

## Maltreatment of young children

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Young children – those from birth to age 5 – are more likely than older children to be victims of abuse and neglect. Below are some key findings relating to maltreatment of young children in the United States.

- In 2009, over 693,000 children were found to be victims of abuse or neglect.[1]
- **The youngest children are at greatest risk of abuse or neglect.** Approximately 313,500 child victims of maltreatment in 2009, or 45% of all victims, were five years old or younger. The victimization rate for children ages birth to five is 12.4 victims per 1,000 children, compared to 7.6 victims per 1000 children ages six to 17.[1]
- **The youngest children are at greatest risk of death from maltreatment.** In 2009, 1,770 children died as a result of abuse or neglect. About 87% of maltreatment fatalities occurred with children ages five and younger, and 46% of all maltreatment fatalities occurred with children under one year of age.[1]
- **Neglect is the most frequent form of maltreatment,** experienced by more than 78% of victims.[1]
- **The actual incidence of child abuse or neglect is greater than that identified by child protective services.** In 2005-2006, 1.26 million children are estimated to have been harmed by maltreatment, compared with (only) 809,494 child victims identified by child welfare agencies during that same time period.[1]
- **Child abuse and neglect is associated with poor educational outcomes.** Children who have been abused are more likely to be placed in special education, and have lower IQs.[1]
- **Child abuse and neglect is associated with poor emotional and social outcomes.** Children who are abused or neglected are more likely to be depressed and socially withdrawn.[1]
- **The psychological toll of abuse lasts well beyond the time of abuse.** As many as 80% of young adults who had been abused as young children had at least one psychiatric disorder (e.g., depression, anxiety, eating disorders, suicide attempts) by age 21.[1]

### References

1. DeVooght, K., McCoy-Roth, M., & Freundlich, M. (2011). Young and Vulnerable: Children Five and Under Experience High Maltreatment Rates. *Early Childhood Highlights*, 2(2), 1-20.