

October 2025

VIOLENCE IN CHILDHOOD: FINDINGS FROM THE LAVEX 2023 SURVEY WITH LOUISIANA ADULTS

Background and Objectives:

Violence is recognized as a major concern in Louisiana, but evidence on violence against children in the state is not well-documented. Lack of documentation is due to under-reporting to the criminal justice system and a lack of systematic data collection on violence experiences from youth themselves. Our recent LaVEX survey with a statewide sample of Louisiana adults asked about experiences of violence in childhood and adolescence, offering a snapshot into Louisianan's experiences of violence in childhood. While this is not a direct assessment of violence against children today, it may offer some insight.

Methodology:

We analyzed data from the statewide 2023 Louisiana Violence Experiences (LaVEX) survey, which assessed adults' experiences of violence, substance use and mental health. In partnership with NORC at the University of Chicago, we conducted an online survey available in English and Spanish with 1081 Louisiana residents aged 18 and older in summer 2023. For more details on this study please see the [LaVEX full report \(4\)](#). We assessed the following key variables for experiences in childhood (0-12), adolescence (13-17), young adulthood (18-24):

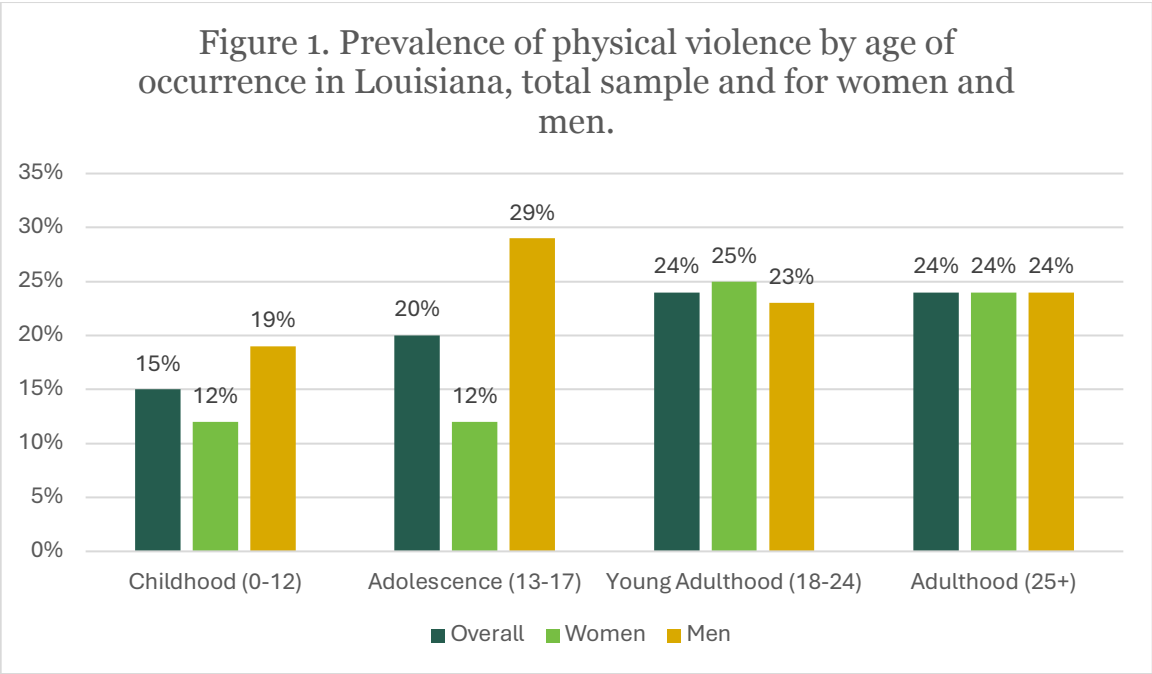
- *Physical violence* ever and age at occurrence. Physical violence included being hit, slapped, punched, shoved, choked, kicked, shaken, or otherwise physically hurt, or having been threatened or harmed by a knife or gun.
- *Sexual violence* ever and age at occurrence. Sexual violence included verbal or cyber sexual harassment, physically aggressive sexual harassment, sexual coercion, or forced sex.
- *Intimate partner violence* ever and age at occurrence. Intimate partner violence included physical, sexual, economic, or emotional control, as well as threats or use of violence against them, someone they care about, or a pet, from a current or former romantic or sexual partner. This form of violence was not assessed by age of occurrence.

Findings:

Physical Violence

Almost 1 in 5 men and more than 1 in 9 women experienced physical violence in childhood. (See Figure 1.) In adolescence, physical violence increased for boys but not for girls, with almost 1 in 3 men and still about 1 in 9 women reporting physical violence in adolescence. For women, the elevation in experiences of physical violence occurred in young adulthood.

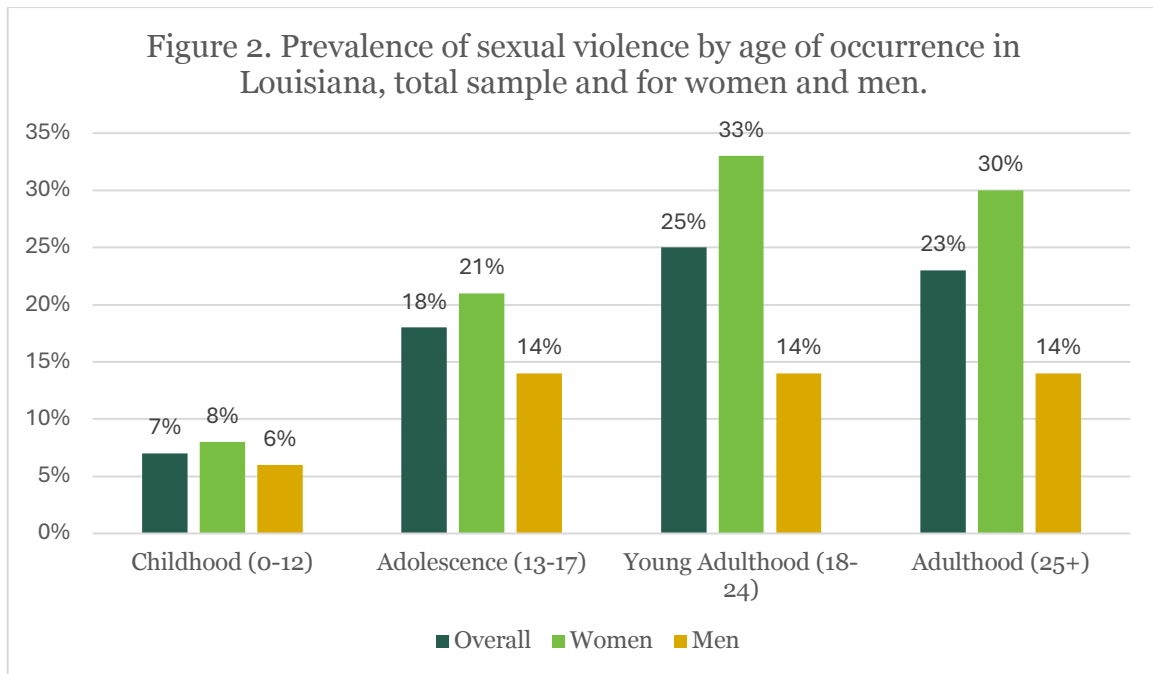
These findings align with studies on physical violence against children which show that such violence is most likely to occur from family and as a means of correcting what is deemed as problem behavior (1). Boys are more likely to experience this form of abuse, with the degree of violent control from a family member escalating as boys get older and larger and are less easily controlled (1). For women, escalation of physical violence occurs in young adulthood, as violence from a partner (i.e., intimate partner violence [IPV]) becomes more likely.



Sexual Violence

Approximately 1 in 17 men and 1 in 12 women experienced sexual violence in childhood. (See Figure 2.) In adolescence, this prevalence more than doubled for both men and women, with 1 in 7 men and more than 1 in 5 women experiencing sexual violence in adolescence. Prevalence remained stagnant at this level in young adulthood and beyond, but it rose again for women in young adulthood, where 1 in 3 women report sexual violence at 18-24 years.

These findings align with research on sexual violence against children, which shows that sexual violence against children is not uncommon and is slightly more likely to occur against girls than boys and in adolescence relative to childhood (2). However, risk for sexual violence continues to increase as girls age into young adulthood, with such violence in the form of forced sex more likely to occur from someone known to the woman, often a partner, friend, or acquaintance (3).



Intimate Partner Violence

One in four Louisiana adults reported experiences of IPV in young adulthood or adulthood, and one in six experienced IPV in adolescence. Women were more likely than men to have experienced physical and sexual IPV across age groups. In addition to direct experiences, more than one in five Louisianans (22%) witnessed IPV against their mother when they were children. Importantly, those who witnessed IPV were more likely to report experiencing IPV themselves as well.

Summary of Key Findings and Implications:

- More than 1 in 5 Louisiana adults report that they experienced physical or sexual violence in childhood or adolescence, and more than 1 in 5 also report having witnessed IPV against their mother in childhood. Such experiences of violence and family violence exposure have significant negative effects on people in the short term and the long term, including mental health concerns and risk for perpetuating the cycle of violence against children (1,2).
- Experiences of violence in childhood and adolescence are different for men and women, with men more likely than women to experience physical violence and the highest risk for these experiences occurring in adolescence where women are more likely than men to experience sexual violence and have highest risk in young adulthood. These findings highlight the need for gender-specific programs to address violence prevention and supports.
- Violence against children is likely a major concern in Louisiana, given the level of exposure to such violence we see reported by Louisiana adults. Opportunities for surveillance to detect and address violence are key, but these should be combined with supports for families and communities to educate parents and prevent violence against children.

References

1. McCoy ML, Keen SM. Child abuse and neglect. Routledge; 2022 Apr 20.

2. Walker-Descartes I, Hopgood G, Condado LV, Legano L. Sexual violence against children. *Pediatric Clinics*. 2021 Apr 1;68(2):427-36.
3. Basile KC, Smith SG, Kresnow MJ, Khatiwada S, Leemis RW. The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey: 2016/2017 report on sexual violence. 2022. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If you need help: Please contact the Louisiana Mental Health, Suicide, and Crisis 24-hour Hotline: 988 For sexual violence support in Louisiana, please visit: <https://www.lafasa.org/>

Acknowledgements: We would like to thank Newcomb Institute at Tulane University for supporting this work, and NORC for their implementation of the survey. We would also like to thank our survey participants for their time and generosity in providing the data for this research.

Citation: Raj A, Morumganti A, LeBlanc SS, Pinkerton J, Patel P, Rao N, Caccioppi C, Daniel C. *Violence in Childhood: Findings from the LaVEX 2023 Survey with Louisiana Adults*. August 2025. Newcomb Institute at Tulane University. <https://newcomb.tulane.edu/LaVEX>

