



CWHS

Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 2005 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Child abuse is a highly prevalent problem with serious social costs.¹ Physical and sexual abuse of children may not only lead to a wide range of negative health outcomes, but is also associated with a higher risk of physical and sexual abuse in adulthood.² Women who had been abused as children and experience repeat victimization as adults are also at greater risk for serious mental health consequences.³

The 2005 California Women's Health Survey (CWHS) assessed the prevalence of child abuse (defined as physical or sexual abuse before age 18), adult assault (defined as physical or sexual assault experienced at age 18 or older), and revictimization (defined as having experienced both child abuse and adult assault) among women.

To assess **child physical abuse**, women were asked: "Before the age of 18, did anyone ever beat you up, such as slap, punch, or kick you, or attack you?"

To assess **child sexual abuse**, women were asked: "Before the age of 18, did anyone ever force you into unwanted sexual activity by using force or threatening to harm you?"

To assess **adult physical assault**, women were asked: "After the age of 18, did anyone ever beat you up, such as slap, punch, or kick you, or attack you?"

To assess **adult sexual assault** women were asked: "After the age of 18, did anyone ever force you into unwanted sexual activity by using force or threatening to harm you?"

Highlights of the survey are as follows:

- At least one form of **child abuse** (physical or sexual) was reported as having been experienced by 23.7 percent of respondents.
 - 19.1 percent reported experiencing **physical abuse**.
 - 10.9 percent reported experiencing **sexual abuse**.
- At least one form of **adult assault** (physical or sexual) was reported as having been experienced by 22.4 percent of respondents.
 - 19.3 percent reported experiencing **physical abuse**.
 - 10.4 percent reported experiencing **sexual abuse**.
- **Revictimization** (experiencing both child abuse and adult assault) was reported as having been experienced by 11.6 percent of respondents.
- Child abuse and adult assault were strongly associated: 48.8 percent of the women with a history of child abuse experienced adult physical or sexual assault, compared to 14.2 percent of women with no history of child abuse.

History of Child Abuse and Adult Victimization Among California Women, 2005

National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, VA Palo Alto Health Care System

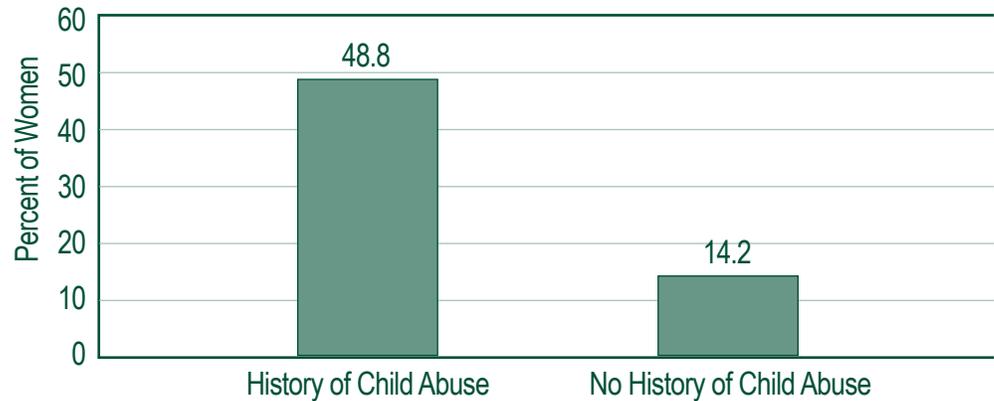
Public Health Message:

A number of theories may explain why women who are victimized as children are at increased risk for being revictimized as adults, including social learning, learned helplessness, stigmatization, low self-esteem, and symptoms of psychopathology.³ Prevention and treatment interventions for child abuse survivors that address underlying mechanisms may reduce violence against women and its associated health consequences.

History of Child Abuse and Adult Victimization Among California Women, 2005

National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, VA Palo Alto Health Care System

History of Adult Assault Among Women With and Without a History of Child Abuse



Child abuse defined as experiencing physical or sexual abuse before age 18.
Adult assault defined as experiencing physical or sexual assault at age 18 or older.

Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2005

- 1 Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. *Child Maltreatment 2003*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office; 2005.
- 2 Desai S, Arias I, Thompson MP, Basile KC. Childhood victimization and subsequent adult revictimization assessed in a nationally representative sample of women and men. *Violence Vict* 2002;17(6):639-653.
- 3 Messman TL, Long PJ. Child sexual abuse and its relationship to revictimization in adult women: A review. *Clin Psychol Rev* 1996;16(5):397-420.

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