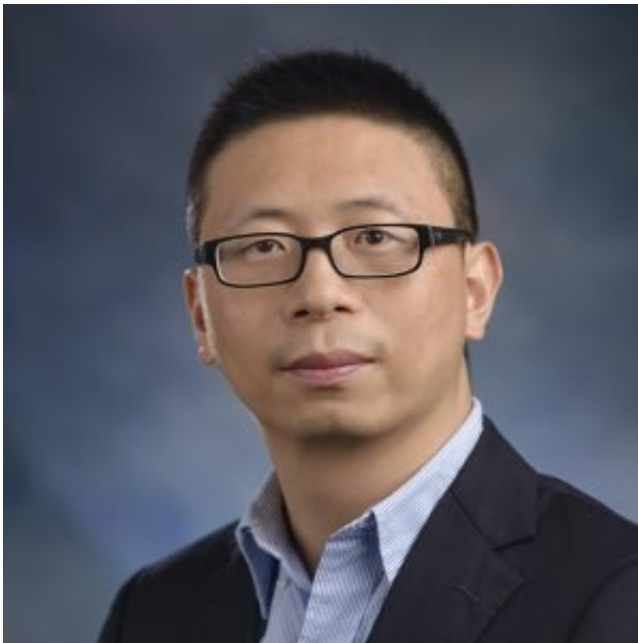


Child sexual abuse in US costs up to \$1.5 million per child death, study finds

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Dr. Xiangming Fang, associate professor of health management and policy in the School of Public Health at Georgia State University. Credit: Georgia State University

Child sexual abuse in the United States is costly, with an average lifetime cost of \$1.1 million per death of female victims and \$1.5 million per death of male victims, according to a new study.

Researchers measured the economic costs of child sexual [abuse](#) by calculating [health care costs](#), productivity losses, child welfare costs,

violence/crime costs, special education costs and suicide death [costs](#).

They estimated the total lifetime economic burden of child sexual abuse in the United States to be \$9.3 billion, based on child sexual abuse data from 2015. For nonfatal cases of child sexual abuse, the estimated lifetime cost is \$282,734 per female victim. There was insufficient information on productivity losses for male victims, which contributed to a lower estimated lifetime cost of \$74,691. The findings are published in the journal *Child Abuse & Neglect*.

"This study reveals that the economic burden of child sexual abuse is substantial and signifies recognition that reducing children's vulnerability will positively and directly impact the nation's economic and social well-being and development," said Dr. Xiangming Fang, associate professor of [health](#) management and policy in the School of Public Health at Georgia State University. "We hope our research will bring attention to the need for increased prevention efforts for child sexual abuse."

The World Health Organization defines child sexual abuse as the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, is not developmentally prepared or violates the laws and social taboos of society. It is the activity between a child - anyone under the age of 18 in most states - and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a position of responsibility, trust or power.

Child sexual abuse includes commercial sexual exploitation and the use of children in pornographic performance and materials. The estimated prevalence rates of exposure to child sexual abuse by 18 years old are 26.6 percent for U.S. girls and 5.1 percent for U.S. boys. International rates of exposure are often higher in low- and middle-income countries. The effects of child sexual abuse include increased risk for development of severe mental, physical and behavioral health disorders; sexually

transmitted diseases; self-inflicted injury, substance abuse and violence; and subsequent victimization and criminal offending.

The researchers examined data from 20 new cases of fatal child sexual abuse and 40,387 new cases of nonfatal [child sexual abuse](#) that occurred in 2015. The data were obtained from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System of the Children's Bureau and [child](#) maltreatment reports issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

More information: Elizabeth J. Letourneau et al, The economic burden of child sexual abuse in the United States, *Child Abuse & Neglect* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.02.020](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.02.020)

Provided by Georgia State University

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