

Violence Against Children In and Around Schools in Sierra Leone

Violence against children is preventable, and the education sector can play a critical role in driving change through schools and school systems. This note summarizes the state of school related violence in Sierra Leone, and highlights key data gaps.

Bullying refers to repeated emotional or physical aggressive behaviours including any form of isolating, rejecting or excluding from a group, or hitting, kicking, pushing by peers. GSHS 2017 indicates 56% of students experienced **bullying in the last 30 days**.¹



Sexual Violence takes different forms, and includes non-consensual completed or attempted sexual contact or acts of a sexual nature that do not involve physical contact, and any form of coercion into sexual situations. Available data indicates that 3% of females aged 15 to 19 **experienced sexual violence in their lifetime**, with almost none of these incidents perpetrated by teachers or peers in 2019. Data for boys is not available.²



Corporal Punishment refers to any form of punishment involving physical force intended to cause pain or discomfort.



Data Gaps GSHS 2017 has data on student bullying. DHS (2013, 2019) provides sexual violence data. MICS 2017 provides data on corporal punishment by caretakers. MICS can be broken down by disability status, while other data cannot be disaggregated by LGBT+ or disability status.⁵ The table below denotes available data.

Type of Violence	Aged 6 to 12	Aged 13 to 22	2008 - 2012	2013 - 2018	2019 or after
Physical (Peers)		✓		GSHS	
Emotional (Peers)		✓		GSHS	
Sexual (Peers)					
Sexual (Teachers)		✓		DHS	DHS
Corporal Punishment (Teachers)		✓		DHS ^{2*}	DHS ^{2*}
Corporal Punishment (Caretakers)	✓	✓		MICS	

Sierra Leone Compared to Other Countries

The graphs below include only countries with data from the same international survey, which means the data were collected from children of similar ages using the same questions. **Below are country averages.**



Bullying is...

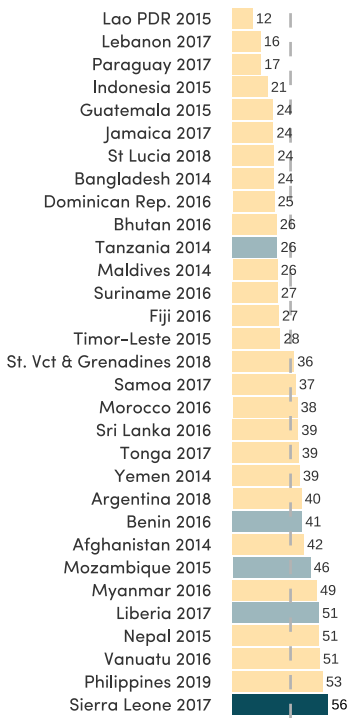
15 percentage points higher than the Sub-Saharan Africa average, and 23 percentage points higher than average for low- and middle-income countries with data.

Bullying data by type is not available

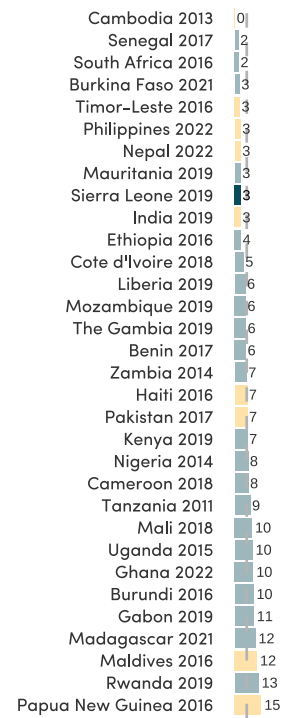
No Data

Sexual Violence is...

4 percentage points lower than the Sub-Saharan Africa average, and 3 percentage points lower than the average for low- and middle-income countries with data.



GSHS 2017 (+/-) 3 years



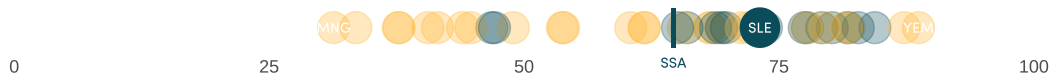
DHS 2019 (+/-) 3 years

Corporal Punishment (Teachers)

No Data

Corporal Punishment (Caretakers)

Children Aged 1 to 14 who experienced corporal punishment (%) - MICS 6



Notes

- International surveys cover different forms of violence and do not use a standard definition of violence.
- This brief covers international survey data. We recommend complementing it with national surveys (e.g., household surveys) when available.
- The violence figures included in this brief are likely an underestimate, as many victims do not disclose their experiences of violence.⁶
- Country comparisons created with DHS, VACS, and GSHS data, include low- and middle-income countries within +/- 3 years of Sierra Leone's survey round. Graphs created with MICS, TIMSS, PIRLS, PISA, PISA-D, and ERCE, include low- and middle-income countries with data on the same survey round.
- Sierra Leone participated in a benchmarking exercise with [Safe to Learn](#), which establishes a baseline to monitor progress in ending violence against children in and around schools. Results are forthcoming.

Sources

- Calculations using GSHS 2017. Surveyed students are in Standards 7 and 8.
- Calculations using DHS 2019. Surveys women aged 15 - 19. While DHS asks about teacher and peer perpetrators of physical violence, we exclude from our analysis as the age range does not reflect the period when children are most likely to experience corporal punishment. If the focus is on physical violence against women by teachers starting at age 15, DHS data can provide relevant insights. The question on sexual violence asks about the perpetrator of the first incident experienced by the respondent.
- Calculations using MICS 2017.
- [End Corporal Punishment of Children](#), data accessed 2024. Note: "Some" represents cases where prohibition is stated for specific provisions (eg., [forms of corporal punishment or school levels](#)). Alternative Care refers to cases where a child's primary caregiver is not their parents (eg. foster care).
- [Evans, Hares, Smarrelli, and Wu](#). CGD 2023.
- [Smarrelli, Wu, Baago-Rasmussen, Hares, and Naker](#). CGD 2024.