


## NOTIFICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PERNAMBUCO BETWEEN 2009 AND 2022

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### ABSTRACT

Introduction: Gender violence is a contemporary agenda in the world, and society has brought to the debate issues such as machismo, domestic violence, and femicide. The objective of this study is to describe the occurrence and characteristics of violence against women reported in the State of Pernambuco. Methods: Public data from the Notifiable Diseases Information System (SINAN/DATASUS) regarding physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, and financial violence in the state from 2009 to 2022 were analyzed, as well as the sociodemographic profile of the victim, place of occurrence of the violence, and its perpetrators. Results: The largest number of notifications of violence against women is of the type of physical violence by an intimate partner and occurred in the victim's own home in women over 14 years of age. A higher frequency of sexual violence was also observed in girls between 10 and 14 years old, and there was a reduction in the number of notifications in the first year of the pandemic (2020). Conclusions: The women who were victims of violence in Pernambuco in the period analyzed are often black, have a low level of education, and are between 20 and 50 years old. It is believed that underreporting was aggravated during the pandemic.

**Keywords:** Gender Violence. COVID-19. Women's Health. Epidemiology.

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## INTRODUCTION

Violence against women can be defined as the establishment of a relationship of subordination, dependence, and fear using intimidatory means, whether of physical origin, through aggression, or of symbolic origin, through manipulations to dominate the victim's body and mind<sup>1</sup>. The World Health Organization, in a survey conducted in 2021, observed that one in three women in the world had already suffered physical or sexual violence throughout their lives<sup>2</sup>.

Law number 11.340/06<sup>3</sup>, known as the Maria da Penha Law, describes five types of violence against women: physical, psychological, sexual, patrimonial, and moral. The Notifiable Diseases Information System (SINAN), in turn, allows the registration of nine types of violence: physical, psychological/moral, sexual, financial/economic, torture, negligence/abandonment, child labor, legal intervention, and other violence.

According to a survey of data from the Secretariat of Social Defense and the Ministry of Health (MS), Pernambuco registered an average of 33,000 annual cases of domestic violence between 2015 and 2019, being among the 10 Brazilian states most violent against women and in second place in the number of femicides. Among the cases, about 40% of the violent actions occur in the psychological sphere in the state, while about 53% corresponded to the physical sphere, with the husband/partner as the main perpetrator in both cases, especially in families in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability.<sup>4</sup>

If, on the one hand, the issue of violence against women has appeared in the media and has been discussed in various sectors of society, allowing for some advances, on the other hand, the Covid-19 pandemic, as an aggravating factor in the condition of poverty and social isolation, has probably deepened gender violence, bringing a greater need for monitoring occurrences to follow trends in the indicators of such cases and allow the public authorities to outline the necessary measures to curb the spread of cases, especially in states with notorious characteristics regarding the subject.

This study is justified by the topicality and relevance of the theme and the social impact of aggression against women. It is also important to know the profile of the abused woman and the rapist to establish the situation of greatest vulnerability, as well as to outline the appropriate planning of public policies and strengthening of the health and safety network in line with the strengthening and/or creation of support networks to support women who are victims of violence. To this end, this study aims to describe the occurrence

and characteristics of violence against women in Pernambuco reported in the Notifiable Diseases Information System (SINAN in the period from 2009 to 2022.

## **METHOD**

### **STUDY DESIGN**

This is a mixed ecological study, whose spatial analysis units were the municipalities of the state of Pernambuco and temporal unit analysis were the corresponding years in the period from 2009 to 2022.

### **STUDY POPULATION**

The state of Pernambuco is a federative unit located in the northeastern region of Brazil. It has a population of 9,058,155 inhabitants and an HDI of 0.719. It is organized into five mesoregions, namely the Metropolitan Mesoregion of Recife, Mesoregion of Mata, Mesoregion of Agreste, Mesoregion of São Francisco, and Mesoregion of Sertão<sup>5</sup>

### **OBTAINING THE DATA**

The choice of the period occurred because the compulsory notification of violence began in 2009, and 2022 was the last consolidated year made available by the Ministry of Health during the survey.

For standardization purposes, the types of violence as stated in the Maria da Penha Law<sup>3</sup> were considered, replacing property violence with financial violence since they are considered equivalent. SINAN unifies psychological and moral violence, so this modification was also made.

The definitions given by this law are:

- Physical violence: understood as any conduct that offends their bodily integrity or health;
- Psychological violence: understood as any conduct that causes emotional damage and decreased self-esteem or that harms and disturbs their full development or that aims to degrade or control their actions, behaviors, beliefs and decisions, through threat, embarrassment, humiliation, manipulation, isolation, constant surveillance, persistent persecution, insult, blackmail, violation of their privacy, ridicule, exploitation and limitation of the right to come

and go or any other a means that causes damage to their psychological health and self-determination;

- Sexual violence: represents any conduct that constrains you to witness, maintain or participate in unwanted sexual intercourse, through intimidation, threat, coercion or use of force; that induces her to commercialize or use, in any way, her sexuality, that prevents her from using any contraceptive method or that forces her into marriage, pregnancy, abortion or prostitution, through coercion, blackmail, bribery or manipulation; or that limits or annuls the exercise of their sexual and reproductive rights;
- Patrimonial (financial) violence: understood as any conduct that constitutes retention, subtraction, partial or total destruction of their objects, work instruments, personal documents, goods, values and rights or economic resources, including those intended to satisfy their needs;
- Moral (psychological) violence: understood as any conduct that constitutes slander, defamation, or injury.

All types of violence registered in the Notifiable Diseases Information System were included in the study. The variables researched were: municipality of occurrence, age of the victim, self-reported race, education, types of violence (physical, moral, sexual, financial), repeated violence, data of the aggressor (father, spouse, boyfriend, ex-spouse, others) and place of occurrence.

## DATA ANALYSIS

To describe the types of violence in the period studied, the absolute frequency of notifications was presented and the p-value was calculated for the chi-square test. The relative evolution of the occurrence of violence during the period studied (2009-2021) was calculated, according to the formula below:

$$Evolução\ Relativa\ Variável_i = \left[ \frac{Ocorrência\ da\ Variável\ no\ ano\ 2021}{Ocorrência\ da\ Variável\ no\ ano\ 2009} \right] \times 100$$

To describe the space category, thematic maps were prepared for the types of violence in the years studied and for the relative evolution indicator, according to the

municipalities of the state, using the Terraview program, version 4.2.2, developed by the National Institute for Space Research (INPE).

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study meets the ethical precepts set forth in Resolution No. 510/2016 of the National Health Council and, therefore, because it uses data in the public domain, it does not require consideration by the Research Ethics Committee, and the duty to disclose all data sources used is safeguarded.

## RESULTS

Regarding the type of violence and the characterization of the victim, the study shows that physical violence was the most reported and is more frequent among women between 20 and 39 years of age, with less education, black or brown. It is also noted that the notified event has already occurred before (repeated violence) and was perpetrated, in most cases, by the spouse (Table 1). It is noteworthy that, although each type of violence was analyzed in isolation, a single notification may describe more than one type of violence. Table 2 indicates the places of occurrence for each of the types of violence.

Figure 1 shows an increase in the number of cases among all types of violence from 2009 to 2022 with notifications of physical violence increasing by approximately 444%, psychological violence, 667%, sexual violence, 325%, and financial violence, 1,166%.

As for the municipality of occurrence, a higher number of notifications was observed in the municipalities corresponding to the largest population clusters for the four types of violence. In addition to the Metropolitan Region of Recife, more cases were registered in the municipalities of Caruaru, Petrolina, Serra Talhada and Ouricuri. The densities of occurrence of physical and psychological violence aggregated by the period are observed in figures 2 and 3 . (Maps generated using R Studio software).

## DISCUSSION

The survey identified that the total number of notifications grew consistently from 2009 to 2023. The affected women were predominantly black or brown, with low education, living in large urban areas, young and victims of physical violence. The findings are consistent with other national studies.

The types of violence that grew the most in notifications in the period were financial violence and sexual violence. Although the numbers found show a significant increase in the number of reported cases in 12 years, they may be distorted since the Violence and Accidents Surveillance System (VIVA) only began to be gradually incorporated into SINAN in 2009, integrating the Compulsory Notification List in Sentinel Units. Only with Ordinance No. 104 of January 25, 2011<sup>6</sup>, the notification of domestic, sexual and other types of violence became compulsory in all public or private health units. It should also be considered that the increase in the number of notifications can be attributed to the influence of the media and campaigns to combat violence that have been encouraging women to cope with the situation.

The study also observed a drop in notifications of all types of violence surveyed in 2020, a period marked by social isolation due to the Covid-19 pandemic. At the end of 2020, Brazil had 13.9% of the population unemployed<sup>7</sup> and more than 100 million people in a situation of food insecurity<sup>8</sup>, a fact that evidences the economic recession and rising price inflation, leading to a setback in the quality of life indicators of the Brazilian population in decades. Since violence against women may have low social indicators as one of the associated factors, it is possible that the Covid-19 pandemic, together with the lack of willingness for continued social assistance to vulnerable populations by political authorities, has boosted the increase in cases of violence through increased poverty.

In addition, the very demands of what was called the "new normal", such as social distancing and the consequent longer time at home, modified family dynamics and may have intensified pre-existing problems by exposing couples who would once have had their moments of individual privacy preserved to uninterrupted coexistence. The longer time under constant surveillance by the aggressor, impediment of contact with family and friends, loss of household financial control and the unequal division of tasks can also be pointed out as potential predisposing causes for the deepening of structural misogynistic issues and the emergence of violent episodes in homes. The covid-19 pandemic and the social isolation it imposed have revealed worrying health indicators on cases of violence against women<sup>9</sup>.

Corroborating our findings, a study conducted by the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) of the United States of America pointed to an 11% drop in notifications of violence against women registered in 2020 when compared to that recorded in 2019<sup>10</sup>. These results are also corroborated by a survey carried out by the United Nations, which

showed an increase in telephone reports of domestic violence, but paradoxically, accompanied by a drop in the number of police reports registered for this crime, which led the organization's director to classify the phenomenon as an "invisible pandemic"<sup>11</sup>. According to the Brazilian Yearbook of Public Security, in the first two months of the pandemic, there was an increase in femicides and greater difficulty in making complaints in Brazil.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding the type of violence against women, there is a greater number of notifications of physical violence about psychological, sexual and financial violence in descending order of frequency, which can mean both a greater real occurrence of this type and also a greater motivation for the woman to make the complaint once the aggression has been made, since other types of violence often exist in a context of manipulation. shame and are more likely to be concealed in private life. However, there is no reason to believe that a woman who is a victim of physical violence is not victimized continuously and in a staggered manner in other typologies by a perpetrator, especially in the context of domestic violence, which demands a greater questioning spirit on the part of social entities.

The predominant type of violence varies depending on the characteristics of the woman. When described by age group, it is noted that physical violence predominates in children under 1 year of age, possibly due to the anatomical fragility inherent to this population, which could present more important injuries and that would be more easily noticed by caregivers and health professionals. From 1 to 14 years of age, the predominant type becomes sexual violence and from 15 onwards physical violence becomes predominant. This phenomenon can be explained by the greater vulnerability of children to sexual abusers within their own homes. The Brazilian Forum on Public Security, when describing child sexual violence, emphasizes that the preferred victims of situational pedophiles are girls during puberty, when secondary sexual characteristics begin to develop<sup>13</sup>.

The study also showed the predominance of physical violence in women with basic education and psychological violence in women with higher education. The increase in schooling has repercussions on women's financial independence and on a greater cultural framework that allows them to be able to identify and report a situation of psychological abuse before it escalates to violence with greater offensive potential. From the racial point of view, there is a predominance of physical violence between blacks and browns, this can

be interpreted considering the ethnic composition of the state of Pernambuco and the factors of inherent social inequality.

Regarding the perpetrator, there are more cases of physical, psychological and financial violence caused by the spouse and more cases of sexual violence caused by the so-called friends. This finding may indicate a context of normalization, on the part of the individuals involved, of sexual violence within a marriage, given the still socially established gender roles that are played in marriage, in which the woman traditionally occupies a place of submission about the husband's wishes. This hypothesis could explain why notifications of violence against women perpetrated by the spouse decrease proportionally only in the context of sexual violence and why friends, who are not given this subliminally instituted authorization, grow in this typology<sup>14</sup>.

Regarding the place of occurrence, corroborating data from the literature that point to domestic violence, the residential environment of the victim was the most frequent for all types of violence. In other words, women from Pernambuco are victimized most of the time by intimate partners in their own homes. It was also observed that violence against women can occur on public roads, bars or similar, shops, schools, collective housing, places of sports practice, or even in industry. These data are compatible with a survey conducted by the Institute of Research and Applied Economics in 2020. Several authors point out that the reason for this is the fact that the perpetrator of violence is, most of the time, someone close to the victim.<sup>15</sup>

The higher number of cases in large urban centers indicates a greater potential for notification in these locations without necessarily implying a greater share of the female population victimized. To perform this type of analysis, other data and other types of analysis would be needed that go beyond the objectives of this study.

Preventing and combating violence against women requires greater information from society so that there is a break in stigmatization and blaming of the victim. But, in addition, greater public investment is needed to ensure welcoming access for girls and women victims of violence in health, security and justice services with professionals sensitive to the problem.

## CONCLUSIONS

The profile of victims of violence reported in Pernambuco is of girls and young women, brown or black, who suffered sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner

within their own home. The study also reports the reduction in the number of notifications during the period of social isolation in the Covid-19 pandemic.

The recognition of this profile and the behavior of notifications of violence over time are warning signs for public policies to be oriented based on the needs of those who are most vulnerable. Women's right to be and live should not be threatened, so the fight against violence should be a permanent agenda on the political agenda of the state of Pernambuco and the country.

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### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The authors deny any conflict of interest in the development of this research.

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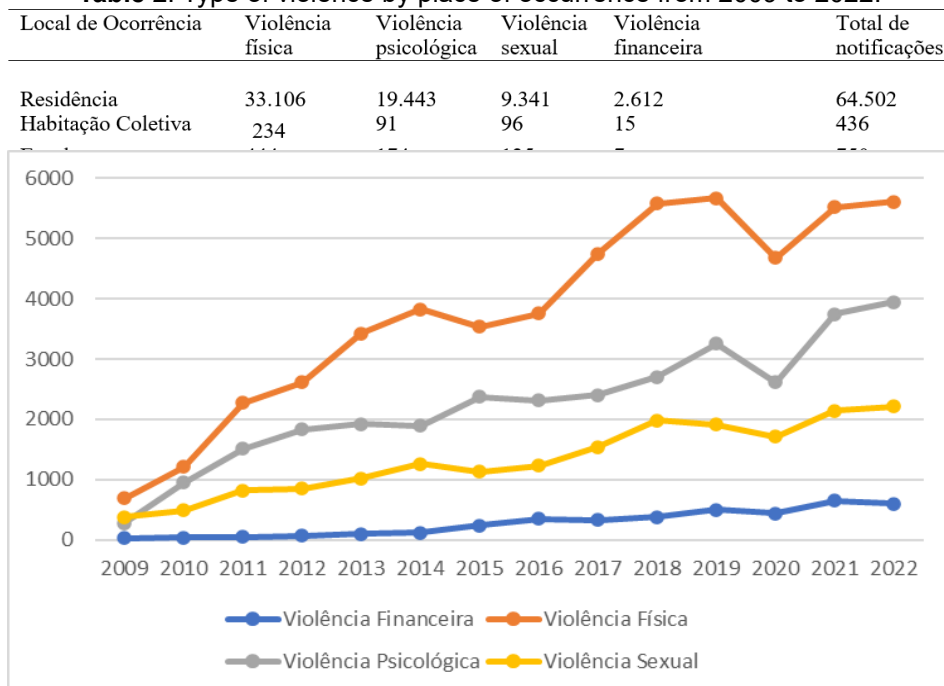
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## ATTACHMENTS

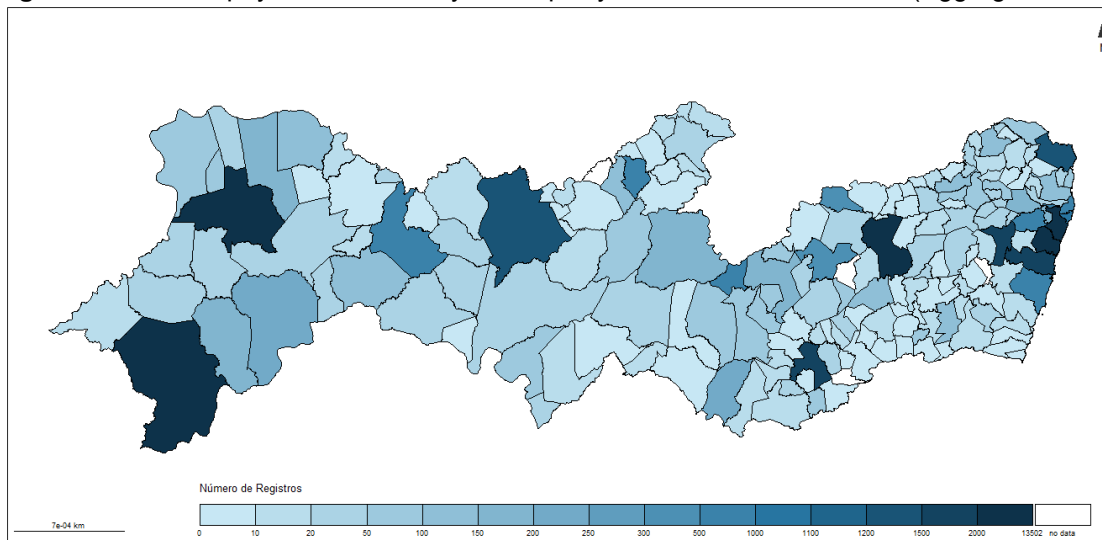
**Table 1:** Notifications of violence against women according to sociodemographic characteristics and perpetrator of violence, aggregate values, in the period from 2009 to 2022, in Pernambuco.

Variables	Physical violence	Psychological violence	Sexual violence	Financial violence	Total notifications *	X2
<b>Age group</b>						
< 9 years	2719	1678	2544	154	11980	X2 = 11220 p<0.01
10 to 19 years old	7911	3804	7089	202	15775	
20-29 years	13.734	7.155	2.838	608	17.108	
30-39 years	10.885	6.626	1.649	683	13.733	
40-49 years old	5.752	3.790	918	457	7.457	
50-59 years	2.245	1.514	300	245	3.024	
60+ years	1.603	1.076	160	406	5.636	
<b>Schooling</b>						
Up to complete elementary school	13.547	8.884	5.794	914	20.840	X2 = 533.9 p<0.01
Middle school	8.542	6.339	2.752	756	12.069	
Higher education	1.906	2.196	1.062	298	3.339	
<b>Race/Color</b>						
Brown/Black	32.612	15.755	10.897	1.936	52.753	X2 = 471.9 p<0.01
White/Yellow/Indigenous	7.064	4.927	3.350	742	11.565	
<b>Repeated violence</b>						
Yes	17.581	16.292	5.976	2.318	27.619	X2 = 3764 p<0.01
No	15.879	6.549	6.812	290	26.785	
<b>Aggressor</b>						
Father	1.317	1.399	785	152	5.053	X2 = 7244 p<0.01
Spouse	11.828	7.278	1.628	878	14.357	
Former spouse	5.321	5.003	816	743	7.242	
Boyfriend	1.307	647	1.750	50	3.165	
Ex boyfriend	977	974	359	130	1.611	
Friend/Acquaintance	4.847	2.065	2.683	86	7.329	
Other	13.127	7.713	6.346	682	26.968	

**Table 2:** Type of violence by place of occurrence from 2009 to 2022.



**Figure 2:** Cases of physical violence by municipality between 2009 and 2021 (Aggregate values)



**Figure 3:** Psychological Violence by municipality between 2009 and 2021 (Aggregate values)

