

Estimates of childhood, youth exposure to violence, crime and abuse

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More than a third of children and teens 17 and younger experienced a physical assault in the last year, primarily at the hands of siblings and peers, according to an article published online by *JAMA Pediatrics*.

Violence against [children](#) is a national and international public health and public policy issue. The U.S. Department of Justice and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention initiated in 2008 the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV) to provide ongoing estimates of a wide range of violence against youth. Assessments have occurred in three-year intervals in 2011 and now in 2014.

Researcher David Finkelhor, Ph.D., of the University of New Hampshire, Durham, and co-authors analyzed data from the survey for 4,000 children and adolescents (17 and younger) to provide current estimates of exposure to violence, crime and abuse. Survey information was collected in telephone interviews (from August 2013 to April 2014) with caregivers and young people.

Key findings (that respondents reported occurred in the past year):

- 40.9 percent of children and youth had more than one direct experience of violence, crime or abuse; 10.1 percent had six or more and 1.2 percent had 10 or more.
- 37.3 experienced a [physical assault](#) during the study year, primarily from siblings (21.8 percent) and peers (15.6 percent). An assault resulting in injury occurred in 9.3 percent.

- 5 percent experienced a sexual offense; 1.4 percent experienced a sexual assault
- Girls ages 14 to 17 were the group at highest risk for sexual assault, with 16.4 percent experiencing a sexual offense and 4.6 percent experiencing [sexual assault](#) or sexual abuse. Among this group, 4.4 percent had an attempted or completed rape, while 11.5 percent experienced sexual harassment and 8.5 percent were exposed to unwanted Internet sexual solicitation.
- 15.2 percent of children and youth experienced maltreatment by a caregiver, including 5 percent who experienced physical abuse.
- 24.5 percent witnessed violence in the family or community, with 8.4 percent witnessing a family assault.

"Children and youth are exposed to [violence](#), [abuse](#) and crime in varied and extensive ways, which justifies continued monitoring and prevention efforts," the study concludes.

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