



Objectives

The Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) systematically measures the prevalence and consequences of physical, emotional, and sexual violence against children. VACS enhances countries' capacity to design, implement, and evaluate violence prevention programs and build successful child protection systems.

The key objectives of VACS Haiti are to:

- Provide information that will guide strategies to prevent, identify, and respond to violence against children;
- Estimate the national lifetime prevalence of sexual, physical, and emotional violence against children (occurring before 18 years of age);
- Identify risk and protective factors for sexual, physical, and emotional violence against children;
- Recognize the health and social consequences of violence against children;
- Assess the knowledge and use of medical, psychosocial, legal, and protective services available for children who have experienced sexual and physical violence in Haiti as well as barriers to accessing such services;
- Assess the impact of the January 12, 2010 earthquake and the complex, protracted humanitarian crisis on sexual violence; and
- Identify areas for further research.

Partners

In-Country Partners: Multi-Sectoral Task Force – Comité de Coordination (CC):

Government: Haitian Institute of Statistics and Information; Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor; Ministry of Public Health and Population; Ministry of Justice and Public Security; Ministry of Women's Affairs and Women's Rights; Institute of Social Welfare and Research; Brigade for the Protection of Minors

Non-government: Inter-university Institute for Research and Development (INURED); Haiti Adolescent Girls Network; KOFIV; PotoFanm+Fi; Kay Fanm; ANAPFEH

International: UNICEF; CDC; USAID; UNFPA; World Vision

Together for Girls Partners:

Private Sector Partners: BD; Nduna Foundation; Grupo ABC; CDC Foundation

Multilateral Partners: UNICEF; UNAIDS; UNFPA; UN Women; WHO

US Government Partners: CDC; Department of State; PEPFAR

Process

Stakeholder Engagement: Key stakeholders in Haiti form the Multi-Sectoral Task Force known as the Comité de Coordination (CC). The CC was assembled with experts in children and/or violence in Haiti and helped to inform the survey work. This group was instrumental in adapting the survey to the local cultural context. The CC also enabled and fostered the broad ownership of the study and building of local capacity to address the problem of violence against children in Haiti.

Qualitative Study to Inform Survey Development: A qualitative study was completed by CDC and INURED in July of 2011 to identify common types of violence against children in Haiti and the circumstances under which they may occur; identify correct and understandable terminologies; clarify various concepts that would be used in the questionnaire; and identify specific cultural perceptions and practices relevant to violence against children that may be unique to Haitian context.

Study Development & Implementation: The CC guided the development of the study to be culturally responsive and relevant to programmatic and policy goals. The Ministry of Public Health and Population's National Ethics Committee in Haiti, the CDC's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and INURED's IRB, all of which protect the rights and welfare of human research subjects, independently reviewed and approved the study. CDC coordinated the study and provided technical assistance. INURED implemented the study.

Data Analysis & Dissemination: The CDC provided technical assistance for the quality control of data collection, data cleaning, statistical weighting of the data and analyses. The CDC and INURED are collaborating on writing and producing the final report which will be released in early 2013. The CC, including relevant ministries, UNICEF, CDC, INURED, and others partners, are collaborating on the official launch of the report, data dissemination, and follow-up action plan.



Photo: Nadia Todres

Methodology and Response Rate

VACS uses a standardized methodology for measuring violence against children. The primary purpose of the survey is to estimate the (1) lifetime prevalence of childhood violence, defined as violence occurring before 18 years of age and (2) prevalence of childhood violence in the 12 months prior to the survey among 13 to 17 year olds. It includes a short questionnaire for an adult in the household to build rapport with the family and to determine current socioeconomics of the household. The respondent questionnaire for 13 to 24 year olds includes the following topics: demographics; socioeconomic status; parental relations; education; general connectedness to family, friends, and community; marital status; domestic servitude; displacement following the January 2010 earthquake; sexual behavior and practices; sex in exchange for money or goods; pregnancy; HIV/AIDS testing; experiences of physical, emotional, and sexual violence; health outcomes associated with exposure to violence; and utilization and barriers to health services. A multi-stage, geographically clustered sample design was used to produce nationally representative data. The study incorporated standard enumeration areas, known as Section d'enumeration (SDE), as well as the internally displaced persons (IDP) living in camps/tent settlements resulting from the 2010 earthquake. There were a total of 2916 completed interviews: 1457 females with an overall response rate 85.6% and 1459 males with overall response rate 82.0%. VACS provides nationally-representative estimates of violence against children in Haiti. Interviewers obtained a very high individual and household response rate among eligible participants, reflecting a strong survey design, well-trained interview staff, and a national willingness to participate. A key limitation of this study is that it may underestimate prevalence based on self-reported violence. Previous research suggests that it is not uncommon for adults who have experienced child abuse to have no memory of that abuse, particularly when that abuse occurred at a young age and by someone well known to the victim.

Haiti VACS Data Highlights

Key Demographic Characteristics

- 57.2% of females and 59.6% of males aged 18-24 years completed primary school or higher
- 2.6% of females and 3.8% of males aged 18-24 years were orphaned (by the loss of both parents) prior to age 18
- 19.7% of females and 21.6% of males aged 18-24 years lost one parent prior to age 18
- 18.5% of females and 11.6% of males aged 18-24 years experienced domestic servitude prior to age 18
- 25.1% of females and 19.5% of males aged 13-17 years were displaced following the earthquake in January 2010
- 19.9% of females and 15.4% of males aged 13-17 years lived in camps or resettled area with tents following the earthquake in January 2010

Sexual Violence: sexual abuse and exploitation

- 25.7% of females and 21.2% of males aged 18-24 years experienced any sexual abuse prior to age 18
- 6.3% of females and 1.9% of males aged 18-24 years experienced physically forced sex prior to age 18
- 23.1% of females and 11.1% of males aged 18-24 years described their first sexual intercourse prior to age 18 as unwanted
- 19.0% of females and 10.9% of males aged 13-17 years experienced any sexual abuse in the past 12 months
- 78.1% of females and 34.8% of males aged 18-24 years who experienced any sexual abuse reported that the perpetrator was 5 or more years older
- 4.2% of females and 6.8% of males aged 18-24 years received money, food, gifts, or other favors for sex prior to age 18

Physical Violence

- 60.5% of females and 57.2% of males aged 18-24 years experienced physical violence prior to age 18
- 55.9% of females and 54.4% of males aged 18-24 years experienced physical violence by an adult household member prior to age 18
- 21.1% of females and 20.0% of males aged 18-24 years experienced physical violence by an authority figure in the community, such as teachers and police, prior to age 18
- 38.1% of females and 36.4% of males aged 13-17 years experienced physical violence in the past 12 months

Emotional Violence

- 34.6% of females and 27.2% of males aged 18-24 years experienced emotional violence by an adult household member prior to age 18

Service Uptake for Violence

- 57.0% of females and 37.4% of males aged 18-24 years who experienced sexual abuse prior to age 18 years told someone about the experience
- 10.0% of females and 6.6% of males aged 18-24 years who experienced sexual abuse prior to age 18 received services of any kind, including medical, mental health, legal, or protection services, for the sexual abuse

Violence and Sexual Risk Taking Behavior

This section examines the prevalence of sexual risk taking behaviors in the 12 months prior to the survey among 19 to 24 year olds and their association with childhood violence to ensure exposure to childhood violence *preceded* involvement in sexual risk taking behavior.

- 36.4% of females age 19-24 years who experienced child sexual violence had multiple sex partners in the past 12 months compared to 29.4% of 19-24 year old females who had not experienced child sexual violence
- Females aged 19-24 years who experienced child physical violence were more likely to have received gifts, food or favors in exchange for sex during the past 12 months compared to those who had not experienced child physical violence
- Females aged 19-24 years who experienced childhood emotional violence were more likely to report infrequent condom use in the last 12 months compared to those who had not experienced childhood emotional violence