

# 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. *Percent 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

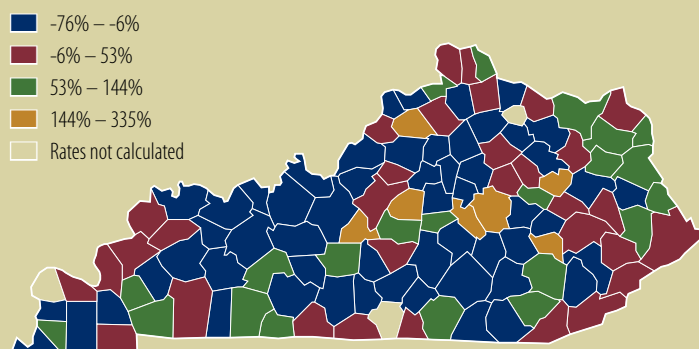
All children need safe homes and caring relationships to grow and thrive. Abuse and neglect have physical, psychological, and behavioral consequences for children, impeding their healthy growth and development.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, the total estimated costs of child abuse and neglect were nearly \$104 billion in 2007.<sup>2</sup> Direct costs exceeded \$33 billion for services such as hospitalization and court proceedings; additional indirect costs occur for services such as special education, mental health treatment for adults who were victimized as children, and the criminal justice system.<sup>3</sup>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention define maltreatment as “any act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child.”<sup>4</sup> Approximately 3.2 million referrals, or initial reports, of maltreatment of 5.8 million children occurred nationwide during federal fiscal year 2007.<sup>5</sup> From these reports, approximately 794,000 children were determined to be victims of abuse, neglect, or both during FFY 2007. Nearly four out of five perpetrators in 2007 were adoptive, biological, or step parents.<sup>6</sup> Children less than one year of age continue to have the highest victimization rate, with a rate of 21.9 per 1,000 nationwide in 2007.<sup>7</sup>

All children need protection from abuse and neglect in the least disruptive way possible. 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 of time.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> Compiling and tracking data on racial disparities at all points within the child welfare system and changing policies at points where disparity occurs are necessary for ensuring racial equity in the treatment and outcomes for youth and families of color.<sup>10</sup>

Referrals for child abuse or neglect in Kentucky increased from 47,486 in 2003 to 52,943 in 2008 (an increase of 11 percent).<sup>11</sup> The percent of referrals that were substantiated also increased greatly during this time, from 21 percent in 2003 to 30 percent in 2008.<sup>12</sup> In 2008, 21,051 children were

## Percent Change in Victimization Rates by County, 2003 to 2008



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

assessed as Families in Need of Services, a designation to engage families in low-risk cases in prevention efforts; no perpetrator or substantiated abuse or neglect was determined in these cases.<sup>13</sup>

The statewide rate of victimization decreased by 1 percent from 2003 to 2008. The rate of victimization decreased by more than 50 percent in Adair, Carlisle, Casey, Lincoln, Marshall, Nicholas, Shelby, and Woodford Counties from 2003 to 2008, and increased the most in Henry and Menifee Counties during that time.

Federal law requires states to track repeat victimization of children. In Kentucky in 2008, 6 percent of children with substantiated abuse or neglect experienced a second incident within one year of the first incident, a reduction of one percentage point from 2007.<sup>14</sup> Of those counties with substantiated victims of abuse or neglect, 42 counties had no cases of repeat maltreatment, but five counties had repeat victimization rates greater than 1 in 4.

Policymakers and communities can help families cultivate protective factors by building on family strengths, promoting cultural competence and culturally sensitive strategies within the child welfare system, and creating access to job opportunities and job networks.<sup>15</sup> Parent training is one approach that appears promising for improving child outcomes and reducing abuse and neglect.<sup>16</sup> States and communities are demonstrating a growing commitment to preventive programs including parenting courses.<sup>17</sup>

**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.

**Data Note:** Data for 2003 may differ from previous versions of the Kentucky KIDS COUNT book due to more recent data entry or modifications to the data due to appeals or other court actions. The population estimates used to calculate the 2003 rates have been revised since last year's Kentucky KIDS COUNT book, therefore the 2003 rates used here are updates from those used last year.

**Rate Calculation:**  $((\text{number of substantiated victims in 2008} / \text{population 0-17 in 2008} * 1,000) - (\text{number of substantiated victims in 2003} / \text{population 0-17 in 2003} * 1,000)) / (\text{number of substantiated victims in 2003} / \text{population 0-17 in 2003} * 1,000)$

## CHILD VICTIMS OF SUBSTANTIATED ABUSE

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

	2003 Number of substantiated victims	2008 Number of substantiated victims	2003-2008 Percent change in victimization rate	2008 Percent of repeat victims
<b>Kentucky</b>	<b>14,695</b>	<b>14,802</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>6</b>
Adair	81	34	-57	11
Allen	63	66	5	0
Anderson	66	54	-21	18
Ballard	4	6	*	0
Barren	304	215	-33	2
Bath	64	48	-26	0
Bell	120	132	18	2
Boone	105	117	-4	0
Bourbon	43	45	8	0
Boyd	161	247	57	1
Boyle	70	116	66	4
Bracken	17	14	-16	0
Breathitt	82	85	10	6
Breckinridge	59	39	-32	0
Bullitt	146	90	-40	0
Butler	26	54	122	8
Caldwell	27	25	-6	0
Calloway	65	76	15	0
Campbell	127	191	59	3
Carlisle	45	10	-76	0
Carroll	74	42	-45	0
Carter	125	246	98	6
Casey	46	17	-62	0
Christian	201	206	-4	5
Clark	90	121	31	4
Clay	120	195	78	16
Clinton	25	30	19	0
Crittenden	28	28	5	8
Cumberland	3	7	*	0
Daviess	477	421	-12	8
Edmonson	63	42	-31	0
Elliott	41	76	99	9
Estill	71	48	-31	3
Fayette	740	739	-8	4
Fleming	62	53	-14	7
Floyd	208	345	71	5
Franklin	179	90	-50	3
Fulton	45	23	-42	7
Gallatin	18	31	71	0
Garrard	27	106	293	7
Grant	81	73	-14	0
Graves	152	102	-31	14
Grayson	52	44	-16	0
Green	59	46	-16	13
Greenup	103	115	18	7
Hancock	31	21	-30	0
Hardin	290	167	-42	7
Harlan	104	138	44	20
Harrison	22	17	-22	0
Hart	38	73	93	5
Henderson	225	133	-40	6
Henry	16	68	335	0
Hickman	7	15	144	0
Hopkins	154	110	-26	17
Jackson	55	62	21	0
Jefferson	2,703	2,520	-9	5
Jessamine	170	134	-29	2
Johnson	296	211	-29	7
Kenton	421	569	32	7
Knott	117	134	26	4

	2003 Number of substantiated victims	2008 Number of substantiated victims	2003-2008 Percent change in victimization rate	2008 Percent of repeat victims
Knox	68	126	80	1
LaRue	25	89	266	6
Laurel	252	298	17	14
Lawrence	73	145	103	15
Lee	52	28	-36	0
Leslie	64	48	-15	0
Letcher	204	221	16	5
Lewis	37	69	91	28
Lincoln	92	41	-55	0
Livingston	22	29	44	31
Logan	45	70	58	0
Lyon	27	45	74	31
McCracken	224	257	35	10
McCreary	115	89	-24	0
McLean	49	36	-47	4
Madison	192	243	291	5
Magoffin	123	133	-3	11
Marion	73	62	128	8
Marshall	56	86	-60	0
Martin	146	230	129	16
Mason	27	62	27	0
Meade	61	41	-21	0
Menifee	13	48	301	5
Mercer	91	52	-43	17
Metcalfe	74	48	-34	0
Monroe	35	45	34	5
Montgomery	71	104	34	3
Morgan	44	36	-13	0
Muhlenberg	101	67	-32	3
Nelson	81	114	34	2
Nicholas	18	7	-61	0
Ohio	120	86	-29	5
Oldham	39	46	15	0
Owen	26	37	44	4
Owsley	19	64	257	35
Pendleton	41	45	23	4
Perry	271	175	-33	4
Pike	306	380	33	5
Powell	42	68	72	2
Pulaski	227	173	-26	8
Robertson	10	0	*	**
Rockcastle	90	68	-20	7
Rowan	114	111	-4	2
Russell	53	32	-41	0
Scott	81	76	-25	10
Shelby	223	96	-63	10
Simpson	37	68	91	24
Spencer	15	27	53	7
Taylor	71	85	22	7
Todd	37	34	-10	0
Trigg	22	37	68	0
Trimble	36	30	-14	0
Union	61	61	10	0
Warren	344	306	-21	5
Washington	22	67	209	5
Wayne	53	87	73	4
Webster	34	40	21	4
Whitley	205	162	-19	3
Wolfe	45	52	12	34
Woodford	82	38	-52	0

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

\*\* County had no substantiated victims.