

The International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS) is a comparative study specifically designed to target men's violence against women, especially domestic violence and sexual assault.

The IVAWS project is co-ordinated by an International Project Team, composed of representatives of HEUNI (The European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the UN), UNICRI (the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute), and Statistics Canada.

The main aim of the IVAWS is to promote and implement research on violence against women in countries around the world, and in particular in developing countries and countries in transition where resources for survey research have been severely limited.

Participating countries

Discussions have been carried out with 8-10 industrialised countries, including Australia, Canada, Denmark, England & Wales, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland.

The project team is presently seeking funding assistance in order to assure the participation of 10 developing countries and countries in transition: Indonesia, the Philippines, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Poland, FR Yugoslavia, Ukraine, Argentina, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay. A number of other countries have shown interest in participating.

Project activities:

- In early 2001, the IVAWS team redrafted the survey instrument and organised a meeting for participating countries in Vancouver.
- During the second half of 2001, the pilot survey instrument underwent thorough discussions and revisions and was finalised in October.
- Pilot studies were commenced in selected countries in November 2001 (including Canada, Costa Rica and Denmark).
- In early 2002, pilot studies are being conducted in a number of the other participating countries.
- A second meeting for participating countries will be held in late 2002 to discuss the revision of the instrument and the implementation of the full-fledged survey.

Plans:

- to launch and carry out the IVAWS in a wide range of countries and to conduct the survey on a regular basis (every 4-5 years).
- The full-fledged surveys to be undertaken in 2003.
- A seminar/workshop to discuss policy strategies to prevent and address violence against women will complete the project in each participating country.
- Country reports and a comparative volume on the project results will be prepared and published and made available also in electronic format.
- Data files will be made available to interested researchers for further analysis.

Ethical questions

Interviewing women directly about their experiences of sexual and physical violence raises some important ethical and methodological questions for researchers. The sensitivity of these issues raises questions about the safety of respondents and interviewers, emotional trauma that can be raised when talking about these experiences, and about trust and

confidentiality. Interviewers, female only, will be carefully trained, using a standardised training module, to ensure their empathy towards respondents and the safety of respondents. Interviewers play a central role in helping to ensure that women report honestly on their experiences of violence. During fieldwork, interviewers will refer respondents to victims' service agencies in case of trauma. Interviewers will themselves receive continuous debriefing and support during the fieldwork process.

Carrying out the IVAWS survey and obtaining statistical data on a regular basis can assist in national policy making and in finding tools to combat violence against women in several ways:

- by providing estimates about the incidence of domestic violence and others acts of violence against women;
- by raising awareness of the public and authorities that domestic violence is a legitimate social problem and that legislative measures may be necessary to discourage such violence and provide assistance to victims; and,
- to provide recommendations for prevention and procedural safeguards in situations of domestic violence.

For further information, please contact:

Ms Natalia Ollus, Senior Programme Officer

The European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the UN
(HEUNI)

P.O.Box 157

FIN-00121 Helsinki

Finland