# Report: Child Abuse

Child abuse is a very difficult topic. How to talk about it, what can we talk about and what exactly is child abuse? These are the most common questions that people face when they think about child abuse.

## What is child abuse?

### Sexualized violence

Sexual abuse is when adults or older children consciously and intentionally satisfy themselves on the body of a child or have themselves satisfied by a child.

### Psychic violence

Psychic violence is isolation, threats, coercion, anxiety and of course, harassment and terror, like constant calls or SMS, spying and persecution in the workplace and at home or generating guilt feelings. Insults and devaluations serve to destroy the self-esteem of the victim.

### Physical violence

Physical violence includes all forms of abuse: beat, shake (of babies and small children), kick, box, throw objects, pull the hair, beat with fists or objects, burn with cigarettes or attacks with weapons. This can go up to attempted murder or murder.

## Facts & figures on violence against children

Every 60 seconds a child becomes a victim of abuse. 4 children die each day as a result of abuse, 70% of these child fatalities are under the age of 3.

Abused children are 9 times more likely to become involved in criminal activities than children with a normal childhood. 2 out of 3 people with drug abuse were abused in their childhood.

It is estimated that every fourth girl and eighth boy in the world is the victim of sexual assault at least once during childhood or adolescence. Six out of ten children between the ages of two and 14 experience regular physical punishment. This is about one billion children worldwide. About one in four girls aged 15 to 19 worldwide reported being physically abused. Seven out of ten victims have never sought help to stop the attacks. (UNICEF, 2014)

In 2014, the Internet Watch Foundation estimated that there were 31,266 websites worldwide depicting sexual abuse of children. Compared to the previous year, this means an increase of 137%! (IMF, 2014).

Eighty percent of underage victims seen on commercial pornographic images are less than 10 years old (ECPAT International, 2008).

## Austria

In 6% of abuse cases the offender is unfamiliar to the victim, in 25% of cases the child lives together with the offender. 50% of the abusers were victims themselves as they were a child.

The abuse lasts on average 3 to 11 years if the offender is familiar to the child. Abused children need on average 7 attempts to let somebody know that they aren’t all right.

## Legal situation and legal development

Once the victim is 18 years old, a period of 5 to 20 years begins after which the crime becomes time-barred. Since 1997, child abuse by an Austrian living in another country is punishable, even if the offense is not punishable in that country.

Violence in education has been banned since 1989, since 2011, the prohibition of violence was even raised to constitutional status. Despite the law, 30% of parents do not know that they can’t punish their children by force. 15% of the interviewees use slight strikes as an educational measure.

Worldwide, only 39 countries have banned all forms of violence against children.

## Recognize violence against children

Injuries and changed behaviour are often symptoms of abuse, but it can also have other causes.

Possible symptoms in everyday life are that the children don’t want to stay home alone, the don’t want to sleep alone anymore or they have sleep disorders and nightmares, also concentrating problems or a big change of weight and their eating behaviour, they often or no longer wash themselves and reject caresses. In case of sexual abuse, they often tell sexual stories or use sexual expressions that don’t match to the age, sometimes they also show sexualized behaviour.

Abusers try to silence the children and the children are afraid of the consequences when they confide in someone, because they often feel guilty and responsible for what happened and have doubts whether they are believed.

It is always important to show the willingness to be listened to and to leave it to the self-determination of the child when, with who and what is being talked about.

A premature confrontation of the caregivers with guesses does not serve the welfare of the affected child. Contact with professionals, e.g. B. youth welfare offices, child protection centres, child and youth lawyers can be very helpful.