

***North America:  
National Survey of Children Exposed to  
Violence***

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Expert Consultation on Strengthening Data and Research to  
Protect Children from Violence

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# National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NATSCEV)

- Survey conducted January 2008- May 2008
- National RDD sample of 4549 children age 0-17
- Telephone interviews with 2454 caregivers of children age 0-9
- Telephone interviews with 2095 youth age 10-17
- Respondents promised confidentiality and paid \$20 for participation
- Interviews completed with 71% of eligible respondents contacted

# Comprehensive epidemiology of childhood victimization

- Assessment of most comprehensive spectrum of victimization types to date (violence, abuse, crime, etc.)
- Entire age range of childhood (0-17)
- Advantages:
  - Understand full burden on children
  - See inter-relationships among exposures
  - Identify highest risk children
  - Appreciate developmental patterns
  - Promote collaboration, avoid fragmented response



**JvQ**

**Juvenile Victimization  
Questionnaire**

# JVQ Modules

## □ Module A: Conventional Crime

- Robbery
- Personal Theft
- Vandalism
- Assault with Weapon
- Assault without Weapon
- Attempted Assault
- Kidnapping
- Bias Attack

## □ Module B: Child Maltreatment

- Physical Abuse by Caregiver
- Psychological/Emotional Abuse
- Neglect
- Custodial Interference/Family Abduction

## □ Module C: Peer & Sibling Victimization

- Gang or Group Assault
- Peer or Sibling Assault
- Nonsexual Genital Assault
- Bullying
- Emotional bullying
- Dating Violence

## □ Module D: Sexual Victimization

- Sexual Assault by Known Adult
- Nonspecific Sexual Assault
- Sexual Assault by Peer
- Rape: Attempted or Completed
- Flashing/Sexual Exposure
- Verbal Sexual Harassment
- Statutory Rape & Sexual Misconduct

## □ Module E: Witnessing & Indirect Victimization

- Witness to Domestic Violence
- Witness to Parent Assault of Sibling
- Witness to Assault with Weapon
- Witness to Assault without Weapon
- Burglary of Family Household
- Murder of Family Member or Friend
- Witness to Murder
- Exposure to Random Shootings, Terrorism or Riots
- Exposure to War or Ethnic Conflict

# NatSCEV JVQ Additions

## Community Crime Exposure

- Family/friend Sexual Assault
- Family/ friend Robbed
- Family/friend Gun Threat

## Internet Victimization

- Internet Harassment
- Internet Sexual Victimizations

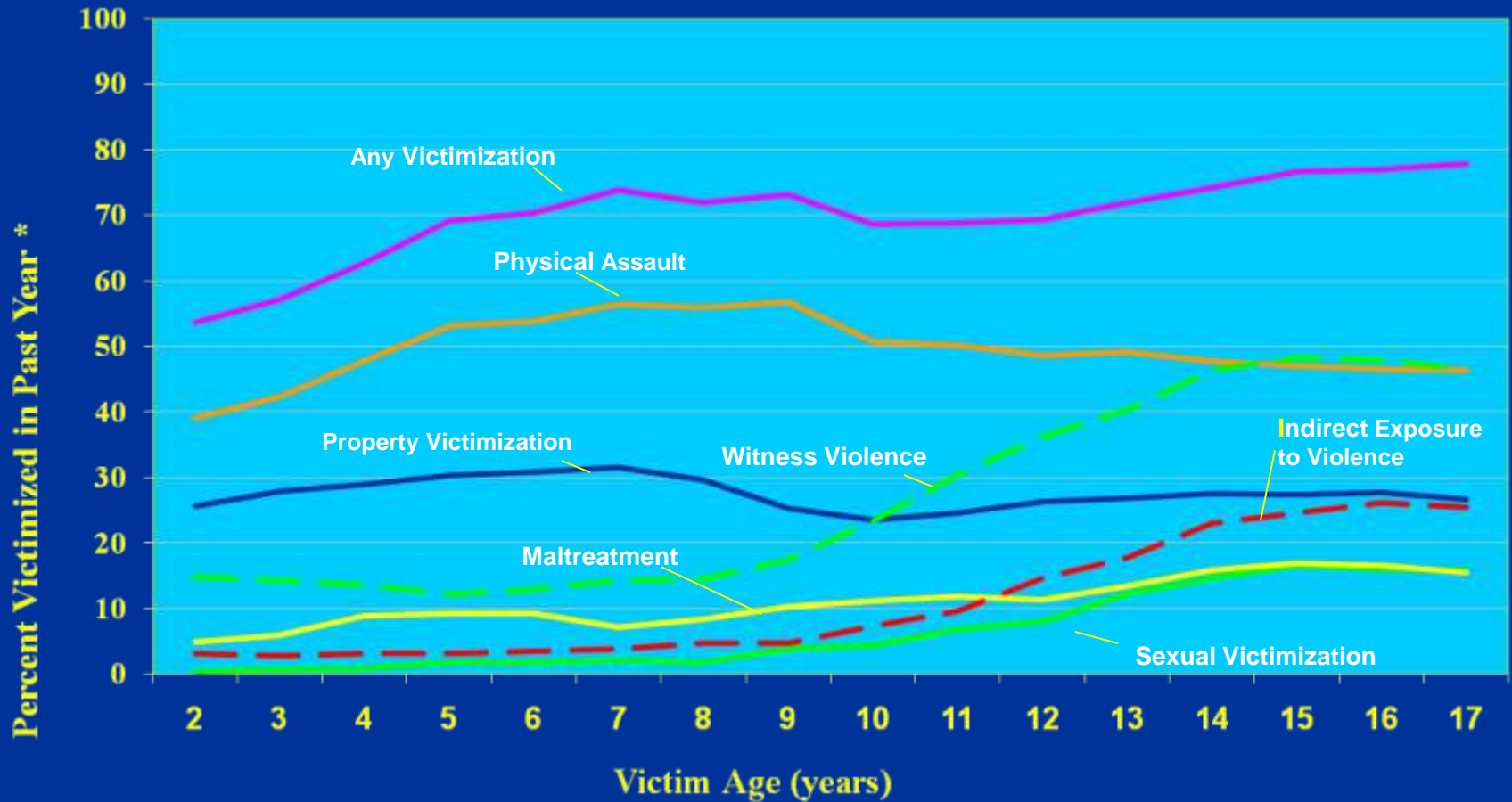
## Family Abuse Exposure

- Parents Threaten Other Parent
- Parents Break Objects
- Parents Push Other Parent
- Parents Slap, Choke, Beat Up
- Any Teen or Grown-up Fight in Household

## School Violence Threat

- Threaten School Bomb or Attack
- School Vandalism

# Major Victimization Types by Victim Age

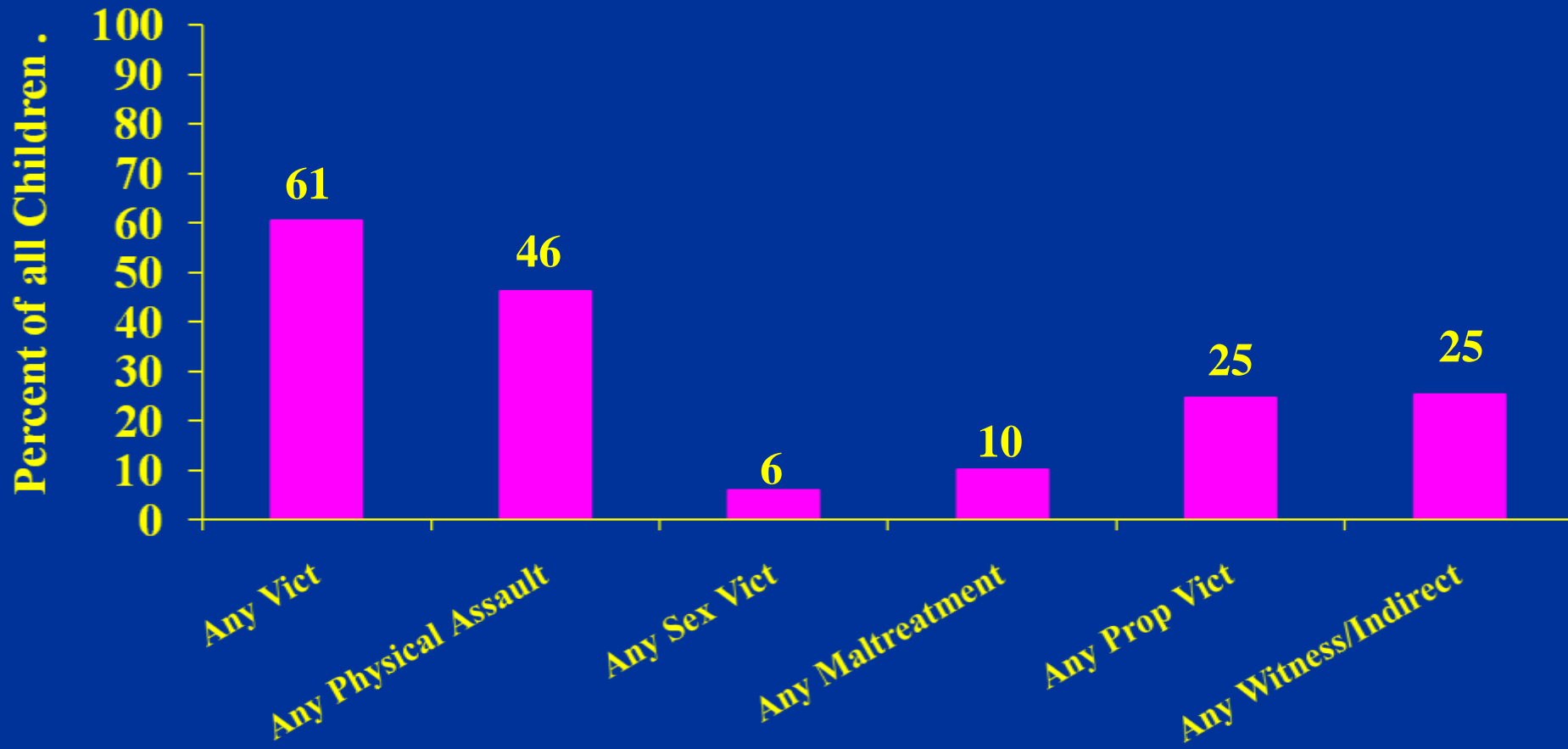


3-year running average

# Victimization in Last Year

## Total and Selected Aggregates

(Children 0-17, N=4549)





# *Physical Assaults, Bullying and Teasing in the Past Year*

- 46% of the sample reported a physical assault
- 10% reported an assault-related injury
- 13% reported bullying and 20% reported being teased and harassed
- Boys have higher rates of most assault and bullying victimizations
- Physical assaults with no injury and bullying highest among elementary school age children (6-9)
- Other assault categories and dating violence highest among teenagers
- Assault perpetrators most often juvenile acquaintances and siblings

## *Sexual Victimizations in the Past Year*

- 8% of the 14-17 y o girls reported a sexual assault;  
3% of boys
- Sexual victimizations highest among female teenagers
- Adult perpetrators responsible for 15% of total sexual victimizations and 29% of sexual assaults
- Most sexual victimizations perpetrated by acquaintances

## *Child Maltreatment in the Past Year*

10% of sample reported some form of child maltreatment; 17% of 14-17 y o

- Emotional abuse most common
- Physical abuse 8% 14-17 y o. 20% life time
- Rates similar for boys and girls (except sexual abuse)
- Rates lowest for pre-school age children

## *Property Victimizations in the Past Year*

25% of the sample reported property victimizations

- 5% experienced robbery, 7% theft, and 6% vandalism by non-siblings
- Boys have higher rates of property victimizations
- Most often perpetrated by juvenile acquaintances

# Odds Ratios for Occurrence of Other Victimization Type Given One Victimization Type

- Of those with 1 type of direct victimization, 64.5% had 2 or more types of victimization
- 10.9%  $\geq$  5 types of victimization (PY), 1.4%  $\geq$  10 types (PY)

PAST YEAR VICTIMIZATION	Any Physical Assault	Any Sexual Victimization	Any Maltreatment	Any Property Victimization	Any Witness Violence	Exposure to Violence
Any Physical Assault		5.0	4.1	2.7	2.5	2.2
Any Sex Victimization	1.8		2.9	2.2	2.2	3.2
Any Maltreatment	1.8	3.3		2.1	2.4	2.7
Any Property Victimization	1.8	3.5	2.9		2.4	2.9
Any Witness Violence	1.7	3.1	3.3	2.4		3.2
Any Indirect Exp to Viol	1.4	3.5	2.6	2.1	2.3	

# Key contributions

- New estimates not previously available, in particular of the full spectrum of child victimization
- Estimates over full span of childhood
- How many kids suffer from a single and multiple types of exposures
- Increased risk created by any exposure
- Implications:
  - Need to ask about the full spectrum of victimization experiences (dating violence, emotional maltreatment, property victimization, exposure to violence in family and community)
  - Need a more integrated approach among policy makers, programme designers, and practitioners that addresses the full spectrum

## Violence, Abuse, and Crime Exposure in a National Sample of Children and Youth

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### KEY WORDS

child maltreatment, bullying, child molestation, exposure to domestic violence

### ABBREVIATIONS

PY—previous year

NatSCDV—National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence

OR—odds ratio

CI—confidence interval

Points of view or opinions in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the US Department of Justice.

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**WHAT'S KNOWN ON THIS SUBJECT:** Children and adolescents are exposed to more violence, abuse, and crime than are adults, an exposure that is responsible for considerable physical and mental health morbidity.



**WHAT THIS STUDY ADDS:** This study gives precise dimensions of exposure to a wide range of specific forms of violence, abuse, and crime at different developmental stages, and demonstrates how some children and adolescents accumulate a very large number of these exposures.

## abstract

**OBJECTIVE:** The objective of this research was to obtain national estimates of exposure to the full spectrum of the childhood violence, abuse, and crime victimizations relevant to both clinical practice and public-policy approaches to the problem.

**METHODS:** The study was based on a cross-sectional national telephone survey that involved a target sample of 4549 children aged 0 to 17 years.

**RESULTS:** A clear majority (60.6%) of the children and youth in this nationally representative sample had experienced at least 1 direct or witnessed victimization in the previous year. Almost half (46.3%) had experienced a physical assault in the study year, 1 in 4 (24.6%) had experienced a property offense, 1 in 10 (10.2%) had experienced a form of child maltreatment, 6.1% had experienced a sexual victimization, and more than 1 in 4 (25.3%) had been a witness to violence or experienced another form of indirect victimization in the year, including 9.8% who had witnessed an intrafamily assault. One in 10 (10.2%) had experienced a victimization-related injury. More than one third (38.7%) had been exposed to 2 or more direct victimizations, 10.9% had 3 or more, and 2.4% had 10 or more during the study year.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The scope and diversity of child exposure to victimization is not well recognized. Clinicians and researchers need to inquire about a larger spectrum of victimization types to identify multiply victimized children and tailor prevention and interventions to the full range of threats that children face. *Pediatrics* 2009;124:000



## JUVENILE JUSTICE BULLETIN



# NATIONAL SURVEY OF Children's Exposure to Violence



Jeff Slowikowski, Acting Administrator

October 2009

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## Children's Exposure to Violence: A Comprehensive National Survey



David Finkelhor, Heather Turner, Richard Ormrod,  
Sherry Hamby, and Kristen Kracke

This Bulletin discusses the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV), the most comprehensive nationwide survey of the incidence and prevalence of children's exposure to violence to date, sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Conducted between January and May 2008, it measured the past-year and lifetime exposure to violence for children age 17 and younger across several major categories: conventional crime, child maltreatment, victimization by peers and siblings, sexual victimization, witnessing and indirect victimization (including exposure to community violence and family violence), school violence and threats, and Internet victimization. (For more detailed information on the types of violence that children were questioned about, see "Screening Questions" on page 2.) This survey is the first comprehensive attempt to measure children's exposure to violence in the home, school, and community across all age groups from birth to age 17,

and the first attempt to measure the cumulative exposure to violence over the child's lifetime.

The survey confirms that most of our society's children are exposed to violence in their daily lives. More than 60 percent of the children surveyed were exposed to violence within the past year, either directly or indirectly (i.e., as a witness to a violent act; by learning of a violent act against a family member, neighbor, or close friend; or from a threat against their home or school) (for full details on these and other statistics cited in this Bulletin, see Finkelhor et al., 2009). Nearly one-half of the children and adolescents surveyed (46.3 percent) were assaulted at least once in the past year, and more than 1 in 10 (10.2 percent) were injured in an assault; 1 in 4 (24.6 percent) were victims of robbery, vandalism, or theft; 1 in 10 (10.2 percent) suffered from child maltreatment (including physical and emotional abuse, neglect, or a family abduction); and 1 in 16 (6.1 percent) were victimized sexually. More than 1 in 4 (25.9 percent) witnessed a violent act

### A Message From OJJDP

Children are exposed to violence every day in their homes, schools, and communities. They may be struck by a boyfriend, bullied by a classmate, or abused by an adult. They may witness an assault on a parent or a shooting on the street. Such exposure can cause significant physical, mental, and emotional harm with long-term effects that can last well into adulthood.

In 1999, OJJDP created the Safe Start Initiative to prevent and reduce the impact of children's exposure to violence through enhanced practice, research, evaluation, training and technical assistance, resources, and outreach. The initiative has improved the delivery of developmentally appropriate services for children exposed to violence and their families.

Understanding the nature and extent of children's exposure to violence is essential to combating its effects. Partnering with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, OJJDP has sponsored the most comprehensive effort to date to measure children's exposure to violence. The National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence is the first survey to ask children and caregivers about exposure to a range of violent incidents and maltreatment.

As amply evidenced in this Bulletin, children's exposure to violence is pervasive and crosses all ages. The research findings reported here are critical to informing our efforts to protect children from its damaging effects.

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