



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

Target overview

SDG monitoring

SDG Target 5.2 is tracked by the following indicators:

- 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
- 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 ¹

This briefing note will focus on the first indicator.

Broader monitoring context

Although violence against women has been widely researched over the years, particularly in many high-income countries, the lack of comparable data is a serious obstacle to robust monitoring. Many data collection efforts have relied on different study methodologies and used different definitions and diverse age groups, and limited data have been collected on forms such as sexual harassment or unwanted sexual touching.

Collecting reliable data on violence against girls and women is a complex and sensitive undertaking. One key consideration is girls' and women's willingness to disclose that they have been victims

¹ Discussions are ongoing among the co-custodian agencies regarding this indicator given overall low data availability and lack of comparability of available data.

of violence and the need to maintain confidentiality, which involves taking careful steps to ensure that data collection is undertaken in a way that safeguards the privacy of respondents and ensures their safety.

In addition to Target 5.2, which focuses on violence against women and girls, there are related indicators included in other SDG targets, including indicator 11.7.2 Proportion of persons victim of physical or sexual harassment, by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months; indicator 16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months; and indicator 16.2.3 Proportion of young women and men aged 18-29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18 (see Briefing Note 14).

UNICEF role in monitoring

In UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2018-2021, children's protection from violence and exploitation is the dedicated focus of Goal Area 3. While this is not specific to addressing violence against women and girls, there is some overlap since adolescent girls can still be considered children in the strict sense of the word. In addition, the new UNICEF Gender Action Plan 2018-2021 includes addressing gender-based violence, particularly within the context of emergencies, as one of its five targeted priorities.

UNICEF is one of five co-custodian agencies for Indicators 5.2.1 and 5.2.2. An Inter-Agency Group on Violence against Women Data and its Technical Advisory Group is currently being established (jointly by WHO, UN Women, UNICEF, UNSD and UNFPA) to establish a mechanism for compiling harmonized country level data.

General information and resources

- UNICEF data: <https://data.unicef.org/>
- SDG indicators: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>
- UN Women: <http://evawgglobal-database.unwomen.org/en>
- UNSD Gender: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/vaw/>

For further information, please contact the Child Protection and Development focal point at the Data & Analytics Section at UNICEF HQ via: data@unicef.org



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

Description

Definition and key terms

This indicator is currently being defined as percentage of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15-49 years who have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner, in the previous 12 months. The rationale for using a proxy indicator is because comparable data are currently only available for a subset of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years and the fact that there is no agreement on a standard operational definition for psychological violence. The proxy indicator, for which comparable data are available, is being used while the SDG indicator's definition is being operationalized.

SDG indicator:

Numerator: Number of ever-partnered women and girls (aged 15 years and above) who experience physical, sexual and/or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months

Denominator: Number of ever-partnered women and girls (aged 15 years and above) in the population

Proxy indicator:

Numerator: Number of ever-partnered women and girls (aged 15-49 years) who experience physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months

Denominator: Number of ever-partnered women and girls (aged 15-49 years) in the population

This indicator refers specifically to intimate partner violence, which includes any abuse perpetrated by a current or former partner within the context of marriage, cohabitation or any other formal or informal union.

Key terms:

The types of violence included in the indicator currently being used as a proxy for reporting on SDG 5.2.1 are operationally defined as follows:

- 'Physical violence' includes the following acts: pushed her/him, shook her/him or threw something at her/him; twisted her/his arm, pulled her/his hair or slapped her/him; punched her/him with his/her fist or with something that could hurt her/him; kicked her/him, dragged her/him or beat her/him up; tried to choke her/him or burn her/him; threatened or attacked her/him with a knife, gun or other type of weapon.
- 'Sexual violence' includes the following acts: physically forced her/him to have sexual intercourse with him/her even when she/he did not want to; physically forced her/him to perform any other sexual acts she/he did not want to; forced her/him with threats or in any other way to perform sexual acts when she/he did not want to.

The conceptual definitions of the types of violence covered in the SDG indicator, as defined in the 2014 UN Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women are:

- Physical violence consists of acts aimed at physically hurting the victim and include, but are not limited to, pushing, grabbing, twisting the arm, pulling the hair, slapping, kicking, biting or hitting with the fist or object, trying to strangle or suffocate, burning or scalding on purpose, or threatening or attacking with some sort of weapon, gun or knife.
- Sexual violence is defined as any sort of harmful or unwanted sexual behaviour that is imposed on someone. It includes acts of abusive sexual contact, forced engagement in sexual acts, attempted or completed sexual acts without consent, incest, sexual harassment, etc. In intimate partner relationships, experiencing sexual violence is commonly defined as being forced to have sexual intercourse, having sexual intercourse out of fear for what the partner might do, and/or being forced to do something sexual that the woman considers humiliating or degrading.
- Psychological violence includes a range of behaviours that encompass acts of emotional abuse and controlling behaviour.

National data sources

The main sources of intimate partner violence prevalence data are (1) specialized national surveys dedicated to measuring violence against women and (2) international household surveys that include a module on experiences of violence by women, such as the DHS.²

The DHS standard module asks all girls and women aged 15 to 49 who have ever been married or cohabited whether they have ever experienced various forms of physical, sexual or emotional violence perpetrated by a current or former spouse or partner. Questions are also asked in reference to experiences that occurred in the 12 months preceding the survey.

² These are also the main sources of data for SDG indicator 5.2.2.



Although administrative data from health, police, courts, justice and social services, among other services used by survivors of violence, can provide information on violence against women and girls, these do not produce prevalence data, but rather incidence data or number of cases received/reported to these services. Many abused women do not report violence and those who do, tend to be only the most serious cases. Therefore, administrative data should not be used as a data source for this indicator.

Data collection innovation

Work ongoing by custodian agencies to harmonize databases and develop new data collection instruments to measure psychological violence and violence experienced by older women (aged 50 and above).

Using the indicator

Interpretation

Violence directed at women and girls represents one manifestation of gender inequality and is symptomatic of the widely held view that girls and women have low status in society and are expected to comply with, and conform to, certain defined gender roles. In societies that sanction male dominance over women, violence between intimate partners may be perceived as an ordinary component of interpersonal dynamics between the sexes, particularly in the context of marriage or other unions.

This indicator is intended to characterize current levels of intimate partner violence, regardless of the type of abuse, the type of union, or whether or not the woman is still in union.

Research confirms that girls who marry in childhood are at greater risk for intimate partner violence than same-age peers who marry later.³ Partner violence can have devastating consequences for the health, wellbeing and overall development of these girls. Moreover, exposure to partner violence can also have intergenerational implications and be detrimental to children's development.⁴

It is important to note that because of the stigma surrounding intimate partner violence, available data are likely to underestimate the true prevalence. Even in nationally representative surveys with interviewers who are trained to collect these sensitive data, women may be reluctant to report their personal experiences. Furthermore, because of estimates based on inconsistent methodologies, any data should be interpreted with caution. This is particularly true when comparing two or more estimates whether from the same or different countries.

3 Santhya, K. G., et al., 'Consent and Coercion: Examining unwanted sex among married young women in India', *International Family Planning Perspectives*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2007, pp. 124–132.

4 Wolfe, D. A., et al., 'The Effects of Children's Exposure to Domestic Violence: A meta analysis and critique,' *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2003, pp. 171–187.

Disaggregation

As a minimum, disaggregation by form of violence together with age is recommended, specifically by:

- Physical violence
- Sexual violence
- Psychological violence
- Any form of physical and/or sexual violence

Additionally, survey data often allow for disaggregation by other standard sociodemographic factors including place of residence, geographic location, and household wealth. In addition to these standard levels of disaggregation, this indicator can be usefully disaggregated in some surveys by marital status, employment status, number of living children and education level.

Common pitfalls

The availability of comparable data remains a challenge in this area as many data collection efforts have relied on different survey methodologies, used different definitions of partner or spousal violence and of the different forms of violence and different survey question formulations, and diverse age groups are often utilized. Willingness to discuss experiences of violence and understanding of relevant concepts may also differ according to the cultural context and this can affect reported prevalence levels.

Although some countries may have administrative data from services used by survivors of violence such as health, police, courts, justice and social services, this indicator should not be derived from these data sources as many abused women do not report violence.



Monitoring and reporting

National

National Statistical Offices (in most cases) or line ministries/other government agencies that have conducted national surveys on violence against women and girls.

Global

Agencies: UN Women, UNICEF, UNSD, WHO, UNFPA

Process: UNICEF maintains the global database on violence that is used for SDG and other official reporting. UNICEF HQ updates the database annually through its collaboration with Country Offices, through the CRING process. Before the inclusion of any data point in the database, it is reviewed by sector specialists at UNICEF headquarters to check for consistency and overall data quality. This review is based on a set of objective criteria to ensure that only the most recent and reliable information is included in the databases. For global SDG reporting, estimates from UNICEF's global database are used as a starting point and additional country-level data are added by the other co-custodian agencies if they meet the objective criteria for inclusion.

Timing: The Secretary-General's report on the SDGs, which includes latest available country, regional and global estimates on 5.2.1 is typically released every year in May/June.

Discrepancies with national estimates: The estimates compiled and presented at global level come directly from nationally produced data and are not adjusted or recalculated.

Key resources

Indicator information and cross-country comparable estimates:

- UNICEF data: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/violence/violent-unions/>
- SDG global database: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>

Tools and measurement guidance:

- Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women-Statistical Surveys: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/docs/Guidelines_Statistics_VAW.pdf
- DHS domestic violence module: <https://dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-DHSQM-DHS-Questionnaires-and-Manuals.cfm>