

Child Abuse and Victimization

In 1995, more than one million children were identified as victims of abuse or neglect. Nationwide, the victimization rate of children was approximately 15 per 1,000 children younger than 18 years of age. About 80 percent of the perpetrators of child maltreatment were the parents of the victims. Another 10 percent of the perpetrators were other relatives. About 2 percent were persons in other caretaking roles (e.g., foster parents, facility staff, and child care providers). (*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.*)

Twice as many victims suffered from neglect (52 percent) as were victims of the next most frequent type of maltreatment, physical abuse (25 percent). About 13 percent of the victims were sexually abused. More than half of all victims were 7 years of age or younger, with about 26 percent younger than 4 years old. About 21 percent of the victims were teenagers. The majority of victims of neglect and medical neglect were younger than 8 years old, while the majority of victims of other forms of maltreatment were 8 years old or older. (*Ibid.*)

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. (*Ibid.*)

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.*)

As violence against women escalates in the home, children experience a 300 percent increase in physical violence by the male batterer, and may be at increased risk of abuse by the mother or female caretaker. (*Straus, M. & Gelles, R. (1990). Physical Violence in American Families, Risk Factors and Adaptations to Violence in 8,145 Families. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.*)

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. R., Cohen, M. A., & 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.*)

(Continued on back)

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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.)

Respondents also indicated that young males had significantly higher rates of physical assault than females -- 21.3 percent versus 13.4 percent. Behavior that the study considered to be a physical assault included being attacked or threatened with a weapon; badly hurt from a beating; or attacked without a weapon, but with the intent to kill or seriously injure. (Ibid.)

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. A. (1996, March). *Child Victimization: Violent Offenders and Their Victims: Executive Summary*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics and Office for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice.)

More than half the violent crimes committed against children involve victims age 12 or younger, with three in four child victims of violence being female. (Ibid.)

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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