

## Short Communication

# Estimate of physical violence against women in Brazil

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## ABSTRACT

Present paper is a comment about a study aimed to estimate the prevalence of physical violence against women in Brazil (Nakamura et al., 2021). By conducting a systematic review with meta-analysis of population representative studies held from 1999 to 2016 in the country, we found that one in five women in Brazil had been victims of physical violence at least once in their lives, and one in ten experienced physical violence in the previous year. Studies that ensured the privacy of the participants and used validated instruments and an adequate sample source had the highest prevalence, indicating a possible non-response bias in assessments that did not employ these measures.

**Key words:** Woman, Brazil, Prevalence, Violence

## INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is a serious global public health problem and is based on gender inequality. Different social, economic and political contexts generate different patterns of violence against women, which explains the higher prevalence found in less developed countries. Intimate partner violence over a lifetime reaches almost 40% in less developed countries, while in regions such as Central Asia and Southern Europe the prevalence is less than 20%. Factors such as education, living with a partner's family and not having decision-making power are associated with higher prevalence of violence against women [1-3]. Between 2010 and 2018 there was a growth of more than 90% in national surveys on violence against women. These data are consistent with global publications on the epidemiology of the phenomenon. However, surveys in more developed countries are more numerous, where the prevalence is relatively lower [4]. In less developed countries, as example Ethiopia, a recent of there

systematic review showed that more than 39% of women have suffered some form of physical violence at least once in their lifetime. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated estimates of violence against women in all countries that have adopted measures of social distancing, exposing women to living with the aggressor for longer than they used to be [5]. Some political government strategies may mitigate this violence against the women. Community mobilization gendered social norms interventions and economic empowerment, singly or combined, had some evidence of benefit. Particularly in Brazil, the Maria da Penha Law, enacted in 2006, integrated policies like women-only police stations, specialized courts and perpetrator programs. Despite this major advance, over 3,000 Brazilian women were murdered in 2019, and more than 30% of all violent deaths among women occurred within the home. The evidence about the prevalence of physical violence against women in Brazil is still scarce. To address this, we performed a systematic review of representative studies of physical violence against women in Brazil that we comment here this research methods and main findings [6-8].

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## DESCRIPTION

The protocol of the systematic review and meta-analysis was previously registered at the International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews, registration number CRD42019118293. Population-based studies with representative sampling method were searched in the MEDLINE, Embase, Scopus, and Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information Virtual Health Library (VHL/BIREME) databases up to March 2020. Studies that assessed outcomes based on single questions and those based on police and health facility records were not eligible. Two researchers independently selected studies, extracted data and assessed the studies' methodological quality and discrepancies were resolved by a third researcher [9]. The prevalence of physical violence with 95% Confidence Interval (CI) was estimated by means of meta-analysis by Freeman-Tukey double arcsine transformation weighted by the official size of the local population. Heterogeneity was estimated by  $I^2$  and investigated by meta-regression analyses [10-12] of the 3,408 records retrieved, 13 studies reported in 41 publications were included, totaling 25,781 women aged from 14 to 60 years. Most studies had limitations on sample size (5/13) and in the response rate (7/13). Physical violence was present in 22.4% of Brazilian women lifetime (95% CI [21.6, 23.2%];  $I^2=99.0\%$ ). In the last 12 months, 11.5% of women suffered some physical violence (95% CI [11.1, 11.9%];  $I^2=99.5\%$ ). Ensuring the individual's privacy during the interview, having an adequate sample source, and using a validated instrument are related to higher prevalence and

lower non-response bias, possibly because it allows access to sensitive outcomes with greater reliability and increases the accuracy of the measure [13-14]. Mild physical violence (16.3%; 95% CI [14.0, 18.7];  $I^2=99.4\%$ ) was more frequent than moderate (12.4%; 95% CI [10.7, 14.3];  $I^2=98.2\%$ ), which was more frequent than severe violence (11.9%; 95% CI [10.6, 13.3%];  $I^2=94.8\%$ ).

The studies included in this research were carried out in different contexts within the country and may explain the high heterogeneity found in the results. The Maria da Penha Law led to improve social change in Brazil regarding awareness on the violence against women. Along with encouragement of violence promoted by policies like less gun control, austerity measures in course in Brazil since the controversial removal of an elected president reduced welfare state policies and are expected to worse health outcomes resulting from violence in the future [15].

## CONCLUSION

One in five Brazilian women suffered physical violence at some point in their lives, and over 10% suffered this violence in the previous year of assessment. Since findings were potentially affected by outcomes' measurement, further research should ensure the participant's privacy and use validated instruments. Violence against women remains a wound in Brazilian society and highlights the urgent need to promote gender equity and repairing its major historical debts—genocide of indigenous peoples, slavery and dictatorship—to reconcile the society toward a developed nation for its entire people.

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