

## INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Update for <https://helpauckland.org.nz/resources/sexual-abuse-statistics-summary/>

# Sexual Abuse Statistics - Summary

Sexual abuse is one of the key social problems undermining the health and well-being of our population today. It has a wide prevalence and can have a high impact.

## Prevalence

The Ministry of Justice recently estimated that more than one in four (27%) New Zealand adults experience sexual assault in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

The Ministry of Justice reports that about one in three Māori adults (30%) may experience sexual assault during their lifetime<sup>2</sup>. Research has indicated that Māori girls may be twice as likely to experience child sexual abuse than non-Māori girls<sup>3</sup>.

Results from the 2019 New Zealand Family Violence Survey<sup>4</sup> found that more than one in four women (26%) and one in nine (11%) men reported experiencing sexual abuse before age 15.

In the What About Me? Survey<sup>5</sup> of secondary school students, almost one in five young people (19%) reported that they have been touched in a sexual way or made to do sexual things that they did not want to. In the Youth'12 survey of secondary school students, more than one in five girls and one in eleven boys reported that they had ever been made to do unwanted sexual things, with 84% of students reporting that they had been victimised by a known peer<sup>6</sup>.

The Thursdays in Black Students' Survey<sup>7</sup> suggested that 83% of university students experienced sexual harassment during their tertiary studies, with more than half (53%) experiencing some forms of sexual assault.

The Ministry of Justice<sup>8</sup> estimated that people with diverse sexualities were more than six times as likely as heterosexual peoples to have been a victim of sexual assault: about one in nine people with diverse sexualities were victimised, compared with one in 60 heterosexual people.

In the Counting Ourselves survey<sup>9</sup>, almost one in three (32%) transgender and non-binary people had experienced sexual violence. Trans women (23%), trans men (33%) and non-binary people (38%) reported someone having had sex with them against their will at rates two to three times higher than that for women in the general population and seven to 12 times higher than for men in the general population.

The Ministry of Justice<sup>1</sup> reported that adults with disability (40%) were significantly more likely than adults without disability (24%) to have been sexually assaulted in their lifetime. In the Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura – Outing Violence study<sup>10</sup>, more than half of people with disabilities had been touched in places they did not want to be touched or been pressured to be sexual in ways they did not want, with at least one in five people experiencing these behaviours from three or more people.

## Impacts

Research strongly demonstrates that physical and mental health problems resulting from sexual abuse and rape can be significant. Untreated impacts of abuse in childhood can continue to impact on survivors as adults in the form of depression, anxiety, impaired interpersonal relationships, parenting difficulties, eating difficulties, and/or drug and alcohol misuse to cope with strong feelings. <sup>11 12 13</sup>

The long-term effects of sexual abuse on children have been correlated with almost every known mental health disorder and most of society's 'social problems' such as early teenage pregnancy, single parenting and lifetime low social economic status. <sup>14 15 16 17 18</sup>

Research points to a child's home environment as a key factor in recovery. Early intervention of specialist services can make the difference between a family that is able to develop an emotionally safe home environment that both heals and prevents future abuse, versus a family that leaves a child isolated and vulnerable in dealing with the aftermath of the abuse. <sup>19</sup>

Women who engage with counselling are better equipped and resourced to heal from their experiences and are less likely to suffer from more acute physical and mental health problems<sup>20</sup>. Survivors who engage in therapy show significant improvement in self-rated emotional wellbeing and reduced psychological distress <sup>21</sup>.

## Accountability

The Ministry of Justice<sup>22</sup> estimates that 92% of sexual abuse crimes are not reported to Police.

The Ministry of Justice<sup>23</sup> suggested that if only 10% of sexual violence is reported to Police, for every 100 victimisations only three results in a perpetrator being charged, and only one results in a conviction.

**Note:** Data are used to report what was found in particular samples in particular research projects at particular times, so only tell us this information. We use these statistics as a guide to what might be happening now, but this data cannot tell us what will happen in the future.