

International Violence Against Women Survey: The Singapore Report

*Preliminary results of study by SAFV-NUS
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Background

The International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS) is an instrument developed by the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Institute, and Statistics Canada. It aims to provide a more reliable assessment of the prevalence of violence against women and enable international comparisons of data. Eleven countries have conducted the IVAWS to date: Australia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Hong Kong, Italy, Mozambique, Philippines, Poland and Switzerland.

Singapore became the most recent country to have conducted the IVAWS in 2009. The research team comprises A/P Chan Wing Cheong, Mr Benny Bong and Ms Suzanne Anderson; and the project was funded by the National University of Singapore (R-241-000-069-112). The Nielsen Company carried out the fieldwork which was done between February and May 2009.

Methodology

A total of 2006 women aged between 18 to 69 years old were surveyed through a random sampling of Singapore households. One woman in each household was identified for the survey using the next birthday rule.

The survey questions were translated into Chinese and Malay by the Nielsen Company. Only female interviewers were used and the interviews were conducted face-to-face. The final data was weighted to reflect the overall profile of residents in Singapore.

Key findings

Lifetime experience of violence

- Singapore had the lowest rate of lifetime violence victimisation (9.2%) as compared to other participating countries
- Singapore also had the lowest rate of lifetime *physical* violence victimisation (6.8%) and the lowest rate of lifetime *sexual* violence victimisation (4.2%) as compared to other participating countries

The IVAWS asked respondents specific questions about 7 types of physical violence and 5 types of sexual violence:

Physical

- 1. Threatened with hurt physically*
- 2. Thrown something or hit with something*
- 3. Pushed or grabbed, having arm twisted or hair pulled*
- 4. Slapped, kicked, bitten or hit with a fist*
- 5. Tried to strangle, suffocate, burn or scald*
- 6. Used or threatened to use a knife or gun*
- 7. Any other physical violence*

Experience of violence in last 12 months

- Singapore had the second lowest rate of one year violence victimisation (2.6%) as compared to other participating countries
- Singapore (together with Hong Kong) had the second lowest rate of one year *physical* violence victimisation (2.1%) and (together with Switzerland) had the lowest rate of one year *sexual* violence victimisation (0.5%) as compared to other participating countries

Types of violence

- The most common form of physical violence was (1) being threatened with hurt physically; followed by (2) being pushed or grabbed, having arm twisted or hair pulled; and (3) being slapped, kicked, bitten or hit with a fist
- The most common form of sexual violence was non-consensual sexual contact

Sexual

1. *Forced into sexual intercourse*
2. *Attempted to force into sexual intercourse*
3. *Touched sexually*
4. *Forced or attempted to force into sexual activity with someone else*
5. *Any other sexual violence*

Repeat victimisation

- 58.8% of victims experienced repeated victimisation:
 - 35.7% experienced repeated victimisation of 2 to 4 times
 - 9.7% experienced repeated victimisation of 5 to 9 times
 - 13.4% experienced repeated victimisation of 10 times or more
- Repeated victimisation was higher for physical violence (64.0% of victims who experienced physical violence) than for sexual violence (44.9% of victims who experienced sexual violence)

Profile of those who experienced violence in last 12 months (see circle on right)

- 47.2% were aged between 30 to 39 years old
- 18.9% were Malays; 7.5% were Indians
- 17.0% lived in HDB 1 and 2 room flats
- 30.2% had university/postgraduate education

Severity and perception of incident

- Of the most recent incident involving a non-partner:
 - 34.3% felt their life was in danger
 - 26.5% were physically injured
 - 22.2% of those physically injured needed medical care
 - 19.6% considered incident “very serious”; 40.2% “somewhat serious”; 38.2% “not very serious”

Those who experienced violence in the last 12 months:

- *Majority aged 30 to 39 years*
- *Over-representation of Malays*
- *No over-representation of Indians*
- *More likely to be living in HDB 1 and 2 room flats*
- *More likely to have university / postgraduate education*

- 44.1% considered incident “a crime”; 32.4% “a wrong but not a crime”; 21.6% “just something that happens”
- Of the most recent incident involving a partner:
 - 42.4% felt their life was in danger
 - 45.5% were physically injured
 - 28.9% of those physically injured needed medical care
 - 28.3% considered incident “very serious”; 32.3% “somewhat serious”; 35.4% “not very serious”
 - 20.2% considered incident “a crime”; 43.4% “a wrong but not a crime; 34.3% “just something that happens”
- 6.9% of victims of non-partner incidents used alcohol and/or medication to help them cope as compared to 15.2% of victims of partner incidents
- 1.0% of victims of non-partner incidents contacted a specialised agency for help as compared to 13.1% of victims of partner incidents

Incidents involving partner victimisation were more serious than non-partner victimisation; but the former were less likely to regard the incident as a crime or a wrong.

Involvement of police

- 77.5% and 71.7% of those involved in non-partner and partner victimisation respectively did not report incident to the police
- Most common reasons for not reporting to the police are: (1) dealt with it myself / involved a friend or family member; (2) too minor / not serious enough; and (3) did not want anyone to know
- Most common action taken by the police (if police were notified of incident) was that they “took a report”
- Assessment of police action by those who reported incident:
 - Those involved in non-partner victimisation: 13.6% “very satisfied”; 27.3% “satisfied”; 27.3% “dissatisfied”; 22.7% “very dissatisfied”
 - Those involved in partner victimisation: 12.0% “very satisfied”; 64.0% “satisfied”; 8.0% “dissatisfied”; 16.0% “very dissatisfied”

Those involved in partner victimisation were more likely to be pleased with the way the police handled the case than those involved in non-partner victimisation.

Contact with specialised agencies (see circle on next page)

- 7.0% of those who experienced violence contacted specialised agencies for assistance
- Of those who contacted specialised agencies:
 - 50.0% were between 30 to 39 years old

- 66.7% were Chinese; 13.3% were Malay; 13.3% were Indian
- 30.8% lived in HDB 4 room flats; 30.8% lived in HDB 5 room/Executive/HUDC flats
- 14.3% had university/postgraduate education

Comparison of those who experienced violence in last 12 months with other Singapore studies (see list below under “References”)

- Supports earlier studies in that:
 - majority are between 30 to 39 years old
 - over-representation of Malays
 - majority have secondary education
- Differs from earlier studies in that:
 - no over-representation of Indians
 - over-representation of those with university/postgraduate education

Of those who contacted specialised agencies:

- *Majority between 30 to 39 years old*
- *Under-representation of Chinese*
- *Over-representation of Malays and Indians*
- *Majority lived in HDB 4 room; HDB 5 room/ Executive/HUDC flats*
- *Few who had university / postgraduate education*

Implications for practice

- Prevalence rates
- Repeated victimization
- Recent victims
- Severity and victim’s perception
- Involvement of police
- Involvement of specialized agencies

Contact

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