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“ He got this gun, I don't know from who... And he would tell the girls: "I'm going to kill your mother... The day will break and your mother will be dead right here..." I would sleep in a locked bedroom and with a dog inside the room with me. My dog. So he would not kill me. ”

Woman interviewed in Brazil



- **Background, objectives, methodology**
- **Results: Prevalence of violence, impact on health, women's responses**
- **Conclusion and recommendations**





## Beijing Platform for Action, 1995

### States that

"The absence of adequate sex-disaggregated data and statistics on the incidence of violence make the elaboration of programmes and monitoring of changes difficult..."

### Recommends

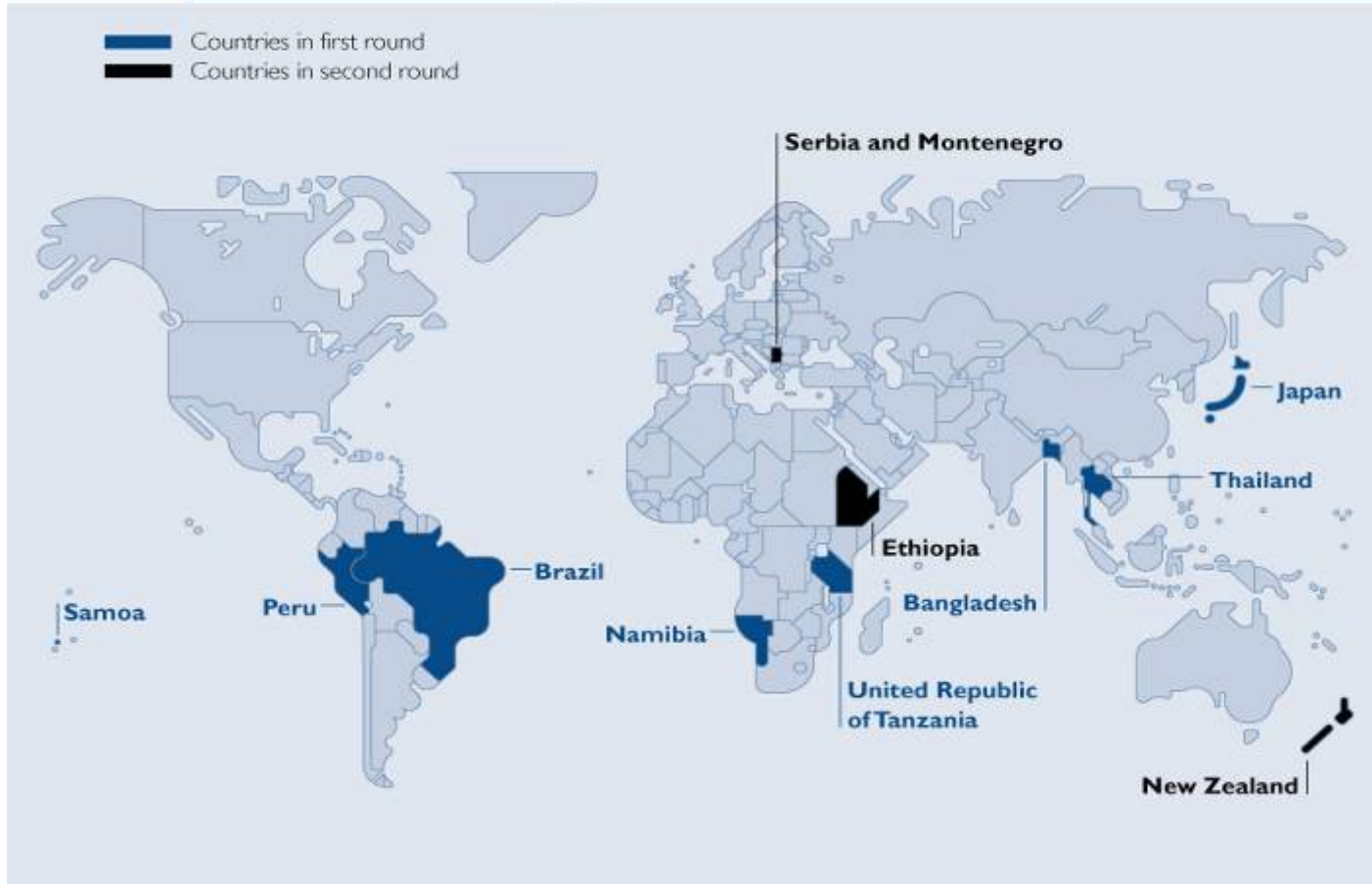
"The promotion of research and data collection on the prevalence of different forms of violence against women, especially domestic violence, and research into the causes, the nature and the consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of measures implemented to prevent and redress violence against women."





# Global study with interviews with 24 000 women in 10 countries

**Figure 1** Countries participating in the WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women





## Who is involved?

- Core research team:  
WHO, LSHTM, PATH
- Expert Steering Committee
- Country teams: research organization's and women's organizations
- Local consultative committees





## Objectives

- Estimates of prevalence of violence against women
- Associations between partner violence and health outcomes
- Risk and protective factors for partner violence
- Strategies used by women who experience partner violence (who do they talk to, where do they seek help, what response do they get)



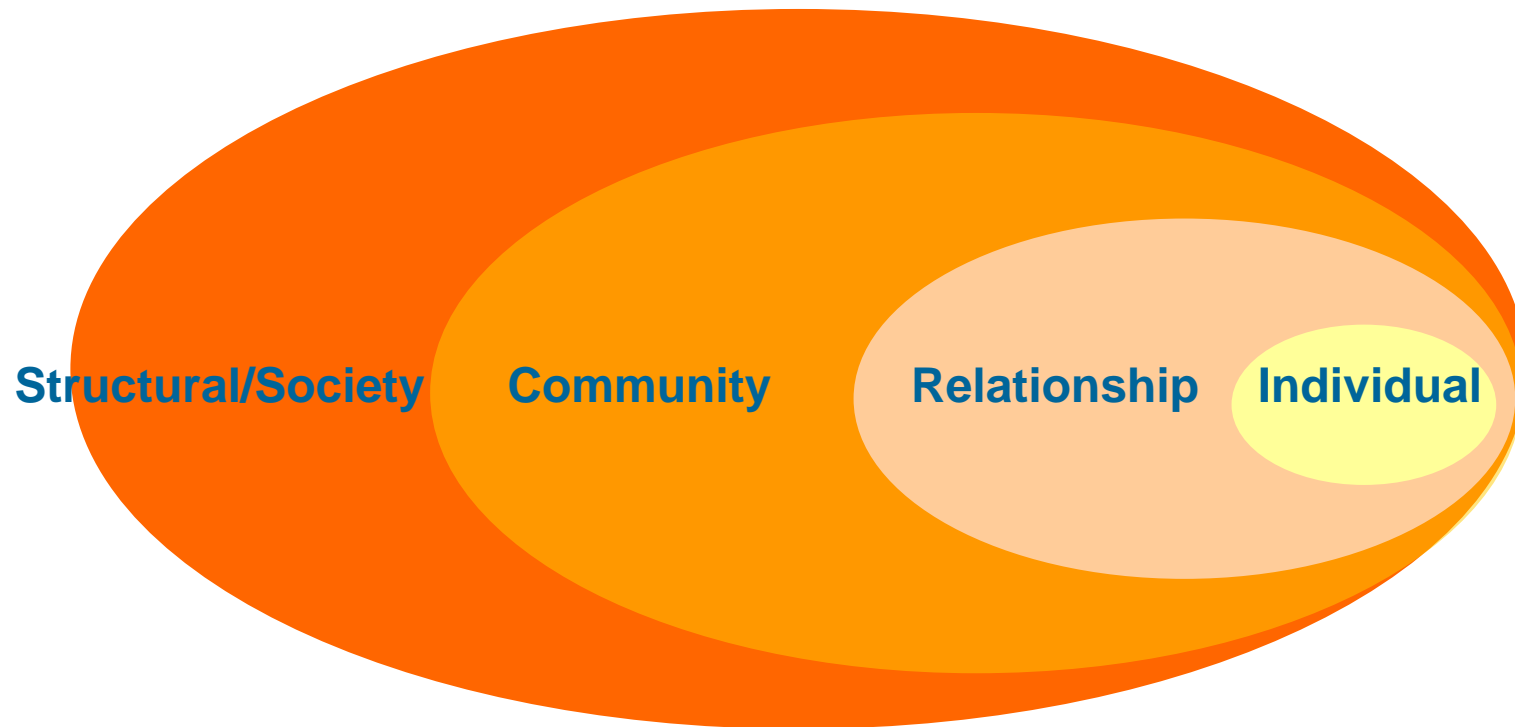
## Additional Objectives

- Develop and test new instruments for measuring violence cross-culturally
- Increase national capacity amongst researchers and women's organizations working on violence
- Increase sensitivity to violence among researchers, policy-makers and health providers
- Promote ethically sound research





# Ecological framework





## Risk and protective factors

- Individual
  - women's access and control of resources
  - witnessing marital violence as a child
  - being abused in childhood
- Family
  - willingness of family members to intervene
  - partner's loss of status
  - partner's use of alcohol
- Community
  - levels of crime
  - male on male violence
  - availability of services
- Society
  - norms around male dominance
  - approval of physical chastisement
  - male entitlement over women



## Study Design

- Quantitative household survey of women 15-49 years of age
- One or two sites per country: approx. 1500 women per site
- Standardized training and questionnaire
- Standardized quality control
- Ethical and safety recommendations: all participants provided with information about sources of support; follow up support offered





# 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



## Types of violence measured in WHO study

### Violence by current or former intimate partners:

- Physical violence
- Sexual violence
- Emotional abuse and controlling behaviours

### Violence by others (parents, neighbours, strangers, etc):

- Physical violence (after age 15 years)
- Sexual violence (after age 15 years)
- Childhood sexual abuse (prior to age 15 years)





## How was physical partner violence measured?

- Slapped or threw something at you 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**



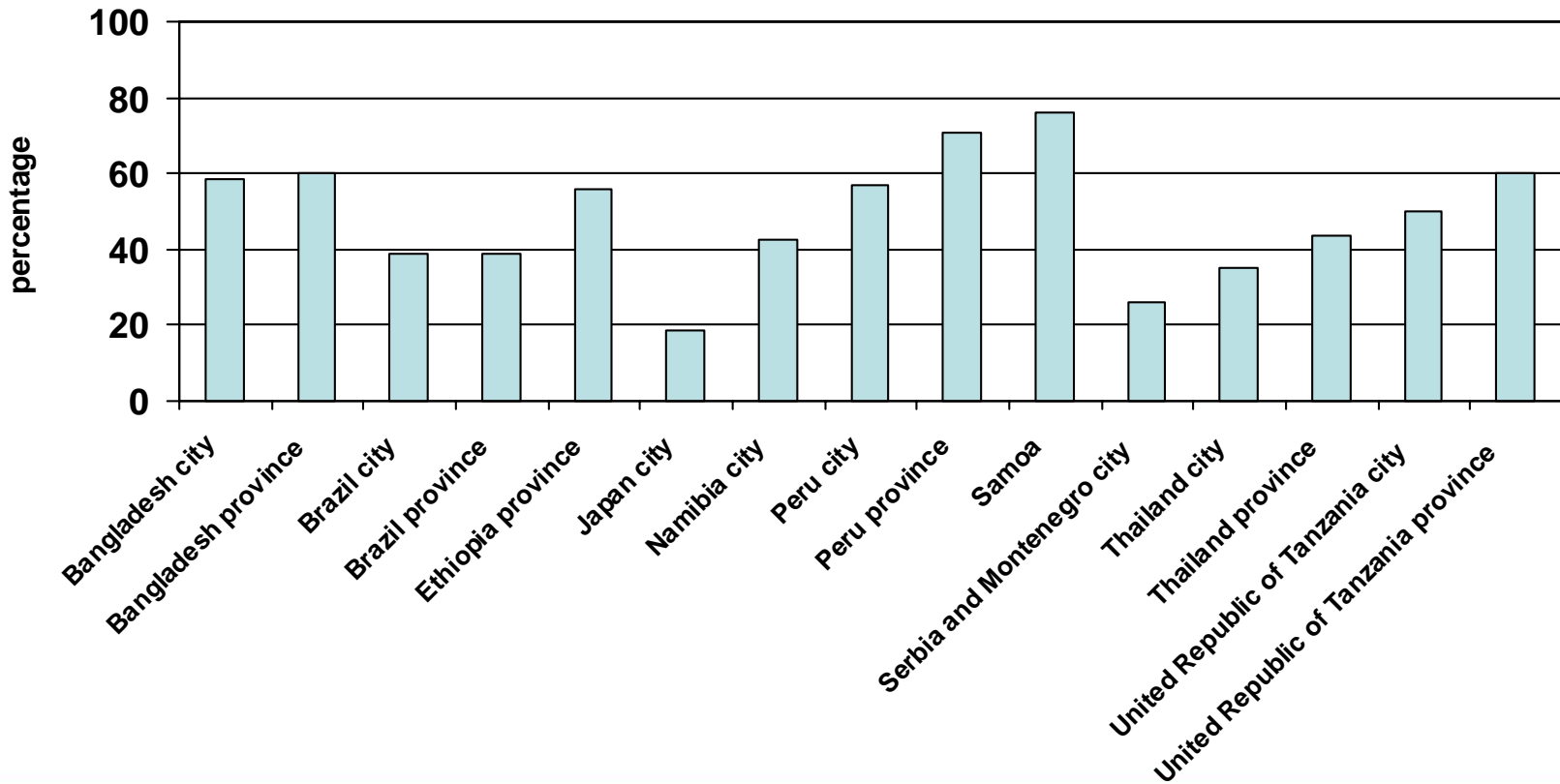
## How was sexual partner violence measured?

- 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?



# Physical and sexual violence is extremely common in women's lives

Prevalence of physical or sexual violence against women by anyone (partners and others), since age 15 years

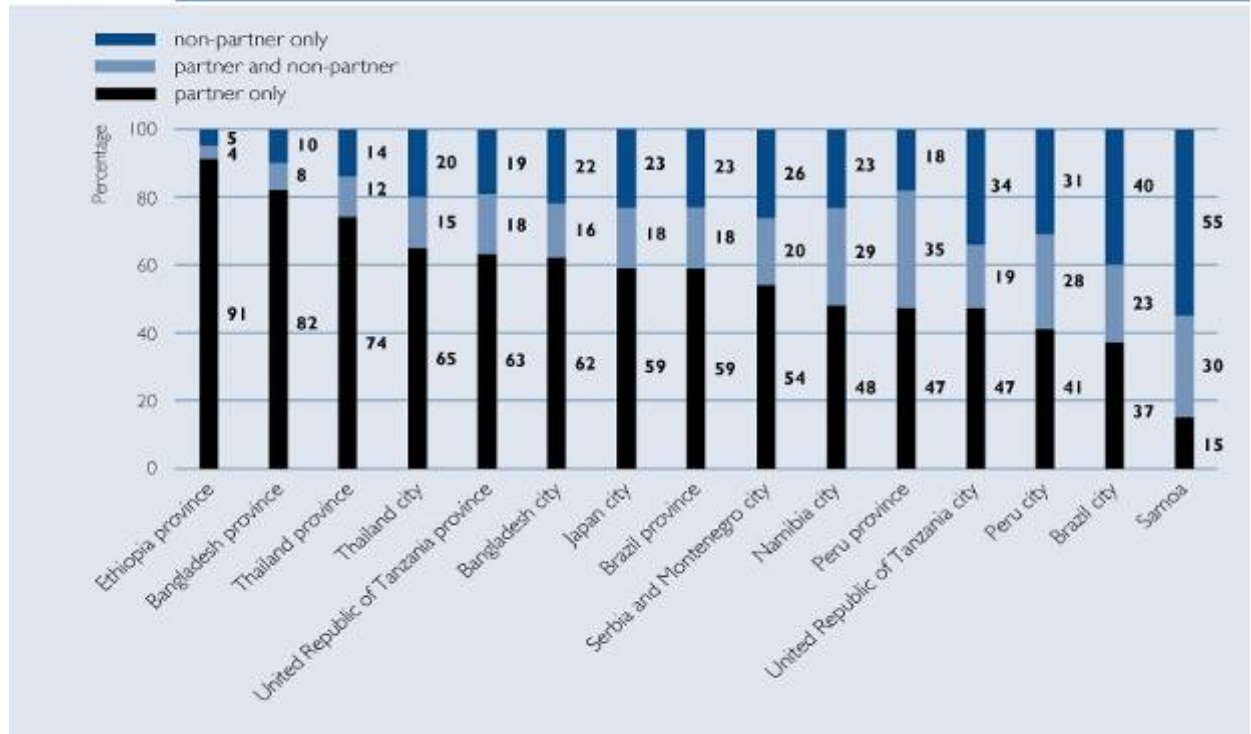




# Women's greatest risk of violence is from a partner

Women are more likely to be beaten or raped by their partners or husbands than by anyone else

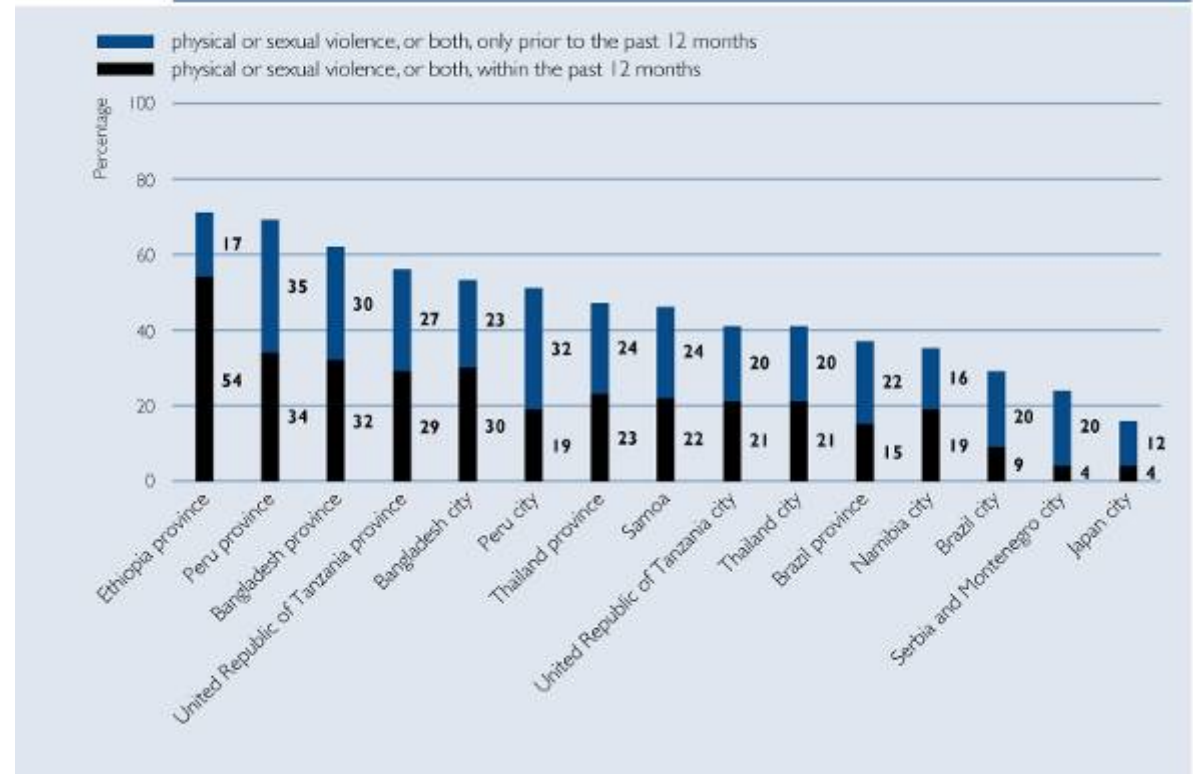
**Figure 7** Frequency distribution of partner and non-partner physical or sexual violence, or both, among women reporting such abuse since the age of 15 years, by site



# Domestic violence is prevalent but the level varies greatly among settings

- Rates of violence by intimate partners vary widely
- Generally about half of the women suffer ongoing violence

**Figure 4.2** Prevalence of physical or sexual violence, or both, by an intimate partner among ever-partnered women, according to when the violence took place, by site



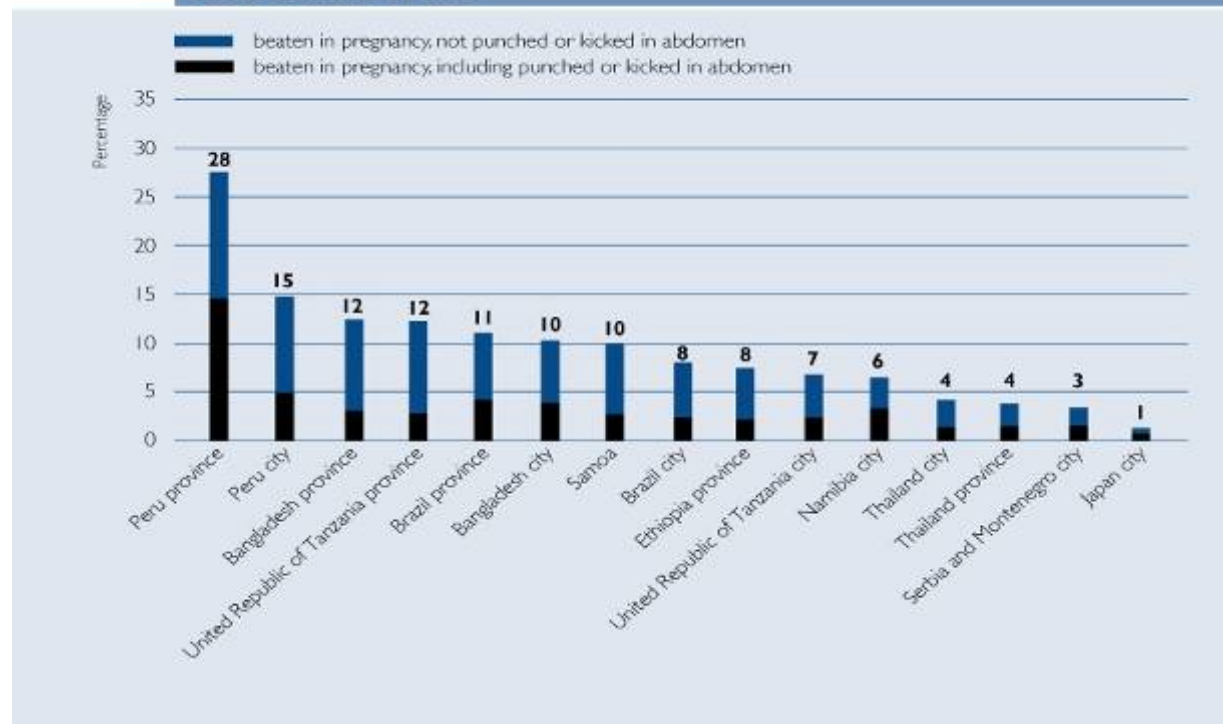


# Pregnancy is not necessarily a protected time

“ He hit me in the belly and made me miscarry two babies - identical or fraternal twins, I don't know. I went to the hospital with heavy bleeding and they cleaned me up. ”

Woman interviewed in Peru

**Figure 12** Percentage of ever-pregnant women who were ever beaten in at least one pregnancy, by site





## Many women internalize social norms justifying abuse

“ My husband slaps me, has sex with me against my will and I have to conform. Before being interviewed I didn't really think about this. I thought this is only natural. This is the way a husband behaves. ”

Woman interviewed in Bangladesh





# Percent of women who believe that a man is justified in beating his wife if...

	Wife disobeys	Wife refuses sex
Bangladesh province	39	23
Brazil city	1	0.3
Brazil province	11	5
Ethiopia province	78	46
Namibia city	13	4
Peru province	46	26
Samoa	20	7
Serbia & Montenegro	1	0.6
Thailand province	25	7
Tanzania province	50	42



## Percentage of women who believe that a wife has the right to refuse sex if...

	She doesn't want it	Her husband mistreats her
Bangladesh province	46	66
Brazil city	94	98
Brazil province	76	92
Ethiopia province	46	56
Namibia city	82	88
Peru province	49	72
Samoa	28	69
Serbia & Montenegro city	97	98
Thailand province	76	88
Tanzania province	26	49



## Violence impacts on women's health

“ I suffered a long time and swallowed my pain. That is why I am constantly visiting doctors and using medicines. No one should have to do this. ”

Woman interviewed in Serbia & Montenegro

- Women who have ever experienced violence by a partner have:
  - Worse general health
  - More symptoms of ill health such as pain, memory loss, dizziness in the past 4 weeks
  - More signs of mental distress
  - More suicidal thoughts and attempts
  - More induced abortions and miscarriages

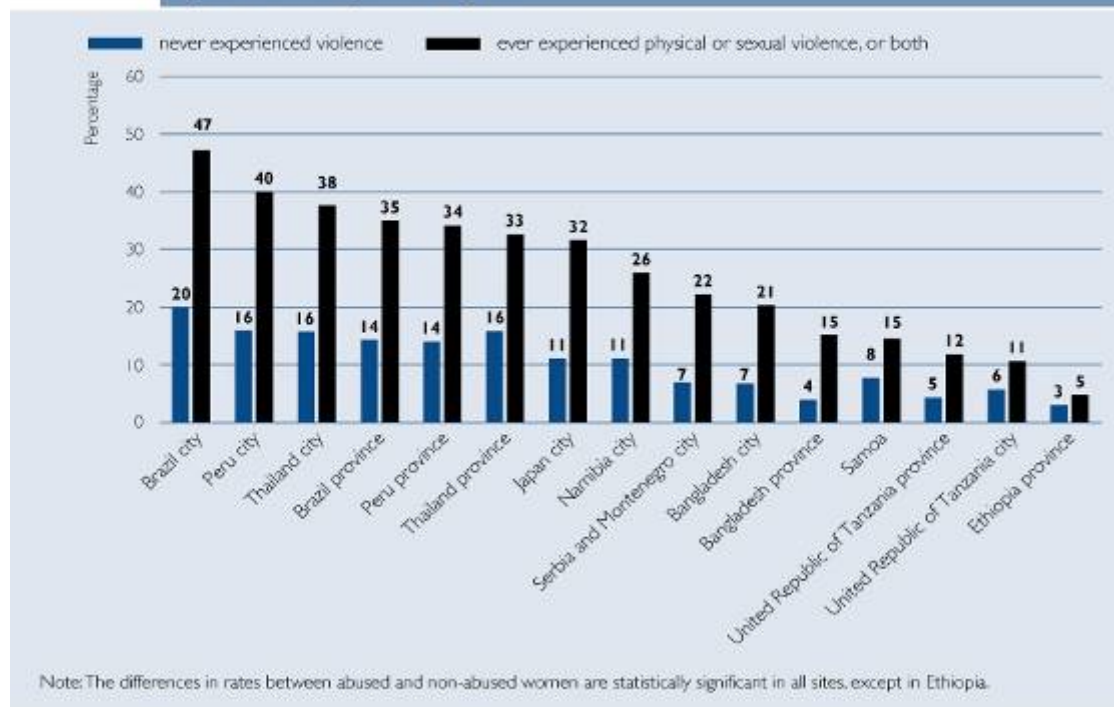


# Partner violence increases risk of suicidal thoughts and attempts

“ I don't feel well and I just cry. There are times that I want to be dead. I even thought of killing myself or poisoning myself and my kids, because I think if I have suffered that much, how much would my kids suffer if I am no longer there... ”

Woman interviewed in Peru

**Figure 11** Percentage of ever-partnered women reporting suicidal thoughts, according to their experience of physical or sexual violence, or both, by an intimate partner, by site





# Health associations are consistent across widely divergent settings

Site	Poor or very poor health	Induced abortion	Suicidal thoughts
Bangladesh city	1.4*	2.5*	3.5*
Brazil city	2.0*	2.6*	3.3*
Ethiopia province	2.0*	6.2*	1.6
Namibia city	2.1*	2.5	2.8*
Peru province	1.6*	3.3*	3.3*
Serbia & Montenegro	2.0*	2.0*	3.4*
Thailand city	1.6*	2.9*	3.1*
Tanzania province	1.6	2.0*	2.7*

Table shows odds ratios adjusted for age, current partnership status and educational level

\* Significant at  $p < 0.05$



## Violent acts as a risk factor for ill health

An association between recent ill health and lifetime experiences of violence suggest that the negative consequences of violence can persist long after the violence has ended





# Violence is largely hidden

One-fifth to two-thirds of women had never told anyone about their partner's violence prior to the WHO interview

“ If I protest I'll be marked in the society and then my daughter wouldn't be able to get married... If I voice my protest the community will blame me for not bearing it in silence. This helplessness is a torture in itself. ”

Woman, 43 years old, interviewed in Bangladesh



## The majority of women never contact formal support services

- Between 55% and 95% of physically abused women had never sought help from any formal agency or person in a position of authority
- To the extent that women do reach out, they do so to family and friends

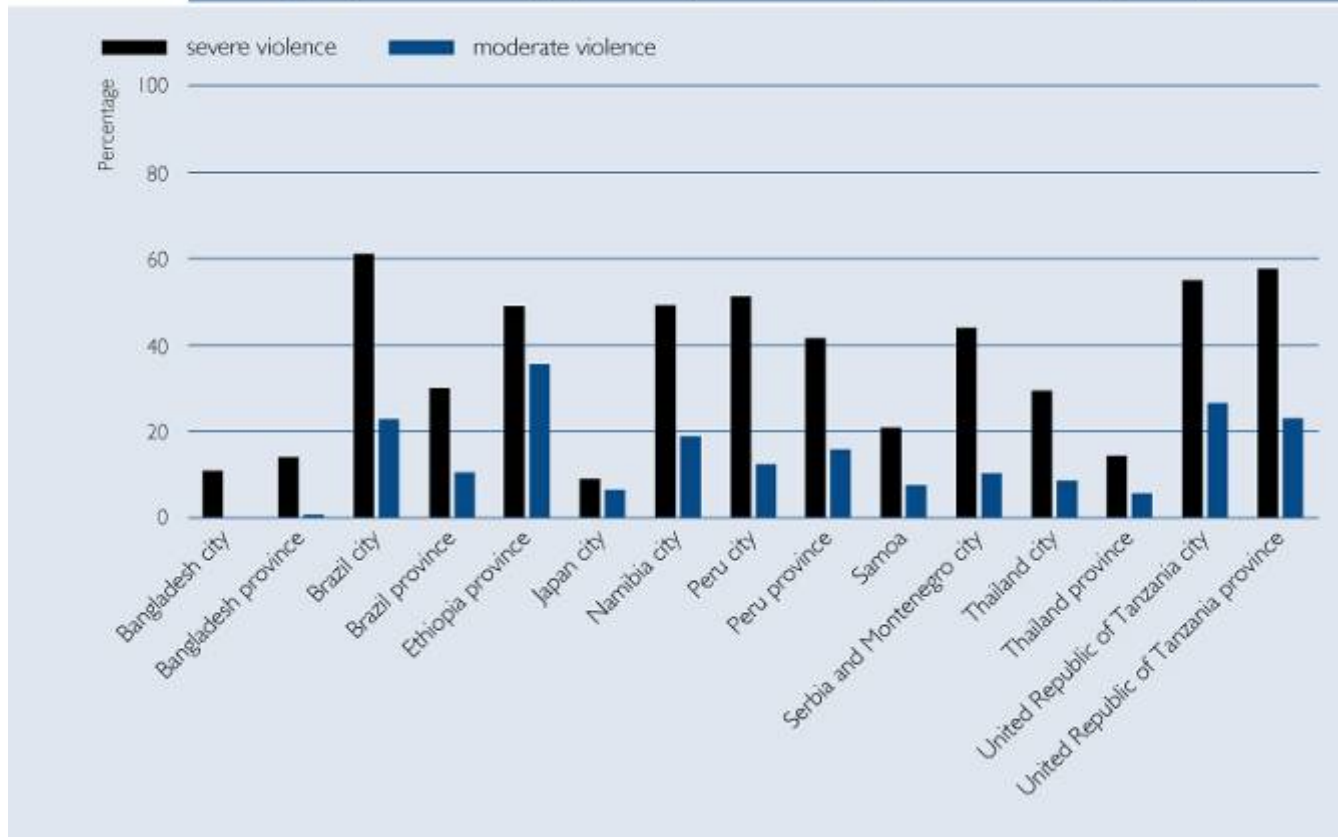
“ At work I have one close friend. I told her sometimes. She would nod and encourage me to stay in the relationship. For the kids, she said. He is not that bad. No one is perfect. ”

Woman, 25 years old, interviewed in urban Thailand



# Women's help seeking is strongly related to the severity of the violence

**Figure 9.4** Percentage of ever physically abused women who sought help from at least one agency or authority, by severity of intimate-partner violence, and by site







# Violence is preventable

- Violence against women represents a hidden burden on health systems
- The variation in levels of violence across settings illustrate that violence is not inevitable



## An integrated response is needed

### Prevention campaigns

- Changing social norms that support and condone violence
- Children and young people should be educated in social skills needed to handle conflict and have healthy relationships

### Response to violence

- Train doctors and nurses to identify women living with violence, in particular in HIV/AIDS, maternal health, mental health, and antenatal programs
- Create awareness at family and community level and overcome barriers to women seeking formal help



# Thank you!

For more information about the study:

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

**genderandhealth@who.int**





# Percentage of physically abused women who ever initiated violence

