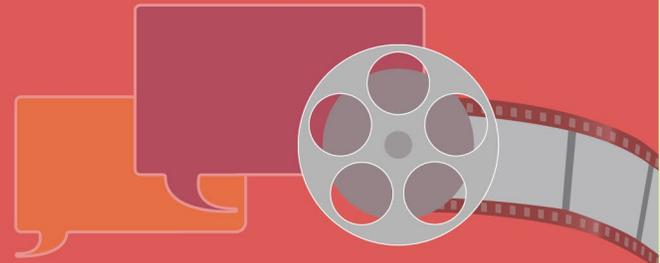




Building Community, Building Hope



Key Facts About Child Maltreatment in the United States

Q. What is the definition of child abuse and neglect?

A. Child abuse and neglect are defined in both Federal and State laws. The types of maltreatment defined include physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse. Details about how your state's laws define the conduct, acts, and omissions that constitute child abuse or neglect that must be reported to child protective agencies can be found in the Child Welfare Information Gateway's [Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect](#).

Q. How many U.S. children are abused or neglected each year?

A. For 2013, there were a nationally estimated 679,000 victims of abuse and neglect, resulting in a rate of 9.1 victims per 1,000 children in the population. This rate only reflects children for whom a state determined that at least one maltreatment event was substantiated or indicated.¹

Q. How many children die each year due to abuse or neglect?

A. An estimated 1,520 children died as a result of abuse or neglect in 2013. This national estimate was based on data from State child welfare information systems, as well as other data sources available to the States.

Q. Approximately how many allegations of maltreatment are reported and receive an investigation or assessment for abuse and neglect each year?

A. During 2013, Child Protective Service (CPS) agencies received an estimated 3.5 million referrals involving approximately 6.4 million children.

Q. Is the number of maltreated children increasing or decreasing?

A. The number of victims decreased 3.8% from 2009 to 2013.

Q. What percentage of children reported to CPS were "screened in" for follow-up action?

A. Approximately one-fifth of the children reported to CPS were found to be victims.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the data cited is from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Children's Bureau (CB). (2015). *Child maltreatment 2013*. Available from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2013>

Q. Who were the child victims?

A. The youngest children are the most vulnerable—about 27% of reported victims were under the age of three. Victims in their first year of life had the highest rate of victimization at 23.1 per 1,000 children of the same age in the national population.

Q. What are the most common types of maltreatment?

A. Neglect, at 80%, is by far, the most common form of maltreatment. Physical abuse, at 18%, is the second most common form of maltreatment.

Q. What are the long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect?

A. While many children are resilient and can recover from maltreatment, there are significant, widespread long-term consequences for their behavior and physical and psychological development.²

Q. What does child maltreatment cost?

A. [Prevent Child Abuse America](#) estimates that child abuse and neglect prevention strategies can save taxpayers \$104 billion each year.³ According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), the lifetime cost of child maltreatment and related fatalities in one year totals \$124 billion.⁴

² For more information about the long-term physical, psychological, behavioral, and societal consequences of child abuse and neglect, see Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2013). *Long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect*. Washington, DC: HHS, CB. Available from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/long-term-consequences/>

³ Prevent Child Abuse America. *Our mission and vision*. Retrieved January 13, 2016, from <http://www.preventchildabuse.org/about-us/our-mission-a-vision>

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014). *Cost of child abuse and neglect rival other major public health problems*. Available from <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/EconomicCost.html>

Indirect costs, including the long-term economic consequences to society because of child abuse and neglect such as increased use of the health-care system, juvenile and adult criminal activity, mental illness, substance abuse, and domestic violence, drive this number much higher.

Q. What contributes to child abuse and neglect?

A. Multiple life stressors, such as a family history of abuse or neglect; physical and mental health problems; marital conflict; substance abuse; domestic or community violence; and financial stressors such as unemployment, financial insecurity, and homelessness, can reduce a parent's capacity to cope effectively with the typical day-to-day stresses of raising children.⁵

- **Parental substance abuse and child maltreatment.** Research has demonstrated that children of substance abusing parents are more likely to experience abuse—physical, sexual, or emotional—or neglect than children in non-substance abusing households. According to one of the few studies available, between one-third and two-thirds of child maltreatment cases involve substance abuse. It is conservatively estimated that 9% of children in this country (6 million) live with at least one parent who abuses alcohol or other drugs.

While the link between substance abuse and child maltreatment is well documented, it is not clear how much is a direct causal connection and how much can be attributed to other co-occurring issues. National data reveal that slightly more than one-third of adults with substance use disorders have a co-occurring mental illness.⁶

⁵ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2013). *Preventing child maltreatment and promoting well-being: A network for action 2013 resource guide*. Washington, DC: HHS, CB. Available from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/2013guide.pdf>

⁶ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2014). *Parental substance use and the child welfare system*. Washington, DC: HHS, CB. Available from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/parentalsubabuse.pdf>

- **Homelessness and child maltreatment.** The federal government estimates that more than 1.6 million U.S. children, many under the age of six, live on the streets, in homeless shelters, in campgrounds, temporarily doubled up with others, or are otherwise without a stable home.⁷ While homelessness itself is not indication of maltreatment, stress related to being homeless as well as some of the factors associated with it put children at greater risk for neglect in areas such as health, education, and nutrition.⁸
- **Domestic violence and child maltreatment.** Research indicates a 30–60% overlap of child maltreatment and domestic violence. Estimates of the number of children who have been exposed to domestic violence each year vary. Nearly 30 million children in the United States will be exposed to some type of family violence before the age of 17.⁹
- **Poverty and child maltreatment.** While most people in financial need do not maltreat their children, poverty can increase the likelihood of maltreatment, particularly when poverty is combined with other risk factors such as depression, substance abuse, and social isolation.¹⁰

⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Letter to Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting Program grantees, November 30, 2015.

⁸ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2006). *Child neglect: A guide for prevention, assessment and intervention*. Washington, DC: HHS, CB. Available from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/neglect/>

⁹ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2014). *Domestic violence and the child welfare system*. Washington, DC: HHS, CB. Available from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/domestic-violence/>

¹⁰ For a collection of research on poverty and child maltreatment, see the Child Welfare Information Gateway's *Poverty and Economic Conditions*. Washington, DC: HHS, CB. Available from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/can/factors/contribute/environmental/poverty/>

Q. *What prevents child abuse and neglect?*

- A. Focusing on protective factors is a critical way to prevent child maltreatment and promote child and family well-being.

Protective factors are conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that reduce or eliminate risk and promote healthy development and well-being of children and families. These factors help ensure that children and youth function well at home, in school, at work, and in the community, today and into adulthood. Protective factors also can serve as buffers, helping parents who might otherwise be at risk of abusing their children to find resources, supports, or coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even under stress.

Research has found that successful interventions must both reduce risk factors and promote protective factors to ensure child and family well-being. There is growing interest in understanding the complex ways in which these risk and protective factors interact within the context of a child's family, community, and society to affect both the incidence and consequences of child abuse and neglect.¹¹

¹¹ To learn more about protective factors, see Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2015). *2015 Prevention resource guide: Making meaningful connections*. Washington, DC: HHS, CB. Available from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resource-guide/>