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Abstract

THPE0692 - Violence against women and HIV associated risk: findings from the WHO 10 country study on women's health and domestic violence

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Background: There is limited comparable, population data on how violence against women contributes to women's vulnerability to HIV infection. The WHO study aimed to obtain population data on the prevalence of physical and sexual violence against women and explore its association with factors associated with HIV risk.

Methods: Between 2000 and 2003 comparable surveys were conducted in 15 sites in 10 countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Peru, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Namibia, Tanzania, Thailand). Trained interviewers asked women questions about their experience of violence by partners and others. Support was provided to women requesting assistance.

Results: Between 0.4% and 30% of women reported forced first sex, with more than 14% in Bangladesh, rural Peru, rural Ethiopia and Tanzania. In all sites except Ethiopia, the younger her age at first sex, the greater the likelihood that this was forced. Between 9% (urban Japan) to 59% (rural Ethiopia) reported sexual violence since age 15. In 9 sites, the prevalence was greater than 30%. Among ever-partnered women, between 6% and 56% reported sexual partner violence. The level of sexual violence by a man other than a partner was much lower, ranging from 0.3% in Ethiopia to 12% in Tanzania. In all sites except Ethiopia, women who reported that their partner had been violent also knew that he was unfaithful. The association between partner violence and condom use was less clear, although in several sites women with violent partners were more likely to report they had asked their partner to use a condom, but that he had refused.

Conclusions: Coerced sex represents a major challenge to HIV prevention, undermining strategies of abstinence, behavioural change and condom use. Interventions to challenge prevailing stereotypes of male behaviour and the acceptability of coercion, and to address the prevention and support needs of women experiencing violence are urgently needed.