

Child Sexual Abuse Statistics

Child sexual abuse is a significant problem in the state of Utah. The Utah Women & Leadership Project provides these statistics to inform Utah decision makers and residents about this troubling trend so that changes can be made to better protect and support Utah's children.

UTAH STATS

- Nearly 13% of Utahns report being **molested** before the age of 18.¹
- More than three-fourths of all sexual assault victims in Utah (78.7%) reported being sexually assaulted **before their 18th birthday**, with more than one-third of these survivors (34.9%) stating they were assaulted **before their 10th birthday**.² Children are more likely to be victimized **by a family member**.³
- A **2019 survey of high schoolers**⁴ reported the following:
 - 1 in 13 Utah high schoolers (7.6%) were physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to—1 in 9 girls (11.3%) and 1 in 24 boys (4.1%).
 - 1 in 5 girls (21.2%) and 1 in 13 boys (7.6%) experienced sexual violence⁵ in the last 12 months (14.3% total). Utah is significantly above the national statistics for this category (10.8% total, 16.6% for girls, 5.2% for boys). The only two states with higher rates are Idaho (14.9% total) and California (19.0% total).
 - Among students who dated in the previous 12 months, 9.5% experienced sexual dating violence⁶ one or more times (15.3% for girls, 4% for boys). Utah is higher than the national statistics for this category (8.2% total, 12.6% for girls, 3.8% for boys).

UNDER-REPORTED

One source reported that in the U.S., less than 12% of child sexual abuse is reported to the police and that many child sexual abuse victims never disclose their abuse to anyone.¹⁷ Another source stated that fabricated sexual abuse reports constitute only 1% to 4% of all reported cases. Of these reports, 75% are reported by adults. Children fabricate sexual abuse less than 1% of the time.¹⁸ In Utah, according to the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, only 11.8% of women report sexual assault to law enforcement.¹⁹ Yet, even with low reporting rates, Utah's reported rape rate has consistently been higher than the national rate over the past 25 years.²⁰

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Nationally, the estimated economic cost of child sexual abuse totals over \$9.3 billion annually.²¹ In Utah, the estimated economic cost from all sexual violence totals nearly \$5 billion every year, almost \$1,700 per Utah resident.²² In 2011, the Utah state government spent more than \$92 million on people known to have perpetrated sexual violence while spending only \$16.5 million on those who experienced sexual violence. Only \$569,000 was spent on efforts to prevent sexual violence.²³

NATIONAL STATS

- 1 in 5 children is sexually abused before they turn 18.⁷
- 70% of sex offenses reported to law enforcement involve a minor.⁸
- Children **know the perpetrator** in around 80% of the reported cases of sexual abuse.⁹
- Over half of child sexual abuse survivors were abused by juveniles under the age of 18—most of the perpetrators were peers they knew.¹⁰
- Youth are responsible for about half of all sexual offenses against other children.¹¹
- **Girls are the victims** of incest and/or intrafamily sexual abuse much more frequently than boys: Between 33–50% of perpetrators who sexually abuse girls are family members; 10–20% of those who sexually abuse boys are intrafamily perpetrators.¹² Girls are at an increased risk of sexual abuse and/or sexual assault over a lifetime when compared to boys.¹³ However, according to one source, due to a decrease in reporting by male survivors, rates of child sexual abuse among boys may be significantly higher than reported as well.¹⁴
- Abuse survivors often don't disclose their abuse until adulthood.¹⁵
- Protective factors may lessen the likelihood of children being abused or neglected.¹⁶

RISK FACTORS

While there is risk for children of all ages, children are most vulnerable to abuse between the ages of 7 and 13.²⁴ Children with disabilities are 3 times more likely to be victims of sexual abuse,²⁵ and children of single parents with live-in partners are 8 times more likely to experience abuse.²⁶

LONG-TERM NEGATIVE EFFECTS

- High school dropout rates may increase as much as 40% for survivors of childhood sexual abuse.²⁷
- Child sexual abuse and adolescent sexual assault are associated with increased rates of alcohol and substance abuse. In one large study, 1 in 5 of survivors developed alcohol dependence by age 30. Similarly, in the same study, 1 in 5 of survivors developed illicit substance dependence by age 30.²⁸
- Sexually abused youth are 5 times more likely than the general population to be hospitalized for a mental or physical health problem.²⁹
- Sexually abused youth are 1.6 times more likely than the general population to use outpatient treatment for a mental or physical health problem.³⁰
- Children who experience sexual abuse are at least three times more likely to attempt suicide later in life, and as they get older, the risk of suicide attempts increases.³¹
- Child sexual abuse survivors are 4 times more likely to develop symptoms of drug abuse, 4 times more likely to experience PTSD as adults, and 3 times more likely to experience a major depressive episode as adults.³²
- In one study, 42% of abused females were classified as obese by young adulthood, compared to 28% of the control group.³³

Acknowledgements: Thank you to Defend Innocence and The Younique Foundation for much of the national statistics and research. Also, thanks to Staci Liljegren for gathering these statistics.