

# Child Maltreatment



Worldwide,  
**1 in 4 adults** were  
physically abused  
as children.

## The Health Sector Responds



World Health  
Organization

# What is Child Maltreatment?

It's the abuse and neglect of children. It takes many forms.

## Physical abuse

Hitting, beating, shaking



## Sexual abuse

Sexual contact or exposure to sexual acts or materials



## Emotional or psychological abuse

Threatening, insulting, ridiculing, confining



## Neglect

Failing, despite having the means, to provide medical care, education, shelter or other essentials for a child's healthy development



# Child maltreatment is widespread.

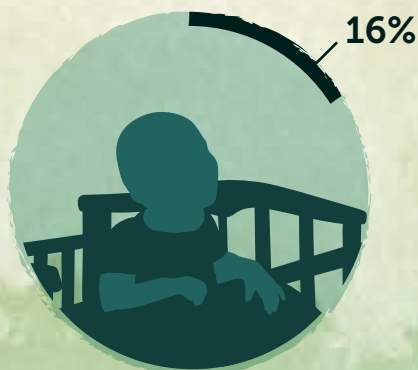
Worldwide children report that they suffered some form of violence in the past year:



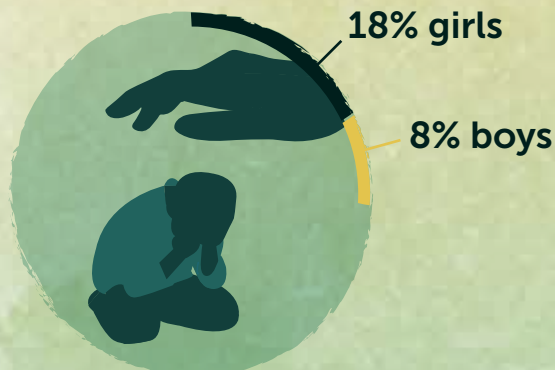
Physical abuse



Emotional abuse

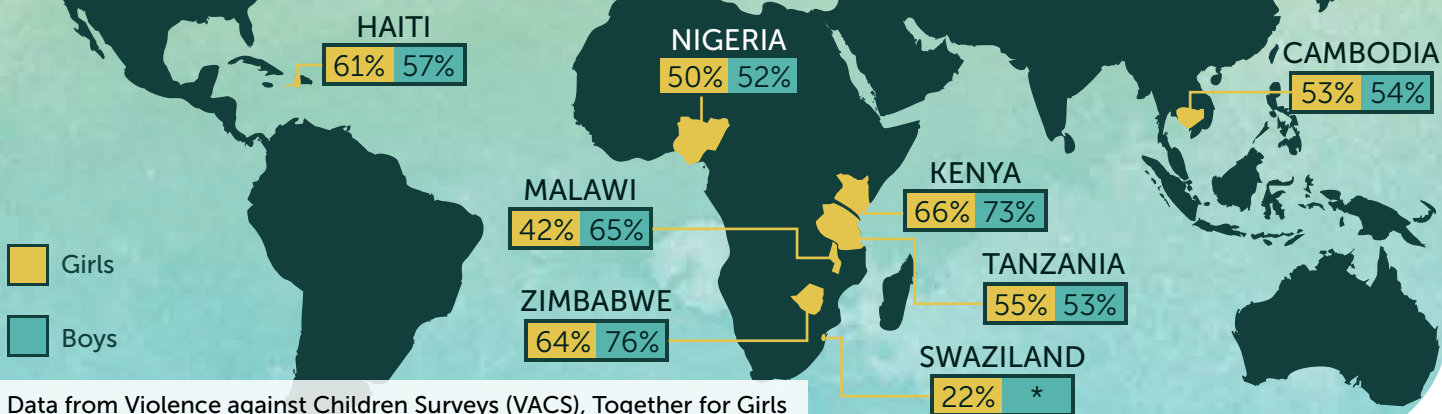


Physical neglect



Sexual abuse

**Data spotlight: Percentage of individuals aged 18-24 years who experienced physical violence prior to age 18**



Data from Violence against Children Surveys (VACS), Together for Girls

# Child maltreatment has serious consequences.

## The effects can be immediate.

Victims of child maltreatment can suffer serious injuries — or die.



**Every year, about 41,000 children under 15 years are victims of homicide.**

More deaths from child maltreatment go unreported — since they're incorrectly documented as due to other causes.

## The consequences can also last a lifetime.

Adults who were abused or neglected as children have a higher risk of:



Perpetrating or being a victim of violence



Depression



Obesity



High-risk sexual behaviours and unintended pregnancies



Harmful use of tobacco, drugs, and alcohol

Studies show that child maltreatment has high economic costs — in medical expenses, legal costs, and lost productivity.



Child maltreatment can actually slow a country's economic and social development.



# What increases the risk of child maltreatment?

## Having parents or caregivers who

- Suffered abuse or neglect as children
- Misuse drugs or alcohol
- Are involved in other forms of violence, such as intimate partner violence



## Living in communities that

- Have high unemployment
- Lack support services for families
- Have high tolerance for violence



## Living in societies that

- Don't have adequate legislation to address child maltreatment
- Have cultural norms that promote or glorify violence
- Have social, economic, and health policies that lead to poor living standards or socio-economic inequality



Research shows that children **with disabilities** are four times more likely to suffer from abuse or neglect.



# These are strategies that can prevent child maltreatment.



**Parent and caregiver support to teach parents about child development and healthy positive strategies for raising children**



**Promote norms and values that support pro-social, non-violent behaviour**



**Education and life skills training to improve children's knowledge of abusive situations and teach them social skills to protect themselves and to interact in positive ways**

They can be effective across the globe.



**Income and economic strengthening interventions to increase investments in children**



**Response and support services to help children that have been exposed to violence**



**Creating and sustaining safe environments for children**



**Implementation and enforcement of laws, such as laws banning violent punishment of children by parents, teachers or other caregivers**

# The health sector has a crucial role in addressing child maltreatment.

1

Raise awareness about the long-term negative health effects and social burden of child maltreatment – both in the health sector and other sectors

2

Collect and communicate data about prevalence, risk factors, and health consequences of child maltreatment

3

Develop and test evidence-based interventions to prevent child maltreatment – like home visits with nurses, or parenting programmes held in provider's offices or health facilities

4

Provide support and services to victims of child maltreatment, including mental health and psychosocial services

5

Collaborate with other sectors to address child maltreatment – especially social welfare, protection, education and criminal justice sectors



## WHO Resources:

- INSPIRE: Seven strategies for Ending Violence Against Children  
[http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/inspire/en/](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/inspire/en/)
- Preventing child maltreatment: a guide to taking action and generating evidence.  
[http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/43499/1/9241594365\\_eng.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/43499/1/9241594365_eng.pdf)



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