

**Title:** Child-Parent Contact Postseparation in Situations of Family Violence – keeping the best interest of the child in focus

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**Abstract:**

**Introduction:** Despite the proliferation of research documenting negative consequences for children subjected to violence perpetrated by a parent against the other parent, a sibling and/or the child themselves, little is yet known about the acute and long-term impact of having continued contact with an abusive parent postseparation, as well as the child's thoughts and feelings about the contact. To address this gap, the study outlined in this presentation looks at family violence and child-parent contact (digital and IRL) during childhood from the child's perspective.

**Methods:** This study is based on cross-sectional data, including a Swedish nationally representative sample of 1 013 young adults, aged 20-30 years, who responded to an online survey about childhood experiences carried out by Kantar Public and commissioned by Unizon.

**Results:** Of the 1 013 young adults, 26 % had been subjected to family violence and 14 % of them had experienced parental separation during childhood. The majority reported continued contact with the abusive parent postseparation. About three out of five described that the contact continued although they did not want to, often to avoid conflicts or to protect other family members, but also because they had no choice since contact was forced upon them by the family courts. Many of the young adults felt that they were not listened to when they disclosed their feelings. The results also provide insights into the acute and long-term trajectories of continued contact, for example, 89 % and 44 % of all the young adults reported levels of psychological and physical suffering respectively in adulthood.

**Conclusions:** The study demonstrates consistent failings of the society to ensure that children are safe and able to access their rights. To be forced to have contact was particularly detrimental. Implications for policy and practice concerning child-parent contact, both digital and IRL, are discussed.

**Keywords:** Family violence, postseparation, forced child-parent contact, digital and IRL, repeat victimization, health, relationships, disclosure

**Preferred way of presenting:** 1. Oral presentation

**About Unizon:** Unizon is a not-for-profit national association for over 140 Swedish Women's Shelters, Young Empowerment Centres and other Support Services which work together for a gender equal society free from violence.