

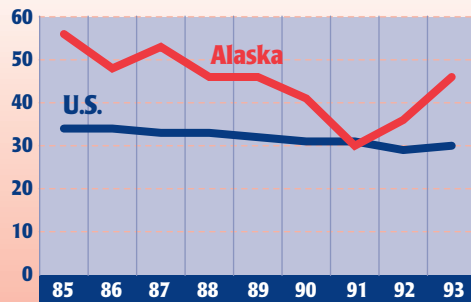


Children in Danger

Clark Mishler Photo

Child Death Rate

Trend 1985-1993: Child Death Rate (Deaths per 100,000 children ages 1-14)



Source: Kids Count Data Book, 1996, Annie E. Casey Foundation

Definition

The child death rate is the number of deaths from all causes per 100,000 children ages 1-14. The data are reported by child's place of residence, not place of death.

Significance

The death rate among children is an indication of whether children are living in safe and supervised environments and are receiving adequate nutrition, health care, and preventive services. Once children survive the first year of life, mortality drops sharply. However, many children are exposed to high risks as they move toward adolescence.

The child death rate in the United States has fallen in the past several years, due largely to advances in medical care and the general decrease in motor vehicle accidents—which are a major cause of death among children.

Despite the overall decline in child death rates, however, some children—especially poor children living in dangerous neighborhoods—still face hazardous conditions.

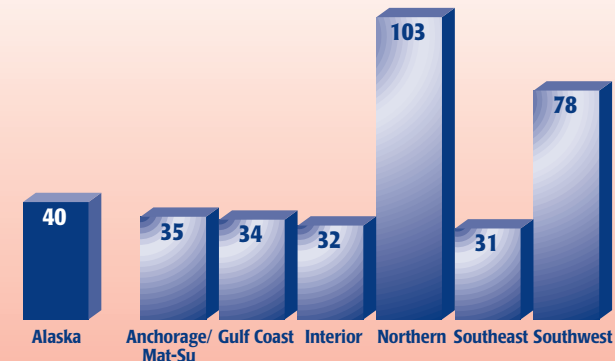
Impact

- The primary cause of death for children of all ages in the United States is unintentional injury—which is often preventable. In 1991, such injuries claimed 4,404 lives among American children between the ages of 1 and 9.⁵⁹
- Motor vehicle crashes are the single largest cause of injury death for children between ages 1 and 9. Following motor vehicle crashes, fires and related burns and drowning are the leading causes of unintentional injury deaths in children. The death rates from fires and drowning for

children ages 1-4 are approximately three times the rate for children ages 5-9.

- The rate of deaths from homicide nearly tripled between 1960 and 1991. Homicide is now the fourth leading cause of death among children ages 1 to 9.⁶⁰
- According to a 1990 estimate, approximately 3,600 children die each year, 20,000 become permanently disabled, 350,000 are hospitalized, and 15 million visit the emergency room because of unintentional injuries.⁶¹

Child Death Rate (Death Rate per 100,000, Children Age 1 to 14, 5 year average, 1989-1993)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

Child Death Rate

What About Alaska?

Although the child death rate in Alaska has been lower in the 1990s than it was in the 1980s, Alaska still had the highest child death rate in the nation in 1993.⁶²

From 1989 to 1993, the average child death rate in Alaska was 40 per 100,000 children, compared with a national rate of 31 per 100,000. The child death rate varied greatly across regions of the state. Rates were highest in the Northern (103 per 100,000) and Southwest regions (78 per 100,000). The lowest rates were in the Interior (32 per 100,000), and Southeast (31 per 100,000).

In Alaska, accidents are the leading cause of death among children age 1-14, followed by natural causes and homicides. A total of 293 Alaskan children ages 1-14 died between 1989 and 1993. The adjacent table shows causes of death among children of different ages between 1989 and 1993; remember that the numbers are very small in some categories.

Causes of Death for Alaskan Children Ages 1-14, 1989-1993 *

Age 1-4	Number of Deaths	Percent of Total
Accident	63	49.6%
Suicide	0	—
Homicide	10	7.9%
Other (Undetermined/Pending)	2	1.6%
Natural	52	41.0%
Total	127	100%

Age 5-9	Number of Deaths	Percent of Total
Accident	40	56.3%
Suicide	0	—
Homicide	8	11.3%
Other (Undetermined/Pending)	0	—
Natural	23	32.4%
Total	71	100%

Age 10-14	Number of Deaths	Percent of Total
Accident	49	51.6%
Suicide	7	7.4%
Homicide	10	10.5%
Other (Undetermined/Pending)	1	1.1%
Natural	28	29.5%
Total	95	100%

*The total number of children age 1-14 who died between 1989-1993 was 293.

Sources: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, U.S. Bureau of the Census



Child Abuse and Neglect

Definition

Child abuse is defined as an act—or failure to act—by a person with custodial responsibility for a child, that results in actual or threatened danger to the child’s physical or emotional well-being.⁶³

Neglect includes emotional, medical, or physical neglect, or a failure to thrive.⁶⁴

The child abuse and neglect rate can be measured in two principal ways:

- By the **reported** cases (adjusted to eliminate duplicate cases involving the same child) of child abuse and neglect, per 1,000 children under 18.
- By the **substantiated** cases (adjusted to eliminate duplicate cases involving the same child) of child abuse and neglect per 1,000 children under 18.⁶⁵

Here we report rates in both ways, always making it clear which measurement we are reporting. Experts disagree about which is the more valid measure—but everyone agrees that child abuse is a serious problem. The discussion on page 35 examines why reporting rates of child maltreat-

ment is complex, and how the Division of Family and Youth Services in Alaska records and categorizes reported cases of child abuse and neglect.

Significance

Child abuse and neglect lead to physical, emotional, and social problems for children and families—including psychiatric and behavioral disorders, delayed development, permanent disability, poor academic performance, delinquency and deviant behavior, anxiety and depression, alcoholism and substance abuse, suicide, teen pregnancy, and domestic and criminal violence.

The economic consequences of child abuse and neglect are staggering, including the costs of foster care, court services, counseling, specialized education, and medical care for victims.⁶⁶

Although child abuse and neglect affect people of all races, ethnicities, cultures, and socioeconomic groups, abuse and neglect are more common among families living in poverty. Given the higher rates of poverty among minority groups, children from these groups enter the child protection system at disproportionately higher rates.⁶⁷

Impact

- Research indicates that victims of child abuse are at higher risk of abusing their own children when they become parents.⁶⁸
- In 1994, an estimated 1,271 American children—over three children a day—died from abuse and neglect.⁶⁹
- Neglect was the largest single category of child abuse nationwide in 1992, accounting for 43 percent of substantiated cases.⁷⁰
- A majority (62 percent) of pregnant teens or teens with children report having been sexually abused as children.⁷¹
- Ninety percent of juvenile delinquents and adult prisoners report being abused as children.⁷²
- The majority of child deaths nationwide due to abuse and neglect occur among children under the age of two.⁷³
- Children under the age of five suffer 86 percent of child abuse nationwide.⁷⁴

Child Abuse and Neglect

- Victims of child abuse and neglect are 53 percent more likely to be arrested for juvenile delinquency and 38 percent more likely to be arrested for violent crimes than children who were not abused.⁷⁵
- Being a victim of childhood abuse increases the odds of future delinquency and adult criminality by 40 percent.⁷⁶
- One-third of child abuse victims will become abusive parents themselves.⁷⁷

What About Alaska?⁷⁸

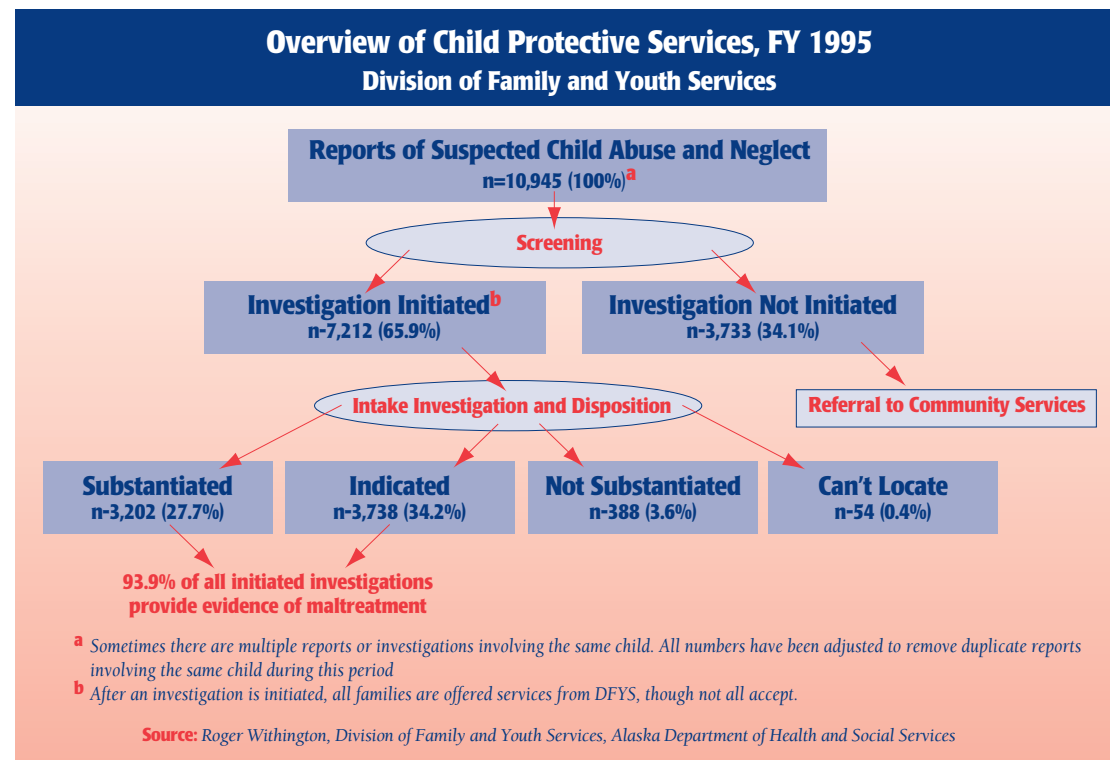
Interpreting Child Abuse and Neglect Rates: A Note of Caution

Reliable and valid measures of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect are very difficult to obtain. While some cases of suspected child abuse and neglect are never reported, other cases receive multiple reports. Furthermore, variations in the way cases are screened and investigated by child protective service agencies can also have a significant impact on the estimated prevalence of child abuse and neglect. Thus, readers should pay careful attention to what measures of child abuse are being used—and keep in mind that a number of factors can influence the reported rates of child abuse and neglect.

Investigation Procedures of the Division of Family and Youth Services

Many cases of suspected child abuse and neglect in Alaska are reviewed and investigated by the Division of Family and Youth Services in the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. The flow chart below shows the investigative and classification process and numbers of children in each category in FY 1995.

A **report** of suspected child maltreatment can be made by anyone—including physicians, nurses, teachers, social workers, or others who have reason to believe that children are being abused or neglected. The division screens each report to determine if an investigation is required. Some cases are dropped after this initial screening. The cases that are investigated can fall into several categories. A **substantiated case** involves confirmed child abuse and neglect. An **indicated** (or “**reason to suspect**”) case involves some evidence of child abuse



Child Abuse and Neglect

or neglect but not enough for definite confirmation. The case is considered **not substantiated** when no evidence of child abuse and neglect is found. Finally, when the division receives a report of suspected child abuse but the case worker can't locate the child, the case is classified as **can't locate**.

In the U.S. as a whole, the reported rates of child maltreatment were 45 per 1,000 children under 18 in 1993 and 47 per 1,000 in 1994.⁷⁹

In Alaska, the 1992 reported rate of child maltreatment was 49 per 1,000 children under 18. By 1995, this rate had risen to 58.2—considerably above the national average. But even though the rate of reported cases of abuse and neglect of Alaskan children rose between 1992 and 1995, rates of substantiated cases actually dropped—from 17.7 per 1,000 children to 16.1. The table below shows the frequency of cases and the rate per 1,000 children for the four-year period from FY 1992 through FY 1995.

In Alaska, children between the ages of 5 and 9 years old suffer the highest rate of maltreatment, as the table below shows.

Substantiated Child Abuse and Neglect Cases* Among Alaskan Children, by Age, Annual Average, FY92-FY95

Age Group	Average No. of Cases	Rate per 1,000 children
Under 1	289	1.6
1-4	867	4.7
5-9	1,035	5.6
10-14	861	4.6
15-17	304	1.6
Total	3,355	18.0

*Unduplicated counts

Source: Raw data were provided by the Division of Family and Youth Services, State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

Trends in Child Abuse and Neglect Among Alaskan Children Under 18

	FY 1992		FY 1993		FY 1994		FY 1995	
	Cases ^a	Rate ^b	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate
Reported	8,998	49.0	10,566	56.8	11,117	59.5	10,945	58.2
Investigation Not Initiated	1,063		2,316		2,923		3,733	
Investigation Initiated	7,935	43.2	8,250	44.4	8,194	43.8	7,212	38.3
Substantiated	3,257	17.7	3,661	19.7	3,398	18.2	3,032	16.1
Indicated	3,854	21.0	3,819	20.5	4,066	21.8	3,738	19.9
Not Substantiated	807	4.4	726	3.9	645	3.5	388	2.1
Can't Locate a Child	17	n/a	44	0.2	85	0.5	54	0.3

^aUnduplicated counts

^bRate per 1,000 children under 18

Source: Division of Family and Youth Services, State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

Child Abuse and Neglect

Most cases of child maltreatment in Alaska are either neglect or physical abuse.

Rates of substantiated child abuse and neglect vary considerably by race in Alaska. The average annual rate, from 1992 through 1995, was 36.2 per 1,000 for Alaska Native children, 10.5 for White children, 28.6 for

Black children, and 5.9 for Asian/Pacific Island children. Neglect accounted for most maltreatment of Native children. Among White children, rates of neglect and physical abuse were similar, while for Black children, cases of neglect somewhat outweighed cases of physical abuse.

Substantiated Child Abuse and Neglect^a Among Alaskan Children^b by Race and Type of Abuse, Annual Average FY92-FY95

Race	Per 1,000 Children									
	Neglect		Physical Abuse		Sexual Abuse		Mental Injury		Abandonment	
	# of cases	Rate	# of cases	Rate	# of cases	Rate	# of cases	Rate	# of cases	Rate
White	523	4.0	553	4.3	243	1.9	34	0.3	9	N/A
AK Native	957	24.3	282	7.2	141	3.6	28	0.7	16	N/A
Black	133	14.7	97	10.8	20	2.2	8	N/A	>1	N/A
Asian/P. Isl.	16	N/A	22	2.8	6	N/A	2	N/A	0	N/A

^aUnduplicated counts

^bUnder 18

Source: Raw data were provided by the Division of Family and Youth Services, State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

N/A means that there were too few cases to compute a rate

Substantiated Child Abuse and Neglect^a Among Alaskan Children,^b by Type of Abuse, Annual Average FY92-FY95

Type of Abuse	Average No. of Cases	Rate per 1,000 children
Neglect	1,745	9.4
Physical Abuse	1,055	5.7
Sexual Abuse	456	2.5
Mental Injury	75	0.4
Abandonment	25	0.1

Substantiated Child Abuse and Neglect^a Among Alaskan Children,^b by Race, Annual Average FY92-FY95

Race	Average No. of Cases	Rate per 1,000 children
White	1,361	10.5
AK Native	1,423	36.2
Black	258	28.6
Asian/P. Isl.	46	5.9

^aUnduplicated counts

^bUnder 18

Source: Division of Family and Youth Services, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

