



## Regional Study on Violence and Women living with HIV in Latin America

### Polyvictimisation, violence and women living with HIV in Latin America

The regional study on violence and women living with HIV in Latin America shows that the violence experienced by women living with HIV throughout their lives and in different locations is generalised, recurrent and concurrent. High levels of polyvictimisation – experiencing different forms of violence at the same time, or at different life stages – intertwine with HIV-related stigma and precarious living conditions, and this has an impact on the risk of violence, consequences of violence and ways to address violence.

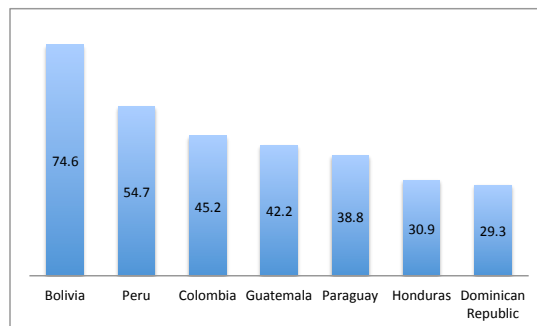
#### Childhood violence

384 women reported at least one episode of sexual violence by someone other than a partner throughout their lives. 56% of these women had such an experience before they were 15 years old.

In 2018, ICW Latina and Hivos carried out a regional study on violence and women living with HIV in Latin America developed by Development Connections and Salamander Trust with, by and for women living with HIV from seven countries in the region. The research focused particularly on including young women, Indigenous women, Afrodescendent women and Garifuna women. National research teams obtained information from surveys of 955 women and focus groups with 64 women from 19 locations in Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru and Dominican Republic, from a range of socio-demographic, economic and cultural backgrounds.

Studies show that children who witness violence towards their mother by their father (or vice versa) can have psychological and emotional problems and adverse consequences for their development in the long term, including depression, trauma-related symptoms and, in women, low self-esteem. These problems can increase or decrease depending on whether the boy or girl also experiences physical abuse, their age, sex, duration of exposure to violence, how the child perceives their relationship to adults in the family, and how much family support they get.<sup>1,2</sup>

#### Women reporting that their father/step-father hit their mother/step-mother, by country (%) n=914

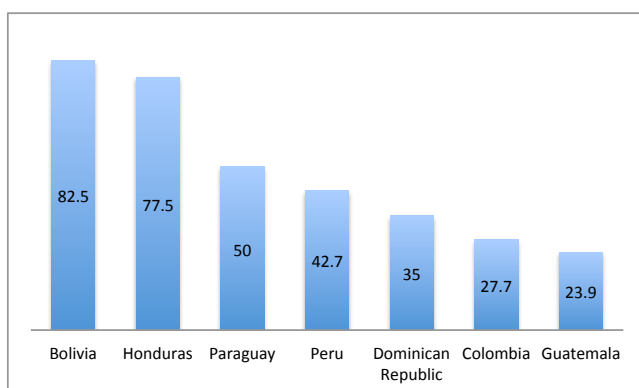


<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey L. Edleson (1999). Problems Associated with Children’s Witnessing of Domestic Violence. National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. Harrisburg, PA, USA. <https://vawnet.org/material/problems-associated-childrens-witnessing-domestic-violence>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2017). Effects of domestic violence on children. USA

45.5% of women reported that their father/step-father was ever physically violent to their mother/step-mother. Three countries recorded levels which were similar to or higher than the average: Bolivia (74.6%), Perú (54.7%), y Colombia (45.2%).

### Women reporting physical violence after the age of 15 by any person other than an intimate partner

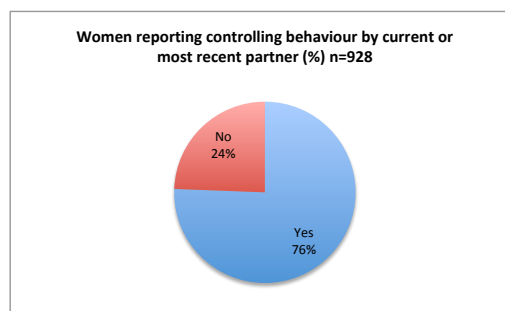


Almost half the women (49%) reported ever having experienced any type of physical violence from anyone other than an intimate partner, ranging from 82.5% in Bolivia and 23.9% in Guatemala.

### Intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence is any behaviour in an intimate relationship which causes or could cause physical, psychological or sexual harm to any partner in the relationship.<sup>3</sup> This includes acts of physical, sexual and emotional violence, as well as controlling behaviour, by a current or former partner.

75.6% of survey participants reported experiencing controlling behaviour by a current or most recent partner. This was most often related to preventing contact or communication with other people (between 39% and 52.3%), suspecting the partner of unfaithfulness, and controlling physical appearance. In the four types of violence analysed, Bolivia had the highest rates and Honduras had the lowest, as follows:



- Insisting on knowing where she is at all times: 74.6% and 29.1%
- Getting angry if she speaks to other men/people: 75.4% and 25.6%
- Checking her mobile phone: 62.7% and 15.7%
- Often suspecting her of unfaithfulness: 58.6% and 14.2%

<sup>3</sup> Organización Panamericana de la Salud. Comprender y abordar la violencia contra las mujeres. Violencia infligida por la pareja. Washington, DC OPS, 2013.

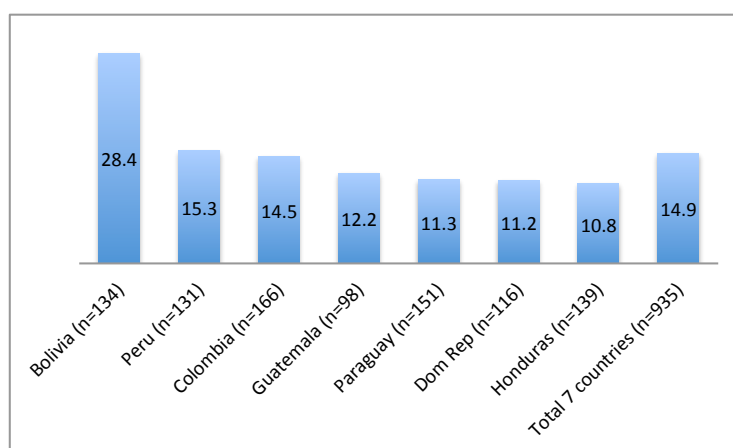
[http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/98816/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.36\\_spa.pdf;sequence=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/98816/WHO_RHR_12.36_spa.pdf;sequence=1)

## Prevalence of physical, sexual and emotional violence by an intimate partner in the last 12 months and ever, among women who have ever had a partner, by country (%) n=935

Partner violence		Bolivia	Colombia	Guatemala	Honduras	Paraguay	Peru	Dom Rep	Total 7 countries
Ever	Emotional	83.6	59.0	44.9	30.2	76.8	79.4	71.5	64.2
	Physical	81.3	56.6	36.7	23.0	56.9	74.8	55	55.5
	Sexual	79.0	51.8	32.6	24.5	80.0	56.5	53.4	55.1
	Physical and sexual	73.0	44.6	23.5	13.7	51.7	53.4	41.4	55.0
Last 12 months	Emotional	51.5	28.3	39.8	24.5	49.0	35.9	30.2	36.9
	Physical	39.5	19.3	20.4	18.0	30.5	21.4	19	24.8
	Sexual	42.5	19.9	14.3	21.0	48.3	22.0	23.3	28.1
	Physical and sexual	35.8	14.5	6.1	11.5	29.0	16.0	12.0	18.5

In all countries there was a higher prevalence of emotional violence compared to physical and sexual violence in the last 12 months and ever. Lifetime emotional violence ranged from 83.6% in Bolivia to 30.2% in Honduras, and in the last year from 51.5% to 24.5% in the same countries. The prevalence of lifetime physical and sexual violence ranged from 73% in Bolivia to 13.7% in Honduras, and in the last year from 35.8% in Bolivia to 6.1% in Guatemala.

### Severity of physical violence by an intimate partner: Prevalence of severe physical violence in the last 12 months, by country and total (%)



Severe violence: If the participant answered yes to one or more of the following questions: Has your partner: c) hit you with a fist or something else which could injure you d) kicked you, dragged you or beaten you e) strangled or burnt you on purpose f) threatened you with a gun, knife or another weapon or used any of these weapons against you. Taken from the WHO Multicountry study on women's health and domestic violence (2005).

14.9% of women experienced severe violence in the last year, with the highest levels in Bolivia (28.4%), Peru (15.3%) and Colombia (14.5%).

**Age:** Physical, sexual and emotional violence by an intimate partner in the last year was much more common among women aged 19-29 than other age groups. Four in ten women living with HIV aged 19-29 reported at least one experience of sexual violence from an intimate partner in the last year.

**Ethnicity:** Indigenous women reported more experiences of all forms of intimate partner violence, with 40% of Indigenous women reporting sexual violence and 38% physical violence (four in ten Indigenous women).

## Violence in the family, community and services

Exposure to different forms of family (non-partner), community and collective violence can have a significant impact on the lives of women living with HIV, and in the way they think, feel and act on a daily basis. These forms of violence can also affect women's decisions to use community support networks and services, perceptions of personal safety, and general quality of life. These forms of violence can vary significantly depending on context, circumstances and characteristics such as armed conflict, organised crime, political crisis, urban and rural areas, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, etc.<sup>4, 5, 6, 7</sup>

### Prevalence of violence by site, type, country and total (%)

Type of violence	Bolivia	Colombia	Guatemala	Honduras	Paraguay	Peru	Dom Rep	Total
<b>Community</b>								
Has been excluded from meetings or social activities	16.7	10.6	2.0	6.3	22.2	6.9	7.8	10.9
Has been excluded from religious activities or places of worship	2.2	2.9	1.0	2.8	9.8	1.5	5.2	3.8
<b>Family (non-partner)</b>								
Family member insulted, spoke down to, manipulated, humiliated and/or threatened you	50.0	32.0	7.8	8.5	26.3	25.2	22.4	25.5
Family member has taken away money, property, goods or withheld inheritance	20.3	18.1	4.9	4.2	17.8	8.4	10.3	12.6
Excluded from family activities	29.0	26.7	2.9	4.2	32.9	7.6	13.8	17.9
<b>Housing</b>								
Has been forced to change place of residence, or has been unable to rent a place to live	23.2	12.4	9.8	4.9	23.0	4.6	9.5	12.8
<b>Work</b>								
Has lost a job or source of income	18.1	10.5	4.0	4.3	9.0	6.1	15.7	9.8
Had a job description or job changed, or been moved to a different role, or denied promotion	15.9	6.5	2.0	1.4	4.8	1.5	13.2	6.5
Not applied for a job because of HIV status	32.6	23.4	2.0	8.5	9.4	6.9	37.4	17.5
<b>Education</b>								
Has been rejected, expelled or prevented from attending an educational institution	3.6	4.1	2.9	0.0	0.8	3.1	2.6	2.5
Son/daughter has been rejected, expelled or prevented from attending an educational institution	2.9	3.5	3.9	0.7	3.1	2.3	4.3	2.9
<b>Health services</b>								
Been denied health services because of HIV status	24.8	29.0	3.9	0.7	16.9	12.2	10.3	14.9

<sup>4</sup> American Psychological Association (2018). Violence and Socioeconomic Status. Washington DC.

<https://apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/violence.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> CIDH/OAS. Violence and discrimination against women in the armed conflict in Colombia. Washington DC.

<http://cidh.oas.org/women/Colombia06eng/part3co.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Tali Cassidy et al. A systematic review of the effects of poverty deconcentration and urban upgrading on youth violence. Health & Place. Volume 26, March 2014, Pages 78-87. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1353829213001731>

<sup>7</sup> Susann Feuerschütz and Jennifer Erin Salahub (2013). Gender and Urban (In)Security in Fragile States. The North-South Institute. <http://www.nsi-ins.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/2013-Gender-and-Urban-InSecurity-in-Fragile-States.pdf>

## Denial of sexual and reproductive health services because of HIV status, by type, by country, and total (%)

Type of service	Bolivia	Colombia	Guatemala	Honduras	Paraguay	Peru	Dom Rep	Total
Contraceptives n=83	37.6	30.5	100	0	28.6	28.6	0	34.6
Counselling n=40	17.2	14	8.3	50	16.7	14.3	28.6	16.9
Sexual health information n=136	72	43.1	8.3	0	64.6	85.7	0	57.1
Breast cancer n=116	86	52.5	25	0	2	7.1	0	48.5
Cervical cancer n=116	68.8	58.3	25	16.7	16.7	21.4	28.6	48.3
Hormone replacement n=104	64.5	60	8.3	0	14.6	0	0	43.3
Menopause n=111	65.6	70	25	16.7	6.3	7.1	0	46.3
Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) n=124	68.8	60	16.7	50	31.3	14.3	28.6	51.7
Assisted conception n=102	62.4	60	0	0	4.2	35.7	14.3	42.5
Pleasurable and safe sex n=127	87.1	59.3	0	33.3	8.3	35.7	0	53.1

Half or more of the women surveyed reported that they have been denied information on sexual health (57.1%), pleasurable and safe sex (53.1%) and human papilloma virus or HPV (51.7%). Furthermore, 48% said they had been denied cervical cancer and breast cancer services. Among the women, 35% reported having been denied contraceptives, reaching 100% of the women interviewed in Guatemala, followed by 37.6% in Bolivia, 30.5% in Colombia and 28.6% in Paraguay and Peru.

### Percentage of women who have ever been pregnant and ever felt coerced by a health professional into abortion, sterilisation, or decisions made by the health professional and their partner

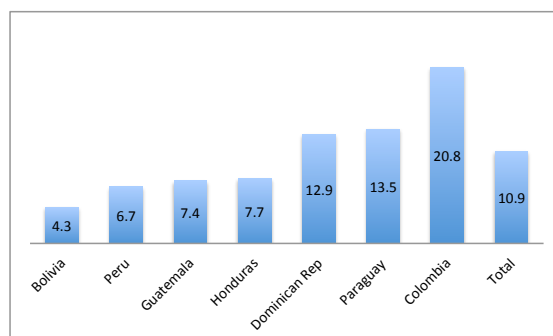
Country	Ever pregnant n=861	Total number of women ever coerced n=178		
		Abortion	Sterilisation	Health professional decided with their partner about abortion and/or sterilisation
Bolivia	29.9	40.0	94.3	45.7
Colombia	29.7	43.5	69.6	32.6
Guatemala	21.7	40.0	90.0	65.0
Honduras	8.8	33.3	75	41.7
Paraguay	15.4	21.1	94.7	31.6
Dominican Republic	8.1	0	100.00	66.7
Total	20.7	32.0	86.5	38.8

Among the total number of women who have ever been pregnant (n=861), 20.7% (n=178) reported having ever felt coerced by a health professional to undergo abortion or sterilisation, with this being more frequently reported in Bolivia (29.9%), Colombia (29.7%) and Peru (29.1%). Among the total number of women reporting coercion (n=178), coerced sterilisation was reported more frequently (86.5%), and abortion less frequently (32%). In 38.8% of cases, the health professional made the decision with the partner of the woman.

## Violence associated with women's human rights activism

Attacks, repressive actions, intimidation, threats, criminalisation and judicialization, restrictions on freedom of movement and expression, and even assassination of human rights defenders have been documented in various countries across Latin America.<sup>8,9</sup>

### Percentage of women who have ever been assaulted, threatened or physically attacked for being an women's rights activist or human rights defender n=293



Colombia and Paraguay had the highest proportion of women reporting this form of violence, with 20.8% and 13.5% respectively, followed by Dominican Republic (12.9%) and Honduras (7.7%).

<sup>8</sup> OXFAM (2016). El riesgo de defender. Reino Unido. [https://d1holjzgzk5247a.cloudfront.net/peru.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file\\_attachments/El%20Riesgo%20de%20Defender\\_1.pdf](https://d1holjzgzk5247a.cloudfront.net/peru.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/El%20Riesgo%20de%20Defender_1.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Romero, Axela. El trabajo de la Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos en el Triángulo Norte. Presentación en el taller de trabajo "Hacia una estrategia regional conjunta para proteger a las mujeres y a las niñas de violencia en el Triángulo Norte" realizado los días 30 de noviembre y 1 de diciembre de 2015. Panamá

Source: Luciano, D., Negrete, M., Vázquez, M., Hale, F., Salas, J., Álvarez-Rudin, M., Arends, M., Cano, A., Iacono, M., Sánchez, M., Cabezas, M., Chete, B., Flores, G., García, F., Herreira, M., López, L., Ramírez, B., Soto, M. (2019) Regional Study on Violence and Women living with HIV in Latin America. ICW Latina, Hivos, Development Connections, Salamander Trust. Managua, Nicaragua. December 2019.

ICW Latina <http://icwlatina.org>

Hivos: <https://america-latina.hivos.org>

Development Connections <http://www.dvcn.org>

Salamander Trust <https://salamandertrust.net>

This material is published with the financial support of UNAIDS.

Translation by Fiona Hale

