

The National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence

The National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV) is the first national incidence and prevalence study to examine comprehensively the extent and nature of children's exposure to violence across all ages, settings, and timeframes. It is the primary surveillance system for tracking youth victimization in the United States. NatSCEV measures 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.

NatSCEV marks the first comprehensive attempt to measure children's exposure to violence in their daily lives, across the settings of home, school, and community.

NatSCEV includes youth across all developmental stages up to age 17, and is the first nationally representative attempt to measure the cumulative exposure to violence over a child's lifetime. The survey asked children and their adult caregivers about not only the incidents of violence that children suffered and witnessed themselves but also other related crime and threat exposures, such as theft or burglary from a child's household, being in a school that was the target of a credible bomb threat, and being in a war zone or an area where ethnic violence occurred. NatSCEV 1 was conducted in 2008 with a follow-up interview approximately 2 years later. NatSCEV 2 is being conducted in 2011.

NatSCEV is also unique in that it collects information on the characteristics of reported incidents, such as where the exposure to violence occurred, whether injury resulted, how

often the child was exposed to a specific type of violence, and the child's relationship to the perpetrator. In addition, the survey documents differences in exposure to violence across gender, race, socioeconomic status, family structure, region, urban/rural residence, and developmental stage of the child; specifies how different forms of violent victimization "cluster" or co-occur; identifies individual, family, and community-level predictors of violence exposure to violence among children; examines associations between levels/types of exposure to violence and children's mental and emotional health; and assesses the extent to which children disclose incidents of violence to various individuals and the nature and source of assistance or treatment provided (if any).

NatSCEV is part of the larger Safe Start Initiative spearheaded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). Under the leadership of then Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder in June 1999, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) created the Safe Start Initiative to prevent and reduce the impact of children's exposure to violence. Recognizing a growing need to document the full extent of children's exposure to violence, OJJDP launched the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV) with the support of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). A key focus of CDC's child maltreatment prevention activities is to collect data on the protective factors of safe, stable, and nurturing relationships. The combined approach by OJJDP and CDC is providing critical national data on levels of violence and data on key indicators of protective factors. Since its inception, NatSCEV has been designed and conducted by the Crimes against Children Research Center of the University of New Hampshire.