

‘Keeping silent is dying’

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN VIET NAM: A HIDDEN ISSUE

Nguyen Thi Viet Nga

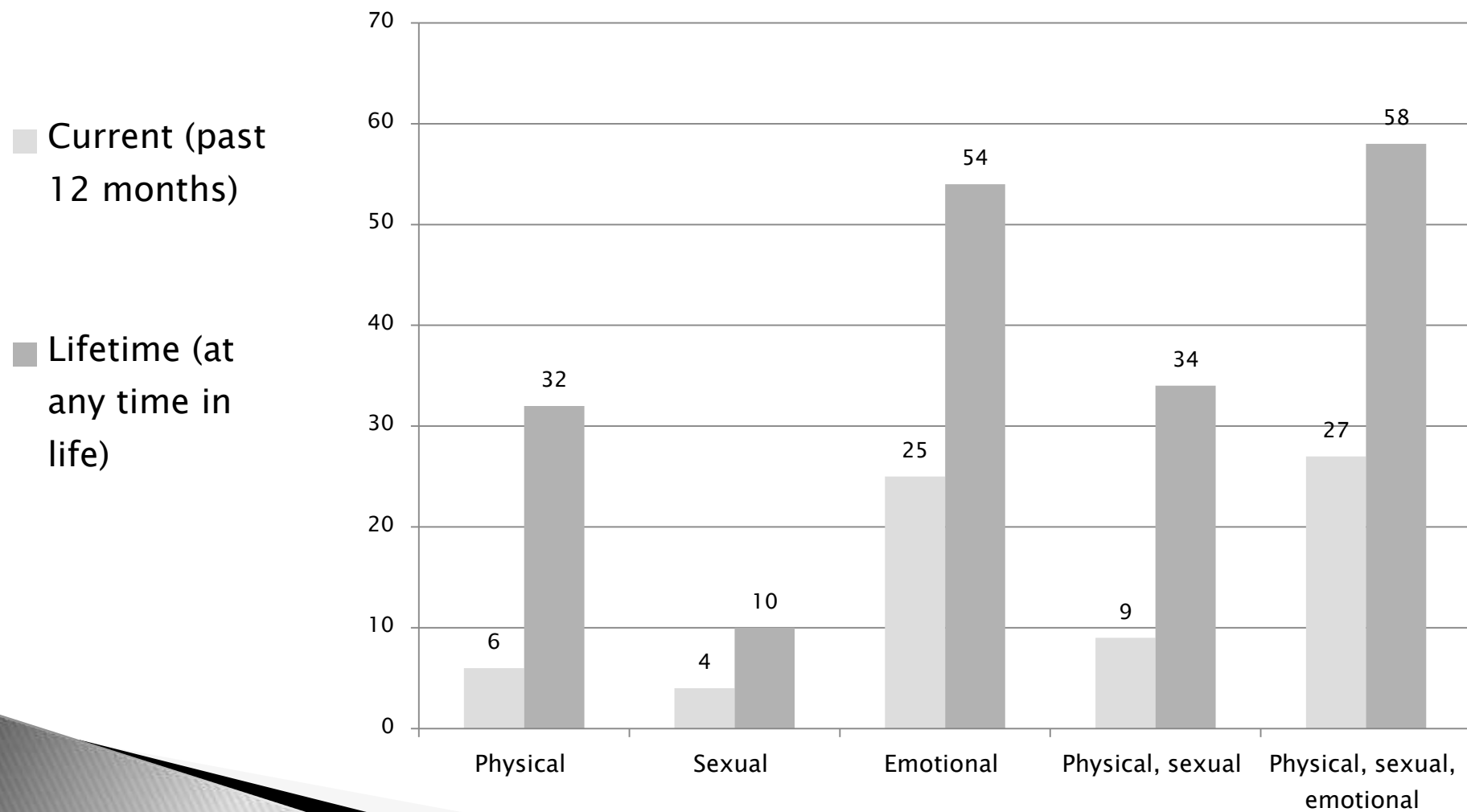
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Cape Town, 10–13 October 2011

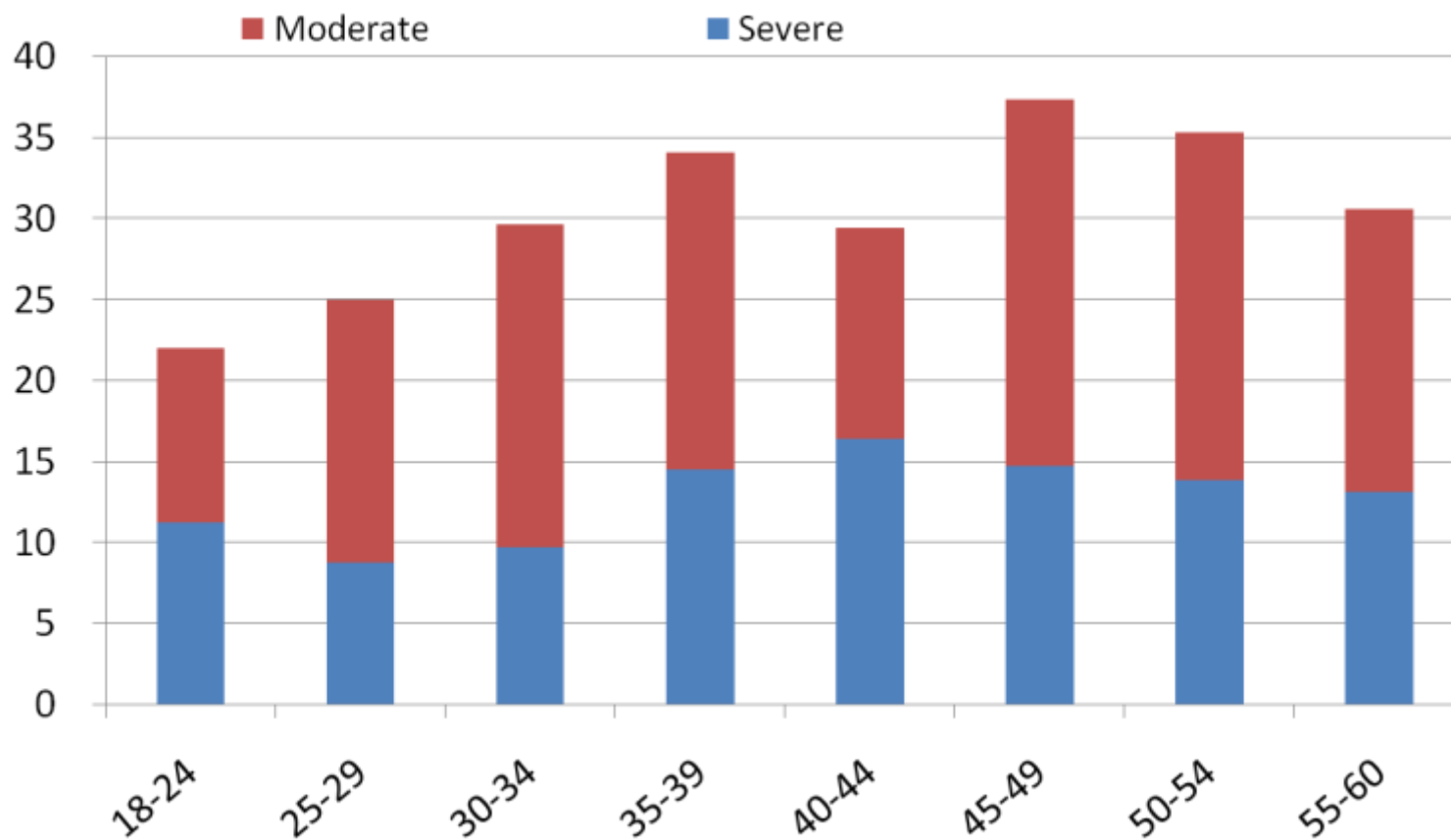
1. Violence against women by partners

“He beat me, then he pulled me like a dog from gate to inside house, my hair was messed up... My god, he took the small chair from the dining table, he took a brick to beat me... He took off his shoes and threw them at my face, that was painful. I ran away but I could not run fast enough, he took the chair and threw it towards me....”

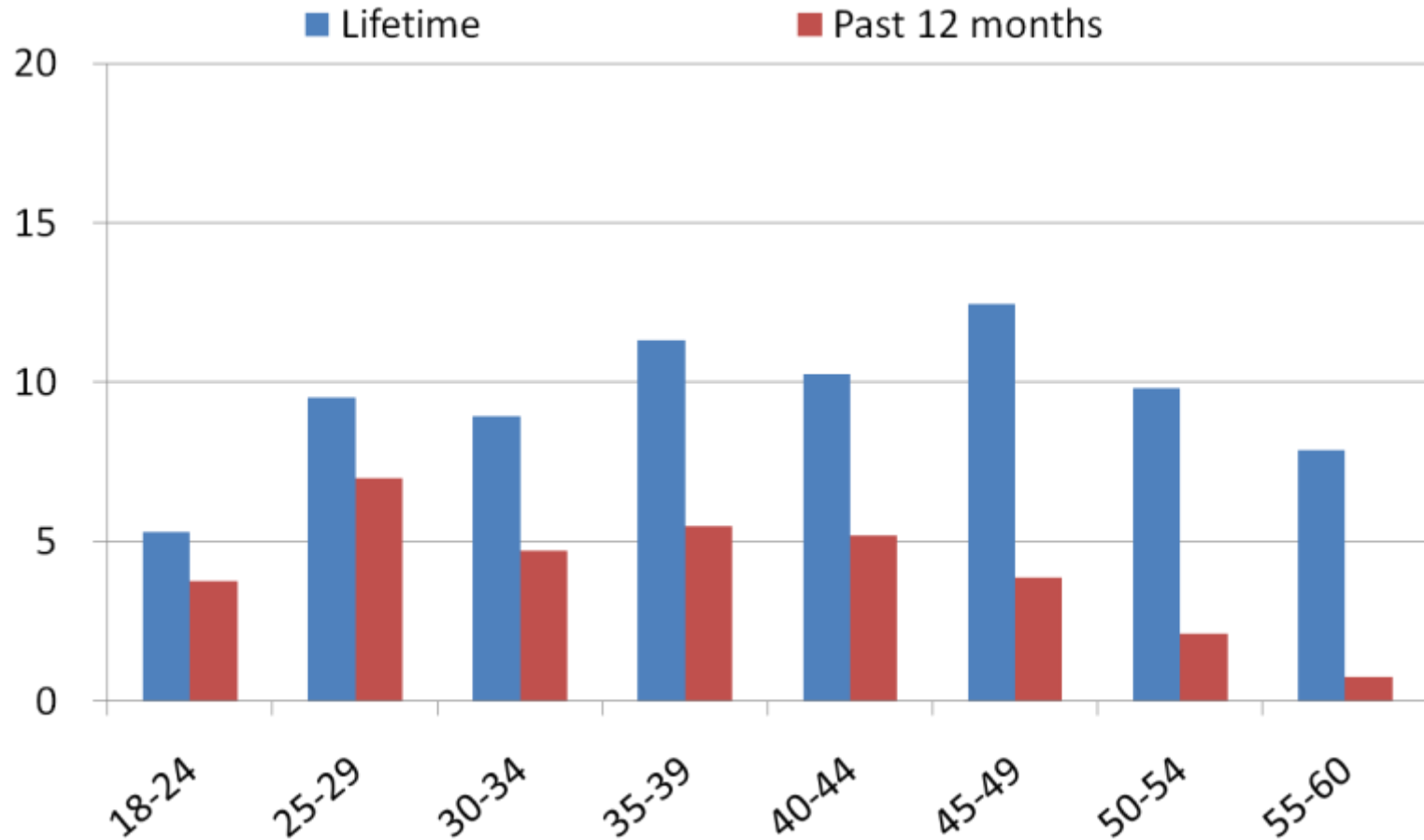
Prevalence of ever-physical, sexual and or emotional violence by husband, among ever-married women, by region, Viet Nam 2010 (N=4561)



Prevalence of moderate and severe physical violence by husband, among ever-married women, by age, Viet Nam 2010 (N=4561)

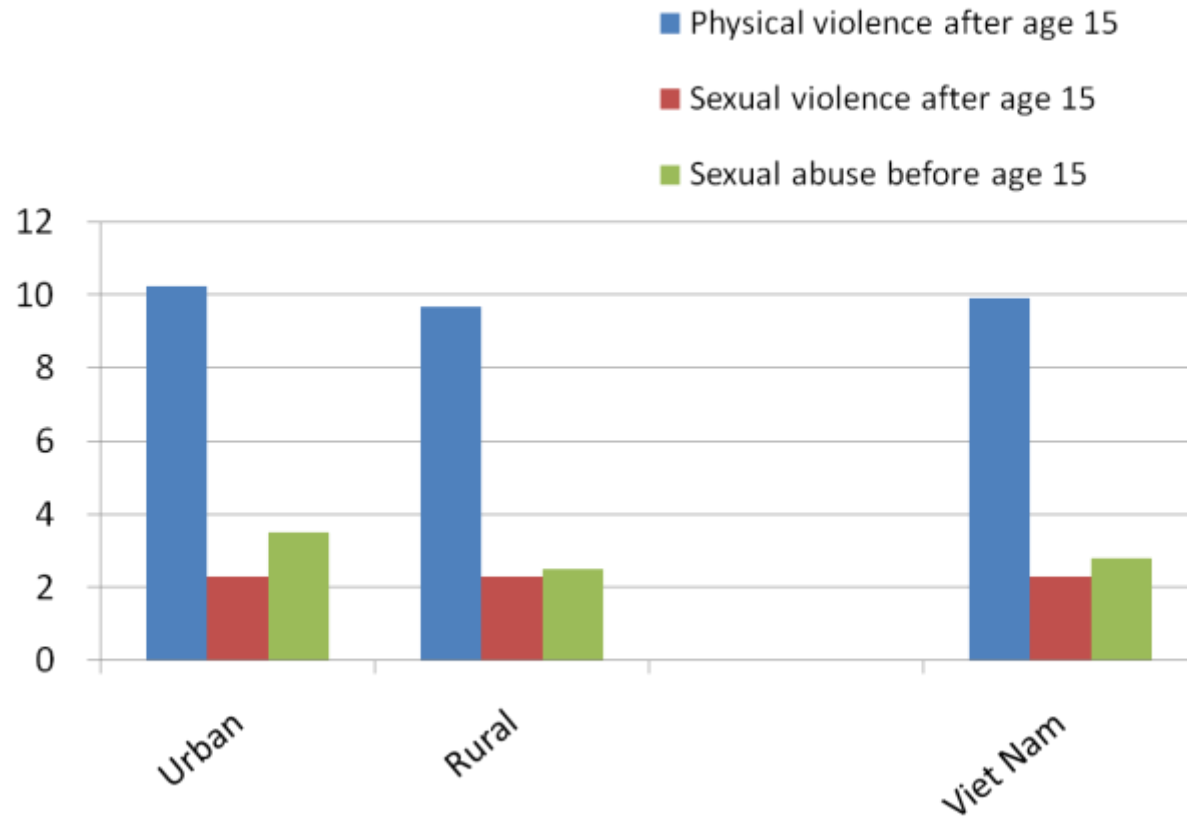


Prevalence of sexual violence by husband, among ever-married women, by age, Viet Nam 2010 (N=4561)



“(Forced sex) it is existing but we cannot speak it out, it is not for speaking out. We can speak about beating. Many husbands force wives to have sex, only their wives know it and they could not speak out... When husband wants it, I have to agree... Otherwise he would beat me...”

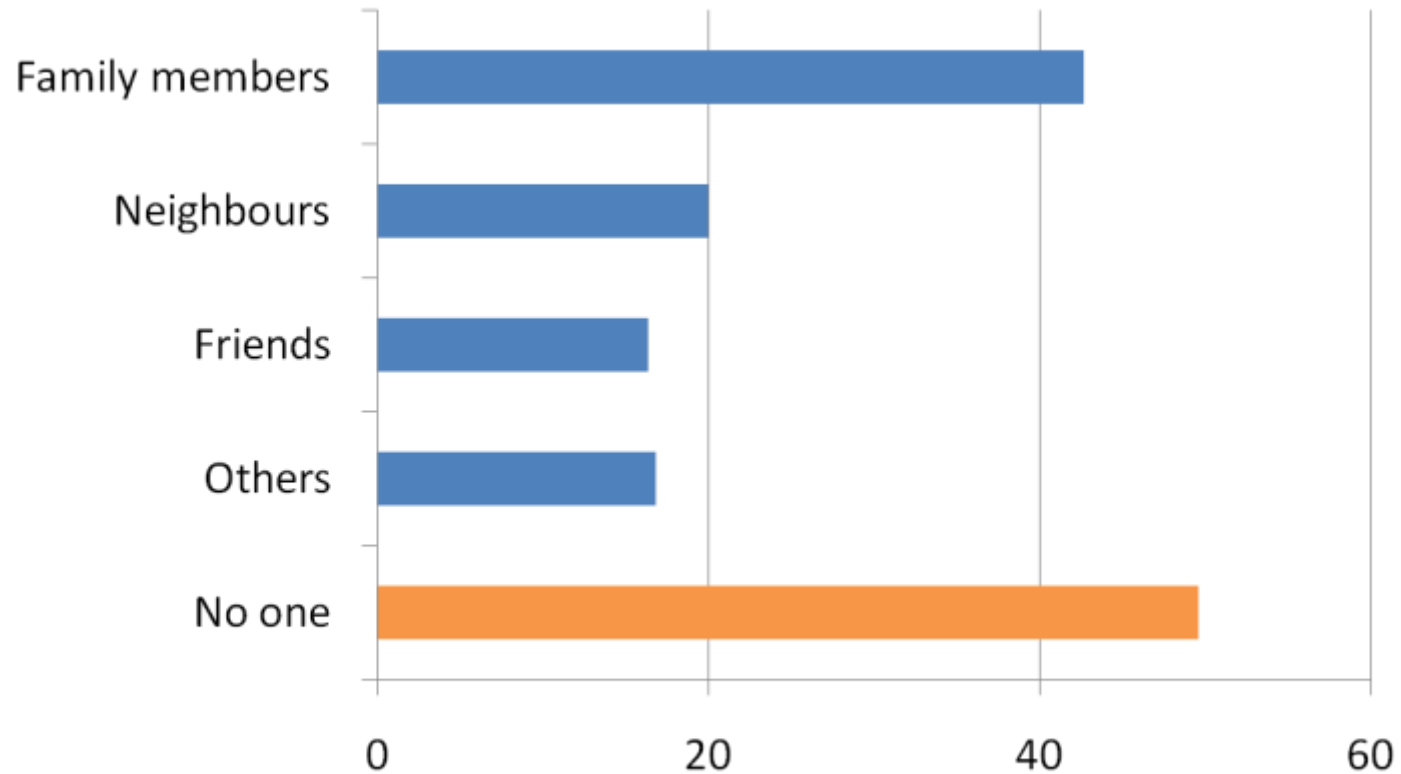
Prevalence of violence by persons other than husband, among all interviewed women, Viet Nam 2010 (N=4836)



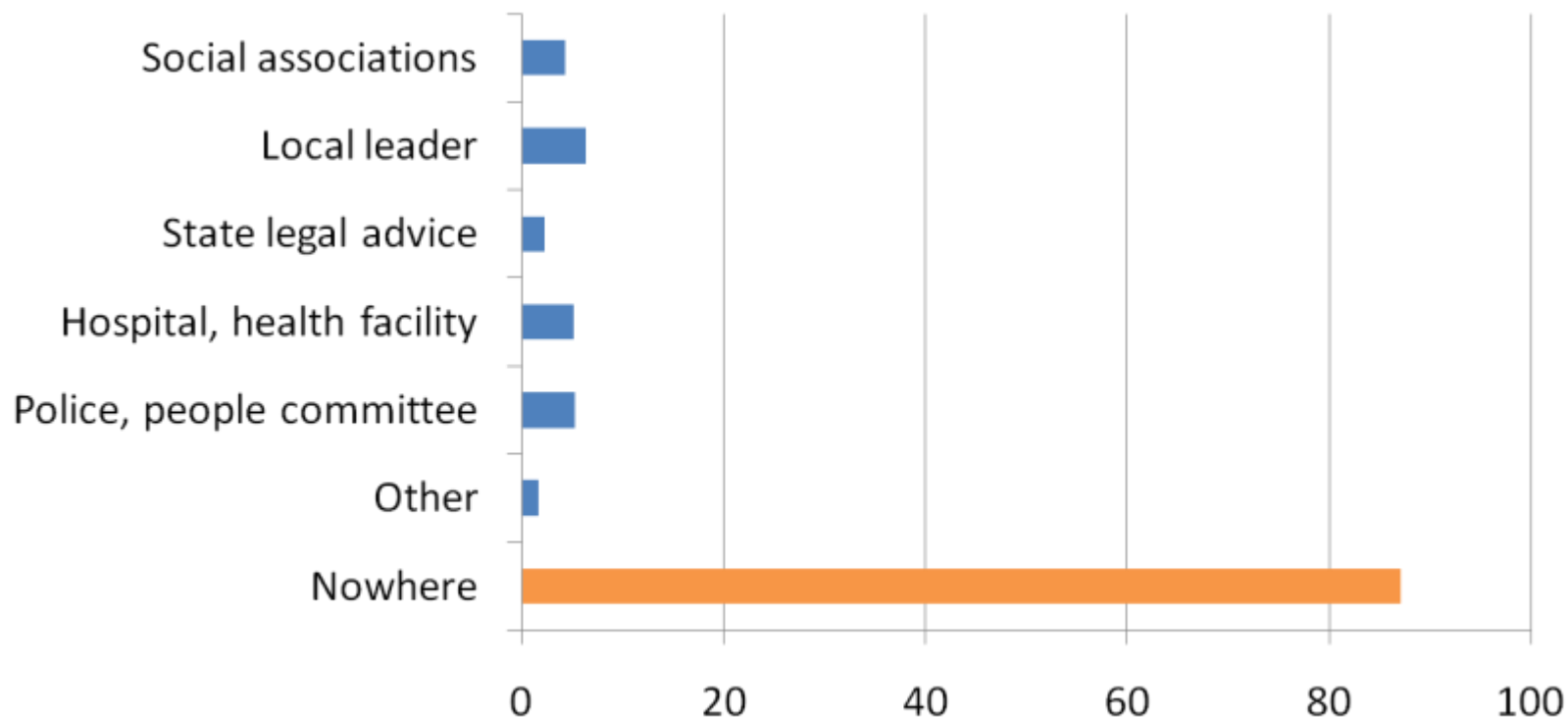
2. Women's coping strategies



Proportion of women who told someone, among women who experienced physical or sexual violence by husband, Viet Nam 2010 (N=1546)



Proportion of women who sought help from official agencies, among women who experienced physical or sexual violence by husband, Viet Nam 2010 (N=1546)



3. Women are keeping silence..., why?

- ▶ *Individual*
- ▶ *Family*
- ▶ *Neighbor*
- ▶ *Community*
- ▶ *Challenge in implementing the DV Law*

Individual ...

“It was bad for him and bad for me as well”.

(Woman survivor in Hue.)

“About our sexual relationship of how he forced me, I would not dare to tell anybody... I think that these stories are very shameful, so I don't want to tell. If someone asks me, I will tell. I can't just tell them”.

(Woman survivor in Ha Noi.)

Family...

“My parents were the first people to ask me to give in.”

(Woman survivor in Ha Noi.)

I did tell my parents, but they got angry with me. They said that I am not the only woman who is daughter-in-law. There are also many other women who are daughters in law and their family are all happy. Why can't I make my family happy and be good daughter-in-law? Was it because I was not loyal to my husband or I did not know how to behave properly? I should know my husband's style and I should know how to behave according to his style. If I knew how to follow my husband, my family would not have violence”.

(Woman survivor in Hue.)

Neighbours...

“When the neighbors came, he said this was an issue between husband and wife, they should leave it for him to deal with and no one should intervene. Thus, no one dared to intervene. They used to call the police but now they did not dare. He drank and he could do whatever he wanted, no one would intervene. If people intervened he would shout at them. So now they just keep out of it”.

(Woman survivor in Ben Tre)

Comunity...

“The village head ... said, ‘This is your family matter, you should deal with it yourself’”.

(Woman survivor in Ha Noi.)

I know these commune police officers. They will not help people in difficult situations. They just help superficially. They will not dare come in and stop my husband when he is using violence against me. I think so and I will not come near them”.

(Woman survivor in Ha Noi.)

“I wanted to go [to the People’s Committee] many times but I was scared. I rarely went to these places. I was scared, I did not dare to go”.

(Woman survivor in Hue.)

Challenge in implementing the DV Law

- ▶ The context of wide acceptance for gender inequity , even local authorities and police are affected by gender bias norms.

“The police came when he just stopped beating me. However, the police did not help me. I told them that he had beaten me for a long time and kept money for himself. The police just said that nowadays all men have separate money and have a mistress”.

(Woman survivor in Ha Noi.)

Challenge in implementing the DV Law

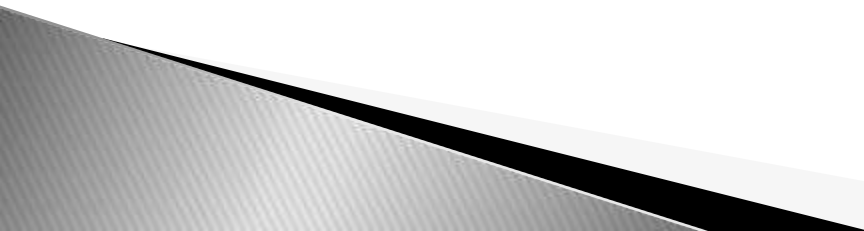
- ▶ Fining perpetrators with a cash fine
- ▶ A woman should present a claim in order to get help
- ▶ Or the need for evidence to apply the law.
- ▶ Severe violence often related to many other issues such as housing, land ownership, custody, etc., that the DV Law alone does not address

“If I would have a house or some land when I get divorced, I would go for divorce. If not, I would have to live like this”.

(Woman survivor in Ha Noi.)

I think women who suffered from violence should raise their voice and ask for help or for counseling. It can vary case by case but we should not keep silent. Keeping silent is dying.”

Conclusions

- ▶ Need to break the silence; need to challenge the social barriers that cause women not to talk or seek help
 - ▶ There is an urgent need for a minimum comprehensive package of services to ensure that women's rights are protected and realized, include emergency shelters, counseling and health services, self-help groups, economic and legal support.
 - ▶ Community interventions should also challenge attitudes and should seek to engage and mobilize local leaders.
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Research team

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Thank you!

