



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare

Physical Violence: The Most Common Form of Violence Experienced by Children and Youth in Namibia

The Government of the Republic of Namibia in 2019 completed a nationally-representative Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (VACS).¹ This survey interviewed 5,191 children and youth 13-24 years old about their experiences of physical², sexual³, and emotional⁴ violence.

FINDINGS

The survey found that both boys and girls experience unacceptably high rates of emotional, physical, and sexual violence.

Physical violence² is the most common form of violence experienced and witnessed by children and youth and is most often perpetrated by a parent, caregiver, or other adult relative.

- Nearly one in three females (32.9%) and two in five males (41.2%) experienced physical violence before age 18.
- Nearly one in four females (23.8%) and males (22.6%) experienced physical violence in childhood by a parent, caregiver, or other adult relative.

Physical violence often starts at a young age.

- Among those who experienced childhood physical violence, one in three females (33.1%) and males (34.9%) experienced the first instance between ages 6 and 11. Over half experienced their first instance between ages 12 and 17 (63.6% of females and 62.2% of males).

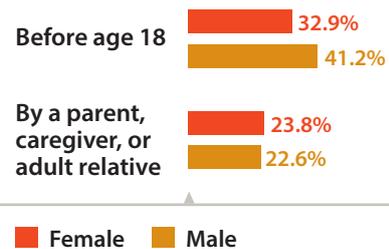
Children can also witness physical violence in their family or household, and in the communities where they live.

- Among youth ages 18-24, over one in three females (35.9%) and males (38.4%) witnessed physical violence in the home before age 18.

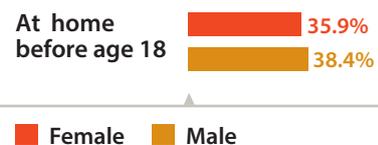
CONCLUSION

The use of physical violence against children is common in Namibia and perpetuates a cycle of violence. Children who experience violence are more likely to further experience violence as adults and to become perpetrators of violence. Children who experience violence are also at elevated risk for poor health including chronic diseases and HIV. Preventing violence against children and providing supportive services to victims is essential in ensuring successful futures for children and youth in Namibia.

Children who **experienced** physical violence



Children who **witnessed** physical violence



RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings from the VACS in Namibia highlight that there is a need to prevent physical violence against children, and to protect and support children who are experiencing physical violence. These services need to be easily accessible, welcoming, and supportive.

Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare:

- Ensure information about positive parenting is available and actively disseminated through schools, community leadership structures, trainings, and the media.

Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS):

- Identify a focal person for child-friendly services in all healthcare facilities and provide training for primary health care (PHC) workers on how to approach and manage cases of child abuse.
- Training materials are available from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare.
- Ensure healthcare facilities increase the visibility of child-friendly services in the community and that children are aware that cases of violence can be cared for and reported at the healthcare facility.⁵
- For anyone accessing HIV testing services, including children and young adults, health assistants communicate information about violence prevention, how to report cases of violence, and appropriately refer cases for post-violence care.⁶
- Training provided to health assistants and community healthcare workers on how to identify cases of violence, and what to do if a child reports they are experiencing violence.³
- Continue to scale up family welfare services through the Directorate of Social Welfare.

Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture:

- Create safe spaces in schools such as a separate room for Lifeskills teachers and counsellors to use where children feel free and safe to report VAC cases and have confidential discussions, including access to a phone where children can call Lifeline/Childline and the presence of a suggestion box as a reporting and grievance mechanism, to be opened daily in the presence of a teacher, parent, or learner.

All stakeholders:

- Ensure that the tollfree LifeLine GBV helpline, 116, is well-advertised throughout Namibia.
- Ensure that the contact information about where to obtain care and report cases of violence is widely available in the community.
- Service providers to make parenting programmes or parenting support more widely available. This could take the form of parents attending a parenting course to community outreach activities and regular telephonic contact with parents.

**Together we will
end violence against
children and youth
in Namibia.**

**Your support can
make a difference.**

For additional information, please contact:

Directorate of Child Protection
Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare
Juvenis Building, Independence Avenue
(north), Windhoek
Private Bag 13359, Windhoek, Namibia

Telephone: (+264) 061-2833111

Fax: (+264) 061-229569

Website: www.mgecw.gov.na

Facebook: www.facebook.com/MGECWNAMIBIA

NOTES

1 Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, Namibia Statistics Agency, and International Training and Education Center for Health at the University of Washington. *Violence Against Children and Youth in Namibia: Findings from the Violence Against Children and Youth Survey, 2019 (Full Report)*. Windhoek, Namibia: Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2020.

2 Physical violence includes slapping, pushing, shoving, shaking, intentionally throwing something to hurt, punching, kicking, whipping, beating with an object, strangling, smothering, trying to drown, burning intentionally, or using or threatening with a knife, panga, gun, or other weapon.

3 Sexual violence includes unwanted sexual touching, attempted sex, physically forced sex, and pressured sex (through threats or harassment).

4 Emotional violence includes being told that you were unloved or did not deserve to be loved, being told that they wished you were dead or had never been born, or being ridiculed or put down by a parent, caregiver, or adult relative.

5 Among 18-24 year olds who ever sought help for any incident of sexual violence, just 57.3% of females sought help from a healthcare provider. The data were unreliable for males. A similar trend is seen with physical violence, as just 55.8% of females and 78.3% of males sought help from a healthcare provider.

6 Among children aged 14-24, 95.0% of females and 93.6% of males aged 14-24 knew where to go for an HIV test.

