



Introduction

A desk review of qualitative and quantitative data on violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Dili, Bobonaro, Viqueque and Ermera was done. The review was conducted to gain insight from existing information in Timor-Leste (see literature overview in Annex 1). Then, a secondary analysis of the 2015-2016 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) was done to present more in-depth findings. A comparison with the Nabilan study was also made. Administrative data were not part of this exercise. This report by UNFPA forms part of the Spotlight Initiative and will be followed by capacity building and training on data literacy and gender statistics for civil servants.

Nabilan Study and 2016 DHS Comparison

The **Nabilan Health and Life Experiences Study** (“Nabilan”) was conducted in 2015 and focused on gathering information from both men and women on the prevalence and perpetration of different forms of VAWG in Timor-Leste.

The **DHS** is a globally comparable household survey focused on population and health, including marriage, maternal and child health, reproductive health, domestic violence, etc. The latest DHS in Timor-Leste was conducted in 2016.

Whilst a comparison between the two surveys was already published by The Asia Foundation in 2018¹, this exercise further identified several differences, including:

- It was observed that the sample design of the Nabilan does not generate a nationally representative survey.
- Both surveys have complex samples that need sample weights to correct for differences in selection probabilities between respondents. In the analysis of the Nabilan, no weights were used. The results of not using sample weights means the standard errors are underestimated, providing smaller confidence intervals and

incorrect significance tests.

- Despite its shortcomings, the Nabilan also has several advantages over the DHS in terms of the survey instrument. The questionnaire, training and field work were developed in such a way that women were probably more inclined to report their violent experience than the DHS.

<https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Intimate-Partner-Violence-Against-Women-in-Timor-Leste.pdf>

Secondary Analysis 2016 DHS

Results of the secondary analysis conducted on the 2016 DHS data cover responses provided by women aged 15-49 years:

Physical violence

- 32.7% of all women had ever experienced physical violence at least once since age 15.
- **Intimate partner violence** (IPV) was 36.8% among all ever-married women. Of these, 87.2% said their husband had committed the violence.

Sexual violence

- 4.7% of all women aged 15 – 49 years experienced sexual violence during their lifetime and 3.5% during the past 12 months.
- More than 80% of all acts of (first) sexual violence were committed by current husband or partner (64.5%), the current or former boyfriend (11.2%) or a former husband or partner (6.7%).

Emotional violence

- Lifetime prevalence was 9.4% and within the last 12 months prevalence of emotional violence was 8.9%.

Demographic characteristics

- Physical lifetime abuse among women 15-19 years was 23.4% and 42.8% among 30-34 years. After age 35 years, it tapered off.



- Physical lifetime violence among women with no **education** is much higher (45.3%) compared to those with a secondary education (15.7%).
- Physical or sexual IPV is 44.2% among women with an uneducated husband, and more than halved if the husband has secondary education.
- As household **wealth** ↑ physical violence ↓

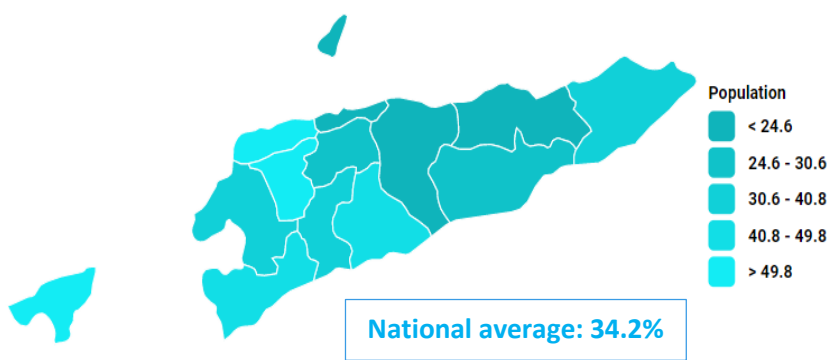
Behavioral factors

- Violence is justified according to husbands when the wife goes out without informing him (71.6%), when she neglects children (68.4%), or argues with the husband (67.4%).
- Women who independently decide on how the husband's money is spent have significantly lower prevalence of ever having experienced physical or sexual violence.

Vulnerable groups

- Among **youth** (15-24 years), about one in five encountered violence during the last 12 months. Levels of sexual violence among young persons are significantly lower than physical violence.
- Non-migrant women had a 36.2 percent lifetime prevalence of having experienced physical or sexual violence, against 28.7 percent of **migrant women**. For recent violence, these figures were 31.5 and 24.5 percent.
- Data for girls (<15 years) and older women (>50 years) was not collected. No women were interviewed who indicated they had a disability.

Women 15-49 years who have ever experienced physical or sexual violence, by municipality (%)



Help-seeking behavior

- Among those who ever experienced physical violence, 77.0 percent had never sought help or talked to someone else about it.
- Those who experienced only sexual violence had a higher percentage of never seeking help or telling anyone.
- Women experiencing both physical and sexual violence seek the most help.
- The most important reasons for women not to seek help includes that it brings a bad name to the family (42.9%), violence was considered normal and/or not serious (41.1%), embarrassment, shame or afraid to not be believed or be blamed (27.2%), afraid to lose children (27.1%) or afraid of threats, the consequences of reporting or be subject to more violence (19.9%).
- The majority of those who sought help did so via one person or organization (84.4%), 6.7% made two different contacts for help, 5.4% had three different contacts and 3.5% had four different contacts.
- Most help was sought via family members. About 4.5% of survivors informed the police.

Conclusion

- The data from the DHS shows that levels of VAWG in Timor-Leste are high.
- Little is known about young girls (<15 years), older women (>50 years) and women with disabilities and their experience with violence and further research should be conducted.
- Best practices in the DHS and Nabilan should be combined to produce reliable data on VAWG in the future. Alternatives to these need to be considered to produce more regular prevalence data on VAWG.
- A review of the administrative data on VAWG is yet to be conducted to create more understanding of useful admin data and sources.

Annex 1. Latest studies conducted on VAWG in Timor-Leste

- Traditional justice and gender-based violence (International Rescue Committee, 2003)
- Mapping Sexual Gender-based violence program in two districts (Asia Pacific Support Collective of Timor-Leste, 2009)
- Bride price and domestic violence in Timor-Leste (Khan & Hyati, 2012)
- Mapping of residential care facilities for children in Timor-Leste (UNICEF, 2012)
- Breaking the cycle of domestic violence in Timor-Leste (UNDP, 2013)
- Timor-Leste Law and Justice Survey (Asia Foundation, 2013) 2013 Baseline study on attitudes and perceptions of gender and masculinities of youth in Timor-Leste (Paz y Desarrollo, Universade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e and Cooperacion Espanola, 2013)
- Beyond fragility and inequity: women's experiences of the economic dimensions of domestic violence in Timor-Leste (Asia Foundation, 2015)
- A survey of community police perceptions in Timor-Leste (Asia Foundation, 2015)
- Attitudes and perceptions of young men towards gender equality and violence in Timor-Leste (Wigglesworth, Niner, Arunachalam, dos Santos & Tilman, 2015)
- Concluding observations on the combined second and third period reports of Timor-Leste (UN CEDAW, 2015)
- Study on violence against children in and around educational settings Timor-Leste (UNICEF, 2016)
- A research report on the lives of lesbian and bisexual women and transgender men in Timor-Leste (Rede Feto & ASEAN SOGIE Caucus, 2017)
- Estimating the resource requirement for a minimum package of essential services for woman and children experiencing violence in Timor-Leste (UN Women, 2017)
- Our path is upwards; becoming strong together. Strengthening women survivors of violence in Timor-Leste through Participatory Action Research (Asia Justice and Rights, UN Women Asia Pacific and UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, 2017)
- Baseline study of knowledge, attitudes and practices towards ten key focus areas of parenting in Timor-Leste (UNICEF, 2017)
- Teenage pregnancy and early marriage in Timor-Leste (UNFPA, Plan International and the Secretariat of State for Youth and Sports, 2017)
- Community-based approaches – ending violence against women through community section. A reflection on research, ethics, and practice (Asia Foundation, 2017)
- Community-based approaches: ending violence against women through community action. Executive summary (Asia Foundation, 2017)
- Women's Multiple Pathways to Justice: Alternative Dispute Resolution and the Impact on Women in Timor-Leste (UN Women, 2018)
- UN Women Timor-Leste Safe Cities Scoping Study (UN Women, 2018)
- Leaving no youth behind in Timor-Leste. Policy brief #4 LGBTI Youth (Belun and United Nations, 2018)
- Leaving no youth behind in Timor-Leste – Policy brief #5 Young people with a disability (Belun and United Nations, 2018)
- Gender and Power Analysis (CARE Australia, 2018)
- Gender-based violence and the law¹ (UNDP, 2020)
- Judicial System Monitoring Program (Government, current)

¹ It should be noted that this study has not been officially published yet, but permission was provided to include it in this report preliminarily.