

Sex Workers' Experience with Violence in La Romana, Dominican Republic

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A pilot study examining the prevalence and types of violence experienced by Dominican female sex workers compared to Venezuelan female sex workers in La Romana, Dominican Republic in 2019

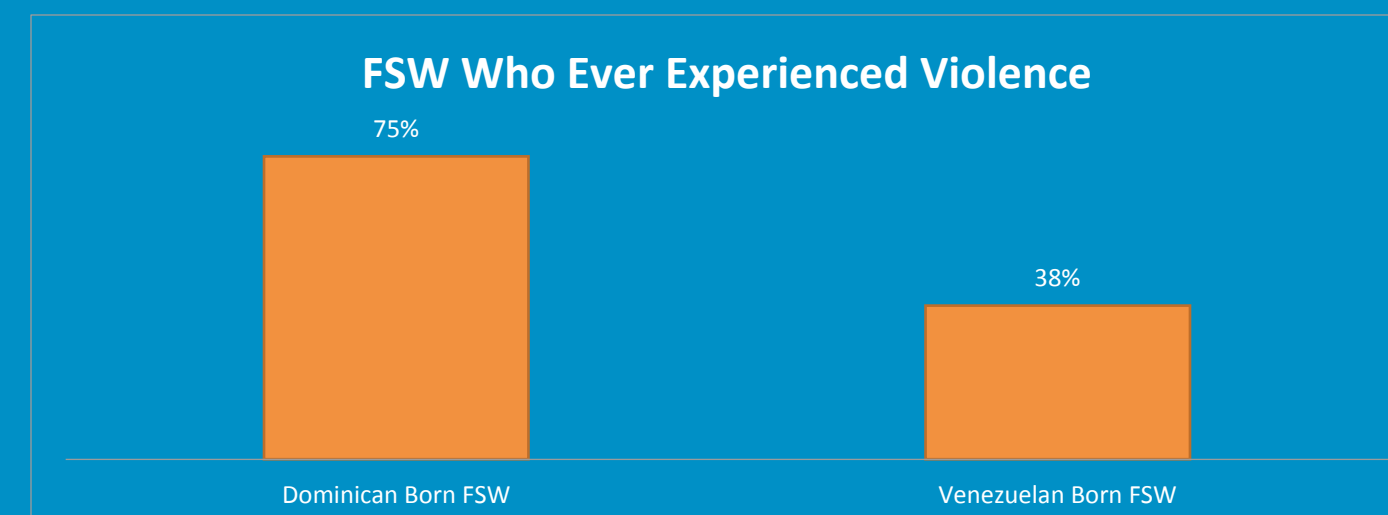
BACKGROUND

There is a high burden of workplace and intimate partner violence against female sex workers (FSW) around the world. Violence against FSWs has not been widely studied in the Dominican Republic (DR) or in the Caribbean. Due to years of economic collapse, Venezuelan women are migrating to the DR and engaging in transactional sex work. This pilot study sought to assess the prevalence of violence among Dominican FSW and Venezuelan immigrant FSW in La Romana in 2019.

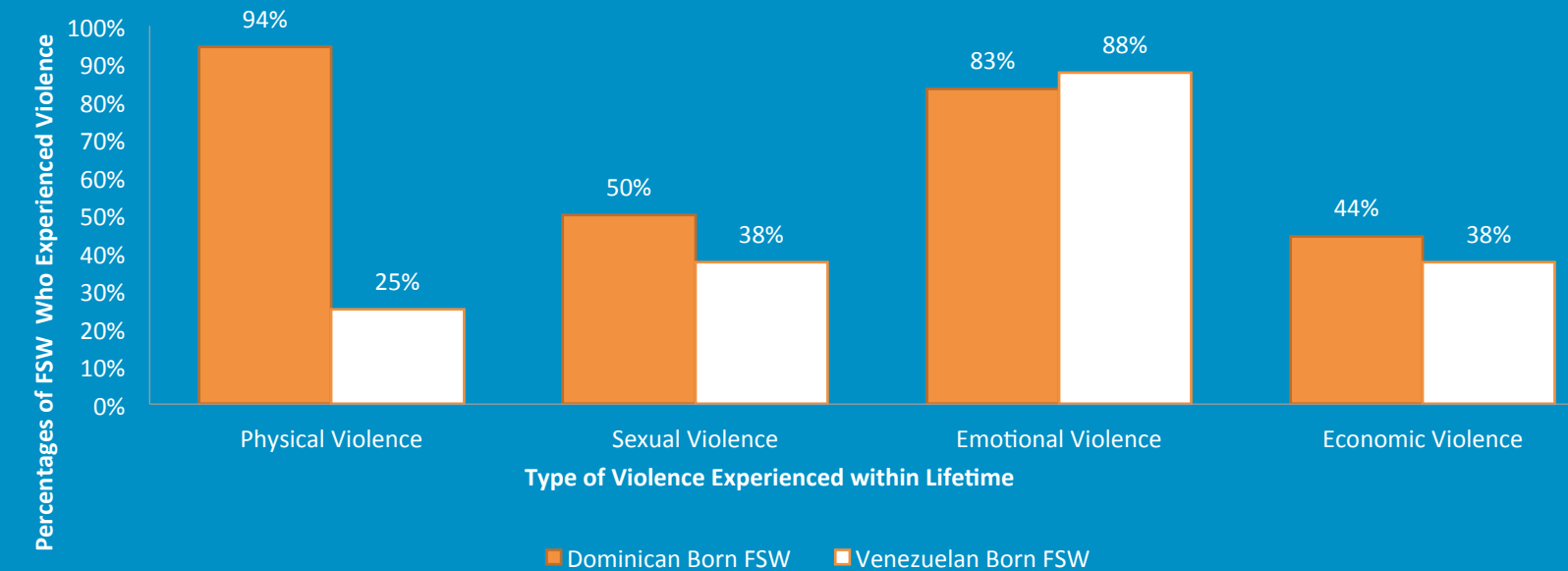
DESCRIPTION OF ORGANIZATION

Clinica de la Familia La Romana (CFLR) is a community based organization that aims to improve community health through provision of comprehensive health care services, education, and research. Programs reach families as well as a wide breadth of vulnerable populations, like sex workers and children living with HIV. Programa de la Mujer is an impactful program that has been improving women's health outcomes, including those of sex workers, since 1990. Through the program, sex workers receive vital clinical services as well as education on prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. Staff also conduct outreach to sex workers at their place of work to promote safer sex practices.

TABLES



Type of Abuse Recorded by FSW Who Experienced Violence in Lifetime



METHODS

A cross-sectional pilot study, conducted by Clinica de la Familia La Romana (CFLR), sought to assess the prevalence of violence among FSWs in La Romana in 2019. 45 FSW were recruited through Programa de la Mujer. Inclusion criteria were individuals who identified as female, aged 18 or older, and who had exchanged a sexual act for money within the past year.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sample consisted of 45 FSW: 24 (53.3%) were Dominican and 21 (46.7%) were Venezuelan, with a total mean age of 25 years. Over half (64.4%) of FSW had a monthly income of under \$300 USD and 86.7% performed sex work in bars/clubs. Sixty-seven percent of Venezuelan FSW held advanced degrees compared with 8.3% of Dominican FSW. Fifty-eight percent of respondents experienced violence in their lifetime, but 75% of Dominican FSW reported violence compared with 38.1% of Venezuelan FSW. More Dominican FSW reported physical (94.4%) and sexual (50%) violence compared to Venezuelan FSW (25%, 37.5% respectively); prevalence of emotional violence was similarly high for both groups (83.3%, 87.5% respectively).

The pilot study indicates the need to further study FSW and their experiences with violence, and reasons for the differences in reported violence found between Dominican FSW and Venezuelan FSW. It is recommendable that futures studies increase sample size for greater statistical significance. This may assist in the design and implementation of interventions aimed at violence prevention.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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