

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WIVES IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN FAMILIES:
BASIC RESULTS**

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In 2002 The MSU Women's Council conducted sociological representative sample survey The Domestic Violence in Russia's seven regions. The sampling frame was males and females presently being married, aged 18-65 years. 2,134 respondents were questioned in more than 50 urban and rural inhabited localities. The questionnaires contain 177 questions to females and 170 questions to males. Female sampling data (N=1076) are mainly used for characterization of the spread, level of domestic violence in Russia.

PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

Almost 80 percent of interviewed women have experienced at least one kind of psychological violence from their husbands: they were either humiliated, among other things by obscene swearing, or their personality was criticized in a disparaging way, or prohibition and/or threats were applied to them.

More than 70 percent of interviewed women have felt various sensations of psychological discomfort in intercourse with their husbands (tension, alarm, lack of self-confidence, impotence, dependence, etc.) while every fifth woman (20 percent of the total number) felt despair, every seventh (14 percent) – fear and every eighth (12 percent) – denial of rights during their contacts with their husbands.

More than 50 percent of women:

- believe that their husbands, at least from time to time, humiliate or try to humiliate, insult, and «put them in place» (57 percent);
- have been subject to insults in an obscene way (51 percent);
- have experienced their husbands disparagingly criticizing them as a personality (a bad wife, a bad disposition, a bad housewife, silly, etc.) (53 percent).

51 percent of women have encountered with prohibitions imposed on them and threats brought against them by their husbands. The most widespread prohibition encountered by every fifth married woman (21 percent) is the restriction of her movement («to go someplace, to go out of doors»). The most widespread threats are those of a physical reprisal (22 percent) and that of the husband finding another woman or deserting his wife (15 percent).

Two thirds (66 percent) of women have been subject either to humiliating remarks or prohibitions and/or threats. More than one third (37 percent) of women have been faced both with humiliating criticism and prohibitions and/or threats at the same time.

Women criticized and humiliated by their husbands, encountering prohibitions and threats when contacting their husbands, have experienced the feelings of inferiority, denial of rights, fear and despair several times more frequently than those who have never come across such manifestations of violence.

As far as the overwhelming majority of men resorting to various methods of psychological pressure on their wives (64 percent) are concerned this pressure is closely interwoven with the desire «to show the wife her place» or firm belief that she knows her place alright. The more often the men «put the wives in their places», hurling humiliating remarks at them, etc. the more they are likely to be confident that they fill their wives with fear.

Every seventh (16 percent) woman is in a situation of a constant and intensive psychological pressure from her husband. Different resources, including the material ones, are concentrated to a greater extent than on the average in the hands of husbands in these families. As a rule, family expenses here are regulated by husbands while all the housekeeping burdens have to be carried by wives.

ECONOMIC VIOLENCE

About 40 percent of men are of the opinion that the husband supporting his wife comes into possession of certain power over her (for instance, he can forbid her to have a job).

The majority of women encounter economic violence, which becomes evident in the following practices:

- wives are obliged to regularly (frequently or from time to time) ask their husbands for money (30 percent); every tenth woman has to do so constantly;
- wives have to report back to their husbands about all or most of the money spent (14 percent);
- in every fifth family (21 percent) the husband always has money he can spend on himself the way he thinks appropriate while his wife has no such money at all or has it but not always;
- every fourth woman (26 percent) has encountered in her life at least one of the following forms of economic pressure (threats/prohibitions/insults) exercised by her husband:
 - o saying that the wife's work is what nobody needs, that she is of no earthly use at work, and that she goes to work for tea parties only, etc. – 14 percent;
 - o refusing to give money or threatening that he would not give it because of the wife's «bad» behavior – 11 percent;
 - o prohibiting the wife from studying, working and seeking a career – 10 percent;
 - o turning the wife out of the house – 10 percent;
 - o threatening that he would turn her out of the house, leaving her «without a penny», and that he would not pay maintenance (alimony) – 10 percent.

Women subject to at least one of the above forms of violence make up 54 percent of the total number of the interviewed. Almost one fifth (19 percent) of women are subject to the simultaneous impact of at least one type of economic violence (*requests, accounting of monies, unjust distribution of money*) and at least one of the economic threats/prohibitions/insults.

13 percent of women live under conditions of hard-core economic violence when their vulnerable and dependent position is aggravated by threats and humiliation coming from their husbands.

Husbands – economic violators gain a number of prizes as a result of their actions, the major ones being the redistribution of family money in the man's favor; taking control of their wives' behavior; and seizing the power to command the family money.

Husbands forbidding their wives to work/study/pursue a career or criticizing their wives' work are inclined to resort to economic violence with regard to their wives to a much greater extent than those avoiding such prohibitions.

The probability for the woman to become subject to economic violence is largely determined by the difference between the husband and wife's level of income rather than by the material position of the family as a whole. Women from average income groups and women earning slightly more than their husbands or as much as they do are liable to the lowest degree of economic violence.

There is a close relationship between the method of family budget building and the family's economic well-being. The more favorable the family's economic conditions are the less the woman's chances of having a free hand in using family money individually seem to be.

Not a single method of budget distribution (even when it is assumed that the wife handles all the family's accounts individually or that the husband and wife pool all their money and each one of them takes as much as he or she thinks necessary) would guarantee the woman that she will not become subject to this or that form of economic violence. The most risky method of family budget building as far as women are concerned is when the husband hands out some of his earnings to his wife to cover essential expenses.

It is worthwhile mentioning that when the husband and wife share the same access to family money or the family budget is in the wife's hands none of them gains an advantage over the partner for a chance of having his or her «own» money which he or she can spend to satisfy one's personal needs. As soon as the husbands get a chance of using their own earnings individually the wives find themselves without «their» money more often than the husbands.

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

There is some discrepancy in the public opinion about the problem of husbands using physical force against their wives but on the whole the permissibility level of such violence is pretty high. The share of those answering various questions that are ready to acquit the husband who has hit his wife or has beaten her up varies from 32 to 47 percent. Men have shown a lot more loyal support to beating of wives than women.

The level of violence in the families of respondents thinking that matrimonial violence is permissible has been higher than in the families of those against its justification. Besides, the males' attitude towards beating the wives up determines whether there will be any use of physical violence on wives or not with a greater certainty than that of females.

The scope of spread of physical violence in families has been determined making use of several indicators:

- the share of women threatened by their current husbands with physical reprisals or treated roughly (at least one case of violence registered) is 56 percent;
- half the women (50 percent) have in fact been subject to their current husbands' physical violence at least once (*the husband hit or pushed, shook, caused acute pain without beating but resorting to other methods, for example, twisting her arms*) – group of general violence;
- husbands have hit at least once 41 percent of women, 26 percent of them have been given a beating repeatedly, including 3 percent of women subject to rough treatment once a month and more often.

The women putting it very clearly that their husbands have never even tried to hit constitute 45 percent – less than one half. In essence, a large section of women find themselves within the range of a probability of their husbands using force on them: 60 percent of them have assumed that their husbands can hit them.

About half the women from the group of general violence (26 percent of the total number of the interviewed) have been subject to assault at the time of their pregnancy, breastfeeding, having a child or experiencing physical or moral sufferings, being in a state of helplessness.

Ten percent of women – victims of physical aggression (3 percent of the total number of the interviewed) have sustained injuries requiring medical treatment.

According to the evidence given by the interviewed men and women, wives have used force on their husbands a good deal rarer compared with husbands' rough treatment of their wives, and the consequences of such assaults have been incomparably smaller. The overwhelming majority of women assaulting their husbands have in their turn been victims of their husbands' violence.

By hitting or beating their wives up the husbands make their family relationship more suitable for themselves. The majority of them stick to the idea that battering their wives has not altered their relations with them or even has improved them while women on the whole think that family relations have thus deteriorated: 43 percent of women hit by their husbands have informed that after the first/the only incident of that sort they have started to be afraid of them at least from time to time.

The men who gave a beating to their wives are inclined to put the blame for the incident on the wives instead. They have accused the wives five times more frequently of causing a quarrel than themselves and pointed to their wives' "bad" behavior as the reason for picking quarrels three times more often than to their own.

The number of women appealing for help after their husbands have given them a beating for the first time is negligible. About half the total number of interviewed – 44 percent of women and 52 percent of men – think that the battered wife should not call for help at all, instead she should wonder what she is guilty of.

The next-door social environment is, as a rule, quite aware of the fact that the husband assaults his wife. The absolute majority of the well-informed neighbors condemn aggressive men. However, more often than not violators do not know anything about it. The husbands – aggressors have experienced the minimal degree of disapproval from their friends.

Five percent of women falling victim to their husbands' assaults have called for medical help (3 percent of the total female data file). 19 percent of women – victims of assaults have lodged complaints against their husbands with the militia (10 percent of the total number of the interviewed women). Half the women believed to be in need of medical or law enforcement help have failed to call for it.

Less than one percent of women suffering from physical violence have approached a crisis center.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Both men and women look at sexual needs of husbands as something of a priority compared to women's requirements. The majority of the interviewed respondents do not think it absolutely essential for the matrimonial sex to take into account the wife's sexual wishes and requirements.

The majority of men (60 percent) and half the women (50 percent) believe that rape in the state of marriage is impossible in principle.

According to female evidence:

- only 13 percent of them have never engaged in sexual intercourse with their husband if not willing to do so;
- 75 percent of wives with a higher or lower rate of recurrence have yielded to their husbands agreeing to have sex while not willing to do so. Every fifth woman (20 percent) makes such concessions frequently.

All in all 23 percent of women have become victims of at least one type of their husbands' sexual pressure or violence:

- husbands of seven percent of women always have sex whenever they want it, absolutely irrespective of their wives' wishes and their degree of preparedness for sex;
- 14 percent of women have been forced at least once to have sex with their husbands against their wish because otherwise *they would give rise to a scandal, stop talking, refuse to give money*, etc. (forced sex);
- 6 percent of women have fallen victim to a matrimonial rape (*the husband would make his wife to have sex using force or threats when she did not want it and told him so*);
- about 6 percent of all the interviewed women have emphasized that they were forced to have sex with their husbands after being battered by them (this accounts for 12 percent of women beaten by their husbands at least once).

The group of rough sexual violence (forced sex and/or rape and/or sex after battering) constitutes 18 percent of all the women interviewed.

Matrimonial sexual relations in families with sexual violence prevailing are characterized by the fact that husbands enjoy considerably greater possibilities to have sex at their wish at the same time reproaching their wives a good deal more frequently with unwillingness to have sex than on the average across the entire spectrum of data collected. For all that, husbands – violators do not feel sexual drive for their wives more frequently than men on the average.

Lessening of sexual drive for husbands is typical among women – victims of sexual violence. Sexual violence is connected with the wives' fear of their husbands. Sexual violence is closely connected with the physical one, it being known that the tougher the form of sexual violence is the stronger this connection is likely to be.

VIOLENCE AND DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

Among the men from all the groups of violence the number of those insisting on men's supremacy over women is far greater than among men not practicing violence. The female opinion of how the power should be distributed among men and women in

society and family determines to a considerably lesser degree whether the woman will be subject to her husband's violence.

The families free from all types of violence are first and foremost egalitarian families with resources and power equally distributed between the husband and wife. A clearly noticeable supremacy of the husband is observed in the families with husband's violence with regard to his wife prevailing.

For women any type of violence is combined with redistribution of resources and power in favor of the male violator. Psychological and economic violence being seemingly most «effective» while physical violence ranking low as least «effective». Women are most likely to be subject to physical violence in such cases when psychological and economic violence turns to be ineffective or the husband has not enough possibilities for its use, which makes him establish his power with the help of physical force.

For men violence is a method of either exercising one's power over his wife or fighting for it. This struggle for redistribution of power is often associated not so closely with the fact that male violators objectively have little power over their wives but rather with the fact that for many of them, no matter how much power they have already gained, it will never be enough.

The differences between various types of male violence are not so strongly pronounced for men than for women. It can be assumed that all types of violence are roughly equivalent and equally possible for men – they simply constitute a set of instruments either to confirm or to establish superiority. Therefore, men practicing other types of violence except physical one assume with a very high degree of probability that they may hit their wives. While it is a possibility for 22 percent of men belonging to the violence-free group, this indicator goes up to 64 percent among men from the group of psychological violence, reaching 78 percent among those included in the group of economic violence and hitting the mark of 89 percent among men making up the group of sexual violence.

Redistribution of power in men's favor can be stated in all the groups of violence and with regard to all the indicators. Such redistribution of power in favor of husbands – violators is likely to be based on the fear they put into their wives. Among women free of any type of violence 4 percent live in fear of their husbands; 50 percent of women belonging to the group of psychological violence are fearful of theirs; 44 percent of those included in the group of economic violence have a fear of their husbands; while 35 and 34 percent of female victims of physical and sexual violence respectively are in fear of their spouse. As to men, 16 percent of husbands belonging to the violence-free group assume that their wives are afraid of them; 66 percent of married men included in the group of psychological violence, 55 percent of those in the group of economic violence, 57 percent in the group of physical violence and 65 percent in the group of sexual violence are of the same opinion.

From our point of view, it proves the fact that the information we have collected during the survey is in fact the information about violence and not simply about matrimonial conflicts, since a conflict is a confrontation of two equal parties while violence is what is connected with power, control and fear.