

Committee: SOCHUM 1

Topic: The question of violence against women

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Summary

A report made by The World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2024 states that one in every three women is subject to or has been the subject of physical or sexual acts of violence in their lifetime; with much of this violence being marked as intimate partner violence. This report only covers girls from the age of 15 and upwards, so it is likely that these statistics are higher than what is shown. This report was based on 161 countries worldwide. The results were further split into groups based on continents and demographics, with women in South-East Asia and the African regions being reported as having the highest percentage of women in their population being subject to violent acts (33% of women), with Eastern Mediterranean and America regions following closely behind (31%, 25% respectively).

The United Nations defines violence against women as, "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental 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 UN women organisation also states that, "since the outbreak of COVID-19, emerging data and reports from those on the front lines, have shown that all types of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, has intensified", with 736 million women and girls globally experiencing acts of violence, a percentage increase of roughly 200%.

Consequently, we must work to ensure that these figures come down, and that violence against women, violence against anyone, decreases. There are many benefits that become available when violence is decreased, such as an increased workforce, less strain on health services and first responders.

Definition of Key Terms

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE: refers to acts in an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, such as but not limited to sexual coercion, controlling behaviour and psychological abuse.

VIOLENCE: behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something.

RAPE: a type of sexual assault involving sexual intercourse, or other forms of sexual penetration carried out against a person without their consent or while not able to give consent.

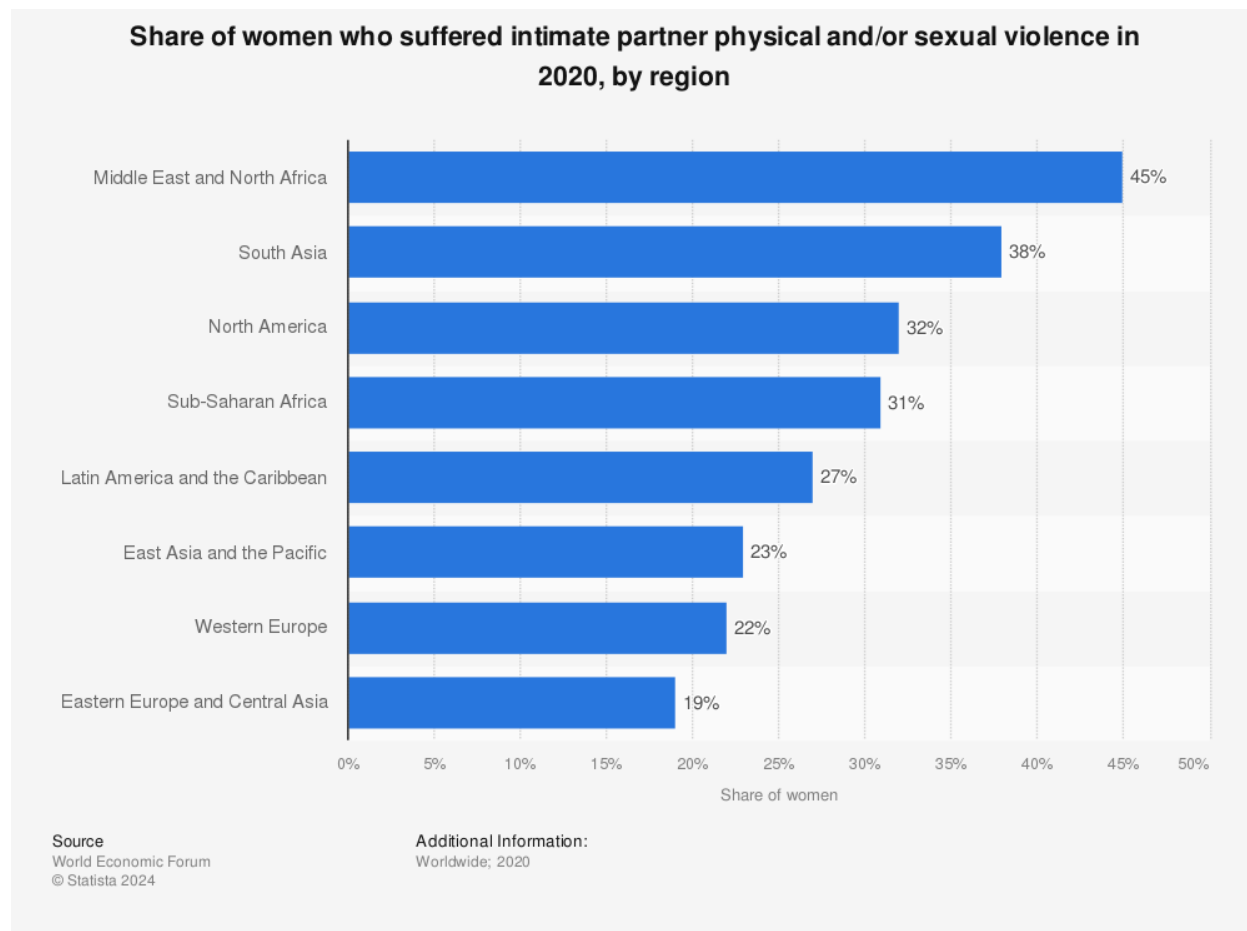
DOMESTIC ABUSE: an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in most cases by a partner or ex-partner.

FGM: Female genital mutilation- consists of all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

GDP per capita: sum of the gross value added by all resident producers in an economy including product taxes divided by the mid-year population of a country or state.

GDP: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) represents the total monetary value of all final goods and services produced by a country over a period of time (typically a year).

Background Information



Multiple studies, like the one above, show that women living in the Middle East or Northern Africa are the most likely to be a victim of violence, and that those living in low and low-middle-income countries are more likely to experience this violence and have more difficulty finding support or help after experiencing these acts of violence. The reason for women living in the Middle East and North Africa receiving the most violence by a large margin can be due to the lack of female political and economic participation, discriminatory laws, armed conflict- such as when the Taliban took over Afghanistan, what is seen as the 'norm' within society, persistent patriarchal structures and interpretations of religious texts to name a few. In the Middle East, 2 of every 5 women are subject to domestic violence in their lifetime, and 1 out of every 3 women in Africa has been a victim of sexual and physical violence, with higher rates of violence against pregnant women in East Africa. A lack of education, understanding of what is classified as violent acts and organisations to help women get out of difficult situations can also be the reason for a global increase in the violence against women, and this is only heightened in Low-Income Countries (LICs), where there is not enough money or any money to be put in place to support a reduction in the percentage of violent acts against women.

Despite efforts made by law enforcement officers and orders, the violence against women in Africa rises still, and is considered an obstacle to achieving equality and peace across Africa. Although anybody can be a victim of rape, the chances of being raped in an LIC is far higher, with some girls being raped by members of their family, a partner, or someone with authority over them.

In the Middle East, huge inequalities lie between men and women, with women being treated like second-class citizens, with hardly any protection from violence. Armed conflicts, the resurgence of extremist religious groups and political tensions significantly reduce the amount of traction that violence towards women to the public eye, meaning that the issue lasts longer and grows bigger over time.

The UN trust fund awards money to countries and areas that need it most, to help reduce, and even put an end to violence targeted towards women, and since its establishment in 1996, has given over 225 million USD to 670 groups and people in over 140 countries and territories in a bid to cease violence against women.

On the other end of the spectrum, Nordic countries, such as Denmark dominate as the best and safest countries for women due to robust social services, multiple safety provisions to ensure safety and security for everyone and building trust between citizens and institutions.

As mentioned previously, COVID-19 saw a large global increase in all types of violence against women, due to women being stuck at home with partners who could potentially be very violent, and so increasing their exposure to abusive partners. Lockdowns within the pandemic also limited their access to services like the police or social services, as these services could have been scaled down to make more room for ambulance services, meaning that women who were a target of violence could not access the few sources of help for women in abusive relationships. The pandemic could have also seen women having less contact with or being unable to contact friends or family who initially would have helped them in dangerous situations.

With violence against women increasing globally, it would be of no surprise that unsocial behaviour and actions by women would increase as they feel increasingly isolated and alienated from society. This would lead to an increase in crime rates globally, especially in places where abortion is illegal, as there are suggestions that children conceived from rape who are unwanted and/or neglected by their mother are more likely to grow up and choose a path of crime and violence. Having women able to have an abortion and live in a safe environment

would then decrease crime rates, such as with the dissipation of elevated levels of crime in New York in the 1960s.

The economic impacts of women living in a violent society and being the victim of violent crimes could also lead to less women working. And with the ratio of men to women in most countries' being around 1:1, this would mean a large chunk of the female population that could be working are not. The reason for women not going to work could be due to a fear of leaving their house, physical damage to their body, or emotional damage. This lack of workers would lead to a weaker economy in all countries, especially those where rates of violence against women is high, meaning that the country is not making as much GDP as they could be making.

If violent acts against women continue to rise, a substantial impact could be felt on the economy of countries worldwide.

Major countries and Organisations involved

UN WOMEN: responsible for creating and putting forward resolutions such as the CEDAW resolution (more noted on this below), the UN women organisation strives to create a world where violence and discrimination against women of any kind does not exist.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: being the birthplace of the Suffragette movement, the USA played a key role in bringing equal rights to women in the beginning of the 1900s. Despite the constant efforts of those who live in the USA and those in power aiming to bring equality and justice to all, this has failed with the recent event of the Supreme Court ruling out abortions, and with the USA being one of the seven countries to not agree to CEDAW.

ICELAND: voted as the country with the smallest gender equality gap between men and women, and being one of the safest countries that a woman can visit, Iceland can be taken as a great role-model for any countries across the globe.

Timeline of Events

DATE	DESCRIPTION
1848	First women's rights movement. American activists, Elizabeth Candy Stanton and Lucreta Mott congregate a few hundred people to form the first of their nation's women's rights convention in New York.

8th March 1911	International Women's Day is created, sending millions of Austrian, German, Dane, and Swiss women to the streets for women's suffrage and rights. In Russia, a large women-led demonstration broke out demanding "bread and peace!" Less than a week later, the Czar abdicates. It is now a national holiday in Russia, and what some historians believe ignited the Russian Revolution.
1920s	Doctors across Egypt stand up against FGM in the first known campaign of its kind. FGM is a practice that over 200 million young girls and women have undergone, and it was not until the 20 th century that it was labelled as a form of violence.
1945	Formation of the United Nations, following the Second World War. Its charter focuses on gender equality and is one of the many steps that the UN took to lay the path for women's rights.
25th November 1960	The Mirabel sisters, known as Las Mariposas (the butterflies) form a movement against the dictator Rafael Trujillo. The sisters are assassinated on the 25th of November, and the day of their brutal murder now marks a day to raise awareness on ending violence against women.
18th December 1979	CEDAW is ratified, and 183 of the 196 countries' sign, with the United States of America being most notably one of the 7 to not sign.
1993	Declaration on the elimination of Violence Against Women- the first international instrument to explicitly set out what is defined as a violent act against a woman.
1994	ICPD 23-year programme is set out to recognise that women's sexual and reproductive health is key to everyone's wellbeing.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

18TH DECEMBER 1979: THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW) entered into force as an International Treaty after the twentieth country had ratified it, with Sweden being the first to ratify it, and was the culmination of over 30 years of work by the United Nations commission on the Status of Women. At least every four years, the states parties are expected to submit a national report to the committee to see the progress made to reduce violence against women. 186 of the 193 countries have signed the Convention, with the United States of America being one of the seven to not sign. The other countries include Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Nauru, Palau, and Tonga.

31ST OCTOBER 2000: LANDMARK RESOLUTION OF WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY was adopted by the Security Council and reaffirms the vital role of women in society and peacekeeping. The resolution is also known as Resolution 1325 and called for all nations to take specific measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence: specifically rape and any other forms of sexual abuse in situations of armed conflict.

22ND DECEMBER 2003: ELIMINATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN was adopted without vote, and stressed that nations have an obligation to prevent, investigate and punish the perpetrators of domestic violence against women and provide protection for all victims. The resolution called for all nations to adopt, strengthen, and implement laws to prohibit violence against women, and contribute or increase their contribution to the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against women.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION RESPONSE: building the evidence base on the scale and nature of violence against women in all settings. The WHO also supported countries' efforts to document and measure the scale of this violence, by developing a global plan of action and synthesising evidence on what works to prevent violence against women. The WHO has also collaborated with multiple international agencies and organisations to reduce violent acts on women.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

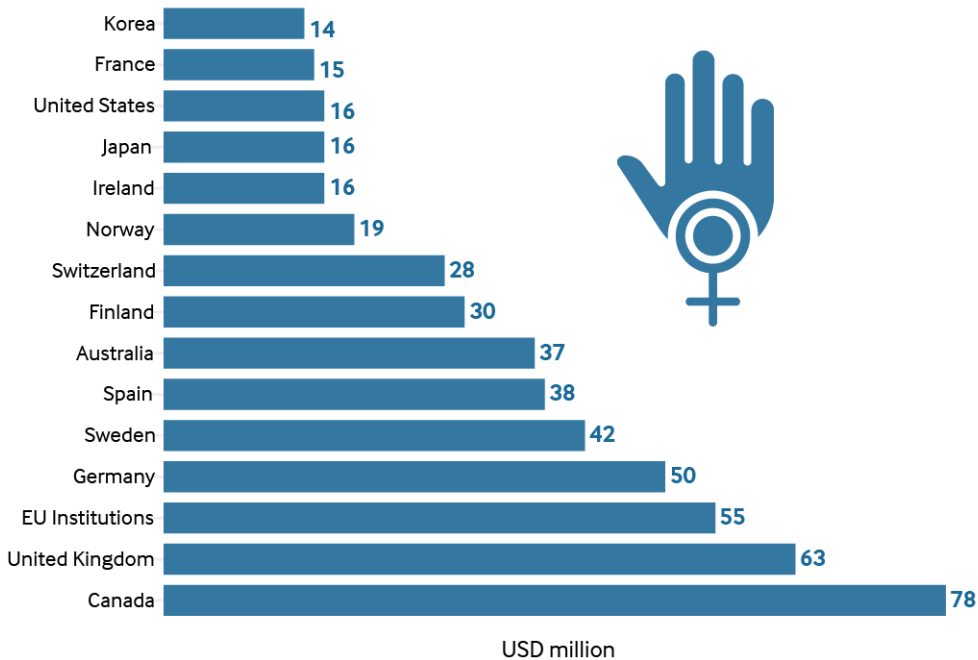
NIA: A women-led, women-only organisation that delivers services to women and girls who have been affected by violence, abuse, and prostitution since 1975. They work to protect spaces for women, particularly but not just women who have experienced violence and abuse.

WOMENS AID: provides support, advice and refuge for women who have experienced violence and abuse in England. As an organisation, they have managed to make their voices heard across politics and law, with submitting their manifesto for the 2024 General Election, and by creating petitions to help those struggling in court to reach a fair verdict after becoming subject

to domestic abuse and violence.

Official development assistance to end violence against women & girls

Top 15 Development Assistance Committee members, average 2021-22



Source: Creditor Reporting System, OECD-DAC statistics



Possible Solutions

Viable solutions to this problem would be by ensuring that all women and girls are able to go to school and have the right for an education. Girls who receive an education will be less likely to marry young, and more likely to live productive lives, ensuring that jobs are filled, meaning that a country's GDP will go up as more people are working. Having an education also means that a woman will be able to get a job and raise her own funds, meaning she is able to leave an abusive household and go somewhere safer to restart her life. This would also have a knock-on effect, meaning that any children that the woman has or could have will be able to grow and develop in a safe environment, meaning they will be less likely to not work or take part in society. If these women and young girls live in a more developed area due to their education

and work, it reduces their chances on ending up in an abusive relationship or being subject to any violent acts against them.

Another way to solve the issue would be by educating men on how to treat women. The best way to do this is by ensuring that young boys can see men treating women with respect and making sure that schools instruct young boys and girls that they are equal in strength and importance. Acts of violence should also be taught as wrong, so that they are less inclined to act violently towards men or women.

A further way to cease the issue of violence against women would be by introducing stricter laws and harsher punishments for acts of violence against people. However, this could have adversary effects, because if someone wanted to commit a crime, they would commit it anyway even with harsher punishments as they would believe that they could get away with doing the crime. Keeping a person in prison is also far more expensive than providing them with the resources needed to correct their behaviour, with prison costing around £300 a day compared to \$23 for correction courses. This means the state would have less money to fund charities and organisations to help those who have been impacted by violent acts.

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