



Child Maltreatment 2002: Summary of Key Findings

This fact sheet presents excerpts from *Child Maltreatment 2002*, a report based on data submissions by the States for calendar year 2002. The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System was developed by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Human Services in partnership with the States to collect annual statistics on child maltreatment from State child protective services (CPS) agencies.¹

The press release announcing these data is available on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website at www.hhs.gov/news/press/2004pres/20040401.html. The *Child Maltreatment 2002* report is available on the Children's Bureau website at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/cmreports.htm. Limited print copies are available from the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information.

Victims

An estimated 896,000 children were determined to be victims of child abuse or neglect in 2002. The rate of victimization per 1,000 children in the national population has dropped from 13.4 children in 1990 to 12.3 children in 2002.

More than 60 percent of child victims experienced neglect. Almost 20 percent were physically abused; 10 percent were sexually abused; and 7 percent were emotionally maltreated. In addition, almost 20 percent were associated with "other" types of maltreatment based on specific State laws and policies.²

Children ages birth to 3 years had the highest rates of victimization at 16.0 per 1,000 children. Girls were slightly more likely to be victims than boys.

American Indian or Alaska Native and African-American children had the highest rates of victimization when compared to their national population. While the rate of White victims of child abuse or neglect was 10.7 per 1,000 children of the same race, the rate for American Indian or Alaska Natives was 21.7 per 1,000 children and for African-Americans 20.2 per 1,000 children.

Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect

In 2002, an estimated total of 2.6 million referrals concerning the welfare of approximately 4.5 million children were made to CPS agencies throughout the United States. Of these, approximately two-thirds (an estimated 1.8 million) were accepted for investigation or assessment; one-third were not accepted.

¹ CPS agencies respond to referrals regarding harm to children caused by *parents* or *primary caregivers*. Incidents of harm to children caused by other people, such as acquaintances and strangers, are not included in these data.

² These numbers add up to more than 100 percent because some children were victims of more than one type of maltreatment.



More than one-half (56.5 percent) of all reports that alleged child abuse or neglect were made by such professionals as educators, law enforcement and legal personnel, social services personnel, medical personnel, mental health personnel, child daycare providers, and foster care providers. Such nonprofessionals as friends, neighbors, and relatives submitted approximately 43.6 percent of reports.

Approximately 30 percent of the reports included at least one child who was found to be a victim of abuse or neglect. Sixty-one percent of the reports were found to be unsubstantiated (including intentionally false); the remaining reports were closed for additional reasons.

Fatalities

Child fatalities are the most tragic consequence of maltreatment. For 2002, an estimated 1,400 children died due to abuse or neglect. Three-quarters (76 percent) of children who were killed were younger than 4 years old; 12 percent were 4 to 7 years old; 6 percent were 8 to 11 years old; and 6 percent were 12 to 17 years old.

Infant boys (younger than 1 year old) had the highest rate of fatalities, nearly 19 deaths per 100,000 boys of the same age in the national population. Infant girls (younger than 1 year old) had a rate of 12 deaths per 100,000. The overall rate of child fatalities was 2 deaths per 100,000 children. One-third of child fatalities were attributed to neglect. Physical abuse and sexual abuse also were major contributors to fatalities.

Perpetrators

More than 80 percent of perpetrators were parents. Other relatives accounted for 7 percent, and unmarried partners of parents accounted for 3 percent of perpetrators. The remaining perpetrators include persons with other (camp counselor, school employee, etc.) or unknown relationships to the child victims.

Female perpetrators, who were mostly mothers, were typically younger than male perpetrators, who were mostly fathers. Women also comprised a larger percentage of all perpetrators than men, 58 percent compared to 42 percent.

Of all parents who were perpetrators, less than 3 percent were associated with sexual abuse. Of all perpetrators of sexual abuse, nearly 29 percent were other relatives, and nearly one-quarter were in nonrelative or nonchildcaring roles.

Services

Approximately 59 percent of victims and 31 percent of nonvictims received services as a result of an investigation or assessment. Additional analyses indicated that children who were prior victims of maltreatment were more than 80 percent more likely to receive services than first-time victims. Additionally, children with multiple types of maltreatment were more than 80 percent more likely to receive services than children with only one type of recorded maltreatment.

Services included both in-home and foster care services. Almost one-fifth of child victims were placed in foster care. About 4 percent of nonvictims also experienced a removal—usually a short-term placement during the course of the investigation.