Defining gender-based violence in the context of international and regional conventions and agreements

Webinar series on measuring gender-based violence in Africa, Europe and Western Asia

May 2023

Definitions of violence

What is **violence against women (VAW)**?

Violence against women is defined as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”.

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the UNGA, 20 December 1993

What is **Gender-based violence (GBV)**?

Gender-based violence in an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will, and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females.

The IASC Guidelines

Types of violence - examples

- **Physical violence** – Physical violence is an act attempting to or resulting in pain and/or physical injury. It includes beating, burning, kicking, punching, biting, maiming, the use of objects or weapons, or tearing out hair. At its most extreme, physical violence may lead to femicide. Some classifications also include trafficking.

- **Sexual violence** - Sexual violence includes rape or some form of penetration of the victim's body, marital rape and attempted rape. Other types of forced sexual activities include forced sex, sexual harassment, and abuse related to reproduction.

- **Psychological violence** – Psychological violence can include threatening behaviors that do not necessarily involve physical violence or even verbal abuse. It can include actions that refer to former acts of violence, or purposeful ignorance and neglect of the other. It may also be perpetrated through isolation or confinement, withholding information, disinformation, etc.

Types of violence - examples

- **Economic violence** - Economic includes taking away the victim's earnings, not allowing her to have a separate income, or making her unfit for work through targeted physical abuse. In the public sphere this can include denial of access to education or (equally) paid work (mainly to women), denial of access to services and exclusion from certain jobs.

- **Tech-faciliated violence** – The Expert Group convened in November 2022 by UN Women adopted the following operational definition: "Technology-facilitated violence against women (TFVAW) is any act that is committed, assisted, aggravated, or amplified by the use of information communication technologies or other digital tools, that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological, social, political, or economic harm, or other infringements of rights and freedoms".

The UN Statistics Division Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women (pages 14-17) includes violence definitions and recommended topics for inclusion in surveys.

Global Context – Violence against women

31% (UI 27–36%)[a] of women aged **15–49 years**

and

30% (UI 26–34%) of women aged **15 years and older**

[a] UI: uncertainty interval (95%).

...have been subjected to:

- **physical and/or sexual violence from any** current or former **husband or male intimate partner**, or to
- **sexual violence from a non-partner**, e.g. strangers, acquaintances, friends, peers, teachers, neighbours, family members, or to
- **both of these forms of violence combined**

at least once in their lifetime (i.e. since the age of 15).

On average, **736 million and up to 852 million women** who were aged 15 years or older in 2018 (nearly **1 in 3** women) have experienced one or both of these forms of violence at least once in their lifetime.

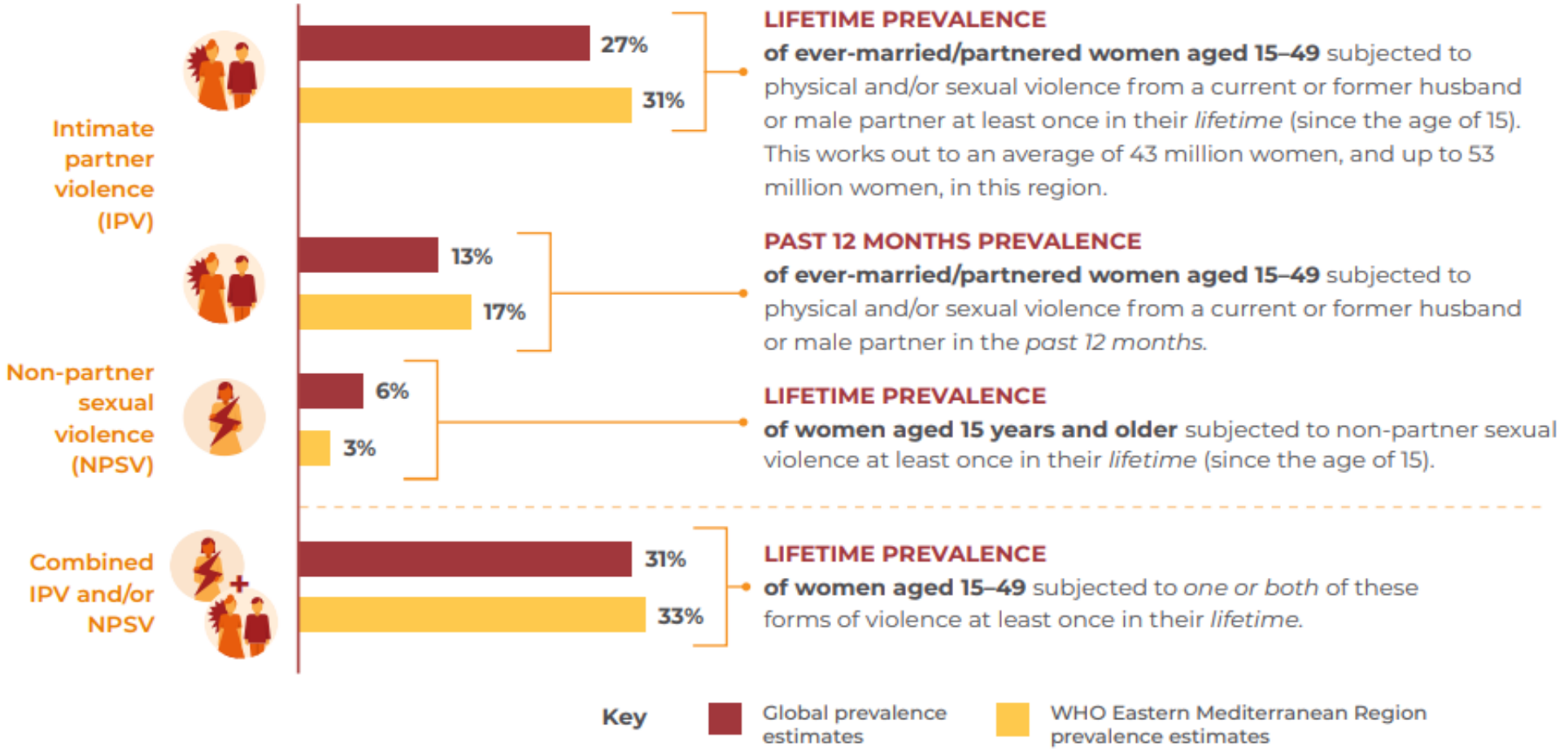
These estimates confirm that physical and sexual intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence remain pervasive in the lives of women and adolescent girls across the globe.

WHO (2018) Violence against Women Prevalence Estimates (published in 2021)

! The most extreme forms of VAW, including femicide, are not captured in prevalence studies; surveys do not include women who have been murdered, or are institutionalized or disabled.

Eastern Mediterranean Region– Violence against women

2018 GLOBAL AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND NON-PARTNER SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVALENCE ESTIMATES



LIFETIME PREVALENCE
of ever-married/partnered women aged 15–49 subjected to physical and/or sexual violence from a current or former husband or male partner at least once in their *lifetime* (since the age of 15). This works out to an average of 43 million women, and up to 53 million women, in this region.

PAST 12 MONTHS PREVALENCE
of ever-married/partnered women aged 15–49 subjected to physical and/or sexual violence from a current or former husband or male partner in the *past 12 months*.

LIFETIME PREVALENCE
of women aged 15 years and older subjected to non-partner sexual violence at least once in their *lifetime* (since the age of 15).

LIFETIME PREVALENCE
of women aged 15–49 subjected to *one or both* of these forms of violence at least once in their *lifetime*.

[WHO (2018) Violence against Women Prevalence Estimates](#) (published in 2021)

International conventions and agreements - CEDAW

"States parties should ensure the collection and analysis of sex- and age-disaggregated data on all forms of gender-based violence against women, including its prevalance, causes, consequences, the risk and protective factors, and the effectiveness of measures taken to prevent, prosecute and punish such violence, and to provide redress and rehabilitation to victims and survivors, and to inform policies and programmes"

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), General Recommendation no. 35

States parties should "establish effective data collection and analysis systems that enable the collection of disaggregated data on violence against women"

General Recommendation no. 19

Specific recommendations highlight the importance of data collection on gender-based violence in education, disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, and the rights of rural women and indigenous women and girls. (CEDAW GR no. 34, 36-39)

International conventions and agreements

Beijing Declaration

Promote research, collect data and compile statistics, especially concerning domestic violence relating to the prevalence of different forms of violence against women, and encourage research into the causes, nature, seriousness and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of measures implemented to prevent and re- dress violence against women (129(a))

Istanbul Convention

Article 10 requires States Parties to establish or designate a national focal point to collect, analyze, and regularly disseminate data on all forms of violence covered by the Convention.

Article 11 requires States Parties to collect and analyze relevant statistical data on all forms of violence covered by the Convention, including domestic violence and violence against women, and to regularly publish information on the measures taken and the progress achieved in preventing and combating these forms of violence.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

SDG Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Target 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

Indicator 5.2.1: Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age.

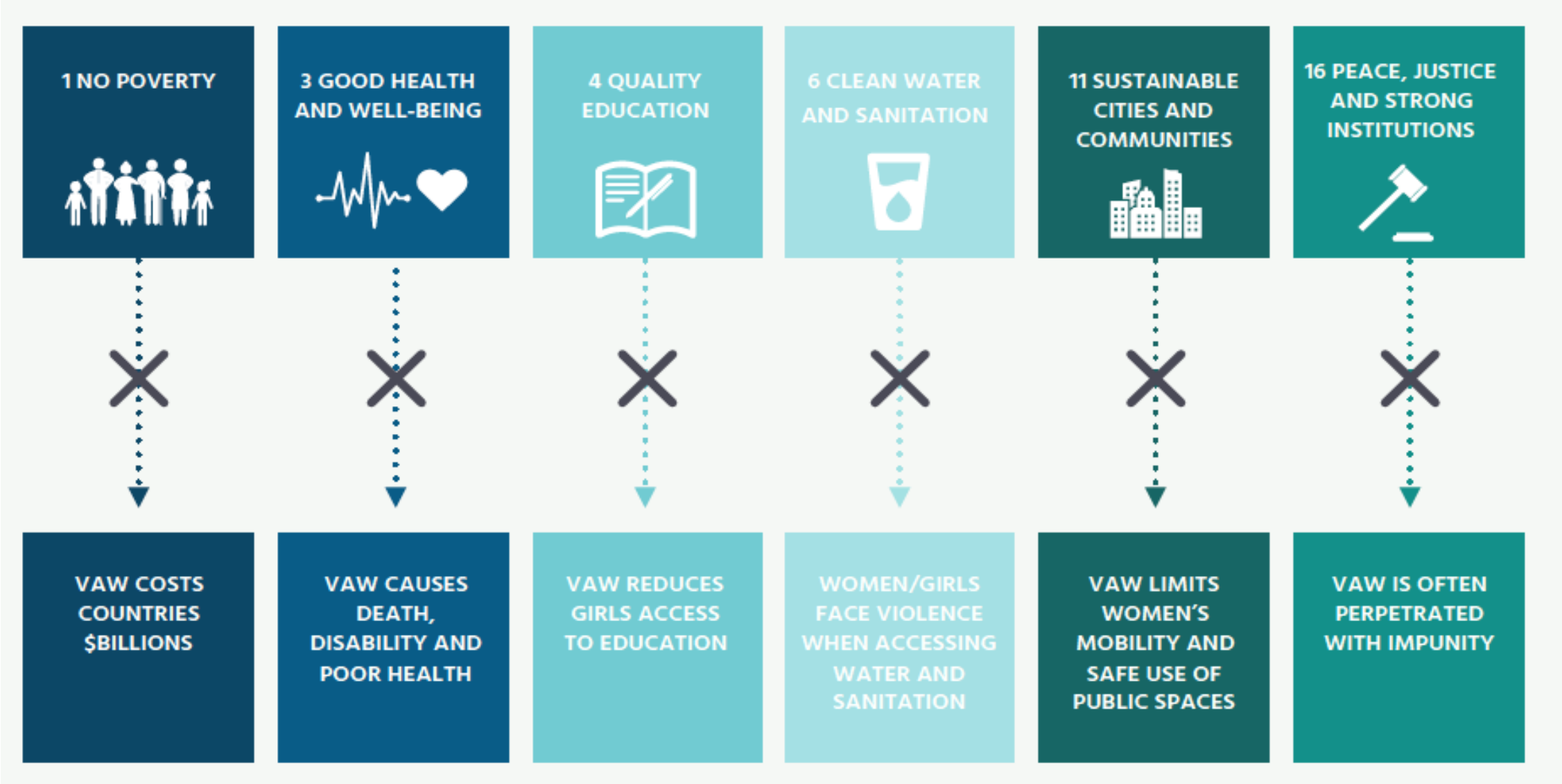
Indicator 5.2.2: Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence

Target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

Indicator 5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18

Indicator 5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age

Violence against women and SDGs



**Source: "SDG Targets and VAW" presentation, Equality Institute (2016)*

Arab Declaration to address all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls

Article 6 of the Declaration states the importance of establishing a national database to guide policies and strategies on violence against women. The Declaration further highlights the importance of collecting, analyzing and disseminating data through academic and community-based research.

National level: National action plans and strategies are often the guidance and motivation for collecting data and investing in data.

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