Trends in Child Abuse and Child Welfare

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Symposium
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U.S. Maltreatment Trends: 1990-2014

- **Neglect**: 8% Decline
- **Physical Abuse**: 55% Decline
- **Sexual Abuse**: 64% Decline

Note: Trend estimates represent total change from 1992 to 2014. Annual rates for physical abuse and sexual abuse have been multiplied by 2 and 3 respectively in Figure 1 so that trend comparisons can be highlighted.
Rape by Juveniles

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17

Year

- 72% 1992-2011
SEXUAL ASSAULT AGES 12-17

Note: Age 12 – 17 years; 3 year averages except 2008 which is a 2 year average. 2006 data excluded.
Source: National Crime Victimization Survey
SEXUAL ABUSE
Minnesota Study Survey

Note: respondents are 9th grade students enrolled in public schools in selected Minnesota school districts. Source: Minnesota Student Survey, 1992-2013

Sources: Stadler, L. & Bieneck, S. (2012)
Germany: Trend in Lifetime Sexual Abuse
National Survey of 16-40 Year Olds

Contact Sexual Abuse %
12
10
8
6
4
2
0

1992
10.6
7.1
3.4

2011
7.4
4.4
1.5

Women
Overall
Men

38% Decline

Germany: Generational Trend in Sexual Abuse
National Survey of 16-40 Year Olds

Contact Sexual Abuse %

31-40 Years Old  21-30 Years Old  16-20 Years Old
5.4  4.0  1.8
66% Decline

## Sexual Abuse Trends: British Columbia, CA
### High School Student Survey

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<td><strong>Sexual Abuse History</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>20.8</td>
<td>14.7</td>
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Data from two nationally representative surveys of the Canadian population suggest a decline in child sexual abuse (CSA) since 1993, consistent with declines observed in the United States.

For cohort 18-24 decline was from 6.0 to 4.3, a decline of 28%.

M. Shields; L. Tonmyr, PhD; W. Hovdestad, PhD (2016)
These population-based findings provide evidence of a decline in the underlying rate of CSA in Australia. ...these trends in self-report complement official statistics that show substantial decline in recent years.

OBSERVED NEW ZEALAND ABUSE RATES: New arrivals
Abuse findings per year per 1000 children

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Physical Abuse</th>
<th>Emotional Abuse</th>
<th>Sexual Abuse</th>
<th>Neglect</th>
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<td>2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
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Note: Unadjusted rates may reflect increased screening rather than changes to the true underlying rate of abuse in NZ.
New Zealand HS survey

Ever been touched in a sexual way or made to do sexual things not wanted?

- **date**
  - 2001
  - 2007

- **males**
  - 12.0
  - 5.4

- **females**
  - 23.7
  - 19.9

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**Fig. 2.** Prevalence estimates (\%) of separate types of child maltreatment in the Netherlands in 2005 and 2010, based on sentinel reports. *Note.* Victims can be included in more than one category, because they may have experienced more than one type of maltreatment.
<table>
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<tr>
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<th>2004 n= 4 343</th>
<th>2009 n= 3 498</th>
<th>2014 n= 5 839</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Penetrative sexual abuse</strong></td>
<td>% i U-grupp</td>
<td>95% Konfidents-intervall</td>
<td>% i U-grupp</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>9,8</td>
<td>8,8 – 10,8</td>
<td>6,9</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td>5,5</td>
<td>4,5 – 6,5</td>
<td>3,1</td>
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<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
<td>13,5</td>
<td>12,1 – 14,9</td>
<td>10,0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender doesn’t fit me</strong></td>
<td>21,4</td>
<td>5,9 – 36,9</td>
<td>20,0</td>
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* orala, anala och genitala samlag

**Sweden Survey Studies 2004-2014**
Overall Serious Violent Offending
By Juveniles

- 60% 1992-2011
<table>
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<th>Most serious offense</th>
<th>Percent change in arrests 2002–2011</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Juvenile</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violent Crime Index</td>
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<td>Murder</td>
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<td>Forcible rape</td>
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<td>Aggravated assault</td>
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<td>Property Crime Index</td>
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<td>Larceny-theft</td>
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<td>Motor vehicle theft</td>
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<td>Simple assault</td>
<td>-19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weapons law violations</td>
<td>-20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drug abuse violations</td>
<td>-20</td>
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**SCHOOL VICTIMIZATION / VIOLENCE**

**Figure 1. Trend in Violent Victimization at School, Past Year, Youth 12-17**

![Graph showing the trend in violent victimization at school from 1992 to 2010. The rate per 1000 shows a 74% decline.](image)

FIGURE 3: Percent of students in grades 9-12 who reported driving after drinking alcohol or riding with a driver who had been drinking alcohol, 1991-2011*

*One or more times during the 30 days preceding the survey.
Figure 1
The Number and Rate of Children in Foster Care Ages 17 and Under, 1990-2011*

- 33% 99-11
Teenage Birth Rate
1990-2010

Percentage of Students who had Sexual Intercourse with Four or More People During their Life

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth Risk Behavior Survey*
Students in Grades 9 -12 Who Have Had Intercourse Within the Last Three Months

1991-2011

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth Risk Behavior Survey*
Trends in Runaway, Kidnapped, and Family-Abducted Children 1990-2012

*Source: state missing children’s clearinghouse data
Teen Suicide
1990 - 2010

Rate per 100,000 Teens (15-19 yrs)

32% Decline 1990-2010

Source: Child Trends Databank
Percentage of High School Students Who Thought Seriously About Attempting Suicide

1991-2011

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth Risk Behavior Survey*
There were 99,000 proven offences by young people in England and Wales in 2012/13, down 28% from 2010/11 and down 63% since 2002/03.

Also, the number of young people who are first time entrants to the criminal justice system in England and Wales is on a downward trend. The number of juvenile (aged 10-17) entrants to the criminal justice system has fallen from 83,000 in 2002/3 to 28,000 in 2012/13. Similarly, the numbers of ASBOs given to young people has declined rapidly from a peak in 2005.

It appears likely that criminal justice policies have had some impact on both increasing the number of juvenile first time entrants in the mid 2000s and on the recent decline. However, there are a number of other factors that have been put forward to explain the falls in measures of criminal activity by young people and reductions in other risky behaviours, which are outlined in slide 12 below.

Sources

Drug use

The prevalence of drug use among 11 to 15 year olds in England has declined since 2001. In 2013, 16% of pupils reported that they had ever taken drugs and 11% said they had taken drugs in the last year, compared with 29% and 20% in 2001.

The proportion of 16-24 year olds in England and Wales who have taken any illicit drug in the last year has increased from 16.2% in 2012/13 to 18.9% in 2013/14 but this is still lower than the 28.3% reported in 2003/04. Class A drug use shows a similar trend with a decrease in use over the last decade, but an increase compared to last year – 4.8% in 2012/13 to 6.2% in 2013/14.

Sources


One in ten pupils (9%) aged 11 to 15 in England had drunk alcohol in the last week in 2013. This continues the downward trend since 2003, when a quarter (25%) of pupils had drunk alcohol in the last week.

The percentage of young people aged 11-15 drinking at least once a week has declined from 19% in 2003 to 5% in 2013. Among those pupils who reported drinking in the last four weeks the proportion reporting getting drunk within that time was 56% in 2006 and 50% in 2012.

In 2013, the average (mean) alcohol consumption by pupils who had drunk in the last week was 8.2 units. This is below the mean consumption levels recorded between 2007 and 2012, which varied between 10.4 units and 14.6 units since 2007, with no clear trend.

The numbers of 16-24 year olds in Great Britain that drink heavily on a single occasion has also declined. For men aged 16 – 24 years, the proportion drinking more than 8 units on at least 1 day decreased from 32% to 22% between 2005 – 2012 and for women drinking more than 6 units has declined from 27% to 17% over the same period, although the downwards trend has flattened out in the most recent years.

**Sources**


Following a downward trend since the late 1990s, teenage (under 18) conception rates in England and Wales are now at their lowest since records began in 1969. However, though data issues make comparison difficult, the UK has one of the highest teenage birth rates of any developed country.

There does not appear to have been a dramatic shift in sexual behaviours over the last decade. The median age of first sexual intercourse in Great Britain in 2010-12 was 16.75 years, the same as it was ten years ago.

Among 16-24 year olds in Great Britain in 2010-12, 31% of men and 29% of women first had sex before age 16, which is not significantly different from the figures for 16-24 year olds in the previous survey (1999-2001). However, the proportion of 16-24 year olds reporting first heterosexual intercourse before age 16 years in 2010-12 for both men and women is higher than for older groups.

Young people (15-24 years) in the UK have higher rates of sexually transmitted infections than older groups. In 2012 the majority of heterosexual people diagnosed in sexual health clinics were under 25. 64% of those diagnosed with Chlamydia, 54% of those diagnosed with genital warts and 55% of those diagnosed with gonorrhoea were aged 15-24 years. Unfortunately, long time trends are not available for this data.

**Sources**


Natsal (2013) *The National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles 3 2010-12* [online]. Available from: [www.natsal.ac.uk](http://www.natsal.ac.uk)

Suicide rates amongst young men in the UK aged 15-29 rose from a rate of 13.2 per 100,000 in 1981 to a peak of 22.4 in 1998. They then declined rapidly to 2005 and since then have stabilised at around 13 per 100,000, a similar rate to 30 years ago. The risk of suicide for men increases markedly between the ages of 15-19 and 20-24.

Suicide rates amongst young women of the same age are significantly lower at 3.4 per 100,000 of population in 2012. This is a similar rate to that of 30 years ago and has varied less over time than for men.

Sources
There has been a long-term decline in the prevalence of smoking since the mid-1990s amongst 11-15 year olds in England. In 2013, less than a quarter (22%) of pupils had tried smoking at least once. In 2003, 42% had done so. The percentage who are regular smokers (smoke at least once a week), has decreased from 9% in 2003 to 3% in 2013.

The percentage of 16-19 year olds that smoke has declined from 31% in 1998 to 15% in 2012. For 20-24 year olds there has been a decline over the same period from 40% to 29%. This appears to be a continuation of an ongoing trend back to 1974, though there are some signs that for 20-24 year olds, the trend may have reversed.

The most recently available data that allows comparison with other countries shows that the proportion of 15 year olds who reported smoking at least once a week in 2010 was lower in Great Britain (14 per cent) than the average for all countries that took part in the Health Behaviours of School Aged Children Survey (18 per cent). It was also lower when compared to other countries like France (20 per cent), Germany (15 per cent) and Italy (23 per cent).

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**Sources**


Trends in Physical Fighting, comparing 2010 with 2002

Cross-national comparison of the adjusted relative risk of frequent physical fighting, 2010 vs 2002.

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<td>18.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
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<td>-60.1*</td>
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<td>14.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>-60.1*</td>
<td>-60.1*</td>
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<td>26.6</td>
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<td>8.3</td>
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* P <0.05. based on inflated Confidence Intervals by 1.4 to account for design effect
Earlier Declines in the United States Are Similar to Other Developed Countries

Change in Teen Birth Rates in Selected Developed Countries, 1991-2008

-60%  -40%  -20%  0%  20%  30%

Sweden
Austria
Russia
Norway
Greece
Canada
Switzerland
Portugal
Netherlands
United States
Denmark
Finland
Italy
U.K.

Germany
Belgium
Ireland
Spain
France
## European Risk Trends 2003-2010

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### Declines

- 17/19
- 18/19
- 14/19
- 16/19
Teen Suicide Trends
Injuries are by far the main cause of childhood deaths right throughout Europe. However there is an impressive downward trend in child fatalities in past years. It can be assumed that this is largely the effect of intensive child safety programs which have taken place in all EU countries, focusing on fatal risks (e.g. promotion of child restraint systems, pool fencing, smoke alarms, and window lockers).

Summary Conclusions

Sexual abuse has declined in many places.
Many forms of delinquency, victimization, self-harm, risk-taking are down since 1990s.
Not reversed by recession of 2008.
In US, no obvious differential by region, race.
International in scope.
Adult offending is down, too.
Weaker Explanations

✓ Economic factors
Questionable Explanations

✓ Economic factors
✓ Family stability
Figure 1

Living Arrangements of Children Under 18, 1970-2012

- Living with two married parents
- Mother only
- Father only
- Living with no parent

Percent

Living with two married parents 85.0 85.4 79.2 73.1 70.5 68.2 64.1
Mother only 8.0 10.7 16.3 21.3 23.3 23.6 24.4
Father only 3.2 2.8 4.1 2.8 3.9 3.9 3.9
Living with no parent 1.1 1.1 1.1 1.1 1.1 1.1 1.1
Explanations worth more study

✓ More effective prevention and intervention
  ✓ Substitution of learning theory for psychodynamic
  ✓ Use of evaluation science
Explanations worth more study

- More effective prevention and intervention
- Media attention and public awareness
Explanations worth more study

- More effective prevention and intervention
- Media attention and public awareness
- Psychopharmacology
Figure 1. Trends in Office-Based Medical Visits by Young People With Mental Disorder Diagnoses, 1995-2010

Disruptive Behavior
Mood
Anxiety
Psychoses and Developmental
Other
Figure 2. Trends in Office-Based Medical Visits by Young People With Psychotropic Medications, 1995-2010

- ADHD Medications
- Anxiolytics
- Antidepressants
- Antipsychotics
- Mood Stabilizers

No. of Visits per 100 Population

- 1995-1998
- 1999-2002
- 2003-2006
- 2007-2010
Explanations worth more study

- More effective prevention and intervention
- Media attention and public awareness
- Psychopharmacology
- Digital technology
Technology

Access = Help
Surveillance = Deterrence
Engagement = Reduced boredom
Buffering of dangers to risk taking and independence striving
Explanations worth more study

- More effective prevention and intervention
- Psychopharmacology
- Digital technology
- Improved parenting – family size reduction, age at first birth
Explanations worth more study

- More effective prevention and intervention
- Media attention and public awareness
- Psychopharmacology
- Digital technology
- Improved parenting – family size reduction, age at first birth
- Removal of environmental lead
Perinatal lead exposure & violent crime

Violent Crime and Lead (22-year lag).

Preschool lead exposure & crime

Figure 7: Preschool Blood Lead vs. Narrowly Defined Index Crime with a 19-Year Lag

Preschool lead exposure & crime

Figure 8: Preschool Blood Lead vs. Broadly Defined Index Crime with a 19-Year Lag

Explanations worth more study

- More effective prevention and intervention
- Media attention and public awareness
- Psychopharmacology
- Digital technology
- Improved parenting – family size reduction, age at first birth
- Removal of environmental lead
Implications

Cheer up (controversial)
Benefits of repeated surveys and data systems
Benefits of multi-method epidemiology
Look for subgroups with contrasting trends
  e.g. region, type of abuse, ethnicity
Include measures to test hypotheses
  e.g. prevention education, psychopharm
Look for natural experiments
  e.g. law change, policy differences
Decline? I don’t see it.
Will policy makers lose interest?
Resources


[www.unh.edu/ccrc](http://www.unh.edu/ccrc)

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