

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SWAZILAND

Major Findings from a National Survey on Violence Against Children in Swaziland

The first nationally representative survey on violence against female children in Swaziland was conducted in 2007. The findings are the result of interviews with more than 1,200 women and girls age between 13 and 24, randomly chosen from 1,900 households across the country. The survey was conducted by UNICEF and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in partnership with the Swazi Government and the Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA). It represents a critical step in addressing the problem of violence against children by providing basic information on the magnitude and characteristics of the problem.

Sexual Violence

- One in every three females has experienced some form of sexual violence before turning 18
- Two out of three women age 18 to 24 have experienced some form of sexual violence
- From birth until they turned 24, nearly half (48.2%) of women experienced some form of sexual violence

Sexual coercion:

- Six out of 10 females reported that they were forced into their first sexual experience
- Approximately 5% of all females said they had been raped or otherwise "forced" to have intercourse prior to age 18
- 9% of females said they were forced into intercourse before they reached 18 years old

Physical violence:

- One in four females experienced physical violence as a child
- One in four cases of physical violence against girls and women resulted in injury serious enough to consult a doctor
- Overall, 30% of all women surveyed reported experiencing some type of physical violence before reaching the age of 24

Emotional abuse:

- Three in 10 females experienced emotional abuse as a child
- More than 36% of all females aged 18 to 24 years experienced emotional abuse
- Emotional abuse was most often perpetrated by a female relative other than a mother or stepmother
- Parents were the perpetrators of emotional abuse in more than 10% of cases

Perpetrators of violence:

- Violence against girls and women was most often perpetrated by someone known to the victim:
 - One in four incidents of sexual violence against children were committed by a man or boy from the victim's community
 - More than half (53%) of incidents of sexual violence against women 18 to 24 were perpetrated by a husband or boyfriend
 - 17% of physical violence against children was committed by a male relative other than a father or stepfather
 - Nearly half (44%) of all physical violence against women 18 to 24 was committed by a boyfriend or husband

Reporting:

- Less than half of all incidents of sexual violence against children were reported to anyone
- Less than 1 in 7 incidents of sexual violence resulted in a female seeking help from available services
- Females surveyed indicated the primary reason for not reporting sexual violence was that they weren't aware that what they had experienced was abuse

Circumstances:

- Sexual violence is most likely to occur in the home, either the home of the victim or the home of a friend, relative or neighbour.

Lasting Impact:

- The majority (67%) of females reported feeling depressed at some point in their lifetime and 17% reported having thoughts of suicide
- Nearly 29% of all females reported having an unwanted pregnancy