Gender Based Violence in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey 2023-24 Key Findings

What is Gender Based Violence?



This temporary tent provides survivors of Gender Based Violence private space to speak to a counsellor during community outreaches.

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is any intentional act or failure to act – whether threatened or actual – against a person on the basis of their gender that results (or is likely to result) in physical, sexual or psychological harm.

The main categories of GBV include physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence. GBV encompasses harassment, sexual exploitation, reproductive coercion, arbitrary deprivation of liberty, as well as controlling behaviours that isolate an individual or restrict their access to financial resources, employment, education or medical care.

Overview of GBV in Zimbabwe

A substantial portion of women in Zimbabwe experience violence, often starting at a young age

Lifetime experience:

30% of women (age **15 -49**) report that they have experienced either physical **(21%)** or sexual violence **(3%)** at some point in their lives while; **6%** experienced both physical and sexual violence.

High-risk age group:

37% of women age 15-29 experienced the most physical or sexual violence when compared to women in other age groups

This factsheet highlights GBV in Zimbabwe presenting data on physical, sexual, and emotional violence, attitudes toward wife-beating, help-seeking, women's decision-making power, partner control, and access to assets such as land, housing, and finances, linking empowerment with vulnerability to GBV.

27% of women have experienced physical violence since age **15** and **13%** of women have experienced physical violence within the past 12 months.

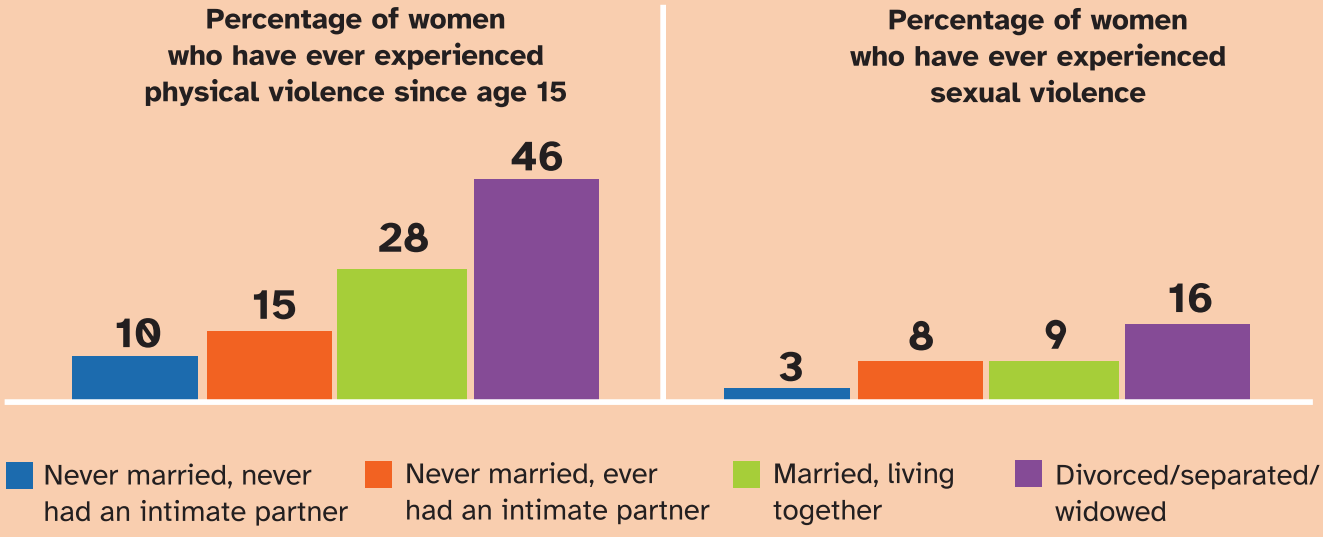
Women with primary education are almost twice as likely to experience physical violence compared to those with more than secondary education **(36% vs 16%)**

32% of ever-married women have experience physical violence.

32% of women in rural areas have experienced physical violence

22% of women in urban areas have experienced physical violence.

Women's experience of violence by marital status



Physical violence during pregnancy

Violence during pregnancy is a grave concern, affecting the health of both the mother and the unborn child.

- Violence against women during pregnancy decreased from **8%** in 2005-06 to **5%** in the 2023-24 survey.
- **9%** of women age 15-19 years experienced the highest incedence of violence during pregnancy.

Perpetrators of violence

Intimate partners (current or former) are overwhelmingly the main perpetrators of both physical and sexual violence against women in Zimbabwe.

Main perpetrators	
Physical violence	**Sexual violence**
Current husband/partner **(55%)** and former husband/partner **(41%)**	Current husband/partner **(68%)** and former husband/partner **(20%)**

Percentage of women who have experienced violence from any husband or intimate partner in the last 12 months

- **Emotional violence: 19%**
- **Physical violence: 14%**
- **Sexual violence: 5%**

Violence initiated by women against their husband/intimate partner

12%

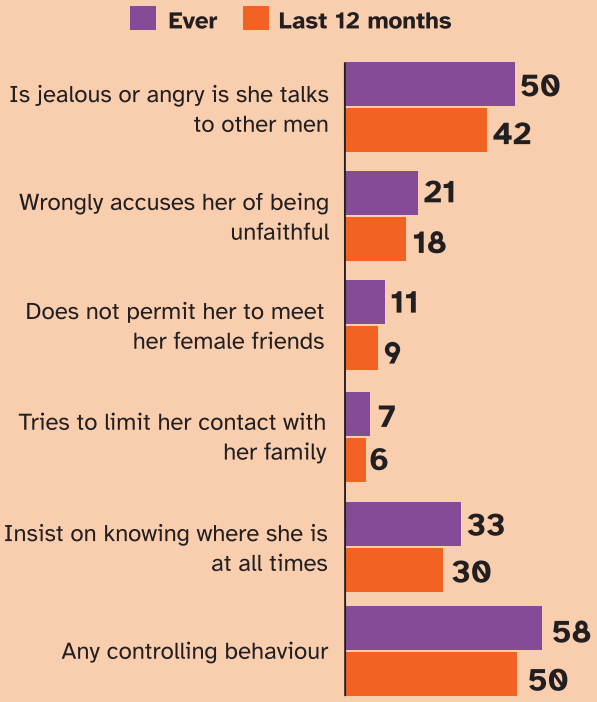
of women who have ever experienced physical IPV reported committing physical violence against their husband/partner. Of these, **7%** reported committing such violence in the last 12 months.

13%

of women who experienced violence in the last 12 months reported ever committing violence against their husband. Of these, **9%** reported committing such violence in the last 12 months

Forms of controlling behaviours

Percentage of women aged 15-49 who have ever had a husband/Intimate partner who have experienced specific types of controlling behaviours



58% of women (15–49 years) who have ever had a husband/intimate partner reported ever experiencing any form of controlling behaviour perpetrated by their current or most recent husband or intimate partner. **50%** experienced the behaviour in the 12 months preceding the survey

Trends: The proportion of ever married women 15-49 years whose husband or intimate partner showed 3 or more specific controlling behaviours has declined from **26%** in 2005-06 to **19%** in 2023-24.

Help seeking behaviour

Among women who have ever experienced physical or sexual violence, the percentage who sought help has increased in every survey since the 2005-06 ZDHS.

2005-06: **36%**	2010-11: **37%**	2015: **39%**	2023-24: **44%**

Sources of help to stop violence

	Type of Violence Experienced			
Source	Physical only	Sexual only	Both Physical and sexual	Physical or Sexual
Own Family	**56.1%**	**57.4%**	**55.1%**	**55.9%**
Family of the Husband/ intimate partner	**31.2%**	**3.6%**	**25.4%**	**27.2%**
Police	**23.3%**	**36%**	**29.9%**	**26.3%**

Women's empowerment: economic & decision-making trends

A woman's ability to participate in household decisions is a key indicator of empowerment and is often linked to her vulnerability to violence.

- **Widening employment gap:** While employment for married women (ages 15-49) has stagnated at **55%** since 2015, employment for married men has surged to **92%** in 2023-24. This marks a significant widening of the gender employment gap over the last decade.
- **Disparity in financial control:** There is a notable gap in financial autonomy. Only **51%** of married women who earn cash report making joint decisions with their spouse on how it's used, compared to **71%** of married men.
- **Education empowers:** A woman's level of education directly correlates with her participation in financial decisions. **62%** of women with more than a secondary education reported making joint decisions on their earnings, compared to only **51%** of women with just a primary education.

Ownership of assets

Ownership of land and housing provides economic security, yet independent ownership remains low for women.

Property ownership:

32% of women (age 15-49) own a house (alone or jointly), and **24%** own land. However, independent ownership of land is rare, at only **2%**.

Significant rural/urban divide:

Asset ownership is much higher for women in rural areas. **45%** of rural women own a house, compared to just **17%** of urban women.

Participation in household decisions

A woman's ability to participate in household decisions is a key indicator of empowerment and is often linked to her vulnerability to violence.

Influence of location:

Urban women report higher participation in all three major household decisions **(80%)** compared to rural women **(72%)** (Women's own healthcare, making major household purchases, visit to her family or relatives).

Education:

A woman's involvement in decision-making rises significantly with education and wealth. **70%** women with no education to and **88%** for women with more than a secondary education.

Attitudes towards domestic violence

Societal acceptance of wife-beating remains a major barrier to ending GBV.

Acceptance of Violence:	Employment Factor:	Geographic Factor:
40% of women and **27%** of men believe a husband is justified in beating his wife for at least one reason.	This belief is more common among unemployed women **(43%)** than those employed for cash **(36%).**	Women in rural areas are twice as likely to justify wife-beating as those in urban areas **(52%** vs. **26%).**

Appreciation goes to the following partners who have provided support to the ZDHS 2023-24