

# Child Abuse and Victimization

In 1996, 969,018 cases of child abuse and neglect were reported nationwide from a total of 47 states. Nearly 80 percent of these cases involved abuse and neglect by parents. An additional 11 percent involved other relatives. (*National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1998). Child Maltreatment 1996: Reports From the States for the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.*)

Among children who died due to abuse or neglect, very young children were most likely to be killed, with children aged 3 and under accounting for three-quarters of all deaths. (*Ibid.*)

Fifty-two percent of maltreated children suffered neglect, 24 percent physical abuse, 12 percent sexual abuse, 6 percent emotional abuse, 3 percent medical neglect and 16 percent other forms of maltreatment. Some children suffered more than one type of maltreatment. (*Ibid.*)

More than half of the children were under 8 years old, while 28 percent were younger than 4 years old. Younger children were more likely than older children to be neglected, while older children were more likely than younger children to be physically, sexually or emotionally abused. (*Ibid.*)

Fifty-two percent of child abuse and neglect victims were girls and 48 percent boys. (*Ibid.*)

Fifty-three percent of all victims were white, 27 percent African-American, 11 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Asian/Pacific Islander

and 2 percent Native American. African American and Native American children were abused and neglected at a rate almost twice their proportions in the national child population. (*Ibid.*)

A report which synthesized the findings of 166 national and more localized studies of male sexual abuse indicates that as many as one in six boys nationally have been sexually abused. (*The Sacramento Bee, December 2, 1998.*)

Forty-five states reported that a total of 996 children were known by the CPS agency to have died as a result of abuse or neglect. The majority of these deaths were children 3 years of age or younger. (*National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1997). Child Maltreatment 1995: Reports From the States for the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.*)

In 1995, child protective service agencies investigated nearly 2 million reports alleging maltreatment of an estimated 3 million children. The national rate of children who were reported was 43 per 1,000 children. (*Ibid.*)

Nationwide, about 36 percent of investigations for maltreatment resulted in a disposition of either substantiated or indicated maltreatment, and more than half (58 percent) resulted in a finding that child maltreatment was not substantiated. (*Ibid.*)

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Violence against children is one of the least well-documented areas of personal crime. For example, with regard to the cost of crime, preliminary estimates suggest that violence against children accounts for more than 20 percent of all out-of-pocket crime victim costs, and more than 35 percent of all out-of-pocket crime costs when pain, suffering and lost quality of life is added. (Miller, T., Cohen, M., & Wiersema, B. (1996, February). *Victim Costs and Consequences: A New Look*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice.)

The cost of mental health care for the "typical" child sexual abuse victim is estimated to be \$5,800. (*Ibid.*)

Based upon new research released in April of 1997, researchers Kilpatrick and Saunders found: more female than male adolescents had been sexually assaulted -- 13 percent of females versus 3.4 percent of males. Sexual assault was defined as "unwanted but actual sexual contact." The researchers noted that this did not include unsuccessful attempts at contact or non-contact victimization, such as exhibition. (Kilpatrick, D. & Saunders, B. (1997, April). "Prevalence and Consequences of Child Victimization." *Research Preview*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice.)

Kilpatrick and Saunders' research measured the lifetime experience of seeing someone shot with a gun, knifed, sexually assaulted, mugged, robbed or threatened with a weapon. The researchers did not include witnessing violence portrayed in the media -- on television, in the movies or in print media. In measuring the lifetime experience of witnessing violence, as described above,

they found: Forty-three percent of male adolescents and 35 percent of female adolescents had witnessed some form of violence firsthand. (*Ibid.*)

Significantly, according to BJS, the study *excluded* approximately 30 percent of adolescents who had directly observed someone being beaten up or badly hurt. Had these adolescents been included in the overall calculations, the prevalence of witnessing violence would have risen to 72 percent for the entire sample of respondents. (*Ibid.*)

In 1994, children under the age of 18 accounted for 11 percent of all murder victims in the United States. (Greenfeld, L. (1996, March). *Child Victimizers: Violent Offenders and Their Victims: Executive Summary*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics & Office for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice.)

Two-thirds of all prisoners convicted of rape or sexual assault committed the crime against a child. (*Ibid.*)

According to a study reported by the National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse, almost 50 percent of children who die from maltreatment in the United States are already known to child protection agencies. (National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse. (1996, March/April). *NRCCSA News*. Huntsville, AL: National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect.)

*Note: OVC makes no representation concerning the accuracy of data from non-Department of Justice sources.*

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