


Investing in Gender Equality:

Ending Violence
against Women and Girls

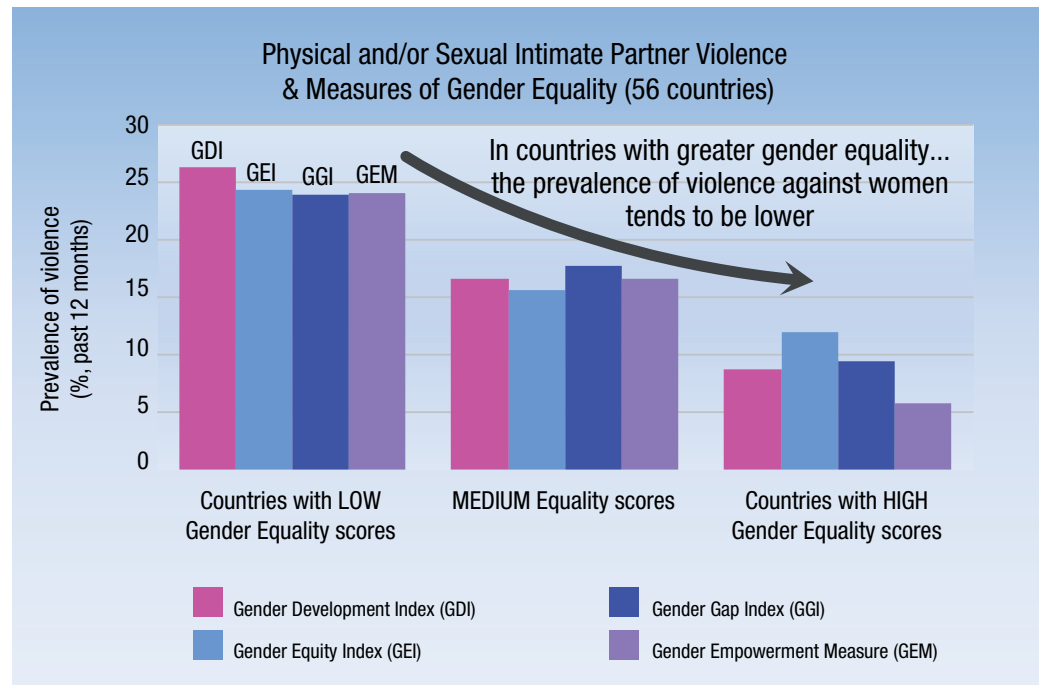


Violence against women is a global pandemic: Between 15 and 76 per cent of women experience it at some point in their lifetime.¹

Violence against women is deeply rooted in discrimination and inequality between men and women. Ending it requires investments in women's empowerment and gender equality, particularly in education, reproductive health and rights, and economic and political empowerment—all of which also have high payoffs for poverty reduction and development overall.

As gender equality improves, the prevalence of violence against women is lower

Data available shows the inverse relationship between gender equality and violence by an intimate partner. This is borne out for both physical and sexual forms of abuse. As seen in the graph, countries with greater equality between women and men tend to have lower levels of violence against women, based on the leading global indices for gender equality.² These measure equality based on: life expectancy; sex ratio at birth; adult literacy; primary, secondary and tertiary education enrollment rates; participation in the formal labour force; estimated earned income; wage equality; shares of seats in legislative, ministerial and senior political positions; and shares in management and technical positions.



ABOUT THE DATA: Prevalence data for all graphs is drawn from leading international surveys on violence against women: World Health Organization; International Violence Against Women Survey; MEASURE Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and the World Bank Domestic Violence Dataset and is based on physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the previous 12 months. Detailed Technical Notes on the methodology and sources are available on request at evaw.helpdesk@unifem.org.

Investments in eliminating violence against women and girls have tremendous benefits for gender equality, poverty reduction and development

Violence against women has significant costs to individuals, children, families and countries. This includes billions of dollars to national budgets every year in terms of police, health, legal and other expenditures. It also erodes precious human capital and results in lost labour productivity. Yet these high human and financial costs can all be averted—by advancing gender equality and ‘zero tolerance’ for violence against women and girls.

Women’s economic security is central to efforts to ending violence against women

The economic empowerment of women can serve as a protective factor against gender-based violence, through access to assets and decent employment that enable women to prevent and escape abusive relationships and exploitative situations.³ Especially if women are poor, economically dependent and/or with children, leaving an abusive husband or partner can be particularly daunting given the limited opportunities and alternatives available to them.

Increasing the political participation of women advances laws and policies to address gender-based violence

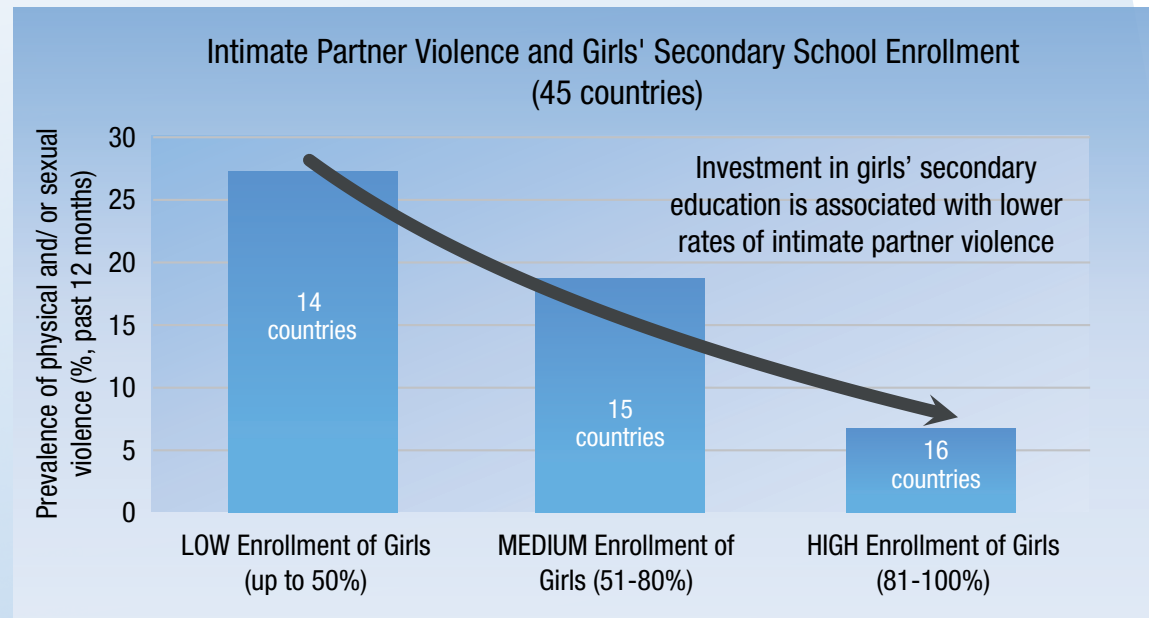
Even though women hold an average of only 18.4 per cent of seats in national parliaments globally,⁴ their participation in decision-making positions has a positive impact on furthering key human rights issues, including for women and children. In Argentina, for example, women representing 14 per cent of parliament introduced 78 per cent of the legislation related to women’s rights. In New Zealand, women, who constitute only 15 per cent of parliamentarians, initiated 66 per cent of debates on parental leave and child care from 1987-1992.⁵

Educating girls, especially through secondary and higher education, can help reduce violence against women — and delivers multiple returns to national social and economic development

Education, particularly secondary education, can serve as a 'protective factor' for girls and women from gender-based violence.⁶ The graph shows that countries with higher secondary school enrollment for girls tend to have lower levels of violence against women.

Educated girls are also more likely to avoid other forms of violence and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage; and to help end these practices with their daughters and future generations. For example, in Mozambique, 55 per cent of girls with only primary education are married before the age of 18, whereas among girls with a secondary education, 8 per cent are married.⁷

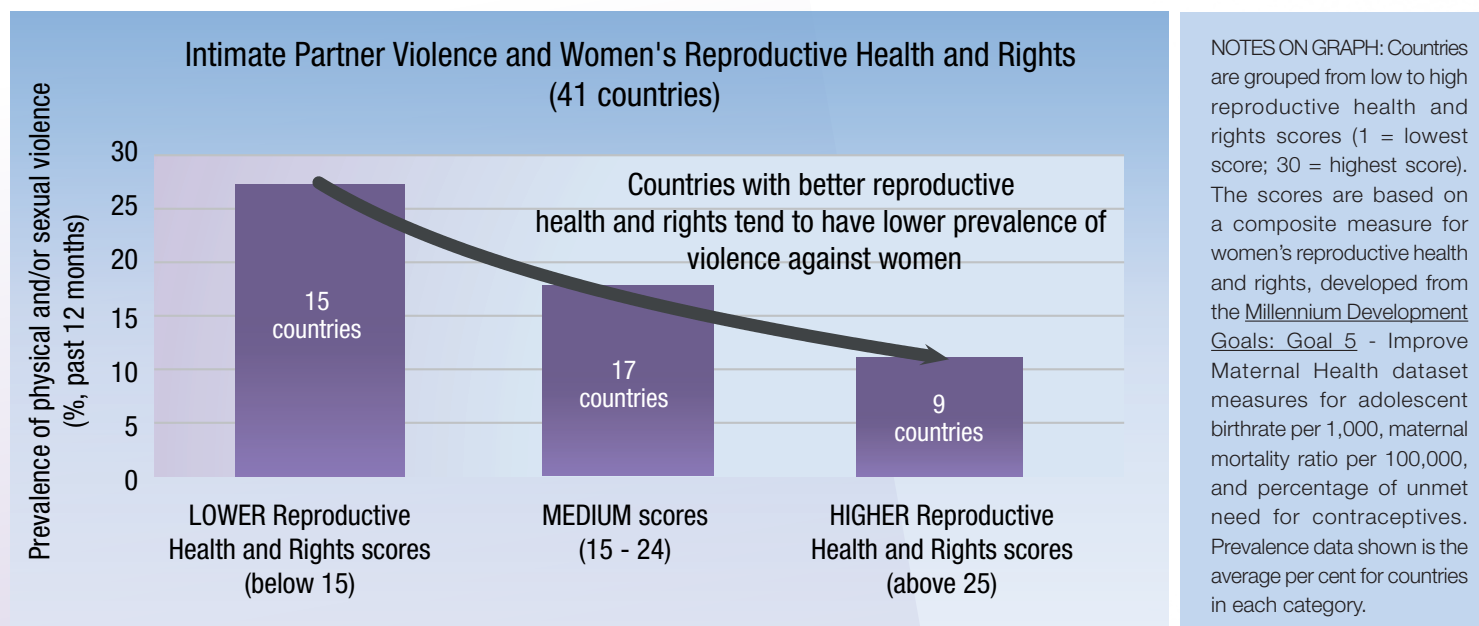
In addition to its benefits for girls' personal development, health and well-being, one additional year of education may increase a girl's future income by 10 to 20 per cent.⁸



NOTES ON GRAPH: Secondary school enrollment is measured as the percentage of eligible girls enrolled in secondary school, based on data from the [UNESCO Institute for Statistics on Female Secondary Net Enrollment Rate](#) (2000-2009), with countries categorized from low to high enrollment rates. Prevalence data shown is the average per cent for countries in each category.

When women have decision-making control over their bodies and sexual and reproductive lives, they are better poised to protect themselves from abusive relationships

Countries that have made progress in advancing women's reproductive health and rights reflect lower levels of violence against women. The graph illustrates this relationship based on a reproductive health score composed by using the Millennium Development Goal indicators for adolescent birthrate, maternal mortality and unmet need for contraceptives.



Violence prevention is a 'smart' investment, with multiple payoffs and savings

Preventing violence against women preserves valuable public and private funds. The 1994 United States Violence Against Women Act cost \$1.6 billion over the first five years while saving \$14.8 billion on direct and indirect expenses related to health care and survivor services, police response, lost productivity, reduced quality of life and death.⁹ In Australia, it is estimated that the National Plan of Action could save \$23,673 for each woman prevented from experiencing violence.¹⁰

UNIFEM (part of UN Women) is grateful for the collaboration of Dr. Laura Sjoberg at the University of Florida and for the technical inputs of Howard Friedman (UNFPA) and UNIFEM colleagues.

1. Figures are based on percent of women had experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime, with data from 48 countries obtained through three leading international surveys on prevalence. Adapted from World Health Organization (WHO). 2005. *WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women*: 46. WHO, Geneva; Johnson, H., N. Ollus and S. Nevala. 2008. *Violence Against Women: An International Perspective*: 39 (International Violence against Women Survey), Springer Science + Business Media, New York; and ***Demographic and Health Surveys-DHS***, ORC Macro, Calverton, Maryland.
2. Gender equality is measured using the following indices: UNDP's Gender-related Development Index (GDI), calculated based on 1) women and men's achievements in life expectancy, 2) education: adult literacy, combined primary to tertiary enrollment rates, and 3) estimated earned income; UNDP's Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) calculated based on 1) women's economic and political participation: shares senior official, managerial, professional and technical positions, 2) legislative seats, and 3) female share of income; the Social Watch's Gender Equity Index (GEI), calculated based on 1) education: adult literacy, primary, secondary, and tertiary enrollment rate, 2) share of technical, management and government positions as well as parliament seats and ministerial level positions, and 3) rate of economic activity and estimated perceived income; and the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index (GGI), calculated based on 1) life expectancy and sex ratio at birth, 2) education: literacy, net enrollment rate in primary and secondary school and gross enrollment in tertiary education, 3) economic and political participation: participation in formal labour force, wage equality, ratio of legislators, officials and managers; ratio of professional and technical workers, and 4) political empowerment: seats in parliament; ministerial posts; number of years with female head of state in last 50 years. The gender equality scores range from 0 (complete inequality) to 1 (perfect equality) and countries are categorized into low, medium and high scores based on their values in each index. Prevalence data for all graphs refers to the percentage of women in a country who have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, based on data from low to high income countries representing all geographic regions from leading international surveys on violence against women and national population-based surveys as follows: ***WHO Multi-country study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women*** (WHO, 2005); ***Violence Against Women: An International Perspective*** (Johnson et al. 2008); and country surveys from the ***MEASURE Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS)*** and the ***World Bank Domestic Violence Dataset 1982-2007*** (2010).
3. General Assembly. 2006. In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women: Report of the Secretary General: 31. A/61/122/Add.1. United Nations, New York.
4. International IDEA, Inter-Parliamentary Union and Stockholm University. Global Database of Quotas for Women. International Idea, Stockholm. Accessed 18 October 2010
5. Figures from Argentina based on data from 1993-1994 and figures from New Zealand collected from 1987-1992. UNICEF. 2007. "State of the World's Children 2007". UNICEF. New York: 53, based on Jones, Mark P. 1997. "Legislator Gender and Legislator Policy Priorities in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies and the United States House of Representatives", *Policy Studies Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 1997: 613-629 and Grey, Sandra. 2002. "Does Size Matter? Critical mass and New Zealand's women MPs". *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 1, January 2002: 6.
6. WHO. 2005. "***Addressing violence against women and achieving the Millennium Development Goals***". WHO. Geneva: 11.
7. UNICEF. 2005. *Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice. A Statistical Exploration*. UNICEF, New York: 32.
8. Psacharopoulos, George, and Harry Anthony Patrinos. 2004. "Returns to Investment in Education: A Further Update." *Education Economics* 12 (2): 111-34. cited in Ruth Levine et al. 2008. "Girls Count: A Global Investment and Action Agenda". Center for Global Development, Washington, D.C.: 16.
9. Clark, Kathryn Andersen, Biddle, Andrea K., Martin, Sandra L. 2002. "A Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Violence against Women Act of 1994." *Violence Against Women*, 8, Sage Publications, Chapel Hill, North Carolina: 423. Figures based on 1998 USD.
10. The National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. 2009. "The Cost of Violence against Women and their Children". Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra: 4. Figure calculated in USD from \$20,766 Australian Dollars (2007-2008 rate) based on 1.14 UN Operational Rates of Exchange rate as of January 2008.

