

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: VICTIM SURVEY REPORT**

### **MAIN FINDINGS**

\* **63.3 %** of Lithuanian women have been victims of male physical or sexual violence or threats after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

\* **42.4 %** of all married and cohabiting women have been victims of physical or sexual violence or threats of violence by their present partner.

\* **53%** of all women who had lived in relationships which had already terminated experienced violence or threats by their ex-partners.

\* **11 %** of Lithuanian women had at least once, after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, been victims of male physical or sexual violence or threats, perpetrated by a stranger, 8.2 % - by a friend, and 14.4 % by an acquaintance or relative.

\* **71.4 %** of Lithuanian women after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday have been victims of sexual harassment or sexually offensive behaviour by a stranger, and 43.8% by a known man.

\* **26.5 %** of Lithuanian women after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday had experienced sexual abuse by a stranger; 18.2 % by a known man; 17 % were attempted to coerce into sexual intercourse by their date.

\* **3.4 %** of all victimised women reported that the experienced violence did not affect them, the absolute majority reported that this had caused hatred, helplessness, sorrow or other negative emotions.

\* **10.6 %** of the victims reported the most serious incident to the police.

\* **women** who were victimised in their parental families more often were victimised in their marital families; women whose mother was abused by the spouse, more often experienced violence by their spouses; men whose father had been violent against the mother, had been more often violent against their own partner.

\* **75.3 %** of adult Lithuanian women do not feel safe from risk of assault.

\* **79 %** of Lithuanian women believe that the home is the safest place for women and children.

## I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

The survey “Violence against Women” was conducted in 1997-1998. It was initiated by the Women’s Issues Information Centre, and supported financially by the UNDP and UNIFEM. The National representative survey of adult women was conducted by the company “Baltic Surveys, Ltd.” on 17-26 November 1997. The random sampling methodology was applied. One thousand and ten women aged between 18-74 years old were interviewed on a one to one basis.

I would like to express my gratitude to Elena Liubšienė for supervising the fieldwork and to Dr. Gediminas Murauskas for consultations on statistical analysis.

### **The main aims of the survey:**

- to measure the prevalence of violence against women in Lithuania and its structure and features in different population groups;
- to analyze relationships between a victim and the perpetrator;
- to measure the scope of violence in the family and outside the family;
- to study relationships between victimisation of women in a marital family and their victimisation in a parental family, and violent behaviour of their fathers and fathers-in-law against their spouses;
- to study the impact of violence and abuse on women and their reaction to violence;
- to measure the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual abuse;
- to study women’s concerns with their personal safety and its relation with experienced violence.

The topic of violence is very broad; it is difficult to cover the whole spectrum in one survey. To conduct a qualitative study, the scope of study has to be narrow in its remit. Therefore we restricted sample of surveyed women to adult ones. We also restricted questionnaire to their experience of men’s violence in adulthood (since they were 16 years of age), not touching on details of childhood violence experience. Concerning the last issue, we asked only about experienced violence in the childhood in a generalized way to reveal the relation between experienced violence in childhood and in adulthood.

The social demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1  
**Social demographic characteristics of respondents**

Characteristics	Scale	N	%
AGE	18-19	38	3.8
	20-29	203	20.1
	30-39	188	18.6
	40-49	159	15.8
	50-59	165	16.3
	60-74	257	25.5
EDUCATION	Unfinished secondary	415	41.1
	Secondary, special second.	459	45.5
	Higher	136	13.4
NATIONALITY	Lithuanian	847	83.8
	Other	164	16.2
PLACE OF INHABITANCE	Rural area	320	31.7
	Town	242	24.0
	City	448	44.3
MARITAL STATUS	Single	112	11.0
	Married first time	556	55.0
	Married not first time	56	5.5
	Cohabiting	83	8.3
	Separated	10	1.0
	Divorced	69	6.8
	Widow	124	12.0
RELIGION	Roman catholic	852	84.4
	Other	90	8.9
	Do not belong any	68	6.7
RELIGIOSITY*	Religious	442	43.8
	Non-religious	568	56.2
OCCUPATIONAL STATUS	Worker	220	21.8
	Professional	189	18.7
	Manager	19	1.9
	Pensioner	310	30.7
	Student	51	5.0
	Housewife	114	11.3
	Unemployed	104	10.3
	No answer	3	0.3
INCOME PER FAMILY MEMBER* (4Lt = 1USD)	Up to 200 Lt	301	29.8
	201-300 Lt	268	26.5
	301-400 Lt	168	16.6
	400 Lt and above	160	15.9
	No answer	113	11.2
		N=	1010
			100 %

\* Two characteristics were not standard: Religiosity and Income per family member

The majority of respondents (84.4%) indicated that they belong to the Roman Catholic religion. But not all of them are practicing religion. Therefore, the additional characteristic - religiosity - was induced. The criteria of religiosity we regarded as

attendance of Church or religious meetings at least once per month, excluding weddings, funerals or christenings.

Income per family member we divided into 4 groups according to the income distribution curve.

## II. SHORT OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN LITHUANIA

Before starting to analyse results of survey “Violence against women”, let us take a short overview of previous conducted surveys, which could inform us about the prevalence levels of violence against women.

First of all, our attention should be drawn to the International Crime Victim Survey in Lithuania conducted in 1997, by the Institute of Law and Market and Opinion Research Center “Vilmorus” (Institute of Law, 1997). Firstly, it should be noted that the aims of this survey did not include measurement of the prevalence levels of domestic violence. Secondly, the methodology of the questionnaire design caused leveling heaviness of crime: questions about heavy crimes (e.g., rape) were put at the same level as theft (however insignificant). In this case one can hardly expect openness from the respondents. Thirdly, the questionnaire was influenced by predominant stereotypes. For example, male respondents were not asked about sexual violence against themselves at all. Nevertheless, let us extract from the results of this survey information out of interest. The methodology did not allow for a broad picture of contact crime but enabled us to discover a high rate of contact violence during the last 5 years, and could serve as a basis for further analysis. The results of the survey are presented at the Table 1 (Institute of Law, 1997, P. 52).

Table 1

**Distribution by gender of victims of direct personal contact during the past 5 years, %**

<b>Type of victimization</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Personal theft	24.4	15.2
Robbery	3.7	5.9
Assault/threat	7.9	12.0
Sexual offence	3.7	-

N= 2191, 16 years and over, National representative survey

The results of the survey enable us to map out the scope of violence. Let us analyse the type of violence “assault/threat”. Taking into account that 1 % of adult women comprise 15,000 inhabitants we can roughly estimate that there are about 24,000 victims of such offences per year. But crime statistics (Women and Men in Lithuania, 1998) indicated only 6,728 women victims of crime in 1997 totally. This is clear evidence of a high underreporting rate.

But these results do not indicate the place of violence or the relationships of the victims with perpetrator, which is extremely important in the case of violence against women.

The survey “Women in Lithuanian Society” conducted by “Baltic Surveys” in 1994 (Purvanekienė, 1995) gives a broader picture of the place and the type of contact violence (Table 3).

Table 3

**Percentage of women and men who reported physical and sexual violence by the type of violence**

<b>Type of violence</b>	<b>Women, %</b>	<b>Men, %</b>
Badly beaten	33	62
- in their parental families	16	22
- in their marital families	18	3
Robbed	18	26
Attempted rape	20	3.6

N=1,500, 15 years and over, National representative survey

In this case, the respondents were questioned about their whole-life experiences, so the results should not coincide with the previous ones. But the main trends are the same: men are more exposed to physical violence. But here we see quite different picture when analysing experiences of women and men in their marital families. So, we can conclude that the main problem for women is domestic violence. In this respect, further research on relations between victim and perpetrator is needed. But before starting to discuss why, I would like to present the results of one more study.

The survey “Violence against Women and Children” was conducted by the Vilnius University Women’s Studies Centre in 1996 (Moterų studijų centras, 1997). The respondents were questioned about their whole-life experience as well. The survey was not representative, therefore, probably, percentage of women who reported violence was slightly higher than in other surveys, but it gave more interesting facts to consider. First of all, these results confirm the conclusion that women are mostly exposed to domestic violence. Secondly, they draw attention to other types of violence experienced by women. (Table 4).

Table 4

**Experiences of emotional, physical and sexual violence by women**

<b>Type of violence</b>	<b>Women, %</b>
Emotional	77.7
Physical	64.5
- by father	17.5
- by spouse	35.6
Sexual	23.7
Did not experience any type of violence	13.6

N=228, 18-65 years of age

The comparison of results from several studies reveal some reasons why violence against women is marginalised, why it is so difficult to persuade officials and the community that immediate and systematic measures to combat violence against women should be introduced. First of all, the general results of the surveys and crime statistics show those men experience physical violence more often. Therefore, the structure of violent incidents should be disclosed, as well as the relationship between a victim and perpetrator. Later on we will analyse the results of the survey, “Violence

against Women” which should disclose not only the prevalence levels of violence against women but also its structure and above mentioned relationships.

The results of the current survey will be compared to results from the national representative women victim surveys in other countries. It should be noted that there are very few surveys of such type. One of the most famous surveys was conducted in Canada in 1993 (Statistics Canada, 1996). Moreover, when designing the questionnaire we used the experience of the Canadians, but so did other authors. A similar survey was conducted in Finland in 1997 (Heiskanen, Piispa, 1998). Not all the questions in these three surveys were formulated identically, but we will try to compare results where possible.

### III. PREVALENCE LEVELS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Total results of experienced violence by women are presented at Table 5. They reflect violence by current spouse or partner, former spouse or partner, a friend, acquaintance or relative, and a stranger.

Table 5  
**Percentage of women who experienced men's violence after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday**

<b>Incident</b>	<b>Spouse/ partner</b>	<b>Former spouse/ Partner</b>	<b>Friend</b>	<b>Acquain tance/ relative</b>	<b>Stranger</b>
Threw anything that could hurt	11	8.4	8.2	1.8	0.8
Threatened to throw anything that could hurt	11	7.4	0.8	2.5	1.6
Pushed or grabbed in a way that hurt	19	12	3.5	5.8	4.6
Threatened to push or grab in a way that could hurt	11	7.8	1.2	3.3	2.3
Pulled hair with a view to hurt	9.3	6.7	0.9	1.2	1.1
Threatened to pull hair with a view to hurt	5.1	4.3	0.8	0.4	0.3
Slapped	19	12	1.7	4.1	2.0
Threatened to slap	17	9.1	1.5	4.5	2.9
Hit with his fist	12	9.9	0.7	2.5	0.8
Threatened to hit with his fist	10	6.8	0.8	1.6	1.3
Hit with something that could hurt	5.7	3.9	0.1	0.8	-
Threatened to hit with something that could hurt	5.2	3.8	0.6	1.1	0.6
Kicked	8.8	7.3	0.3	1.6	0.7
Threatened to kick	6.4	4.6	0.3	0.8	0.5
Choked	4.4	3.4	0.3	0.7	1.0
Threatened to choke	3.4	1.8	0.1	0.5	0.1
Used a weapon	0.4	0.8	0.3	0.2	0.2
Threatened with a weapon	0.9	0.9	0.6	0.4	0.2
Threatened to kill	5.6	6.3	0.5	0.6	1.8
Coerced to have sex when a women did not want to, by holding her down or hurting in some way	5.9	4.8	1.0	1.9	2.1
Coerced to have sex when a women did not want to, by threatening in some way (verbally or with a weapon)	3.9	4.0	0.5	1.0	1.7
<b>Totally</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>11</b>

Percentages presented in this table are counted out of the whole sample of women; not extracting married or divorced ones. Therefore these results could be used to discuss the total experience of violence. When analysing family violence, we will separately count the results for currently married or cohabiting and ever married or cohabited



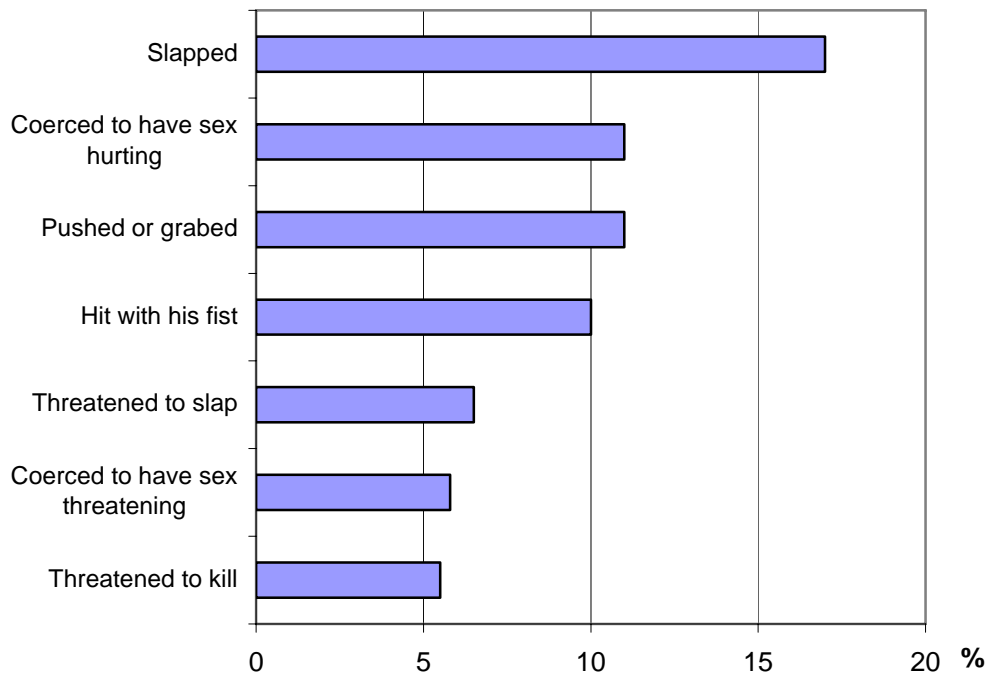
women. Also, in this table we present the results of sexual violence as incidents of rape. Attempted rape we regarded as sexual assault and will analyse this later on when describing sexual assault outside the family.

It should be highlighted that after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, 37.7% of women have never experienced violence from a male. Violence experienced by women at the hands of their spouse or partner was 30%, by a former spouse or partner - 18.3%, by a friend - 8.2%, by other acquaintances or relatives - 14.4%, and by a stranger - 11%. These results allow us to conclude the most dangerous places for women are their families and their closest environment. Leonora Jūrienė presents results of a criminological study (1998) which shows that in the cases of homicide, only 19% of victims were not acquainted with their murderers.

In analysing the result of Table 5, one can say that it is incorrect to summarise threatening behaviour and acts of violence altogether. However, a strong correlation does exist between threatening behaviours and incidents of violence. Namely, threats and throwing something that could hurt coincide in 65.7%, to push or grab in a way that hurt - 79.8%, to pull hair to hurt - 72%, to slap - 68.5%, to hit with a fist - 73.1%, to hit with something that could hurt - 63.5%, to kick - 84.4%, to choke - 70.6%, and to use weapon - 50%. Therefore, further on when discussing about violence against women we will presume that it includes threats.

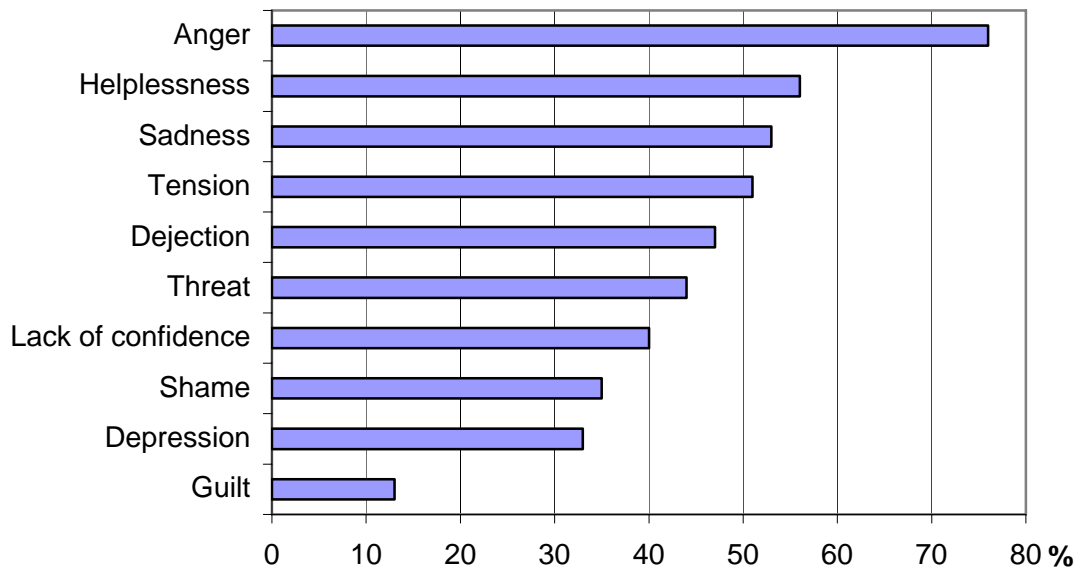
Let us now compare the total experience of violence with the similar studies from Canada and Finland (Statistics Canada, 1996; Heiskanen, Piispa, 1998). The design of questions did not differ essentially. The same incidents of violence were listed, but in other studies threatening was aggregated into one question. Therefore, comparison will not be precisely exact. In total, 63.3% of adult Lithuanian women experienced violence by men, whilst in Canada the figure was 51% and in Finland it was 40%. May be the separation on the questions of threatening behaviour increases the percentage in Lithuania a little bit, but anyway we can state that Lithuanian women experience a higher rate of violence than Finnish women. But violence by strangers the rates of incidences were higher for Canadian women experience than the Lithuanian women (in Lithuania - 11%, in Canada - 23%). Lithuanian women experienced violence by friends less frequently (in Lithuania - 8.2%, in Canada - 16%) and by acquaintances and relatives as well (in Lithuania - 14.4%, in Canada - 23%). In all these countries the greatest danger of violence to women comes from a spouse or a partner. But even from this total results we can make assumption that spouses and partners in Lithuania are more violent than in Finland and Canada. We will explore this aspect of comparisons in further analysis.

Let us now analyse the consequences of violence as experience by women. For this purpose we asked women to indicate an incident which affected them the most (Figure 1).



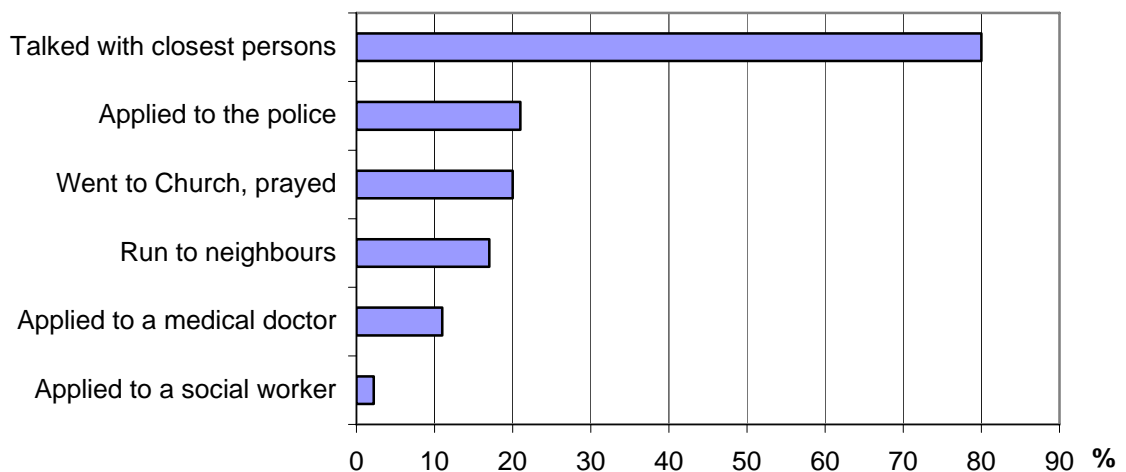
**Figure 1. Violent incident, which affected woman the most, %**

The respondents were also questioned how strongly this incident affected them. Thirty six percent of women reported that they were very strongly affected, 40% - strongly, 19% - something, and only 3.4% - were not affected at all. These results show that the majority of incidents have at lasting psychological consequences. Emotional feelings of victims after the incidents of violence are depicted in Figure 2.



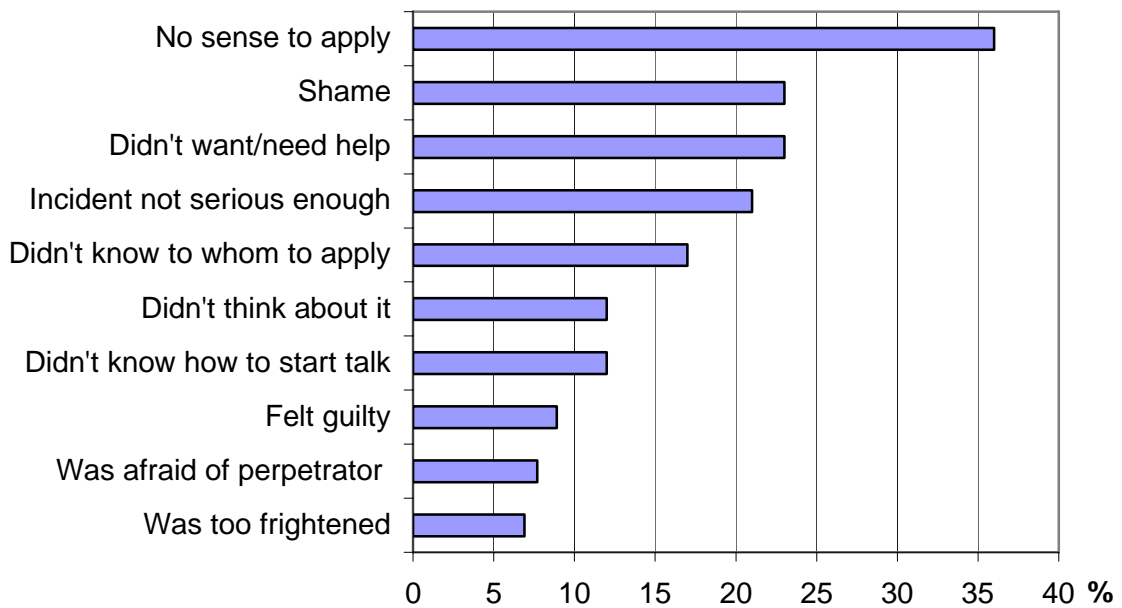
**Figure 2. The emotional consequences of the most serious incident, %**

After the incident, which affected women the most, the majority of victims, felt anger (76%). The most often following negative emotions: helplessness (56%), sadness (47%), dejection (47%), threat (44%), and lack of confidence (40%) which do not give them an incentive to change anything in their lives. Therefore, probably almost the half of victims (46%) did not inform anybody about their violent incident, including those closest to them. Among those women, who did inform somebody, the majority just talked with the person they consider the closest to them (Figure3).



**Figure 3. With whom did the woman speak about the most serious incident of violence, %**

Amongst the victims who reported the incidences of violence, 21% went to the police (i.e. 10.6% out of all victims). 11% reported and sought medical advice after their incidences of violence (5.7% of all victims). It should be noted that no victim went or sought help from any women’s refuge or advice centre, because at the time of the survey none existed. It is worth noting that not all women who asked for help or support received the appropriate supportive responses or help. Only 23% of those who had reported the incident of violence said the support was very helpful, and 41% reported that it helped somewhat. Victims who did not approach any agency were asked why not (Figure 4).



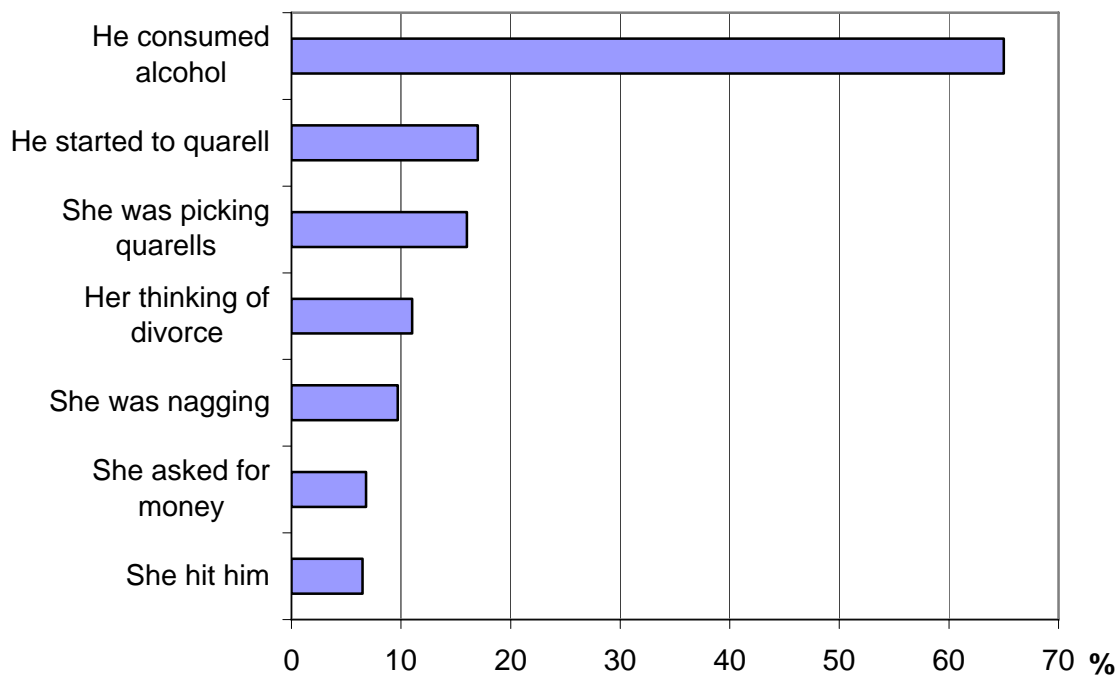
**Figure 4. Reasons why the women did not apply for help or support**

The most often quoted reason for not seeking help or support was there was, “no sense to apply” (36%). Shame was also very important factor preventing women from applying for help (second place, 23%). Not knowing to whom to apply or how to start to talk about it was also the reasons for not applying. It seems that establishment of centres for women’s support could fill in important gaps of assistance to victims of violence. This is confirmed by the fact that only 22% of victims who did not apply for any help (9.8% out of all victims) did not want or need any assistance. Here we can conclude that there is need for assistance to victims of violence, but the list of institutions able to provide such assistance is very short. It should also be noted that according to women’s responses they had no trust or faith in the existing institutions.

According to the victim’s reports to the police, Lithuanian women did not differ very much from Canadians or Finnish: 10.6% of victims in Lithuania reported the incidence of violence to the police, 12% in Finland, and 14.4% in Canada.

There are many people who are looking for circumstances that could justify the violence. In my opinion there are no reasons or circumstances to excuse violence.

Nevertheless, we have to analyse circumstances that could induce violent incidents. Concerning the most serious incident of male violence, 65% of the victims reported that the perpetrator was drunk (Figure 5). One can notice that circumstances of the violent incidents depicted in Figure 5 are more characteristics of family conflicts. But we should not forget that the majority of the violent incidences take place in families. Victims of violence sometimes report that male violence could be caused by their own behaviour. For example, in 6.5% of incidents, a woman was the first to slap a man. However, about two thirds of violent incidents are related to consumption of alcohol. Sometimes (4.5%) both the victim and perpetrator used alcohol. Drugs were involved in 0.2% of cases.



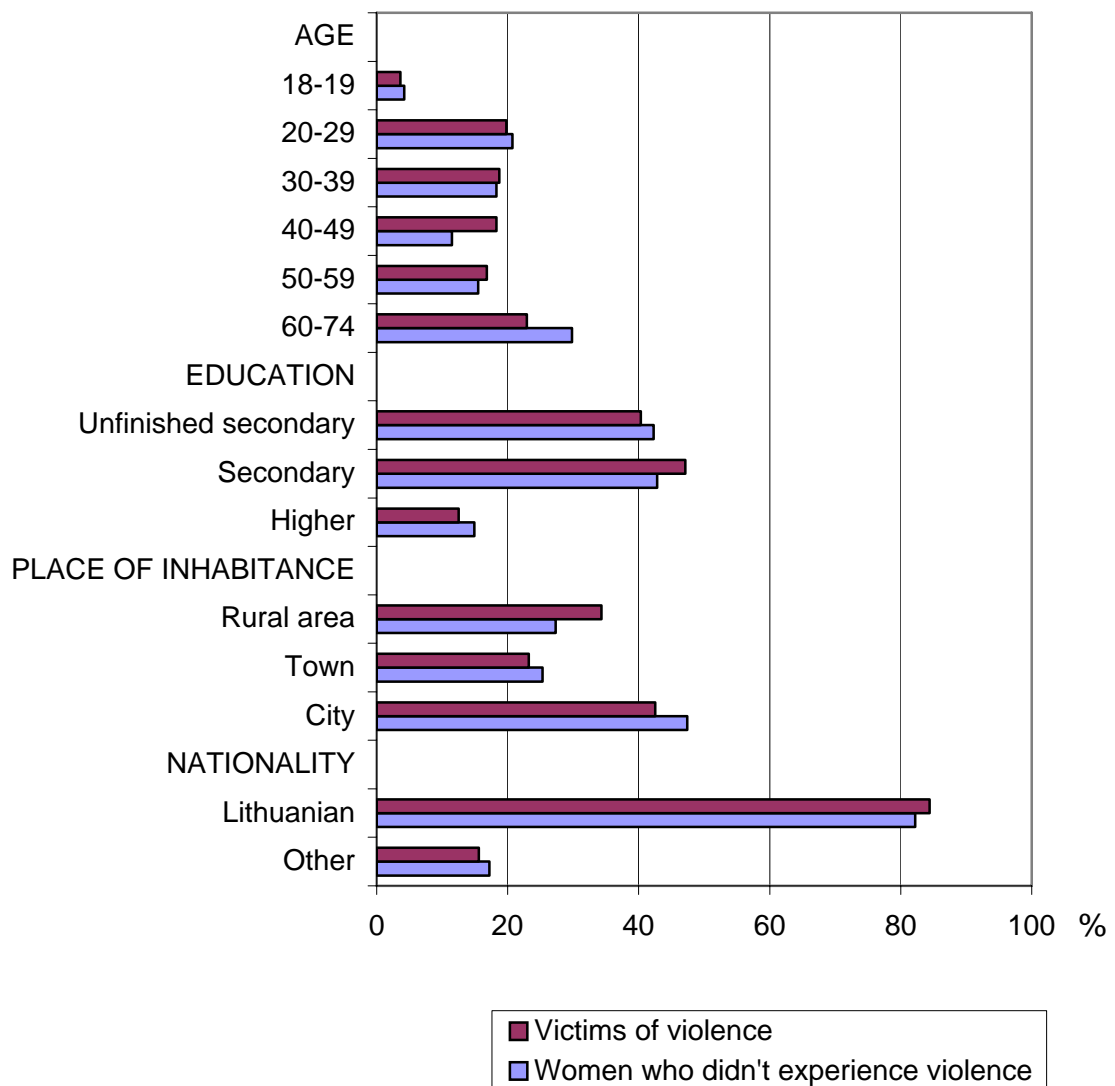
**Figure 5. Circumstances leading to the most serious violent incident**

What kind of women experience violence? Is the danger of violence connected with some specific kinds of women, or are they all equally endangered? Everyone knows that there are myths widely spread in the community that violent relations are characteristic features of the low educated groups in society, unemployed people, and mostly non-Lithuanians. So, first of all, let us consider the differences of the social-demographic characteristics of women who experienced violence, and who do not (Figures 6-7). One can note that there are no essential differences. Comparison of demography confirms that all these myths are senseless. All demographic characteristics do not differ significantly. We did not split other nationalities into separate ones, but it is evident that Lithuanian women experience violence slightly more often than women of other nationalities.

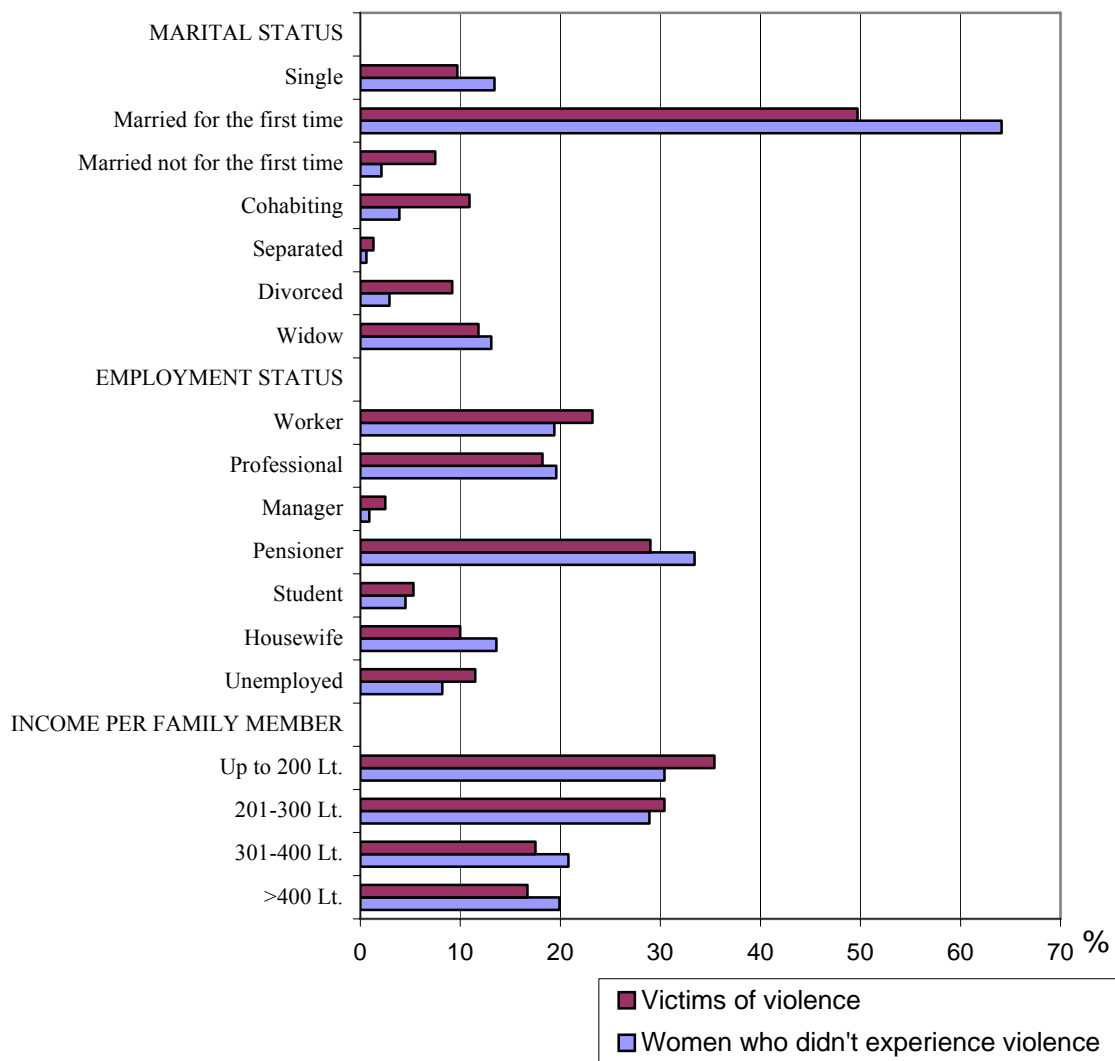
Marital status of victims of violence differs more from that of women who did not experience violence (Figure 7). Re-married, divorced and cohabiting women have greater experience of violence. But this only supports idea that violence is the major cause of divorce. Comparing employment status it could be concluded that violence

prevails slightly more often among women workers and unemployed. It prevails slightly more in less wealthy families too.

Some of social-demographic characteristics are interrelated, and we can not separate their influence. For example, women of the oldest group are mainly pensioners. Their education is the lowest too. In these groups of women the prevalence levels of violence is lower. Probably, their age influence this fact the most, but we can not state it for sure. If such preposition is made, that means that the prevalence levels of violence in Lithuanian community will continue to grow with time.



**Figure 6. Comparison of victims of violence and women who did not experience violence by age, education, place of inhabitation, and nationality, %**



**Figure 7. Comparison of characteristics of victims of violence and women who did not experience violence by marital status, employment status and income per family member, %**

Summarising the analysis of the total prevalence levels of male violence against women, we can make following conclusions:

1. 63.3 % of Lithuanian women have been victims of male physical, sexual violence or threats after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday;

2. Women experience violence mostly in their closest environment, and the most often by their spouse.

3. Psychological violence takes the form of threats and strongly correlates with violent incidents;

4. The majority of victims of violence feel strong psychological consequences.

5. The majority of victims of violence need assistance.

6. Only about one half of victims of violence applied for any assistance. And, the majority of them only talked to the person closest to them.

7. The main reasons, which prevent women for applying for assistance, are lack of confidence in support institutions and shame.

8. In total, 65% of perpetrators were drunk at the moment of the violent incident.

9. Demographic characteristics of victims of violence do not differ essentially from those of women who did not experience violence.

10. To make comparisons with the Canadian or Finnish experience of domestic violence, women in Lithuania experienced a higher incidence rate of violence totally, but outside of the family it was less.