

When the Data You Have Aren't the Data You Need: The Availability of School-Related Violence Data in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

 David K. Evans, Susannah Hares, Gabriela Smarrelli, Dongyi Wu

Abstract

Violence in schools—which surveys demonstrate is a challenge across countries—is associated with worse educational and life outcomes. Yet documenting the prevalence of sexual, physical, and psychological violence in schools is just the first piece of data that policymakers and partners need to act effectively against school-related violence. In this study, we review the availability of data on school-related violence from international surveys administered across low- and middle-income countries, as well as national surveys in a sample of countries. We find that most countries lack the data to answer simple questions that policymakers might ask as precursors to taking action against school-related violence, to understand the consequences of violence, or to monitor progress on reducing violence. For example, only one in six countries has data to measure how many children have recently experienced sexual violence from school staff. The gaps in data are biggest for younger children. We provide a dataset of international surveys with school-related violence questions and recommendations to increase the available, actionable data related to school-related violence.

KEYWORDS

Violence, education, school-based violence, gender-based violence, data

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Accompanying materials:

- Database of surveys with school-related violence questions, available at <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/wu-et-al-2023a-school-violence-survey-database.zip>.
- Summary table of school-related violence questions in international surveys from 2013–2023, available at <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/smarrelli-et-al-2023-summary-school-violencesurvey-questions.zip>.
- Interactive map of surveys with school-related violence questions, available at <https://public.flourish.studio/visualisation/15338664/>.

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Regular Research Article

When the data you have aren't the data you need: The availability of school-related violence data in low- and middle-income countries

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ABSTRACT

Violence in schools—which surveys demonstrate is a challenge across countries—is associated with worse educational and life outcomes. Yet documenting the prevalence of sexual, physical, and psychological violence in schools is just the first piece of data that policymakers and partners need to act effectively against school-related violence. In this study, we review the availability of data on school-related violence from international surveys administered across low- and middle-income countries, as well as national surveys in a sample of countries. We find that most countries lack the data to answer simple questions that policymakers might ask as precursors to taking action against school-related violence, to understand the consequences of violence, or to monitor progress on reducing violence. For example, only one in six countries has data to measure how many children have recently experienced sexual violence from school staff. The gaps in data are biggest for younger children. We provide a dataset of international surveys with school-related violence questions and recommendations to increase the available, actionable data related to school-related violence.

1. Introduction

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most ratified of any human rights treaty in history (CRS 2015). It declares that states shall “protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence” (UNHCR 1989). Yet children around the world continue to experience violence, including within state institutions such as schools. In low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), available evidence suggests that high rates of girls and boys experience school-related violence (Hillis et al. 2016; Evans et al. 2023).¹ Beyond the right to a childhood free of violence, school-related violence has well-documented, adverse effects on children’s human capital accumulation through both educational participation and performance (Bisika, Ntata, & Konyani, 2009; Devries et al., 2014; Dunne et al., 2013; Eriksen, Skyt Nielsen, & Marianne, 2014; Ponzo 2013). There are also longer-term impacts on mental health, relationships, and earnings (Brown and Taylor 2008;

Wodon et al. 2021).

Simply knowing that school-related violence is a problem is insufficient to combat it. For policymakers to act effectively against violence, they need information on many aspects of the violence (what kind? who is experiencing it? who is committing it?), and they need that data with sufficient regularity to know if policy efforts are making a difference. In this paper, we document the current state of regularly collected data about school-related violence across LMICs² to understand if policymakers have the data they need to reduce school-related violence and know if they are succeeding.³ We focus on school-related violence in primary and secondary education.

We reviewed 14 international surveys and built a dataset at the country-survey-year level with detailed information on the characteristics of survey respondents, the target population, and the types of school-related violence covered. We also randomly selected 30 percent of LMICs, which translates to 23 countries, in three sample

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¹ We define school-related violence to include any form of physical, sexual, and psychological violence committed against students by school staff, by other students, or by persons unaffiliated with the school, either at school or on the way to or from school (i.e., in the process of school participation).

² Our focus is on low- and middle-income countries, but some of the surveys we include also cover high-income countries. School-related violence is a challenge in countries at every income level.

³ To evaluate the success of an individual policy, one would need an impact evaluation. Yet most policymakers with the objective of reducing school violence would consider it a policy success to see violence levels falling over time, even if this were not rigorously attributable to specific policies.

regions—Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and East Asia and the Pacific—to explore the availability of data on school-related violence in national surveys.

To demonstrate the availability of data from international and national surveys, we pose six sample questions that a policymaker might ask in a briefing on school-related violence. These are to demonstrate how much actionable data are available to policymakers. We include three questions on the prevalence of violence (e.g., how many school-aged children have been sexually abused by teachers in the last year?), one question on the evolution of violence across time (e.g., if a country made progress in reducing school-related violence over time, would it have the data to show it?), and two questions on the consequences of violence (e.g., how much more likely were youth who experienced physical violence to drop out of the school the next year?). These questions are not intended to be comprehensive: a policymaker may have many other questions about violence in schools. Neither is our characterization of the data needed to answer them definitive: researchers may debate the data needs. We include them as examples to suggest whether the data currently available would allow answers to basic questions.

Our analysis of international surveys—for which we have examined coverage across all LMICs—led to five main findings. First, far fewer international surveys gather data on sexual violence than on physical violence. Only 17 percent of countries have data to document the prevalence of sexual violence perpetrated by school staff or perpetrated on the way to or from school in the past year, despite these having been identified as key issues (Parkes et al. 2023; Trani and Cannings 2013).⁴ More countries (63 percent) have data to identify the prevalence of physical or psychological violence by peers. Second, most countries do not have data to show whether school-related violence is falling over time. To do this, countries would need to gather the same data multiple times. We find that while 62 percent of LMICs administered more than one international survey with questions related to school violence in the last decade, only 36 percent conducted the same survey at least twice across time. This distinction is important, as different surveys ask different questions, and constructing violence trends is nearly impossible without repeating the same survey questions over time.⁵ Even in places where there are repeated surveys, they tend to capture a subset of school-related violence, with a primary focus on physical and psychological bullying by peers and not on sexual violence or on violence by school staff. Third, current surveys offer very little data on the consequences of violence. For example, not a single country had data to assess whether school-related violence was the reason for school dropout; and only ten percent of countries had data on injuries from violence perpetrated by teachers. Fourth, there is little data regarding the characteristics of perpetrators and victims, including particularly vulnerable groups (e.g., LGBTQ+ communities and individuals with disabilities).⁶ Fifth, while many international surveys ask at least some questions on school-related violence, the areas of focus within that topic and the questions are too different to generate comparable data across surveys.

Of course, countries have access to national data in addition to international surveys. We next examine whether national surveys help to close gaps in the data from international surveys in a randomly selected subset of 23 countries in three regions (East Asia and the Pacific, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean). Of these countries, 17 administered a national survey that included school-related violence questions. But in most cases, national surveys did little to fill

⁴ More countries (43 percent) can document sexual violence by school staff at some point in the past, but we would propose that knowing the degree of violence without knowing whether it was one or fifteen years ago limits its actionability.

⁵ Cappa, Cecchetti, and Jijon (2023) propose standardizing questions on violence against children across surveys.

⁶ All initialisms and acronyms outside of references are listed in Appendix J.

the gaps identified in the international surveys.

Our analysis highlights the urgent need for more surveys dedicated to violence against children within and outside of school. It also reveals disparities in school-related violence coverage across regions. Latin America and the Caribbean and East Asia and the Pacific have more data on school-related violence from both national and international surveys compared with Sub-Saharan Africa. Nevertheless, greater efforts are necessary worldwide to enable countries to effectively monitor the state of violence in school and to evaluate their progress in eliminating violence against children. In our discussion section, we discuss ethical issues related to asking children questions about violence and provide recommendations for collecting the data that policymakers need to act effectively against school violence.

Our paper adds to previous work surveying data sources on school-related violence.⁷ Most recently, Heslop et al. (2021) review multi-country surveys that cover violence against children in and around schools. Richardson and Fen Hui (2018) review six international surveys with data on physical and psychological bullying during adolescence with the aim of assessing data comparability and creating a global indicator of bullying. Our study adds to these in three main ways. First, existing work mainly identifies which surveys exist by country. We go beyond this by documenting how frequently school-related violence tends to be available across time by type of violence, gender, and age groups. Second, we propose a way to identify key data gaps worldwide by documenting how well existing data can answer a set of questions relevant to policy decision-making. Third, existing papers focus only on international surveys, while we make an effort to incorporate national surveys.

Previous reports (Richardson and Fen Hui 2018; UNESCO 2017) discuss similarities and differences in school-related violence questions across surveys. We add to this by including in the analysis half a dozen surveys that have not been analysed before—such as the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), and the Service Delivery Indicators (SDI)—and identifying differences in the formulation of questions, time frame, and item response options. Finally, we make our dataset of international surveys publicly available. We hope the dataset will simplify researchers' and practitioners' data search process, particularly when they wish to estimate figures about school-related violence or to identify gaps in existing data.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. In Section 2, we describe the methods used in the paper. In Section 3, we describe the geographical, gender, and age coverage of school-related violence data, as well as how frequently it tends to be available across time. We then document how well existing data can answer a set of questions relevant to policy decision-making. Section 4 discusses data gaps and provides recommendations about school-related violence data collection and measurement.

2. Methods

2.1. International surveys

2.1.1. Search for surveys

To construct a comprehensive database of school-violence-related surveys, we first reviewed the questionnaires of all international surveys that to our knowledge could possibly contain questions on school-related violence. Then, to rule out the possibility of missing any valuable dataset, we reviewed surveys mentioned in a recent systematic review paper on violence against children (Devries et al. 2018).

⁷ Appendix A, Table A.1 summarises key related studies. Beyond reviews of data sources, other research examines data sources to analyse who perpetrates violence against children (Devries et al. 2018) and what we know about how to reduce school-related violence (Parkes et al. 2016).

2.1.2. Inclusion-exclusion criteria

We included only nationally representative school-based or household-based surveys with questions that could be linked to experiences of school-related violence during childhood and adolescence.⁸ This includes incidents of violence committed against students by school staff, other students, or persons unaffiliated with the school, either at school or on the way to or from school (i.e., in the process of school participation). Since the purpose of the study is to create an up-to-date mapping of the current school violence survey coverage, we restricted our sample to surveys conducted between 2013 and 2023 (see Appendix B for more details).

2.1.3. The dataset

We identified 14 international surveys with questions on school violence and built a dataset to systematise the available information. Table 2.1 lists the 14 surveys.⁹ For each international survey, we recorded the country coverage, the year and frequency of administration, the target population and type of respondent, and whether—as of April 2023—the most recent survey round had been completed. Moreover, we reviewed the questionnaires to identify which surveys included school-violence-related questions by type of violence (i.e., physical, psychological, and sexual violence) and by perpetrator (i.e., teachers or other students).

We observe that 176 of 223 countries worldwide administered at least one of the 14 international surveys between 2013 and 2023.¹⁰ (Table 2.2 summarizes the dataset; the full dataset is freely available (Wu et al. 2023a).) Our dataset is constructed at the country-survey-year level, meaning that for each country it is possible to observe the surveys that were conducted in each year between 2013 and 2023. The dataset has a total of 1,066 observations: 792 country-survey rounds completed in all the countries, 229 country-survey rounds currently in implementation, and 45 observations that represent countries that did not conduct any international surveys on school violence.

We created two publicly available inputs in addition to our dataset. The first is a document comparing the questions on school-related violence included in the international surveys (available at Smarrelli et al. 2023). The second is an interactive map that shows which surveys have been executed in each country (available at Wu et al. 2023b). (Fig. 2.1 is a screenshot of the interactive map.) We use these inputs to study and determine what data we have, do not have, and still need about school-related violence. A detailed explanation and case study on how to use our dataset is available in Appendix C.

⁸ In this review, we focus on violence in which the victims of violence are children or youth. We recognize that school-based violence can also include violence against teachers or other staff members (Venketsamy et al. 2023).

⁹ We did not include the Young Lives Survey – a longitudinal survey administered in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam – given that it was not designed to be nationally representative. Another survey that is not included in this review is the Global Kids Online – administered in Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Ghana, Montenegro, the Philippines, Serbia, South Africa and Uruguay. The survey was excluded because it is not representative in every country, focuses only on online users, and the questions would not allow users to clearly identify school-related incidents of violence.

¹⁰ The 223 comprises the 217 entities on the World Bank's list of countries and economies (including places like Hong Kong, which is officially part of China but has a separate economy and constitution) and 6 semi-dependent territories that do not appear in the World Bank's list of countries and economies but which in some cases have their own surveys (e.g., the Cook Islands or Zanzibar).

2.2. National surveys

We complement our analysis of international surveys with a sample of national surveys. We concentrate on large-scale, nationally representative surveys, which are usually those conducted by national statistics offices.¹¹ We focused on three regions (e.g., Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean), which together account for around 70 percent of all LMICs in the world. The objective of this exercise is to provide a sense of the availability of local data rather than an exhaustive characterization, which is beyond the scope of this study. We restricted the analysis to countries with a population above one million and randomly chose 30 percent of the LMICs in each region, stratifying by income distribution within the region.¹²

We then administered a systematic search of nationally representative surveys on school violence for each of the selected countries. The inclusion–exclusion criteria considered four main factors: the survey had to be administered between 2013 and 2023; the survey had to provide quantitative data; the questionnaire had at least one question related to school violence¹³; and surveys had to be nationally representative. The search was carried out in Google and Google Scholar in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, covering the official language spoken in 83 percent of the countries in our sample.¹⁴ For all four countries for which we did not search in one of the official languages (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Somalia), we nonetheless identified national surveys that included school-related violence questions. Thus, the only countries in which we did not identify national surveys with school-related violence questions were countries where we did search in the national language; and there is no country that we suggest has no data on school violence in which we did not search in the national language.

We used the following combination of keywords in the search: “school violence OR school climate OR school environment OR school coexistence OR victimization OR child victimisation OR child maltreatment OR bullying OR gender based violence OR domestic violence OR safety OR child protection OR children life experience OR adolescent life experience OR women life experience OR trauma,” “demographic survey OR health,”¹⁵ and “survey OR questionnaire OR study.”

We identified a total of 27 national surveys with questions on school-related violence across 17 of the 23 sampled countries. (Table 2.3 summarizes the national surveys by country.) In Sub-Saharan Africa, 54 percent of the sampled countries administered a survey, while this was the case for all sampled countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and in East Asia and the Pacific. In total, 19 of the 27 surveys were customized national surveys, while the remaining 8 were modelled after international surveys, including similar questions and sampling, but

¹¹ Conducting a separate systematic review of data from small case studies is beyond the scope of this study. These studies are often in the form of clinical trials, are published in psychological or other health-related fields, have been mainly executed in high-income countries, and generally do not make data publicly available. For example, a systematic review on school violence research by Turanovic et al. (2022) shows that 56 percent of the studies were conducted in the US, and only 26 of the 356 non-US studies were carried out in a low or middle-income country. None of those studies had publicly available datasets.

¹² The regional and income classifications and the population data are from the World Bank.

¹³ This could include questions about prevalence, consequences of violence, or safety in school, among others.

¹⁴ In some instances, searches conducted in English led to sources in the official language of the respective country. In these cases, we used Google Translate to convert the webpage into English before proceeding.

¹⁵ A few countries administer demographic and health surveys that include questions on violence and that are similar to the surveys in the DHS program but administered independently to the program.

Table 2.1
International surveys.

Survey name	Managing institution(s)	Administration mode	Year / Frequency	Region(s)	School violence questions addressed to	Topics covered
Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) – Domestic Violence Module	U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)	Face-to-Face household-based questionnaire	2013 – Ongoing	East Asia & Pacific; Europe & Central Asia; Latin America & Caribbean; Middle East & North Africa; South Asia; Sub-Saharan Africa	females age from 15 to 49	sexual violence; physical violence;
Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo (ERCE)	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	Self-administered school-based questionnaire	2013; 2019	Latin America & Caribbean	male and female 3th grade students; male and female 6th grade students; 3th and 6th grade teachers; school principals	physical violence; psychological violence
Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS)	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); World Health Organization (WHO)	Self-administered school-based questionnaire	2013—2018	East Asia & Pacific; Latin America & Caribbean; Middle East & North Africa; South Asia; Sub-Saharan Africa	males and females age 13 to 17	physical violence; psychological violence
Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC)	WHO	Self-administered school-based questionnaire	2013/14; 2017/18	Europe & Central Asia; Middle East & North Africa; North America	males and females age 11, 13 and 15	physical violence; psychological violence;
Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	Face-to-Face household-based questionnaire	2018 – Ongoing	East Asia & Pacific; Europe & Central Asia; Latin America & Caribbean; Middle East & North Africa; South Asia; Sub-Saharan Africa	males and females age from 15 to 49	physical violence
Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems (PASEC)	Conference of Ministers of Education of French Speaking Countries (CONFEMEN)	Self-administered school-based questionnaire	2014	Sub-Saharan Africa	male and female teachers	corporal punishment; psychological violence; sexual violence
Progress In International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) – Context Questionnaire	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)	Self-administered school-based questionnaire	2016; 2021	East Asia & Pacific; Europe & Central Asia; Latin America & Caribbean; Middle East & North Africa; North America; Sub-Saharan Africa	male and female 4th grade students; school principals	physical violence; psychological violence
Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	Self-administered school-based questionnaire	2015; 2018; 2022	East Asia & Pacific; Europe & Central Asia; Latin America & Caribbean; Middle East & North Africa; North America	males and females age 15; school principals	physical violence; psychological violence
Programme for International Student Assessment – Development Survey (PISA-D)	OECD	Self-administered school-based questionnaire & Self-administered household-based	2017	East Asia & Pacific; Latin America & Caribbean;	males and females age 15	sexual violence; physical violence;

(continued on next page)

Table 2.1 (continued)

Survey name	Managing institution(s)	Administration mode	Year / Frequency	Region(s)	School violence questions addressed to	Topics covered
Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)	OECD	questionnaire for the out-of-school survey Self-administered school-based questionnaire	2013; 2018*	South Asia; Sub-Saharan Africa East Asia & Pacific; Europe & Central Asia; Latin America & Caribbean; Middle East & North Africa; North America; Sub-Saharan Africa	school principals	physical violence; psychological violence
The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SEACMEQ, previously SACMEQ)	SEACMEQ (multilateral cooperation)	Self-administered school-based questionnaire	2013—2017; 2018 – Ongoing*	Sub-Saharan Africa	male and female school principals	sexual violence; physical violence; psychological violence
Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) – Education Survey – Classroom Observation Module	World Bank	Face-to-face school-based questionnaire and classroom observation	2012—2017	East Asia & Pacific; Middle East & North Africa; South Asia; Sub-Saharan Africa	NA (data collected by observation in primary schools)	corporal punishment
Trends In International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) – Context Questionnaire	IEA	Self-administered school-based questionnaire	2015; 2019*	East Asia & Pacific; Europe & Central Asia; Latin America & Caribbean; Middle East & North Africa; North America; South Asia; Sub-Saharan Africa	male and female 4th grade students; male and female 8th grade students; school principals	physical violence; psychological violence
Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS)	Together for Girls (TfG) partnership; CDC	Face-to-Face household-based questionnaire	2013 – Ongoing	East Asia & Pacific; Europe & Central Asia Latin America & Caribbean; Sub-Saharan Africa;	males and females age from 13 to 24	sexual violence; physical violence; corporal punishment; psychological violence

Notes: The year/frequency column refers to survey rounds or data collection years for those surveys mentioning school violence. The designation ‘XXX – Ongoing’ in the Year/Frequency column indicates that the survey commenced in XXX and continues to be conducted annually or regularly in some countries. This label reflects the ongoing nature of the survey and its periodic updates.

* Data not available yet: TALIS 2024 to be released in 12/2025; TIMSS 2023 to be released in 12/2024; SEACMEQ to be completed in 2024.

Table 2.2
Dataset observations.

	No survey	Completeds surveys	Pendings surveys	Total
Number of international surveys		14	7	14
Number of countries	45	176	114	223
Number of country-survey-rounds	45	792	229	1066
Time range		from 2013 to 2023		
Date of last search		April 28th, 2023		

Note: The first row shows the number of international surveys that have been completed and are publicly available, as well as the number of surveys that are currently being administered or are not publicly available at the time of analysis (pending surveys). The second row shows the number of countries with no surveys, completed surveys and pending surveys. The third row indicates the number of surveys per country and year.

undertaken independently by national stakeholders.

At the national level, there are other sources of information on school-related violence. For example, some education systems have monitoring systems in place when students report school violence—as in Peru (Smarrelli 2023). But not all systems collect those data systematically or centrally: a study in Uganda documents students reporting assaults in the school’s suggestion box, but with no evidence that the data were recorded beyond that (Parkes et al. 2023). Other sources of data on school-related violence include policy reports, legal cases, and reporting on cases of school-related violence in the news media. However, while some of these sources may serve as catalysts for action, none of them seek to provide systematic data (the way surveys do) on the levels, causes, and effects of school violence. They are driven by the subset of individuals who actively report their experiences of school violence.

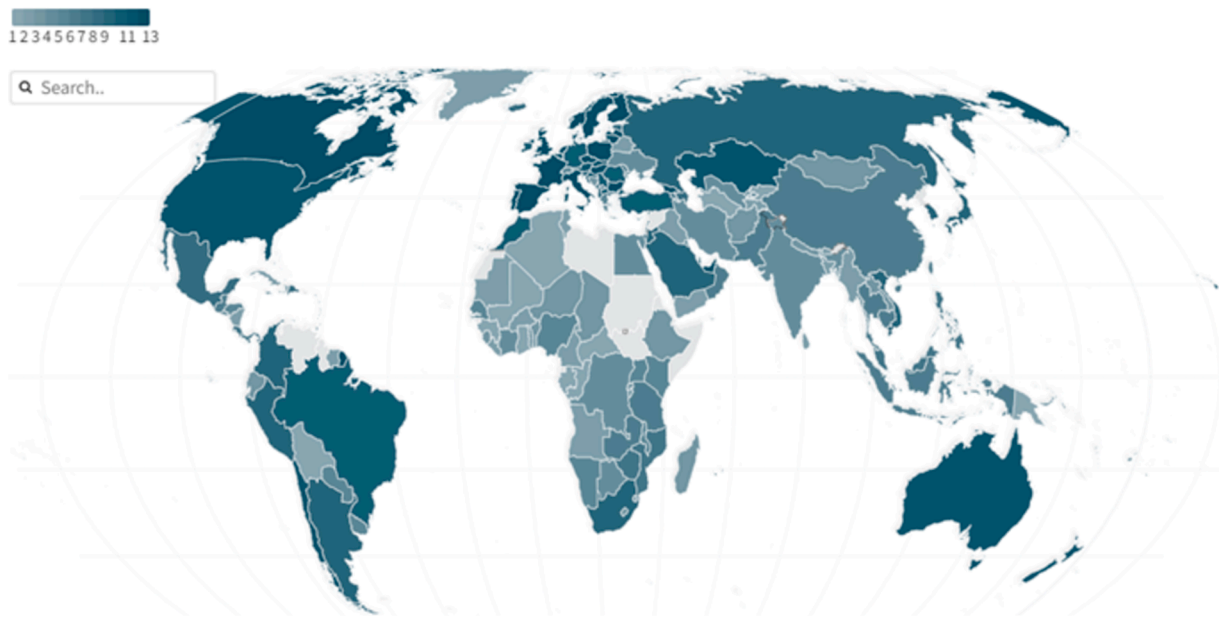


Fig. 2.1. Interactive Map of International Surveys Worldwide. Note: Interactive map created using the dataset available at [Wu et al. 2023a](#). Darker blue indicates a higher number of survey rounds per country.

2.3. Definition of school-related violence

The international and national surveys reviewed in this paper cover different forms of violence and do not use a standard definition of violence. In this review, we define school-related violence to include any form of physical, sexual, or psychological violence committed against students by school staff, other students, or persons unaffiliated with the school, either at school or on the way to or from school (i.e., in the process of school attendance).

We define the different forms of violence based on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) definitions ([UNESCO 2023](#), [WHO 2022](#)) and on the questions covered in the surveys reviewed in this paper.

Physical violence includes any form of physical aggression with the intention to hurt perpetrated by peers or members of the school staff. It includes physical attacks (with or without weapons), physical fights between students, and corporal punishment by school staff. Physical violence also includes physical bullying, a pattern of aggressive behaviour involving hitting, kicking, pushing, and stealing or destroying personal belongings that occurs repeatedly against a victim, rather than as isolated events.

Psychological or emotional violence includes any form of isolating, rejecting, exclusion from a group, ignoring, spreading rumours, name-calling, humiliation, intimidation and threats, discrimination, and any other non-physical form of hostile treatment. It can occur as isolated events or repeatedly against a victim (i.e., psychological bullying).¹⁶

Sexual violence includes non-consensual completed or attempted sexual contact (i.e., unwanted touching, attempted unwanted sex, rape), non-consensual acts of a sexual nature not involving contact (sexual harassment) and any form of coercion into sexual situations.

2.4. Illustrative policymaker questions

To study the degree of data availability for practical policymaking around school-related violence, we pose six questions that a typical

¹⁶ This also includes any cyberbullying or tech-facilitated violence-related to school, perpetrated by schoolmates or school staff.

policymaker or donor might want to answer about school-related violence in a given country, to enable them to consider the right interventions to tackle it ([Fig. 2.2](#)). The proposed questions cover physical, sexual, and psychological violence, and they aim to inform not only data availability to estimate the prevalence of specific forms of school-related violence but also its consequences and evolution over time. These are clearly not exhaustive: a policymaker would likely have many other questions. But a country that lacks data to answer these six simple questions is unlikely to have data to answer other relevant questions on this important topic.

Questions 1, 2, and 3 relate to the prevalence of violence occurring at any point in the 12 months before the survey. Question 1 is on psychological and physical bullying from peers, while Questions 2 and 3 measure sexual violence in and around school.¹⁷ Questions 4 and 5 explore the consequences of school-related violence, focusing on associated physical injuries and school dropouts. Question 6 introduces a time dimension to the analysis and aims to characterize the evolution of school violence across time. (Appendix D provides details on the measurement of each question.) To see if the policymaker questions could be answered with available data, we examined the available questionnaires to identify the countries with at least one international survey able to answer each of the six questions. (Appendix E details which surveys provide answers to each question.) We focus on three windows of analysis. First, we focus on a ten-year window (2013–2023) to provide an overall picture of data-availability in the last decade. Second, we use two five-year windows within that 10-year window (2013–2017 and 2018–2022) to explore differences in data-gaps across time.

2.5. Limitations

While our approach is designed to illuminate the accessibility and

¹⁷ Question 2—which focuses on sexual abuse by teachers—asks about all school-age children, whereas Question 3—which focuses on abuse on the way to or from school—focuses on secondary school children. This is because secondary school children often have longer commutes, since there are fewer secondary schools. Expanding Question 3 to include all school-age children would mean even fewer countries could answer it, since few surveys ask about violence experienced by younger children.

Table 2.3
List of national surveys by randomly selected countries.

Country	National surveys	Year	School violence questions addressed to	Topics covered	Managing institution(s)
<i>Africa</i>					
Benin	Etude sur les violences basees sur le genre	2022	male and female age above 3	–psychological violence by schoolmates or by teachers –physical violence by schoolmates or by teachers –economic violence by schoolmates or by teachers –sexual violence by schoolmates or by teachers –cyber violence by schoolmates or by teachers –location of violence incidence	Ministere des Affaires Sociales et de la Microfinance Observatoire de la Famille, de la Famee et de l'Enfant
Burkina Faso	Etudes nationale sur les violences faites aux enfants au Burkina Faso (national VACS)	2018	male and female age 12–17 parents of children age 0–11	(similar to VACS) – Physical violence by teachers or schoolmates at school – Emotional violence by teachers or schoolmates at school – Different types of sexual violence by teachers or schoolmates at school – Injuries due to physical violence – Psychological bullying and discrimination by peers – Physical attack by teachers – Threatened with violence at school	Institut Supérieur des Sciences de la Population (ISSP) Ministere de la femme, de la solidarite nationale, de la famille et de l'action humanitiare Save the Children Unicef
Burundi	Burundi Population-based Survey on Peace and Education (sample size n = 2991)	2015	male and female age above 14	– Psychological bullying and discrimination by peers – Physical attack by teachers – Threatened with violence at school	Harvard Humanitarian Initiative Bringham Women Hospital
Republic of the Congo	Etude sur les violences de genre et les violences en ligne en milieu scolaire (VGMS) / Study on school-related gender-based violence and cyber violence	2019	male and female age 12–18	(similar to VACS) – Verbal and psychological violence by teachers and students – Physical violence by teachers and students – Economic violence by teachers and students – Sexual violence by teachers and students – Cyber violence by teachers and students	UNICEF
Mali			NA		
Mauritania			NA		
Mauritius			NA		
Senegal	Enquete des Violences Basees sur le Genre (Gender based violence) et Foncier	2020	male and female population above 18 from the 4 regions of Procacsef intervention	– violence in school environment or universities (no distinction between types of violence in the report)	Ministere des Finances et du Budget,Projet Cadastre et Securisation Fonciere (Procacsef)World Bank (financing)
Sierra Leone			NA		
Somalia	Somalia Health and Demographic Survey	2020	females age from 15 to 49	– Physical violence (attacks) by teachers	Directorate of National Statistics of the Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development
South Africa	General Household Survey (GHS)	2009—2019 (annually continuous)	male and female aged 5–17	– Violence in school as a reason of non-enrolment – Do not feel safe at school as a reason of absence – Experience of any form of violence (physical and verbal) at school in the past 3 months – Corporal punishment by teacher – Physical violence by teacher – Verbal abuse by teacher – Verbal abuse by peers – Physical abuse by peers	Statistics South Africa (National bureau of statistics)
	Sexual violence against children in South Africa (Optimus Study)	data collection started in 2013 and ended in 2015	male and female age 15–17	–Sexual violence perpetrated by teachers	Funded by UBS Optimus Foundation
South Sudan			NA		
Zambia			NA		
<i>Asia</i>					
China	China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study (CHARLS) – Life History Survey	2014	male and female age 45 and older (Not representative of the current generation of youth)	– Childhood experience of peer bullying at school (no distinction between physical or psychological bullying)	China Center for Economic Research, Institute of Social Science Survey, Peking University
	China Education Panel Survey (CEPS)	baseline 2013–2014; follow-up 2014–2015	male and female grade 7 and grade 9 children (12- and 14-year-old) school principals, homeroom teachers, subject teachers	– Physical fight among students – Verbal violence, ignorance and corporal punishment by teachers – Peer bullying in classrooms (practice of bullying, not victimisation; no distinction between physical or psychological bullying) – Peer bullying and discrimination towards	National Survey Research Center, Renmin University of China

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Table 2.3 (continued)

Cambodia	National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experiences (WHS)	2015	female age 15—64	students from other counties (practice of bullying, not victimisation; no distinction between physical or psychological bullying) (similar to DHS) – Lifetime and past 12 months sexual violence by teachers after the age of 15 – Lifetime and past 12 months physical violence by teachers after the age of 15	World Health Organisation (Western Pacific Region) National Institute of Statistics Ministry of Planning
Indonesia	National Violence Against Children Survey (VACS)	2013	male and female age 13–17 and 18–24	(similar to VACS) – Physical violence by teachers and schoolmates before 18 – Emotional violence by teachers and schoolmates before 18 – Sexual violence by teachers and schoolmates before 18	Ministry of Sociality; Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection; National Development Planning Agency; Central Bureau of Statistics; Unicef Indonesia
	National Women's Life Experience Survey (SPHPN)	2016	female age 15–64	(similar to DHS) – Lifetime and past 12 months sexual violence by teachers after the age of 15 – Lifetime and past 12 months physical violence by teachers after the age of 15	UNFPA Indonesia Ministry of Empowerment, Women and Child Protection Central Bureau of Statistics
Lao PDR	Lao National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experiences	2014	female age 15—64	(similar to DHS) – Physical violence after 15 by teachers – Resulting injuries from physical violence – Sexual violence before and after 15 by teachers	National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Lao Statistics Bureau
Latin America and Caribbean					
Argentina	Survey on School Climate, Violence and Conflict	2014	male and female enrolled in 2nd and 5th grade of secondary school (approx. age 14 and 17 years old)	– Physical and psychological bullying by students – Physical fights between students – Corporal punishment and psychological violence by teachers	Education Ministry
	National Youth Survey	2014	male and female age 15—29	– Physical and psychological bullying by students and teachers – Corporal punishment and psychological violence by teachers	Statistics Provincial Offices
	Victimisation Survey	2017	male or female household members above 18 years	– Physical violence at school – Sexual violence at school	National Institute of Statistics
	Aprender 2019	2019	male or female enrol in fifth or sixth grade of secondary school	– Perceptions of school climate	Education Ministry
Bolivia	National Household Survey (Encuesta de Hogares)	2018 & 2019	household members, including female and male age 5—14	– Physical and psychological bullying by students – Corporal punishment and psychological violence by teachers	National Institute of Statistics
	Demographic and Health Survey (Encuesta Demográfica y de Salud)	2016	female age 15—49 male age 15—64	– Sexual violence by teachers – Physical attacks by teachers – Aggression against children (self-reported by parents)	National Institute of Statistics and Ministry of Health
	Survey on the Prevalence and Characteristics of Violence against Women (Encuesta de Prevalencia y Características de la Violencia contra las Mujeres)	2016	female age 15 or more	Physical, psychological and sexual violence by the school staff and other students	National Institute of Statistics
Brazil	National Adolescent School-based Health Survey (Pesquisa Nacional de Saúde do Escolar – PeNSE)	2015 & 2019	male and female 13—17	– Psychological bullying by classmates – Physical fights (may be outside of school) – Bullying by classmates	Ministry of Health and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics
Colombia	Encuesta de Convivencia y Seguridad Ciudadana (ECSC)	2011 to 2021 (nationally representative since 2018)	Male and female above 15 years old		National Institute of Statistics
Honduras	Encuesta Nacional de demografía y salud – ENDESA/MICS	2019	female age 15—49 male age 15—59	(similar to DHS and MICS) – Sexual violence by teachers – Physical attacks by teachers	National Institute of Statistics
Peru	National Survey to Analyze School Coexistence Scales (Análisis psicométricos de las escalas de convivencia – ECE)	2018 & 2019	male and female enrolled in 2nd grade of secondary school (approx age 14 years old)	– Perceptions (witness) of physical and psychological bullying between students – Perceptions (witness) of corporal punishment or	Education Ministry

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Table 2.3 (continued)

National Survey about Social Relations (Encuesta Nacional Sobre Relaciones Sociales)	2013,2015 & 2019	male and female 12 to 17 years female age 17 or more	psychological violence teacher to student Physical and psychological violence by peers	National Institute of Statistics
Demographic and Health Survey (Encuesta Demográfica y de Salud Familiar)	2015 to 2021	female age 15—49	(similar to DHS) – Physical attacks by teachers or classmates – Sexual violence by teachers or classmates	National Institute of Statistics

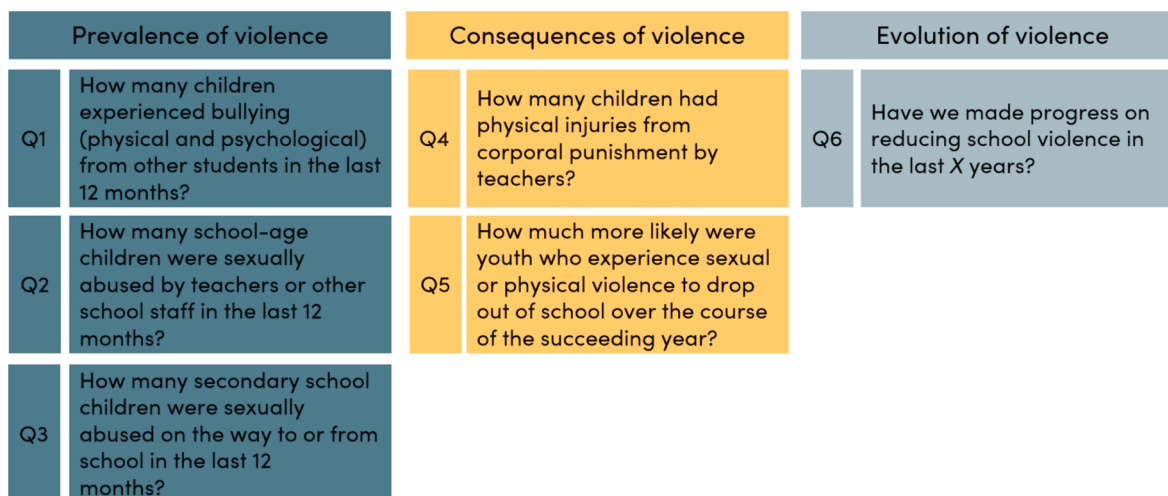


Fig. 2.2. The policymaker questions.

actionability of data on school violence, it has some limitations. Our study includes surveys with questions on school-related violence. For some of these surveys, particularly the household-based surveys, the reported prevalence of school violence (or response rate for survey questions) for some age groups would be too small for the researchers to construct an estimate that is nationally or subnationally representative. In that regard, our estimates of data availability would be overestimates.

Another limitation—already documented in other work—is that school-related violence measures constructed from international and national surveys might not reflect the true prevalence of school violence; surveys will likely underestimate violence estimates if students are embarrassed or ashamed to discuss experiences of violence or if they fear repercussions from reporting (Palermo, Bleck, and Peterman, 2014; Pereira et al., 2020). The available data we identify suffer from this limitation.

3. Results

3.1. The big picture: What do international and national surveys cover?

3.1.1. International surveys

We found 14 international surveys that included questions on school violence (Table 2.1). Most surveys were conducted on the school premises (11 of 14 surveys) and administered to children and adolescents (10 of 14 surveys). None of the surveys are entirely dedicated to school violence, but all include modules with at least one question on school violence. We observe that in most countries around the world, the available surveys would mainly allow us to generate snapshots of at least one form of violence (physical, psychological, or sexual) for adolescent boys and girls. However, available surveys provide little data to analyse school violence trends or to study victimisation figures among younger children. There are limited data on the characteristics of perpetrators, on victimisation among LGBTQ + communities and individuals with

disabilities, on cyberbullying, or on response indicators regarding actions taken post-victimization. Below we discuss six main findings.¹⁸

Finding 1: 80 percent of countries have at least one survey with questions related to school violence, but only limited types of violence are covered in each survey.

At first glance, there seems to be substantial survey coverage of school-related violence across the world: 85 percent, 81 percent and 75 percent of upper-middle-, lower-middle- and low-income countries have at least one survey with questions about school-related violence. However, if we study the survey coverage based on whether the available surveys have questions on physical, psychological, and sexual violence, it becomes evident that the coverage is narrow: only a third of LMICs had surveys that would allow them to explore any statistics on all three categories of violence—physical, psychological, and sexual.

Among all types of violence, physical violence is the most covered (Table 3.1). All international surveys include questions on some forms of physical violence, including physical bullying, physical fights, physical attacks, or corporal punishment, but only in 24 percent of LMICs it would be possible to build prevalence measures for all forms of physical violence.

Within physical violence, physical bullying by peers is the most covered form in upper-middle-income countries (Table 3.1), while it is the least covered form of violence in low-income countries. Physical fights and attacks by peers have wide coverage across LMICs, while corporal punishment has a larger coverage in low-income countries.

¹⁸ The section considers only the sample of surveys that were completed at the time of our search. Hence, it does not consider the surveys that are currently in implementation or that are not public yet. This includes: PISA 2022, TIMSS 2023, TALIS 2024 and SACMEQ 2018–2024. Importantly, if we were to consider these surveys in the analysis, the patterns discussed in this section would stay the same. Appendix H provides the estimates discussed in this section but including the pending surveys.

Table 3.1
Coverage of international surveys by type of violence and income group.

	Upper middle income		Lower middle income		Low income	
	Total surveys	Proportion of countries	Total surveys	Proportion of countries	Total surveys	Proportion of countries
Physical Bullying	5	78 %	5	57 %	1	18 %
Physical attacks or fights	8	78 %	8	81 %	5	68 %
Corporal punishment	2	22 %	4	52 %	4	71 %
Psychological Violence	8	78 %	8	65 %	2	32 %
Sexual Violence	3	26 %	3	50 %	3	64 %

Note: We only considered the surveys that would allow us to measure the proportion of children that self-report being victims of school violence. Hence, it excludes surveys administered to school principals and teachers that capture the perceived frequency of incidents of violence. Moreover, the estimates only include the sample of surveys completed at the time of the analysis.

This is mainly because 20 of 28 low-income countries have a Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (or VACS) that measures corporal punishment by teachers.

Psychological violence is covered in 8 of 14 international surveys. More than 70 percent of middle-income countries conducted surveys with questions on psychological violence, while this was the case in only a third of low-income countries.

Sexual violence against children, on the other hand, is only covered in five international surveys, and only three would allow us to estimate the prevalence of sexual violence based on children's and adolescents' reports, as opposed to teachers' reports.¹⁹ Furthermore, even those surveys that include some query related to sexual violence (with the exception of the VACS) fail to include questions across a comprehensive list of the types of sexual violence (e.g., unwanted touching, rape, sexual harassment) in order to build complete estimates. We observe that 64 percent of low-income countries would be able to estimate the prevalence of sexual violence perpetrated by peers or teachers for those aged more than 13 years of age, while this is the case for 26 percent and 50 percent of upper-middle- and lower-middle- income countries, respectively. Among the countries with available data on sexual violence, only the 20 low-income countries that administered a VACS would be able to build estimates differentiating across the different forms of sexual violence.

Our findings indicate that surveys that include comprehensive questions about school violence are rare. While many surveys inquire about the occurrence of violence by perpetrators, they lack detailed questions regarding different characteristics of the perpetrators (such as their sex and age), as well as questions about perpetration by survey respondents.²⁰ We observe that an increase in the depth of the questionnaires is associated with a decrease in geographical coverage. For instance, VACS has a relatively complete questionnaire on physical and sexual violence compared to the other surveys. However, it has been conducted in only a small fraction of countries, representing just a tenth of countries worldwide.

Finding 2: Surveys mainly provide snapshots of school violence at a point in time.

The 14 international surveys analysed in this paper have been collected at different points in time between 2013 and 2023. In five of the 14 international surveys (DHS, Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS), MICS, SDI, VACS), the year of data collection differs by country, while in the remaining ten, the year of data collection is the same for all the countries included in each survey.

Among the countries that conducted school violence-related surveys, 56 percent of lower-middle- and low-income countries and 70 percent of

upper-middle-income countries conducted more than one survey in the last decade (Table 3.2). Despite this, the available surveys provide restricted opportunities to analyse school violence trends. This is because only in some countries—mainly upper-middle-income countries conducting the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) or the *Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo* (ERCE) surveys—is it possible to use the same international survey to study differences in the prevalence of physical and psychological school violence at two points in time. Our analysis shows that 52 percent of upper-middle-income countries administered on average two to three international surveys twice in the last 10 years, while only a third of lower-middle-income countries and 14 percent of low-income countries administered at least one international survey twice in the last 10 years. Therefore, in the majority of lower-middle- and low-income countries, it is only possible to generate snapshots of the prevalence of violence at a particular point in time.

Finding 3: Surveys focus mainly on adolescent years, neglecting children below age 10.

The majority of international surveys analysed in this paper (9 out of 14) collect data directly from adolescents (aged 13 to 17), while seven surveys cover those aged 6 to 12 years, and only three cover young adulthood years (Table 3.3).²¹ None of the surveys cover the three age groups, and none of the countries have data to analyse the prevalence of school violence for all the stages of child development.

The only international survey collecting school violence data on children below nine years old is the ERCE covering countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.²² Data on children aged 9 to 12 is available from ERCE, TIMSS, PIRLS and the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC). The SDI, the Programme for the Analysis of

Table 3.2
Coverage of international surveys by frequency of administration and income group.

	Upper middle income	Lower middle income	Low income
Two or more surveys administered at different points in time	70 %	57 %	54 %
Two or more survey rounds by survey	52 %	31 %	14 %

Note: The estimates only include the sample of surveys completed at the time of the analysis.

¹⁹ The three surveys based on children and adolescents' reports include VACS, DHS and PISA-D. The two surveys based on teacher reports include PASEC and SACMEQ. See Appendix E for details.

²⁰ Our analysis of international surveys indicates that only the HBSC included a question about perpetration by survey respondents: "How often have you taken part in bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?".

²¹ We include surveys administered to young adults (18–22) with questions on lifetime experiences of violence in order to capture their childhood experiences of school-related violence.

²² ERCE administers the survey to children enrolled in third grade of primary, when children are generally 8 to 9 years old.

Table 3.3
Coverage of international surveys by target population and income group.

	Upper middle income		Lower middle income		Low income	
	Total surveys	Proportion of countries	Total surveys	Proportion of countries	Total surveys	Proportion of countries
Lower Middle Childhood (ages 6–9)	2	28 %	4	30 %	3	39 %
Upper Middle Childhood (ages 10–12)	5	59 %	7	44 %	3	39 %
Adolescence (ages 13–17)	9	83 %	9	83 %	5	68 %
Young Adulthood (ages 18–22)	3	52 %	3	65 %	3	68 %

Note: The estimates only include the sample of surveys completed at the time of the analysis.

Education Systems (PASEC) and the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) also provide some proxies of the prevalence of school violence for this age group but based on the reports of teachers and school leaders. Importantly, even though just a few surveys collect data directly from children below 12 years of age, DHS and VACS include retrospective questions about the victim's age at the time violence occurred, potentially allowing survey users to identify violence incidents taking place during childhood.

Within adolescent years, the 9 available international surveys cover different ages. GSHS and VACS cover all children aged 13 to 17, and DHS and MICS collect data from individuals aged above 15. The remaining surveys have data on specific ages: TIMSS collects data on students aged 13 to 14 (enrolled in 8th grade); and HBSC, PISA and the Programme for International Assessment – Development Survey (PISA-D) survey 15-year-olds. The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), administered to school principals and teachers, also provides school violence data about children enrolled in lower secondary schools. Importantly, none of the reviewed international surveys provide data to explore school violence statistics among LGBTQ + children, and only some surveys – such as DHS, MICS and PISA-D – include questions on children's disabilities.

Finding 4: Most surveys collect data from both boys and girls.

Only five of 14 international surveys completely lack data on school violence for boys and girls separately. These include the DHS that collects the domestic violence module only from women aged between 15 to 49 years, as well as the SDI, PASEC, TALIS and SACMEQ surveys that ask the school staff about cases of school violence among students without differentiating by sex. As a result, among the countries with available surveys on school violence, ten percent (eight lower-middle-income and eight lower-income countries) do not have data on prevalence of violence among boys.

Finding 5: International surveys are too different to allow comparisons across them.

A few similarities between some international surveys might encourage comparing average estimates of violence (i) between surveys within countries, or (ii) between surveys across countries. These comparisons, however, will not yield the same estimates given the differences that exist in the year of data collection, the age of respondents, and the framing of questions in each survey. Regarding the framing of the question, we observe that the definitions of violence, the victimization timeframe (i.e., lifetime prevalence, or prevalence within a time frame), and the item responses vary across surveys, making the comparison of estimates of violence more difficult. For example, ERCE asks about physical bullying in the last 30 days, while PISA and GSHS ask it over the last 12 months, and item responses on the frequency of bullying are slightly different due to the differences in the victimization timeframe. (See Table F1. and Appendix F for further details.)

Furthermore, all international surveys will have some degree of measurement error, and the size and source of this error will not necessarily be the same across surveys, contributing to differences in survey estimates. Richardson and Fen Hui (2018) provide evidence for this: the authors construct a global indicator of bullying and in the process show that GSHS, TIMSS, ERCE and HBSC produce different distributions of responses and mean estimates of bullying.

3.1.2. National surveys

This section describes the availability of national-level surveys with questions on school violence in a random sample of LMICs. As previously mentioned, we randomly selected 30 percent of the countries in three regions, namely, Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean. We found a total of 27 nationally representative surveys with school violence-related questions. The majority of these national surveys were conducted by or under the supervision of the countries' national bureau of statistics. Below we summarize our main findings. Appendix G provides a detailed description and a summary table of the national surveys that we found in each of the selected countries.

Finding 1: Sub-Saharan Africa has a lower availability of national surveys relative to East Asia and the Pacific or Latin America and the Caribbean.

About half of the selected countries (7 out of 13) in Sub-Saharan Africa had at least one survey related to school violence (Table 3.4), while all countries in East Asia and the Pacific and in Latin America and the Caribbean administered at least one national survey with school violence related questions. Similar to the data coverage of international surveys in Sub-Saharan Africa, the region has a lower availability of national surveys relative to other regions.

Finding 2: Most national surveys have been collected only once in the last decade.

Only 6 of the 23 randomly selected countries administered a national survey with school-related violence questions more than once in the last 10 years: 1 country in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1 country in East Asia and the Pacific, and 4 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Of these, China administered a panel survey (the China Education Panel Survey), while the other 5 countries (South Africa, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia and Peru) administered cross-sectional surveys. As was the case with international surveys, the lack of available national surveys across time limits the possibility of studying school violence trends.

Finding 3: As with international surveys, most coverage focuses on violence during adolescence, and few surveys cover children under age 10.

Table 3.4
Countries by region and number of executed national surveys.

Region	N = 0	N = 1	N = 2	N = 3	N = 4
Sub-Saharan Africa	Mali Mauritania Mauritius Sierra Leone South Sudan Zambia	Burkina Faso Burundi Republic of the Congo Senegal Somalia Benin	South Africa		
East Asia and Pacific		Laos PDR Cambodia	China Indonesia		
Latin America & Caribbean		Brazil Honduras Colombia		Bolivia Peru	Argentina

Note: The estimates only include the sample of surveys completed at the time of the analysis.

The majority of the surveys in the sample are nationally representative of a specific target population in the country. Similar to the international surveys, the age group with the highest coverage in our sample is adolescence (13–17), followed by young adulthood (18–22) and middle childhood (6–12) (see Table 3.5). The inclusion of the 18–22 age group reflects surveys that target young adults and ask about lifetime experiences of violence, rather than capturing only violence during their current stage of life. These retrospective questions allow researchers and policymakers to gather data about school-related-violence experienced during earlier, childhood years, even though the respondents are now adults.

Furthermore, most surveys (21 of 27) collect data on both male and female respondents, while 6 of them collect data only from females. None of the surveys exclusively target male respondents.

Finding 4. National surveys are much more likely—indeed, nearly 30 percentage points more likely—to ask questions about physical violence than about sexual violence.

Table 3.6 shows the number and percentage of national surveys in the sample by the type of school violence covered. Around 80 percent (22 out of 27) of the surveys in the sample covered physical violence, while 14 included questions on sexual violence and psychological violence. Moreover, 13 of 27 national surveys include questions to identify both peer-perpetrated and teacher-perpetrated incidents of violence, while 11 only have questions on either peer perpetrated or teacher perpetrated violence, and 3 do not specify the type of perpetrator.

3.2. Results: Can existing evidence answer key policymaker questions?

This section analyses whether data from the international and national surveys are sufficient to answer the policymaker questions.²³ We pose six sample questions that a policymaker might ask in a briefing on school-related violence (Fig. 2.2.). The questions aim to demonstrate how much actionable data policymakers would have to explore the prevalence of specific forms of school violence, its consequences and evolution over time. We first focus on international surveys alone, looking at all LMICs. Then, we provide more detailed analysis in the three regions where we searched for national surveys.

3.2.1. International surveys

The analysis of international surveys shows major gaps in the ability to answer our basic questions. A third of low- and middle-income countries lack data to answer any of the policymaker questions (Table 3.7.). Around half would be able to answer up to two policymaker questions, 16 percent would be able to answer three to four questions, and none would be able to answer more than four questions.

If we take the proposed policymaker questions one by one (Table 3.8.), we find that about 63 percent of all LMICs have surveys that

Table 3.5
Number and percentage of national surveys by age group.

	Number of surveys (Total = 27)	Percentage of surveys (100 %)
Early Middle Childhood (6–9)	4	15 %
Late Middle Childhood (10–12)	7	26 %
Adolescence (13–17)	23	85 %
Young Adulthood (18–22)	18	67 %

²³ The section considers only the sample of surveys that have been completed. Hence, it does not consider the surveys that are currently in implementation or that are not public yet. This includes PISA 2022, TIMSS 2023, TALIS 2024 and SACMEQ 2018–2024. Appendix H provides the estimates discussed in this section but including the pending surveys. We observe that our estimates remain similar when including these surveys in the analysis.

Table 3.6
Number and percentage of national surveys executed by type of violence and perpetrator.

	Number of surveys (Total = 27)	Percentage of surveys (total = 100 %)
Physical Violence	22	81 %
Sexual Violence	14	52 %
Psychological Violence	14	52 %
Peer-perpetrated Violence	17	63 %
Teacher-perpetrated Violence	20	74 %

Table 3.7
Proportion of countries able to answer policymaker questions by number of questions and income group.

	N = 0	N = 1	N = 2	N = 3	N = 4	N = 5 or 6
Low income	64 %	14 %	4 %	11 %	7 %	0 %
Lower middle income	31 %	28 %	24 %	9 %	7 %	0 %
Upper middle income	22 %	22 %	43 %	9 %	4 %	0 %
All LMICs	35 %	23 %	27 %	10 %	6 %	0 %

Notes: The first column indicates the proportion of LMICs that could not answer any policymaker question. The remaining columns show the proportion of countries that could answer policymaker questions disaggregated by the number of questions they could answer.

Table 3.8
Proportion of countries able to answer policy questions by time windows.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
All LMICs in 10 years	63 %	17 %	0 %	13 %	0 %	36 %
All LMICs in 2013–2017	54 %	12 %	0 %	8 %	0 %	2 %
All LMICs in 2018–2022	40 %	5 %	0 %	5 %	0 %	1 %

Notes: Each cell in the table indicates the proportion of LMICs that had at least one survey answering each of the policymaker questions.

can answer “How many children experienced physical or psychological bullying from other students in the last 12 months?” (Q1), but only 17 percent of countries administered surveys to answer “How many school-age children were sexually abused by teachers or other school staff in the last 12 months?” (Q2), and none had surveys to answer (Q3) “How many secondary school children were sexually abused on the way to or from school in the last 12 months?”²⁴

Countries also lack the data to answer questions about the consequences of school violence. Only 13 percent of countries had surveys to answer “How many children had physical injuries from corporal punishment by teachers?” (Q4), and none of the countries had surveys that would allow them to answer “How much more likely were youth who experience sexual or physical violence to drop out of school over the course of the succeeding year?” (Q5).

Answering the latter question would require either a longitudinal survey that follows the same students across time and includes questions to identify the victims, their age, whether they drop out of school and when, or at the very least, a cross-sectional survey with a carefully constructed timeline of incidents of violence and school participation (much as the Demographic and Health Surveys capture a detailed timeline certain demographic events). The number for Q5 rises significantly—to 66 percent of countries—if we simply wish to explore

²⁴ While none of the surveys in our sample of the previous decade include these questions, the VACS did include questions prior to 2013 which allowed an exploration of whether incidents of violence occurred on the way to/from school. See, for example, the VACS questionnaire for Tanzania 2009.

whether students experience violence and then dropped out at some time in the future. Three of the major surveys (DHS, MICS, and VACS) allow countries to identify if an individual has dropped out of school, if they experienced violence, and some information about whether the violence was school related. If we impose the assumption that school-related violence took place before drop out (which is likely true in most cases), then one could at least estimate a simple association between these events.

If countries wanted to analyse changes in violence across time, they would be able to do it only in two cases: if the same survey has been executed more than once across time or if the questions across surveys are standardised to make them comparable. We find that only 36 percent of all LMICs have conducted the same survey more than once in the past 10 years (Q6). Unfortunately, questions in different surveys differ in their framing, age group of analysis and victimization timeframe, complicating direct comparisons between surveys across time (see Appendix F).

We also examine the percentage of countries that would be able to answer the policymaker questions in two time windows: 2013–2017 and 2018–2022 (Table 3.8). A lower proportion of countries administered surveys for each of the policymaker questions during the latter period. This decline could be attributed to the cancellation or postponement of specific surveys due to the COVID-19 pandemic, budgetary constraints that restrict the implementation of large international surveys, and potential changes in countries’ interest in conducting certain international surveys.

Finally, when disaggregating the analysis by income group, we observe that on average, relative to middle-income countries, a lower proportion of low-income countries would be able to answer the policymakers’ questions (Table 3.7). For example, low-income countries are 50 percent more likely to be unable to answer any policymaker question relative to lower- or upper-middle income countries. (Appendix I provides more detail on the breakdown of availability for each question.)

In short, while international surveys often include questions on school-related violence, they provide little actionable data beyond identifying levels for certain types of violence.

3.2.2. How much coverage do national surveys add?

By itself, an analysis centred around international surveys might provide an erroneous representation of data availability. We address this concern by including in the analysis information about national surveys executed in a randomly selected sample of countries in three regions: Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and East Asia and the Pacific (as described in section 2.2).

In total we found that 17 of the 23 sampled countries had administered 27 national surveys that included school-related violence questions. Our analysis of national surveys shows similar patterns to the ones observed when examining the international surveys. None of the countries chosen randomly from the three regions under analysis would be able to answer more than three policymaker questions with national surveys (Table 3.9). The available national surveys mainly provide data to answer Q1 (prevalence of bullying from peers), some data to answer Q2 (sexual violence from teachers), Q4 (injury from corporal punishment) and Q6 (progression of school violence), and no data to answer Q3 (sexual violence in the way to or from school) and Q5 (dropout due to

Table 3.9
Number of countries in each region by the number of questions they can answer with national surveys.

	N = 0	N = 1	N = 2	N = 3	N = 4	N = 5 or 6
East Asia and Pacific	0	1	3	0	0	0
Latin America & Caribbean	1	1	3	1	0	0
Sub-Saharan Africa	9	0	1	3	0	0

school violence).

In Table 3.10, we combine the information from the national and international surveys to facilitate comparisons regarding availability and variety of data. The tables show absolute numbers instead of percentages to avoid any misinterpretation, given that the total number of countries in the sample is relatively small. In most countries (10 of 17) that had national surveys on school violence, they also had at least one international survey with similar data to respond to the policymaker questions. In 7 countries, we observed that the national surveys filled data gaps from international surveys. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the national surveys provide new additional data sources in the absence of international surveys. For example, we observed that after adding the national surveys to the analysis, four countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Republic of the Congo and South Africa) that did not have international surveys to answer Q2 had national surveys with data to answer this question. Similarly, two countries (Burkina Faso and Republic of the Congo) had data from national surveys to answer Q1 and Q4. Moreover, one country (Indonesia) in East Asia and the Pacific and two countries (Argentina and Bolivia) in Latin America and the Caribbean administered national surveys that would cover data gaps related to the prevalence of sexual violence perpetrated by teachers, providing information to explore Q2. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the national surveys in one country (Bolivia) also provided data to compare the progression of school violence overtime (Q6).

Summing up, national surveys are an important source of information to monitor school-related violence. However, adding national surveys into the policymakers’ analysis resulted in small improvements in data availability as only in a third of countries do the national surveys address data gaps from international surveys.

4. Recommendations and discussion

Current data show that girls and boys in LMICs suffer high levels of violence from students, school staff, and others in and around schools. However, current data—often providing levels on only certain types of violence for adolescents—do not provide enough information to combat school-related violence effectively. Our study shows the high potential value added of standard, regularly collected data to monitor the levels, trends, and consequences of different forms of school violence across different ages. Below, we discuss six recommendations to advance the generation of more actionable data about school-related violence.

First, *school violence-specific surveys or modules*: We need surveys—or at least, dedicated modules within surveys—that are designed with the aim of measuring violence in schools. None of the international surveys

Table 3.10
Number of countries with at least one national or international survey answering Q1-Q6 between 2013 and 2022.

Question	Type	East Asia and Pacific n = 4	Latin America & Caribbean n = 6	Sub-Saharan Africa n = 13
Q1	International	4	6	5
	National	2	5	4
	All	4	6	7
Q2	International	2	2	2
	National	3	2	4
	All	3	4	6
Q3	International	0	0	0
	National	0	0	0
	All	0	0	0
Q4	International	2	2	1
	National	1	0	2
	All	2	2	3
Q5	International	0	0	0
	National	0	0	0
	All	0	0	0
Q6	International	3	5	4
	National	1	4	1
	All	3	6	4

were designed with the aim of measuring school violence.²⁵ As a result, none of the surveys include questions on all forms of school violence, and none include sufficient questions to study the phenomenon of school violence (e.g., who perpetrates school violence and the consequences of school violence). Balance is required here: surveys administered to young people cannot be excessively long, and a survey or module about school violence will be most useful when it gathers complementary background information (e.g., to allow analysis of the effects of violence).

Second, *data on sexual violence*: Sexual violence is the type of violence about which data are least consistently collected, and it is the most sensitive to ask about. We need to expand our understanding of how best to collect data on sexual violence against children (Barr et al. 2017; Tanton et al. 2023). The design of sexual violence-related questions should build on existing surveys and combine alternative methods—such as in-depth interviews, visual narratives, and focus groups—to pilot and assess the clarity, relevance and appropriateness of sexual violence-related questions based on context, children's age and characteristics. The teams involved in survey design and data collection should be multidisciplinary, with expertise on violence against children, child protection, and survey methodology. The survey method should prioritize privacy and confidentiality, centering children's well-being and safety.

Third, *standard data*: We need standard measures of school violence that are collected on a frequent basis (Cappa et al., 2023). Existing surveys differ in their definition of school violence, the framing of the questions, the victimization timeframe (i.e., lifetime experiences of violence, time-specific timeframes such as 1 or 12 months), and the victimization frequency, among others. As a result, we do not have standard ways of measuring school violence, limiting the possibility of studying school violence trends within and across countries.

Fourth, *school-related violence about younger children*: We need more data about the experiences of school violence of children aged below 13 years old. Obviously, gathering data about sensitive topics from younger children raises ethical concerns, which leads to our next recommendation.

Five, *violence disclosure and ethical considerations*: Efforts to expand data collection on school violence should carefully consider how to elicit the disclosure of violence (including how surveys are administered and how questions are framed) and should follow ethical and safeguarding practices to protect children and youth. Gathering data on violence against children—including violence in schools—brings risks: children may be upset by the questions or by recounting experiences of violence, or children may experience retribution from perpetrators of violence for answering survey questions (CP MERG 2012). Enumerators have an ethical responsibility to report violence against children, so surveys need systems in place to handle that, and in some settings, the government agency that is officially responsible may be ill-equipped to take action, meaning that the survey agencies may need to follow up (Devries et al. 2015). When local leaders (such as school directors) are perpetrators of violence, the most effective response may require creativity and consultation (Leach 2006). Asking more questions about more types of violence to children of more ages involves both implementing and continuing to develop procedures to keep children safe, both from violence and in the context of asking the questions.

Sixth, *beyond survey data*: Survey data are not enough to ensure a timely response against school violence. Governments also need to create standard systems for reporting school violence when it happens. Such systems should be accompanied by clear school violence response protocols and guidelines and sustained actions to build trust in the system. Violence data based on police or school reports can also be used

²⁵ Even the Violence Against Children Surveys, which are focused entirely on child violence, are not explicitly about school violence and so have many limitations for measuring school violence specifically.

to strengthen research evidence on violence prevention and response, although violence reports likely underestimate the prevalence of violence relative to survey data (Palermo et al, 2014). An outcome measure based on official reports can (like survey data) capture a combination of students' decisions to report or speak up about violence as well as the actual prevalence of violence (Smarrelli, 2023). Data from official systems can also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the official response (e.g., actions taken in response to reported incidents or numbers of cases closed).

These recommendations will require additional research to implement effectively, including on improved, standardised survey modules, on the best ways to collect data from children while also protecting those children's welfare, and on what government systems (for reporting and reacting) are both effective and implementable. In this study, we highlight the lack of actionable data even as the number of surveys touching on school violence has increased; and we call not just for further research, but for targeted research to provide decision makers with the data they need to make schools safe for children to thrive.

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CRediT authorship contribution statement

David K. Evans: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Susannah Hares**: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Conceptualization. **Gabriela Smarrelli**: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Dongyi Wu**: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Appendix. Supplementary materials

Supplementary materials and data related to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2025.106919>.

Data availability

The data for this review article are available at Smarrelli et al. (2023) and Wu et al. (2023a). These are both referenced in the article.

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Appendix for
When the Data You Have Aren't the Data You Need:
The Availability of School-Related Violence Data in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

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Appendix A. Literature Review

Table A.1. Literature Review

Title	Author(s)	Publication Year	Aim of study / Research Question	Main Issue of Focus
Appraisal of data available on violence against children in and around schools (VACS)	Jo Heslop, Lucia Quintero Tamez and Jenny Parkes	2021	Help Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) country advisers, their teams and partners to make use of existing data and plan for further data if needed to support programming.	Violence against children in and around school
Developing a global indicator on bullying of school-aged children	Dominic Richardson and Chii Fen Hiu	2018	Document the process of building and validating a global indicator of bullying in schools.	Physical and psychological bullying against adolescents in school
Let's decide how to measure school violence	Global Education Monitoring Report, UNESCO	2017	Highlight similarities and differences between different surveys to bridge differences between existing monitoring methods. It also aims to inform the current debates and propose options for the future related to school-violence data reliability and consistency.	Violence against children in and around school
A rigorous review of global research evidence on policy and practice on school-related gender-based violence	Jenny Parkes, Jo Heslop, Freya Johnson Ross, Rosie Westerveld, Elaine Unterhalter	2016	Examining research evidence on approaches to addressing school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV)	School-related gender-based violence
Who perpetrates violence against children? A systematic analysis of age specific and sex-specific data	Devries K, et al	2018	Produce the first age-specific and sex-specific prevalence estimates by perpetrator type for physical, sexual and emotional violence against children globally.	Violence against children

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Measuring Violence Against Children - Inventory and assessment of quantitative studies	Technical Working Group on Data Collection on Violence against Children, Child Protection Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group (CP MERG)	2014	Support, facilitate and coordinate the development of guidelines, standards and tools for the collection of data on violence against children at global, regional and national levels.	Violence against children
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Appendix B. Notes on International and National Surveys

Survey Representativeness

All the international surveys included in the study aim to be nationally representative. However, a small number (3.5 percent) of the country-survey-rounds were only conducted at the regional or city level. Such exceptions occur when international surveys are piloted in large cities (e.g., “benchmarking entities” in TIMSS, PIRLS) or resulting directly from the preferences and difficulties of the local government. The exceptions are present in HBSC (e.g., United Kingdom 2014), MICS (e.g., Pakistan 2019), PIRLS (e.g., Argentina 2016), PISA (e.g., China 2015), PISA-D (e.g., Bhutan 2017), SDI (e.g., Nigeria 2013), TALIS (e.g., Argentina 2018) and TIMSS (e.g., Argentina 2015). For a full list of international surveys that are sub-nationally representative, please refer to the “representative” variable in the public database [available at Wu et al (2023a)].

Year of analysis

The study tries to capture the year of the end of data collection as the year of analysis for each international and national survey. However, such information is not always available from the survey publishers. For those cases, we considered instead the year indicated on the official website and the year of publication as the year of analysis.

Income Classification

Some international surveys in our database have been conducted in dependent territories (Anguilla (1), Cook Islands (1), Tokelau (1), Wallis and Futuna (1), Zanzibar (2)) that do not have their own World Bank income classification. They are excluded from the income classification analysis but considered as separate territories from their affiliated nations in the rest of the study.

Survey Specific Considerations

VACS: The VACS has made no official distinctions in terms of survey versions, but the questionnaire content slightly differs across countries. After careful examination of all the VACS questionnaires, the authors summarised the questionnaire content into two separate versions, namely VACS1 and VACS2. The differences are presented in Smarrelli et al (2023).

MICS: In MICS, the rest of the male and female questionnaires are different, but the school violence questions are the same. (considered as one dataset for now) Moreover, although school violence questions are a common feature of MICS-6, not every country has chosen to include them in their questionnaire. The authors manually checked the national reports for school violence content whenever there was a doubt.

DHS: Some countries have been conducting National Demographic and Health Surveys, which, although similar to DHS in form, are not under the supervision of DHS/USAID. They do not

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appear on the official website of DHS and are considered national surveys (rather than international surveys) in this study.

The school violence questions of the DHS-6 questionnaire slightly differ from DHS-7 and DHS-8 in terms of formulation. The differences are presented in the Summary Table available at Smarrelli et al (2023).

TALIS-PISA link survey: To facilitate comparison across surveys, OECD proposed an option to conduct a “TALIS-PISA link survey” to the countries participating in both of the surveys. The “link survey” consists of randomly selecting a subsample of 150 schools from the whole national PISA sample and administering a separate TALIS core questionnaire to the school principals and teachers. It is not considered a separate dataset in the database for risks of double-counting.

SDI Classroom Observation: The school violence questions in the SDI survey are part of the Classroom Observation questionnaire. They are hence not addressed to any specific type of target population.

Appendix C. How to use our dataset?

1.1. Objectives and outputs

The main purpose of our dataset is to identify all the international surveys available with school-based violence questions for each country and to simplify researchers' and practitioners' data search process, particularly when they wish to estimate figures of school violence or to identify gaps in existing data.

Our review allowed us to create three main outputs:

- **The Dataset:** allows a detailed search on the surveys available in each country, the years of data collection and the forms of violence covered in each survey. Moreover, it specifies whether data collection was completed or whether it is pending. The Dataset can be downloaded in “.xls” and “.dta” format (and is available at Wu et al (2023a)).
- **The Map:** the interactive map is accessible at Wu et al. (2023b). It will allow you to visualize the available international surveys in each country. In the map, darker shades of blue reflect the countries that carried out more surveys with school-related violence questions in the last 10 years, whether the lighter shades of blue reflect the countries with fewer surveys. To observe which surveys and with what frequency each survey has been administered, you can select each of the countries.
- **Summary Table:** the table is accessible at Smarrelli et al (2023). It facilitates checking the type of questions that exist in each international survey and comparing the question framing between surveys.

1.2. Case study

In this section, we show an example of how to use the Map, Dataset and Summary Table by reviewing the case of Peru. We first explain the steps that can be followed to explore the available school-related violence data per country. We then provide an example of the type of analysis that can be done with our Dataset.

Steps:

1. **The Map:** we first used the Map to identify which international surveys are available for Peru.
2. **The Dataset:** we then used our Dataset to investigate in more detail the year of data collection of each international survey, the frequency of administration, the target population, and whether it included different forms of violence.
3. **Summary Table:** we used the summary table to review the framing of the questions that were covered in the international surveys to determine if Peru would be able to answer the policymaker questions discussed in section 2.4.
4. **Download international surveys raw data:** We downloaded the publicly available raw data of each international survey to answer the policymaker questions.

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Results:

Peru has data related to school violence from three international surveys—PISA, ERCE and DHS. Each of these has been collected at different points in time in the last 10 years and includes information on different forms of violence, covering different group ages. PISA and ERCE provide data on physical and psychological bullying by peers between ages 8, 12 and 15, while DHS covers questions on physical and sexual violence against women after the age of 15.

In addition to the international survey data, there are three national surveys that include school-related violence questions. In 2018 and 2019, the Ministry administered a survey to students enrolled in the second grade of secondary school (aged 13 to 14 years old) on students’ perceptions of physical and psychological bullying.¹ Moreover, since 2015, the Institute of Statistics – independently from the DHS program – continue to collect DHS every year. This survey is administered to women aged 15 to 49 years and provides data on physical attacks and sexual violence by type of perpetrator (including teachers and classmates). Finally, in 2013, 2015 and 2019, the Institute of Statistics administered a National Survey about Social Relations (Encuesta Nacional Sobre Relaciones Sociales). The survey includes questions on experiences of physical and psychological violence perpetrated by peers, and the main survey respondents include adolescents aged 12- to 17-year-old and women above 17 years old.

Furthermore, one additional source of information comes from an online national platform called SíSeVE. This was created in 2013 by the Ministry of Education for victims/confidants of the victim/witnesses to report all events of school violence, allowing to monitor the prevalence of cases across time.

The available data sources would allow us to respond to only 1 of the 6 policymaker questions (see Table C.1.): (Q1)“How many children experienced bullying (physical and psychological) from other students?”.

Table C.1. Peru - what we know based on international and national surveys

International surveys



National surveys

(nationally representative)

Students’ perceptions of physical and psychological bullying between students and teacher-to-student (2nd grade of secondary)
Demographic health surveys (2015-2021)
National Survey about Social Relations (2013, 2015, 2021)

Type of Violence Covered

Physical Bullying (8 to 15 years old)
Psychological Bullying (8 to 15 years old)
Sexual Violence (>15 years old)

¹ Before 2015, the survey was part of the DHS Program. Since 2015, the country continued to administer the survey, but independently from the DHS Program.

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Data Gaps

Types of violence: sexual violence by type in school or on the way to school, particularly during middle childhood and early adolescence.

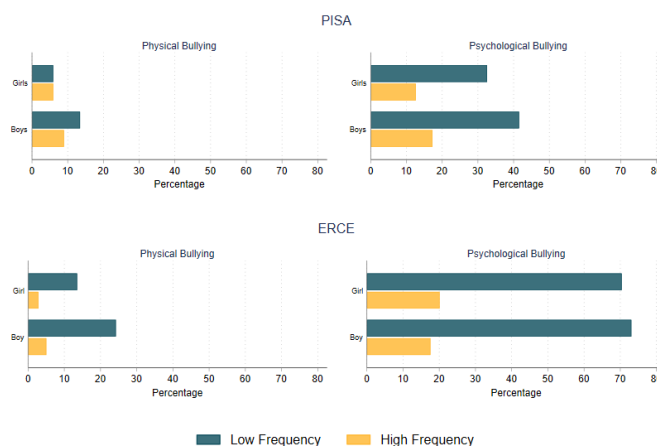
Perpetrators: perpetrators' age and gender.

Response: speaking-up or seeking help by gender and age.

Informing about key figures

Proportion of children that experience bullying at school in the last 12 months

PISA: 18% of children aged 15 years old report being victims of physical bullying, while 47% report being victims of psychological bullying several times a month. ERCE: 29% and 23% of children aged ~9 and ~12 years old, respectively, report being victims of physical bullying, while 30% and 18% report being victims of psychological bullying several times a month.



Note: Authors' analysis using data from 2018 PISA survey and 2019 ERCE survey.

Proportion of children that experience sexual abuse by teachers in the last 12 months

DHS data would allow us to measure the prevalence of sexual abuse perpetrated by teachers at any point in time among females aged 15 to 49 years of age. The data does not include a question on whether the incident happened in the last 12 months, or the specific year of occurrence. It does ask, however, what was the age of the victim the first time she was a victim of sexual violence.

In Peru, among the women aged 15 to 22 that were selected to answer the module of domestic violence between 2013 and 2019, none reported being a victim of sexual violence perpetrated by teachers.

Proportion of children sexually harassed on the way to or from school in the last 12 months

Not available

Proportion of children with physical injuries from corporal punishment by teachers

Not available

Proportion of children that experience sexual or physical violence to drop out over the course of the succeeding year

There is no direct question on whether being a victim of sexual or physical violence was the cause of dropout. Yet, if interested in this question, the Young Lives Survey (that was not included in this review considering that it is only representative of some geographical areas) could allow to construct the necessary variables to explore the correlation between being a victim of physical violence and dropout. This is because the longitudinal dataset can be used to identify if the respondents self-reported being victims of physical violence, to construct the educational history of the children and to identify cases of dropout.

Appendix D. Definition and measurement of policymaker questions

Question	Definition	Specific Assumptions	General Assumptions
<i>Q1. How many children experienced bullying from other students at school in the last 12 months?</i>	Variable receives the value of 1 if a survey in a particular country includes questions to measure cases of physical bullying, physical attacks, and psychological bullying by peers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As long as the violence is perpetrated by peers, we assumed that it happened "at school." - Only considers surveys that ask whether the incident of violence happened at any point during the last 12 months (i.e., in the last month, 6 months, 12 months or last year). Therefore, it excludes questions that only record whether the incident of violence happened at any point in time or surveys that do not ask about the time of occurrence. - Excludes questions addressed to school principals, teachers and classroom observation surveys. These questionnaires wouldn't allow one to estimate a precise prevalence number and only provide a general impression of the school climate. 	We do not impose age restrictions. The construction of the variable includes all questions mentioning "children" or "school-age children" or with information about the age of the respondent. For example, DHS was conducted on a sample aged 15-64, and the question allows us to identify physical attacks by peers in the last 12 months. Thus, we can generate an estimate of recent experiences of physical attacks by peers for adolescent children aged 15-18.
<i>Q2. How many school-age children were sexually abused by teachers or other school staff in the last 12 months?</i>	Variable receives the value of 1 if a survey in a particular country includes questions to measure any type of sexual violence perpetrated by the school staff, including: sexual harassment, unwanted touch, attempted unwanted	- Only considers surveys that ask whether the incident of violence happened at any point during the last 12 months (i.e., in the last month, 6 months, 12 months or last year). Therefore, it excludes questions that only record whether the incident of violence happened at any point in	

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Question	Definition	Specific Assumptions	General Assumptions
	sex, physically forced sex and pressured sex.	<p>time or surveys that do not ask about the time of occurrence.</p> <p>- Excludes questions addressed to school principals, teachers and classroom observation surveys. These questionnaires wouldn't allow one to estimate a precise prevalence number and only provide a general impression of the school climate.</p>	
<i>Q3. How many secondary school children were sexually abused on the way to or from school in the last 12 months?</i>	Variable receives the value of 1 if a survey in a particular country includes questions to measure the occurrence of any form of sexual violence in the way to or from school. Hence, the questionnaire would have to include questions on the location of the incident of violence and include in the options whether this happens in the way to or from school.	<p>- Only considers surveys that ask whether the incident of violence happened at any point during the last 12 months (i.e., in the last month, 6 months, 12 months or last year). Therefore, it excludes questions that only record whether the incident of violence happened at any point in time or surveys that do not ask about the time of occurrence.</p> <p>- Excludes questions addressed to school principals, teachers and classroom observation surveys. These questionnaires wouldn't allow one to estimate a precise prevalence number and only provide a general impression of the school climate.</p>	
<i>Q4. How many children had physical</i>	Variable receives the value of 1 if a survey	-	

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Question	Definition	Specific Assumptions	General Assumptions
<i>injuries from corporal punishment?</i>	in a particular country asks directly whether the individual was a victim of corporal punishment or whether the victim was physically attacked by a teacher.		
Q5. How much more likely were youth who experience sexual or physical violence to drop out of school over the course of the succeeding year?	Variable receives the value of 1 if a survey in a particular country has (i) questions to measure cases of physical or sexual violence, (ii) questions to measure dropout, and (iii) questions to identify if drop out happened over the course of the succeeding year.	Only considers surveys with data to explore if drop out happened over the course of the year succeeding the incident of violence. DHS, MICS and VACS would allow researchers to explore if an individual (i) experienced physical or sexual violence in school or perpetrated by a teacher or student, and (ii) dropped out at any point. But it is not possible to identify if dropout happened over the course of the year succeeding the incident of violence.	
Q6. Have we made progress on reducing school violence in the last X years?	Variable receives the value of 1 if a country has surveys that would allow to measure the prevalence of any form of violence <i>more than once across time</i> . Specifically, the variable receives the value of 1 if the country has conducted the <i>same</i> survey more than once. It excludes countries that have conducted <i>different</i>	Considers the prevalence of any form of violence. We do not impose restrictions on whether surveys are able to answer any of the previous Q1-Q5.	

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Question	Definition	Specific Assumptions	General Assumptions
	surveys and for which arguing comparability across surveys is harder. See Appendix F to review differences between surveys.		

Appendix E. Policymakers' questions and international surveys with data on them.

Table E.1. International Surveys with data to answer the policymaker questions.

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
DHS	PISAD	Not	VACS	Not	DHS
ERCE	VACS	available.		available.	ERCE
GSHS					HBSC
HBSC					MICS
PIRLS					PIRLS
PISA					PISA
TIMSS					SDI
VACS					TALIS
					TIMSS

Note: See Table 2.1 for a list of international surveys and their accompanying acronyms.

Appendix F. Scope and Framing of Questions in International Surveys

Physical violence: all international surveys include questions on physical violence against children in school. The questions cover topics on physical bullying, physical fights, physical attacks, and corporal punishment.

- **Physical bullying:** 6 of 14 international surveys include questions on physical bullying between students or peers. Physical bullying considers any aggressive physical behaviour between students that is repeated over time. GSHS, ERCE, PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS ask children whether they were hit or hurt by other students, with small differences in the description of the type of physical harm. For example, GSHS ask whether the child was “hit, kicked, pushed, shoved around, or locked indoors”, PISA asks whether the child was “got hit or pushed around by other students”, and the remaining surveys only ask whether the child was “hit or hurt” by other students (see table F.1). Only the GSHS indicate in the question that bullying exists when there is an imbalance of strength between the victim and the perpetrator.

The timeframe for reporting also differs across surveys, ranging from the last 30 days to the last 12 months. ERCE ask about bullying in the last 30 days, PISA and GSHS² in the last 12 months, and PIRLS and TIMSS ask about experiences of bullying during the year.³ Moreover, except PASEC, all surveys ask about the frequency of bullying, and item responses are slightly different mainly due to the differences in the timeframe for reporting between ERCE and the rest of the surveys.

None of the international surveys has data to explore the sex and age of the perpetrators, and only GSHS asks whether physical bullying happened at school.

- **Physical fights:** 6 of 14 international surveys include questions on physical fights between students or peers. PISA-D, GSHS and HBSC ask directly to the children whether they were involved in physical fights with another student. The main difference between these surveys is that PISA-D considers a timeframe for reporting of four weeks, while GSHS and HBSC consider a 12-month period. Moreover, PIRLS, TIMSS and SACMEQ also ask about physical fights between students, but the information is reported by school principals.
- **Physical attacks:** 4 of 14 survey international surveys include questions on physical attacks. To differentiate bullying from physical attacks, we consider physical attacks the acts that are not directly defined as bullying in the survey, are not perpetrated only by other students, and might involve the use of weapons. VACS includes three questions to capture whether the respondent was punched, kicked, or beaten with an object; was choked, smothered or burned; and/or was threatened with a weapon by different perpetrators, including classmates and teachers. DHS also includes one question to measure whether the respondent has been hit, kicked or hurt physically by

² GSHC questionnaire from 2018 onwards considers bullying in the last 12 months, whereas GSHC questionnaires before 2018 consider bullying in the last 30 days.

³ As a result, the timeframe for reporting depends on the month of execution of the survey.

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teachers and classmates. Moreover, MICS asks directly whether the respondent has been physically attacked and the location of the incident, allowing us to measure whether it happened in school, but does not include information on who the perpetrator is. The three surveys include a question to measure whether the physical attack occurred in the last 12 months. Finally, the TALIS does not ask directly about physical attacks or fights to students, but asks teachers about physical injuries caused by violence between students and hence, the data can be used to build proxy measures of physical attacks and fights in schools.

- Corporal punishment: 4 of the 14 international surveys include questions on corporal punishment by teachers. As explained above, VACS and DHS ask whether the physical attacks were perpetrated by teachers. Therefore, this information can be used to create a proxy measure of corporal punishment from teachers. Other surveys with data in corporal punishment include the PASEC that asks about the prevalence of corporal punishment in schools to teachers and the SDI survey - through the classroom observation module - that informs whether teachers use corporal punishment in the classroom.

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Table F.1. Survey questions on physical violence

Physical bullying	ERCE	PISA	PIRLS
	<p>During the last month, how often have other students done the following? This could be in person, through texting or the Internet.</p> <p><i>[Never, Sometimes, Many times; Every or almost every day]</i></p> <p>(...)</p> <p>Hit or hurt me (e.g., shoving, hitting, kicking)</p>	<p>During the past 12 months, how often have you had the following experiences in school?</p> <p><i>[Never or almost never; A few times a year; A few times a month; Once a week or more]</i></p> <p>(...)</p> <p>I got hit or pushed around by other students</p>	<p>During this year, how often have other students from your school done any of the following things to you (including through texting or the Internet)?</p> <p><i>[At least once a week; Once or twice a month; A few times a year; Never]</i></p> <p>(...)</p> <p>Hit or hurt me (e.g., shoving, hitting, kicking)</p>
Physical fights	GSHS	PISA-D	PIRLS
	<p>The next question asks about physical fights. A physical fight occurs when two students of about the same strength or power choose to fight each other.</p> <p>During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight on school property?</p> <p><i>[0 times; 1 time; 2 or 3 times; 4 or 5 times; 6 or 7 times; 8 or 9 times; 10 or 11 times; 12 or more times]</i></p>	<p>During the past four weeks, did any of the following events occur?</p> <p><i>[Yes; No]</i></p> <p>(...)</p> <p>I was in a physical fight on school property</p>	<p>To what degree is each of the following a problem among fourth grade students in your school?</p> <p><i>[Not a problem; Minor problem; Moderate problem; Serious problem]</i></p> <p>(...)</p> <p>Physical fights among students</p>
Physical attacks	DHS	VACS	MICS

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	<p>From the time you were 15 years old has anyone hit you, slapped you, kicked you, or done anything else to hurt you physically? Remember, I do not want you to include any husband or any other male partner.</p> <p><i>[Yes; No; Refused to answer] [Yes; No; Refused to answer]</i></p> <p>Who has hurt you in this way?</p> <p><i>[...; Schoolmate/classmate]</i></p>	<p>The next questions are about people your own age not including a boyfriend, husband or romantic partner. These may include, people who you may or may not know such as siblings, schoolmates, neighbours or strangers. Remember, you can ask to skip any question that you do not want to answer. Has a person your own age ever:</p> <p>A) punched, kicked, whipped, or beat you with an object?</p> <p>B) choked, suffocated, tried to drown you, or burned you intentionally?</p> <p>C) used or threatened you with a knife, gun or other weapon?</p> <p><i>[Yes; No; Don't know/declined]</i></p>	<p>In the last three years, have you been physically attacked? If 'No', probe: An attack can happen at home or any place outside of the home, such as in other homes, in the street, at school, on public transport, public restaurants, or at your workplace.</p> <p><i>[Yes; No; Don't know]</i></p> <p>Where did this happen?</p> <p><i>[...; At school]</i></p>
Corporal punishment	DHS	VACS	

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	<p><i>Idem.</i></p> <p>Who has hurt you in this way?</p> <p>[...; <i>Teacher</i>]</p>	<p><i>Idem.</i></p> <p>The adult in the community who did this to you the last time, what was this person's relationship to you?</p> <p>[... <i>Female teacher; Male teacher</i>]</p>	
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Psychological violence: 9 of 14 international surveys include questions on psychological violence between students, with some differences in the framing of questions across surveys. VACS and HBSC ask generally if the respondent was a victim of any form of psychological violence (verbal abuse, emotional violence, and social exclusion), whereas PISA, PIRLS, TIMSS, GSHS and ERCE ask about different forms of psychological violence separately⁴ (table F.2.). Moreover, the SACMEQ and TALIS surveys also provide data on psychological violence by asking school principals about intimidation and bullying between students. The timeframe for reporting also differs across surveys, ranging from the last 30 days to the last 12 months. Specifically, VACS and ERCE ask about bullying in the last 30 days, HBSC asks about bullying in the last couple of months, PISA and GSHS⁵ in the last 12 months, and PIRLS and TIMSS ask about experiences of bullying during the year⁶. Except for VACS and GSHS, all surveys ask about the frequency of bullying, and item responses are slightly different particularly due to the differences in the timeframe for reporting between ERCE and the rest of the surveys.

The international surveys do not have data to explore the sex and age of the perpetrators, and only HBSC and GSHS ask whether psychological violence happened at school.

⁴ The categories of psychological bullying included in ERCE and TIMSS changed depending on the age of the respondent. This is because ERCE is applied to students enrolled in 3rd and 6th grade, and TIMSS is applied to students enrolled in 4th and 8th grade.

⁵ GSHC questionnaire from 2018 onwards considers bullying in the last 12 months, whereas GSHC questionnaires before 2018 consider bullying in the last 30 days.

⁶ As a result, the timeframe for reporting depends on the month of execution of the survey.

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Sexual violence: 5 of 14 international surveys include questions on sexual violence against children. Sexual violence can take different forms, including verbal or visual sexual harassment, sexual assault (i.e., unwanted touch, attempted unwanted sex), and rape. The VACS covers the most comprehensive list of questions on sexual violence. VACS asks separately about different types of sexual violence against boys and girls (including forced touch, attempted unwanted sex, and rape), while DHS and PISA-D do not differentiate between types of sexual violence. DHS asks whether women experienced rape or sexual assault⁷, and PISA-D asks about sexual harassment. SACMEQ survey also collects data on the frequency of sexual harassment by teachers or students based on school principals' reports, and PASEC survey asks to teachers whether sexual harassment happens in schools.

International surveys consider different timeframes for reporting: VACS and DHS ask whether sexual violence occurred within the last 12 months, whereas PISA-D asks whether it occurred within the last 4 weeks. Moreover, VACS allows us to identify whether victimization happened in school, who the perpetrator is (differentiating between teachers, classmates, family, and partner, among others), their gender and age. DHS and PISA-D include questions to identify whether the perpetrator was a teacher or a student, but no data on the perpetrator's age or gender. Importantly, DHS would not allow to identify the perpetrator of the incident of sexual violence that occurred in the last 12 months.

Other violence-related questions: VACS also includes questions about the consequences of physical or sexual violence. VACS asks whether experiences of rape resulted in pregnancies or affected school attendance, and whether physical violence resulted in injuries. Moreover, VACS, DHS and MICS include questions on whether the victim told anyone about their experience of violence and whether they sought help from police, hospital, and legal offices, among others.

⁷ DHS allows to differentiate between rape and sexual assault only when asking whether the husband or partner was the perpetrator.

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Table F.2. Survey questions on psychological bullying

VACS	PISA	PIRLS	ERCE
<p>Bullying occurs when a student or group of students say or do bad or unpleasant things to another student. It is also bullying when a student is teased a lot in an unpleasant way or when a student is left out of things on purpose.</p> <p>During the past 30 days, were you bullied at least once?</p> <p><i>[Yes; No; Don't Know; Decline]</i></p>	<p>During the past 12 months, how often have you had the following experiences?</p> <p><i>[Never or almost never; A few times a year; A few times a month; Once a week or more]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I got called names by other students. ● I got picked on by other students. Other students left me out of things on purpose. ● Other students made fun of me. ● I was threatened by other students. ● Other students spread nasty rumours about me. 	<p>During this year, how often have other students from your school done any of the following things to you (including through texting or the Internet)?</p> <p><i>[At least once a week; Once or twice a month; A few times a year; Never]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Made fun of me or called me names ● Left me out of their games or activities ● Spread lies about me ● Made me do things I didn't want to do ● Shared embarrassing information about me ● Threatened me 	<p>During the last month, how often have other students done the following? This could be in person, through texting or the Internet.</p> <p><i>[Never, Sometimes, Many times; Every or almost every day]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Made fun of me or called me names ● Left me out of their games or activities ● Spread lies about me ● Made me do things I didn't want to do ● Shared embarrassing information about me ● Threatened me

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Table F.3. Survey questions on sexual violence

VACS	PISA-D	DHS	SAQMEC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="204 398 496 792">● Has anyone ever touched you in a sexual way without your permission, but did not try and force you to have sex? Touching in a sexual way without permission includes fondling, pinching, grabbing, or touching you on or around your sexual body parts. <i>[Yes; No; Don't know/Decline]</i> <li data-bbox="204 887 496 1218">● These next questions ask you about sex, by sex I mean vaginal, oral or anal sex or the insertion of an object into your vagina or anus. Has anyone ever tried to make you have sex against your will but did not succeed? <i>[Yes; No; Don't know/Decline]</i> <li data-bbox="204 1312 496 1429">● Has anyone ever physically forced you to have sex and did succeed? <i>[Yes; No; Don't know/Decline]</i> <li data-bbox="204 1523 496 1711">● Has anyone ever pressured you to have sex, through harassment, threats or tricks and did succeed? <i>[Yes; No; Don't know/Decline]</i> 	<p data-bbox="518 398 810 945">Sexual harassment is any unwanted or inappropriate language or touching of a sexual nature that makes you feel upset, hurt, or angry. It can be verbal, such as comments about your body, sexual remarks, or the spreading of rumours about a person. It can be physical, such as touching, rubbing, pinching, or hugging in a sexual way. It can be a request for a sexual favour in return for something else. It can happen to both boys and girls.</p> <p data-bbox="518 981 810 1093">In the past 4 weeks, have you felt sexually harassed at school by a student? <i>[Yes; No]</i></p> <p data-bbox="518 1128 810 1281">In the past 4 weeks, have you felt sexually harassed at school by a teacher or other staff member? <i>[Yes; No]</i></p>	<p data-bbox="833 398 1125 577">In the last 12 months, has anyone forced you to have sexual intercourse or perform any other sexual acts that you did not want to?</p> <p data-bbox="833 613 1061 667"><i>[Yes; No; Refused to answer]</i></p>	<p data-bbox="1142 398 1386 546">About how often does the school have to deal with the following behaviours of pupils?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1142 551 1337 582">● <i>(Other items)</i> <li data-bbox="1142 586 1358 698">● <i>Sexual harassment of pupils by other pupils</i> <li data-bbox="1142 703 1353 815">● <i>Sexual harassment of teachers by pupils</i> <p data-bbox="1142 887 1386 1034">About how often does the school have to deal with the following behaviours of teachers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1142 1039 1337 1070">● <i>(Other items)</i> <li data-bbox="1142 1075 1382 1187">● <i>Sexual harassment of teachers by other teachers</i> <li data-bbox="1142 1191 1353 1303">● <i>Sexual harassment of pupils by teachers</i>

Appendix G. Description of National Surveys

1.3. List of surveys

Table 2.3 summarizes the lists of national surveys in the randomly selected sample of low- and middle-income countries. It is important to note that some national surveys in the sample are similar in content and structure to some international surveys. For example, several countries⁸ conducted demographic and health surveys with a questionnaire and survey structure similar to the DHS, but these were not part of the DHS programme.⁹ We also observe that a few countries¹⁰ administered surveys similar to the VACS that are not part of the official list of VACS. In these cases, the identified surveys were categorized as national surveys.

1.4. Description of surveys

Africa

About half of the countries (7 out of 13) had at least one nationally representative survey with school violence related content between 2013 and 2023. Of these 8 school-violence-related surveys, only 5 of them were able to provide consistent estimates for any of the policymaker's questions.

Senegal: Besides the four international surveys (DHS, MICS, PASEC, PISA-D), our search identified one more school-violence-related survey conducted on a national scale in 2020: Enquete des Violences Basees sur le Genre (Gender-based Violence Survey). The survey is addressed to male and female individuals above the age of 18 from 4 regions of the Procases (Projet Cadastre et Securisation Fonciere) intervention. The questionnaire content encompasses violence in school environments, including universities. Regrettably, the survey made no distinction between different types of violence and perpetrators. Due to its limited coverage and representativeness, it failed to provide data usable to answer any of the six policymakers' questions.

The Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville): Besides PASEC 2014, the research team found one additional school-violence-related survey implemented in the Republic of the Congo: The Study on School-related Gender-based Violence and Cyber Violence, conducted in 2019 under the support of Unicef. The survey is targeted at male and female individuals aged between 12 – 18, with a questionnaire similar to the VACS in both content and structure. In addition to the usual VACS survey content, the survey also contains questions on economic and cyber violence perpetrated by teachers and peer students. The national survey provides the policymakers with supplementary data to answer *Q1 How many children experienced bullying*

⁸ Somalia 2020, Bolivia 2016, Honduras 2019, Peru 2015-2021 and Laos PDR 2014.

⁹ This information was corroborated with the DHS team that confirmed that these national demographic and health surveys are conducted by the national statistics bureaus, without any involvement from their side.

¹⁰ Burkina Faso 2018, Indonesia 2013, Republic of the Congo 2013

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from other students at school?; Q2 How many school age children were sexually abused by teachers or other school staff? and Q4 How many children had physical injuries from corporal punishment?.

Burundi: In addition to the DHS 2016 and PASEC 2014, Burundi has also conducted a Population-based Survey on Peace and Education in 2015 that contains questions on psychological bullying by peers and physical attacks by teachers. The population-base survey is addressed to male and female age above 14 under the supervision of the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and the Brigham Women Hospital. However, the exact questionnaire content of the Survey was not available at the time that the search was conducted, and the research team could only infer from the content of its final report. Regrettably, the report yields limited information concerning the framing of the questions on school-related violence. The research team was unable to discern whether these questions satisfy the recentness constraint imposed on the three prevalence questions (Q1, Q2, Q3).

Asia

The following section reviews in detail the availability of nationally representative surveys in China, Cambodia, Indonesia and Laos PDR. All of the countries had at least one nationally representative survey with school violence related content in the selected time frame. All of these countries with valid surveys are able to answer at least one of the policymakers' questions.

China: Along with PISA and TALIS, the research team found 2 other national-level surveys with school violence related content in China: The China Education Panel Survey (CEPS 2013-2015) and the China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study (CHARLS 2014).

The CEPS is a nationally representative survey conducted by the National Survey Research Center of the Renmin University of China. The survey organisation is relatively similar to PIRLS and TIMSS, as different questionnaires were administered to 7th grade students, 9th grade students, parents, school principals and teachers. The survey was conducted for two rounds (baseline 2013-2014, follow-up 2014-2015) covering a wide range of school violence related topics, including physical fight among students; verbal violence, ignorance and corporal punishment by teachers; practise of peer bullying in classrooms. The CEPS would be able to provide consistent estimates for Q1: *“how many children experienced bullying from other students at school?”*

The CHARLS 2014 used a nationally representative sample of individuals aged 45 and older with stratified multistage cluster sampling method. The final samples fell within 150 counties of 28 provinces across China. The Life History Survey Questionnaire of CHARLS 2014 contains questions on childhood experience of peer bullying at school. It is worth noting that this survey only allows one to produce valid estimates of childhood peer bullying prevalence

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for the cohort aged over 45 in 2014. It is hence not representative of the actual school violence situation experienced by the current cohort enrolled in school (nor of those enrolled in 2014). Thus, although the questionnaire could answer Q1 *“How many children experienced bullying from other students at school?”* for that specified cohort, it fails satisfying the “five year” time constraint imposed by the policymakers' questions analysis.

Cambodia: Apart from the 5 international surveys (GSHS, PISA-D, DHS, VACS, PISA), the research team found one nationally representative surveys satisfying the inclusion criteria: The National Survey on Women’s Health and Life Experiences (WHS). The survey was conducted using an adapted version of the questionnaire from the WHO Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence Against Women, which is itself similar to the DHS module on domestic violence. The WHS survey collects data from female population aged between 15 and 64 on lifetime and past 12 months sexual and physical violence perpetrated by teachers, allowing the policymakers to explore Q2: *“How many school-age children were sexually abused by teachers or other school staff?”*

Moreover, an UN cross-sectional study on men and violence, conducted in Asia-Pacific countries including Cambodia (2011-2012) used a modified version of Childhood Trauma Questionnaire which includes questions on violence in and around school perpetrated by teachers. However, the year of data collection does not satisfy the time frame of our study and is hence excluded from the analysis.

Indonesia: In addition to the 4 international surveys (GSHS, PISA, TIMSS, SDI), Indonesia has conducted its own National Violence Against Children Survey in 2013. To some reasons that the authors ignore, the Indonesia National VACS, although similar in content to the international VACS, is not included in the list of countries published on VACS’ official website. It is hence considered as a national survey in this study. The Indonesia National VACS is administered to male and female individuals aged from 13 to 24, covering experiences of physical, emotional and sexual violence before the age of 18, perpetrated by teachers and schoolmates. The survey is funded and managed by multiple institutions including the Ministry of Sociality; Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection; National Development Planning Agency; Central Bureau of Statistics and Unicef Indonesia. The questionnaire content properly answers two of the policymakers' questions: Q2: *“How many school-age children were sexually abused by teachers or other school staff?”*

Moreover, Indonesia have also conducted a National Women’s Life Experience Survey (SPHPN 2016) similar to the one that we found in Cambodia and Lao PDR. The authors were not able to access the questionnaire content for this survey. The information on survey questions were obtained indirectly from the survey report. The survey would allow one to answer Q2: *“How many school-age children were sexually abused by teachers or other school staff?”*.

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We have also found a Child & Adolescent Life Experience Survey for Indonesia, conducted in 2021. However, the survey report is only available in Indonesian and we were unable to analyse it due to the language constraint.

Lao PDR: Apart from the 4 international surveys, the research team found 1 additional nationally representative survey with school violence related content. The Lao National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experiences is administered to female individuals aged between 15 and 64, by the Lao Statistics Bureau in 2014. The survey is similar in structure to the international DHS and provides estimates on experiences of school-related violence after the age of 15. The topics covered includes physical violence perpetrated by teachers, resulting injuries from physical violence as well as sexual violence before and after the age of 15 by teachers. The survey allows one to explore Q2 "*How many school-age children were sexually abused by teachers or other school staff?*" and Q4 "*How many children had physical injuries from corporal punishment by teachers?*"

Latin-America and the Caribbean

We revised the availability of nationally representative surveys covering school-violence-related questions in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia and Peru. All countries had survey data on school violence, but only 4 of 5 had at least one nationally representative survey. The surveys included questions related to at least one of the following topics: victimization at school, school climate, and perceptions of safety in school and on the way to school. This information would allow each country to answer, at most, two of the six policymakers' questions: *How many children experienced bullying from other students at school?*; and *How many school-age children were sexually abused by teachers or other school staff?*

Argentina: in addition to five international surveys (ERCE, GSHS, PIRLS, PISA and TIMSS), the country has three nationally representative surveys covering questions on school violence: the 2014 Survey on School Climate, Violence and Conflict, the 2014 National Youth Survey and the 2017 Victimization Survey. The first two are representative of urban areas and include questions on physical and psychological violence, while the latter one is representative of both urban and rural areas and includes questions on physical and sexual violence. The available national surveys would allow us to respond to 2 of the 6 policymaker questions: *how many children experienced bullying from other students at school?*; and *how many school-age children were sexually abused by teachers or other school staff?*

The 2014 Survey on School Climate, Violence and Conflict is a school violence-specific survey managed by the Education Ministry and administered to students enrolled in second and fifth grade of secondary school located in urban areas. The survey includes questions on physical and psychological bullying by students, physical fights and corporal punishment or psychological violence from teachers. The 2014 National Youth Survey is managed by Statistics Provincial Offices and is administered to individuals aged 15 to 29 years old living

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in urban households. The survey also includes questions on physical and psychological violence between students and teacher-to-student. The 2017 Victimization Survey is a household survey that asks about different forms of violence, including whether cases of physical and sexual violence happened at school and the type of perpetrator. Moreover, in 2019, the Ministry of Education collected nationally representative data from students enrolled in fifth and sixth grade of secondary to measure the student's learning progress (Aprender 2019). The survey included a few questions on perceptions about the school climate.

An additional source of information in the country includes the 2015-16 National LGBT Youth School Climate Survey. The survey is not nationally representative given that it was administered online to a self-selected sample of the LGBT population aged above 13 years. However, it is an important source of information given the lack of data available on LGBT students. The survey provides information on the prevalence of physical, psychological and sexual violence at school, perceptions of safety and cyberbullying. Other sources of surveys with questions on school-related violence that are representative of specific geographical areas only, include: Encuesta de Prevalencia de Violencia Contra las Mujeres, and Encuesta Rápida sobre la situación de la Niñez y Adolescencia (sexta ronda).

Bolivia: apart from one international survey (GSHS), the country has three nationally representative surveys covering questions on school violence. The National Household Survey included questions on school violence in 2018 and 2019. This survey includes questions on physical and psychological bullying, the frequency of bullying and the type of perpetrator for children above four years of age¹¹. The 2016 Demographic and Health Survey¹² is administered to men aged 15 to 64 and women aged 14 to 49. The survey includes information on sexual victimization by type of perpetrator (including teachers) and collects data on children's experiences of aggression¹³ in school (self-reported by the adult caretaker). Finally, in 2016 the Statistics Department administered a survey on the prevalence and characteristics of violence against women (Encuesta de Prevalencia y Características de la Violencia contra las Mujeres). The survey was administered to women above 15 years old and included questions on women's experiences of physical, psychological and sexual violence perpetrated by the school staff or other students. These nationally representative surveys allow us to respond to 2 of the 6 policymaker questions: *how many children experienced bullying from other students at school?; and how many school-age children were sexually abused by teachers or other school staff?*

Brazil: in addition to four international surveys (ERCE, PIRLS, PISA and TIMSS), the country has one nationally representative survey covering questions on school violence: National

¹¹ The questions are administered to the adult caretakers for children aged between 4 to 12 years, while individuals aged above 12 directly respond the questions.

¹² The survey is not part of the DHS Program. It is an independent survey managed by the National Institute of Statistic and the Ministry of Health.

¹³The survey asks about aggressions in general and does not differentiate between physical, psychological or sexual aggression.

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Adolescent School-based Health Survey. Since 2013, the survey has been administered to adolescents aged 13 to 17 years in 2015 and 2019 and managed by the Ministry of Health and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, with the support of the Ministry of Education. The data provides information on the perpetration of psychological bullying by classmates and the prevalence of physical fights with or without weapons. Therefore, it would only allow us to respond to 1 of the 6 policymaker questions : *how many children experienced bullying from other students at school?*

Colombia: in addition to the four international surveys (DHS, ERCE, PISA, VACS) collected in Colombia, we found one survey – Encuesta de Convivencia y Seguridad Ciudadana - that includes a question covering bullying among those aged above 14 years old This data source would contribute to responding Q1: *how many children experienced bullying from other students at school?*

Moreover, in 2013 the country created the *Sistema de Información Unificado de Convivencia Escolar*, a national system to report cases of school violence that would inform about the prevalence and evolution of reports violence at school. It is also worth mentioning two smaller-scale survey efforts that collect data on school violence: the 2016 School Climate LGBT Survey, and the School Climate and Victimization Bogota Survey. The former is executed at the national level on a self-selected sample of LGBT students and was managed by two non-governmental organizations (Colombia Diversa and Sentido). The School Climate and Victimization Bogota Survey is representative of Bogota City (Colombia's capital), has been collected every 2 years since 2011 and is managed by the National University of Colombia (Universidad Nacional de Colombia) and Education Secretariat of Bogota's Major Office. Both surveys include questions on the prevalence of physical, psychological and sexual violence, as well as questions on perceptions of discrimination and school climate.

Peru: in addition to four international surveys (ERCE, DHS, PISA and YLS), the country has three nationally representative surveys covering questions on school violence. In 2018 and 2019, the Ministry of Education applied a national survey to students enrolled in second grade of secondary in public and private schools¹⁴. The survey does not ask the students if they were victims of violence, but instead, whether they witnessed cases of psychological or physical bullying between students, or teacher to student. The survey also included questions on perceptions of discrimination and sense of belonging. Moreover, every year between 2015 and 2021, the Institute of Statistics administered the Demographic and Health Survey¹⁵. The survey is administered to women aged 15 to 49 years and provides data on physical attacks and sexual violence by type of perpetrator (including teachers and classmates). However, this data does not allow to identify if sexual violence occurred in the last 12 months. Finally, the Institute of Statistics administered a National Survey about Social Relations (Encuesta Nacional Sobre Relaciones Sociales) in 2013, 2015 and 2019. The survey includes questions on experiences of

¹⁴ The survey was administered as part of the Student Assessment Census (Evaluación Censal de Estudiantes).

¹⁵ Before 2015, the survey was part of the DHS Program. Since 2015, the country continued to administer the survey, but independently from the DHS Program.

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physical and psychological violence perpetrated by peers, and the main survey respondents include adolescents aged 12- to 17-year-old and women above 17 years old. The available information would allow us to explore 1 of the 6 policymaker questions: *how many children experienced bullying (physical and psychological) from other students?*

Similarly, to Colombia, in 2013, the Ministry of Education created an online platform called SISEVE. The platform can be used by victims, witnesses or confidants of the victims to report any cases of school violence and serves as an additional source of information to identify and monitor the prevalence of cases of school violence across the country. Among other sources of information, the Ministry of Education piloted a National Survey on School Coexistence and School Violence. The survey was administered to children enrolled in fourth grade of primary (age 10) and fifth grade of secondary (age 16) and included questions on psychological, physical and cyberbullying between students and teacher-to-student. However, the data is only representative of 9 of the 25 regions of the country.

Appendix H. Policymakers' Questions with both completed and pending surveys

Table H.1. Proportion of countries able to answer policymaker questions by number of questions and income group

	N = 0	N = 1	N = 2	N = 3	N = 4	N = 5 or 6
Low income	61%	18%	4%	11%	7%	0%
Lower middle income	30%	30%	24%	9%	7%	0%
Upper middle income	22%	22%	43%	9%	4%	0%

Note: See Figure 2.2 for the policymaker questions.

Table H.2. Proportion of countries able to answer policy questions by time windows

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
All LMICs in 10 years	65%	17%	0%	13%	0%	36%
All LMICs in 2013-2017	54%	12%	0%	8%	0%	2%
All LMICs in 2018-2022	43%	5%	0%	5%	0%	22%

Notes: See Figure 2.2 for the policymaker questions. Each cell in the table indicates the proportion of LMICs that had at least one survey answering each of the policymaker questions.

Table H.3. Proportion of countries able to answer policymaker questions by income group

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
2013-2022						
Low income	36%	18%	0%	18%	0%	14%
Lower middle income	67%	20%	0%	17%	0%	31%
Upper middle income	78%	13%	0%	7%	0%	52%
2013-2017						
Low income	32%	14%	0%	14%	0%	0%
Lower middle income	52%	15%	0%	11%	0%	4%
Upper middle income	69%	7%	0%	2%	0%	2%
2018-2022						
Low income	7%	4%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Lower middle income	41%	6%	0%	6%	0%	15%
Upper middle income	65%	6%	0%	6%	0%	41%

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Notes: See Figure 2.2 for the policymaker questions. Each cell in the table indicates the proportion of LMICs that had at least one survey answering each of the policymaker questions.

Table H.4. Proportion of countries able to answer policymaker questions by region

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
2013-2022						
East Asia and Pacific	51%	5%	0%	5%	0%	19%
Europe & Central Asia	29%	2%	0%	2%	0%	24%
Latin America & Caribbean	48%	14%	0%	7%	0%	29%
Middle East & North Africa	43%	0%	0%	0%	0%	19%
South Asia	88%	13%	0%	0%	0%	38%
Sub-Saharan Africa	42%	27%	0%	25%	0%	19%
2013-2017						
East Asia and Pacific	51%	5%	0%	5%	0%	3%
Europe & Central Asia	24%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Latin America & Caribbean	38%	12%	0%	5%	0%	2%
Middle East & North Africa	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
South Asia	75%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Sub-Saharan Africa	33%	17%	0%	15%	0%	2%
2018-2022						
East Asia and Pacific	22%	0%	0%	0%	0%	16%
Europe & Central Asia	29%	2%	0%	2%	0%	21%
Latin America & Caribbean	43%	2%	0%	2%	0%	17%
Middle East & North Africa	29%	0%	0%	0%	0%	14%
South Asia	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	13%
Sub-Saharan Africa	17%	10%	0%	10%	0%	2%

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Notes: See Figure 2.2 for the policymaker questions. Each cell in the table indicates the proportion of LMICs that had at least one survey answering each of the policymaker questions.

Table H.5. Number of countries in each region by the number of questions they can answer with national surveys

	N = 0	N = 1	N = 2	N = 3	N = 4	N = 5 or 6
East Asia and Pacific	0	0	1	2	1	0
Latin America & Caribbean	0	0	4	0	2	0
Sub-Saharan Africa	5	2	3	2	1	0

Notes: See Figure 2.2 for the policymaker questions.

Table H.6. Number of countries with at least one national or international survey answering Q1-Q6 between 2013 and 2022.

Question	Type	East Asia and Pacific n=4	Latin America & Caribbean n=6	Sub-Saharan Africa n=13
Q1	International	4	6	6
	National	2	5	4
	All	4	6	7
Q2	International	2	2	2
	National	3	2	4
	All	3	4	6
Q3	International	0	0	0
	National	0	0	0
	All	0	0	0
Q4	International	2	2	1
	National	1	0	2
	All	2	2	3
Q5	International	0	0	0

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	National	0	0	0
	All	0	0	0
<hr/>				
Q6	International	3	5	4
	National	1	4	1
	All	3	6	4
<hr/>				

Notes: See Figure 2.2 for the policymaker questions.

Appendix I. Detailed Per-Question Analysis

This section discusses in more detail our findings for each of the policymaker questions by income group (Table I.1.) and region (Table I.1.).

Q1: “How many children experience bullying (i.e., physical or psychological violence) from other students?”

Q1 is the question that can be answered in most LMICs. We identify eight different international surveys that provide data about Q1. Every income group and region had some countries with datasets able to answer Q1 both during 2013-2017 and 2018-2022 (Table I.1.). Availability of data on this question varies dramatically across regions, and the regions with most coverage vary a great deal across time periods (Table I.2.). Overall, we observe that a higher percentage of countries administered international surveys between 2013-2017, particularly in South Asia and East Asia and Pacific.

Q2: “How many school-age children were sexually abused by teachers or other school staff?”

A few countries in each income group would be able to identify the proportion of children that have been sexually abused by teachers over the two-time windows (Table I.1.). Unlike Q1, relative to upper-middle-income countries, more low- and lower-middle-income countries conducted surveys to answer Q2 during 2013-2017. This finding reversed as we progressed to 2018-2022 as a lower number of low- and lower-middle-income countries administered surveys with available data to answer Q2. Taking a closer look at the data sources, only two international surveys provide an answer to the question.¹⁶ Hence, the observed drop seems to be mainly explained by the fact that PISA-D was only conducted in 2017. When disaggregating the data by region, we observe that our findings are driven by a few LMICs countries in Latin-America and the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Q3: “How many secondary school children were sexually abused on the way to or from school?”

None of the 14 international surveys included in this review would result answers to Q3. Several surveys do contain questions regarding sexual violence against secondary school-age children, but none of them have questions to identify whether this happened on the way to or from school. PISA-Development covered violence on the way to or from school, but neither in

¹⁶ The two surveys with questions to measure incidents of sexual violence perpetrated by the school staff over the last 12 months are PISA-D and VACS. DHS also includes questions to measure whether the respondent was sexually abused by teachers at any point in their life but would not allow us to measure whether the teacher was the perpetrator in incidents that occurred in the last 12 months. Because of this, we did not consider the countries with DHS data for Q2. If we remove the 12 months restriction, the proportion of countries able to answer this question would increase to 43%.

such a way that one could answer this question. PISA-D asked about the subjective feeling of safety on the way to or from school and did not capture any actual violence experiences.

Q4: “How many children had physical injuries from corporal punishment by teachers?”

None of the international surveys that inquire specifically about corporal punishment include a subsequent question on physical injuries. However, the VACS includes a question about injuries resulting from any physical violence perpetrated by teachers—a larger category than corporal punishment. We treat this as a proxy for corporal punishment, and in the Q4 column of Tables I.1. and I.2. we show the regions and income groups where the VACS has been administered. Specifically, in 13 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, 4 countries in Latin-America and the Caribbean, 2 in East Asia and Pacific and 1 in Europe and Central Asia it would be possible to explore whether corporal punishment resulted in physical injuries. Moreover, we observe that the percentage of countries able to answer Q2 and Q4 are identical for the time window between 2018 to 2020. This is because the two questions could only be answered in the countries that administered a VACS during those years.

Q5: “How much more likely were youth who experience sexual or physical violence to drop out of school over the course of the succeeding year?”

None of the international surveys in our database would provide a direct answer to Q5. 7 of the 14 international surveys are administered to children while at school. Thus, it is infeasible to ask about the reasons for dropouts simply because none of the respondents has abandoned school. Among all the surveys in our database, only PISA-D has a separate survey for “out of school” children. Unfortunately, the question closest to Q5 we can get from the PISA-D questionnaire is “Would you be more likely to continue your schooling if there were: (...) a safe school (...)?” A small number of surveys collect data on the reasons for absence instead of dropouts. VACS asks the victims of sexual and physical violence whether they “ever had to miss school because of what happened.” Neither of these two surveys is able to answer the question raised in Q5. Hence, the likelihood of school-violence-induced dropouts is not directly available from any of the existing datasets.

Q6: “Have we made progress on reducing school violence in the last X years?”

To assess progress on reducing school violence, countries need data from at least two different points in time. In each of the income groups and regions, some countries have conducted more than one international survey in the last 10 years. This includes cases in which the same survey was administered more than once across time (within-survey trends), and cases where different surveys with similar questions on violence were administered at different points in time (cross-survey trends). If we consider both cases, we observe that 63 percent of countries have data on school violence at least twice in the last 10 years. We do not observe major differences for middle-income countries when analysing each 5 time-window separately. However, we find that there was a significant drop in the proportion of low-income countries that conducted

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international surveys at least twice between 2018 and 2022: 41 percent of the low-income countries had at least two surveys at different points in time during 2013-2017, whereas only 26 percent of them had multiple surveys from 2018 to 2022.

These figures, however, should be interpreted with caution as they mainly inform about data frequency across time and not necessarily about the evolution of violence across time. This is because international surveys differ in the age of their target population, scope and framing of questions, and hence are not strictly comparable (see section 4.1 and appendix C). With the existing international surveys, Q6 can only be answered rigorously in the countries that have administered the same international survey at least twice in the last 10 years. We observe that only 37 percent of countries fulfil this criterion, and that result is driven by middle income countries with surveys such as the PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS. These international surveys are executed approximately every three years, not within the two-time windows considered in this paper, which is why we observe that less than 5 percent of countries would be able to answer Q6 in the two 5-year windows considered in this paper (see Table I.1., column Q6).

Table I.1: Proportion of countries able to answer policymaker questions by income group

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
2013-2022						
Low income	32%	18%	0%	18%	0%	14%
Lower middle income	65%	20%	0%	17%	0%	31%
Upper middle income	78%	13%	0%	7%	0%	52%
2013-2017						
Low income	32%	14%	0%	14%	0%	0%
Lower middle income	52%	15%	0%	11%	0%	4%
Upper middle income	69%	7%	0%	2%	0%	2%
2018-2022						
Low income	4%	4%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Lower middle income	35%	6%	0%	6%	0%	4%
Upper middle income	63%	6%	0%	6%	0%	0%

Notes: Each cell in the table indicates the proportion of LMICs that had at least one survey answering each of the policymaker questions.

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Table I.2. Proportion of countries able to answer policymaker questions by region

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
2013-2022						
East Asia and Pacific	51%	5%	0%	5%	0%	19%
Europe & Central Asia	29%	2%	0%	2%	0%	24%
Latin America & Caribbean	48%	14%	0%	7%	0%	29%
Middle East & North Africa	38%	0%	0%	0%	0%	19%
South Asia	88%	13%	0%	0%	0%	38%
Sub-Saharan Africa	40%	27%	0%	25%	0%	19%
2013-2017						
East Asia and Pacific	51%	5%	0%	5%	0%	3%
Europe & Central Asia	24%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Latin America & Caribbean	38%	12%	0%	5%	0%	2%
Middle East & North Africa	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
South Asia	75%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Sub-Saharan Africa	33%	17%	0%	15%	0%	2%
2018-2022						
East Asia and Pacific	19%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Europe & Central Asia	29%	2%	0%	2%	0%	0%
Latin America & Caribbean	40%	2%	0%	2%	0%	0%
Middle East & North Africa	24%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
South Asia	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	13%
Sub-Saharan Africa	13%	10%	0%	10%	0%	2%

Notes: Each cell in the table indicates the proportion of LMICs that had at least one survey answering each of the policymaker questions.

Appendix J. List of Initialisms and Acronyms

CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
CEPS (China Education Panel Survey)
CHARLS (China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study)
CP MERG (Child Protection Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group)
CONFEMEN (Conference of Ministers of Education of French Speaking Countries)
DHS (Demographic and Health Surveys)
ECSC (Encuesta de Convivencia y Seguridad Ciudadana)
ENDESA (Encuesta Nacional de demografía y salud)
ERCE (Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo)
FCDO (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office)
GHS (General Household Survey)
GSHS (Global School-based Student Health Survey)
HBSC (Health Behaviour in School-aged Children)
IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement)
ISSP (Institut Supérieur des Sciences de la Population)
LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer +)
LMICs (Low- and Middle-income Countries)
MICS (Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys)
OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)
PASEC (Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems)
PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment)
PISA-D (Programme for International Assessment – Development Survey)
PIRLS (Progress In International Reading Literacy Study)
SACMEQ or SEACMEQ (Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality)
SDI (Service Delivery Indicators)
SPHPN (National Women’s Life Experience Survey)
SRGBV (school-related gender-based violence)
TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey)
TfG (Together for Girls)
TIMSS (Trends In International Mathematics and Science Study)

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UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund)

USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development)

VACS (Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys)

VGMS (Etude sur les violences de genre et les violences en ligne en milieu scolaire)

WHS (National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experiences)

WHO (World Health Organization)