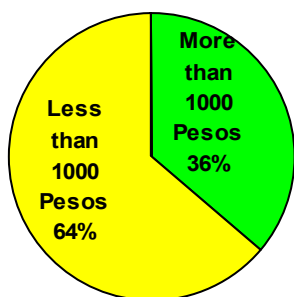
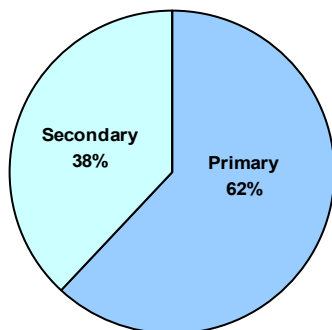


Weekly Income



Education



Birthplace

VIOLENCE AT THE BORDER: Gender, Fear and Everyday Life

Research Summary

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In Collaboration with the Federación Mexicana de Asociaciones Privadas/FEMAP and Salud y Desarrollo Comunitario de Ciudad Juárez/SADEC.

Ciudad Juárez, home to approximately 1.5 million residents, is a growing city of many images: a large industrial sector of underpaid workers; a gateway for drug trafficking and lawlessness. The city is famous world-wide for the hundreds of women and girls killed (female homicide, “femicide”) over the last decade. Approximately a third of these deaths involve serial murderers who raped and mutilated women before killing them. Femicide has perhaps muted attention to domestic violence and domestic-violence homicide, a gruesome and terrifying “normalized” part of everyday life found not only in Cd. Juárez but in all countries around the world.

Key Questions

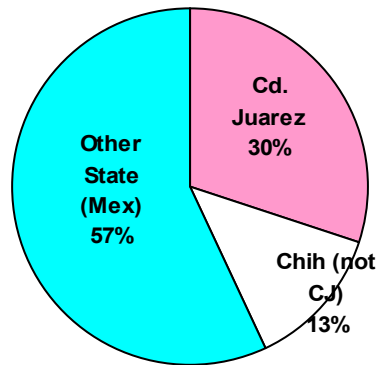
Many studies, both academic and governmental, show that domestic violence—illegal in most countries—is a serious problem, damaging victims, both physical and psychological; their children who observe (and sometimes reproduce violence in adulthood); and economic productivity due to days lost from earning. While studies in Mexico document extensive physical violence, figures are reported at the state and national rather than municipal levels. The current research was undertaken in 2004-2005 in the municipality of Cd. Juárez to answer the following questions:

*How common is domestic violence among a representative group of women, aged 15-39? Among survivors, which women are at greatest risk?

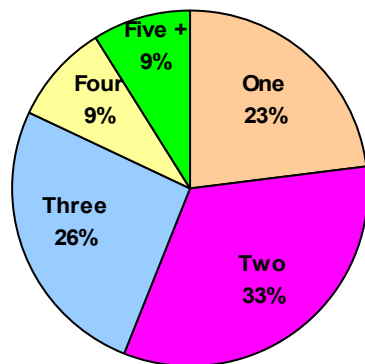
*What are women's attitudes about and strategies to address domestic violence?

*How effective are workshops as a space for women to discuss domestic violence and to affect their attitudes and awareness?

*What should be done to reduce or end domestic violence?



Number of Rooms

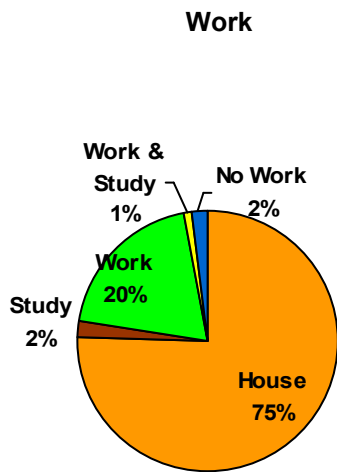


Women in the Representative Sample: Living Conditions, Assets, and Fearfulness

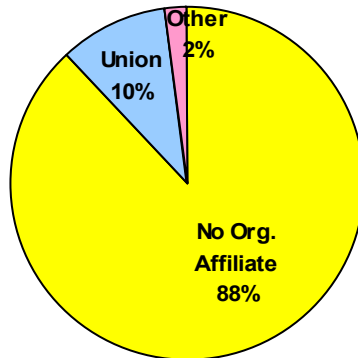
FEMAP/SADEC recruited a cross-section of 404 women aged 15-39 from different neighborhoods of Cd. Juárez. Their education and income levels matched women aged 15-39 in the 2000 Census. More women with high incomes and at younger ages (from several *preparatorias*) were also recruited for a total sample of 615. The pie charts show characteristics of the 404 women: their education and weekly income (in pesos; ~10=US\$1); their birthplace, marital status and housing conditions; their work and organizational affiliations; and their perceptions of security, fear, and sadness.

Many women are living in poverty-level economic conditions, lacking educational credentials, but dedicated to their homes. They are fearful in neighborhoods and streets, and sad to the point of depression and suicidal thoughts. As shown in the graphics, approximately two thirds achieved *primaria* education or less and live in households where earnings are less than 1,000 pesos weekly; 56% live in houses with 1-2 rooms. A majority of women were born outside of Cd. Juárez and Chihuahua. Most women are living with partners, married or in free unions. In a question about work, three-fourths of women report that they are 'dedicated to the home' (~housewives); however, some may be generating earnings informally.

Half of women report security in their *colonias*, but a compromised security involving police patrols. (NOTE: 70% of women reported that they do NOT trust the police, and only 20% of physically abused women denounce the crime to



Civic Capacity



authorities.) Most women report some fearfulness in their neighborhoods and streets. Not only do many women express sadness, but slightly more than half report that sadness affects their daily activities; 13% have thought about taking their lives in the last year.

Incidence of Domestic Violence: 27% hit; 12% raped

The research contained questions about different kinds of violence: psychological, verbal, physical, and sexual. The focus, however, was on physical and sexual violence.

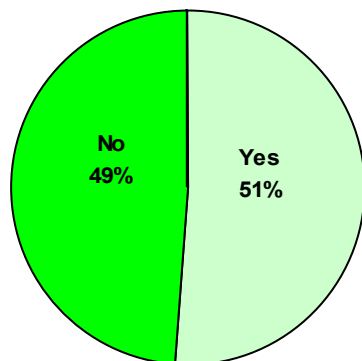
Among women with partners, 27% reported that they had been hit or hit during a discussion. Given the painfulness of acknowledging domestic violence, women may underreport the crime. In further examination of this group, approximately two-fifths experience continuous violence in the last year or month. To the extent that this sample represents women aged 15-39 in Cd. Juárez, the number of partnered women who are physically abused would total more than 70,000.

On forced sex, 12% of women reported rape. More than half of those women indicated that boyfriends or partners forced sex. To the extent that this sample represents women aged 15-39 in Cd. Juárez, approximately 26,000 women have undergone this experience.

Victims or Survivors? Women at Risk

Domestic violence cuts across economic and educational lines, but the survivors of domestic violence live in precarious economic circumstances. They lack the educational credentials to leave abusive relationships and support themselves and their children economically. Abused women are more likely to be migrants, without the social structure necessary to leave relationships. Abused women also experience psychological and verbal violence at high rates, with partners threatening and humiliating them. Multiple forms of violence undermine

Colonia Security



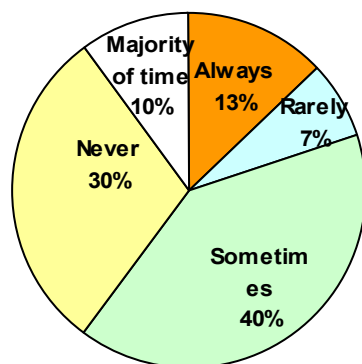
women's self-value and diminish their wherewithal to leave dangerous circumstances.

When asked about strategies they use to respond to violence, survivors responded with various responses. Some use passive-aggressive techniques or return the attack, but most remain in dangerous relationships, suffering in silence. Few denounce the abuser (only 20%), and fewer yet seek help from counseling centers or shelters. Not enough shelters and counseling centers are available in Cd. Juárez.

Women's Voices: Workshops

FEMAP/SADEC offered a remarkable set of capacity-building workshops (*talleres de capacitacion*) over six hours to half of the women sampled. At the workshops, women discussed the causes and consequences of violence and advocated comprehensive solutions to the problem.

Fear in Colonia

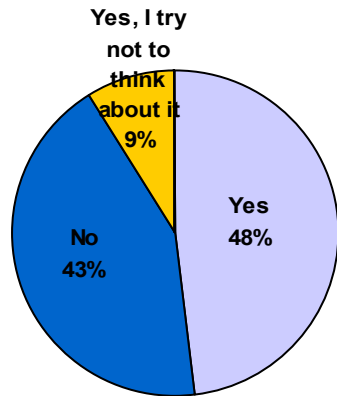


At the workshops, small groups of women prepared 'homework' in the form of posters presented to their groups. The forty posters women prepared show creativity and perceptiveness about their community and households. In analyzing the themes women used, the most common was that women were devalued and disrespected. The second most common theme involved government gaps in services, impunity, and corruption. Closely linked to that was the third most common theme: drugs and drunkenness. Other important themes included poverty, the economy, and lack of solidarity among neighbors. Women were not silent about abuse in workshops.

Women's Awareness: Extensive!

Women answered surveys before and after the workshops, focused especially on 12 questions. Each received a brochure about domestic violence counseling centers and shelters. Compared to women who did not attend workshops, workshop participants changed their attitudes and awareness in 6 of

Depression



the 12 questions, in statistical terms, not by chance alone. One of the biggest changes involved women’s knowledge about counseling centers.

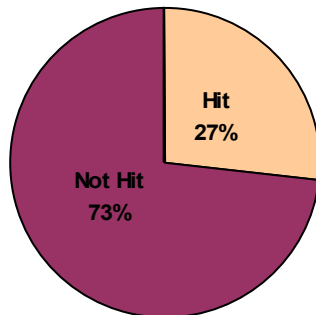
As the workshops began, women displayed widespread awareness that domestic violence was illegal and a reluctance to excuse abusers who are drunk, promise to reform, or blame women for alleged misbehavior. (See bar graph at end with all 615 women’s responses.) Despite these attitudes, substantial numbers of women are abused, living in an economy without resources to escape abuse and in a city without justice and responsiveness to victims and survivors.

Recommendations

*Publicize the damages of domestic violence assault and homicide to both men and women in order to protect potential victims and to shame and deter abusers.

*Publicize the damages of violence against children.

Physical Violence



*Professionalize police officers and Ministerio Público (investigations) staff, making the process clear and transparent. Publish annual reports of the number of domestic violence complaints and convictions, by gender.

*Train police officers on domestic violence. Build a police force worthy of respect and trust. Develop an internal complaint procedure, with civilian oversight, to remove and penalize officers for corruption, harassment, and sexual assault.

*Hold batterers accountable for their crimes through fines, jail, and workshops for batterer where they learn accountability change abusive behavior.

*Provide public financial support for many more shelters and counseling centers.

*Replicate workshops like those offered in this research project, unhindered with the complexities of research, for longer periods of time.

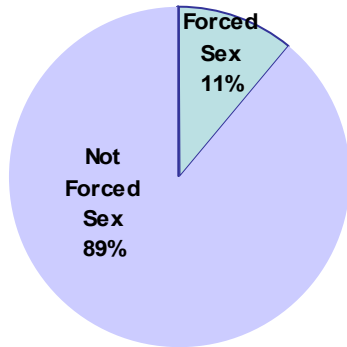
Rape

*Emphasize problems of power and control in families to both boys and girls in schools.

*Train health workers, including *promotoras*, to identify domestic violence and promote early intervention to reduce crimes.

*Build social capital and civic capacity among women, who hunger for social solidarity, at neighborhood, regional, and municipal levels.

*Increase the minimum wage to a living wage (3x the current minimum wage).



**Thanks to the many who have helped me: Graciela de la Rosa, Adriana Pena, and Enrique Suárez (FEMAP/SADEC), Vanessa Johnson (FEMAP Foundation), Center for Border Health Research, and Laura Andujo, Charles Boehmer, Carla Cardoza, Irasema Coronado, Gabriel Escandón, Lorena Jiménez, Guillermo Martínez, Iris Morales, Elsa Ontiveros, Roberto Pérez-Díaz, Azuri Ruiz, Amanda Vásquez.

Women's Awareness of Violence in Cd. Juarez Alerta para Mujeres de la Violencia en Cd. Juarez



