



The World's Women 2005 Progress in Statistics



United Nations

FACT SHEET | UNDER EMBARGO 12 NOON EST 18 JANUARY 2006

Slow Progress in Official Statistics Bringing Violence Against Women to Public Scrutiny

Violence against women is an area where data collection remains fraught with difficulties, but also where progress is apparent, according to a UN report from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the state of statistics on women.

Over the last ten years, considerable progress has been made in developing methodologies and procedures for collecting data on violence against women. The adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 has led to an increase in the number of countries conducting national surveys on violence against women, albeit, with a small number (Australia, Canada and the United States, for example) doing so on a regular basis.

According to the report, titled *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics**, at least 68 of the 204 countries or areas analyzed have carried out a survey on violence against women since 1995, with at least 38 with national coverage.

The fact that studies and surveys are now raising the issue of violence against women is the first step in classifying it as a defined social problem, and bringing it from the shadows out into the light, according to UN DESA's Statistics Division, which authored the report.

Chart 5.1. Number of countries or areas that have conducted at least one survey on violence against women, 1995-2004

Geographic region	At least one survey	At least one survey with national coverage
Africa	13	4
North America	11	10
South America	8	5
Asia	15	8
Europe	17	8
Oceania	4	3
World	68	38

Yet most countries still do not have an established system of statistics on violence against women and there is currently no official international data collection on this issue. Efforts to design programmes to combat the problem and monitor their progress have been hampered by the absence or lack of adequate statistics and methods.

“While there have been considerable improvements in statistics on intimate partner violence...reliable statistics on many other forms of violence against women, including trafficking in women and girls and violence against women by agents of the State, remain scarce,” states the report.

A number of international initiatives, such as WHO's Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence¹ which covers 10 countries, have helped to work towards standardized survey methods for the collection of reliable, internationally comparable statistics.

The report analyses a range of different methods that can be used by governments to collect data on this issue such as specialized population surveys, police and court statistics and other administrative data such as health records. Though relatively expensive, the report states that specialized surveys provide the most reliable and detailed statistics on the prevalence of violence against women and girls.

¹ http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/en/

“Most surveys examine in detail a woman’s experience of violence, such as its nature, history, causes and consequences, thereby providing a wealth of information on the character and dynamics of the forms of violence being studied and allowing the identification of risk factors and correlates of violence,” the report says.

Such detail is lacking in administrative records and police and court statistics which are often compromised by underreporting and the lack of data collected about the victim’s age and sex and relationship to the offender.

The report encourages countries to develop their capacity to collect, process and disseminate quality data on violence against women and improve the quality of administrative data — such as police and court records — to provide better information on violence against women.

“A positive trend that has emerged... is the building of partnerships and strong consultation processes among policy-setting institutions, service providers and development cooperation entities,” states the report. The process of consultation contributed to better utilization of the data for advocacy and policy-making.

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* *World’s Women 2005: Progress in Statistics* (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/17), United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.05.XVII.7, ISBN 92-1-161482-1 For more information see: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/wwpub.htm>

The World’s Women report is prepared by the Statistics Division of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) at regular five-year intervals starting in 1991. The three previous issues compiled and analyzed data on women’s status world wide. Previous issues noted a lack of available official statistics disaggregated by sex. Therefore *The World’s Women 2005* uniquely reviews and analyses the current availability of data and assesses progress made in the provision of national statistics, as opposed to internationally prepared estimates, relevant to gender concerns during the past 30 years. The first Annex table reports on the availability of national statistics of key gender concerns. The second Annex table provides updated figures for many of the indicators presented in *The World’s Women 2000: Trends and Statistics*, plus some additional relevant indicators of the status of women and men.