

Child neglect and abuse – also known as maltreatment – is a grave concern; it is associated with many negative outcomes, including physical injuries, psychological problems, and in extreme cases, death. In 2015, over 700,000 U.S. children were found to be victims of maltreatment. This is likely an underestimate, as some cases lack evidence and others go unreported. Each year, states submit data to the federal government on reports of maltreatment, called “referrals.” After receiving referrals, child protective services agencies investigate to determine if children are at risk of maltreatment, if maltreatment occurred, and if services are needed. Children and families may receive a variety of services including foster care, family preservation, mental health, and substance abuse.

Child abuse and neglect referrals¹

	ID	US
Number of referrals made to the child welfare agency	19,684	3,547,553
Rate of referrals made per 1,000 children in the population	45.5	53.2
Percent of referrals that met the criteria for an investigation or assessment	43%	58%

Child abuse and neglect investigations²

	ID	US
Number of children who received an investigation or assessment for abuse or neglect	12,233	2,894,562
Rate of investigations or assessments per 1,000 children in the population	28.3	45.1
Average response time from report to investigation	61 hours	71 hours

Victims of child maltreatment³

	ID	US
Number of children found to be victims of maltreatment	1,623	683,487
Rate of victims per 1,000 children in the population	3.7	9.2
Percent of children investigated/assessed who were found to be victims of maltreatment	13%	24%
Rate of first-time victims per 1,000 children in the population	3.0	6.9

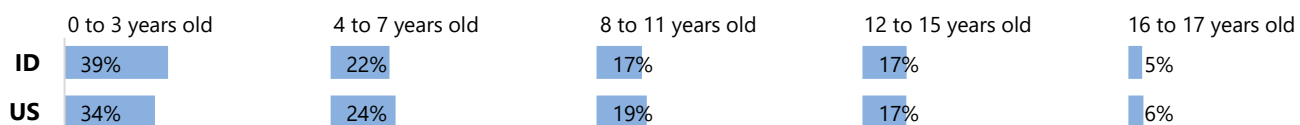
Race and ethnicity of maltreatment victims^{4,5}



Gender of maltreatment victims

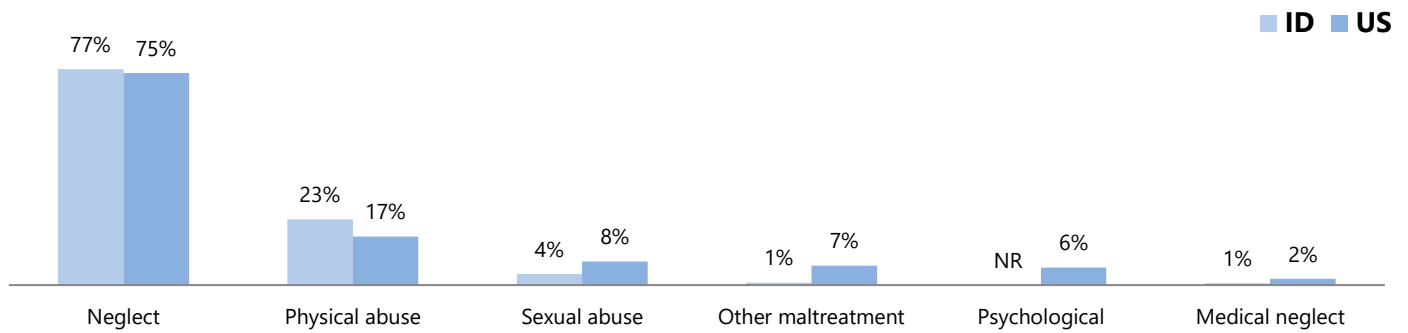
	ID	US
Male	52%	49%
Female	48%	51%

Age distribution of maltreatment victims⁶



Source, unless specified otherwise: This information is from the federal National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), and represents the federal fiscal year 2015 reporting period (October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015). Data are publicly available in Child Maltreatment 2015, available from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2015>.

Maltreatment types⁷



Child fatalities attributed to maltreatment

	ID	US
Number of child fatalities attributed to maltreatment	6	1,585
Rate of maltreatment fatalities per 100,000 children in the population	1.39	2.25

Child maltreatment perpetrators⁸

	ID	US
Parent of the child	86%	78%
Non-parent or of unknown relationship to the child ⁹	14%	22%

Postresponse services¹⁰

	ID	US
Percent of victims who received postresponse services	74%	62%
Percent of non-victims who received postresponse services	24%	30%
Percent of victims who received foster care services	48%	23%
Percent of non-victims who received foster care services	1%	2%
Average time from report receipt to service initiation	43 days	47 days

¹ Referrals can include more than one child.

² This reflects a "unique count of children who had a maltreatment report investigated or assessed" (i.e., a child who had at least one maltreatment report investigated/assessed was counted once, regardless of how many investigations/assessments they had).

³ Unless noted otherwise, data on victims represents "unique victims" (i.e., a child is counted once regardless of how many times s/he was determined to be a victim of maltreatment). "First-time victims" are those with no previous findings of maltreatment.

⁴ If a child is determined to be of Hispanic origin, they are only counted as Hispanic and are not included in any of the other racial/ethnic categories. Data for the general child population under age 18 is from the U. S. Census Bureau and is publicly available from the Kids Count Data Center.

⁵ Fields with "NR" signify that the data was not reported or available in the 2015 Child Maltreatment Report. See Appendix D of the report for more detailed information by state.

⁶ Percentages for those unknown, unborn or 18-21 years old are not presented here as they represent such a small percentage of the overall total.

⁷ Total may exceed 100 percent. Children who experienced more than one type of maltreatment were counted in each applicable category. The "neglect" category includes fetal alcohol syndrome, prenatal substance abuse exposure, abandonment, and educational neglect.

⁸ In the Child Maltreatment 2015 report, perpetrators and relationships are only counted once regardless of the number of times the perpetrator was reported. Previous reports counted each relationship and percentages of relationships totaled more than 100 percent.

⁹ Child daycare provider, foster parent, friends or neighbors, legal guardian, other, other professional, other relative, group home and residential facility staff, unmarried partner of parent, multiple relationships, or unknown.

¹⁰ NCANDS collects data for 26 types of services including but not limited to adoption, foster care, family preservation, mental health, and substance abuse. In the Child Maltreatment 2015 report, only children who were removed from their home after the report date are counted. Previously, a child was counted if the service was initiated prior to the report date, but continued after the report disposition date. This is an unduplicated count; a single child was counted for each postresponse event. Foster care services are defined as activities associated with 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the State Title IV-B/IV-E agency has responsibility for placement, care, or supervision.