

Child Abuse and Neglect: An Overview

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 in the rate of children confirmed as victims between the reported time periods. *Percent of repeat victims* is the percent of substantiated victims who experienced a second substantiated incident of abuse or neglect within twelve months.

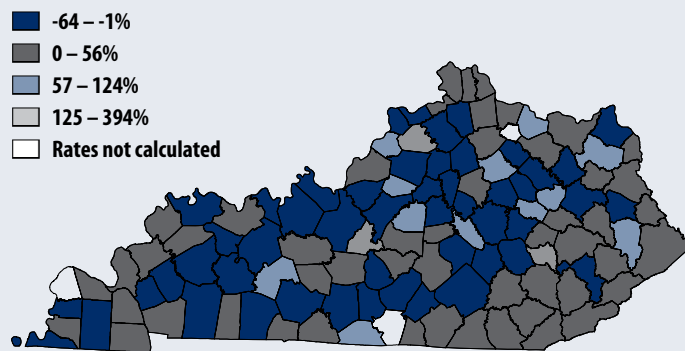
Data in context

Children need safe environments and nurturing relationships to grow and thrive. Abuse and neglect can impede a child's development, including physical growth, behavioral and mental health, and brain functioning.¹ Nationally, the direct costs of abuse and neglect, such as operating judicial and child welfare systems and hospitalizing injured children, exceeded \$33 billion in 2007.² This is in addition to the indirect costs of long-term consequences, such as special education, juvenile and adult crimes, and lost productivity.

Successful outcomes are needed for all child victims of abuse and neglect. Research indicates no differences among races in rates of abuse or neglect; however, unequal treatment in the child welfare system means children of color are overrepresented and involved for longer periods.³ Black and Hispanic children are disproportionately more likely to be part of investigations, confirmed as victims, and placed into foster care. Once in care, they typically stay longer than children of other races and ethnicities.⁴

States and communities can implement cultural competency training for caseworkers 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.⁵ Addressing parental risk factors such as mental illness and substance abuse can help keep all families together while reducing the likelihood of maltreatment.⁶

Percent Change in Victimization Rates by County, 2003-2007



Source: Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, processed by Kentucky Population Research at the University of Louisville Urban Studies Institute.

In FFY 2006, approximately 905,000 children experienced abuse or neglect in the United States.⁷ That year, more than 3.5 million children were part of child abuse and neglect investigations as a result of approximately 3.3 million referrals to Child Protective Service agencies.⁸ An estimated 1,530 children died as a result of abuse or neglect that year.⁹ Children under age 4 face the greatest risk of death from abuse and neglect, with infant boys having the highest rates of maltreatment fatalities.¹⁰

More than 84,000 Kentucky children were involved in 50,724 referrals for abuse or neglect in 2007.¹¹ Statewide, a total of 15,518 children were substantiated as victims of abuse or neglect, an increase of 823 children from 2003. As part of Kentucky's differential response system, which engages families in prevention in low-risk cases, an additional 24,933 children were determined to be part of Families in Need of Services, and no perpetrator was named or substantiation made.¹²

The rate of Kentucky children victimized by abuse or neglect increased by 5 percent between 2003 and 2007. The victimization rate improved by more than 50 percent in Bullitt, Nicholas, and Russell Counties. However, the rates of child victims more than doubled in Garrard, Henry, LaRue, Mason, Menifee, Oldham, and Owsley Counties.

Most child victims in Kentucky in 2007 had no history of maltreatment. Of children experiencing maltreatment in 2007, 7 percent experienced a second incident within six months. More than a quarter of counties had no repeat victims, while more than 1 in 3 child victims experienced a second incident in Gallatin and Martin 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: $((\text{number of substantiated victims in 2007} \times 1,000 / \text{population 0-17 in 2007}) - (\text{number of substantiated victims in 2003} \times 1,000 / \text{population 0-17 in 2003}) \times 100) / (\text{number of substantiated victims in 2003} \times 1,000 / \text{population 0-17 in 2003})$

- 1 Child Welfare Information Gateway (2008). *Long-Term Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect*. Available at <http://www.childwelfare.gov>. Accessed July 2008.
- 2 Wang, C., and Holton, J. (2007). *Total Estimated Cost of Child Abuse and Neglect in the United States*. Chicago, IL: Prevent Child Abuse America.
- 3 Hill, R. (2006). *Synthesis of Research on Disproportionality: An Update*. Washington, DC: Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity in Child Welfare.
- 4 Hill, R. (2007). *An Analysis Of Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality and Disparity at the National, State, and County Levels*. Washington, DC: Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity in Child Welfare.
- 5 Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006). "Unequal Opportunities within the Child Welfare System." *Race Matters Toolkit*. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed August 2008.
- 6 Johnson, K., and Theberge, S. (2007). *Reducing Disparities Beginning in Early Childhood*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.
- 7 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (2008). *Child Maltreatment 2006*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Data obtained from the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Department for Community Based Services, July 2008.
- 12 Ibid.

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

	2003 Number of substantiated victims	2007 Number of substantiated victims	Percent change in victimization rate	2007 Percent of repeat victims
Kentucky	14,695	15,518	5	7
Adair	81	49	-39	15
Allen	63	86	37	8
Anderson	66	36	-47	0
Ballard	4	7	*	0
Barren	304	285	-11	3
Bath	64	57	-12	0
Bell	120	147	31	4
Boone	105	134	12	9
Bourbon	43	68	63	6
Boyd	161	165	6	7
Boyle	70	78	12	5
Bracken	17	24	43	0
Breathitt	82	109	43	10
Breckinridge	59	47	-18	0
Bullitt	146	68	-55	6
Butler	26	46	87	0
Caldwell	27	18	-31	0
Calloway	65	83	24	3
Campbell	127	162	35	3
Carlisle	45	25	-41	0
Carroll	74	46	-39	12
Carter	125	200	61	5
Casey	46	48	7	0
Christian	201	145	-32	0
Clark	90	79	-14	9
Clay	120	137	25	5
Clinton	25	27	9	0
Crittenden	28	40	53	9
Cumberland	3	21	*	0
Daviess	477	560	18	14
Edmonson	63	77	26	0
Elliott	41	41	7	0
Estill	71	47	-33	0
Fayette	740	884	13	4
Fleming	62	66	8	7
Floyd	208	326	62	20
Franklin	179	159	-10	11
Fulton	45	34	-13	27
Gallatin	18	19	5	36
Garrard	27	58	111	3

	2003 Number of substantiated victims	2007 Number of substantiated victims	Percent change in victimization rate	2007 Percent of repeat victims
Grant	81	63	-24	10
Graves	152	108	-28	0
Grayson	52	58	11	8
Green	59	50	-9	5
Greenup	103	76	-23	3
Hancock	31	27	-12	6
Hardin	290	250	-12	6
Harlan	104	137	41	5
Harrison	22	25	15	0
Hart	38	48	27	9
Henderson	225	216	-3	5
Henry	16	78	394	0
Hickman	7	9	44	0
Hopkins	154	110	-26	11
Jackson	55	51	-1	6
Jefferson	2,703	2,959	8	4
Jessamine	170	114	-38	0
Johnson	296	245	-17	13
Kenton	421	527	23	2
Knott	117	126	18	5
Knox	68	91	31	0
LaRue	25	93	278	10
Laurel	252	282	11	3
Lawrence	73	111	56	5
Lee	52	59	31	11
Leslie	64	79	35	0
Letcher	204	256	35	12
Lewis	37	56	53	11
Lincoln	92	78	-16	0
Livingston	22	22	8	0
Logan	45	32	-29	0
Lyon	27	24	-10	14
McCracken	224	236	7	4
McCreary	115	122	9	2
McLean	49	46	-1	0
Madison	192	138	-34	8
Magoffin	123	120	3	9
Marion	73	85	17	0
Marshall	56	85	54	0
Martin	146	182	41	38
Mason	27	56	110	0

	2003 Number of substantiated victims	2007 Number of substantiated victims	Percent change in victimization rate	2007 Percent of repeat victims
Meade	61	44	-19	7
Menifee	13	26	114	11
Mercer	91	59	-35	0
Metcalfe	74	71	-3	16
Monroe	35	64	89	0
Montgomery	71	50	-34	5
Morgan	44	30	-29	21
Muhlenberg	101	71	-28	10
Nelson	81	80	-5	5
Nicholas	18	7	-61	0
Ohio	120	97	-19	11
Oldham	39	90	124	9
Owen	26	25	-4	15
Owsley	19	58	225	27
Pendleton	41	56	48	17
Perry	271	176	-33	16
Pike	306	396	38	6
Powell	42	76	89	3
Pulaski	227	181	-22	14
Robertson	10	5	*	0
Rockcastle	90	83	-3	11
Rowan	114	87	-24	14
Russell	53	19	-64	0
Scott	81	87	-10	0
Shelby	223	133	-47	8
Simpson	37	48	33	12
Spencer	15	34	98	0
Taylor	71	78	12	2
Todd	37	54	44	0
Trigg	22	33	49	9
Trimble	36	28	-21	0
Union	61	63	12	6
Warren	344	366	-2	6
Washington	22	39	81	0
Wayne	53	60	18	3
Webster	34	42	25	10
Whitley	205	249	24	4
Wolfe	45	61	32	4
Woodford	82	54	-32	5

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