

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

The Prevalence of Confirmed Maltreatment Among US Children, 2004 to 2011

Wildeman, C., Emanuel, N, Leventhal, J., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Waldfogel, J., & Lee, H (2014). The prevalence of confirmed maltreatment among US children, 2004 to 2011. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 168(8), 706-713. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2014.410

SUMMARY: Child maltreatment is prominent in the United States making it a public health issue; maltreatment during childhood results in higher risk of physical and mental health problems. Previously data on the prevalence of maltreatment was based on retrospective self-reports. This study generated data on the prevalence of maltreatment based on official Child Protective Services (CPS) reports.

KEY FINDINGS:

- In 2011, 670,000 children in the United States (12.5%) experienced a confirmed report of maltreatment.
- Black children experience maltreatment at a higher rate (1.5%) followed by Native Americans (1.1%), Hispanic (.9%), White (.8%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (.2%).
- Girls experienced a slightly higher rate of confirmed reports of maltreatment than boys.
- Geographical regions differed in rate of confirmed reports of maltreatment, the highest being the Northeast (1.0%) and the South (1.0%), then the Midwest (.9%) and West (.8%).

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Collaborate with schools to facilitate support groups for military children who are reported by the CPS as having experienced maltreatment
- Examine ways to prevent maltreatment in at-risk populations

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide programs for military couples which provide information on preventative measures against maltreatment for parents
- Tailor efforts to girls, Black, and Native American military children to reduce their elevated risks for maltreatment.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to maintain programs that offer support to children survivors of maltreatment
- Recommend education of professionals who work with military children (e.g., child care providers, teachers and pediatricians) on the warning signs of child maltreatment

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METHODS

- Data were collected from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System child files from 2004 to 2011.
- Researchers generated 5 multiply imputed data sets for missing information in the NCANDS reports.
- Data were organized into synthetic cohort life tables, which showed the rate of maltreatment in a cohort by the age of 18 years from 2004 to 2011.

PARTICIPANTS

- The sample included 670,000 children who had a confirmed report of maltreatment in 2011.
- The sample included included data on 326,800 boys, 343,200 girls, of which 317,900 were White children, 174,400 Black children, 153,400 Hispanic children, 9,300 Asian/Pacific Islander children, and 15,000 Native American children.
- Eighty percent of the cases in the reported data were cases of neglect, not abuse.
- About one-quarter of children with confirmed reports of maltreatment experienced maltreatment prior to 2 years of age.

LIMITATIONS

- CPS gathered data based on states and then calculated the rates; however, it is possible for a child to have been counted multiple times if they resided in more than one state during the time period which would have skewed the data.
- Each state follows their own definition of maltreatment resulting in national estimates which are not based on an established single definition, which was not accounted for in the analyses.
- The data lack information on the rates of different kinds of maltreatment (e.g., neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse), restricting the ability to analyze the data.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Filter data to avoid a child who is maltreated in more than one state during the time period from being counted more than once
- Define a single definition for maltreatment to be used for all states establishing a nationwide standard for the data
- Gather data on the rates of the different kinds of maltreatment(e.g. neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse) to allow for more detailed estimates

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