

The Economics of Child Abuse

A Study of California

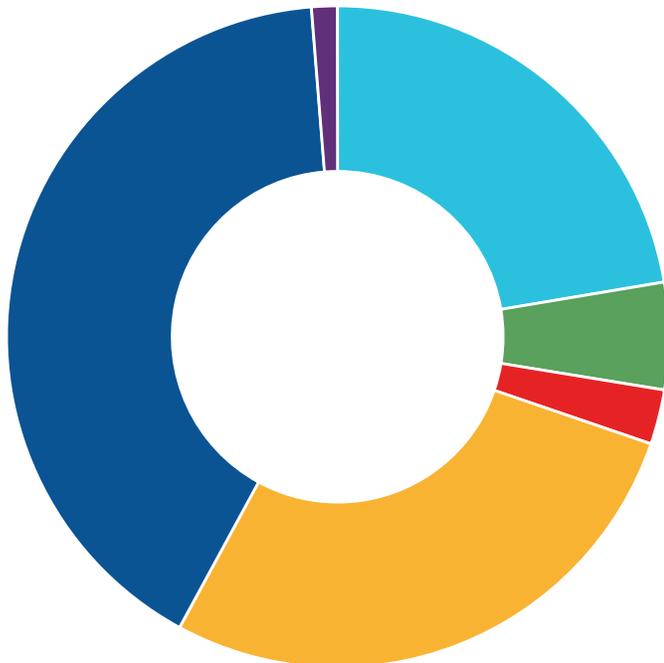
A Report by Safe & Sound
June 2020

Child maltreatment is a persistent and pervasive problem throughout California. Although it is a hidden social ill, its impact is significant. Child maltreatment impacts not just the child, but the family, the community, and society at large. The impact of maltreatment not only morally degrades our society, it significantly hurts our economy. In fact, the physical, mental, and emotional effects of maltreatment persist long after child maltreatment occurs, and result in ongoing costs to every sector of California.

Child maltreatment is a core underlying factor in many of California's ongoing struggles, such as high rates of school dropout, homelessness, incarceration, and chronic health issues. This report shines a light on this largely ignored issue and the negative impact it has on all of us.

The Financial Impact of Child Abuse: \$26.3 Billion

This is the cumulative financial impact to California for the **67,369 substantiated survivors** of maltreatment and **58 maltreatment fatalities** in 2019. Though these costs are accrued over the course of the victim's life, the community will continue to occur the same cost each year until we are able to reduce and ultimately end child abuse.



CHILD WELFARE - \$4,623,946,919

Victims may require intervention services, foster care, and counseling services.

EDUCATION - \$1,081,185,077

Maltreated children are 77 percent more likely to require special education.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE - \$551,916,007

Maltreated children are 59 percent more likely to be arrested as juveniles, and 28 percent more likely to have an adult criminal record.

HEALTHCARE - \$6,608,124,173

Victims may require hospital care, mental health services, and other medical services during childhood, and have a higher incidence of physical and mental health issues throughout adulthood.

LIFETIME PRODUCTIVITY - \$13,310,159,094

Victims are more likely to be unemployed and rely on public assistance which leads to diminished earning potential.

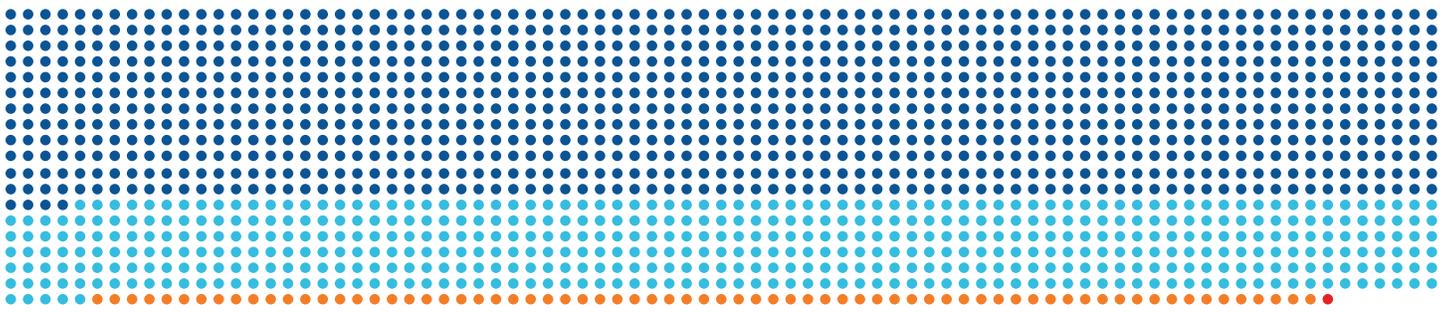
FATALITIES - \$98,466,069

Accounts for the victims' lost wages and healthcare costs.

**References available upon request.*



Read the full report: <http://economics.safeandsound.org>



● One Dot = 100 Children

1,042,090

Estimated Survivors, based on national estimates of child abuse prevalence

475,450

Reported Survivors, or one child every minute

67,369

Substantiated Survivors, or 184 children each day

58

Fatalities from child maltreatment

California's Community Protective Factors

Strong families — and communities whose conditions nurture strong families — protect children. Every community has Protective Factors, or characteristics that are linked to lower rates of child maltreatment. Factors work in concert with each other and with each family's unique strengths to create safe environments for children to grow up.

Economic Supports

Policies and programs that provide economic support and help families develop some financial security are a protective factor against child maltreatment. Indeed, a family's economic situation can enable or prevent them from taking advantage of the other protective factors listed here.

Parental Skills & Education

Parents that have the tools and knowledge that they need to parent effectively are less likely to draw on violence as a disciplinary method. There is an abundance of evidence on the importance of programs that develop parenting skills and strengthen bonds between parents and their children.

High Quality Childcare

Research shows that parents with more financial means tend to access higher quality childcare. Higher quality childcare is linked to reduced risk for child maltreatment as it provides a more nurturing and stable environment for the child.

Community Institutions & Services

Communities are formed and maintained through institutions like schools, churches, community centers, and family resource centers. If these institutions are effective and accessible, they contribute to the formation of important parent and family social connections, which prevent child maltreatment.

Positive Social Norms & Interventions Against Violence

When maltreatment does occur, intervention at schools or in physicians' offices can prevent further harm. Policies and educational campaigns can also change the social norms that perpetuate violence against children.

Finally, institutional racism and systemic oppression over generations have prevented many families of color from accessing the social and economic factors listed above. Initiatives that promote racial equity are critical to promoting Community Protective Factors and mitigating Community Risk Factors.

California's Community Risk Factors

A variety of factors place children and their families at greater risk for maltreatment. Below are Risk Factors that are endemic to California communities, as well as communities across the country. Many of these risk factors have been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Socioeconomic Inequality & Poverty

Today, the gap between the rich and poor is twice as large in California as it was in 1980. Research suggests that income, or socioeconomic status, is the strongest predictor of maltreatment rates.

Lack of Adequate & Affordable Housing

Californians spend a disproportionate amount of their income on housing. In addition to increasing families' stress, lack of affordable housing leads to greater rates of cohabitation, which places children at greater risk for maltreatment.

High Unemployment Rates

Unemployment reached a record high of over 15% in April 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. High levels of unemployment increase economic uncertainty and stress for families.

Homelessness

Homelessness is a major driver of temporary family separation, not only increasing family stress but also the number of caregivers in a child's life, which places the child at greater risk for maltreatment.

Community Violence

Across the state, families exposed to a culture of violence often experience trauma, strain, and fear, all of which increase the likelihood of child maltreatment.

Substance Abuse

Families with problematic alcohol or drug use often experience trauma, strain, and fear.

Social Isolation & Marginalization

Community turnover is problematic for families as it leads to deteriorated social and support networks for children and caregivers, both for those who stay in the state and those who leave.