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Violence is No Solution!

A SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL SURVEY
"VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SWEDEN 2016"

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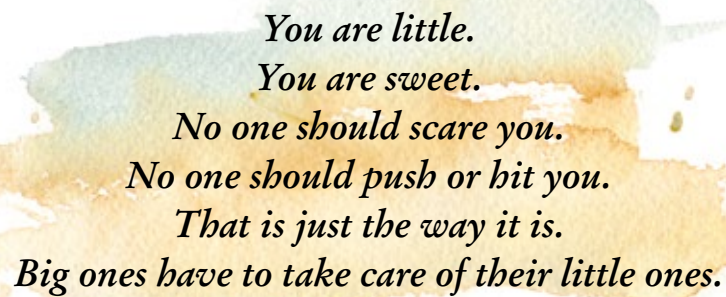
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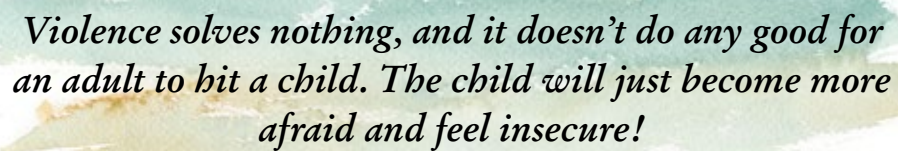
Illustration & Layout: Johan Andréasson, Hectornado

In Stina Wirséns children's book Little, the teacher listens to the main character when he/she is sad and afraid at home. Then the teacher says:



*You are little.
You are sweet.
No one should scare you.
No one should push or hit you.
That is just the way it is.
Big ones have to take care of their little ones.*

Or, as one pupil in the study puts it:



*Violence solves nothing, and it doesn't do any good for
an adult to hit a child. The child will just become more
afraid and feel insecure!*



Violence is no solution!

Every child has the right to an upbringing free from violence. The goal is to put an end to all violence against children. We are a long way from reaching that goal – in Sweden as well as in the rest of the world.

It is important to try to find out how prevalent violence against children is. This knowledge provides us with the tools to prevent violence and to protect and support children.

Official statistics on the number of police reports filed or notifications made to social services provide certain information – but don't give us the full picture of how many children are actually abused. It is relatively seldom that knowledge of violence against children reaches the authorities. When the tolerance of violence decreases, the number of notifications to social services and the police jumps. Here in Sweden, we have seen such an increase over the last few decades.

The path that the Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden has chosen is to allow children and young people themselves to answer questions, on a completely anonymous basis. This gives abused children who have not been in contact with the authorities an opportunity to be heard. The answers provide a more accurate picture of the situation than statistics about the number of notifications to the authorities do. One can thus begin to grasp the true extent of the violence to which children are exposed.

In conjunction with a commission from the government, the foundation has therefore allowed the researchers Carolina Jernbro and Staffan Janson to conduct a survey of violence against children in Sweden.¹ The Report *Violence against Children in Sweden 2016* is available for download from the Children's Welfare Foundation's website.²

One pupil in the study puts it this way: *Violence is no solution, and it doesn't do any good for an adult to hit a child. The child will just become more afraid and feel insecure!*

We think that we learned a lot from these pupils. Their answers constitute an invaluable source of knowledge that can prove useful to anyone working with children. To make the knowledge more accessible, we have developed this summary of the findings of the national survey.

1. The study is based on a nationally representative pupil survey. Students in the 9th grade in primary school (14-15 years of age) and in high school year two (16-17 years of age) participated in the investigation, which was conducted in late autumn of 2016. A total of 4,741 pupils responded to questions about their exposure to various forms of violence throughout their childhoods. By asking some of the same questions in the years 2000, 2006 and 2011, it has been possible to monitor progress over time.

2. Jernbro, C. & Janson, S. (2018). *Violence Against Children in Sweden 2016*. The Children's Welfare Foundation.

Violence Against Children

The UN Child Rights Committee interprets the concept of violence against children broadly. Their definition includes all forms of physical or psychological/emotional violence, injury or abuse, negligence or neglect, maltreatment, and exploitation – including sexual abuse, regardless of the age of the perpetrator. The committee stresses that children may be subjected to violence by adults, but that violence may also occur among children. Moreover, some children harm themselves.

The committee is aware that various forms of violence against children often occur at the same time. It stresses that both boys and girls are at risk from all forms of violence, but that their exposure to violence and the way in which it is perceived differs somewhat, depending on their gender.³

Child abuse is when **an adult person** subjects a child to physical or psychological violence, sexual abuse, or humiliating treatment. When adults fail to provide for a child's basic needs, that is also a form of child abuse.⁴ In this report, we primarily address these various forms of child abuse. When it comes to sexual abuse, we have chosen to report how common it is in general, regardless of whether the offender is an adult or child.

Corporal punishment

Certain types of violence against children, such as sexual abuse, have always been taboo. Other forms have previously been accepted and sometimes even respected. Until the second half of the 1900s, "disciplining" children by using corporal punishment was seen as an effective and necessary child-rearing method. In the mid-1960s, almost all Swedish parents felt it was their duty to beat their children, so that they would grow up to become upstanding citizens. This attitude has changed in Sweden, but people in many countries still hold these views.

In recent decades, violence against children for child-rearing purposes has declined sharply in Sweden. Nowadays, 95 percent of parents believe that all forms of violence against children are wrong.

When researchers first started studying the prevalence of violence against children in Sweden, the focus was on what was then known as corporal punishment, i.e. spanking and other forms of physical punishment. Violence against children for child-rearing purposes was long permitted in older laws and jurisdiction, but in 1979, Sweden became the first country in the world to forbid all forms of violence against children. It is now commonly accepted that no child shall be subjected to corporal punishment or other humiliating treatment. An adult who uses physical violence against a child can be tried in court and convicted of child abuse if the violence harms the child or causes him/her pain.

At the time at which it is administered, corporal punishment may be effective in preventing children from doing something disobedient. However, research shows that the use of corporal

3. Barnombudsmannen (2014). *Barnrättskommitténs allmänna kommentar nr 8 (2006). Barnets rätt till skydd mot kroppslig bestraffning och andra grymma eller förnedrade former av bestraffning.*

4. Socialdepartementet. (2001). *Barnmisshandel. Att förebygga och åtgärda. (SOU 2001:72) Stockholm: Socialdepartementet.*

punishment as a child-rearing method does not have any lasting positive effects. On the contrary, studies from various parts of the world indicates that there is a strong correlation between corporal punishment and aggressive behaviour and mental illness in children. In addition, there is scientific evidence that the violence that adults use to rear their children often escalate into more severe forms of violence.⁵

In Sweden, the limits have become clear

The concept of corporal punishment is difficult to define. Parents often turn to violence when they are tired, stressed, or pressured by things that have nothing to do with the child. It becomes difficult to determine whether the violence is part of the child-rearing strategy or simply a way to vent stress and frustration at the child's expense.

In some circles, even severe violence is still applied as part of child-rearing. Therefore, countries that allow corporal punishment have set limits on how severe the violence may be. In Sweden, all violence against children is prohibited. This means that what was formerly known as corporal punishment is now referred to as child abuse.

In this report, we have chosen to avoid the term "corporal punishment" and have instead consistently used the terms "child abuse" or "violence against children."

Violence and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) applies to all children in Sweden. Some of the articles are of particular relevance for children who are victims of violence:

- *Article 1. A child is any human being below the age of 18.*
- *Article 2. All children have the same rights and equal value. No child shall be subjected to discrimination of any kind.*
- *Article 3. The best interests of the child must always be prioritised.*
- *Article 12. The child has the right to express his/her views on all matters that affect him/her.*
- *Article 19. The child has the right to protection from all forms of physical or psychological violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.*
- *Article 34. The child has the right to protection from all forms of sexual abuse and from exploitation through prostitution and pornography.*
- *Article 39. A child who has been the victim of any form of neglect, exploitation, abuse, torture, armed conflicts, or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment has the right to rehabilitation and social reintegration.*

5. Jernbro, C. & Janson, S. (2018). Violence Against Children in Sweden 2016. The Children's Welfare Foundation.

How common is child abuse?

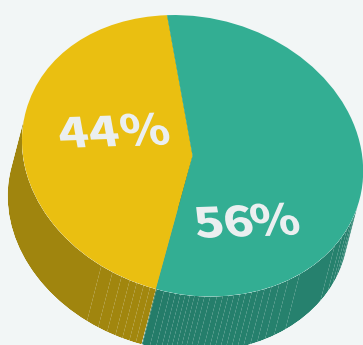
Most of the pupils who participated in our survey have not been subjected to any violence at all by adults during childhood. *"Everything is fine with me; I have nothing to talk about. I am happy and I have a good life with my parents and friends,"* writes one pupil. But the results show that too many children are still exposed to violence, and that too few of those who are abused gain access to the protection and rehabilitation they require. *"They don't care about what children think and what they want, and just do what's best for them,"* says a pupil who had suffered child abuse and who had been involved in numerous investigations.

When we include all the forms of child abuse that we ask about in the survey – physical violence, psychological violence, neglect, having witnessed intimate partner violence, and sexual abuse – a total of 44 percent of the participants had been victims of some type of child abuse at some point during their lives.

Child abuse often occurs within the family. 36 percent of the pupils have been exposed to some type of abuse by parents, step-parents or foster parents in the course of their childhood. This number takes into account physical violence, psychological violence, neglect, experiencing violence against a parent, and sexual abuse.

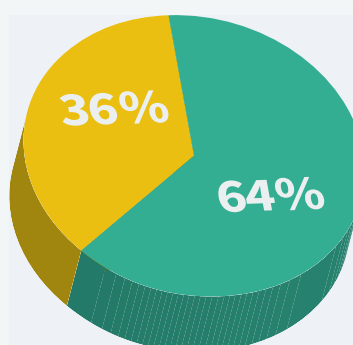
Exposure to any form of child abuse by any adult in the course of their childhood

- Exposure to any form of child abuse
- Never subjected to child abuse



Exposure to any form of child abuse by one or more parents in the course of their childhood

- Subjected to child abuse by a parent
- Never subjected to child abuse by a parent





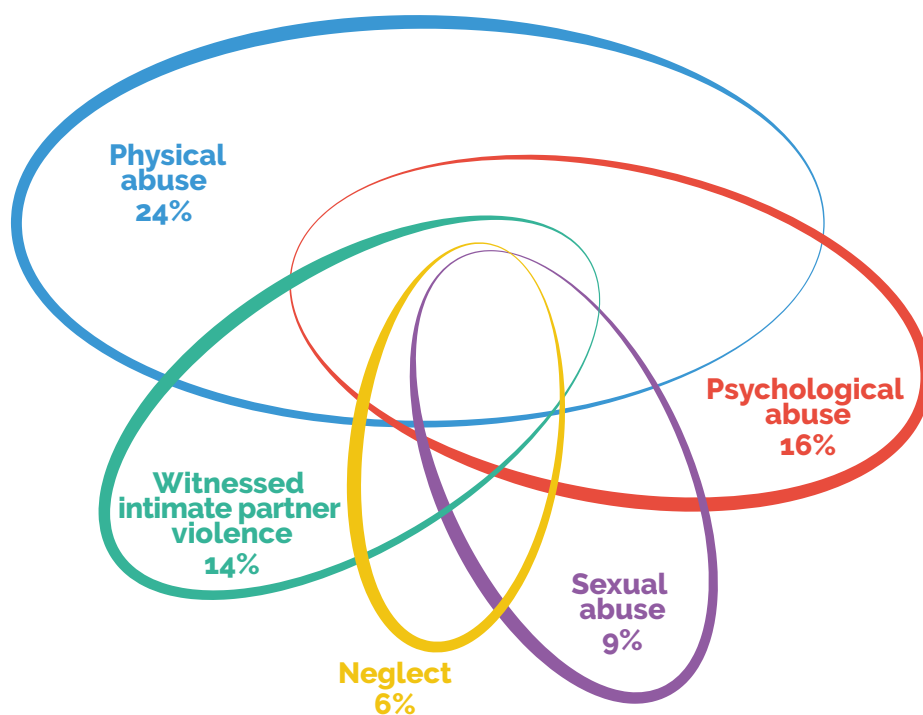
Abused in many ways

Research shows that children who are most at risk are those who are exposed to various types of violence or who are repeatedly subjected to violence. Our survey indicates that the various forms of child abuse often overlap. This is known as poly-victimisation.

Isolated incidents of less severe forms of violence constitute the majority of the child abuse to which pupils have been exposed. But almost nine percent of the participants had been exposed to three or more different forms of child abuse. The same pupils have also been subjected to harsher and repeated abuse.

The pupils who reported neglect are the group that is most vulnerable to other forms of child abuse. The majority of them have been subjected to physical and psychological/emotional violence, and nearly half of them have witnessed intimate partner violence. Psychological abuse also largely overlaps with other forms of child abuse, especially physical abuse.

Proportions and overlaps of various forms of child abuse





When a child discloses one form of child abuse, there is a great risk that they are also being exposed to other forms of abuse. Inform! Ask!

Physical child abuse

Physical child abuse may involve pulling a child by his/her hair or ear, or hitting a child. Severe forms of physical child abuse include kicking, burning or scalding a child, throttling a child or constricting his/her throat or neck, beating a child with an implement, and using a knife or firearm to threaten or harm a child.

A large part of the physical abuse involves isolated incidents of less serious violence. These forms of violence are legal in many countries, but not in Sweden.

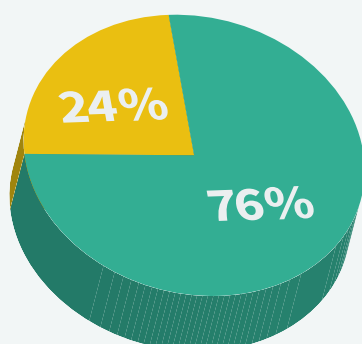
Almost 11 percent of the pupils had been exposed to more serious forms of physical child abuse. Five percent had been subjected to physical child abuse many times. Most of the pupils who had been abused on numerous occasions had also endured severe forms of physical child abuse.

A smaller proportion of pupils (2.7%) had been subjected to such severe abuse that they were forced to seek hospital treatment.

In comparison with previous surveys, the percentage of 9th grade pupils who were victims of physical child abuse by a parent has dropped sharply in Sweden, from 35 percent in 1995 to 12 percent in 2016⁶. However, this positive trend seems to have stagnated.

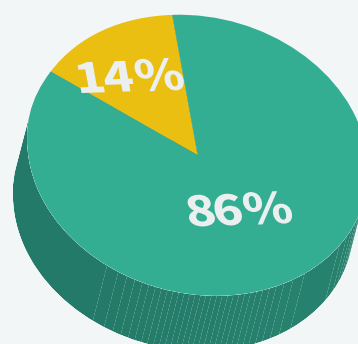
Exposure to any form of physical abuse by any adult in the course of their childhood

- Subjected to physical abuse by an adult
- Never subjected to physical abuse by an adult



Exposure to any form of physical child abuse by one or more parents in the course of their childhood

- Subjected to physical abuse by one or more parents
- Never subjected to physical abuse by a parent



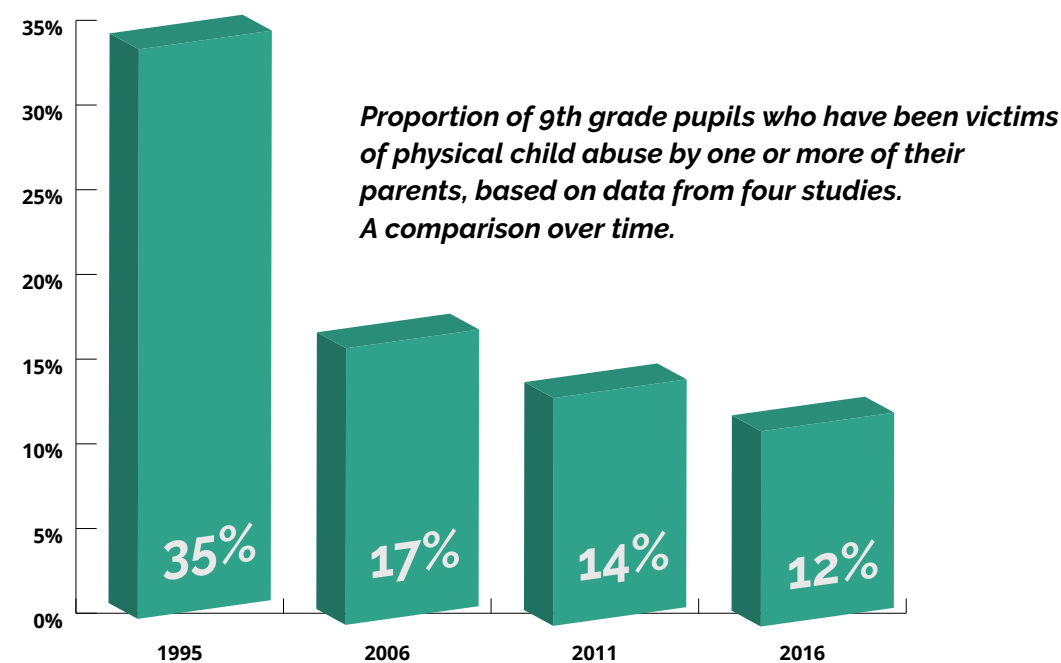
6. This information applies to 9th grade pupils, where there is comparative material. If all pupils are included, 14% were victims of physical abuse by a parent.

Admittedly, a slightly smaller percentage of pupils were victims of physical child abuse by an adult in the home in 2016, compared with 2011.⁷ But the proportion of pupils who have been victims of severe forms of physical child abuse and/or repeated physical abuse by an adult in the home has not changed since 2011.

Both mothers and fathers subject children to physical child abuse, but it is more common for fathers to do so. Outside the family, it is most common that either a complete stranger or a teacher/preschool teacher is responsible for the violence.

The incidence of various forms of physical child abuse on isolated occasions or on many occasions (%).

	Isolated Incidents	Many occasions	
Pulled by the hair or ear	11	2,7	Less severe forms of abuse
Smacked with an open hand	12	2,7	
Hit hard with an open hand or fist	3,4	1,4	
Kicked	2,8	1,1	
Burned or scalded (with hot liquid)	0,5	0,3	Severe forms of abuse
Throttled or constricted around the throat/neck	2,7	0,8	
Beaten with a cane, belt, ruler or similar	3,1	1,5	
Threatened with a knife or firearm	1,6	0,6	
Injured with a knife or firearm	0,4	0,4	



7. The change in those numbers has been insignificant..



Category of person who subjected the child to physical child abuse, percentage (%).

	Percentage of physical child abuse victims
Biological or adoptive father	37 %
Biological or adoptive mother	28 %
Preschool teacher/Teacher	8,6 %
Other relative	7,5 %
Stepfather	4,8 %
Friend or acquaintance of the family	4,6 %
Sports coach or recreational activity leader	4,4 %
Foster parent	2,9 %
Stepmother	2,6 %
A complete stranger	10 %
Another person	4,1%

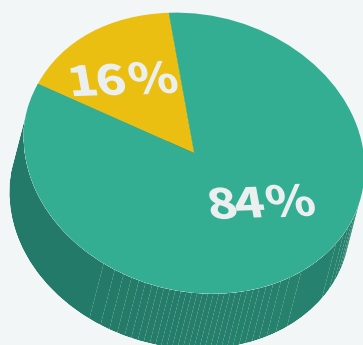
Psychological child abuse

The psychological or emotional abuse of a child may entail repeated insults/put-downs, repeatedly treating a child as if he/she is invisible, locking a child up, locking a child out of his/her home, or subjecting a child to threats of physical violence.

A total of 16 percent of the pupils surveyed reported that they were victims of psychological abuse by an adult; eleven percent had been abused by at least one of their parents. The most common forms of psychological child abuse were threats of physical violence and systematic insults/put-downs.

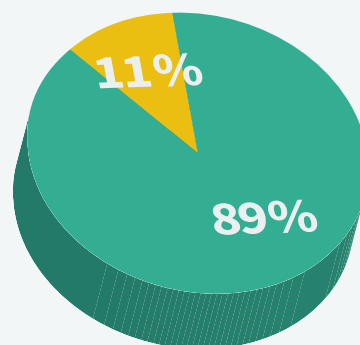
Exposure to any form of psychological abuse by any adult in the course of their childhood

- Subjected to psychological abuse by an adult
- Never subjected to psychological abuse by an adult



Exposure to any form of psychological child abuse by one or more parents in the course of their childhood

- Subjected to psychological abuse by one or more parents
- Never subjected to psychological abuse by a parent



Category of person who subjected the child to psychological/emotional child abuse, percentage (%).

	Percentage of victims of psychological/emotional child abuse
Biological or adoptive father	50 %
Biological or adoptive mother	35 %
Preschool teacher/Teacher	13%
Other relative	13 %
Stepfather	9,8 %
Friend or acquaintance of the family	8,7 %
Sports coach or recreational activity leader	6,7 %
Stepmother	6,7 %
Foster parent	4,6 %
A complete stranger	12,1 %
Another person	3,9%

Witnessing intimate partner violence

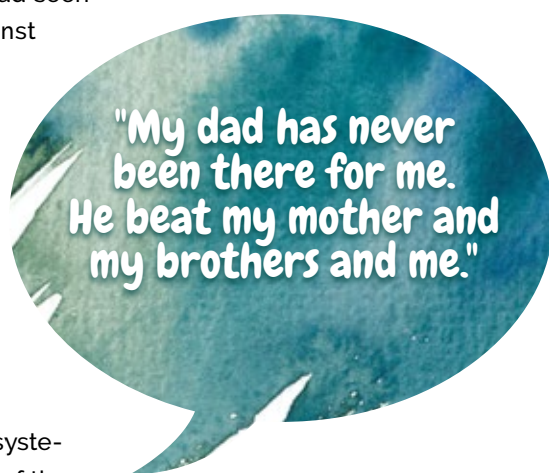
One form of psychological/emotional child abuse is when children witness or experience intimate partner violence against a parent. We have chosen to separately record the prevalence of this particular form of violence, and then have asked about both physical and psychological violence. For example, physical violence can entail a slap in the face, hair pulling, throwing things, hitting, or kicking. Psychological violence can entail verbal abuse, oppressive or dominating behavior, or threats of physical violence.

This part of the study does not include questions about whether the child witnessed sexual violence against a parent.

A total of 14 percent of the pupils reported that they had seen a parent using physical or psychological violence against another parent.

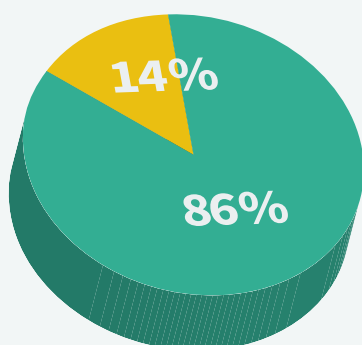
A total of eight percent of pupils had experienced that one parent had used physical violence against another parent; three percent had witnessed repeated incidents of physical violence. Pupils had more commonly experienced a father's violence against a mother than vice-versa (eleven percent compared to seven percent).

Fathers accounted for the majority of the physical and systematic violence. It is not possible to deduce the severity of the violence based on the responses.



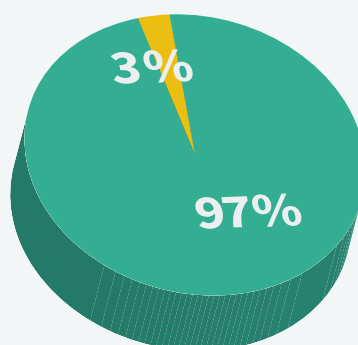
Percentage of children who have witnessed intimate partner violence

- Have witnessed intimate partner violence
- Have never witnessed intimate partner violence



Percentage of children who have witnessed repeated physical intimate partner violence

- Have witnessed repeated physical intimate partner violence
- Have not witnessed repeated physical intimate partner violence

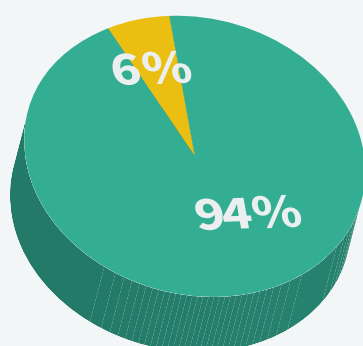


Neglect

Physical neglect entails not getting enough food, being forced to wear dirty clothing, or parents who are too affected by alcohol or drugs to take care of the child. Emotional neglect can cause a child to feel unloved, or mean that no one in the family is perceived to be a source of strength and support.

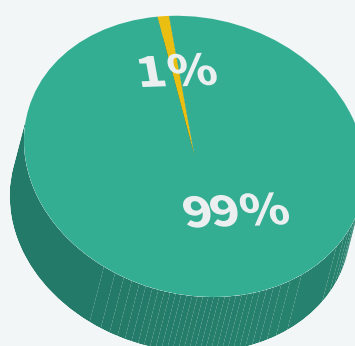
Percentage of children who are victims of neglect

- Have been subjected to neglect
- Have not been subjected to neglect



Percentage of children who feel that none of their parents care about them

- Feel that no parent cares about them
- Feel that they have at least one parent who cares about them



Both my parents have always been a great support and both of them have always shown me how much they care.

He took drugs in front of us when we were little, and when we grew up.

Just over six percent of the pupils reported that they had been neglected in the course of their childhood. Just over one percent had been victims of physical neglect. Just over five percent had been victims of emotional neglect.

The vast majority of pupils felt that their parents cared about them. Nearly 98 percent of pupils responded that they felt that their mother cared about them and 93 percent felt that their father cared about them. But almost nine percent of the pupils felt that at least one parent (usually the father) did not care about them. Less than one percent of the children who participated in the survey reported that they had no parent who cared about them.



If a child feels that his/her parents do not care about him/her, this is a serious warning sign. Children who are neglected are very often exposed to other types of violence. Inform! Ask!



Sexual abuse

Examples of sexual abuse include kissing, groping, or having sex with a child against his or her will. It also entails someone taking or disseminating nude photos of a child or forcing a child to look at another person's naked body.

Overall, 26 percent of survey participants (40 percent of girls and ten percent of boys) have been sexually abused on one or more occasions.

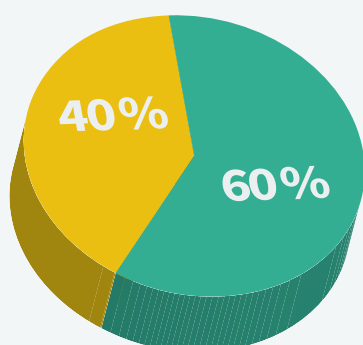
The majority of the abuse had been committed for the first time in the child's/the young person's teenage years, and had been committed by a peer of similar age, unknown or known. Nearly nine percent (14 percent of the girls and two percent of the boys) had been abused by an adult, usually a stranger.

Category of person who subjected the child to sexual abuse, percentage (%).

Abusers	Percentage of pupils who reported sexual abuse
Acquaintance/peer the child knew	41 %
Peer the child did not know	35 %
Adult stranger	25 %
Girlfriend/boyfriend	15 %
Parent/stepparent	6,0 %
Sibling	5,4 %
Another adult (such as a teacher or sports coach)	4,0 %
Friend of the family	3,2 %
Adult relative	2,9 %

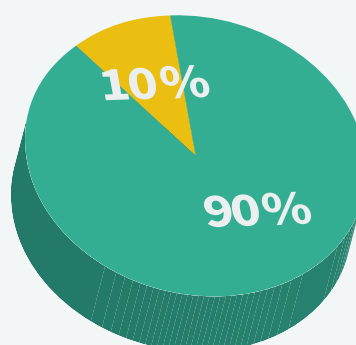
Girls' exposure to sexual abuse (regardless of the age of the person who abused them)

- Have been sexually abused
- Have not been sexually abused



Boys' exposure to sexual abuse (regardless of the age of the person who abused them)

- Have been sexually abused
- Have not been sexually abused



Particularly vulnerable situations and groups

There are groups of pupils who are more vulnerable to child abuse than others. However, there may be pupils who belong to a low-risk group but who are abused nonetheless. Pupils may also belong to a high-risk group – but not be exposed to abuse. The fact that a group is particularly vulnerable does not necessarily say anything about causation. Causality can be complicated. For example, children who have ADHD or ADD are often victims of child abuse. This may be because the adults they encounter in their daily lives find them to be difficult to deal with. It may also be that they have been misdiagnosed. Symptoms caused by trauma can be mistaken for symptoms of a disability. The disability may even be caused by injuries the child incurred as a result of violence (such as blows to the head).

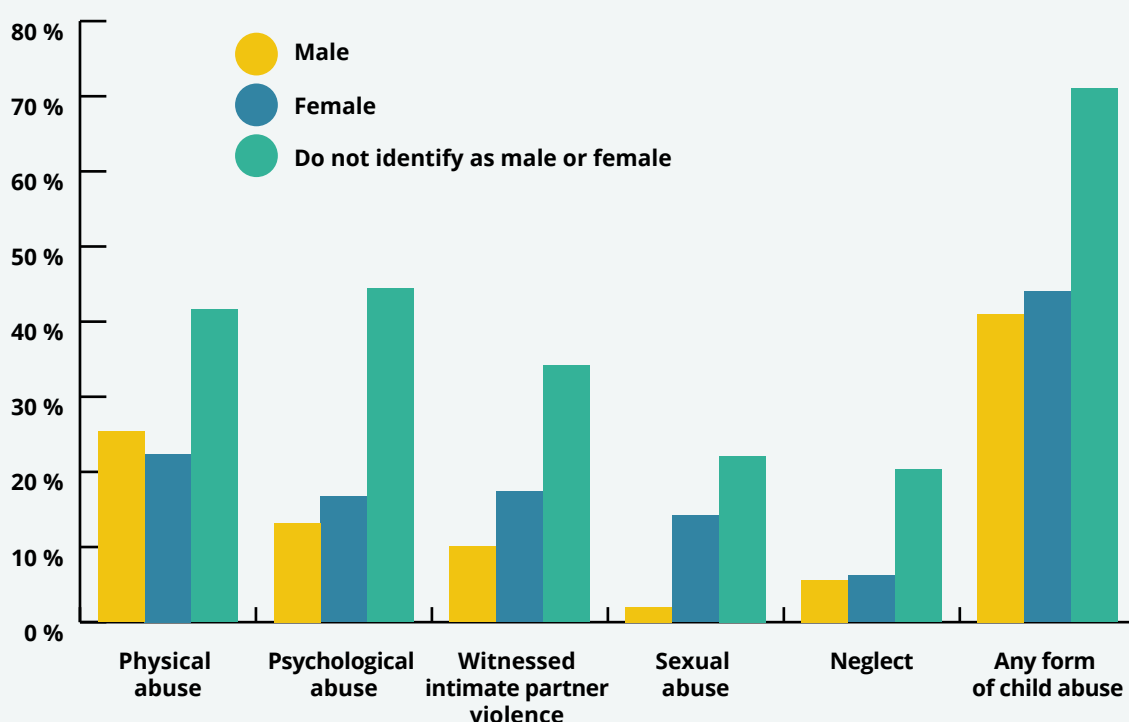
Regardless of the cause, it can be important to know which groups of children are particularly vulnerable, so that preventative measures can be taken and to ensure that at-risk children receive the support and protection to which they are entitled.

Vulnerability related to gender

Girls were exposed to psychological/emotional child abuse and sexual abuse more often than boys, and were also more likely to have witnessed violence against a parent. Boys were more likely to be victims of physical violence by an adult outside the family than their female counterparts. Girls were more likely to be victims of multiple forms of abuse than boys were. 20 percent of the girls had been subjected to two or more forms of abuse, in comparison with twelve percent of boys.

85 of the pupils surveyed (1.8%) identified as neither male or female. These pupils were especially vulnerable to all types of child abuse.

Exposure to different types of child abuse. A comparison of boys, girls and pupils who identify themselves as neither male nor female (%).



More than 76 percent of pupils who identify themselves as neither male or female had been subjected to some type of child abuse in the course of their childhood. Compared to other pupils, about five times as many pupils in that group had been subjected to four or five different forms of abuse.



Girls are more likely than boys to be exposed to most types of violence. Pupils who identify themselves as neither male nor female are considerably more likely to be victims of child abuse (of all types) than other pupils.

Boys are more likely to be victims of physical violence by an adult outside the family than their female counterparts.

Inform! Ask! Combat gender-based violence and all forms of gender discrimination!

Financial vulnerability

Pupils who feel that their family cannot afford to buy what they need are abused more often than other pupils (83% versus 41%). This vulnerability applies to all forms of child abuse.

Vulnerability to many different types of abuse is strongly linked to financial stability. More than 24 percent of the pupils who did not feel that their family could afford to buy what they need had been subjected to four or five types of abuse, compared to just over two percent of pupils who reported that their family's situation was financially stable.



Pupils who have felt their family could not afford to buy what they need are subjected to child abuse more often than other children. Inform! Ask!

Disability and chronic illness

54 percent of the pupils surveyed reported that they have at least one disability or chronic illness, and 45 percent stated that the disability/illness had been diagnosed by a physician or psychologist. Examples of disabilities and chronic illness are visual or hearing impairment, ADHD, ADD, autism, physical disabilities, diabetes, and epilepsy.

Pupils with a disability or chronic illness reported physical abuse to a greater extent (28%) than other pupils (17%). Psychological/emotional abuse and neglect were reported more than twice as often by pupils with a disability or chronic illness than they were by other pupils.

66 percent of pupils with ADHD/ADD have been victims of some form of child abuse. 68 percent of pupils with Asperger's syndrome have been victims of some form of child abuse.

Nearly 80 percent of pupils with eating disorders had been subjected to some form of child abuse in the course of their childhood.



Children with chronic illnesses or disabilities are significantly more likely to be subjected to child abuse than other children. Inform! Ask!

Be aware that parents may need additional support! When investigating disorders such as ADHD and ADD, always ask about a child's experiences of violence in order to be able to make the right diagnosis.

Children born outside the Nordic region

Children born outside the Nordic region were more likely than other children to be victims of all forms of child abuse (with the exception of sexual abuse). Overall, 63 percent of them had been subjected to some form of child abuse – compared with 41 per cent of all pupils.

Pupils born outside the Nordic countries also reported exposure to two or more types of child abuse to a greater extent (31%) than the pupils who were born in the Nordic countries (15%). The pupils who were born in Europe and those who were born in Asia (including Middle Eastern countries) reported that they had been abused to a comparable extent (64% and 63%, respectively). Among the pupils who were born in Africa, 58 percent reported that they had been subjected to child abuse. For the most part, physical abuse against children born outside the Nordic countries had been inflicted by (an) adult(s) other than the child's parent(s).

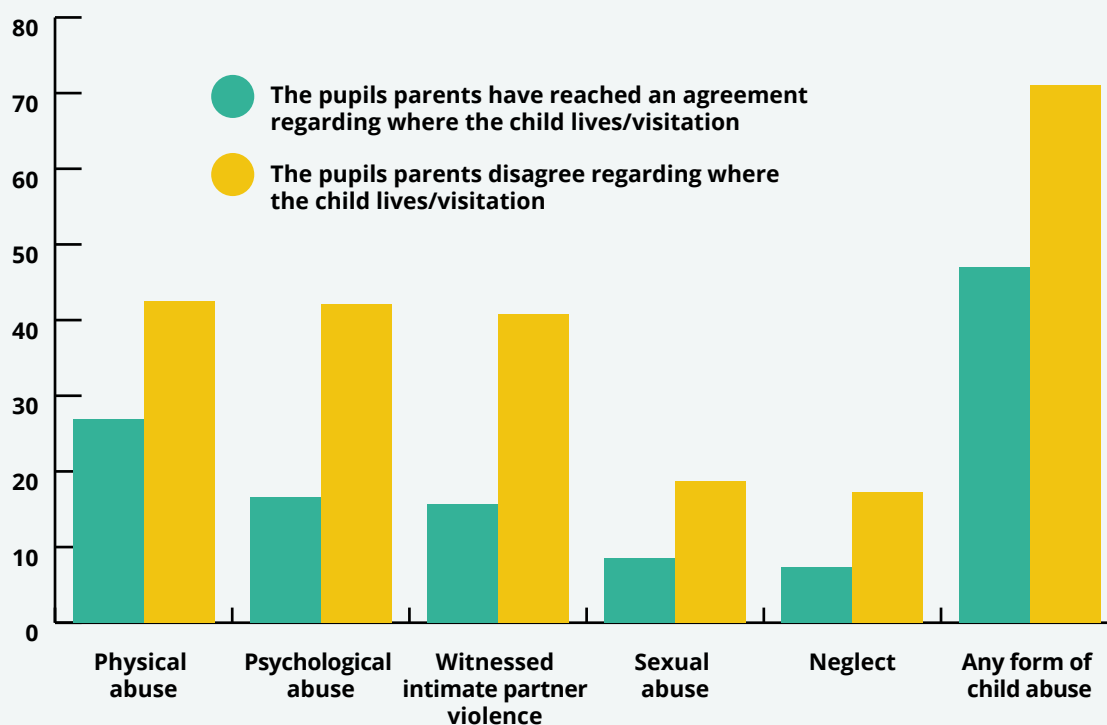
Children who live with a parent and whose parents disagree about where the child should live or about visitation issues

Pupils who primarily lived with one parent were more likely to be exposed to all forms of child abuse, compared to pupils who lived with both their parents (61% had experienced some form of abuse, compared to 37% of pupils from intact families). The pupils who primarily lived with only one parent were exposed to two or more types of child abuse to a greater extent (32%) than pupils who lived with both parents (12%).

Eleven percent of all pupils reported that their parents had been at odds over where the pupil should live or had disagreed about how much time the pupil would spend with the other parent. Eight percent reported that this happened on rare occasions, and three percent reported that their parents had often disagreed on such matters. These pupils were especially vulnerable to child abuse. Among the pupils who reported that their parents had disagreed about where they should live or about visitation issues, 71 percent had been subjected to some form of abuse. The same was true for 84 percent of those who reported that their parents often disagreed on such matters.

Based on the pupils' answers alone, there is no way to tell if they had been abused by the parent they live with, or if they had previously been abused by a parent with whom they no longer live. It is not apparent from the responses whether the disagreement(s) between the parents were a result of the child abuse, or if the disagreement existed before the child abuse had taken place. In instances in which one of the parents had exposed a child to violence, the disputes about visitation and custody could either have preceded the violence or have been a result of the abuse.

Exposure to different types of child abuse among pupils with separated parents where parents were in agreement regarding living arrangements and visitation, and among pupils whose parents had disagreed on these issues.



When parents disagree about where a child should live or about visitation, children are more likely to be abused.

Inform! Ask! Take children seriously if they say that a parent has been violent in the course of disputes regarding custody, living arrangements, or custody.

Bullying

There was a strong correlation between bullying and all forms of child abuse. More than half of the pupils who have been victims of any form of child abuse had also been victims of bullying (52%, compared to 28% among those pupils who have not been victims of child abuse). The pupils who had been abused were also more likely to bully others (34% versus 16%).



Children who bully or who are bullied are more likely to be victims of child abuse than other children. Ask! Inform!

Pupils placed in a foster home or out-of-home placements

83 percent of pupils who have been placed in a foster home or out-of-home placements had been exposed to at least one form of child abuse, in comparison with 42 percent of the pupils who were living at home. A full 36 percent of these pupils had been victims of four or five different types of child abuse, compared with two percent among pupils who were not in state care. 52 percent of these children had been subjected to repeated or severe physical child abuse, compared with 11% of other pupils.

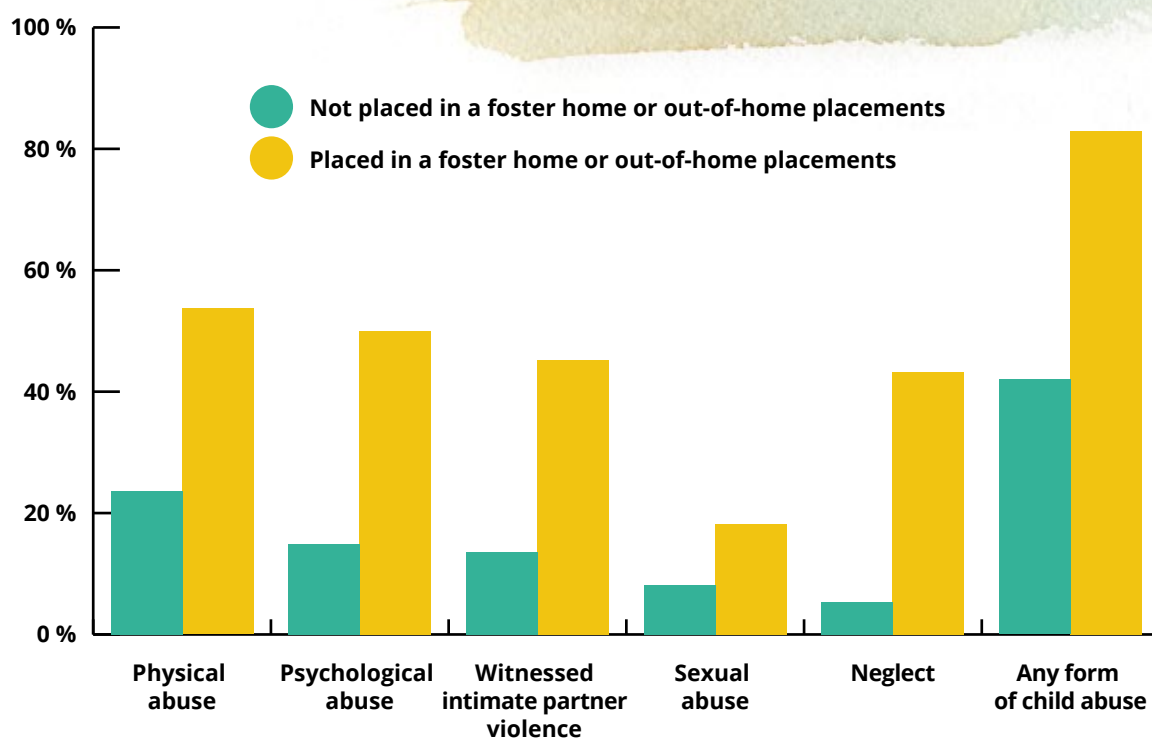
Few pupils report that they have been victims of abuse while living in a foster home or out-of-home placement. It is likely that most of the violence to which these pupils were subjected to occurred before they were placed in foster care/out-of-home placements, and it is possible that this may be one of the reasons why they do not live at home.



Children in state care have been exposed to child abuse to a far greater extent than others. Inform! Ask!

Make sure that these children receive the treatment they need.

A comparison of the exposure to different types of abuse experienced by children who are placed in foster homes or out-of-home placements and those who are not.



Children who are not allowed to make decisions about their own lives

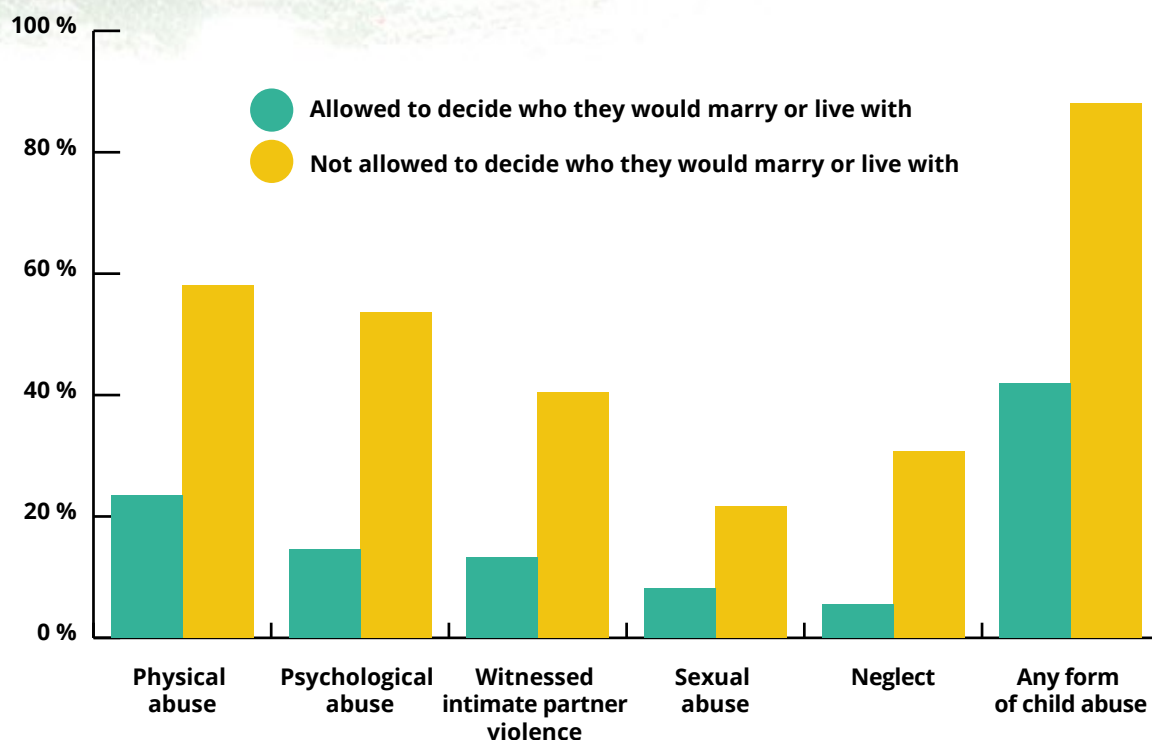
The pupils were asked about the degree to which they could make decisions about r their own lives. A large majority of all pupils were allowed to make decisions about their own lives, but pupils whose parents were born outside the Nordic countries are rarely given the opportunity to make decisions about their own lives. Such decisions pertain to clothing, friends, leisure activities, education, religion/beliefs, political or ideological beliefs, and who the pupils will marry or live with.

The lack of opportunity to make decisions about one's life was closely linked to different forms of child abuse, irrespective of the country in which the pupil's parents were born. Of the pupils who felt that they would not get to decide who they would marry or live with, 88 percent have been victims of some form of child abuse, compared with 42 percent of those who think that they will be allowed to choose their future partners themselves.



Children who feel that they have no control over their own lives are more likely to be victims of various forms of violence. Inform! Ask!

A comparison of exposure to various forms of abuse among pupils who are allowed to choose their future partners and those who feel that they are not allowed to choose.

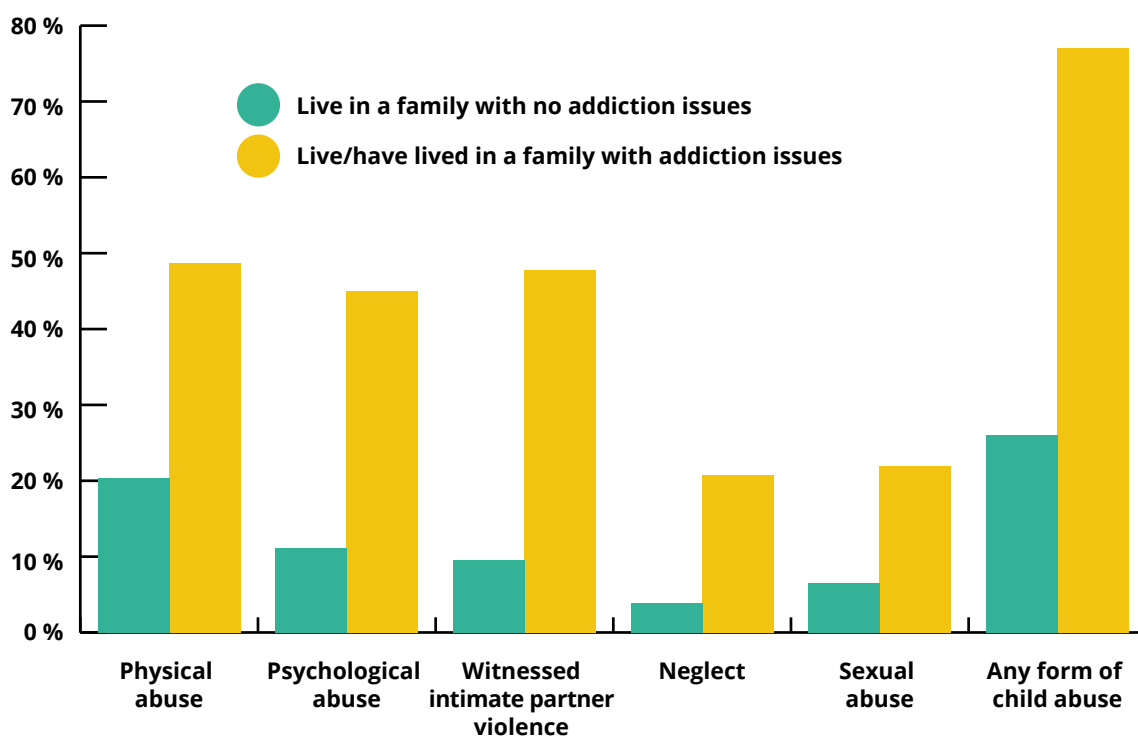




Children who lived with an adult with alcohol problems, drug problems or mental illness

Nearly 10 percent of the pupils have lived with an adult with addiction problems in the course of their childhood. They constitute a particularly vulnerable group. 77 percent of them have been victims of some form of abuse (compared to 26 percent of those who live in a family without substance abuse issues). They were also exposed to all kinds of abuse (as well as severe and repeated abuse) to a significantly greater extent. Among the pupils who have lived with an adult with substance abuse issues, 32 percent have been victims of severe forms of physical violence (compared to 7%), and 19 percent have been beaten many times (compared to 3%). In addition, five percent had been subjected to violence by a parent that resulted in injuries that required medical attention (compared to 0.1%) and 37 percent had been subjected to three or more types of abuse (compared to less than 5%).

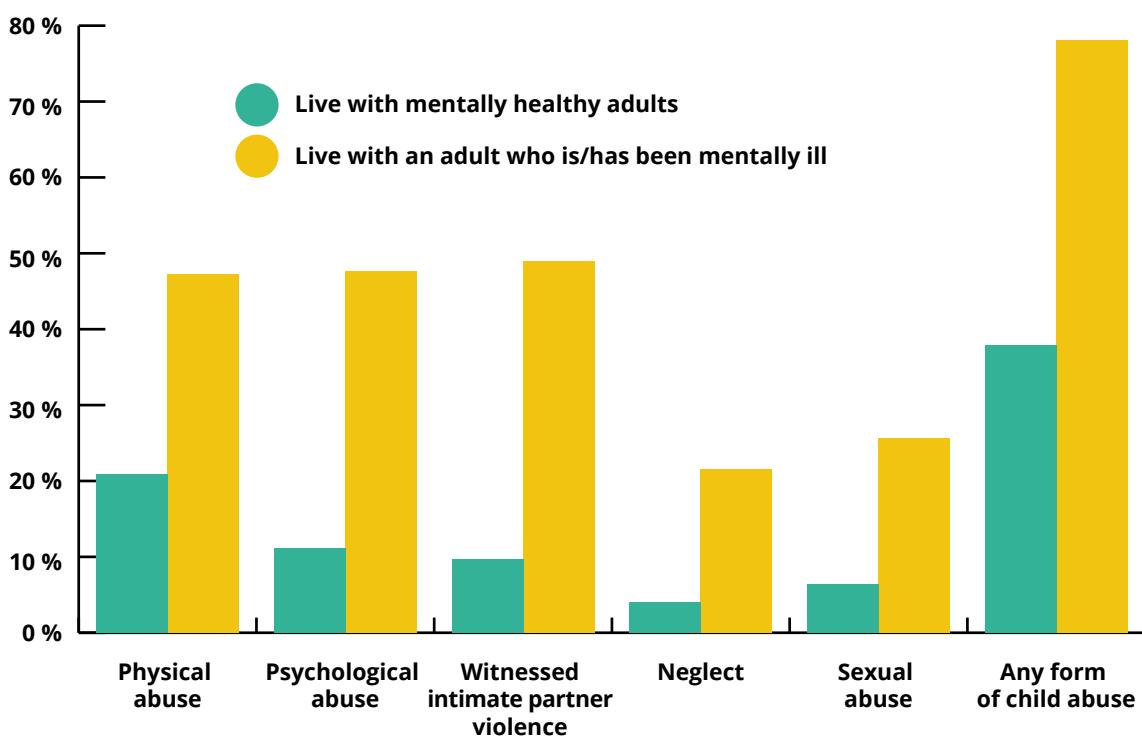
Exposure to various forms of abuse among pupils who lived with an adult with alcohol or drug abuse problems, compared to pupils who did not.

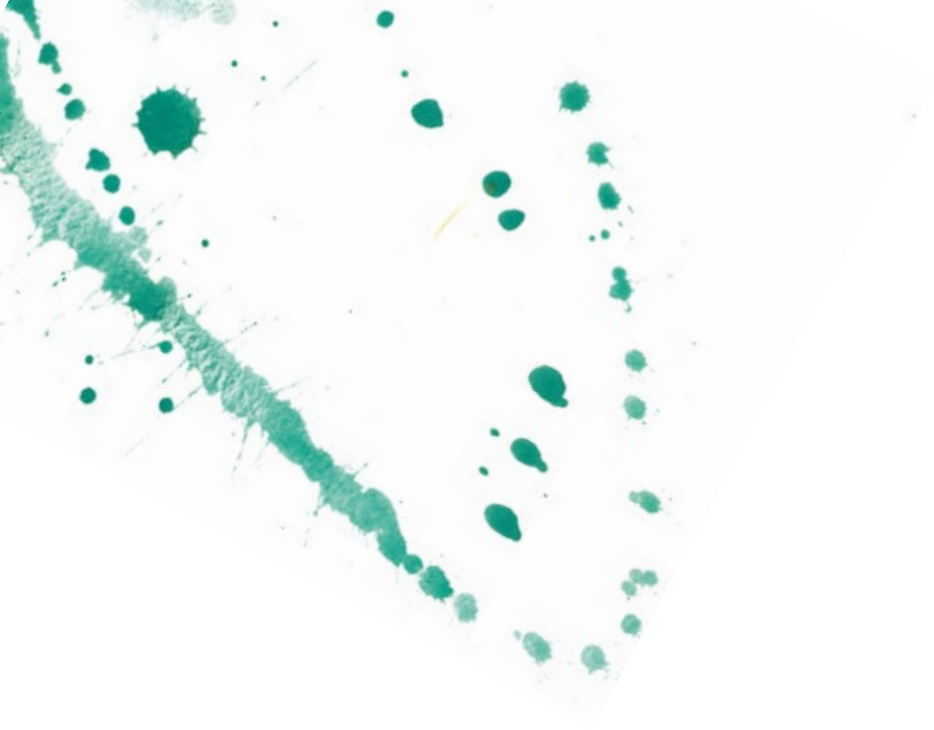




The same pattern with regard to the various forms of child abuse can be seen among those pupils who live in families with an adult who is or has been mentally ill (see Figure 9). Among these pupils, 39 percent had been exposed to three or more forms of abuse, as opposed to five percent of those living with mentally healthy parents. 21 percent had been beaten frequently (compared to 3%).

Exposure to various forms of abuse among pupils who have lived with a mentally ill adult and those who have not.

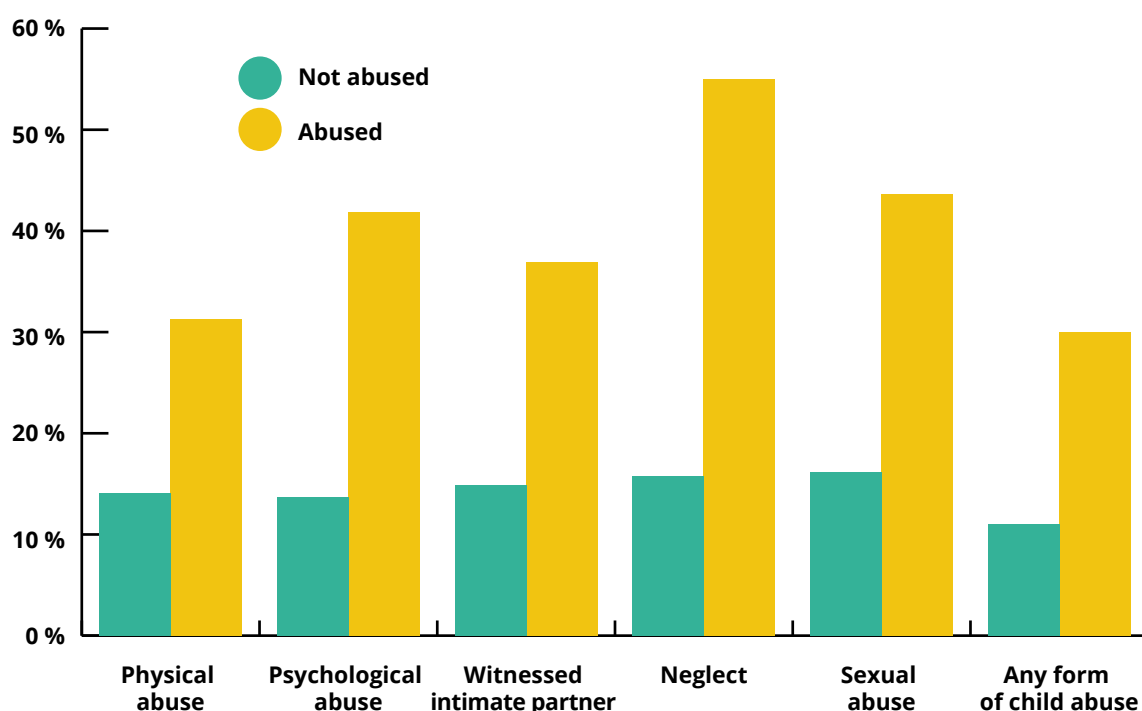




Child abuse and health

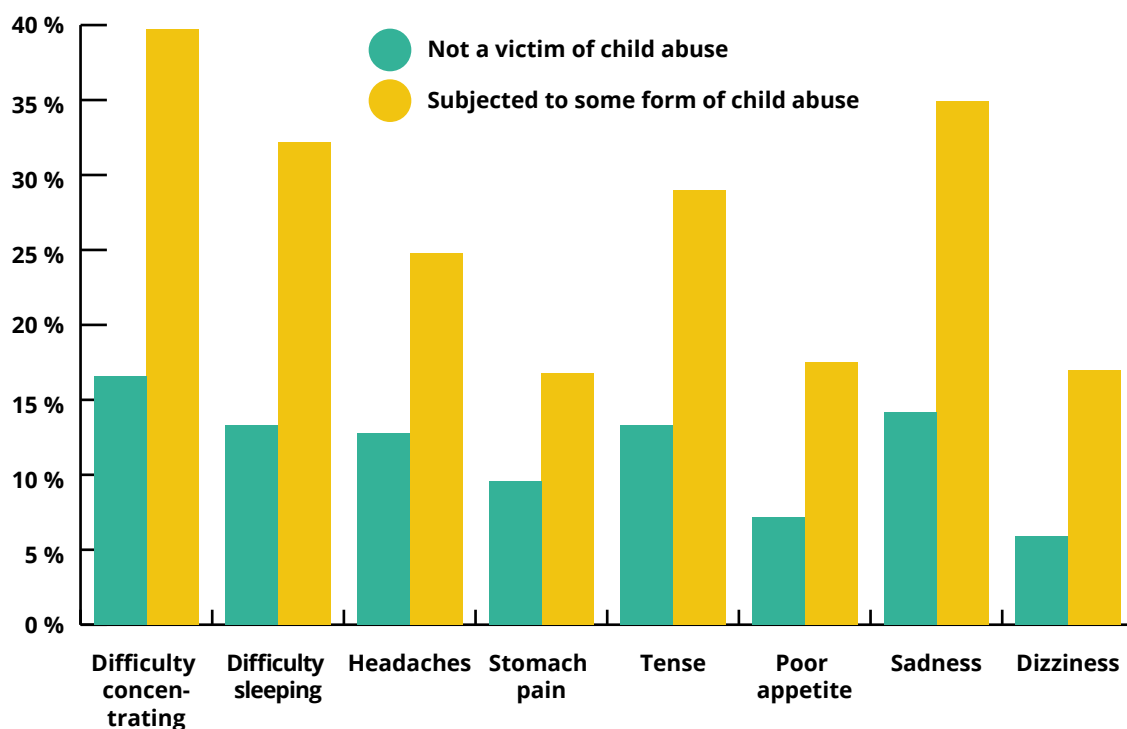
Pupils who have been subjected to some form of child abuse were three times more likely to report poor general health, compared to pupils who have not been abused. The more violence the pupils had been exposed to, the worse they felt.

Percentage of pupils who report that they do not feel well. A comparison between those who have not been abused and those who have been subjected to abuse, divided into types of abuse.



Pupils who have been victims of child abuse reported various psychosomatic symptoms to a greater extent than pupils who have not been subjected to abuse.

Percentage of pupils who reported that they had experienced constant or frequent psychosomatic disorders during the last six months. A comparison between pupils who have been victims of some form of abuse compared with those pupils who have never been abused.⁸



8. The PSP-scale, an eight-point evaluative instrument developed by researchers at Karlstad University, was used to measure the psychosomatic disorders (Hagquist, 2008).



Children who do not feel well in general and children who have three or more psychosomatic symptoms are often victims of violence. Inform! Ask!

Self-harm, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts

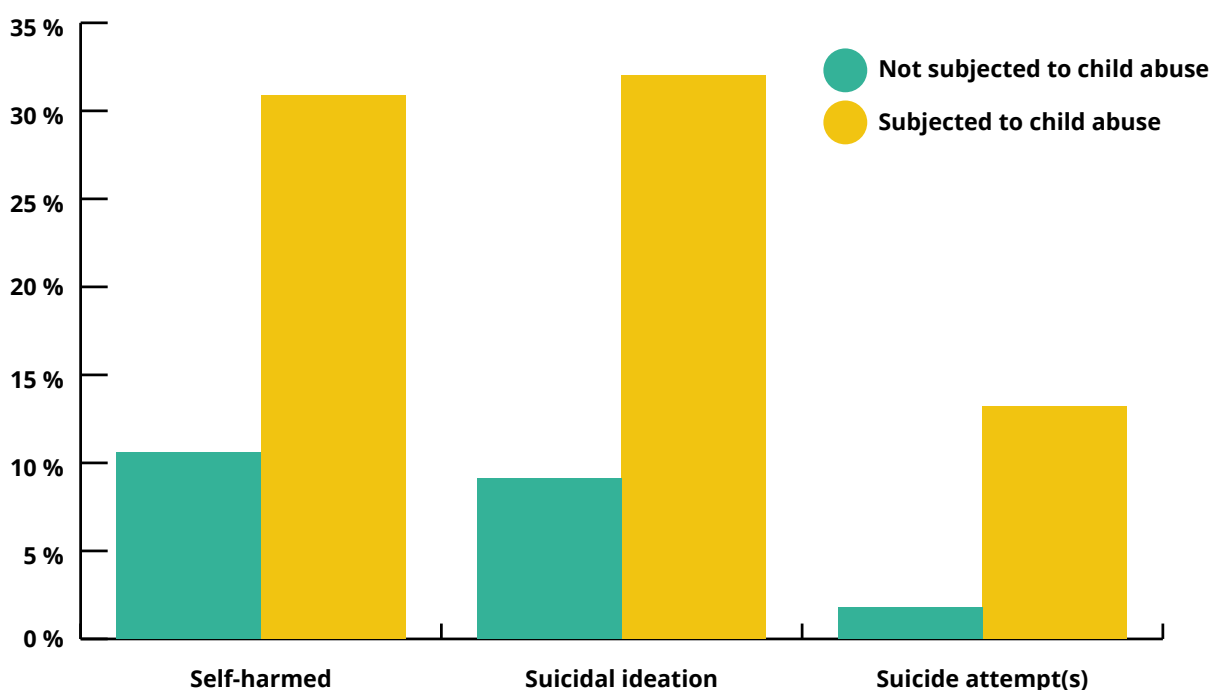
Self-harming was five times more prevalent among the pupils who have been victims of child abuse than among pupils who have not been abused.

Suicidal ideation was at least three times more prevalent among the pupils who have been victims of child abuse than among pupils who have not been abused.

Just over 13 percent of the pupils who were victims of child abuse had attempted suicide, in comparison to less than two percent of pupils who have not been abused.

50 percent of pupils who have been subjected to four to five types of child abuse reported that they had repeatedly self-harmed (five times or more). 46 percent said they had frequent suicidal thoughts, and 21 percent had attempted suicide on at least five occasions.

Percentage of pupils who self-harmed, had suicidal thoughts, or attempted suicide on one or more occasions. A comparison between the pupils who have been victims of child abuse and those who have not been abused.

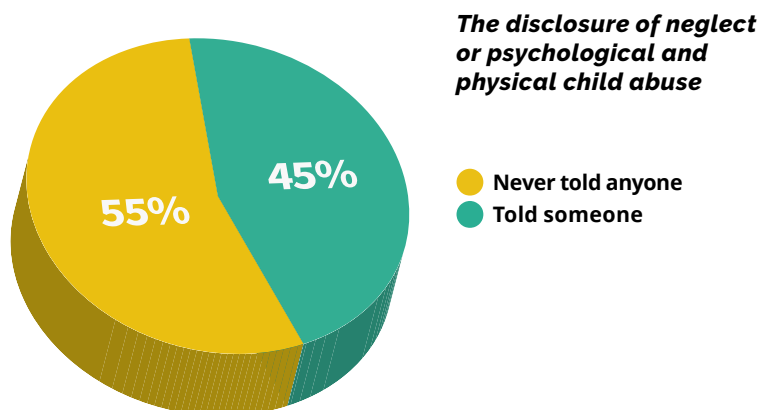


Children who self-harm, have suicidal thoughts, or attempt suicide are very frequently victims of abuse. Children who have attempted suicide on multiple occasions are particularly vulnerable.

Inform! Ask! Ask the children who are victims of violence, particularly those who are victims of various forms of violence, about whether they have suicidal thoughts, have made plans to commit suicide, or have attempted suicide.

Disclosure of physical and psychological violence, neglect, or witnessing intimate partner violence

Of the pupils who were exposed to physical and psychological violence, neglect, or intimate partner violence, 45 percent had told someone about the abuse. They had usually told a sibling or a friend who was about their age.



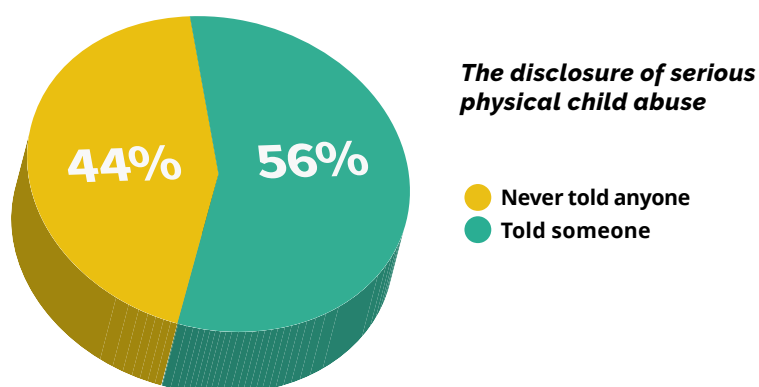
Just five percent of the victims had disclosed the abuse to the police. Even fewer had told social services. A total of just over ten percent of abuse victims had told any professional within their school, social services, the police, the healthcare service, or a youth centre employee. More girls (54%) than boys (33%) had disclosed the abuse.



People/organisation(s) to whom the pupils had disclosed child abuse.

Disclosed the abuse to:	Andel av dem som utsatts för misshandel från vuxen:
Friend of similar age	15 %
Sibling	13 %
Parent/close adult acquaintance	11 %
Girlfriend/boyfriend	6,3 %
Social services	5,0 %
School staff member (e.g. teacher, school nurse, guidance counsellor)	4,8 %
Healthcare professional	3,9 %
The police	3,3 %
Anonymous helplines or online support	1,6 %
Youth guidance centre staff	1,6 %
Adult in a club/association or similar person	1,2 %
Another person	1,5 %

When the abuse was severe and systematic, pupils were more likely to have told someone about what had happened. 56 percent of the pupils who had been subjected to more severe forms of physical violence and/or had repeatedly witnessed intimate partner violence had told someone about the abuse, and nearly 20 percent had told a professional within the school, social services, the police, the healthcare service, or a youth guidance centre employee.



People/organization(s) to whom the pupils had disclosed severe physical child abuse (in percentages)

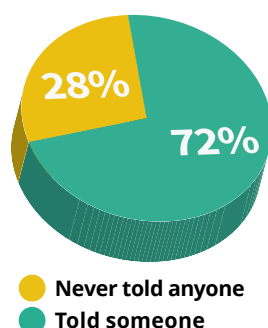
Disclosed the abuse to:	Percentage of those children who had been severely abused*
Friend of similar age	25 %
Sibling	21 %
Parent/close adult acquaintance	16 %
Girlfriend/boyfriend	12 %
Social services	11 %
School staff member (e.g. teacher, school nurse, guidance counsellor)	8,7 %
Healthcare professional	8,0 %
The police	7,6 %
Anonymous helplines or online support	3,1 %
Youth guidance centre staff	2,5 %
Adult in a club/association or similar person	1,8 %
Another person	3,3 %

** Those exposed to severe physical violence and/or those who had witnessed physical intimate partner violence on numerous occasions.*

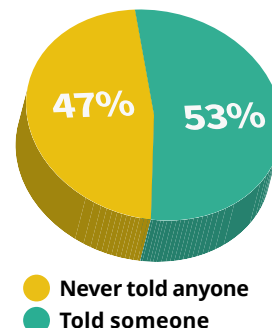
Disclosure of sexual abuse

61 percent of pupils who have been sexually abused (by abusers of any age) told someone about the abuse. Most of the children who told someone about the sexual abuse had disclosed to a similarly-aged friend, a sibling, or a partner. Just over 15 percent had told a close adult acquaintance or a parent. Eleven percent of abuse victims had told a professional within their school, social services, the police, the healthcare service, or a youth guidance centre employee. More girls told someone about the abuse (72%) than boys did (53%). A greater percentage of pupils who were victims of the most severe forms of sexual abuse (penetrative assault) had told someone about the abuse.

Girls' disclosure of sexual abuse



Boys' disclosure of sexual abuse



People or organisation(s) to which the pupils disclosed sexual abuse.

Disclosed the sexual abuse to:	Percentage of those abused*
Friend of similar age	39 %
Parent/close adult acquaintance	15 %
Girlfriend/boyfriend	12 %
Sibling	8,9 %
The police	5,6 %
School staff member (e.g. teacher, school nurse, guidance counsellor)	5,3 %
Healthcare professional	3,6 %
Social services	2,8 %
Youth guidance centre staff	2,0 %
Adult in a club/association or similar person	1,1 %
Anonymous helplines or online support	0,9 %
Another person	1.6

* Applies to victims of sexual abuse, regardless of the abuser.



Overall, 70 percent of the pupils who have been victims of sexual abuse by an adult told someone about the abuse. Almost half of the victims had told a friend of similar age, and 25 percent of abused pupils had told a parent or a close adult acquaintance about the abuse. 18 percent of pupils who had been abused by an adult had told a professional within their school, social services, the police, the healthcare service, or a youth centre employee.

People or organisation(s) to which the abused pupils disclosed sexual abuse.

Disclosed the sexual abuse to:	Percentage of those abused*
Friend of similar age	45 %
Parent/close adult acquaintance	25 %
Girlfriend/boyfriend	16 %
Sibling	13 %
The police	11 %
School staff member (e.g. teacher, school nurse, guidance counsellor)	7,7 %
Healthcare professional	5,7 %
Social services	5,2 %
Anonymous helplines or online support	2,2 %
Youth guidance centre staff	2,2 %
Adult in a club/association or similar person	1,6 %
Another person	3,3 %

* Applies to pupils who have reported that they were sexually abused by an adult abuser.

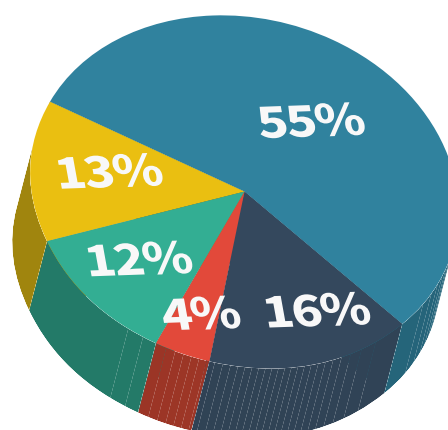
Experience of professional help

The pupils who were victims of child abuse or sexual abuse were asked if they sought or received professional help with dealing with what had happened.

A full 55 percent of the pupils who have been subjected to more severe forms of physical abuse and/or who have experienced physical intimate partner violence on several occasions did not think they required any professional help as a result of what they had experienced. Just over 16 percent reported that they needed help but had not sought it, and four percent had sought help but had not managed to get in touch with anyone who could assist them. Nearly twelve percent had received professional help with which they were satisfied. Just over 13 percent had received professional help with which they were dissatisfied.

Experience of professional help in more serious instances of physical child abuse or have experienced physical intimate partner violence on numerous occasions

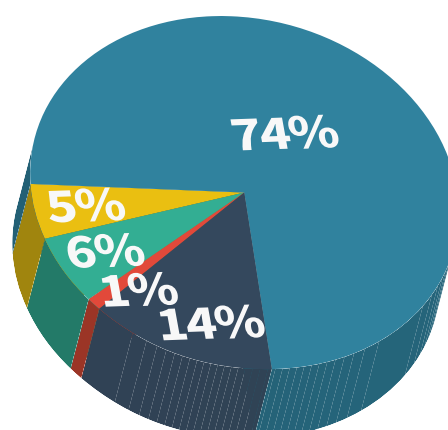
- Needed no support
- Needed support but did not seek help
- Sought support but did not receive it
- Received support and are satisfied with the help they received
- Received support and are dissatisfied with the help they received



The majority of those who have been victims of sexual abuse by an adult (74%) felt that they have not received any professional help. Just over 14 percent had needed help but had not sought it. One percent had sought professional help, but had not managed to get in touch with someone who could assist them. Six percent of the abused children had received professional help with which they were satisfied, and five percent had received professional help with which they were dissatisfied.

Experience of professional help for issues related to sexual abuse by an adult

- Needed no support
- Needed support but did not seek help
- Sought support but did not receive it
- Received support and are satisfied with the help they received
- Received support and are dissatisfied with the help they received

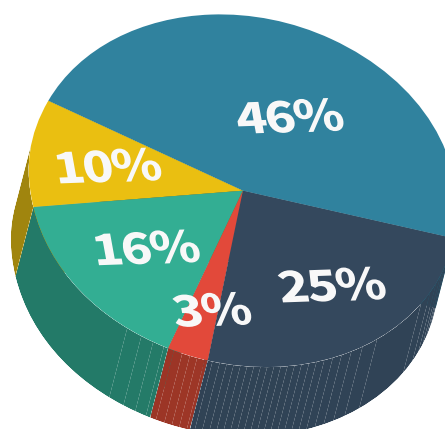




Of the pupils who had been raped (penetrative assault, regardless of the age of the abuser), less than half (46%) reported that they did not need professional help. A quarter (25%) had needed help but had not sought it, and three percent had sought help but had not managed to get in touch with someone who could assist them. Sixteen percent had received help with which they were satisfied, and ten percent had received help with which they were dissatisfied.

Experience of professional support for penetrative sexual abuse, regardless of the age of the abuser(s)

- Needed no support
- Needed support but did not seek help
- Sought support but did not receive it
- Received support and are satisfied with the help they received
- Received support and are dissatisfied with the help they received





Inform!

Children are legally entitled to know their rights. They have the right to know what violence is, who they can turn to if they have been abused, and what protection and support they are entitled to. The children who the Children's Welfare Foundation has met have expressed a wish to receive such information from their parents, but have also emphasised that when the abuser is a parent or guardian, other adults must step in to educate them about their rights. They think preschools and schools are the best places to provide children with this information.

There is a risk that the information provided to the groups of children that are at greater risk of being exposed to violence will be of lesser quality than that which is provided to other children. Children who have developed difficulties as a result of the violence they suffered, children fleeing violence and living in secured accommodation with a parent (usually their mother), children with disabilities or chronic illnesses, and children who have been removed from their homes by social services — all these are examples of groups that may not receive the information they require. Perhaps these children do not attend school, or they may be receiving education on more limited terms or have communication difficulties that demand that the information be specially formulated to suit their needs and abilities. The adults in these children's lives must ensure that information reaches them.



Ask!

Direct questions make it easier for children to tell you if they are being exposed to violence. It is often useful to combine information with a question.



No one has the right to hurt a child. Nonetheless, many children have been mistreated by adults or by other children. Has that happened to you?

When a child is assumed to belong to a group of particularly vulnerable children, it may be necessary to ask more detailed questions. Those who are working with the investigation or who are involved in the child's treatment may require a questionnaire regarding various difficult or traumatic events in order to understand the child's situation.



When children harm themselves and do not want to live, there can be many reasons behind these feelings and behaviours. However, in many cases someone has harmed them. A child may be bullied, he/she may have been beaten or mistreated at home, or sexual abuse may lie at the root of the child's problems. I would like you to tell me if that's the case for you. So I'm going to ask you some questions about what you may have been through.



You have said that your parents have not taken good care of you. I know that children who feel this way have often experienced other difficult things. I would like you to tell me if that's the case for you. So I'm going to ask you some questions about what you may have been through.



Listen, support, and raise the alarm!

If a child tells you that he/she is abused, the first step is to calmly listen to what they have to say. Children the Children's Welfare Foundation has met have told us that it is hard for them when adults react strongly and get angry or sad about what they hear. Adults may need to control their reactions to what a child tells them.

With the help of children and young people, the Children's Welfare Foundation has created the website www.dagsattprataom.se. The children tell us how they wish to be treated by adults who want them to talk about sexual abuse or other difficult things:

- *Listen!*
- *Take your time; children must be allowed to tell you their story at their own pace!*
- *Ask questions – but not too many...*
- *Stay calm!*
- *Believe what children tell you!*

Often, adults need only listen and be supportive. It can be good for children to hear that what happened to them is wrong and that it is not their fault. The adult in whom a child confides may not necessarily be someone who can stop the violence or provide long-term support. But he/she can listen, be supportive for the time being, and pass the information on to others (i.e. parents, social services or the police).

Sometimes children talk about violence that has already ceased, and that has been reported and investigated. It may still be important for them to share what happened. Other times, children talk about violence that is still occurring or about violence that has not yet been investigated. All adults who work with children in Sweden are required to notify the social services if they suspect that a child is being abused. Private individuals are also encouraged to notify social services, but are not legally obligated to do so.

- *If you suspect a child is being mistreated: Contact social services!*
- *If you come upon an abusive incident while it is in progress or if the child is in immediate danger: Make an emergency call!*
- *If you wish to report a crime to the police: Call the police or find a police station!*



The way forward

It's good that most children in Sweden are not subjected to violence. However, the goal is to put an end to all violence against children.

- *Violence prevention work must continue and be intensified. Everyone, both adults and children alike, are resources for carrying out this important work!*

Over the years, there has been a strong positive trend in terms of the reduction of the use of corporal punishment for child-rearing purposes in Sweden. However, when it comes to physical child abuse, this positive trend appears to have stagnated!

- *We need to know more about the groups of children who are victims of severe and repeated physical child abuse. Preventive measures must be implemented.*

Most children who are subjected to abuse tell someone about the abuse, but their stories are rarely brought to the attention of the police or the social services. All too often, the information never goes further than the person who the child first informs, be that person a peer or an adult

- *Both professionals and the general public need information. Both children and adults need to know that all forms of violence against children is wrong, and who they can turn to if a child is being abused.*
- *Adults who work with children must get better at asking about their exposure to violence.*

Few abused children receive professional help, and a large percentage of those who do receive help are dissatisfied.

- *We must get better at identifying and helping abused children. We need to know more about why children and young people are dissatisfied with the help they receive – and develop methods for personal interactions, support and treatment that are based on what they want and need.*

Violence is No Solution!

A SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL SURVEY

"VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SWEDEN 2016"

Authors: Åsa Landberg, Carolina Jernbro and Staffan Janson

How common is it for adults to subject children to physical and psychological abuse? How common is it for children to be neglected? How common is sexual abuse? How is the mental and physical health of the pupils who have been abused and what help have they have received?

Every child has the right to grow up without violence, and the goal is to stop all violence against children. We are a long way from reaching that goal – in Sweden as well as in the rest of the world.

In conjunction with a commission from the government, the Children's Welfare foundation has allowed the researchers Carolina Jernbro and Staffan Janson to conduct a survey of violence against children in Sweden. The results are based on what the pupils themselves have chosen to share. The study shows that a majority of children in Sweden have never been exposed to violence by adults. But it also shows that too many are exposed and many of them do not get the support and rehabilitation they are entitled to.

In the study, the pupils have answered questions anonymously. That way, abused children who do not come in contact with the authorities can make themselves heard and we can get a more accurate picture of the pervasiveness and nature of violence against children.

Approximately 4700 pupils in 9th grade in primary school (14-15 years of age) and in high school year two (16-17 years of age) have responded to questions about their exposure to violence in the course of their childhoods.

This summary is based on the results of the more comprehensive report Violence against children in Sweden 2016. The intention is to make the survey more accessible to a broader audience.

A pupil in the study expresses this as follows: "Violence solves nothing, and it doesn't do any good for an adult to hit a child. The child will just become more afraid and feel insecure!"



Stiftelsen
Allmänna Barnhuset

The Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden is a government foundation whose mission is to support methodological and knowledge development in order to empower children and young people in socially vulnerable situations. Our work is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and focuses on increasing the competency of professionals who interact with such children. We do this by developing and disseminating knowledge that is based on research and practice. Among other things, we provide grants for child and youth research, operate our own development projects, organise conferences and seminars, and publish books on topical issues. Read more about us at www.allmannabarnhuset.se