

Key Facts in Rural Health

Fall 2005

Poverty, Stress and Violent Disagreements in the Home among Rural Families

Violence in the home is not an “adults only” issue. Witnessing domestic violence increases a child’s chance of having emotional/ behavioral problems and being in abusive relationships in adulthood, even without child maltreatment. Our study used information from a large, nationally representative telephone survey of households with children, carried out by the National Center for Health Statistics, to explore the prevalence of violent disagreements in the home. “Violent” disagreements are those that involve hitting or throwing, as opposed to heated argument or calm discussion. We also examined two factors, poverty and parenting stress, hypothesized to be associated with violent disagreement.

Key Findings:

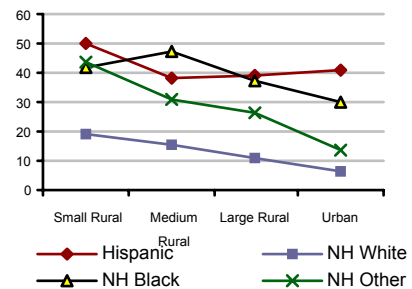
Disagreements

- Nationally, 10.3% of children lived in homes where disagreement is expressed, at least occasionally, by hitting and throwing. The prevalence of violent disagreements was lower in homes located in rural counties than in urban homes, with no significant differences across levels of rurality.
- An additional 31.5% of children lived in homes where disagreement is expressed through heated argument and shouting.
- Parents experiencing high parenting stress had over 3 times the odds of reporting violent disagreements, that is, hitting or throwing, than parents reporting less stress (OR 3.17, CI 2.91-3.47). Parents reporting high parenting stress also had the higher odds of heated disagreements (OR 1.99, CI 1.87-2.12), those involving arguing or shouting.

Poverty

- 40% or more of minority children were living at or below 100% of the Federal poverty level in 2003.
- Poverty increases as the child’s county of residence becomes more rural.
- In small rural counties, 77% of African American children, 77% of Hispanic children, 73% of “other” children, and 50% of white children lived in households at or below 200% of the Federal poverty level.

Percent of children living in households <100% of the Federal poverty level, by rurality



Parental Stress

- Rural parents were slightly less likely to report high parenting stress than urban parents. Only one rural group, African American families in medium rural counties, experienced higher stress than urban residents.
- For Hispanic and White respondents, the effects of poverty on parenting stress are minimal when other factors, such as family structure and employment, are held equal.
- Among African American and “other” families, reported parenting stress declines as income increases, with a possible threshold effect at the 200 - <400% of poverty income level.

A full copy of the report can be obtained from the SC Rural Health Research Center at <http://rhr.sph.sc.edu>