

# Has intimate partner violence in Cambodia changed in the past 15 years?

## A case for an innovative and more robust indicator to monitor SGBV-related SDG targets

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### BACKGROUND

The Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) in 2000, 2005 and 2014 collected data from women on physical and sexual violence by intimate partners during her lifetime and in the past 12 months ('current violence'). A comparison of prevalence rates over time suggested that the surveys had different levels of underreporting. This poses huge challenges to the monitoring of SGBV-related SDG indicators, in particular indicator 5.2.1.

**SDG Indicator 5.2.1.** Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical or sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner, in the last 12 months, by form of violence and by age groups.

### METHODS

Secondary analysis using data from the CDHS surveys in the past 15 years was conducted to explore change over time in intimate partner violence (IPV).

### FINDINGS

Prevalence rates for both lifetime and current physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence showed to have decreased between 2000 and 2005, while they had increased by 2014 (Fig 1). Since lifetime prevalence, due to its cumulative nature, is not expected to vary much over periods of 10 years, these results suggest that there are different levels of underestimation at different time points.

Fig 1. Cambodia DHS: Proportion of women (15-49 years old) experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by a partner

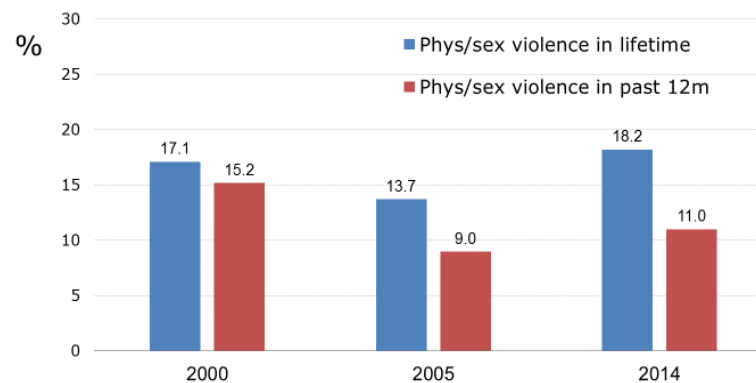
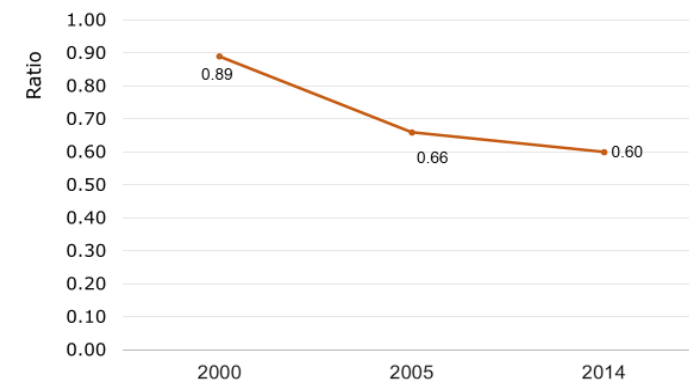


Fig 2. Cambodia DHS: Ratio of prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence in past 12 months over lifetime



### CONCLUSION

It is generally recognized that prevalence rates of violence are very sensitive to methodological issues (wording of questions, translation, interviewer training) and context (stigma, confidentiality, fear for more violence, levels of awareness and possibilities for support, etc.). This makes trends in prevalence rates hard to interpret, and monitoring change challenging.

This paper provides strong arguments for the use of an alternative indicator instead of (or in addition to) the current SDG indicator 5.2.1. **The ratio of the prevalence of IPV in last 12-months over lifetime** appears to be more robust and nuanced for measuring change and evaluating the impact of prevention measures.

An additional novel indicator was created consisting of the ratio of current to lifetime prevalence, to account for the unknown levels of underreporting for each time period. Trends based on this new indicator showed that the rate consistently decreased over time (Fig 2). This can be interpreted that over time more women in Cambodia have been able to stop the violence, find support or break out of a violent relationship. This is consistent with expectations in the light of prevention and response programmes in the country. Data from other countries and on other forms of partner violence have also been explored and confirm the robustness of the alternative indicator.

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