

SEXUAL ABUSE

Definition

Investigations is the number of allegations of sexual abuse referred to, and investigated by, the Department for Community Based Services for the reported year. *Percent substantiated* is the percent of investigations for sexual abuse where the Department for Community Based Services determined that sexual abuse occurred.

Data in context

All children need safe, appropriate relationships with caring adults to thrive and learn to trust others. Yet some children are subject to inappropriate contact with adults. Sexual abuse occurs when a parent or other caregiver engages in inappropriate touching or other physical contact, or non-physical exploitation such as exposure to sexually explicit materials.

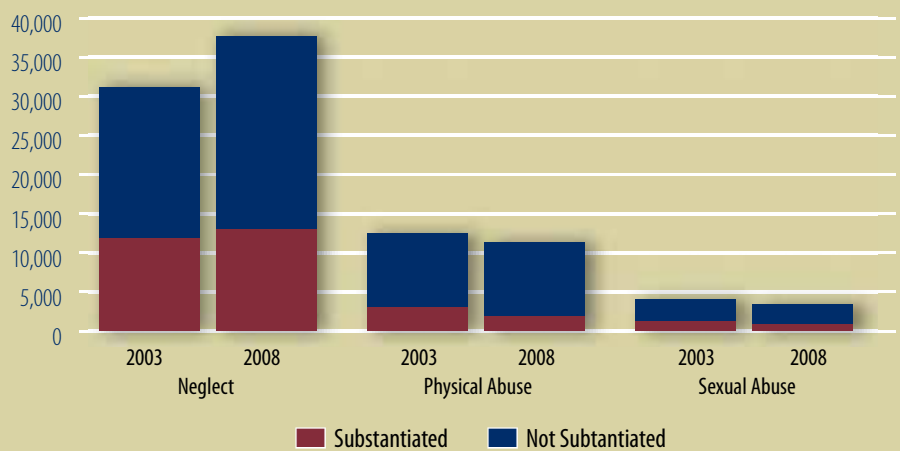
Children are resilient, but the consequences of sexual abuse can be significant. The emotional effects of sexual abuse often include feelings of fear, guilt, anxiety, or depression.¹ Some victims of sexual abuse will display signs of the harm, such as bedwetting, inappropriate touching, or knowledge of sexual activity beyond what is age appropriate.² Victims of child sexual abuse may continue to experience traumatic symptoms into adulthood, including depression, substance abuse, self-injury, and abusive relationships.³

Sexual abuse can be difficult to prove for several reasons. Given the close relationship between caregivers and children, many victims experience feelings of shame, guilt, or confusion surrounding the abuse, making it difficult to come forward. Sexual abuse can also be difficult to recognize because the signs and effects are not always visible.

More than 56,000 children were victims of sexual abuse in the United States in federal fiscal year 2007, constituting 7.6 percent of all victims of child maltreatment that year.⁴ Most were victimized by caregivers, such as relatives or babysitters.⁵ Approximately three percent of children removed from their homes that year were victims of sexual abuse.⁶ Police and lawyers were the most frequent reporting sources for child sexual abuse.⁷

In Kentucky, 3,382 investigations of sexual abuse occurred in 2008, a decline of nearly 600 from 2003. The rate of substantiated investigations of sexual abuse also decreased, from 30 percent in 2003 to 25 percent in 2008.

Kentucky Child Abuse Investigations by Type of Abuse Reported and Substantiation, 2003 and 2008



Source: Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

Fayette and Jefferson, Kentucky's most populous counties, saw the largest number of investigations of sexual abuse reported and substantiated. Among counties with six or more investigations of sexual abuse reported in both years, the number of investigations doubled or more than doubled in Fulton, Grayson, Logan, and Rockcastle Counties, but decreased by 50 percent or more in 14 other counties. Only Robertson County, the least populous county, had no investigations of sexual abuse in 2008.

Everyone bears responsibility to speak up on behalf of children and report suspected cases of sexual abuse when inappropriate behaviors are witnessed. Child care providers, educators, faith communities, and mentoring programs play a particularly crucial role and should take active steps to reduce the risk of sexual abuse for the children in their care. This includes establishing policies that reduce risk and ensure child safety, assessing physical environments for the degree to which they protect children from potential perpetrators, and providing training on when and how to report suspected sexual abuse.⁸

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

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.

Rate Calculation: (number of investigations with sexual abuse substantiated in 2003 * 100) / (number of investigations of sexual abuse in 2003) - (number of investigations with sexual abuse substantiated in 2008 * 100) / (number of investigations of sexual abuse in 2008)

INVESTIGATIONS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

(number & percent substantiated)

	2003		2008		2003		2008		
	Number of investigations	Percent substantiated	Number of investigations	Percent substantiated	Number of investigations	Percent substantiated	Number of investigations	Percent substantiated	
Kentucky	3,974	30	3,382	25					
Adair	25	60	13	31	Knox	22	9	19	21
Allen	21	43	13	38	LaRue	5	0	20	30
Anderson	26	31	17	18	Laurel	58	40	56	25
Ballard	4	75	2	50	Lawrence	14	36	13	8
Barren	84	33	67	28	Lee	3	0	12	25
Bath	16	44	9	11	Leslie	27	22	20	5
Bell	33	27	43	28	Letcher	30	43	25	24
Boone	31	26	47	32	Lewis	8	0	13	23
Bourbon	16	25	13	38	Lincoln	47	26	39	26
Boyd	41	34	64	11	Livingston	13	38	7	0
Boyle	26	23	33	36	Logan	12	25	33	45
Bracken	7	14	7	14	Lyon	5	40	15	40
Breathitt	21	19	31	13	McCracken	68	25	41	29
Breckinridge	20	25	17	29	McCreary	43	21	24	54
Bullitt	29	41	54	19	McLean	3	33	7	57
Butler	10	40	14	36	Madison	65	43	70	30
Caldwell	4	25	8	63	Magoffin	39	26	26	19
Calloway	16	19	15	40	Marion	26	27	30	37
Campbell	57	21	30	37	Marshall	23	48	26	54
Carlisle	23	17	7	29	Martin	31	26	35	20
Carroll	17	29	8	63	Mason	11	9	10	30
Carter	30	27	33	48	Meade	22	27	26	8
Casey	6	17	10	10	Menifee	2	0	10	30
Christian	50	30	52	23	Mercer	22	9	8	13
Clark	24	38	16	25	Metcalfe	18	33	18	28
Clay	31	19	55	16	Monroe	6	33	9	44
Clinton	12	8	20	15	Montgomery	22	32	13	8
Crittenden	8	0	13	46	Morgan	8	38	13	23
Cumberland	0	*	1	0	Muhlenberg	19	11	9	22
Daviess	130	31	72	28	Nelson	38	11	7	57
Edmonson	14	21	10	10	Nicholas	5	20	8	13
Elliott	2	0	6	0	Ohio	24	38	7	43
Estill	7	0	9	11	Oldham	23	26	29	17
Fayette	200	23	139	18	Owen	7	14	7	29
Fleming	15	40	7	29	Owsley	0	*	15	7
Floyd	62	27	50	20	Pendleton	14	14	9	11
Franklin	40	28	45	7	Perry	47	30	46	13
Fulton	7	14	15	60	Pike	59	17	74	16
Gallatin	6	0	4	50	Powell	16	13	17	24
Garrard	15	27	20	35	Pulaski	68	29	55	24
Grant	33	52	23	35	Robertson	2	50	0	*
Graves	28	50	14	7	Rockcastle	12	58	24	21
Grayson	14	14	29	10	Rowan	32	25	33	33
Green	11	55	16	19	Russell	21	43	21	5
Greenup	27	26	36	39	Scott	27	41	27	11
Hancock	10	20	3	33	Shelby	121	30	38	26
Hardin	93	39	60	18	Simpson	10	10	10	10
Harlan	26	31	33	18	Spencer	4	100	8	38
Harrison	15	20	11	18	Taylor	26	27	20	25
Hart	27	11	10	20	Todd	8	63	7	14
Henderson	48	27	33	27	Trigg	7	43	5	20
Henry	9	22	14	57	Trimble	21	38	10	20
Hickman	5	20	1	100	Union	9	33	15	33
Hopkins	42	43	31	16	Warren	70	29	50	30
Jackson	20	40	8	25	Washington	4	0	35	29
Jefferson	597	37	442	28	Wayne	24	33	22	27
Jessamine	54	20	24	42	Webster	10	10	10	10
Johnson	68	25	54	20	Whitley	35	34	46	22
Kenton	183	25	100	36	Wolfe	9	33	17	6
Knott	34	35	15	27	Woodford	19	37	17	18

* County had no investigations for sexual abuse.