

YOUNG WOMEN' & VIOLENCE

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THE FACTS

- Violence against women is defined as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”²
- Many young people who experience violence – particularly young women who are raped - do not receive family or community support. They may even be seen to be responsible for the violence.³
- Traditional harmful practices may also disproportionately affect young women. Many young women are victims of so-called honour killings or suffer acid attacks⁴, and more still are subject to “corrective rape” if they are perceived to be lesbian.⁵ In 2005 in India, almost 7,000 women between the ages of 15 and 34 lost their lives due to dowry-related murders.
- Relationship-based (dating) violence is also common among young people. For example, a South African study found that 42% of females and 38% of males aged 13-23 years reported having experienced physical dating violence.⁶
- Almost 50% of all sexual assaults around the world are against girls 15 years old and younger.⁷ An estimated 150 million girls under 18 suffered some form of sexual violence in 2002 alone.⁸
- Early and forced marriage occurs world-wide, with nearly 10% of all adolescent girls in low and middle income countries becoming mothers before they are 16.⁹
- For many women and girls, their first sexual experience is forced - the WHO study found this among 24% of women in rural Peru, 28% in Tanzania, 30% in rural Bangladesh, and 40% in South Africa.¹⁰
- A multi-country study by WHO found that between 15–71% of women reported having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner.¹¹ And young women are not spared: a 2009 report from Colombia, for example, found that 74% of 27,000 women and girls who experienced intimate partner violence were “underage girls.”¹²



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THE IMPACT

- Violence against girls restricts their access to the highest attainable standards of health, education and agency. It reduces their empowerment and restricts their ability to participate in meaningful development. It leads to poorer health and can result in death.
- Early and forced marriage reduces girls' and young women's agency and empowerment. They may become vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, early pregnancy with high risk of maternal mortality and morbidity, and transmission of sexually transmitted infections and HIV. Teen pregnancy is the number one cause of mortality for girls between the ages of 15 and 19.¹³
- Girls who have been subject to FGM/C may suffer complications including bleeding, severe pain, shock, infection and death, and trauma during pregnancy and birth. They may experience psychological harm, including depression, symptoms of impaired cognition and panic attacks.¹⁴ It may also result in absenteeism from school, poor concentration and low academic performance,¹⁵ which reinforces her inequality within the gender structures of the community and severely limits her empowerment and agency.



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Between 15–71% of women reported having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We ask member states to:

- Enact laws to address violence against women and youth, including legislation that addresses early marriage, violence within marriage, and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Take action to prevent sexual violence against youth in situations of conflict and post conflict, including offering comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and information to young survivors
- Provide human rights-based comprehensive sexuality education that promotes gender equality and equity and provides information on sexual violence as well as builds self-confidence, agency, and communication and negotiation skills.
- Develop and implement well-funded services for young survivors of physical and sexual violence, including physical and psycho social rehabilitation services, voluntary HIV/STI screening and treatment, post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV, referrals to HIV support services as needed, pregnancy tests, emergency contraception, safe abortion and referrals to legal aid.
- Develop and implement well-funded school-based and community programmes to address the social gender stereotypes and norms that tolerate and accept violence against women and youth.
- Establish Special Commissions to Monitor Investigations of Femicide, as already done in Mexico.
- Ensure the girls and young women have access to abortion in cases of rape and incest.

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