

The Economics of Child Abuse

A Study of California

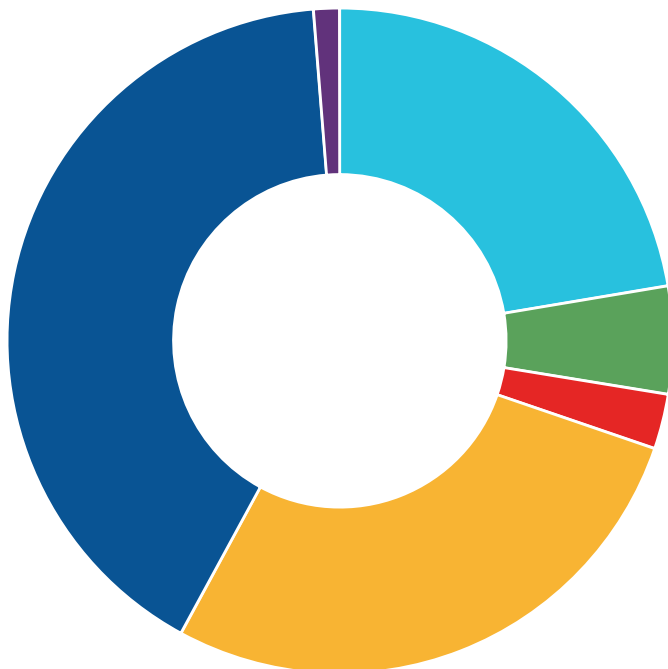
A Report by Safe & Sound
April 2023

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: \$24.4 Billion

This is the cumulative financial impact to California for the **51,747 substantiated survivors** of maltreatment and **108 maltreatment fatalities** in 2022. 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 - \$4,066,577,769

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

EDUCATION - \$840,227,706

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

CRIMINAL JUSTICE - \$428,544,610

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

HEALTHCARE - \$5,013,331,064

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 - \$10,574,692,611

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

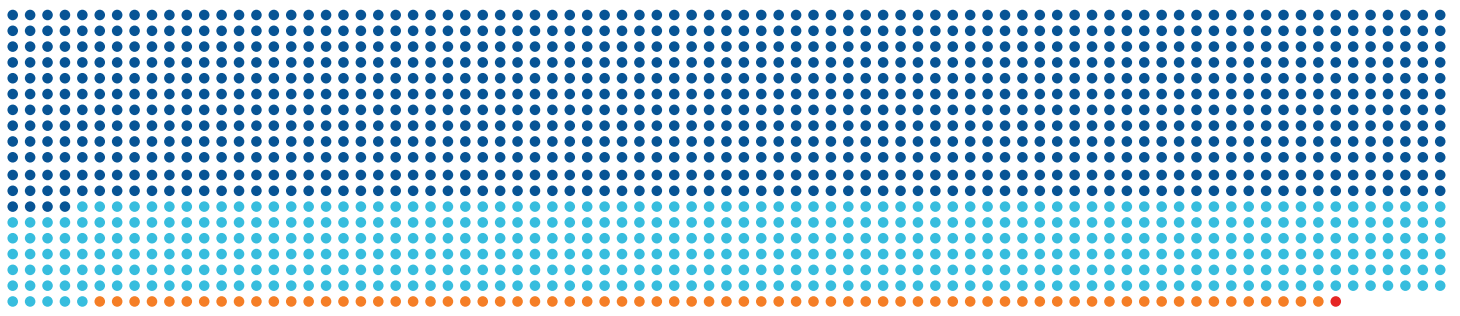
FATALITIES - \$189,743,080

Accounts for the victims' lost wages and healthcare costs.

** References available upon request.*



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



1,226,857

Estimated Survivors, based on national estimates of child abuse prevalence

451,101

Reported Survivors, or 0 every minute

51,747

Substantiated Survivors, or 141 children each day

108

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. Ongoing research from the Center for the Study of Social Policy suggests that the following Community Conditions nurture strong families:

Equitable Access to Essential Needs

This includes policies and programs that support equitable access to economic opportunities, family-friendly employment, health care, housing, high-quality childcare, education, and food security. Economic support and high-quality and affordable childcare are two essential needs that have been shown through research to reduce maltreatment.

Social Support and Connection

This means an acknowledgement across community members that parenting is hard and all caregivers can benefit from community support. Cohesive neighborhoods and community institutions like schools, churches, community centers, and family resource centers contribute to building these social connections and reducing maltreatment.

Social Contract

This represents a collective understanding about what support can be provided by institutions, and what support must come from friends, family, and neighbors. Strong communities promote positive social norms about parenting and provide well-functioning response systems to prevent further harm when maltreatment occurs.

Racial and Social Justice

This means fostering an anti-racist and equitable social structure. Institutional racism and systemic oppression over generations have prevented many families of color from accessing the other social and economic factors listed here. Initiatives that promote racial equity are critical to promoting Community Protective Factors and mitigating Community Risk Factors.

Support for Building Individual Protective Factors

In addition to the community conditions listed above, it is important that parents and caregivers have access to resources that will help them strengthen their individual protective factors, including parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and the social and emotional competence of children.

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.

Disproportionate Impact of Race & Ethnicity

Families of color are overrepresented in the child welfare system. Causes of racial disproportionality include institutional and structural racism on parents of color, implicit bias in the child welfare system and society in general, economic inequality, and the disproportionate involvement of child welfare and law enforcement in the lives of families of color.

Socioeconomic Inequality & Poverty

Pandemics typically raise income inequality. Research has shown that the economic hardship triggered by the pandemic has disproportionately impacted people of color.

Lack of Adequate & Affordable Housing

While California's eviction moratorium has prevented mass homelessness, the pandemic has increased the number of housing-burned families.

High Unemployment Rates

Unemployment in California peaked in April 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, and has fallen but is still higher than pre-pandemic levels. 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

Social isolation and loneliness are important risk factors for child abuse. The COVID pandemic and subsequent social distancing measures have led to a population-wide increase in social isolation.