



WHO's landmark study documents the horrifying extent of violence against women by their intimate partners. It also clearly shows that violence against women demands a public health response, because the impact of such violence goes far beyond the immediate harm caused, affecting all aspects of women's future health.

This summary outlines the initial results of the study based on evidence collected from over 24 000 women by carefully trained teams of interviewers. It presents the findings from 15 sites in 10 countries representing diverse cultural settings: Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Peru, Namibia, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Thailand, and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Focusing on the prevalence of violence by intimate partners, and the associations

between such violence and women's physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health, the report also deals with non-partner violence, sexual abuse during childhood and forced first sexual experience.

Who do women turn to and whom do they tell about the violence in their lives? Although some women leave home and some fight back, the shocking answer in too many cases is nobody.

The report culminates in 15 recommendations to strengthen national commitment and action on violence against women by promoting primary prevention, harnessing education systems, strengthening health sector responses, supporting women living with violence, sensitizing criminal justice systems, and undertaking research and enhancing collaboration.

## Summary report

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

Initial results on prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses



World Health Organization

ISBN 92 4 159351 2



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The World Health Organization was established in 1948 as a specialized agency of the United Nations serving as the directing and coordinating authority for international health matters and public health. One of WHO's constitutional functions is to provide objective and reliable information and advice in the field of human health, a responsibility that it fulfils in part through its extensive programme of publications.

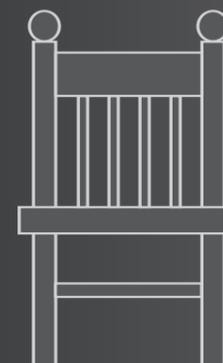
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“ After knowing I was pregnant, he changed. No more sweet and kind words from him... He would hit me and throw things at me. He meant to kill me. Once he lifted a table and threw it at me... I survived. Later that night, we fought. He used a broom to hit me several times. I was bruised all over. I was in such a great pain never experienced before... ”

Woman interviewed in Thailand



“ So I take a blanket and I spend the night with my children out in the cold because he is hitting me too much and I have to take the kids to stop him hitting them too. I would go up the mountain, and sleep there all night. I've done that more than ten times... ”

Woman interviewed in Peru



Summary report **WHO Multi-country  
Study on Women's Health  
and Domestic Violence  
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and women's responses

### **WHO Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women: summary report of initial results on prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses.

1. Domestic violence 2. Sex offenses 3. Women's health 4. Cross-cultural comparison 5. Multicenter studies 6. Epidemiologic studies I. World Health Organization.

ISBN 92 4 159351 2 (NLM classification: WA 309)

Suggested citation: *WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women: summary report of initial results on prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses*. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2005.

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Designed by: Grundy & Northedge Designers

Printed in Switzerland

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## Preface

Violence against women by an intimate partner is a major contributor to the ill-health of women. This study analyses data from 10 countries and sheds new light on the prevalence of violence against women in countries where few data were previously available. It also uncovers the forms and patterns of this violence across different countries and cultures, documenting the consequences of violence for women's health. This information has important implications for prevention, care and mitigation.

The health sector can play a vital role in preventing violence against women, helping to identify abuse early, providing victims with the necessary treatment, and referring women to appropriate care. Health services must be places where women feel safe, are treated with respect, are not stigmatized, and where they can receive quality, informed support. A comprehensive health sector response to the problem is needed, in particular addressing the reluctance of abused women to seek help.

The high rates documented by the Study of sexual abuse experienced by girls and women are of great concern, especially in light of the HIV epidemic. Greater public awareness of this problem is needed and a strong public health response that focuses on preventing such violence from occurring in the first place.

The research specialists and the representatives of women's organizations who carried out the interviews and dealt so sensitively with the respondents deserve our warmest thanks. Most of all, I thank the 24 000 women who shared this important information about their lives, despite the many difficulties involved in talking about it. The fact that so many of them spoke about their own experience of violence for the first time during this study is both an indictment of the state of gender relations in our societies, and a spur for action. They, and the countries that carried out this groundbreaking research have made a vital contribution.

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