

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE STATISTICS Risk Factors

FACT:

While no child is immune, there are child and family characteristics that significantly heighten or lower risk of sexual abuse.

The following risk factors are based on reported and identified cases of abuse:

- Family structure is the most important risk factor in child sexual abuse. Children who live with two married biological parents are at a low risk for abuse. The risk increases where children live with step-parents or a single parent.³
- Children living without either parent (foster children) are 10 times more likely to be sexually abused than children that live with both biological parents. Children who live with a single parent that has a live-in partner are at the highest risk; they are 20 times more likely to be victims of child sexual abuse than children living with both biological parents.³
- Gender is also a major factor in sexual abuse. Females are five times more likely to be abused than males.³⁰ The age of the male being abused also plays a part. 8% of victims aged 12-17 are male. 26% of victims under the age of 12 are male.⁹
- Age is a significant factor in sexual abuse. While there is risk for children of all ages, children are most vulnerable to abuse between the ages of 7 and 13.³⁰ The median age for reported abuse is 9 years old.³¹ However, of children who are sexually abused, more than 20% are abused before the age of 8.⁹
- Race and ethnicity are an important factor in identified sexual abuse. African American children have almost twice the risk of sexual abuse than white children. Children of Hispanic ethnicity have a slightly greater risk than non-Hispanic white children.³



DARKNESS TO LIGHT

FACT:

While no child is immune, there are child and family characteristics that significantly heighten or lower risk of sexual abuse.

- The following risk factors are based on reported and identified cases of abuse:
- The risk for sexual abuse is tripled for children whose parent(s) are not in the labor force.³
- Children in low socioeconomic status households are three times as likely to be identified as a victim of child abuse.³
- Children who live in rural areas are almost two times more likely to be identified as victims of child sexual abuse.³
- Children who witness or are the victim of other crimes are significantly more likely to be sexually abused.³²

FACT:

Family and acquaintance child sexual abuse perpetrators have reported that they look for specific characteristics in the children they choose to abuse.

Perpetrators report that they look for passive, quiet, troubled, lonely children from single parent or broken homes.¹⁷

Perpetrators frequently seek out children who are particularly trusting and work proactively to establish a trusting relationship before abusing them.⁵¹ Not infrequently, this extends to establishing a trusting relationship with the victim's family as well.¹⁷

References

- 3 Sedlak, A.J., Mettenburg, J., Basena, M., Petta, I., McPherson, K., Greene, A., and Li, S. (2010). Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-4): Report to Congress, Executive Summary. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.
- 9 Snyder, H. N. (2000). Sexual assault of young children as reported to law enforcement: Victim, incident, and offender characteristics. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved January 12, 2009 from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/saycrle.pdf>
- 17 Elliott, M., Browne, K., & Kilcoyne, J. (1995). Child sexual abuse prevention: What offenders tell us. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 5, 579-594.
- 30 Finkelhor, D. (1994). Current information on the scope and nature of child sexual abuse. *The Future of Children*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Sexual Abuse of Children, pp. 31-53
- 31 Putnam, F. (2003). Ten-year research update review: Child sexual abuse. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 42, 269-278.
- 32 Finkelhor, D., Ormrod, R.K. & Turner, H.A. (2010). Poly-victimization in a national sample of children & youth. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.
- 51 De Bellis, M. D., Spratt, E. G., & Hooper, S. R. (2011). Neurodevelopmental biology associated with childhood sexual abuse. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 20(5), 548-587.