

## **Publication**

Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Ormrod, R., Hamby, S., & Kracke, K. (2009). Children's exposure to violence: A comprehensive survey. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Program's, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Available from <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/227744.pdf>. Retrieved from Internet on November 23, 2009.

## **Background & Purpose**

A nationwide survey was conducted between January and May 2008 and measured past-year and lifetime exposure to violence among children 17 and younger. Telephone interviews were conducted with 4,549 children and adolescents ages 10 to 17 and adult caregivers of children age 9 and younger. Categories included: conventional crime, child maltreatment, victimization by peers and siblings, sexual victimization, witnessing and indirect victimization (community and family violence), school violence/threats, and Internet victimization. This is the first survey that is comprehensive and measures exposure to violence in the home, school, and community and measured the cumulative exposure to violence over a child's lifetime.

## **General Findings**

- 60% children were exposed to violence in the past year (direct or indirect)
- 46.3% were assaulted at least once and 1 in 10 were injured in assault.
- 38.7% experienced 2 or more direct types of victimizations in the previous year
- 1 in 10 experienced 5 or more victimizations in the previous year
- 1.4% experienced 10 or more direct victimizations in the previous year
- Exposures most common among younger children were assaults without weapons or injury, assault by sibling, bullying and teasing.
- As children grow older the incidences of victimization increases
- 1/3 of all 14 to 17 year olds had witnessed a parent being assaulted
- More than 1 in 10 children were indirectly exposed to violence

## **Sexual Victimization**

- 6.1% of all children had been sexually victimized during the previous year
- 9.8% (1 in 10) were sexually victimized during their lifetime
- Children 14 to 17 years old were most likely to be sexually victimized, 1 in 4 reported being victimized during their lifetime.
- Most common forms of sexual victimization were flashing, exposure by peer, sexual harassment, and sexual assault.
- Highest rates of sexual victimization over a lifetime (18.7%) were experienced by girls aged 14 to 17.

## **Physical Assault**

- 46.3% were physically assaulted within the previous year
- 56.7% were physically assaulted during their lifetime
- Males (60.3%) were more likely to be assaulted than females (52.9%) across a lifetime

## **Bullying**

- 13.2% were physically bullied during the previous year
- 21.6% were physically bullied during their lifetime
- 1 in 5 reported being teased or emotionally bullied in the previous year
- 3 in 10 reported being teased or emotionally bullied during their lifetime
- Internet harassment increased with age, 7.9% of 14 to 17 year olds reported Internet harassment over their lifetime.
- Boys were more likely than girls to be physically bullied.
- Girls were more likely to have higher cumulative exposures to emotional bullying than boys.

## **Witnessing and Indirect Exposure to Violence**

- 25.3% witnessed violence in homes, schools, or communities during the previous year
- 37.8% witnessed violence in homes, schools, or communities during their lifetime
- The proportion of children who witnessed violence both within the previous year and during their lifetime increased with age. The highest increase in age was reported for community violence.
- Witnessing family violence remained constant across all age groups.
- Boys (40.1%) were more likely to witness violence than girls (25.4%)
- Boys were more likely to witness violence in community, murder, and shootings than girls.
- No gender differences were reported for witnessing family violence.

## **Recommendations**

- Researchers and practitioners must ask more specific questions about victimizations and ask those who are suffering from one form of violence about other forms of violence they may have experienced in lifetime.
- More research is needed to assess the long-term effect of violence on children into adulthood.
- Policies and practices need to be considered across disciplines to identify and provide services to children exposed to violence.
- Research and prevention efforts need to be comprehensive and coordinated to address children's exposure to violence.