

The individual, domestic, and community costs of violence against women in Ecuador

Executive summary

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SECRETARÍA TÉCNICA
PLAN TODA UNA VIDA



Published by the

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Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
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Summary based on the study Los costos
individuales, domésticos y comunitarios de la
violencia contra las mujeres en Ecuador. Quito,
PreViMujer, GIZ: 2020.
Dr. Aristides Vara-Horna.

Graphic design

Erika Valeria Hidrovo Sánchez

Statistical review

Daniel Rea Constante

Cover photo

Jonathan Stutz en Adobe Stock

ISBN N°

First edition: January, 2020



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► Introduction

In Ecuador, according to the *Encuesta Nacional de Relaciones Familiares y Violencia de Género contra las Mujeres*¹ (National Survey on Family Relations and Gender-Based Violence against Women), approximately 65 out of every 100 women are psychologically, economically, physically, or sexually abused at least once in their lifetime.

Violence against women in intimate partner relationships (VAW) is the most prevalent form of gender-based violence. VAW acquires a series of forms and manifestations, ranging from the most bloody, such as sexual abuse and physical violence, to the more subtle and invisible, such as economic violence and emotional violence. The study understands VAW as an exercise of coercive power, since all these attacks occur within an unequal power relationship between men and women, being a mechanism used by men to keep women submissive and subordinate to their authority.

For centuries, VAW and its effects have been underestimated by society. Determining the economic impact of VAW, from an integrated approach, including a multilevel analysis, is necessary to strengthen the arguments in favor of its effective prevention.

At the individual level, the effects of VAW on women's autonomy and health have indirect effects on their income, both in the case of women with labor ties and in those with formal and informal businesses, results that have already been established in previous studies. In addition, they generate opportunity costs and incur expenses, in time and money, to obtain medical, legal, police, and social assistance.

One of the main contributions of this study is that it includes unpaid housewives in its analysis, and focuses on the costs of money and time, as well as days lost as a result of seeking help and suffering harm.

At the household level, VAW can increase children's antisocial behaviors, decrease their school performance, and affect their health. As in the previous case, this impact can be monetized at both the opportunity cost and expenses levels. In addition, the study presents a novelty with respect to the link between VAW and food insecurity and its impact at the economic level. In the case of Ecuador, this contribution is particularly significant, considering that Ecuador is the second most food insecure country in South America.

In addition, new measurement needs emerge at the community level. For this reason, the impacts on organizations (especially non-formal) in the community are also considered, since there is an invisible but relevant social cost, based on the resources and capacities of family members, acquaintances, and neighbors who assist and support the assaulted women.

For all these reasons, this study calculates the costs of VAW for Ecuador, and takes into account an approach at different levels to demonstrate that VAW is also a brake on social and economic development, as it destroys women's well-being, health, productivity, and capital, not only at the individual level, but also at the family and community levels.

Therefore, the objective of the study is to determine the costs of violence against women in intimate partner relationships for Ecuadorian women, their homes, and communities.

► Methodology

► 1. Design

A descriptive study was conducted based on household surveys of women 18 to 65 years old living in Ecuador. The cost accounting method was used to capture the value of time and money lost as a direct consequence of VAW. Basically, assaulted women were asked what post-violence actions they took and what the consequences in terms of time and health were, as well as the expenses incurred. In addition, the econometric method that captures the time and money lost indirectly due to VAW was used.

► 2. Sample

Based on statistical information from the National Institute of Statistics and Census (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos - INEC), a sample of 2,501 women between 18 and 65 years old was drawn, with a confidence level of 95% and an error of $\pm 2\%$. The sample included women from different regions (coast, highlands, and the Amazon), rural and urban areas, and took into consideration the size of the population centers (metropolitan area, large cities, medium-sized cities, small cities, and rural areas).

► 3. Instruments

A structured questionnaire used in interviews was applied. With it, information was obtained on experiences of VAW, as well as its effects on health, the household, the community, and its translation into monetary costs, whether direct (expenses or debts) or indirect (lost time or income). Such a questionnaire has been continuously improved since its design in Peru in 2012 and used in many countries and contexts.

The questionnaire has ten sections: The first section contains women's demographic and labor information, educational level, and income. Section 2 asks about the couple's relationship and the couple's employment status and income. Regarding the children, the third section asks about their school performance; the fourth, about information on their health; and the fifth, about violence specifically directed at them. Next, section 6 explores the situation of food insecurity, and section 7 asks about the woman's own health. Section 8 inquires about situations in which they have witnessed violence in family members, neighbors, or acquaintances, while section 9 explores the situation in which the women themselves have experienced violence. The last section establishes the direct consequences of VAW and, in a second part, explores the social support received by the assaulted women from family members, neighbors, and acquaintances.

► 4. Procedure

All methodological and ethical recommendations for surveying women in their homes on VAW issues were followed. Thus, it was possible to ensure voluntary, anonymous participation with guarantees of confidentiality. In addition, security precautions were taken to avoid intrusions by the partner during the interview. All data was archived, tabulated, and analyzed following the principles of traceability and open data.

Calculation of days lost due to VAW

Algorithms designed for each scale are used, following the accounting method. The costs measured are direct, tangible costs, which include the amounts of money spent by women to seek assistance and those that were intended for other purposes but were used to cover the damages and aftermath of VAW. Also included are indirect tangible costs, meaning, lost income from lost days (paid or unpaid) and loss of work productivity or home care.

Calculation of costs at the national level

The estimate considers women 18 to 65 years old who are assaulted only by their partner or ex-partner. The individual cost is multiplied by the number of assaulted women who have had some expense in time or money. Only in the case of community costs incurred by those who witness VAW, the projections are for the entire population of women.

Three levels of analysis (individual, household, and community) and 21 cost categories have been included for the calculation of the cost of VAW for Ecuador. If you are looking for detailed information on the cost categories by level, please feel free to review the full study.

► Main results

VAW has cost Ecuador US\$2,084.5 million, equivalent to 1.92% of its Gross Domestic Product (hereinafter GDP), of which 57.58% is covered at the individual level, 26.08% is covered at the household level, and 16.34% is covered at the community level.

Table 1: Invisible costs of VAW in Ecuador by cost level (US\$)

Level	Costs US\$	Percentage in relation to the total cost	GDP equivalence
Individual	1,200,266,171.60	57.58%	1.11%
Household	543,644,831.47	26.08%	0.50%
Community	340,615,644.56	16.34%	0.31%
Total	2,084,526,647.63	100.00%	1.92%

Source: Probabilistic survey of 2,501 women 18 to 65 years old in Ecuador.

► Prevalence of VAW

In Ecuador, 6 out of 10 women between 18 and 65 years old have been assaulted at least once in their lives by their partner or ex-partner. Considering the last year, 4 out of 10 have been assaulted with an average of 23 attacks².

Regarding the prevalence of types of violence: the most prevalent type of violence is psychological (40.69%), followed by physical (18.70%), economic (15.54%), and sexual (6.77%).

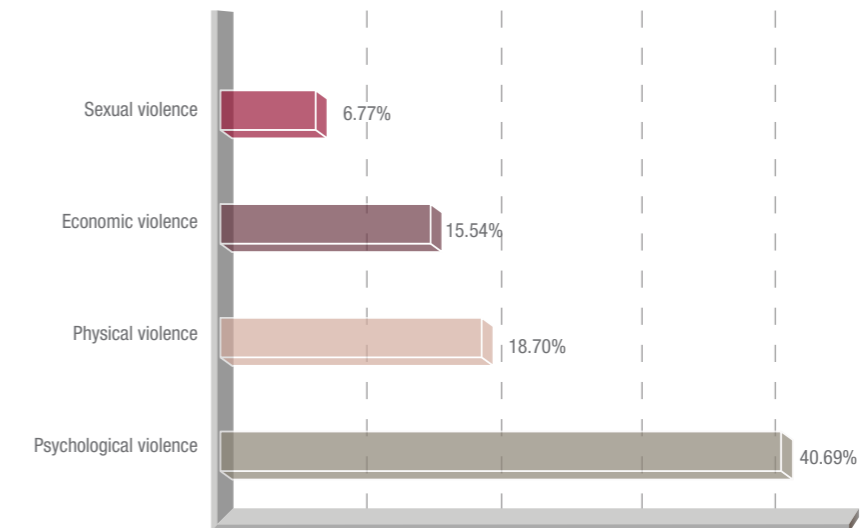


Figure 1. Prevalence of women in Ecuador who have been assaulted by their partners or ex-partners in the last year

There are no major differences between the prevalence in urban and rural areas, but there are differences in terms of geographic zones, being higher in the Amazon region, followed by the highlands and the coast.

Comparing the surveys conducted by INEC (2011, 2019), it is generally observed that the levels of violence have remained stable over time. However, analyzing the types of VAW, we observe a migration from the most bloody types (physical and sexual) to more socially-covert violence (psychological and economic). In other words, the manifestations of VAW are becoming more sophisticated.

► Concurrence of VAW types

When violent attacks of different types (psychological, physical, sexual, economic) occur at the same time, the level of severity of the violence increases:

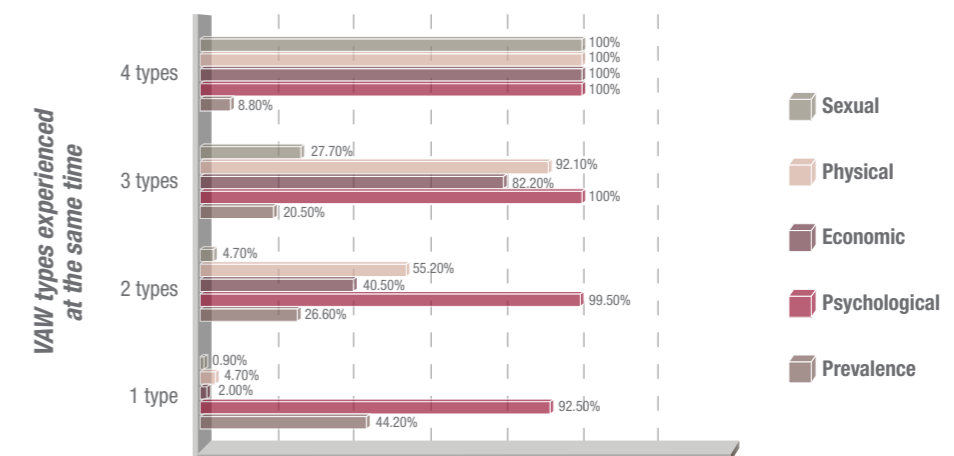


Figure 2. Prevalence according to the combination of types of violence against women during the past twelve months

This demonstrates the need to work at all three levels of prevention and with differentiated attention. The best prevention is undoubtedly to prevent violence from occurring (primary prevention) and this requires focusing on the group of women who have not yet been assaulted, especially girls, adolescents, and young women. However, secondary prevention, which prevents VAW from escalating and its cost from increasing over time, should not be neglected, nor should tertiary prevention, which addresses the damage and pernicious effects of VAW to avoid serious consequences in the medium and long term, both for the lives of women and for their homes and society. In turn, with respect to care, women who are at risk of femicide and who require high-risk care would basically be the 8.8% in which the various types of VAW concur.

► Impact of VAW on women’s health (morbidity)

Assaulted women have 83% more incidents of morbidity than non-assaulted women, and violence involving different types is more pernicious: a non-assaulted woman experiences an average of 17 incidents of physical or mental morbidity; a woman assaulted by a single type of violence may suffer 27; and one with all 4 types may suffer 43.

► Underestimation of violence

15% of women who say they have “never” suffered violence are actually underestimating it, as they report 2.88 attacks in the last year. In other words, almost 460,000 women do not perceive VAW as a serious problem for them. This is why it is so dangerous, since, if prevention measures are not taken to recognize it from its initial stages, any subsequent action to empower women economically or socially may generate a “backlash” effect on their partners, who will see their power threatened and will use violence more frequently and intensely to reestablish it.

► Individual impacts and costs

Labor productivity

VAW generates a loss of 16.6% of the monthly income of women in paid employment.

Out-of-pocket expenses and lost time

17.3% of assaulted women have spent, on average, 31 hours and US\$50 to seek assistance and protection from the last episode of VAW (6.4 times in the last year). In addition, VAW produces an opportunity cost, since 20.2% of assaulted women report having lost 6.34 productive days: they have not been able to dedicate themselves to their jobs, social, or political activities, or to caring for their homes.

Housewives also lose

The 47.4% of the population of women who are unpaid housewives also suffer the pernicious effects of VAW (health, justice, protection, etc.); they lend money and valuable time to their assaulted acquaintances, relatives, and neighbors or receive it when they are assaulted. In other words, they lose not only days of domestic care, but also money in expenses and debts incurred to cover the costs of attending to its consequences.

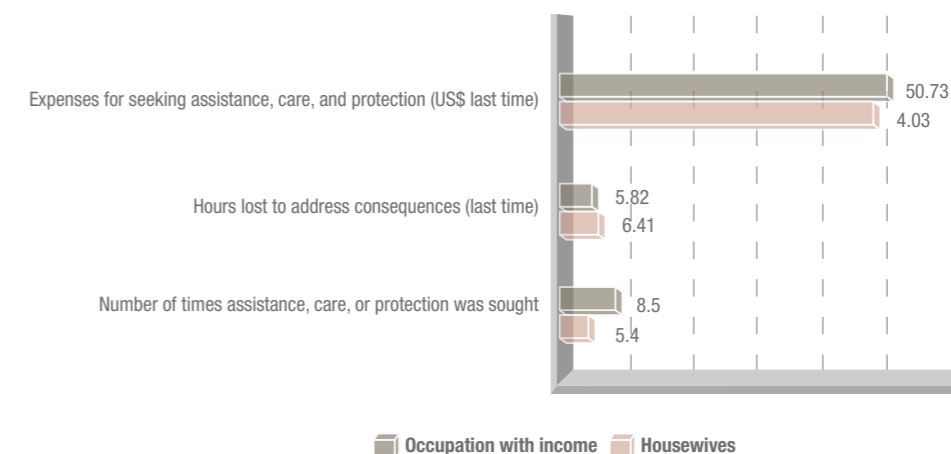


Figure 3. Average costs to address the consequences of VAW

► Impacts and costs of VAW on households

In food insecurity

There is a direct relationship between food insecurity and VAW. As shown in Figure 4, assaulted women are more likely to run out of money to buy food, so they tend to buy food on credit, in addition to going hungry or having their children go hungry.

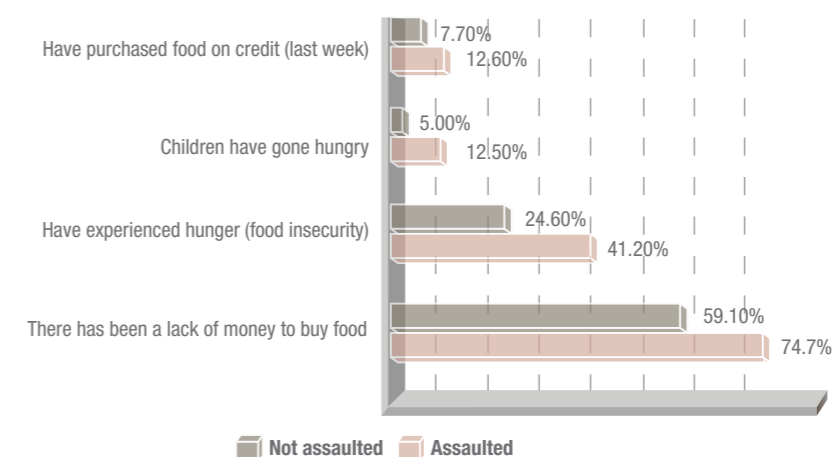


Figure 4. Differences in moderate/severe food insecurity (last 30 days), according to whether or not they are women assaulted by their partners or ex-partners

The impact of VAW on food security can be observed in three ways:

- Control of women's food autonomy. In the case of 27% of Ecuadorian women, it is their partner who decides how much to spend on food, he must be asked permission to buy it or the woman is seriously questioned about what she cooks or what she spends. In addition, she has to give priority to feeding her partner over feeding her children or herself. In short, there is a strong relationship of power and gender subordination in these practices. In addition, this restricted autonomy is associated with VAW, as a high percentage of women in this group (between 60.6% and 87.4%) were assaulted in the last year.
- Coercive food control. In this case, 11% of women have been abused either through threats or by means of "leaving them without food or without money for food".
- Diminished capacities. Due to the increase in women's physical and mental morbidity, which requires expenses for care, their decapitalization increases and ultimately increases their food insecurity, as the amount of money available to buy food is affected.

Intergenerational effects on education and health

3 out of 10 children witness violence against their mothers an average of 4.65 times per year, often intervening to try to stop it (16.7% in 5.10 times on average) and others being physically punished, which increases the likelihood of tardiness or absences from school.

89,968 women report that, as a consequence of VAW, their children or dependent minors missed an average of 2.5 days of school, for a total of 221.5 thousand days of schooling. 175,466 minors failed or postponed a course and at least 63,283 repeated the school year as a result.

Due to scholastic failure and greater performance problems, the amount that women spend on psychological or pedagogical treatment for their children has doubled. In addition, 14,382 minors have been suspended for misconduct and, in the worst scenario, 25,888 minors have dropped out of school due to VAW.

In turn, assaulted women are more likely to have to attend school citations for misconduct or poor performance, incurring double the expense. These effects also generate opportunity costs for women, since 19.2% of assaulted women have had to miss 4.4 days of work or request leave from work to attend to their children's school problems, losing up to 936,261 productive days per year and increasing the probability of leaving home without their care for up to 325,332 days per year, as well as borrowing money to attend to these contingencies, doubling the amount required.

Another pernicious intergenerational effect is the increase in morbidity among the children of the assaulted women (87.3% versus 76.1%), in all the indicators included, especially fights and accidents with medical effects. As a consequence, the probability of children missing school increases (a total

of 218,614 minors have missed 931,296.28 days due to VAW), women have to ask for leave or miss work (54,941 days) or leave their homes in the care of others, or have to borrow money to cover health expenses.

► Community impacts and costs

The invisible community subsidy

2 out of 10 assaulted women received some type of social support from family members, neighbors, and acquaintances, 7 times, for an average of 10 hours the last time. This support of 5,978,818 days per year subsidizes and assumes the costs of care and protection of the assaulted women, the care and attention of their homes, and even shelter. In addition, the assaulted women receive loans to attend to the consequences of VAW. For this reason, prevention work must also be carried out with the community social network, and how to break myths about "family privacy" and gender norms that cover up acts of violence must be addressed.

The invisible cost of witnessing VAW

1 out of every 3 women has had a family member, neighbor, or acquaintance assaulted by a partner or ex-partner in the last year. 71.1% of this group has assisted the assaulted women 8 times, for 6.65 hours the last time, 17.8% have given shelter in their homes for 4 days the last time, and 24.8% have lent money up to 3 times, for an amount of US\$38 the last time.

In addition, 10.7% of the female witnesses have left their household chores or home without their care to help 2.67 times. 4.2% have missed work or asked for leave from work twice, and 3.3% have canceled a meeting or dropped out of school to help 2.2 times.

Costs of providing shelter

266,905 assaulted women (9.4%) have taken refuge in the homes of relatives or acquaintances, for 3 million productive days per year. This value contrasts with the 301,504 women who report having given refuge to women assaulted by their partners, for 3.6 million productive days per year.

► Costs of VAW at the national level

At the individual level

The values correspond to averages for each assaulted woman who has reported some expense or associated cost, since not all of them do so, only 20%. It is important to note that even when the service is free, not all women seek help because assistance and protection costs them money and time which, for many of them, is a luxury they cannot afford.

Projecting these costs at the national level, we find an enormous economic impact (see Table 2) with serious repercussions on women's development and quality of life. Furthermore, in a scenario in which all assaulted women would seek medical assistance, police or legal protection, family support, among others, the direct costs at the individual level would increase fivefold.

At the household level

The costs are also significant. As a consequence of VAW, 15 out of every 100 women went hungry themselves or their children. In addition, intergenerational costs have been generated at school, in lost days to attend to school problems and in expenses to attend to school problems due to their children's misbehavior as a result of VAW. In addition, 6 out of every 100 assaulted women have had expenses on pedagogical or psychological treatment for their children, which has meant borrowing money to attend to these events for 5 out of every 100 assaulted women. Two out of every 100 assaulted women will have to spend money to cover the school expenses of their children who are repeating a year. As can be seen in Table 2, there are also health costs for the children due to VAW.

At this level, it is worth highlighting the contribution of the study with respect to food insecurity, since the classic policies of empowerment and money transfers to reduce food insecurity would be insufficient if VAW is not taken into account. In other words, food insecurity can be temporarily reduced only by transferring money (increased income), but if work is not done in parallel to modify unequal power relations based on gender, as the damage increases, income will be outweighed by the costs of VAW.

At the community level

Women have lent money and dedicated productive days to other women who are assaulted by their partners or ex-partners and vice versa (assaulted women have gone into debt or received support and assistance from family members, neighbors, and acquaintances).

Combining these categories, VAW has caused a total cost of **US\$2,084.5 million, equivalent to 1.92% of Ecuador's GDP.**

Table 2. Invisible costs of VAW at the individual, household, and community levels in Ecuador: 2018

Cost categories	US\$	%
Individual level^a	1,200,266,171.60	57.58
Lost labor productivity (income)	984,657,867.37	47.24
Out-of-pocket expenses (health care, justice, and protection)	67,539,049.74	3.24
Opportunity cost post-VAW (unaccounted lost days)	77,804,008.67	3.73
Opportunity cost post-VAW (lost days accounted for)	70,265,245.83	3.37
Household level^b	543,644,831.47	26.08
Food insecurity (they went hungry)	238,897,173.02	11.46
<i>Schooling</i>		
Costs for failing a school year	45,074,613.75	2.16
Expenses for psychological/pedagogical treatment of children	9,416,286.83	0.45
Expenses for children's school problems	55,024,206.35	2.64
Opportunity cost: Time lost for going to school	17,788,961.47	0.85
Opportunity cost (Days leaving the home without care due to school problems)	6,181,315.15	0.3
Opportunity cost (Missed work due to school problems)	5,061,464.15	0.24
Indebtedness: Money borrowed for school problems	10,287,636.81	0.49
<i>Health</i>		
Opportunity cost: Time lost due to children's medical care	16,244,561.79	0.78
Opportunity cost: Days leaving the home without care due to health	3,111,972.45	0.15
Opportunity cost (Missed work due to children's health)	1,043,882.58	0.05
Expenses for children's health problems	105,983,623.12	5.08
Indebtedness: Money borrowed for children's health	29,529,133.99	1.42
Community level^c	340,615,644.56	16.34
Indebtedness: Social support received (time)	113,597,549.93	5.45
Indebtedness: Social support received (money)	40,859,496.56	1.96
Potential opportunity cost: Social support provided (time)	144,733,358.63	6.94
Expenses for social support granted (borrowed money)	41,425,239.44	1.99
Total cost Ecuador	2,084,526,647.63	100

Source: Probabilistic survey of 2,501 women 18 to 65 years old in Ecuador. S.D. = Standard deviation.

Notes: Projected population = 4,942,691 women 18 to 65 years old. Average daily income = US\$19. Productive day = 8 hours. a Calculated based on the total number of women ever assaulted by their partners, with individual consequences in the last twelve months. b Calculated based on the total number of women ever assaulted by their partners or ex-partners, with consequences in their households, in the last twelve months. The value is obtained by the marginal difference with reference to the group of non-assaulted women, previously balanced by propensity scores. c Social support received is based on the calculation based on the total number of women ever assaulted by their partner or ex-partner. The social support given is based on the calculation of the total number of women (assaulted or not) who have assisted other women assaulted by their partners.

Of these costs, 57.58% are borne by the assaulted women, 26.08% by their households, and 16.34% by the community. In terms of type of cost, US\$279.3 million corresponds to expenses (13.41%), US\$194.2 million to debt (9.32%), and US\$1,610.8 million to opportunity cost (77.27%).

► Conclusions and recommendations

► Conclusions:

VAW

59.2% of women between 18 and 65 years old in Ecuador have been assaulted at least once by their partner or ex-partner. In the last year, 42.1% have been assaulted in an average of 23.5 attacks per year. The most prevalent violence is psychological (40.6%), followed by physical (18.7%), economic (15.5%), and sexual (6.7%).

Morbidity

VAW increases women's physical and psychological morbidity by 83%, with a significant impact on all health indicators.

Heterogeneity of VAW

Most of the assaulted women (44.2%) experience sporadic and infrequent attacks (7.2 times), usually of the psychological type (92.5%), increasing their morbidity by 64% and with a risk of underestimating the violence against them. A quarter of them (26.6%) experience psychological and physical or economic attacks more frequently (19.9 times) and maintain the harmful effects on their health. A fifth of them (20.5%) experience physical violence, in combination with the previously-named types of violences, about 37.5 times a year, increasing physical and emotional damage by 101% (34.5 morbidity incidents). The most critical situation and with the risk of femicide falls on 8.8%, who experience 84.3 attacks - of all types of violence - and with 149% more incidents of morbidity (42.9 incidents).

Origin of expenses

Only 1 in 5 assaulted women report costs or expenses, mainly associated with medical care, access to justice, and protection; or as an indirect consequence of the intergenerational effects on the schooling and health of their children; or for supporting with time and money other women who have been assaulted and have sought their assistance. This implies that the problem is not only centered on whether or not the services are free, but also on the fact that in order to access them, women spend time and money that compete with other needs, which is why access to services can become, for many women, a luxury they cannot afford.

Individual costs

Assaulted women have spent, in the last year, US\$67.5 million to seek care and protection, and have lost US\$77.8 million dollars for 4.09 million days lost in mitigating the effects of VAW, time that could have been spent on productive, social, and domestic activities. Another opportunity cost is in the labor income of 1,290,684 women in paid work, reducing it by 16.6%, in total, US\$984.6 million per year.

Housewives also lose

Unpaid housewives are also affected economically, with costs similar to those of women with income, to attend to the consequences of VAW (health, justice, protection, etc.). They also lend money and valuable time to their assaulted acquaintances, relatives, and neighbors, and vice versa, they receive borrowed money and social support in the form of time to cover the costs of VAW.

Household costs in food insecurity

As a result of the VAW, 15 out of every 100 households went hungry. At the national level, 50.2 million days were food insecure, equivalent to US\$238.8 million lost due to VAW, which should have been used to buy food.

Household costs in intergenerational effects

1 in 3 children have witnessed VAW against their mothers up to 4.6 times per year and 1 in 2 suffer physical punishment. This increases the likelihood that they will be late or absent from school, fail grades or the school year, be suspended for misconduct, or drop out of school. This greater scholastic failure or performance problems also increases the amount that women spend on psychological or pedagogical treatment for their children, the probability that they will borrow money to attend to these contingencies, or the probability that they will leave their home without their care.

Household costs of schooling

As a result of VAW, 11 out of every 100 women have spent a total of US\$55 million per year to attend to school problems due to their children's misbehavior. Likewise, 6 out of every 100 assaulted women have spent a total of US\$9.4 million per year on educational or psychological treatment for their children. These catastrophic expenditures for VAW explain why 5 out of every 100 assaulted women have had to borrow money, for a total of US\$10.2 million. In addition, 2 out of every 100 assaulted women will have to spend a combined US\$45 million to cover the school expenses of their children repeating the year.

Household costs in health care

VAW increases the morbidity of children as a result of accidents or fights with medical effects, and increases the probability that they will miss school, that women will have to ask for leave or miss work, or that they will have to borrow money to cover health expenses. This generates an annual cost of US\$105.8 million in health expenses for children, in addition to US\$20.3 million in opportunity costs for lost work days to care for them and US\$29.5 million in indebtedness to cover these emerging costs.

Community costs in subsidies received

22 out of every 100 assaulted women have received some type of social support from family members, neighbors, and acquaintances on 7 occasions. 6 out of 100 assaulted women received loans 3 times. Thus, assaulted women borrowed money from their relatives, neighbors, and

acquaintances for US\$40.8 million per year; and received support and assistance for 5.97 million days per year (equivalent to US\$113.6 million of opportunity cost) to comfort, accompany, support, or shelter them, having shown that assaulted women tend to be more dependent on credit and donations and have less access to government food assistance and community kitchens than those who are not.

Community costs in subsidies delivered

Considering only the last year, 35 out of every 100 women in Ecuador know a family member, neighbor, or acquaintance who has been assaulted by a partner or ex-partner. Of this group, 71% have provided them with social support in time and money, often at the cost of their own time, since they must leave their jobs, studies, or household chores to attend to them. Thus, women have lent US\$41.4 million a year to other women who are assaulted by their partners or ex-partners. They have also dedicated 7.6 million productive days (equivalent to US\$144.7 million) to comfort, accompany, support, and shelter them.

National cost

VAW has caused a cost of US\$2,084.5 million for Ecuador, equivalent to 1.92% of its GDP. Of these costs, 57.58% are borne by the assaulted women, 26.08% by their households, and 16.34% by the community. In terms of type of cost, US\$279.3 million correspond to expenses (13.41%), US\$194.2 million to debt (9.32%), and US\$1,610.8 million to opportunity costs (77.27%). These costs do not include those from the business sector or those accrued by the state.

► Recommendations

Evaluate the effectiveness of prevention strategies and increase the budget for primary prevention of VAW

An effective state policy for prevention of VAW is always long-term, based on an educational approach. Primary prevention is often the most neglected, as it is immaterial and lacks tangible result indicators. However, increasing the budget allocated to it is an investment for long-term development. The lack of progress in the reduction of VAW makes it necessary to evaluate and rethink the prevention and containment strategies deployed to date. In addition to increasing the budget, it is necessary to identify which actions are effective, counterproductive, or ineffective.

Articulate prevention intersectorally

The enormous economic impact of VAW on the health, schooling, safety, and work of both women and their families requires that prevention be coordinated across sectors. Health, education, labor, and social security policies need to consider VAW as an axis of analysis that cannot be postponed.

Food security policies

Food security policies need to take into account VAW prevention strategies in order to be sustainable over time. Otherwise, as the damage from VAW increases, transfer revenues will be outweighed by the costs of VAW.

Segmenting prevention services

Assaulted women are not a homogeneous group and therefore have different needs. Prevention should focus on specific groups of women, according to their level of risk, and should be evaluated to assess its orientation and effectiveness. To this end, it is recommended that a system of primary prevention, timely secondary detection, and effective tertiary care be designed.

a) Primary prevention

Given that approximately 4 out of 10 women do not experience VAW, it must be prevented in the near future. A policy of zero tolerance to violence, which translates into the promotion of a culture free of violence, across all institutions and levels of society, can be of great help.

b) Secondary prevention

The attacks and intensity of violence can be reduced if they are detected in a timely manner and control measures are taken in the early stages of the couple's relationship. Campaigns should be designed to identify psychological violence and to take advantage of the high percentage of women who know others who have been assaulted by their partners. In light of the results, to the extent that the family, neighbors, and acquaintances are the first referents to whom assaulted women turn to, they are, therefore, necessary agents for more effective prevention. This calls for new challenges to break down and discuss various myths of "family privacy" and gender norms that tend to cover up acts of violence.

c) Tertiary care

For cases of women who suffer extreme violence (physical attacks with objects, sexual abuse, and physical damage that requires medical attention), it is necessary to articulate the network of specialized institutional services to treat each situation psychologically, physically, and legally. At this point, it is necessary to create an effective referral channel and the necessary facilities so that women can be treated in a timely manner.

Include new cost categories of violence against women in intimate partner relationships

Calculating the costs of VAW is an opportunity to make visible its enormous economic impact, not only for women but for all levels of society. Much research is still needed from academia to continue to understand the enormous invisible impact of violence against women.

► References and notes

1. INEC, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (2019). Encuesta de relaciones familiares y violencia de género contra las mujeres - ENVIGMU. INEC, Quito.

2. According to the results of the Encuesta de Relaciones Familiares y Violencia de Género contra las mujeres (Survey of Family Relations and Gender-Based Violence against Women) (INEC, 2019), 42.8% of women have been assaulted by their partner or ex-partner at least once in their relationship.

There may be many reasons why the prevalence is higher in this study than in the INEC study.

1. The sampling error, which is much higher in our study due to the size of the sample selected (2,501 women in GIZ versus 17,211 women in INEC). 2. The target sample: women 18 to 65 years old in the case of GIZ, and women over 15 years old in the case of INEC. As for factors that may underestimate INEC's calculations are: 3. The length of the questionnaire, which in this case is shorter and specialized only in intimate partner violence and its costs, while INEC asks about all types of gender-based violence against women, and its associated factors and consequences, with intimate partner violence being almost at the end. 4. Although the same dimensions of VAW are measured (psychological, economic, physical, and sexual), the indicators used in both surveys are not the same. 5. The questions on intimate ex-partner violence are limited to 6 items in INEC, while in GIZ they are the same 18 items used in intimate partner violence. Due to these reasons, for and against, the prevalence obtained was chosen for the cost calculations.

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