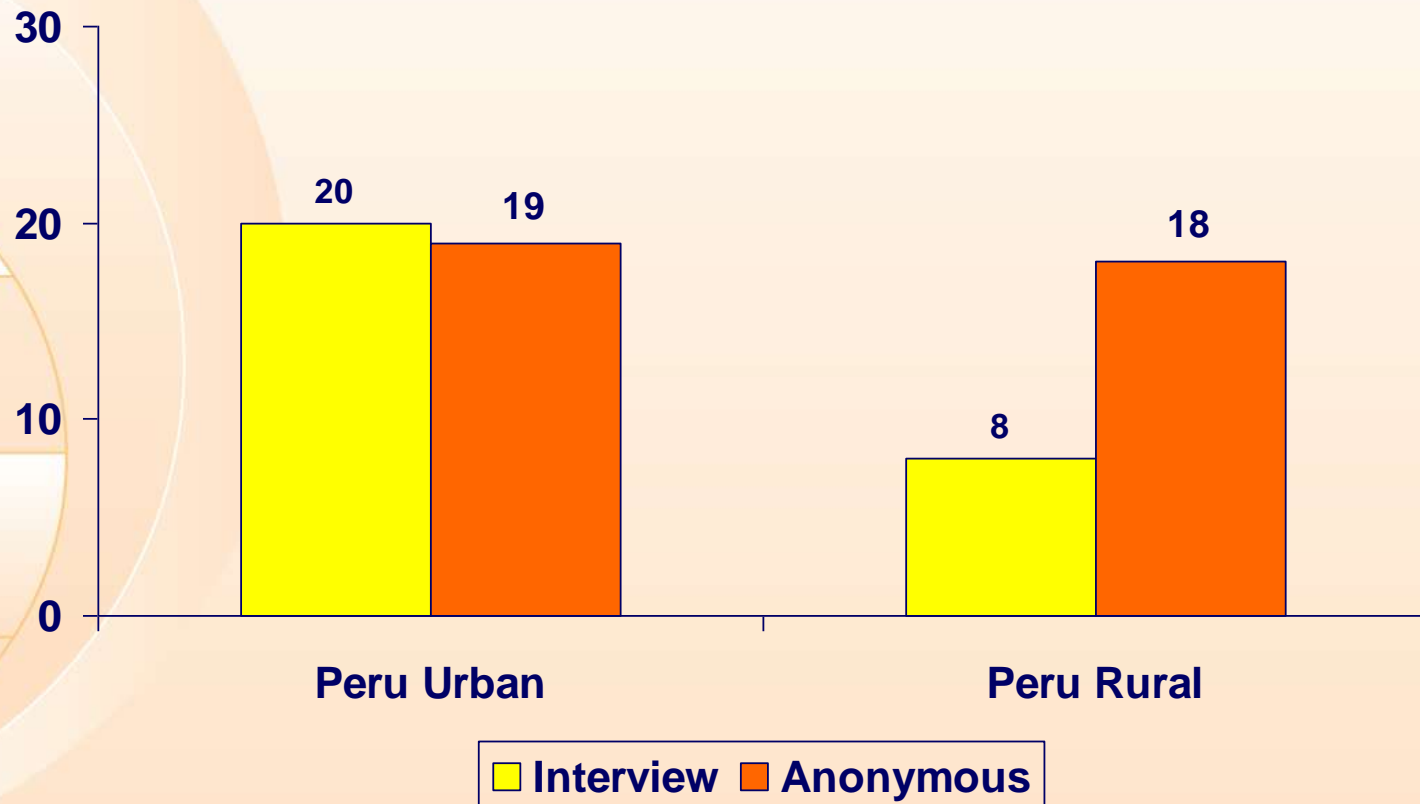
- Before the age of 15, do you remember if any one in your family ever touched you sexually or made you do something sexual that you didn't want to?
 - If yes, who did this to you?
 - How old were you when it happened for the first time?
 - How old was this person?
 - How many times did this happen?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

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Anonymous reporting of sexual abuse before age 15

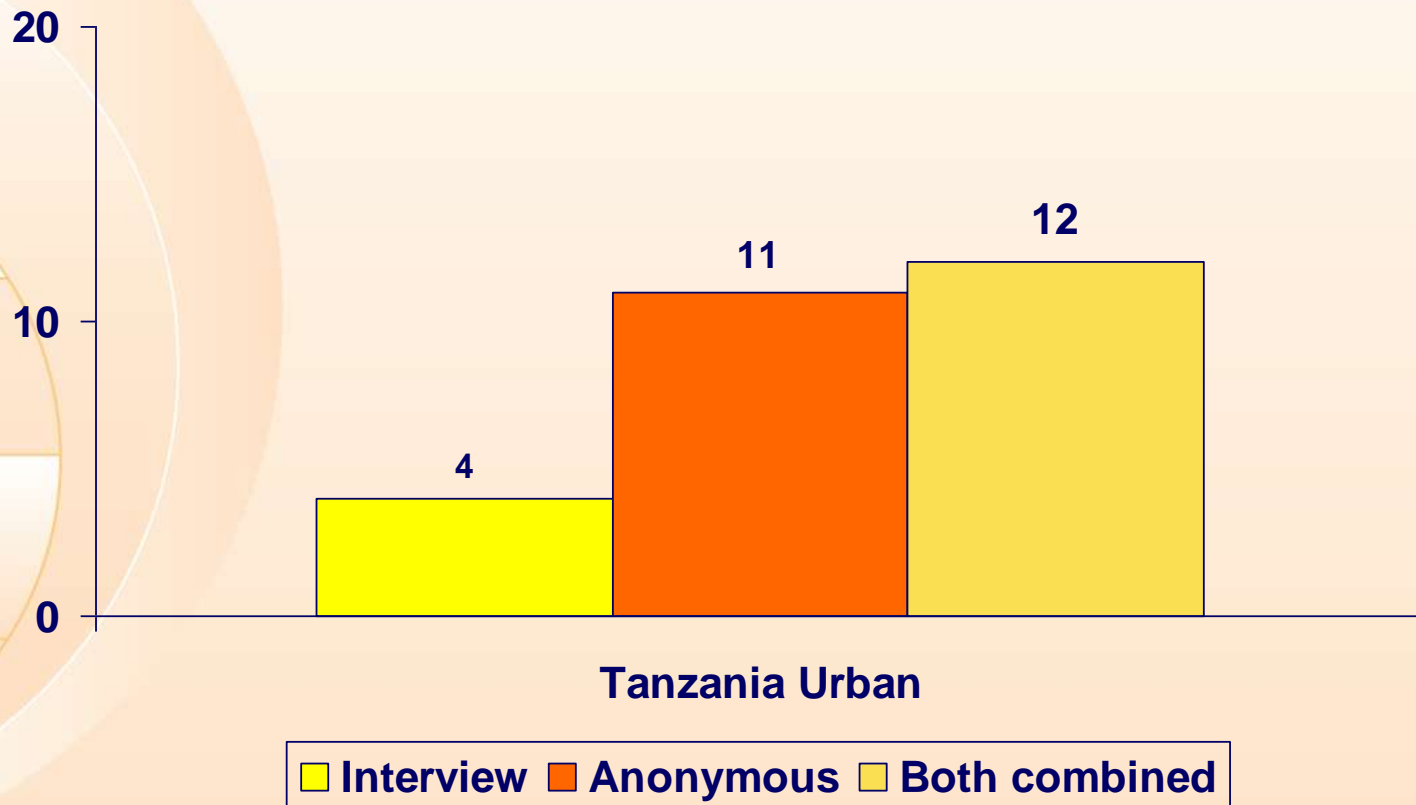


Comparison of methods of measuring sexual abuse before age 15



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Percentage reporting sexual abuse before age 15, Tanzania

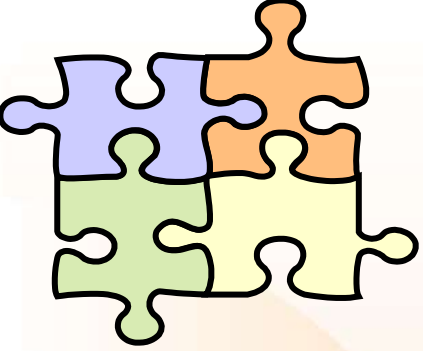


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CONCLUDING REMARKS

- 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!

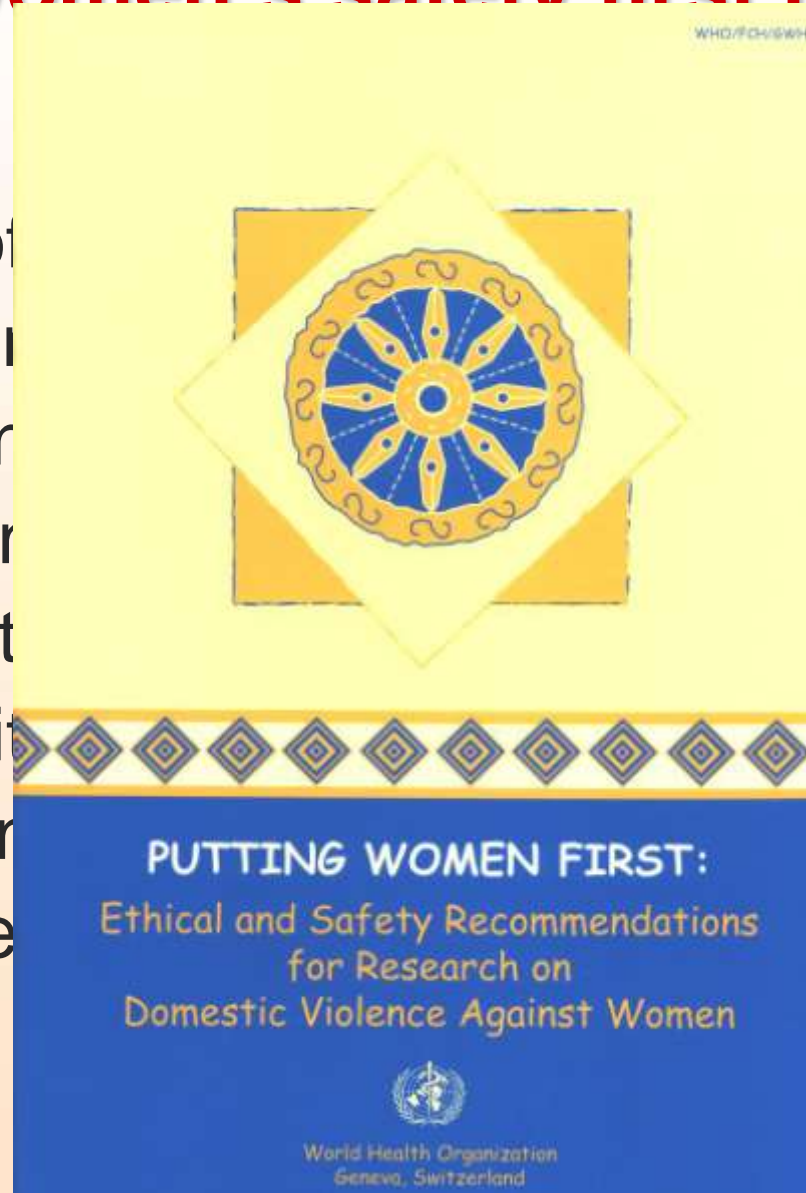


Ethical and safety issues

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Putting women's safety first in violence

- 1. Safety of
- 2. Studies in
- 3. Confidentiality
- 4. Selection of
- 5. Actions to
- 6. Possibilities
- 7. Proper in
- 8. Violence



Research team
Ethically sound
High quality
Diverse members
Responsible respondents
Transparent mechanisms
Clear study results
Accessible ways

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1. Safety of respondents and research team

- Interviews only in a private setting, participant should feel free to reschedule or relocate
- Frame the study not in terms of violence (but further information should be give as part of consent procedure)
- Only one woman per household
- Train interviewers about interruptions
- Logistics and budget planning should consider respondent and interviewer safety

2. Studies need to be methodologically sound

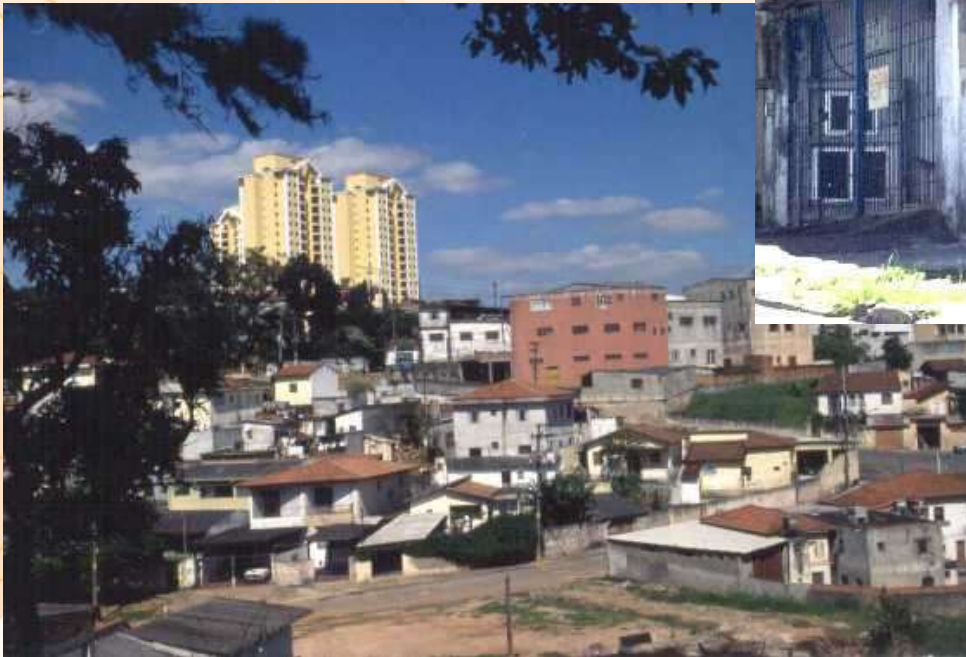
- Ethically it is unacceptable to conduct a poorly designed study that cannot address the aims
- Practically too: too low estimates can be used to question the importance of violence
- Avoid loaded terms as abuse, rape, violence
- Give attention to wording, length of interview, multiple opportunities for disclosure, etc.
- Sex, skill, attitude and training of interviewer
- When results unexpected, discuss findings with key informants, community groups before dissemination

3. Confidentiality for safety and data quality

- Address this in training of interviewers; no interviewers working in their own community
- Confidentiality procedures, consent process
- Handling of names
- Presentation of findings: no one community or individual can be identified
- Handling of photographs

Fieldwork

Brazil



4. Selection and training of team members

- Training should include introduction on gender and violence
- Training as opportunity for research staff to come to terms with own experiences
- Addressing emotional needs of team members
- Role of interviewers: Not counselling, not trying to "save" respondents

Goals of interviewer training

- To increase sensitivity of participants to gender issues at a personal as well as a community level;
- To develop a basic understanding of gender-based violence, its characteristics, causes and impact on the health of women and children;
- To understand the goals of the Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence;
- To learn skills for interviewing, taking into account safety and ethical guidelines;
- To become familiar with the questionnaire and protocol of the Violence against Women Study.

Interviewer Training



5. Actions to reducing distress to respondents

- Ask all questions in supportive and non-judgemental manner (language of questions)
- Train interviewers to deal with distress
- Train when and how to terminate interview
- All interviews should end in a positive manner

- *"Somehow it made me feel good, because it was something that I had never told anyone before. Now I've told someone".*
- --Respondent, Brazil



6. Possibilities of referral, support mechanisms

- If possible meet prior to field work with potential providers of support
- Develop list of resources and offer to all respondents – either small enough to be hidden or include a range of other services
- Where few resources exist, consider having a trained counsellor or women's advocate accompany the teams

7. Proper interpretation and use of study results

- Research findings should be fed into ongoing advocacy, policy-making and intervention activities
- Involve advocacy and service groups etc from the beginning as part of research team or advisory committee. Also in use and advocacy
- Researchers need to be proactive in ensuring that research findings are interpreted appropriately by public and media-

Conclusions

- A population based survey on violence against women should be and can be done ethically and safely
- Women are willing to share experiences with trained and empathetic interviewers



THANK
YOU

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