



FSM Family Health and Safety Study

National Findings

Violence against women (VAW) is one of the most concerning human rights violations and public health issues in the world today. The United Nations defines VAW 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 private life.” (UN Resolution A/RES/48/104, 1993).

The FSM Family Health and Safety Study (FHSS) aimed at obtaining reliable data on the prevalence and different types of VAW in the FSM. Among other objectives, the study also sought to document associations between partner violence and health issues, impact on women’s children, and to identify protective and risk factors for partner violence. The following are the main facts about violence against women in the FSM.

PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL PARTNER VIOLENCE

- **33%** of women in the FSM **experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner** at least once in their lifetime.
- **24%** of women **experienced physical and/or sexual partner by a partner in the last 12 months.**
- The prevalence of **lifetime physical and/or sexual violence by partners was higher in Kosrae and Chuuk States:** Kosrae (58%); Chuuk (50%); Yap (27%); and Pohnpei (19%).
- **29%** of women **experienced physical violence by a partner** in their lifetime and the **most common act** of physical violence was **being slapped or having something thrown at them.**
- **18%** of women **experienced sexual violence by a partner** at least once in their lifetime and the **most common act** of sexual violence was being **physically forced to have sexual intercourse** when she did not want to.
- **6%** of ever-pregnant women **experienced physical partner violence in at least one pregnancy.**

EMOTIONAL PARTNER VIOLENCE

- **33%** of women have **experienced emotional abuse** by a partner in their lifetime.
- **25%** of women **experienced emotional abuse by a partner in the 12 months preceding the interview.**
- The **most common acts of emotional partner abuse** were being insulted or made feel bad (27%) and being belittled or humiliated (21%).

ECONOMIC PARTNER VIOLENCE

- **15%** of women experienced at least one act of **economic abuse** by a partner in their lifetime.
- The prevalence of **economic partner abuse was higher in Chuuk and Kosrae States.**
- The **most common act of economic abuse** was the partner refusing to give her money for household expenses when there was money available.

IMPACT OF PARTNER VIOLENCE ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

- **41%** of women who experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence **were injured at least once.**
- **11%** of women who experienced partner violence **lost consciousness** at least once in their lifetime.
- **9%** of women who experienced partner violence were **hurt enough to need health care.**
- The **most common injuries** were scratches, abrasions, and/or bruises.
- Women who experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence were more likely to report a **poorer health** condition than women who never experienced partner violence.
- Women who experienced partner violence were over 4 times more likely to report more symptoms of **emotional distress** than women who never experienced partner violence.
- Women who experienced partner violence were over 2 times more likely to **attempt suicide** than women who never experienced partner violence.

RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL PARTNER VIOLENCE

- **Woman's age.** Younger women (ages 15-24) were more likely to experience lifetime and current physical or sexual partner violence than older women.
- **Child sexual abuse.** Women who experienced sexual abuse before the age of 15 were almost 2 times more likely to experience lifetime and current partner violence than women who never experience child sexual abuse.
- **Nature of first sexual experience.** Women whose first sexual experience was coerced were over 2 times more likely to experience lifetime and current partner violence than women whose first sex was wanted.
- **Women's attitude towards physical partner violence.** Women who agreed that it is acceptable for a husband to hit his wife if he suspects or finds out his wife is unfaithful were about 2 times more likely to experience lifetime and current partner violence than women who disagreed with this statement.
- **Partner's education.** Women whose partners had achieved tertiary education were 70% less likely to experience lifetime partner violence and 49% less likely to experience current partner violence than women whose partners had primary or no education.
- **Partner's alcohol consumption.** Women whose partners consumed alcohol on a daily or weekly basis were over 2.5 times more likely to experience lifetime and current partner violence than women whose partners did not drink or drank less than once a week.
- **Partner's fights with other men.** Women whose partners had a history of fighting with other men were almost 2 times more likely to experience lifetime and current partner violence than women whose partners never fought with other men.
- **Location.** Women in Chuuk and Kosrae were generally more likely to experience violence by a partner in their lifetime and in the past 12 months than women in the State of reference, Pohnpei.

IMPACT ON CHILDREN

- **44%** of women who experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence said their **children witnessed the violence.**
- Children of women who ever experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence were more likely to **having nightmares, bedwetting, being withdrawn, and being aggressive** than children of never women who never experienced partner violence.
- Children of women who experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence were almost 3 times more likely to have **stopped or dropped out of school** than children of women who never experienced partner violence.

INTERGENERATIONAL ASPECTS OF PARTNER VIOLENCE

Experiencing partner violence in childhood is associated with experiencing partner violence in adulthood:

- The proportion of women who reported their mother was beaten by a husband was higher among women who experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence than among never abused women.
- The proportion of women who reported their partner's mother was beaten by a partner was triple among women who experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence.
- The proportion of women who reported their partner was beaten in childhood was nearly triple among women who experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence.

VIOLENCE BY NON-PARTNERS

- **8%** of women in the FSM have experienced **sexual violence by a person other than a partner** since the age of 15.
- The **most common act of sexual non-partner violence** since age 15 was an attempted rape or other unwanted sexual acts (14%).
- **14%** of women experienced **child sexual abuse** (before the age of 15).
- The **most common perpetrators** for non-partner sexual abuse before and since the age of 15 were **male relatives.**

OTHER IMPORTANT FACTS

- **35% of ever-abused women had not told anyone** about the violence. Those who did tell someone mostly confided in parents and friends.
- **64%** of women who experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence **never left home** despite the violence, mostly because they thought the violence was normal.
- **89%** of women who experienced partner violence **did not seek help from formal services or authorities.**
- The **most common reasons for not seeking help** were: believing that partner violence is normal and being embarrassed or afraid of not being believed.

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For this study, **partner violence against women** is defined as the violence experienced by a woman, perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner, whether cohabiting or not. **Non-partner violence against women** is defined as the violence experienced by a woman that is perpetrated by anyone other than an intimate partner that includes acts of physical and sexual abuse.