

More Than 1 in 4 U.S. Kids Witness Violence Between Parents: Study

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FRIDAY, Oct. 21 (HealthDay News) — More than one in four children in the United States has been exposed to physical violence between their parents at home at some time in their lives, and one in nine has been exposed to this type of violence within the past year, a new study says.

This exposure to family violence includes hearing it, being told about it, seeing the consequences, or actually seeing it. Ninety percent of the children exposed to violence directly witnessed at least one incident, according to the researchers at the University of New Hampshire's Crimes Against Children Research Center.

"Not surprisingly, given this high rate of eyewitness exposure, children had strong reactions to the exposure. Almost half yelled at their parents to stop, more than two in five tried to get away from the fight, and nearly one in four called for help," lead author Sherry Hamby, a research associate at the center and a research associate professor at Sewanee: The University of the South, said in a UNH news release.

The study, which included interviews with a nationally representative sample of more than 4,500 children, also found that male parents and caregivers were the perpetrators of family violence about 69 percent of the time, and female parents and caregivers were the perpetrators 23 percent of the time.

Both male and female perpetrators were responsible in 9 percent of cases.

"We want people to recognize that children's exposure to violence in the family is not limited to fights between parents. They also see parents physically assault siblings and teens or adults physically assault other relatives," Hamby said.

When all these types of family violence are taken into account, about 18.8 million children in the United States have been exposed to some type of family violence in their lifetime, according to the researchers.

The study was included in a new U.S. Department of Justice bulletin from the National Survey of Children Exposed to Violence.

"We want to encourage people who have contact with children in a variety of settings — including teachers, pediatricians, nurses, child protection workers, and domestic violence advocates — to consider more comprehensive, collaborative assessments of the safety issues and needs of all family members," Hamby said.

More information

The Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence outlines the [effects of family violence on children](#).

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