El Salvador 2017 VACS Data File

SUMMARY

The Ministry of Justice and Public Security established and chaired all aspects of the El Salvador Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) with inputs from institutional members of the Technical Working Group. The General Directorate of Statistics and Census of El Salvador (DIGESTYC), advised on survey design, provided the survey sample, and contributed to fieldwork implementation. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided technical assistance, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in El Salvador coordinated the study and directed the implementation strategy.

The purpose of the El Salvador VACS is to estimate (1) the prevalence of childhood violence (physical, sexual and emotional), defined as violence occurring before 18 years of age among 18-24 year olds, and (2) the prevalence of violence in the 12 months prior to the survey among adolescents (ages 13-17) and young adults (ages 18-24). To achieve these purposes, the El Salvador VACS assessed the experiences of females and males ages 13-24, via a nationally representative household survey. The participant questionnaire included approximately 300 questions and covered the following topics: demographics; parental relationships, education, general connectedness to family, friends and community; gender beliefs; safety; witnessing violence in the home or community; sexual history and risk-taking behavior; experiences of physical, sexual and emotional violence; violence perpetration, pregnancy; health outcomes and risk behaviors; and violence disclosure, service-seeking and utilization of services. Additionally, the survey contained modules that were specific for El Salvador and the region. These included questions about sexual orientation, remittances, migration, bullying, online sex, and community violence. The questionnaire used in El Salvador was an adaptation of a core VACS questionnaire that was structured in a way that facilitates international comparisons. The adaptation to El Salvador considers local linguistic expressions as well as country-specific census classifications.

The VACS use a standardized methodology for measuring physical, emotional, and sexual violence against children. A multi-stage, geographically clustered sample design was used to produce nationally representative data. The El Salvador VACS was implemented in El Salvador in 2017. The sampling frame was originally compiled by the General Directorate of Statistics and Census (DIGESTYC, in Spanish *Dirección General de Estadística y Censos*) based on the 2007 national census. The master frame for the El Salvador VACS included 10,055 enumeration areas (EAs) out of 12,423 from the census. The EAs in the master frame were selected to be representative of the country. The VACS utilized a three-stage stratified sample design. In the first stage, a total of 281 EAs were selected randomly from the master frame; 94 were assigned to be female EAs and 187 were assigned to be male EAs. In the second stage, the sampling plan was to select a fixed number of 27 households using equal probability systematic sampling within each EA. This was accomplished in approximately 48% of the sample. EAs that were considered small (e.g. those with a total of less than 50 households overall), were excluded from the study to protect participants' confidentiality because of the low geographic dispersion. However, during fieldwork there were inconsistencies in how the households were sampled, due mostly to community violence in certain EAs throughout the country. This situation either prevented teams from visiting those EAs affected by violence or restricted the time that teams had to complete the surveys within them. As a consequence of these security issues, about 27% of the sampled EAs had fewer than 27 households sampled (in addition to EA loss). In order to control the cost of the survey and as a way to adapt to the security situation that affected fieldwork as well as to protect the survey teams, a decision was made to sample more than 27 households in the remainder of the EAs (approximately 24% of EAs). This situation means that when weighing the data, the estimations will be biased towards those convenient-to-reach individuals. In this survey, sample weights were applied during data analysis that accounted for the probabilities of selecting individuals based on the actual

results of the fieldwork, rather than the original sampling plan. These probabilities take into account (1) varying household selection probabilities and (2) non-response adjustments due to sample loss (e.g. loss of EAs). In the last stage, one eligible participant (female or male depending on the selected EA) was randomly selected from the list of all eligible participants (females or males) 13-24 years of age in each household and administered the questionnaire. To calculate separate male and female prevalence estimates for violence victimization, a split sample approach was used. This means that the survey for females was conducted in different EAs than the survey for males. The split sample approach served to protect the confidentiality of respondents and eliminated the chance that a male perpetrator of sexual violence and the female who was sexually assaulted in the same community would both be interviewed. The design also eliminated the chance that a female perpetrator and a male who experienced sexual violence from the same community would both be interviewed.

Due to the complex sample design, clustering, stratification and sample weights should be taken into account in the data analysis in order to obtain proper point estimates and variances. Users of the El Salvador VACS 2017 Data Files should use statistical software packages such as SAS, SPSS, SUDAAN, or Stata that have specific analytic procedures for complex survey designs. The stratification, cluster, and sample weight variables are Department, Class, EA, and SurveyWeight, respectively.