

# Child Abuse and Neglect: An Introduction

## Definition

*Substantiated victims* is the number of children determined by the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) to have been victims of abuse or neglect. *Change in victimization rate* is the change between the reported time periods in the rate of children confirmed as victims. *Percent of repeat victims* is the percent of substantiated victims who experienced a second substantiated incident of abuse or neglect within twelve months.

## Data in context

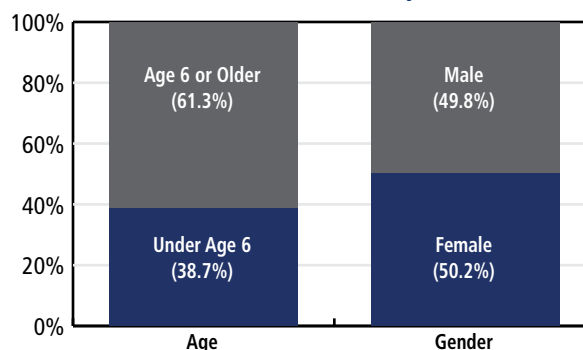
Children need safe, nurturing family environments for healthy physical and emotional development. However, some children experience abuse or neglect, which can compromise their well-being and even result in death. In FFY 2005, there were 1,460 child fatalities nationally as a result of abuse or neglect.<sup>1</sup> Research estimates the daily cost of child abuse and neglect to the United States could be as much as \$258 million for direct costs like court proceedings and foster care, and indirect costs like special education and juvenile delinquency.<sup>2</sup>

During FFY 2005, 6 million children in the U.S. were involved in 3.3 million referrals made to child protective services.<sup>3</sup> Of these referrals, 62 percent were investigated and 25 percent were substantiated, meaning nearly 900,000 children were victims.<sup>4</sup> Across the country, most child abuse cases were due to neglect (63 percent), then physical abuse (17 percent), and sexual abuse (9 percent).<sup>5</sup>

All child victims of abuse and neglect may experience harmful effects; however, research suggests younger children are more likely to be victimized and more susceptible to the effects of maltreatment. In the U.S. in 2005, 77 percent of all child fatalities were to children under age 4, with the highest rates among infants.<sup>6</sup>

Families in poverty experience higher rates of child abuse and neglect, although the causes are not fully known.<sup>7</sup> Limited family resources and increased stress deplete protective factors, while increased surveillance as a result of involvement with public social services

**Demographic Characteristics of Children in Referrals, 2006**



**Source:** Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Department for Community Based Services.

also makes families more visible.<sup>8</sup> Research indicates no differences among races in rates of abuse or neglect; however, families of color are more likely to be investigated and have allegations substantiated, and less likely to receive in-home services, than White families in similar cases.<sup>9</sup> When decisions are made about removing a child from the home, Black children are more likely to be placed in foster care than White or Hispanic children.<sup>10</sup> As a result of this differential treatment, children of color are more likely to become involved with the child welfare system and more likely to experience longer spells in foster care than White children.<sup>11</sup>

States and communities can implement cultural competency training to minimize inappropriate involvement of children of color in the child welfare system and offer financial support for relative placements to shorten the duration of stay in foster care for those in substantiated cases.<sup>12</sup> Working with families to address parental risk factors like substance abuse and mental illness will reduce the likelihood of abuse or neglect in families.<sup>13</sup> Substance abuse was a contributing factor in 60 percent of substantiated referrals in 2006, while 39 percent involved mental health issues.

In Kentucky in 2006, the number of child victims of abuse or neglect increased by 959 victims from 2003.

The number of child victims declined in 56 counties from 2003 to 2006. The statewide rate of substantiated child maltreatment increased as well, by 6 percent, and 61 counties mirrored this increase. Of children experiencing maltreatment during a six-month time frame in 2006, 7 percent experienced a second incident of maltreatment in the following year. The rate of repeat victimization ranged from 0 percent in 42 counties to more than 20 percent in four counties.

**Data Source:** Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Department for Community Based Services. Number of children for rate calculation from Kentucky Population Research at the University of Louisville Urban Studies Institute.

**Rate Calculation:** 
$$\frac{((\text{Number of substantiated victims in 2006} * 1,000 / \text{population 0-17 in 2006}) - (\text{Number of substantiated victims in 2003} * 1,000 / \text{population 0-17 in 2003}) * 100)}{(\text{Number of substantiated victims in 2003} * 1,000 / \text{population 0-17 in 2003})}$$

$$\frac{(\text{Number of substantiated victims of child abuse from a six-month period in 2006 who had a second substantiated incident of child abuse or neglect within 12 months} * 100)}{(\text{Number of substantiated victims of child abuse during a six-month period in 2006})}$$

1 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (2007). *Child Maltreatment 2005*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

2 Fromm, S. (2001). "Total Estimated Cost of Child Abuse and Neglect." Chicago, IL: Prevent Child Abuse America.

3 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (2007). *Child Maltreatment 2005*. Available at <http://www.childwelfare.gov>. Accessed July 2007.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Macomber, J. (2006). *An Overview of Selected Data on Children in Vulnerable Families*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

8 Ibid.

9 Hill, R. (2006). *Synthesis of Research on Disproportionality: An Update*. Washington, DC: Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity in the Child Welfare System.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006). "Unequal Opportunities within the Child Welfare System." *Race Matters Toolkit*. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed August 2007.

13 Johnson, K., and Theberge, S. (2007). *Reducing Disparities Beginning in Early Childhood*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.

## Child victims of substantiated abuse (number, percent change in rate, & percent of repeat victims)

	2003 Number of substantiated victims	2006 Number of substantiated victims	Percent change in victimization rate	2006 Percent of repeat victims
Kentucky	14,702	15,661	6	7
Adair	81	36	-55	7
Allen	75	93	27	10
Anderson	80	34	-58	12
Ballard	5	4	*	0
Barren	188	213	10	3
Bath	59	72	21	4
Bell	132	203	59	3
Boone	103	95	-16	0
Bourbon	45	51	16	12
Boyd	124	128	4	15
Boyle	80	72	-9	9
Bracken	15	21	39	0
Breathitt	91	139	60	5
Breckinridge	61	37	-38	13
Bullitt	157	67	-58	8
Butler	24	53	126	6
Caldwell	33	37	15	10
Calloway	62	59	-5	0
Campbell	138	166	24	2
Carlisle	35	31	-10	4
Carroll	75	29	-63	0
Carter	134	174	31	5
Casey	46	41	-10	0
Christian	178	199	14	11
Clark	89	108	20	6
Clay	55	79	51	3
Clinton	26	31	19	9
Crittenden	30	25	-11	0
Cumberland	6	16	187	10
Daviess	503	551	10	9
Edmonson	59	66	14	0
Elliott	48	56	20	0
Estill	80	33	-58	0
Fayette	717	1,206	62	11
Fleming	69	59	-13	0
Floyd	205	230	14	5
Franklin	187	217	16	5
Fulton	45	30	-25	6
Gallatin	12	14	13	0
Garrard	30	19	-37	0

	2003 Number of substantiated victims	2006 Number of substantiated victims	Percent change in victimization rate	2006 Percent of repeat victims
Grant	101	41	-60	0
Graves	152	100	-34	2
Grayson	48	63	31	0
Green	49	23	-51	0
Greenup	108	101	-4	9
Hancock	38	31	-19	0
Hardin	404	363	-9	11
Harlan	105	177	77	11
Harrison	33	17	-48	0
Hart	49	80	63	15
Henderson	237	232	-2	11
Henry	18	67	271	3
Hickman	11	15	48	0
Hopkins	162	135	-15	7
Jackson	56	56	2	0
Jefferson	2,717	3,108	14	5
Jessamine	180	107	-43	0
Johnson	239	227	-5	16
Kenton	393	473	18	3
Knott	136	148	17	1
Knox	73	89	20	10
LaRue	10	65	566	0
Laurel	274	258	-6	4
Lawrence	67	99	50	5
Lee	62	42	-24	25
Leslie	72	64	-6	8
Letcher	217	216	3	7
Lewis	41	48	18	10
Lincoln	84	69	-19	0
Livingston	24	27	17	0
Logan	39	58	49	0
Lyon	20	16	-18	0
McCracken	229	228	0	3
McCreary	130	155	21	5
McLean	51	87	76	11
Madison	187	126	-36	3
Magoffin	116	69	-39	12
Marion	70	54	-23	0
Marshall	57	49	-13	0
Martin	146	214	60	22
Mason	31	43	40	13

	2003 Number of substantiated victims	2006 Number of substantiated victims	Percent change in victimization rate	2006 Percent of repeat victims
Meade	42	49	25	4
Menifee	15	21	45	0
Mercer	91	68	-26	14
Metcalfe	75	60	-19	4
Monroe	43	77	81	22
Montgomery	76	84	6	11
Morgan	43	53	28	8
Muhlenberg	107	68	-36	0
Nelson	81	92	10	2
Nicholas	8	8	-2	0
Ohio	120	111	-8	13
Oldham	38	68	77	0
Owen	34	24	-28	0
Owsley	18	42	144	15
Pendleton	44	57	36	4
Perry	269	170	-36	3
Pike	303	387	32	4
Powell	43	47	12	0
Pulaski	220	225	1	6
Robertson	10	3	*	0
Rockcastle	91	65	-28	10
Rowan	123	87	-28	6
Russell	50	26	-49	0
Scott	73	37	-55	0
Shelby	115	97	-22	5
Simpson	45	58	30	12
Spencer	13	32	124	0
Taylor	90	99	12	2
Todd	47	39	-19	0
Trigg	17	41	138	14
Trimble	37	11	-70	0
Union	64	54	-11	0
Warren	392	346	-16	2
Washington	19	65	250	5
Wayne	60	60	2	7
Webster	38	57	50	11
Whitley	203	248	25	4
Wolfe	48	37	-26	29
Woodford	79	54	-31	0

\* Rates were not calculated for counties with fewer than 6 occurrences.