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National Research on Domestic Violence Against Women in Turkey

Summary Report

Ankara, January 2009



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PREFACE

Violence against women is a serious social problem, which deprives women of their most basic human rights and basic freedoms, adversely affects their health, and impedes their effective participation in social and economic life.

Violence against women is a violation of human rights and an important impediment of the progress of nations. International institutions and States are taking various legal and administrative measures to prevent violence and discrimination against women and to protect the victims.

Turkey has begun to combat violence by taking legal and administrative measures in all fields with the aim to prevent violence against women and protect the victims, taking into account both international engagement and the prevalence of violence against women in the country.

However, the lack of data on national level about violence against women in our country has been a big obstacle for the development of policies, strategies and programs in this field. Although in the last twenty years various studies have been conducted by some public institutions, non-governmental organizations and universities to compensate the lack of data on violence against women, comprehensive national data could not be obtained.

Because of this need for data, the National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey has been conducted. This research aimed to obtain national level data on violence against women, to enable more effective formulation of policies and programs to combat violence against women.

I would like to thank the European Commission for providing financial support for the realization of the National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey; the Central Finance and Contracts Unit for doing the tender of the research; the Governors of Provinces, Directorates of Social Services and Health and District Kaymakams of the provinces visited during the field work for their support; the consortium of ICON-Institut Public Sector, Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies and BNB for conducting the research with their devoted work.

I believe that the results of the research as a crucial resource for those working on violence against women will be an important contribution to combat this violence and for the formulation of policies in this area.

Esengül CİVELEK

General Director

Directorate General on the Status of Women

FOREWORD

Violence against women is a common worldwide problem faced by all women without distinction of race, language, religion and ethnic group. Violence against women, in the last 30 years, is being considered a violation of women's human rights and a social problem affecting public health. Studies conducted in many countries indicate that domestic violence against women is a widespread phenomenon. In Turkey, the issue of violence against women has entered the agenda of the country through the struggle of the women's movement which gained momentum in the late 1980s. Since the 1990s institutionalization accelerated, the Directorate General on the Status of Women was established under the Prime Ministry, research centers were formed in universities and the number of women organizations increased. Although the issue of domestic violence against women in Turkey has stayed on the agenda by the collaboration of all these institutions, the number of national studies conducted on the subject remained insufficient.

These efforts over the last 20 years have brought us together today to conduct a comprehensive nationwide research to determine the dimensions of domestic violence against women. The National Research on Domestic Violence Against Women in Turkey is the first most comprehensive and nationally representative study carried out on the topic of domestic violence against women, which is a breach of women's human rights. The objective of this research is to perform a situation analysis on combating violence against women, by determining the prevalence of the violence that women are experiencing. In this research, qualitative as well as quantitative research methods have been used.

Since 40 years, Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies planned and conducted numerous studies on different subjects, especially on demography and reproductive health, and has proven itself both nationally and internationally. I would like to express our contentment that our Institute participated in the Consortium which has undertaken and conducted this research, which will contribute to eliminate the violence which women experience in their daily life due to their gender. I appreciate the efforts of the field workers who participated in the research as team supervisors, editors, interviewers and data entry staff in the qualitative and quantitative phases of the project. They ensured that this tough research was conducted in the best possible way. In addition, I would like to thank the women all over the country who participated in the research and shared their experiences with us and wish them a violence free life.

I would like to thank the Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Directorate General on the Status of Women (KSGM), the beneficiary of the National Research on Domestic Violence Against Women in Turkey, for their collaboration in the process; the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT) for their contribution in the sample selection; the Governors of Provinces, Directorates of Social Services and Health and District Kaymakams of the provinces visited during the field work, for their support in carrying out the work properly. My appreciation goes to the academic and administrative staff of the Institute of Population Studies and the project experts for handling this subject with the utmost sensitivity and for successfully completing the study with determination, eagerness and devotion.

In this report, some basic results are presented. The detailed results of the research are in the main report. I hope that these findings, as a new contribution to the efforts carried out by women's non-governmental organizations, universities and KSGM, will be effective for the development of new policies by providing the basic information needed to tackle the problem.

On behalf of the Consortium,

Prof. Dr. Sabahat Tezcan

Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies, Director

PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

Violence against women is still a serious problem in Turkey, as it is all over the world. In Turkey, since the 1980s as a result of the women's movement, gender-based domestic violence has been an item on the agenda of the public opinion and the government. Especially in the legal domain, many actions have been taken and positive developments have been achieved. However, violence against women is still an issue to be investigated and acted upon.

The lack of comprehensive, reliable and valid data on violence against women is a major obstacle in the development of effective policies, strategies and programs which deal with violence. Since the 1990s, in spite of studies done by some public institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and universities to overcome the lack of data, thus far comprehensive national data on domestic violence against women could not be obtained.

The National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey is the most comprehensive research conducted nation-wide, with the objective to determine the prevalence and types of domestic violence against women, its causes and consequences, as well as its risk factors.

This research has been carried out by ICON-Institut Public Sector, Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies and BNB Consulting. Three key experts have been employed: the team leader responsible for the whole project, and the coordinators for the qualitative and quantitative research respectively, who worked together in this research with the experts of Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies.

Objective of the research

The main objective of the research is to contribute to strengthening the capacity of stakeholders who strive to protect women from domestic violence, in the name of improving women's human rights. Through this research, data at national level have been obtained to enable the responsible institutions to formulate policies and develop programs to combat domestic violence against women more effectively.

This study has been conducted in two parts: qualitative and quantitative research. Through **qualitative research**, an analysis was carried out on forms of domestic violence and perceptions about violence by collecting more detailed information on emotions, experiences, attitudes and behaviours related to domestic violence against women. The adequacy of institutions providing services to the women who have been exposed to violence and the views of the staff of these institutions have also been assessed. The information obtained through the qualitative research was used during the questionnaire design to improve the wording of the questions used in the quantitative research. Further, these results were used to strengthen the interpretation and explanation of the results from the quantitative research results. Through **quantitative research**, reliable estimates have been obtained regarding the prevalence of different forms of violence against women, as well as information on causes and consequences. Results have been achieved for Turkey as a whole as well as for each of the 12 regions¹.

¹ 12 regions: The NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units) system is a statistical region classification determined for Turkey's accession to the European Union. There are three different NUTS levels. The 12 regions in this report represent the NUTS 1 level.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research two main research methodologies have been used in order to explore the different dimensions of domestic violence against women.

Qualitative research

Within the scope of the qualitative research, focus group discussions as well as in-depth and semi-structured interviews have been conducted.

In-depth and semi-structured interviews: In the provinces of Ankara, Samsun and Mersin a total of 64 in-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted. The in-depth interviews included interviews with women who have been exposed to violence, with mothers and mothers-in-law of women who have been exposed to violence, as well as with men. Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with professionals providing medical/ psychological/ legal and public services and support to women who experience violence.

Focus Group Discussions: A total of 9 focus group discussions have been conducted in Ankara. These were carried out with men, in groups of different ages, educational levels and marital status. Further, focus groups have also been conducted with professional groups.

Quantitative research

Sample design

The sample design for the survey utilized a weighted, stratified and multi-staged cluster sample approach. The major aim of the sample design was to achieve estimates of the indicators related to violence against women with an acceptable precision within a defined 95% confidence interval, for the whole country as well as the 12 regions and urban/rural strata (further referred to as "type of residence"). In addition, it also aimed to estimate these indicators for major variables such as age group, educational level and socio-economic status (further referred to as "wealth level") in the whole country. The sample selection was done in collaboration with the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT), and the sampling frame, cluster selection and the block lists containing the selected households have been provided by TURKSTAT.

Questionnaires

The research questionnaires were designed according to the needs of the country, taking into consideration the questionnaires of the World Health Organization's Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women. Two questionnaires were used in the research: a household and a woman's questionnaire. Information about the following subjects was collected through the questionnaires:

- a) The household population and the housing characteristics of the households

- b) Background characteristics and marriage history of the women
- c) General health and reproductive health of women and behavioural problems of their children
- d) Background characteristics and behaviour patterns of the husband or partner
- e) Physical and sexual violence, emotional and economic violence/abuse experienced by the women (during lifetime and in the last 12 months prior to the interview), perpetrated by husband or intimate partner
- f) Physical and sexual violence against women by perpetrators other than intimate partners, since she was 15 years old
- g) Sexual abuse before 15 years of age
- h) Attitudes of women towards gender roles and violence
- i) Violence in pregnancy and injuries due to violence
- j) The methods of coping with violence by women who experience domestic partner violence

In this study, the target population constituted of all women between 15 and 59 years of age. In households with more than one woman in the 15-59 age group, only one woman was interviewed. This was for her safety; it ensured that her answers remained confidential; it enabled that she would answer the questions more comfortably and increased the reliability of her answers. In this study, all the women's marital or non-marital (boyfriend, fiancé, engaged) partnerships have also been considered.

Ethical rules for Research on Domestic Violence against Women

In this research which has a sensitive subject, the safety of women was given priority and the research was so designed that the safety of the interviewers was ensured as well. The Ethical and Safety recommendations developed by the World Health Organization were used to guide research decisions.²

A safe name was used in the research in order not to put the safety of respondents as well as the interviewers at risk. In particular, it was important to eliminate the risks that interviewed women who already lived with violence, could experience more violence for participating in the research. Instead of "Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey", the name "Women and Family Research Turkey" was used in all of the documents during the training and throughout the field work.

In the context of the field work, the interviewed women who stated that they needed help were given contact information of public institutions and non-governmental organizations that support women and give services in the provinces where they live.

Field work and response rates

The field work was conducted between July and September 2008, in the 51 provinces which were included in the sample. Data entry of the questionnaires was done in a data entry program developed with Census and Survey Processing System (CSPro) software. All questionnaires were entered twice (double entry) to minimize errors.

² Putting Women First: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women. Geneva, World Health Organization WHO/FCH/GWH/01.1 (2001)

The research sample size according to the sample design was 24,048 households in 542 clusters. In 5 of these clusters interviews could not be made on cluster level (for the entire cluster). Out of 19,505 households, which were visited and eligible for a household interview, 17,168 were successfully interviewed. As a result, the household level response rate is 88.0 percent. The reasons for not conducting interviews in the households were as follows: in 10.9 percent of the selected households either none of the household members were at home during the survey period, or the address was not a dwelling or the dwelling was vacant. Only 4.4 percent of the households refused to be interviewed.

In the interviewed households 22,822 women were determined as being in the 15-59 year age group. Basic information such as age, marital status and education of each of these women had been asked. Out of 22,822 women matching the interview criteria, 14,854 women were selected by the Kish³ method. Within the scope of the research, 12,795 women interviews were completed through the woman's questionnaire in a face to face interview. For the women interviews the response rate was 86.1 percent and the refusal rate was 2.1 percent (Table 1).

Table 1. Response rates		
	Number	Percentage
Number of selected households	24,048	
Number of households that could not be interviewed at cluster level	228	
Number of households that could be interviewed ⁴	19,505	
Number of households interviewed	17,168	
Household response rate		88.0
Number of women in the households	22,822	
Number of women selected with the Kish method ⁵	14,854	
Number of women interviewed	12,795	
Response rate for woman's questionnaire		86.1

³ The Kish method is a technique used for respondent selection when there is more than one eligible person in the household, to avoid possible interviewer bias.

⁴ The household questionnaire included codes for the following situations during which the interview could not be conducted: None of the household members present during the survey period; dwelling vacant; address not a dwelling; dwelling destroyed and "other".

⁵ This number is equal to the number of households where there was at least one woman in the 15-59 age group.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

When a woman confirmed that she had experienced at least one of the below mentioned acts of violence⁶, it is considered in the analysis that she had experienced the indicated form of violence.

Physical violence by husband or partner(s)

- he slapped or threw something at her that could hurt her
- he pushed or shoved her or pulled her hair
- he hit her with his fist or something else that could hurt her
- he kicked her, dragged her or beat her up
- he choked or burnt her on purpose
- he threatened to use or actually used a gun, knife or other weapon against her

Sexual violence by husband or partner(s)

- he physically forced her to have sexual intercourse when she did not want to
- he had sexual intercourse when she did not want to because she was afraid of what he might do
- he forced her to do something sexual that she found degrading or humiliating

Emotional violence/abuse by husband or partner(s)

- he insulted her or cursed her
- he belittled or humiliated her in front of other people
- he scared or threatened her
- he threatened to hurt her or someone she cared about

Economic violence/abuse by husband or partner(s)

- he prevented her from working or caused her to quit her job
- he was not giving money for the household expenses
- he deprived her of her income.

Physical violence by non-partners

She was beaten or physically mistreated in any way by anyone other than husband or partner, since the age of 15 years.

Sexual violence by non-partners

She was forced to have sex when she did not want to or to perform a sexual act which she found humiliating or degrading, by anyone (other than husband/partner) since the age of 15 years.

Childhood sexual abuse

She was being exposed to an unwanted sexual act or to sexually disturbing touching before the age of 15 years.

⁶ The word "violence" itself was not used in the questionnaire.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women can be assessed according to the type of perpetrator. Possible perpetrators range from husband/partners, men in the immediate social vicinity of the women, to men they don't know, and even to women in the family. In this study, information was collected not only on domestic violence against women, but also on violence against women by people outside the family. The results are being presented under two main headings according to the type of perpetrators of the violence, and will focus on (1) violence by husband or partner(s) and (2) violence by people other than husband or partner(s). Besides looking at different types of violence against women, results on certain views of women on violence and gender roles are also being included.

Violence against women by husband or partner(s)

The information presented in this section shows the prevalence of different forms of violence to which women were exposed by the men to whom they are currently married, were married to for a period, or are living together with as if married. Results on physical violence, sexual violence, emotional violence/abuse and economic violence/abuse are presented according to the basic characteristics of the women such as age, educational and wealth level, as well as type of residence (urban/rural) and region.

Specific acts have been defined in order to measure different forms of violence (see Operational Definitions). All ever-partnered women were asked whether they had experienced specific acts of physical, sexual, emotional or economic violence and if a woman confirmed having been exposed to any of the acts, more detailed questions were asked on when and how frequent the act had happened. Regarding the timing of the act, two different periods were considered: the last 12 months preceding the interview⁷ and any period in their life.

The partnership concept does not express the same phenomenon everywhere due to differences in setting, region, culture, etc. Therefore, in this summary report when presenting the results of partner violence only answers of ever-married women have been included.

"He was not my relative, he saw me at a wedding, and he abducted me. My family wanted to take me back, he didn't let me go. He used to tie me to a tree and beat me, tie me to a tree and beat me; for any tiny reason he beats me, violence, beating, violence."

(woman, 34 years old, married, four children, primary school graduate)

Physical violence

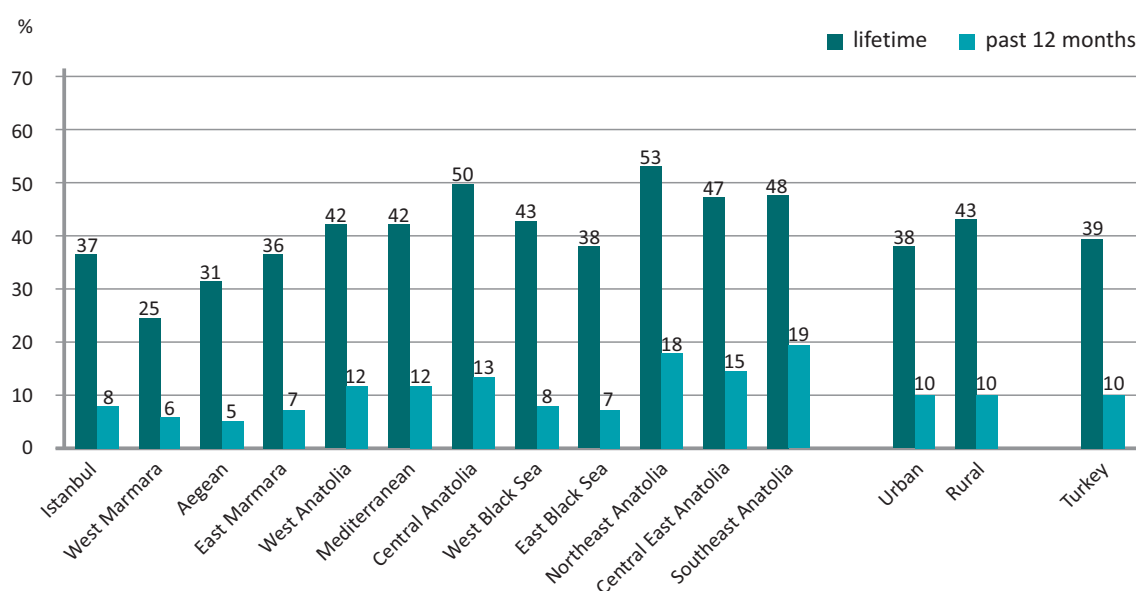
In order to measure physical violence, women were asked whether they had experienced certain acts of physical violence (see Operational Definitions).

⁷ Hereafter referred to as past 12 months.

Overall, 39 percent of women reported to have experienced physical violence. In other words, 4 out of 10 women have been exposed to physical violence by their husbands or partners at least once in their life. The experience of physical violence in the 12 months prior to the interview is less when compared to the violence experienced in any period of her life as expected. In Turkey, one out of 10 women has experienced physical violence in the past 12 months. There is significant variation between regions with regards to experiencing physical violence. For example, while the prevalence of experiencing physical violence among women living in West Marmara is 25 percent, it is 53 percent in the Northeast Anatolia region (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Prevalence of physical violence:

Percentage of women reporting physical violence by husband or partner, by region and type of residence, Turkey 2008



Note: Percentages based on ever-married women.

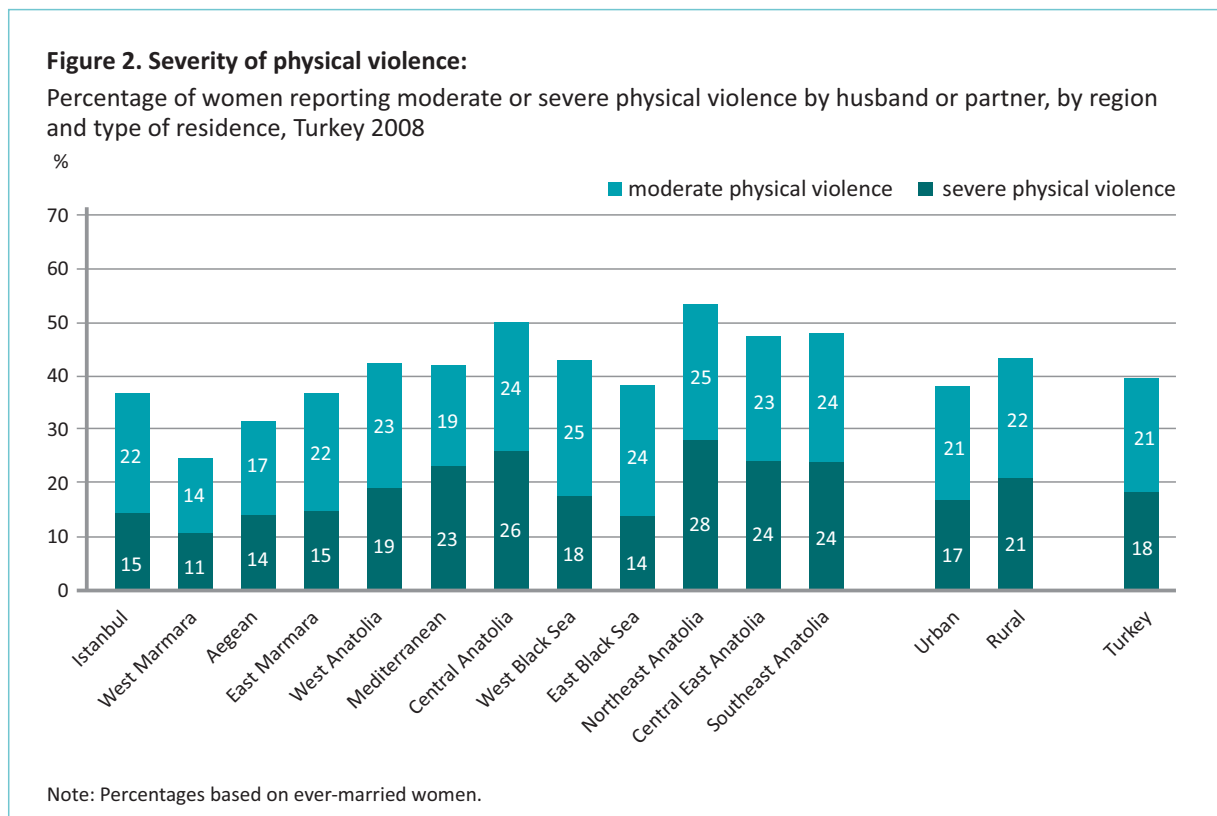
The World Health Organization classifies the severity of physical violence into two levels, one being moderate and the other being severe, based on the likelihood of causing injuries. "Slapping, pushing, shoving" are defined as 'moderate' physical violence, and "hitting, kicking, strangling, using a knife or a weapon" are defined as 'severe' physical violence (WHO, 2005).⁸

"Last April he punched me in the eye. He goes to work at 5 in the morning. We overslept for 10 minutes, he threw me out of the bed saying 'why don't you wake me up', punched my eye. My husband also kicked my eye before..."

(woman, 34 years old, married, two children, primary school graduate)

⁸ WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women: initial results on prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2005.

The prevalence of severe violence varies between 11 and 28 percent between regions. It is seen that in Northeast Anatolia and Central Anatolia, which are the regions where prevalence of physical violence is the highest, the prevalence and the proportion of severe physical violence are also the highest (Figure 2).



"...that day my sisters-in-law, mother-in-law all came home. It was a little their influence, the fight started, when the fight started, then I thought he took scissors in his hand... he attacked me with scissors and I ran into the bedroom and put the ironing board behind the door... I jammed it between the feet of the bed and the door; I was thinking would he open the door, or will he enter from the balcony or from somewhere else..."

(woman, 35 years old, divorced, one child, high school graduate)

Sexual violence

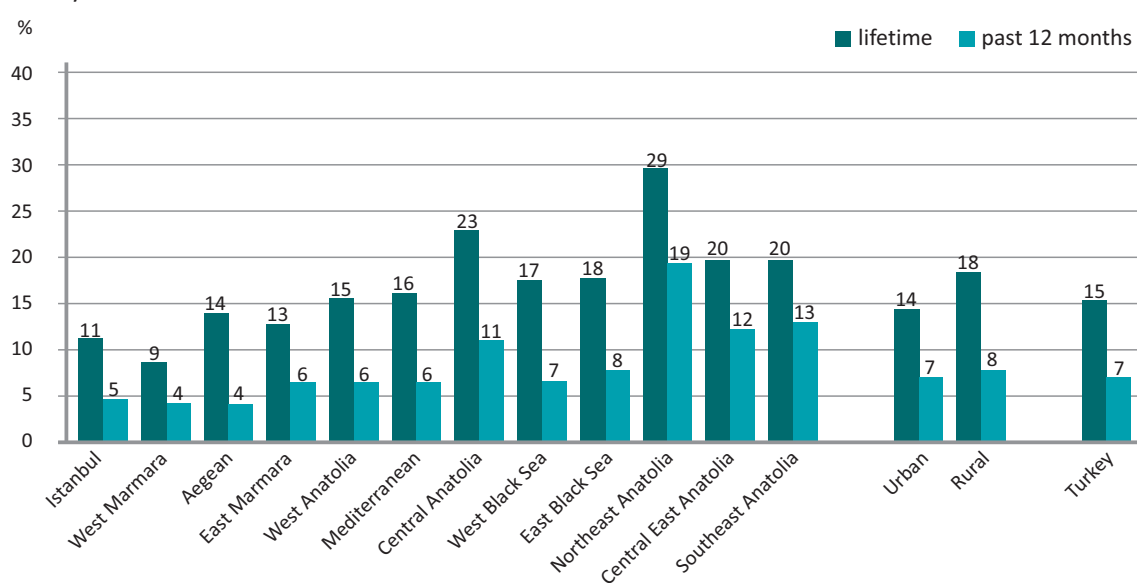
In order to measure sexual violence, the women were asked whether they were exposed to some acts of sexual violence (see Operational Definitions).

It is more difficult for women to disclose experiences of sexual violence compared to those of physical violence. Likewise, to talk about sexual violence within marriage is not regarded as very appropriate. Nevertheless, in the interviews 15 percent of the ever-married women reported that they have

experienced one or more of these acts. While in West Marmara 9 percent of married women reported sexual violence, in the Northeast Anatolia region this is 29 percent. For the remaining regions it varies between 11 and 23 percent. The most commonly mentioned act among the sexual violence acts is that the woman has sexual intercourse against her will, with the fear for something that her husband may do (for example administer physical violence, leave, or have intercourse with other women) (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Prevalence of sexual violence:

Percentage of women reporting sexual violence by husband or partner, by region and type of residence, Turkey 2008



Note: Percentages based on ever-married women.

"I mean, I would be screaming, yelling, saying that I didn't want, he was forcing me. But at the end, somehow, what he said would happen."

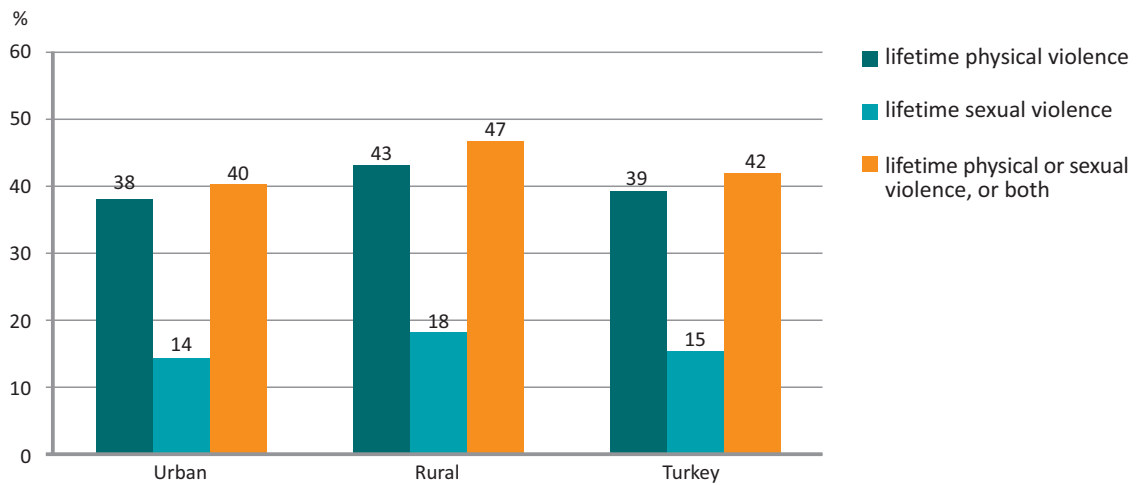
(woman, 35 years old, divorced, one child, high school graduate)

Physical or sexual violence

In Turkey, as well as in all regions and type of residence the prevalence of physical partner violence reported by women is higher than the prevalence of sexual violence. Nationwide, the proportion of married women who reported to have experienced physical violence is 39 percent, whereas the proportion of women, who have experienced either sexual or physical violence, or both, is 42 percent. This small difference in proportion shows that in many cases where sexual violence is experienced, physical violence is experienced as well. Sexual violence rarely occurs alone, and different forms of violence are usually experienced together (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Prevalence of physical or sexual violence:

Percentage of women reporting physical or sexual violence by husband or partner, by type of residence, Turkey 2008

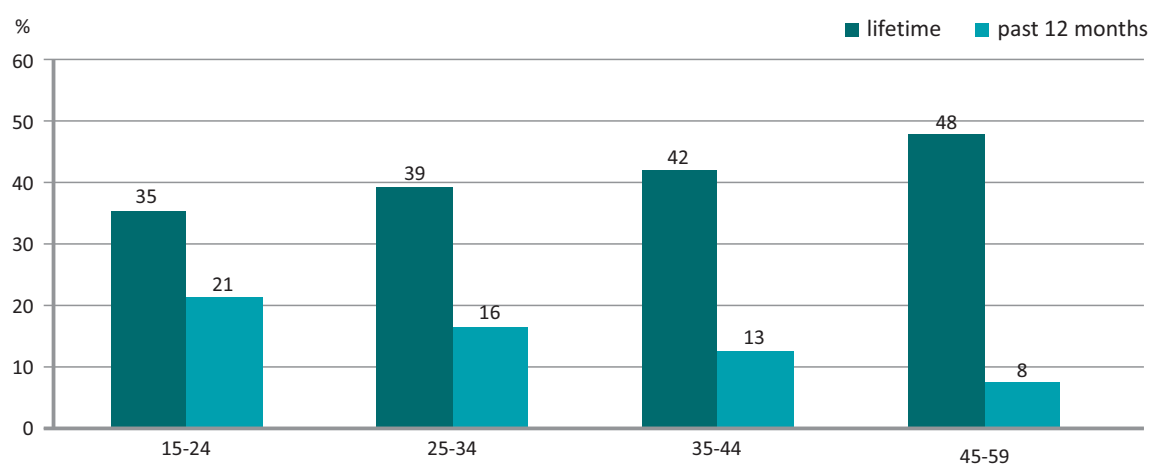


Note: Percentages based on ever-married women.

As can be expected the prevalence of lifetime physical or sexual violence is the highest among women in the 45-59 age group. Considering partner violence in the 12 months prior to the interview, it is observed that the youngest age groups have the highest prevalence of current violence, which indicates that violence starts early in marriage and when women are young (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Prevalence of physical or sexual violence by age:

Percentage of women reporting physical or sexual violence by husband or partner, by age group, Turkey 2008

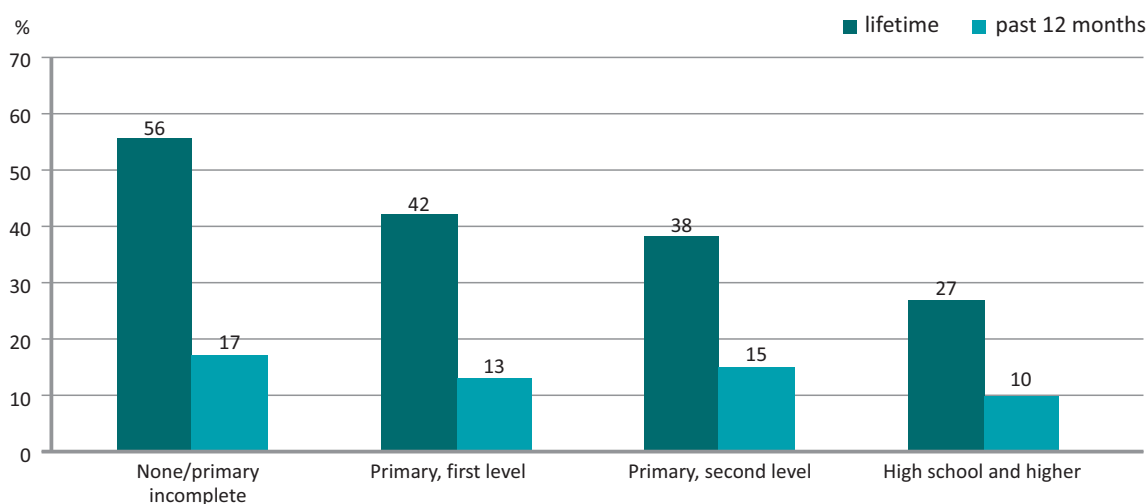


Note: Percentages based on ever-married women.

As the educational level increases the proportion of women reporting experience of partner violence decreases. Whereas the prevalence of physical or sexual violence experienced by women with no education/who have not completed primary school is 56 percent, it is 32 percent among high school graduate women, and 17 percent among university graduates. Although it seems that the increase in educational level is effective in protecting women against violence, it is also striking that almost 3 out of 10 women in the high school and higher education group have experienced partner violence (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Prevalence of physical or sexual violence by educational level:

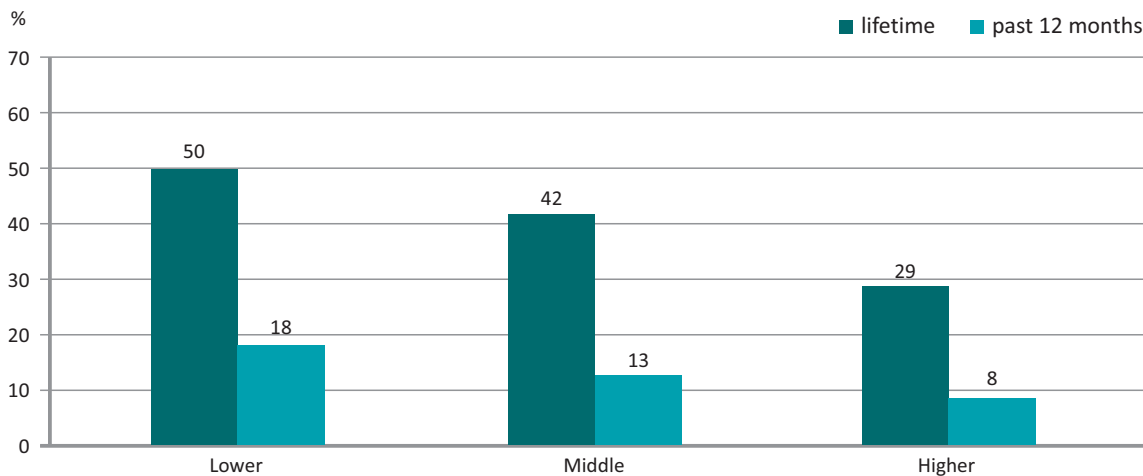
Percentage of women reporting physical or sexual violence by husband or partner, by educational level, Turkey 2008



Note: Percentages based on ever-married women.

Figure 7. Prevalence of physical or sexual violence by wealth level:

Percentage of women reporting physical or sexual violence by husband or partner, by wealth level, Turkey 2008



Note: Percentages based on ever-married women.

Whereas the prevalence of lifetime partner violence reported by women with a lower wealth level is 50 percent, this drops to 29 percent among the women with higher socio-economic levels. It appears that when living standards improve, partner violence is reported less (Figure 7).

"...my marriage lasted twenty-three years, after twenty-three years, all through these years I had violence all the time, I mean sexually too, when I didn't want, how I didn't want; for example, he would gamble, and when he lost money he would come and beat me. And after this beating, for instance after this beating for example he wanted to have sex, when I refused I would be beaten again."

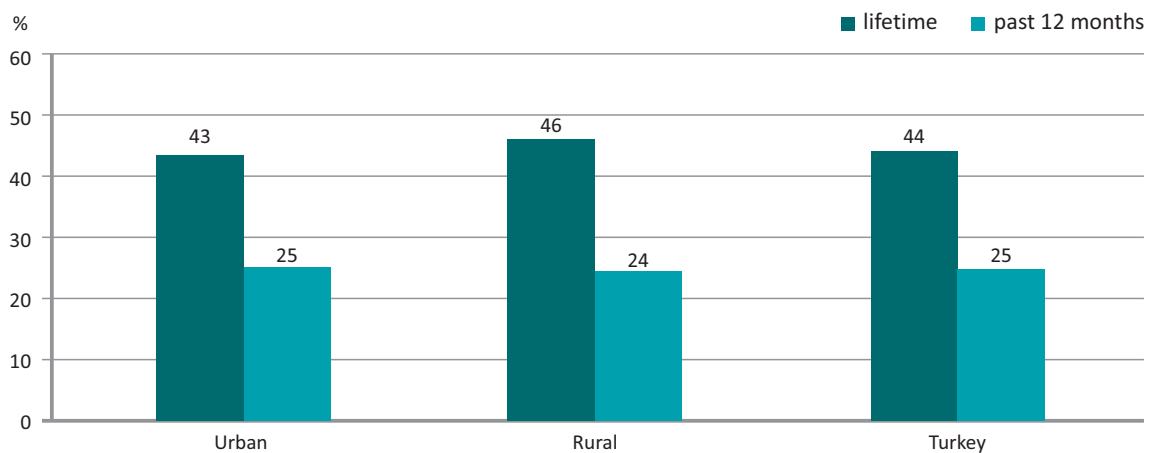
(woman, 44 years old, separated, two children, high school graduate)

Emotional violence/abuse

Another form of violence against women is emotional violence or abuse. The women were asked whether they were exposed to acts of emotional abuse by their husband or partner(s) (see Operational Definitions). Overall, 44 percent of women reported emotional abuse in any period of their lives. One out of four women has experienced emotional abuse in the past 12 months. Both for lifetime emotional abuse and for abuse in the past 12 months, the prevalence rates do not show an important difference between urban and rural areas; however they do vary between regions (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Prevalence of emotional violence/abuse:

Percentage of women reporting emotional abuse by husband or partner, by type of residence, Turkey 2008



Note: Percentages based on ever-married women.

"We were scared, we would tip-toe around the house, we were scared that we would make a sound, that he would wake up and something would happen, when he sleeps so quiet and peaceful, when he wakes up and sees us watching television then it's over, you won't watch television, you won't listen to the radio..."

(woman, 44 years old, married, one child, high school graduate)

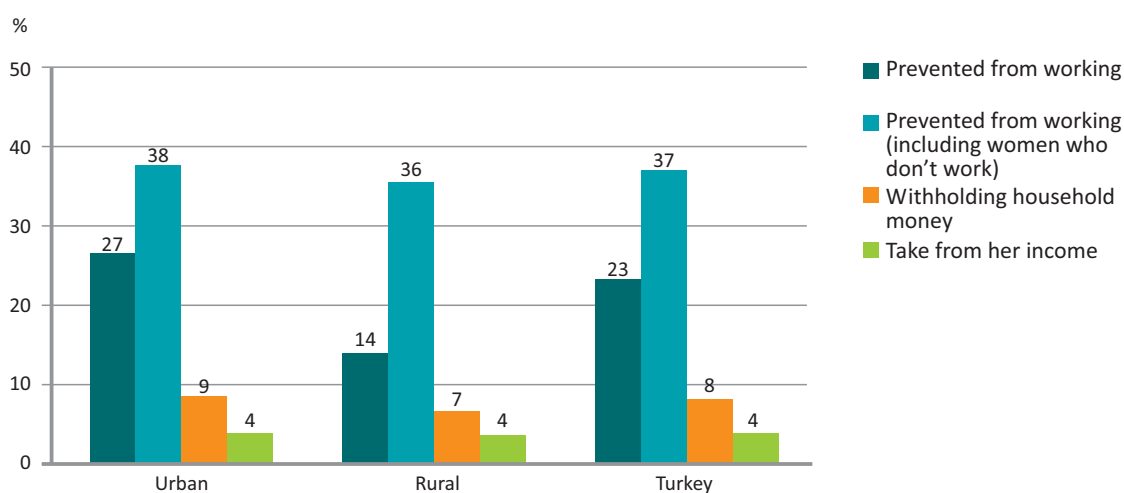
Economic violence/abuse

The following forms of economic violence or abuse have been considered: preventing the woman from working or causing her to quit her job, not giving money for household expenses and depriving the woman of her income. The most commonly reported act of economic abuse was in the form of preventing women from working or causing her to quit her job. This was reported by the 23 percent of the married women. When women who did not want to work or women for whom such a situation was not in question are included, the proportion of women exposed to this particular act of economic abuse becomes 4 out of 10.

The highest proportions of women reporting economic abuse in any period of their lives in the form of preventing her from working or causing her to quit her job are in the East Marmara and the Istanbul region, with 29 and 27 percent respectively. This form of economic violence/abuse displays a different pattern than the other forms of violence and is found twice as much among women living in the urban areas than among women living in rural areas (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Prevalence of economic violence/abuse:

Percentage of women reporting economic abuse by husband or partner, by type of residence, Turkey 2008



Note: Percentages based on ever-married women.

"For example, he gets his salary, there's nothing to eat at home, you ask for money, I mean, you need to cook, the kids need to go to school. He says 'go to the school... talk to the headmaster; he should take care of the kid...' I would ask my neighbours for stale bread, I mean of course, in order not to show my poverty, telling them the children didn't want to go to the market in the rain... I would get stale bread. In order not to disclose my family matters. I mean ask for money, he gets a salary, in short, for example I ask him to leave money for food and bread, no money. When I ask him why, it is the reason of a fight."

(woman, 44 years old, separated, two children, high school graduate)

Violence against women by perpetrators other than husbands or partners

In the survey, information was also collected about violence the women were exposed to by perpetrators other than intimate partners, such as members of the partner's family, relatives and other persons. All women, married or single, were asked questions to find out whether they experienced physical and sexual violence by others (not their husband or partner) since they were 15 years old. Women were further asked questions to assess their experience of sexual abuse before they were 15 years old (childhood sexual abuse). All women who have experienced physical and sexual violence/abuse were also asked who did this to her and how many times it happened.

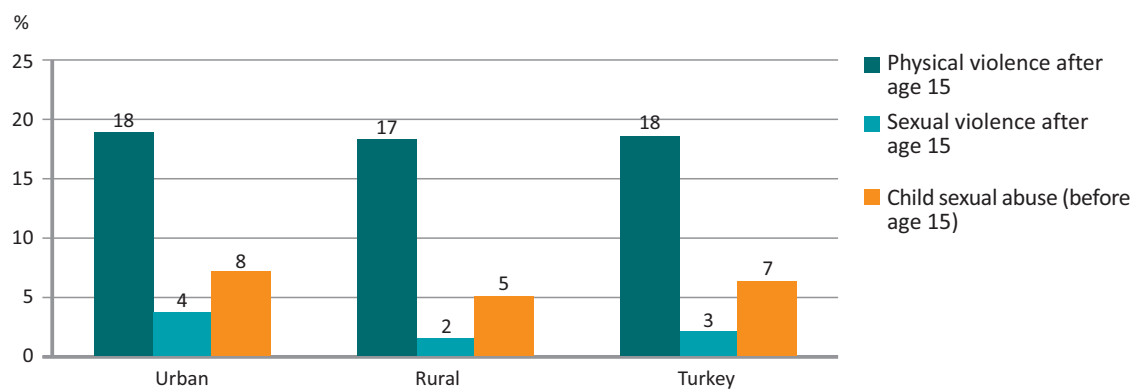
"We have experienced this violence thing more from our father anyway. My father was an extremely angry and nervous person. For everything, for example he asks for a glass of water, when the water arrives late he would smash the glass with water on top of your head. The glass would break, I mean together with your head. It must come immediately, in the same instant."

(woman, 35 years, divorced, one child, high school graduate)

Physical violence against women after 15 years of age from perpetrators other than husband or partner(s)

Overall, one out of 5 women (18 percent) reported to have been exposed to physical violence by someone other than her intimate partner since age 15. There was not much difference between urban and rural areas (Figure 10). The proportion of women reporting physical violence by family, relatives or other persons is highest among women living in Northeast Anatolia (23 percent), followed by Central East Anatolia (22 percent), East Black Sea (19 percent) and Istanbul (20 percent). The proportion is lowest among women living in the West Marmara region, with 14 percent. In Turkey, when husbands and partners are excluded, the most common perpetrators of physical violence against women are members of the women's own families.

Figure 10. Prevalence of physical or sexual violence by perpetrators other than husbands or partners: Percentage of women reporting physical or sexual violence by persons other than husband or partner, by type of residence, Turkey 2008



Note: Percentages based on all women.

"I was beaten by my father-in-law... and to make matters worse I had violence from my mother-in-law. Because I am a woman, I thought a woman is someone who should best understand me, but she didn't. Experiencing violence from her really exceeded my limit of endurance. I mean, to be beaten by my mother-in-law as well was clearly the final blow to me..."

(woman, 26 years old, married, one child, secondary school drop-out)

Sexual violence against women after 15 years of age from perpetrators other than husband or partner(s)

In Turkey, 3 out of 100 women reported to have experienced sexual violence by perpetrators other than their intimate partners since age 15. In urban areas this was 4 percent and in rural areas 2 percent (Figure 10). Half of the women, who have experienced sexual violence by perpetrators other than their intimate partners, reported that violence was perpetrated by strangers.

Sexual abuse before the age of 15 years

Because sexual abuse experienced before the age of 15 years is a sensitive and a difficult subject to talk about in an interview, this information was collected in a gradual way. During the interview the women were asked whether anyone had performed a sexual act against her will or touched her in a sexually disturbing way before the age of 15. In addition, regardless of the answer given to this question, at the end of the interview they were given a card with two pictures on it: a crying and a smiling face of a girl. Women were asked to mark one of the two pictures, which would express whether they experienced such an act or not and to put the card in an envelope, without showing their mark to the interviewer.

Overall, the proportion of women reporting to have experienced sexual violence in the face to face interview was 4 percent. The proportion who marked the crying face on the card was 6 percent. When both answers are combined the prevalence for the whole country was 7 percent (Figure 10). Women living in urban areas are more likely to report childhood sexual abuse than women living in the rural areas. 42 percent of women who have experienced childhood sexual abuse reported that this was done by strangers.

Women's attitudes towards gender roles and violence

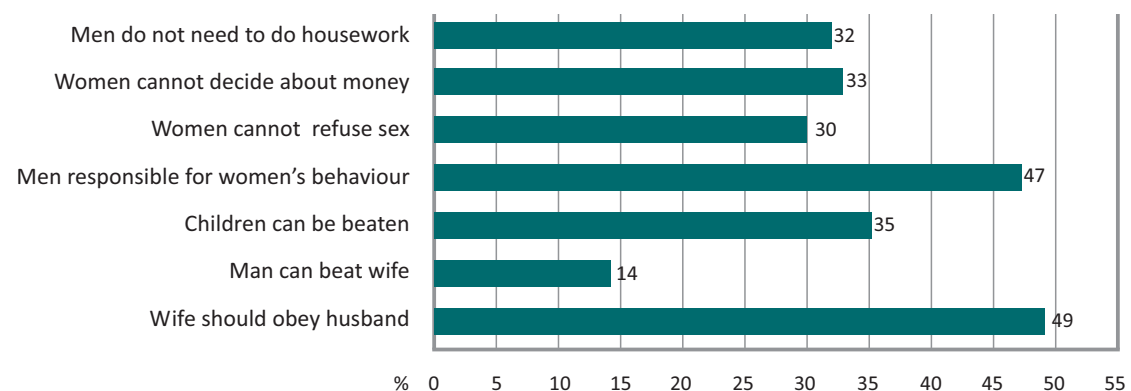
During the interview, all women, married or single, were asked whether they agreed with certain statements in order to understand their attitudes towards violence and gender roles. These statements were:

- In some situations men can beat their wives.
- It is a wife's obligation to have sex with her husband even if she doesn't feel like it.
- Sometimes, it may be necessary to beat children to discipline them.
- Male family members are responsible of the attitudes and behaviours of a woman.
- A good wife should not argue with her husband and keep silent if she disagrees with him.
- A woman should be able to spend her own money according to her own will.
- Men should also do housework like cooking, dish washing, laundry and ironing.

The statement "in some situations men can beat their wives" is important to understand the attitudes of women towards physical violence. Fourteen percent of all women in the whole country agree with the statement. This also indicates that 86 out of 100 women think that physical violence is unacceptable. The proportion of women agreeing with wife beating is higher in rural areas (23 percent) than in urban areas (11 percent) (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Women's attitudes towards gender roles and violence:

Percentage of women who agree to certain statements on gender roles and violence, Turkey 2008



Note: a) Percentages based on all women.

b) The first two statements in the figure have been reversed so that for each statement a higher percentage corresponds with a more "traditional" view on gender roles.

"What should women do? As I said, women should express their authority. At the very first beating, she should react. Me, for example, when I was still little I couldn't do so. The society wasn't as aware as today. Ankara at the time of my childhood and Ankara at present have nothing in common. (...) For a woman authority is very important, then she will be able to express herself. She should say if my husband is working, earning, bringing home money; at home I am also working. I am working as well, cleaning the house, cooking, washing the clothes, ironing, what I do is also working. (...) I am against beating. Now I am telling my husband, as I said I have the right to express my opinion now."

(woman, 63 year old, married, three children, primary school graduate)

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

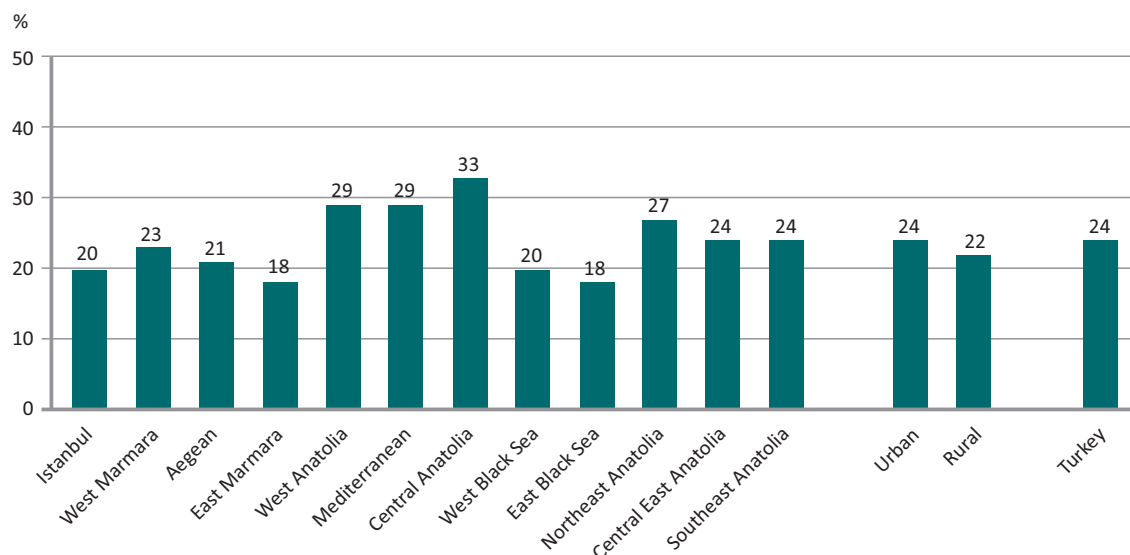
One of the most important consequences of violence against women is that it adversely affects women's physical and mental health. Violence against women should be considered as an important public health problem. Injuries occurring as a result of experiencing physical or sexual violence are obviously direct effects of violence on women's health. In addition to this, when looking at the answers given by women to questions to assess their self-reported general and mental health⁹, and comparing the answers of women who have experienced partner violence in any period of their lives, with those who have not experienced such violence, it is seen that experiencing partner violence can also have indirect effects on health. The results of studies conducted in other countries also show that, although not claiming to be a direct result of violence, women who experienced partner violence suffer more from physical and mental illnesses than women who have not (WHO, 2005).

Injuries due to violence

Overall, one fourth of ever-married women who reported partner violence told in the interview that she had been injured as a result of physical or sexual partner violence. This proportion does not differ much between urban and rural areas. In the Central Anatolia, West Anatolia and Mediterranean regions, about one out of three women have been injured as a result of the violence experienced (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Injuries as a result of physical or sexual violence:

Percentage of women ever injured due to physical or sexual violence by husband or partner by region and type of residence, Turkey 2008



Note: Percentages based on ever-married women who reported physical or sexual partner violence.

"Very much so, very broken down, as if the burden of the whole world is on my shoulders, I mean I think about how I should overcome that burden, and I can't find a remedy. There is none, I mean it's finished... headaches... very extreme depression and in an instant I get a headache, first in the forehead then right at the top of my head."

(woman, 35 years old, divorced, one child, high school graduate)

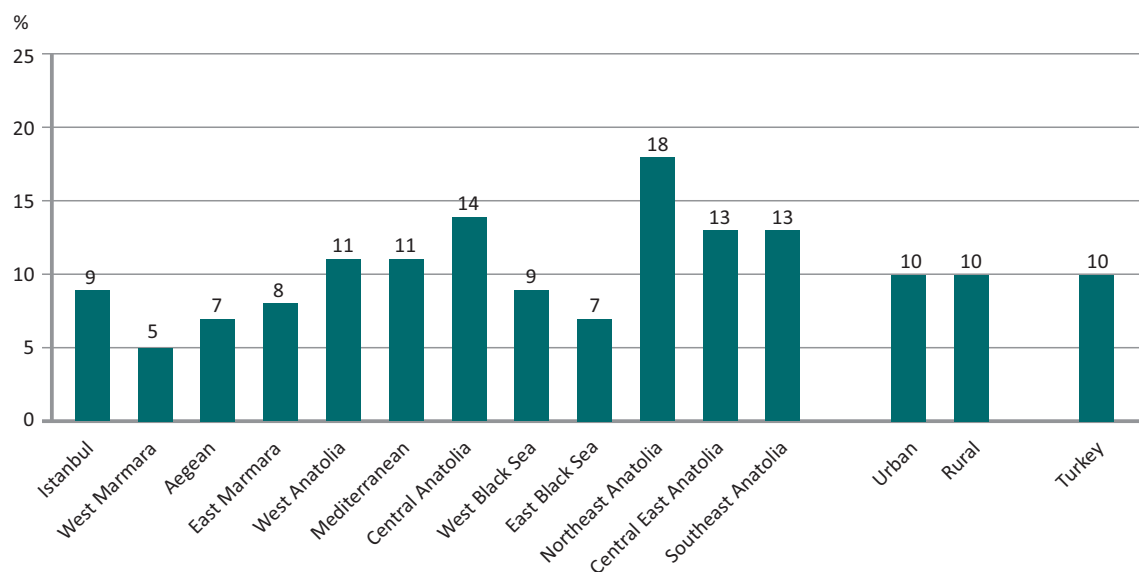
⁹ The health questions were asked early on in the interview, before the violence questions.

Physical violence during pregnancy

Physical violence during pregnancy affects the health of the (unborn) children as well the health of the women. In Turkey, one out of ten women who have been pregnant at least once has experienced physical violence during pregnancy from her husband or partner. Whereas in the Northeast Anatolia region the proportion of women reporting to have experienced physical violence during any pregnancy is 18 percent, it is 5 percent among the women living in West Marmara (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Physical violence during pregnancy:

Percentage of women ever experienced physical violence by husband or partner during pregnancy, Turkey 2008



Note: Percentages based on ever-married women who have ever been pregnant.

"A hut like a greenhouse, he had sacrificial sheep, they stood there, in the early days there wasn't beating, beating started as time passed, violence, beating, violence, beating. In the mud like a dog, he took me by the arm and twisted me, nobody came to my rescue, I was pregnant."

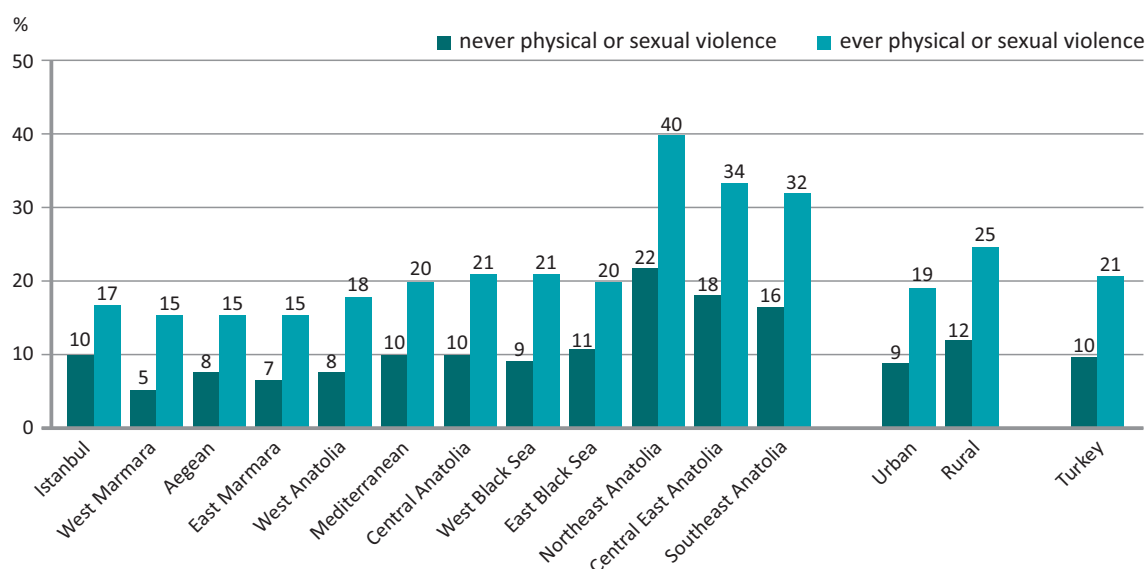
(woman, 34 years old, married, four children, primary school graduate)

Physical or sexual violence and general health

When looking at the self-reported general health status of ever-married women, according to whether they experienced physical or sexual violence or not, it is seen that women who have experienced partner violence are twice as likely to describe their health condition as "poor" or "very poor" compared to women who have never experienced such violence. Women living in Northeast Anatolia, Central East Anatolia and Southeast Anatolia are more likely to make negative evaluations about their general health conditions, compared to women in other regions (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Physical or sexual violence and general health:

Percentage of women who reported that their general health was “poor” or “very poor”, according to whether they experienced partner violence or not, by region and type of residence, Turkey 2008



Note: Percentages based on ever-married women.

Physical or sexual violence and mental health

Besides questions to assess symptoms of physical and mental health, women were asked whether they have ever thought of ending their life and whether they attempted to end their life. In Turkey, the proportion of the women who have ever thought of ending their life is 3 times higher among the women who have experienced physical or sexual partner violence compared to women who have never experienced such violence. Four out of ten women living in the Northeast Anatolia, Central East Anatolia and Southeast Anatolia regions who have experienced physical or sexual partner violence have stated that they have ever thought about ending their life (Figure 15).

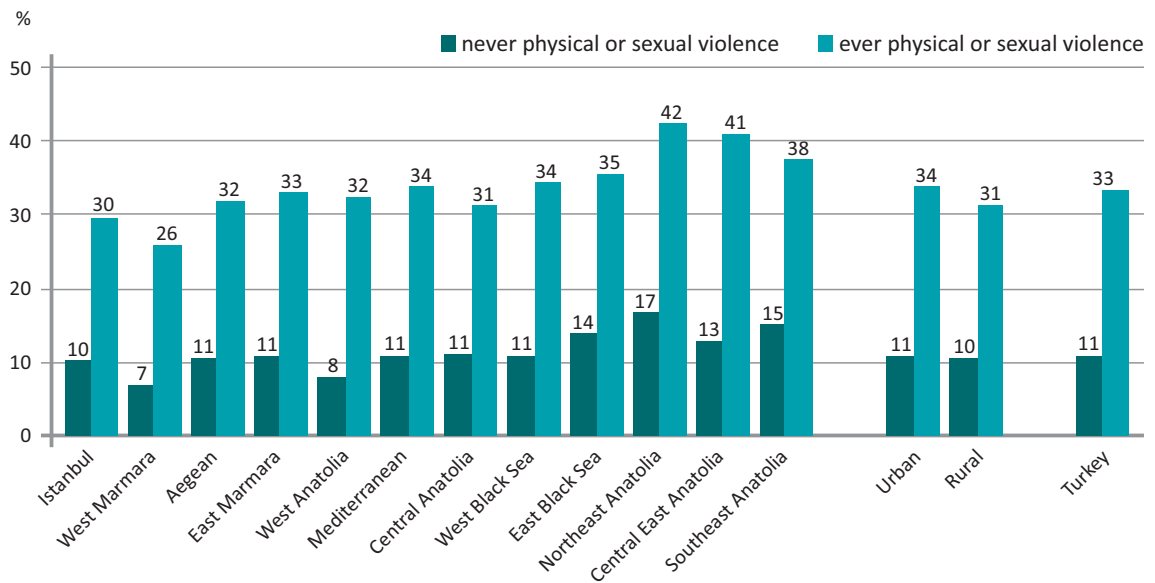
Overall, women who ever experienced partner violence are 4 times more likely to have actually attempted to end their life compared to women who have not experienced such violence. Among the women who live in the Mediterranean and Southeast Anatolia regions and who have experienced physical or sexual partner violence, the proportion of women who attempted to end their life is 15 percent. In Istanbul and West Marmara this proportion is 9 and 8 percent, respectively.

Within one week he started beating her already.... We have a saying... .you enter with your wedding dress and you leave with your shroud...(...) My brothers and others asked her to return, she returned to him. Upon her return, she tried to commit suicide. After she attempted suicide, we took her back, had her treated, I took her to the psychiatrist. She stayed with me for two months, got well. She returned to him, and the same things happened again..."

(woman, 58 year old, widowed, four children, primary school graduate, about her abused daughter)

Figure 15. Physical or sexual violence and thoughts of ending own life:

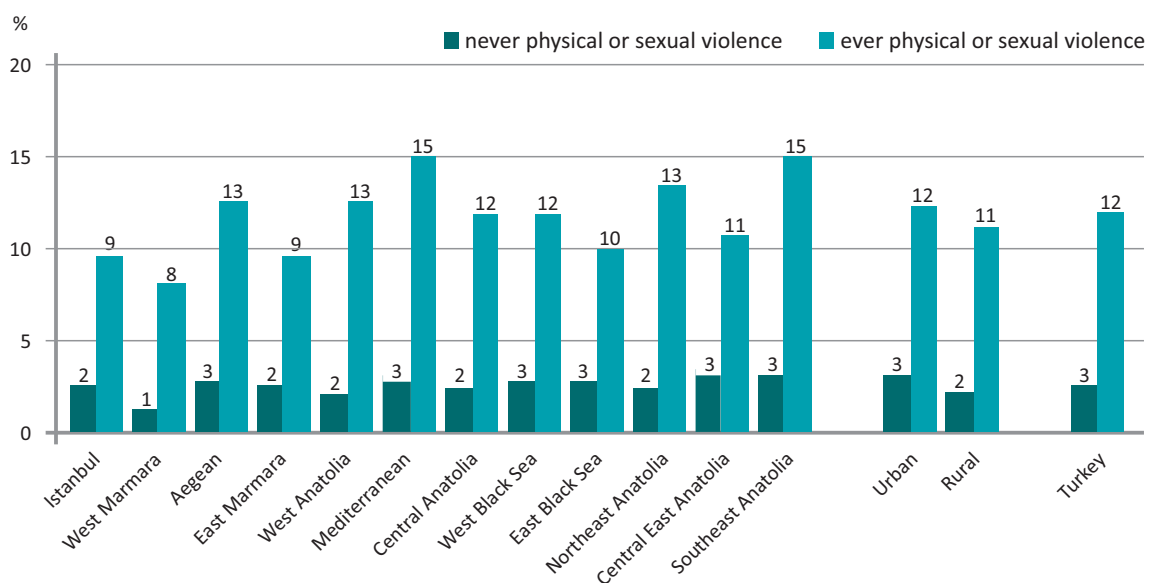
Percentage of women who ever thought of ending their life, according to whether they experienced partner violence or not, by region and type of residence, Turkey 2008



Note: Percentages based on ever-married women.

Figure 16. Physical or sexual violence and attempts at ending own life:

Percentage of women who ever tried to end their life, according to whether they experienced partner violence or not, by region and type of residence, Turkey 2008



Note: Percentages based on ever-married women.

COPING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

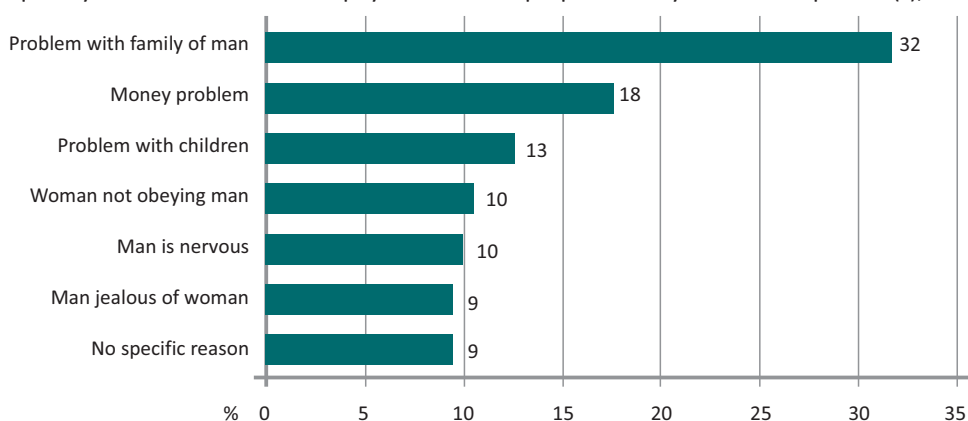
It is important to know the causes of partner violence from the women's perspective, how abused women cope with this violence, with whom they share and tell about the violence, and where they apply to due to violence. In Turkey not much is known about how women respond to violence, how they obtain help from their immediate social network, health services and other services. Therefore, women who reported physical or sexual partner violence were also asked questions to find out how they respond to domestic violence.

Causes of violence from women's perspective

Women who reported physical abuse by a husband or partner were asked¹⁰ about the causes of the violence from their own perspective. The most common reason among the responses is "problems with husband's/partner's family", which was reported by 32 percent of the women as the reason for the violence they experienced. While 18 percent of the women said that her husband or partner's violence was due to "monetary problems", 13 percent said that they experienced violence due to "problems related to the children". Other situations commonly mentioned as causing violence were "the woman is disobedient", "the man is nervous", "the man is jealous of the woman" and "no particular reason" (Figure 17).

Figure 17. The reasons of physical violence experienced from women's perspective:

Most frequently mentioned reasons for physical violence perpetrated by husband or partner(s), Turkey 2008



Note: a) Percentages based on ever-married women reporting physical partner violence.

b) Categories have been calculated independent from each other.

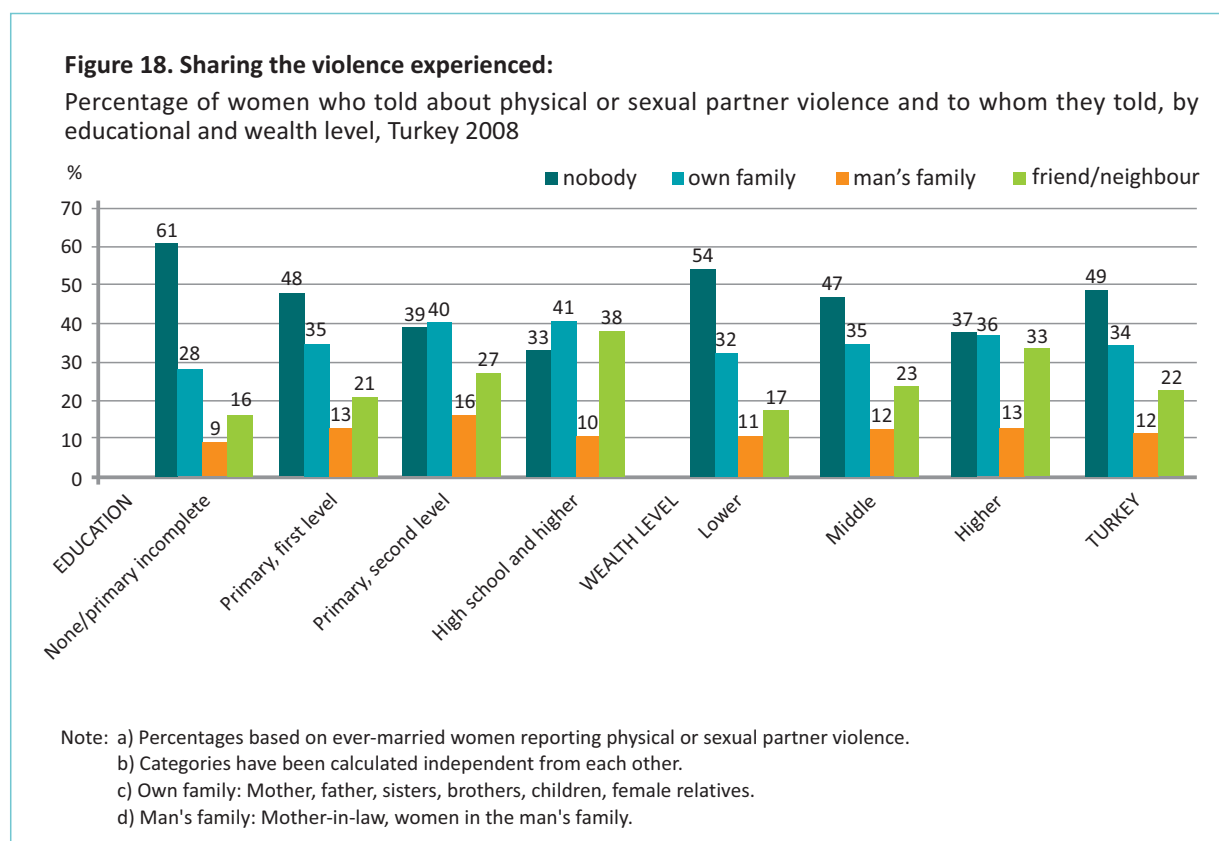
"First of all, the greatest factor of a woman being suppressed is that one doesn't have economic power. I mean if you didn't get an education, if you couldn't get to some place, if you don't have money, a salary to support you, then you are already half gone... If you don't have these conditions, if something like that, then we say let's keep quiet for the sake of the children, good fine 'Amen' to that but we are dying while keeping the children alive... Most women, I swear most endure everything for their children. If there weren't children nobody would endure anybody."

(woman, 35 years old, divorced, one child, high school graduate)

¹⁰ In a way they could give more than one answer

Sharing and telling about the violence experienced

In Turkey, 49 percent of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence by their husbands or partners, reported that they had not told anybody about the violence they experienced (Figure 18). In other words; almost half of the women who have experienced violence have told for the first time about the violence they experienced to the interviewers during the survey.



While 34 percent of women who experienced violence told their own families about violence, only 12 percent told the man's family about the violence. At the same time women told their friends or neighbours about the violence. One out of five women told her friend or neighbour about the violence she experienced. The proportion of women sharing the violence with someone is at least 10 percent more among women living in urban areas, than among women living in rural areas.

Sharing of violence varies according to the age of the woman. Whereas young women (between ages 15-24) are more likely to tell about the violence experienced, sharing is less common for older women. Sharing violence with persons in the immediate social network also varies with educational level: When the educational level is high, hiding violence is relatively low. When the wealth level is high, telling about violence to persons in the immediate social network occurs also relatively more often.

Half of the women, who have experienced physical or sexual partner violence, have shared violence with persons in their immediate social network. On the other hand, among women who have experienced violence, more than half reported that no one among the people who had witnessed the violence or knew about it had actually helped them. While, as mentioned above, 34 percent of the women tell about the violence to their own families, only 17 percent said that their family had tried to help.

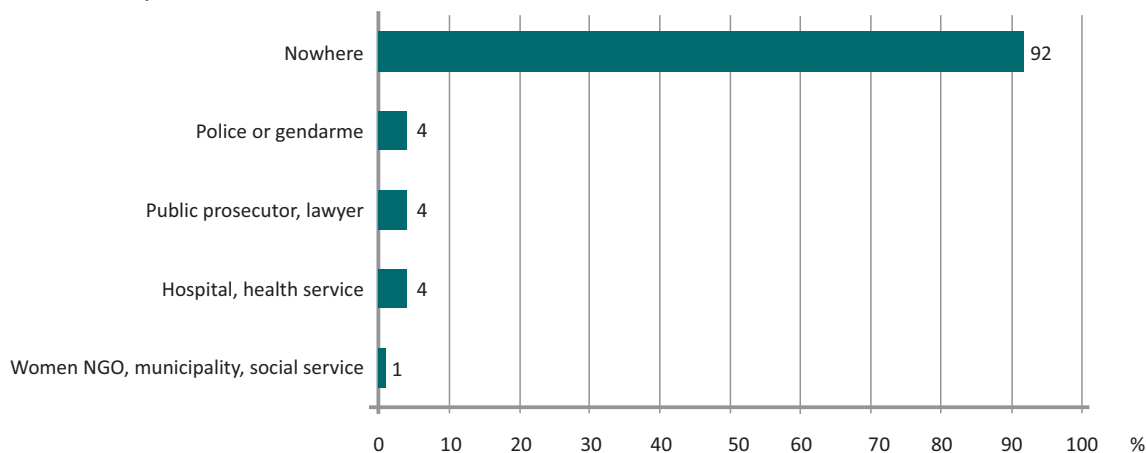
"I won't even tell my neighbours. Hmm, ... my child, if I tell, do you think it would be any good? Is it a solution? Ok let me tell, let me go here and tell, let me go there and tell, good, what do I get out of it? I don't want to tell and I am not telling. I won't even say anything to my neighbours."
 (woman, 50 years old, married, has three children, primary school graduate)

"I went to my mother first. (.....) The first time I went I couldn't tell, when it kept happening, I told little by little. Their reactions were as such, 'didn't we tell you', 'you brought this upon yourself, now pay for it', 'there is the child, what will you do, where will you go' and so on..."
 (woman, 20 years old, married, one child, high school graduate)

Applying to official institutions and NGOs due to violence experienced

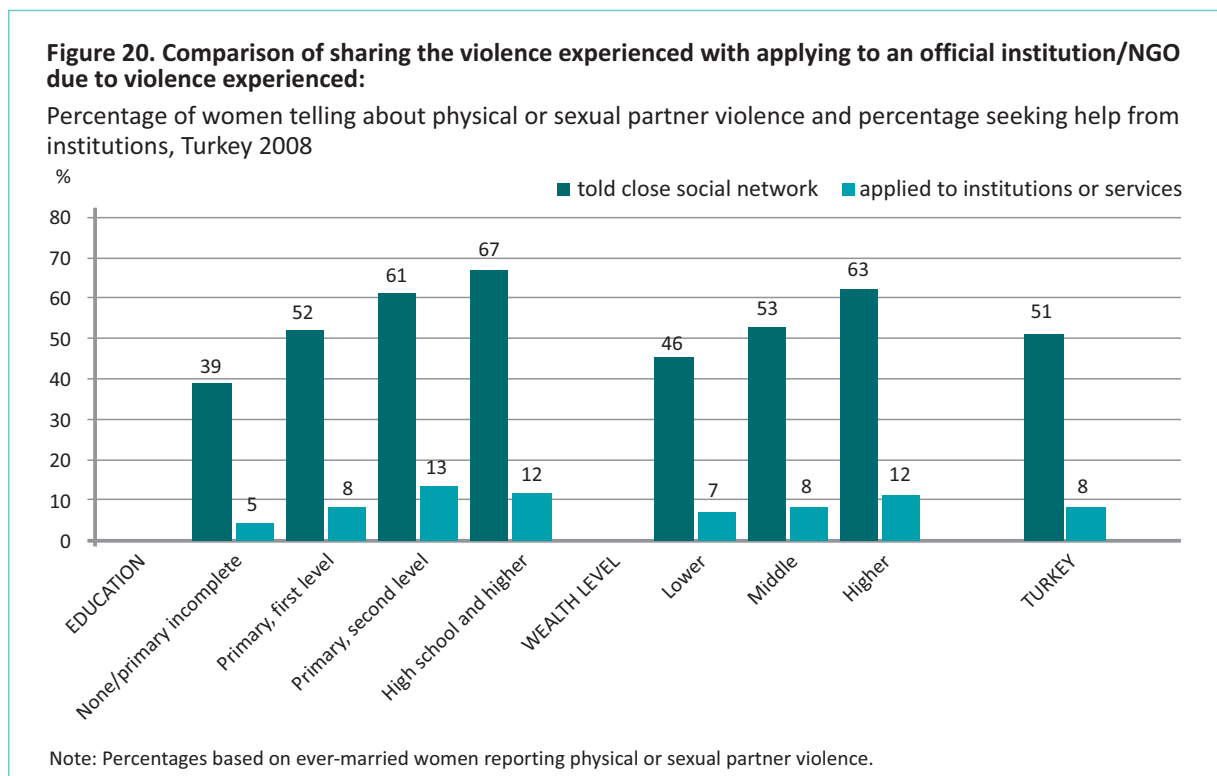
Women who reported physical or sexual partner violence have been asked whether, due to violence, they have applied to (sought help from) police, gendarmerie, hospital or health institution, public prosecutor, lawyer, women's organization, municipality, the Social Services and Child Protection Institution, Society Center and other official institutions or NGOs. A great majority (92 percent) of the women who have experienced physical or sexual violence, has never applied to any of these institutions/persons. The proportion of women applying to institutions for help is very low. When they do seek help, it is seen that the women living in urban areas are applying more than the women living in rural areas. (Figure 19).

Figure 19. Applying to official institutions and NGOs due to violence experienced:
 Percentage of women seeking help due to physical or sexual partner violence from official institutions and NGOs, Turkey 2008



Note: a) Percentages based on ever-married women reporting physical or sexual partner violence.
 b) Categories have been calculated independent from each other.

In the case of partner violence, women are more likely to share the violence experienced with their family, friends or neighbours rather than applying to official institutions or NGOs, (Figure 20). This is true for women in every region and type of residence, for women of all age groups, educational and wealth levels. Even in urban areas where, compared to rural areas, women talk more about the violence and make more applications to official and unofficial institutions/persons, there is a substantial difference between sharing violence (55 percent) and asking for official help (9 percent).



Although women who have experienced physical or sexual violence rarely apply to official institutions or NGOs, women who have applied at least once to these institutions were asked whether they were satisfied with the services or not. More than half of the women who had applied to "hospital or health institution", and to "public prosecutor" or "lawyer" for legal support reported to have been satisfied with the service they received. On the other hand, less than half (41 percent) of the women who had applied to police reported to have been satisfied with the service they received.

Among the reasons for asking help from an official institution or NGO due to physical or sexual violence, the most frequently mentioned reason was that they could not endure the violence they were experiencing anymore (41 percent). This is followed by wanting to get legal support (probably for getting divorced or being protected from violence) and being injured badly, 29 and 25 percent respectively. Not being able to endure violence anymore and being injured badly implicitly indicate that these women have experienced severe violence.

A great proportion (64 percent) of the women who reported that they had not applied to or sought help from any institution due to the violence, stated that the violence they experienced was not a very serious problem. Among other reasons for not applying to official institutions, the most frequently mentioned ones were: "loved/forgave partner" (11 percent) and "afraid her children would be unhappy" (10 percent). Besides, women also reported that they didn't ask for help because they were afraid that it would bring a bad name to the family (9 percent) and because they were embarrassed/ashamed/afraid they would be blamed (9 percent). The proportion of women not asking for help because they didn't know where to apply is 7 percent.

"The police comes; they first say it's a domestic problem. I tell them 'what domestic, I have papers at the courts', this time they send to the..., you know where they issue a health report, to the forensic medicine. It comes out. He receives the court papers saying so and so. He says he won't go, he says 'go and complain to wherever you want, even the court house cannot save you.' I mean it's out of hand, he doesn't care about anyone."

(woman, 47 years old, divorce suit ongoing, three children, primary school graduate)

Fighting back against physical violence

Thirty one percent of women in Turkey who have experienced physical violence by their husbands or partners, reported that they had ever fought back against violence with the intention of protecting themselves. While this proportion is 23 percent in rural areas, it is 34 percent in urban areas. The proportion of women who have ever fought back is higher among those who have experienced severe physical violence, compared to those who experienced moderate physical violence. Whereas 21 percent of the women, who have no education or have not completed primary school, fought back against physical violence with the intention to protect themselves, almost half of the women, who have a high school or higher education level, ever did so. Fighting back in case of physical violence varies according to wealth level. While one fourth of women in the lower wealth level fight back against physical violence, this proportion is 41 percent for women in the higher wealth level. Young women are more likely to fight back than older women.

Among women who fought back, 42 percent reported that the violence had increased as a result of fighting back. On the other hand, 28 percent reported that fighting back had stopped violence for that moment.

Leaving home due to violence

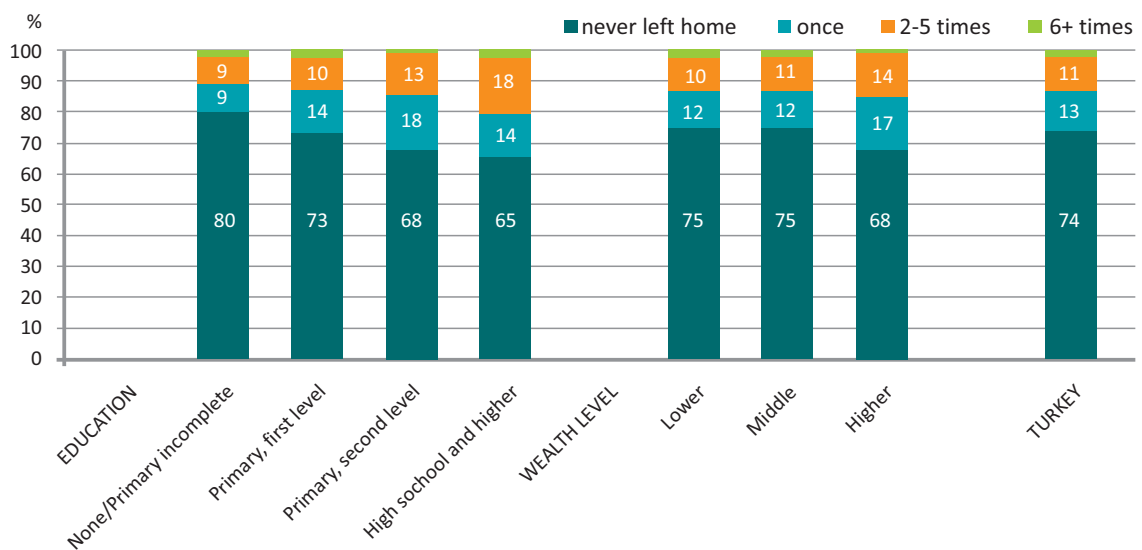
Among women in Turkey who experienced physical or sexual violence by their husbands or partners, 26 percent had left their homes at least once, even if for one night, due to violence. While 13 percent of the women left their homes only once, 11 percent stated to have left 2 to 5 times (Figure 21).

For women who have left their home due to physical or sexual violence, the reason for returning was commonly related to their children. The most common reason was "feared that her children would be unhappy". Other commonly mentioned reasons were: "partner asked her to come back", "the fear of losing her children", "loved/forgave partner". Other reasons were "thought partner would change", "children wanted her to return" and "her own family wanted her to return to her home".

A great proportion of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence but who never left their homes, stated that they didn't leave their homes because it was not a very serious problem. Reasons such as "feared that her children would be unhappy", "loved/forgave partner" and "fear of losing her children" were among the reasons for not leaving home and are similar to the reasons for returning, which were mentioned above.

Figure 21. Leaving home due to violence:

Percent distribution of number of times leaving home due to physical or sexual partner violence, by education and wealth level, Turkey 2008



Note: Percentages based on ever-married women reporting physical or sexual partner violence

"...or else there's nothing else to do I mean. Sometimes you pack and go to your mother's house... My mother knew of course, I would pack and go. My mother was sorry of course... We stopped talking, we had a fight. I wouldn't tell that he was violent towards me... I went twice. I went twice... I would take my son and go... I would stay for a few days. Then I would return again..."

(woman, 41 years old, divorced, one child, secondary school dropout)

CONCLUSIONS

The "National Research on Domestic Violence Against Women in Turkey" collected information on both prevalence of different types of domestic violence against women and on perceptions of violence by women and men. An important aspect of the research is that it has the largest-scale sample ever surveyed in Turkey, which provides information about violence against women for urban and rural areas, 12 regions, and a number of other background characteristics. It is further noteworthy that the research findings are registered as part of TURKSTAT's official statistics.

The questionnaires of the study were designed based on the questionnaires developed by the World Health Organization, which have been applied in many countries. The questionnaires were adapted taking the needs of the country into account. It is noteworthy that the results allow for making international comparisons.

As in many countries, also in Turkey, physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence/abuse adversely affects women's lives and constitutes a violation of women's human rights. The results reveal that violence against women by their husbands or partner(s) is widespread in Turkey and that the prevalence of physical or sexual violence by intimate partners experienced by ever-married women is considerably high. The findings generally are consistent with the results of studies conducted in many other countries.

Overall, the violence that ever-married women experienced by husband or partner(s) in any period of their lives are as follows:

- 39 percent of women have been exposed to physical violence,
- 15 percent of women have been exposed to sexual violence,
- 42 percent of women have been exposed to physical or sexual violence,
- 44 percent of women have been exposed to emotional violence/abuse,
- Twenty-three percent of women reported that their husbands or partners prevented them from working or caused them to quit their jobs.
- Women, who have been exposed to physical violence, often have experienced this violence in severe levels.
- The prevalence of physical partner violence experienced by women does not show an important difference between urban and rural areas; the variation between regions however is considerable. In some regions, the proportion of women exposed to violence is more than the country's average. Half of the women living in Northeast Anatolia and Central Anatolia have been exposed to physical violence by their husbands or partners.
- In most cases, sexual violence is experienced together with physical violence by husband or partner.
- A striking finding is that 3 out of 10 women who have a high school or higher education have been exposed to physical or sexual violence by their husbands or partners.
- Seven percent of women reported sexual abuse in childhood (before they were 15 years old).

- Further, women, married or single, since they were 15 years of age, are also at risk of physical and sexual violence by someone other than their intimate partners such as their own and spouses' families, relatives, acquaintances from school or work, and strangers.
- In their lives, women are more likely to experience physical or sexual violence by their husbands or intimate partners than violence by members of their families, relatives or strangers.
- A great majority of the women do not support the statement that in some situations men may beat their wives.
- One fourth of women who have been exposed to physical or sexual partner violence, reported having been injured as a result of the violence they experienced.
- One out of 10 women has been exposed to physical violence during pregnancy.
- Women who have experienced physical or sexual violence by husband or partner are more likely to suffer general and mental health problems than women who have not experienced violence.
- One third of the women who experienced physical or sexual violence by husband or partner reported to have ever thought about ending her life.
- Women mentioned "problems experienced with the man's family" and "money problems" as the two most common reasons for the violence they experienced.
- Nearly half of the women have not told anyone about the physical or sexual violence they experienced.
- Almost none of the women who experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner reported to have sought help from any official institution or NGO.

The research results suggest clues about the priorities and responsibilities for the realization of the National Action Plan 2007-2010¹¹, which foresees the collaboration of related public institutions and NGOs. When the basic objectives mentioned in the National Action Plan, that are *ensuring legal regulations, raising awareness and transforming mentalities, empowering women, providing protective services, providing curative and rehabilitation services and cooperation between institutions and organisations, are reconsidered*, the priorities of this action plan have to be reviewed in accordance with the research results. In view of this, it is important that short, medium and long term plans are rendered operational.

The research findings highlight that women are left alone with the violence they experience and that they do not have enough information, tools and awareness to defend their rights. Therefore, empowering women, as mentioned in the National Action Plan, should be given priority. Another important point, which needs to be emphasized, is the necessity to accelerate efforts to create awareness and consciousness among men about violence against women.

¹¹ Combating Domestic Violence Against Women National Action Plan 2007-2010, Republic of Turkey, Prime Ministry, General Directorate on the Status of Women.