

Introduction

The International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS) is an international, comparative survey on violence perpetrated by men against women. The IVAWS project was initiated in 1997 when HEUNI together with a number of international experts in the field started developing a comparative and standardised survey tool for measuring violence against women worldwide. The project is co-ordinated by HEUNI with inputs from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and Statistics Canada.

IVAWS is specifically designed to target violence against women and to make international comparisons. It utilises the methodology and contacts developed for the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS) and the specific expertise of Statistics Canada in developing sensitive survey tools for measuring violence against women. The International Violence Against Women Survey thus combines the comparative methodology of the International Crime Victim Survey with the national violence against women surveys.

International mandate

Elimination of violence against women is one of the priorities of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme. Based on the Resolution on the Elimination of Violence against Women adopted by the 9th United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (Cairo, April–May 1995), and as a follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995), a plan of action on the subject of women and violence was submitted for consideration to the UN Crime Commission at its fifth session in 1996 and went through consultations with Governments, United Nations entities, international governmental organisations and NGOs. The need for gender-disaggregated data describing the prevalence, nature, causes and consequences of violence against women has been reiterated in a number of international forums.

Sixth Session of the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, 1997, approved a resolution on “Elimination of Violence against Women” which, inter alia, urges member states to utilise the “Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice”, presented as an annex to the resolution.

As regards research and evaluation, the “Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice” urges Member States, the Institutes comprising the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme network and other relevant bodies:¹

to develop crime surveys on the nature of violence against women;

¹ United Nations, Economic and Social Council, “Elimination of Violence Against Women - Canada: revised draft resolution”, Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Sixth Session, Vienna, 28 April - 9 May 1997, E/CN.15/1997/L.7/Rev.1, “Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice”, Section VIII. Research and Evaluation. Approved by the General Assembly as A/52/635.

to gather data and information on a gender-disaggregated basis for analysis and use, together with existing data, in needs assessment, decision making and policy making in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice, in particular concerning:

- i. the different forms of violence against women, its causes and consequences;
- ii. the extent to which economic deprivation and exploitation are linked to violence against women;
- iii. the relationship between the

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- b. Support and initiate research on the impact of violence, such as rape, on women and girl children, and make the resulting information and statistics available to the public;
- c. Encourage the media to examine the impact of gender role stereotypes, including those perpetuated by commercial advertisements which foster gender-based violence and inequalities, and how they are transmitted during the life cycle, and take measures to eliminate these negative images with a view to promoting a violence-free society.”

Ad Hoc Committee of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly³, June 2000 notes that since the Beijing conference in 1995, research into all forms of violence against women has increased. However, the report also notes **nnni**

Development of the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS)

The International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS) project was started in 1997 with the development of a draft questionnaire and methodology. In late 1999, an International Project Team was formed between the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations (HEUNI), the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and Statistics Canada⁶. Following the co-ordination meeting held in Helsinki in January 2001 that planned the fi

At the moment, full-fledged studies have taken place in six countries (Australia, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Mozambique, Switzerland), and national reports from these studies

Response rates, sampling, methodology

Violence against women is a sensitive topic. The sensitivity of the topic is one factor that contributes to respondents' willingness to participate. The survey may trigger traumatic memories of past events and the respondent may refuse to participate, or may wish to terminate the interview. Other reasons for non-response include lack of time, lack of privacy to respond (especially related to respondents own perception of safety), and lack of interest to participate in surveys.

In order to minimise initial refusals, the IVAWS is not introduced as a survey on violence, but on personal safety. Efforts are taken to ensure that the interview can be conducted in private. If the respondent is unavailable to participate, measures are taken to reschedule or relocate the interview. In order to accommodate themselves for different scenarios during fieldwork, interviewers and researchers need to familiarise themselves with the community and the different social and cultural issues in the areas where they are interviewing (e.g. as intergenerational households, high unemployment, dowry, customary marriages, polygamous marriages etc).

In the experience of the IVAWS, it seems that women are generally willing to participate and that the topic of the survey is perceived to be important. Many respondents feel that through participating they contribute towards a greater good, and that their experiences m

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