

Do Children in Domestic Servitude Experience More Violence? — Results from the Violence Against Children Survey, Haiti, 2012

Leah K. Gilbert, MD, MSPH

Medical Epidemiologist

Sexual Violence Research Initiative

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My Experience with Child Domestic Servants in Haiti: “Restavèks”



Photo taken with permission by Leah Gilbert

Child Domestic Servants: “Restavèks”^{1,2}

- **From an impoverished family**
- **Sent to live with a host family**
- **Perform unpaid domestic labor**
- **Often unable to attend school**
- **Treated worse than other children**
- **Illegal, but not enforced**

1. Pan American Development Foundation and U.S. Agency for International Development. Lost Childhoods in Haiti. Quantifying Child Trafficking, Restaveks & Victims of Violence. 2009.
2. McCalla. Restavek No More. Eliminating Child Slavery in Haiti. National Coalition for Human Rights. April 2002.

Why Study the Restavèk Population?

- Restavèks are common in Haiti: estimates of 200,000 - 500,000 children¹
- Difficult population to access
- No nationally representative data
- Small studies, qualitative reports and anecdotes suggest that restavèks experience more violence^{1,2}

1. Pan American Development Foundation and U.S. Agency for International Development. Lost Childhoods in Haiti. Quantifying Child Trafficking, Restavèks & Victims of Violence. 2009.
2. Kolbe AR, Hutson, RA. Human rights abuse and other criminal violations in Port-au-Prince, Haiti: a random survey of households. Lancet 2006; 368: 864-73.

Study Rationale

- **Restavèks are exposed to documented risk factors for child maltreatment** ^{1,2}
 - Living away from biological parents
 - Not having a close relationship with their mothers
 - Socially isolated
 - Having less education
 - Lower socioeconomic status
- **Hypothesis: Restavèks experience more violence than other children in Haiti.**

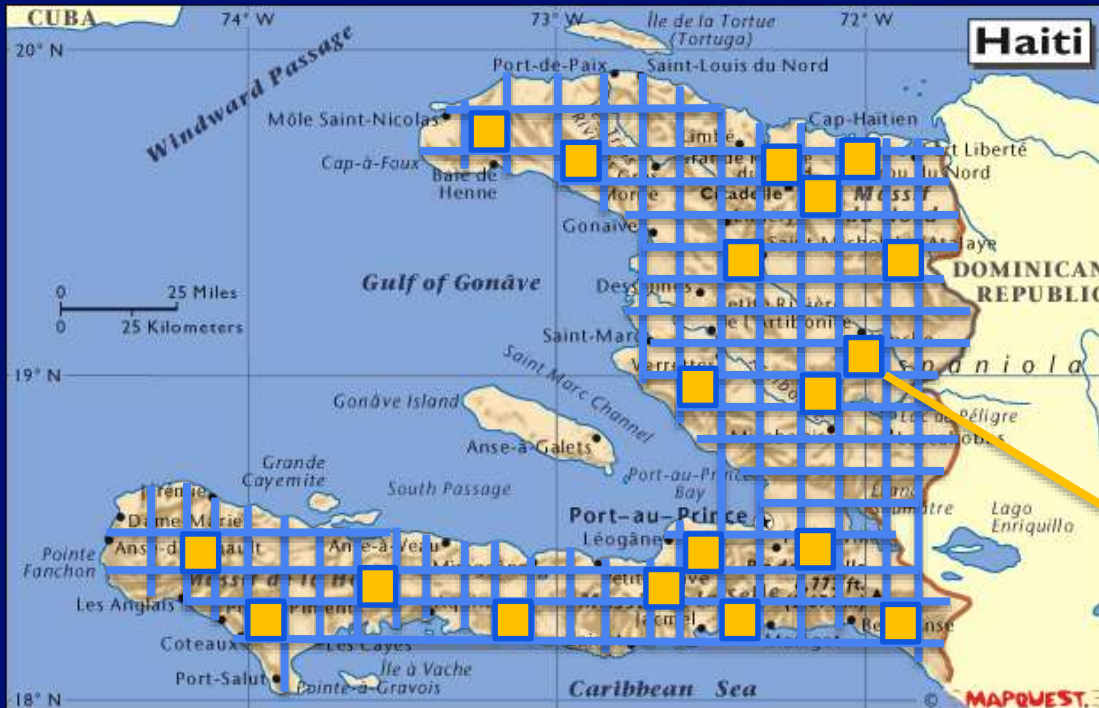
1. Brown J, Cohen P, Johnson J, Salzinger S. A Longitudinal Analysis of Risk Factors for Child Maltreatment: Findings of a 17-year Prospective Study of Officially Recorded and Self-Reported Child Abuse and Neglect. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 1998; 22(11): 1065-78.



2. Breiding M, Reza A, Gulaid J, Blanton C, Mercy J, Dahlberg L, Bamrah N, Bamrah S. Risk Factors Associated with Sexual Violence Towards Girls in Swaziland. *Bull World Health Organ* 2011; 89:203-210.

Study Design: Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) Haiti

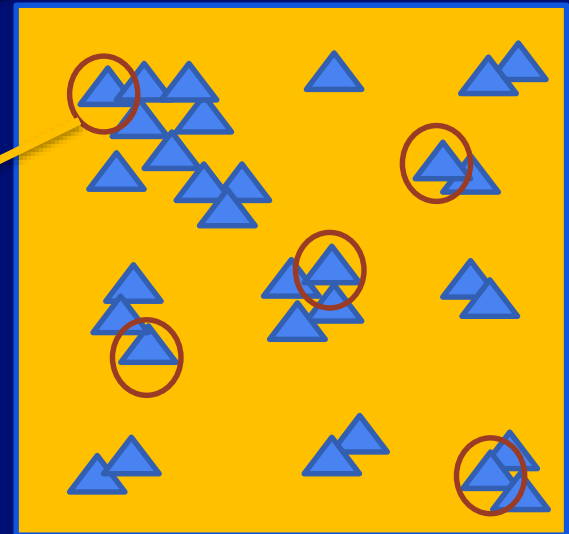
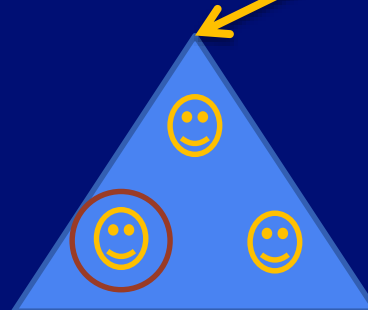
- **Nationally representative**
- **Cross-sectional**
- **Household survey**
- **13-24 year old males and females**
- **May-June 2012**
- **Stratified, three-stage, cluster design**
 - Standard enumeration areas
 - Internally displaced persons
- **Sample**
 - N = 2,916 (1,457 F; 1,459 M)
 - Response rate: 86% F; 82% M

Three-Stage Cluster Sampling: VACS Haiti



- Haiti is divided into 4,993 SDEs
- **Stage 1:** 177 SDEs  randomly selected
- **Stage 2:** A cluster of 35 households  randomly selected from each SDE

- **Stage 3:** 1 eligible respondent is randomly selected from each household



Analysis: VACS Haiti

- **History of child domestic servitude**
- **Prevalence of childhood violence before age 18:**
 - Physical Violence
 - Committed by household authority figures
 - Committed by public authority figures
 - Emotional Violence
 - Committed by household authority figures
 - Sexual Violence
 - Committed by anyone

Definition of Physical Violence

- **Did a household or public authority figure ever:**
 - Punch, kick, whip, or beat you with an object
 - Choke, smother, or attempt to drown you
 - Burn or scald you intentionally
 - Threaten to use a knife or other weapon against you

Definition of Emotional Violence

- **Did a household authority figure ever:**
 - Say that you were not loved or did not deserve to be loved
 - Say that they wished you had never been born or were dead
 - Ridicule or put you down
 - Threaten to abandon you or force you to leave home

Definition of Sexual Violence

- **Did anyone ever:**
 - Touch you in a sexual way without your permission
 - Try to make you have sex without your permission
 - Pressure you into having sex using non-physical means
 - Physically force you to have sex

Definition of Sexual Violence

- **Did anyone ever:**
 - Touch you in a sexual way without your permission
 - Unwanted sexual touching
 - Try to make you have sex without your permission
 - Attempted sex
 - Pressure you into having sex using non-physical means
 - Pressured Sex
 - Physically force you to have sex
 - Forced Sex

Results: History of Child Domestic Servitude

- **History of child domestic servitude**
- **Prevalence of childhood violence before age 18:**
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 - Committed by public authority figures
- Emotional Violence
 - Committed by household authority figures
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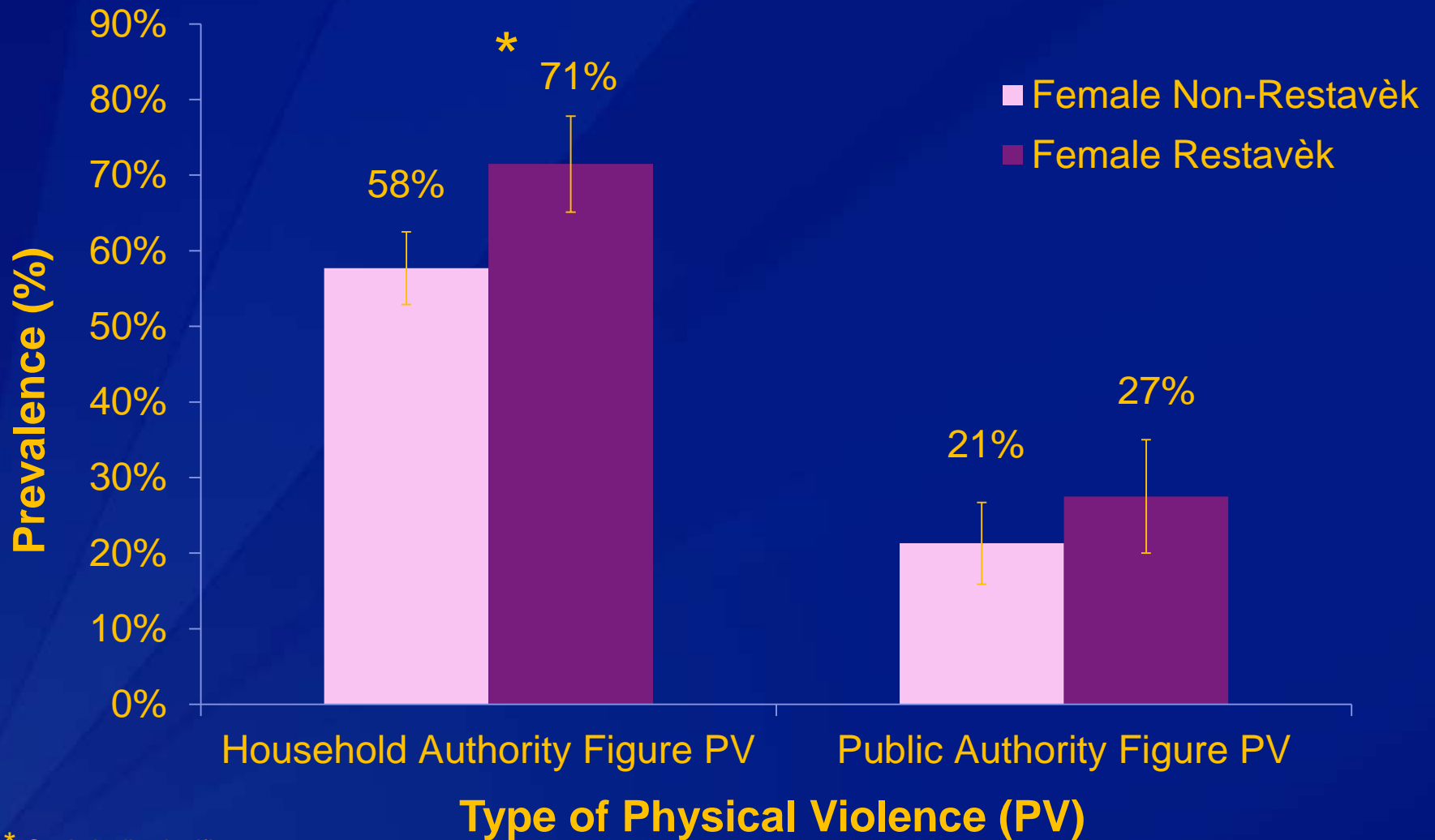
Results: History of Child Domestic Servitude

- **Reported ever working as a restavèk**
 - 17% of females
 - 12% of males
 - Weighted estimate: 385,373 children (15%)
- **Age at becoming a restavèk**
 - Range: 3-17 years old
 - Mean: 10 years old
 - Median: 10 years old

Results: Prevalence of Childhood Physical Violence

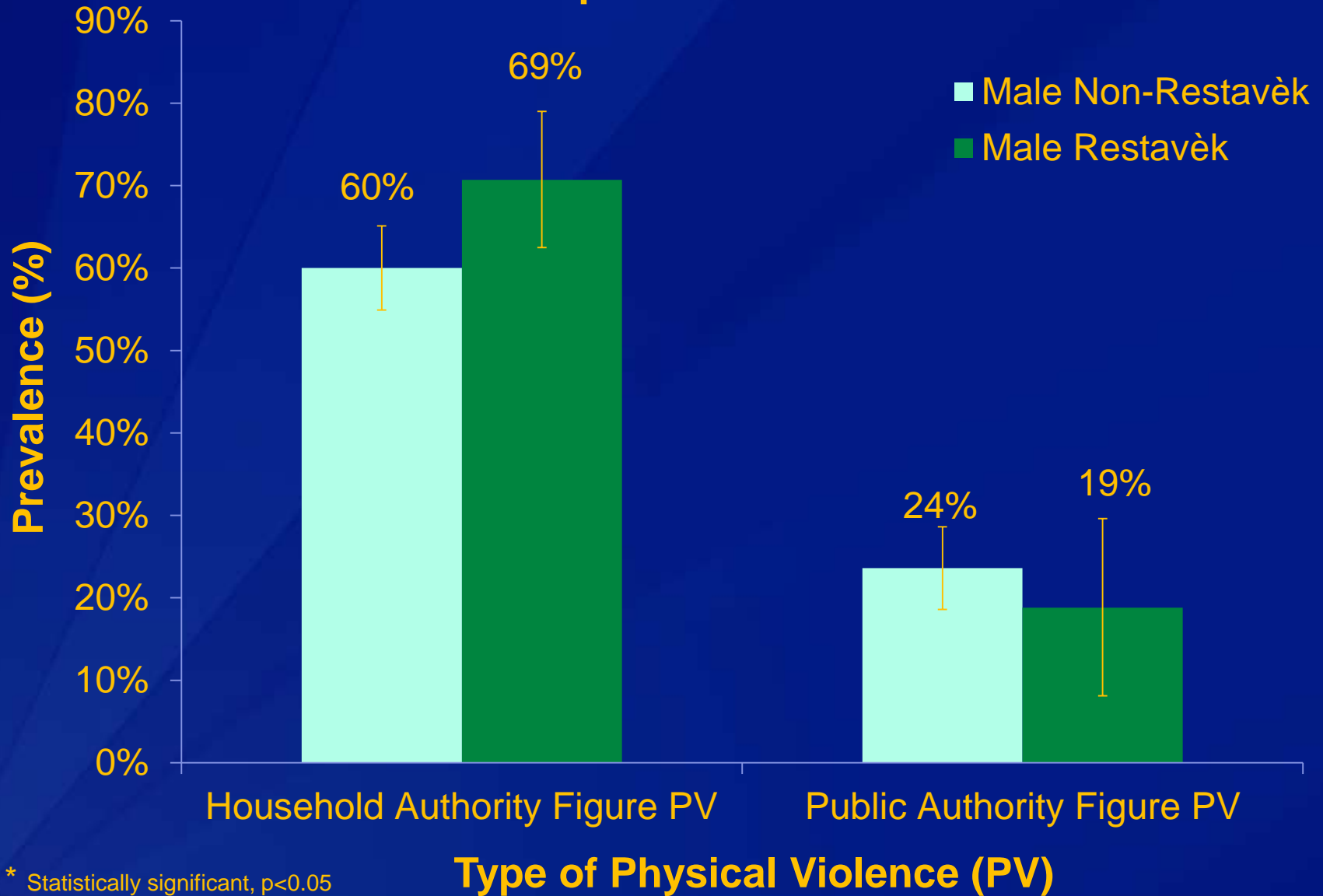
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Prevalence of Childhood Physical Violence in Female Restavèks Compared to Non-Restavèks



* Statistically significant, $p < 0.05$

Prevalence of Childhood Physical Violence in Male Restavèks Compared to Non-Restavèks

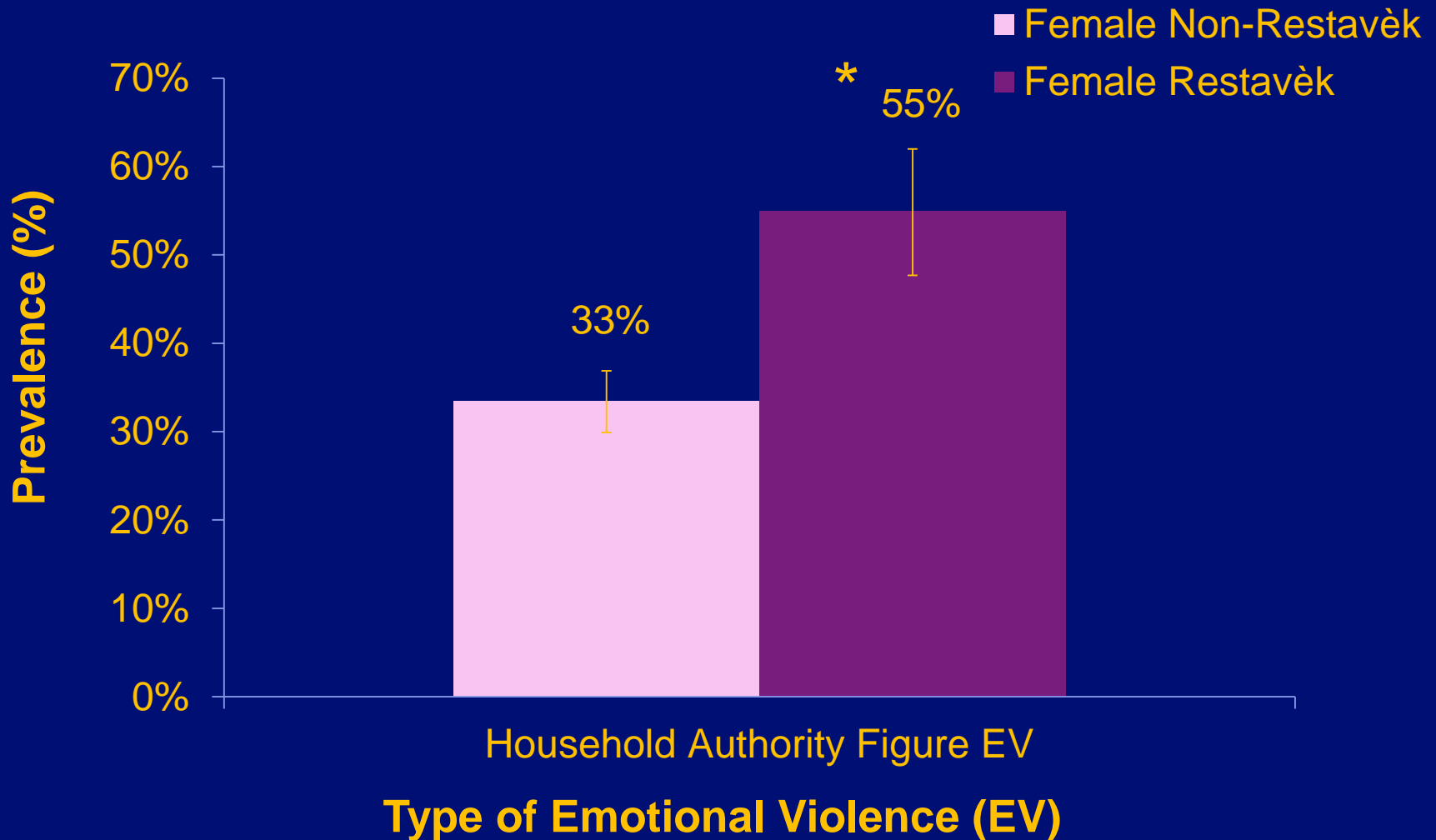


* Statistically significant, $p < 0.05$

Results: Prevalence of Childhood Emotional Violence

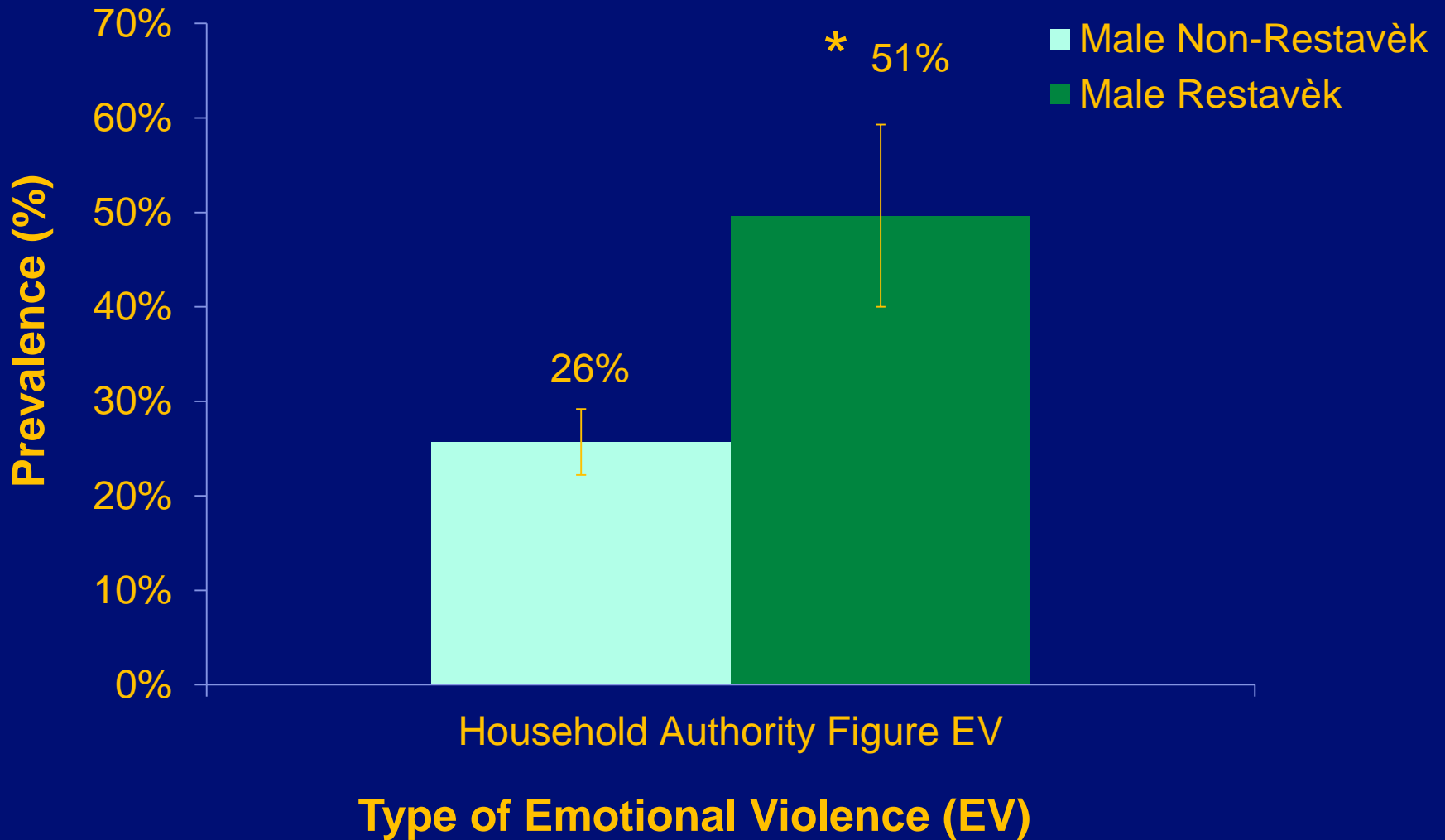
- History of child domestic servitude
- Prevalence of childhood violence before age 18:
 - Physical Violence
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 - Committed by public authority figures
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 - Committed by household authority figures
 - Sexual Violence
 - Committed by anyone

Prevalence of Childhood Emotional Violence in Female Restavèks Compared to Non-Restavèks



* Statistically significant, $p < 0.05$

Prevalence of Childhood Emotional Violence in Male Restavèks Compared to Non-Restavèks

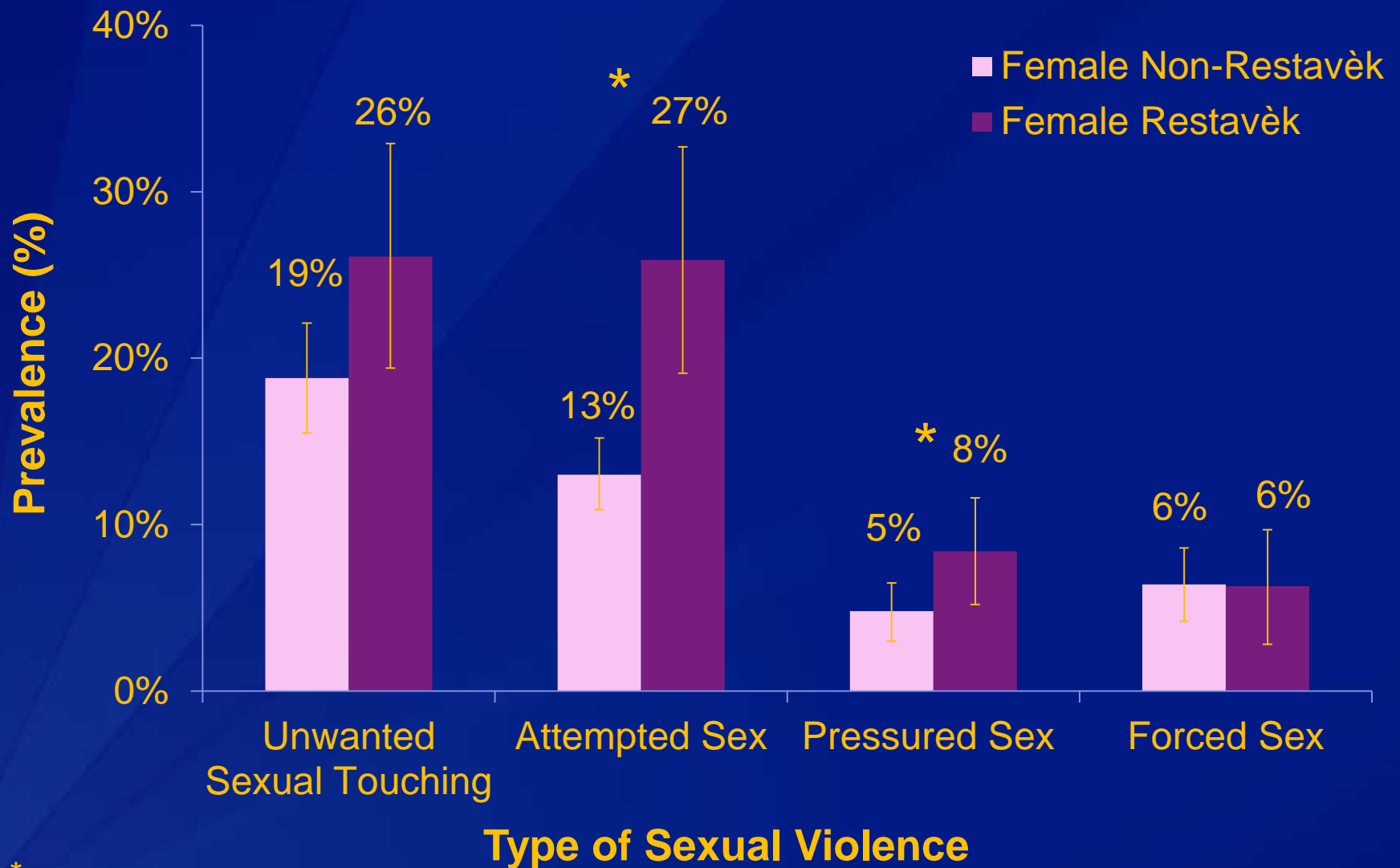


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Results: Prevalence of Childhood Sexual Violence

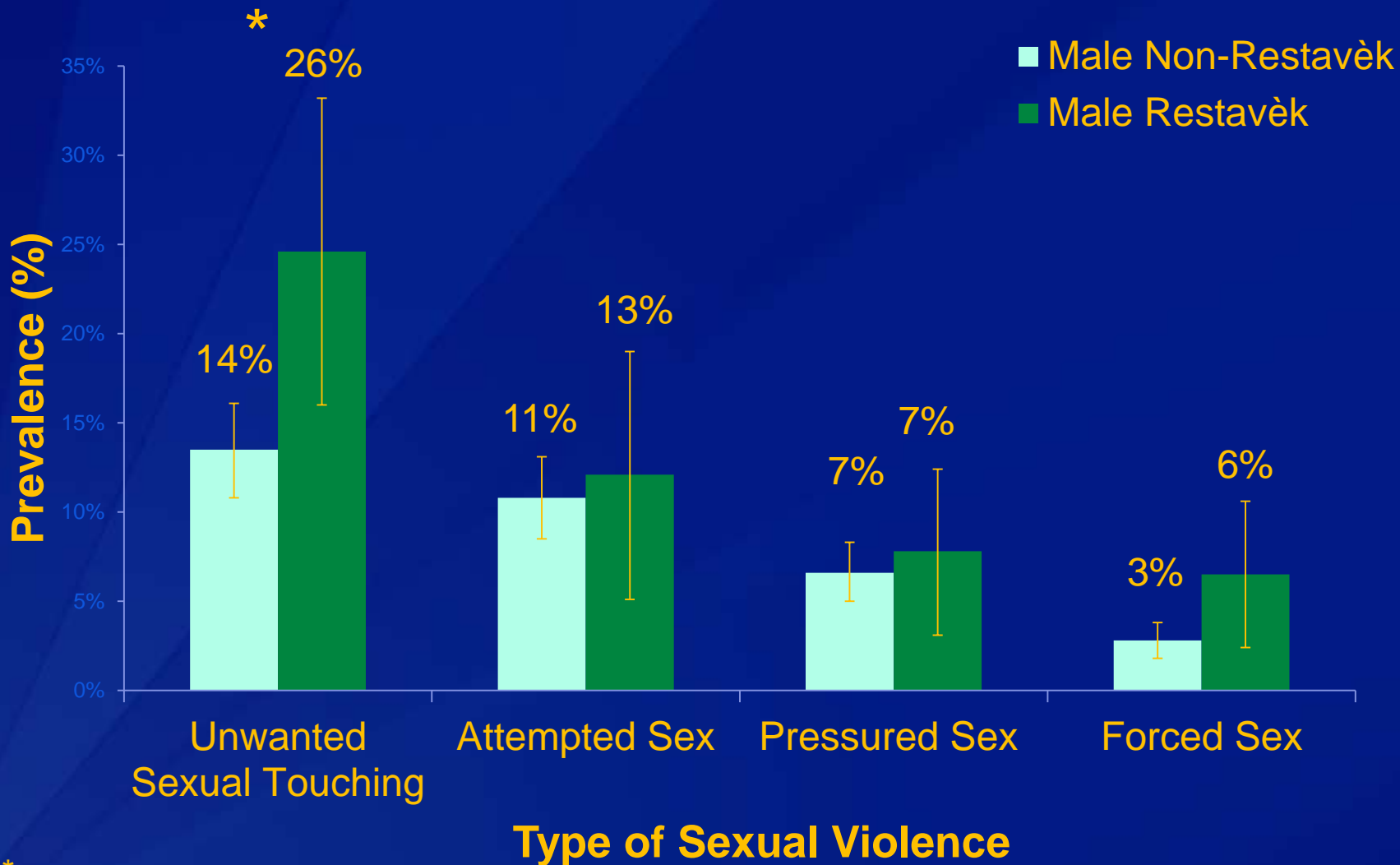
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 - Committed by anyone

Prevalence of Childhood Sexual Violence in Female Restavèks Compared to Non-Restavèks



* Statistically significant, $p < 0.05$

Prevalence of Childhood Sexual Violence in Male Restavèks Compared to Non-Restavèks



* Statistically significant, $p < 0.05$

Conclusions: VACS Haiti

- **Child domestic servants (restavèks) do experience more violence than other children in Haiti:**
 - Physical Violence
 - Committed by a household authority figure (females and males)
 - Emotional Violence
 - Committed by a household authority figure (females)
 - Sexual Violence
 - Unwanted sexual touching (males)
 - Attempted sex (females)
 - Pressured sex (females)

Limitations: VACS Haiti

- **Head of household may not have listed restavèks as household members nor permitted them to participate**
- **Unable to assess directionality of restavèk status and violence**
- **The study is cross-sectional**
- **Could not control for socio-economic status**

The Way Forward: Eliminating Child Domestic Servitude

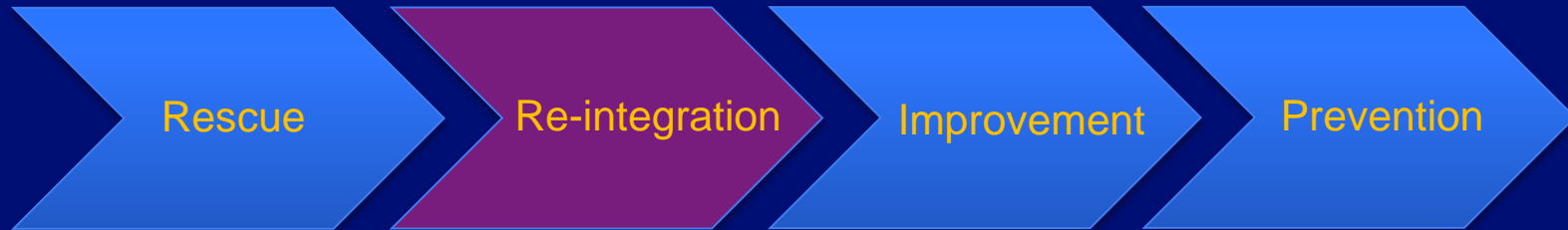


The Way Forward: Eliminating Child Domestic Servitude



- Bolster social services
- Build safe-houses

The Way Forward: Eliminating Child Domestic Servitude



- Reconnect with families
- Provide skills for independence

The Way Forward: Eliminating Child Domestic Servitude



- Enforce existing laws

The Way Forward: Eliminating Child Domestic Servitude



- Build community capacity
- Create public school systems
- Increase public awareness

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Authors

- Avid Reza, MD, MPH
- Jim Mercy, PhD
- Veronica Lea, MPH
- Juliette Lee, MPH
- Marisa Hast, MPH
- Jim Vertefeuille, PhD, MHS
- Louis HERN Marcelin, PhD

Other Contributors

- Likang Xu
- Matt Breiding
- Tom Simon
- Linda Dahlberg

Thank you!



For more information please contact Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30333

Telephone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)/TTY: 1-888-232-6348

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Division of Violence Prevention

