

# 7 Social Illness: Violence Against Women

Violence against women is increasingly being recognized as a public health problem that affects women's health and the quality of women's lives. Violence against women is defined as any violent act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women.<sup>1</sup> Violence against women can take many forms. Physical violence, sexual assaults, and child and older adult abuse are discussed here because those data are available in Utah.

- Approximately one in ten Utah residents have been victims of domestic violence.
- In 1995, spouse abuse filings increased by 45 percent statewide compared to 1994.

- In 20 percent of domestic violence cases, the woman who was assaulted was pregnant at the time of the assault, according to national studies.
- According to the Utah DPS's report, 1.5 percent of Utah girls aged 18 and younger were reported victims of child abuse, compared to 1.2 percent of boys.
- Utah older women made up 62 percent of adult abuse victims in 1995.

## Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is characterized as a pattern of coercive behaviors that may include battering, psychological abuse, sexual assault, isolation, deprivation and intimidation, when those behaviors are perpetrated by someone who is or was in an intimate relationship with the individual experiencing the violence. Data are insufficient to portray a psychological or sociodemographic profile of victims of domestic violence. However, certain individuals are at greater risk for abuse: divorced or separated women, women between the ages of 17 and 28, women who are pregnant, and women who abuse alcohol or drugs or whose

partners do.<sup>2</sup> Since women and children are most often the victims of domestic violence, the discussion of domestic violence often focuses on violence against women.

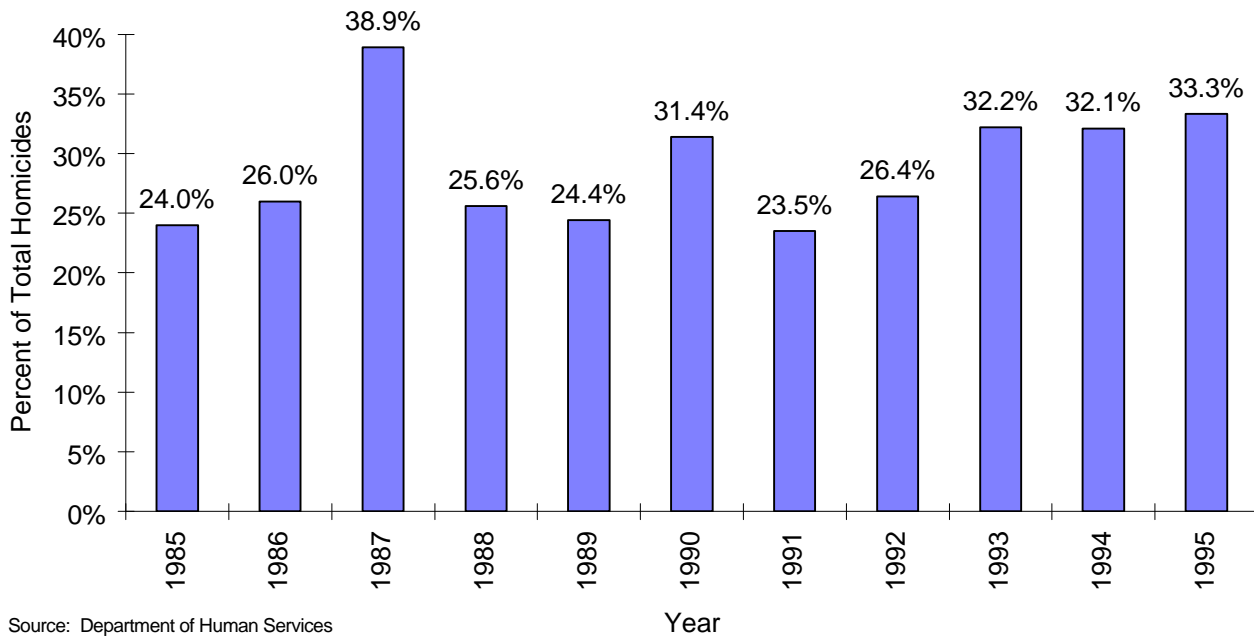
A study in Utah conducted by Dan Jones and Associates in 1996 found that approximately one in ten Utah residents have been victims of domestic violence.<sup>3</sup> According to the Utah Department of Public Safety, domestic violence accounted for 31.6 percent of all assaults filed in 1995.<sup>4</sup>

**Homicides**

Nationally, it is reported that 52 percent of female murder victims were killed by a current or former partner or husband.<sup>2</sup> According to the Utah Department of Public Safety, domestic violence

accounted for 25 murders in Utah during 1995, that is, one-third of all homicides. The proportion of homicides that were due to domestic violence increased from 24 percent of all homicides in 1985 to 33 percent in 1995.

**Domestic Violence Homicides as Percentage of Total Homicides, Utah, 1985-1995**



Source: Department of Human Services  
Division of Family Services.  
Crime in Utah 1994, p. 58

**Spouse Abuse**

Violence between spouses accounted for 45 percent of offenses committed between family members in Utah in 1995.<sup>4</sup> About 5,700 spouse abuse cases, including protective orders, were filled in Utah in 1995; that is a 45 percent increase over the previous year. The increase among Wasatch jurisdictional districts was 48 percent, ranging from 37 percent in Davis to 53 percent in Provo. The reporting of spouse abuse in other

parts of Utah had a large variation and the overall increase was 33 percent. The underlying reasons for the increases and regional variations cannot be explained at this time. In 1995, a new law (Criminal Code 30-6-A) was implemented that made it possible to file a spouse abuse case for no charge. This law removed a barrier that might have prevented some spouse abuse victims from asking for public help.

**Number and Percentage Change of Spouse Abuse Filings: Utah, 1994-1995**

<u>Spouse Abuse Filings</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>% Change</u>
State	3,956	5,738	45.0
Davis District	397	545	37.3
Ogden District	814	1,146	40.8
Provo District	256	392	53.1
Salt Lake District	1,756	2,679	52.6
<b>Wasatch Front Area</b>	<b>3,223</b>	<b>4,762</b>	<b>47.8</b>
Brigham City	125	148	18.4
Coalville District	17	50	194.1
Logan District	98	151	54.1
Moab District	43	59	37.2
Price District	104	133	27.9
San Juan District	22	22	0.0
St. George District	157	224	42.7
Tooele District	84	93	10.7
Vernal District	83	96	15.7
<b>Non Wasatch Front Area</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>33.2</b>

Source: Utah Department of Human Services, Administrative Office of the Courts.

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### Injuries

According to national studies, the woman who was assaulted was pregnant at the time of the assault in 20 percent of domestic violence cases.<sup>5</sup> The abuse of pregnant women affects not only the women but the children as well. Studies have

shown a correlation between domestic violence and low birth weight babies.<sup>6</sup>

The following table reports the numbers of different types of injuries which were caused by domestic violence in Utah in 1995.

#### Reported Number of Physical Injuries Caused by Domestic Violence Utah, 1995

Apparent Minor Injury	1415
Possible Internal Injury	27
Severe Laceration	24
Apparent Broken Bones	20
Other Major Injury	15
Unconsciousness	9
Loss of Teeth	3

Note: Incident Based Reporting (IBR) statistics include crimes reported by only 44 out of the 120 reporting agencies.

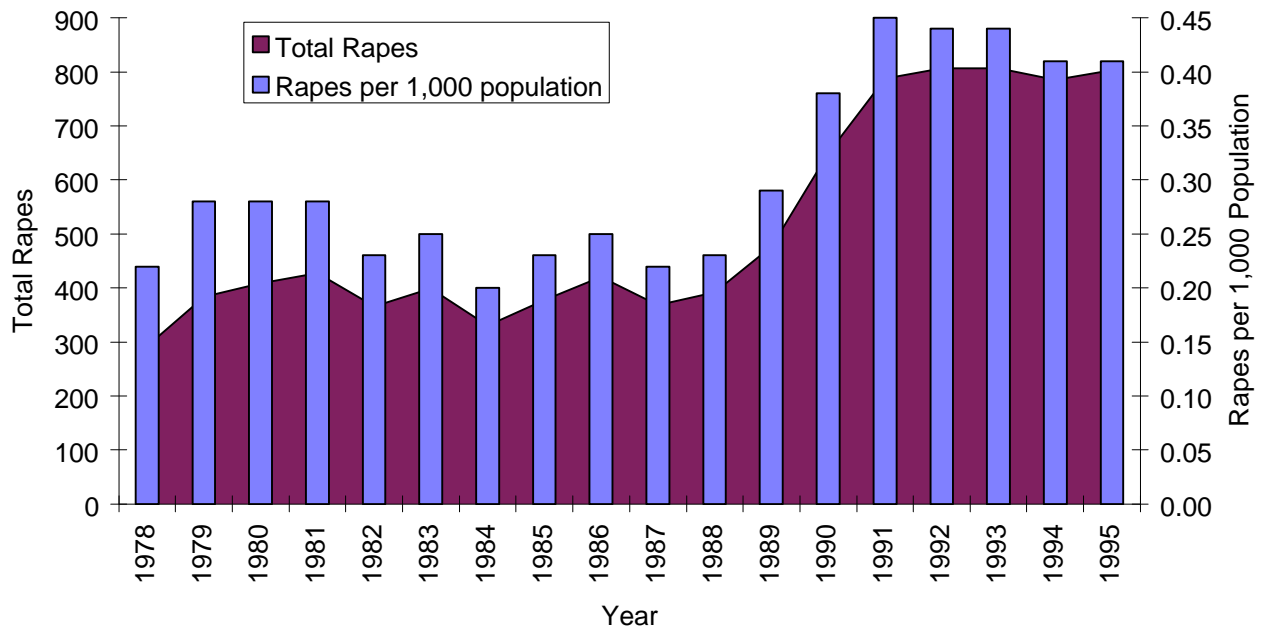
Source: IBR Program, Department of Public Safety Bureau of Criminal Identification, Crime in Utah 1995 p. 57.

# Rape

The National Crime Victimization Survey found that, based on reported rapes, women were more likely to be raped by someone they knew (55% of reported rapes) than by a stranger (45%).<sup>7</sup> The National Institute of Justice recently released a

report on rape victims, including the costs and consequences. About 259,000 rape incidents were recorded nationwide in 1993, the estimated cost was about \$25 billion.<sup>8</sup>

Number of Total Rapes and Rape Rate per 1,000 Total Population, Utah, 1978-1994



Source: Department of Public Safety Bureau of Criminal Identification. *Crime in Utah 1995*, p. 39.

In Utah, the annual number of reported rapes and rape rate per 1,000 population have increased since 1978. The Rape Recovery Center in Salt Lake City assisted 3,637 clients in 1995. Of these clients, 13 percent (486 clients) was seen in hospitals. In the northern part of the state, Citizens Against Physical and Sexual Assault

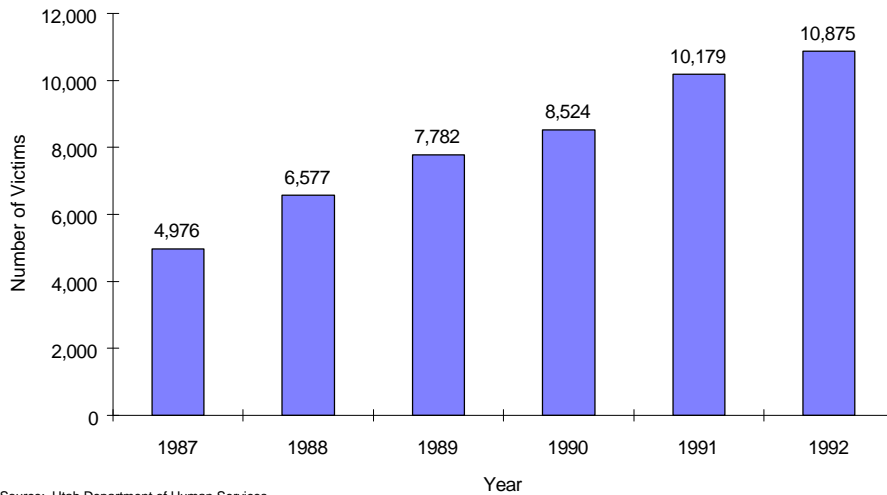
(CAPSA) in Logan reported providing direct services for 37 victims of sexual assaults in 1995. Of those clients, only 14 (38%) reported the incident to law enforcement. Of the 37 assaults, 21 (61.7%) were listed as date/acquaintance rape; 6 (17.6%) as marital rape; and 5 (14.7%) as rape by a stranger.

**Gender and Child Abuse**

Children, as well as women, are often victims of abuse in violent families. Reported and investi-

gated incidents of child abuse in Utah increased during the period from 1987 to 1992.

Number of Reported Child Abuse Victims in Utah, 1987-1992

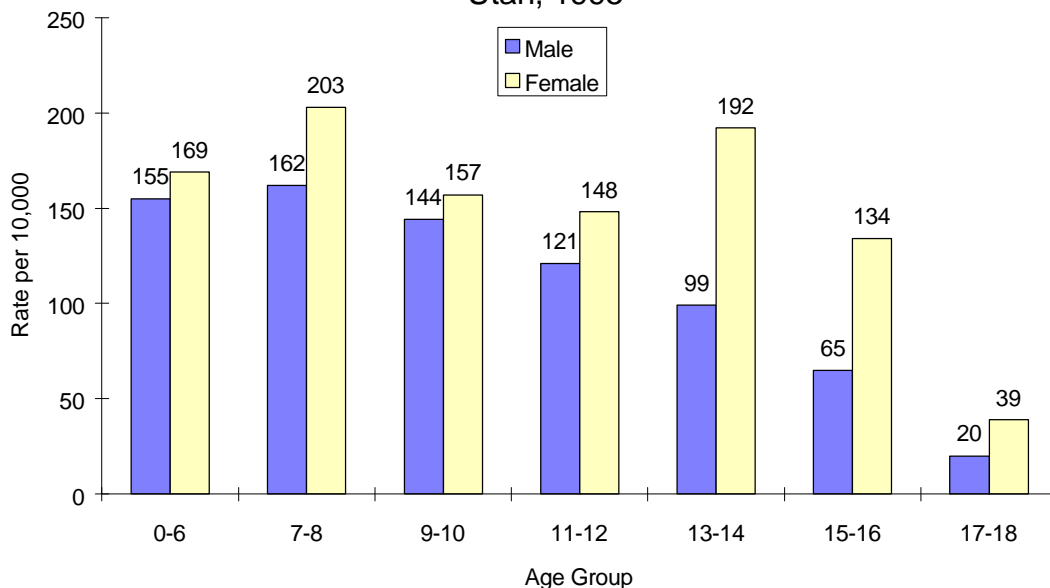


Source: Utah Department of Human Services  
Division of Family Services

According to the Utah Department of Public Safety, 1.5 percent of Utah girls aged 18 and younger were victims of child abuse, compared to

1.2 percent of boys in the same age group. The following figure provides detailed age and sex specific rates of child abuse.

Reported Child Abuse Victim Rates by Age Utah, 1995

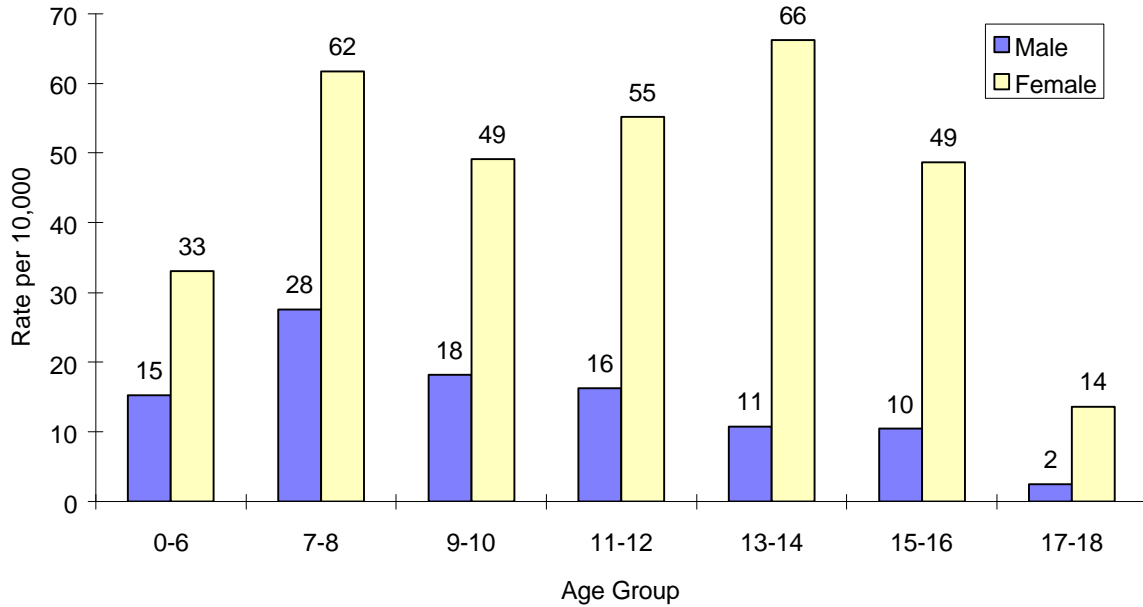


Source: Department of Public Safety Bureau of Criminal Identification.  
*Crime in Utah 1995* p. 59.  
Rates were calculated by the Utah Department of Health

In Utah, children have a similar risk of being physically abused regardless of gender; however,

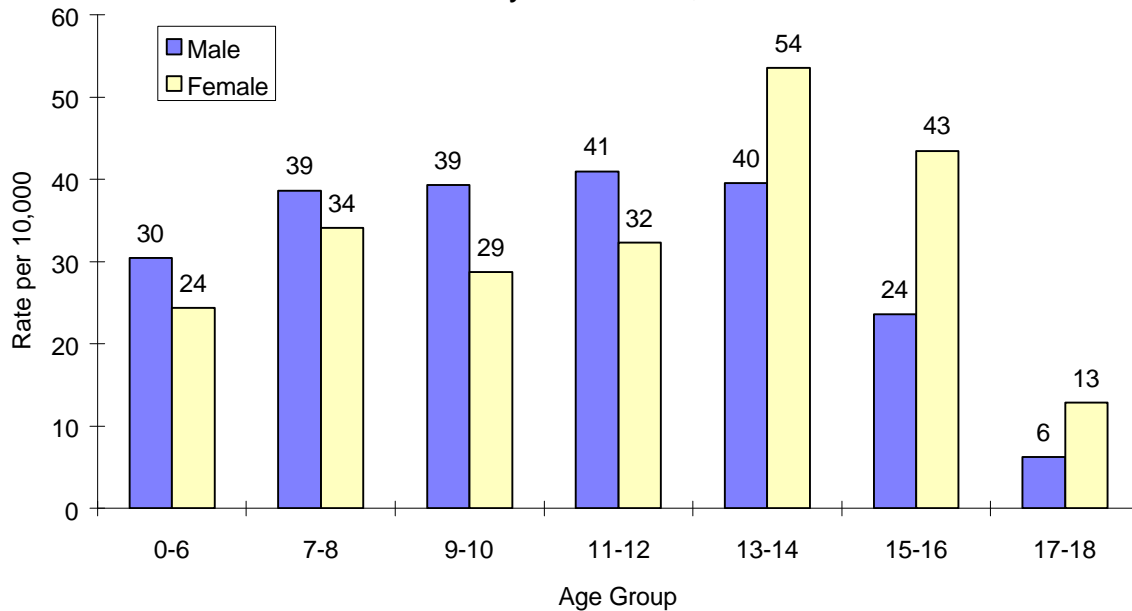
girls are at greater risk than boys for sexual abuse and negligence.

**Reported Sexual Abuse Rates by Age  
Utah Boys and Girls, 1995**



Source: Department of Public Safety Bureau of Criminal Identification.  
 Crime in Utah 1995, p. 59.  
 Rates were calculated by Utah Department of Health

**Reported Physical Abuse Rates by Age  
Utah Boys and Girls, 1995**



Source: Department of Public Safety Bureau of Criminal Identification.  
 Crime in Utah 1995, p. 59.  
 Rates were calculated by Utah Department of Health

## Older Adult Abuse

Nationally, reported domestic abuse against older people increased from about 117,000 cases in 1986 to 241,000 in 1994.<sup>9</sup> In 1995, referrals to Utah Adult Protective Services for abuse, neglect, or exploitation of disabled or older adults increased 20 percent compared to 1994.<sup>10</sup> In 1995,

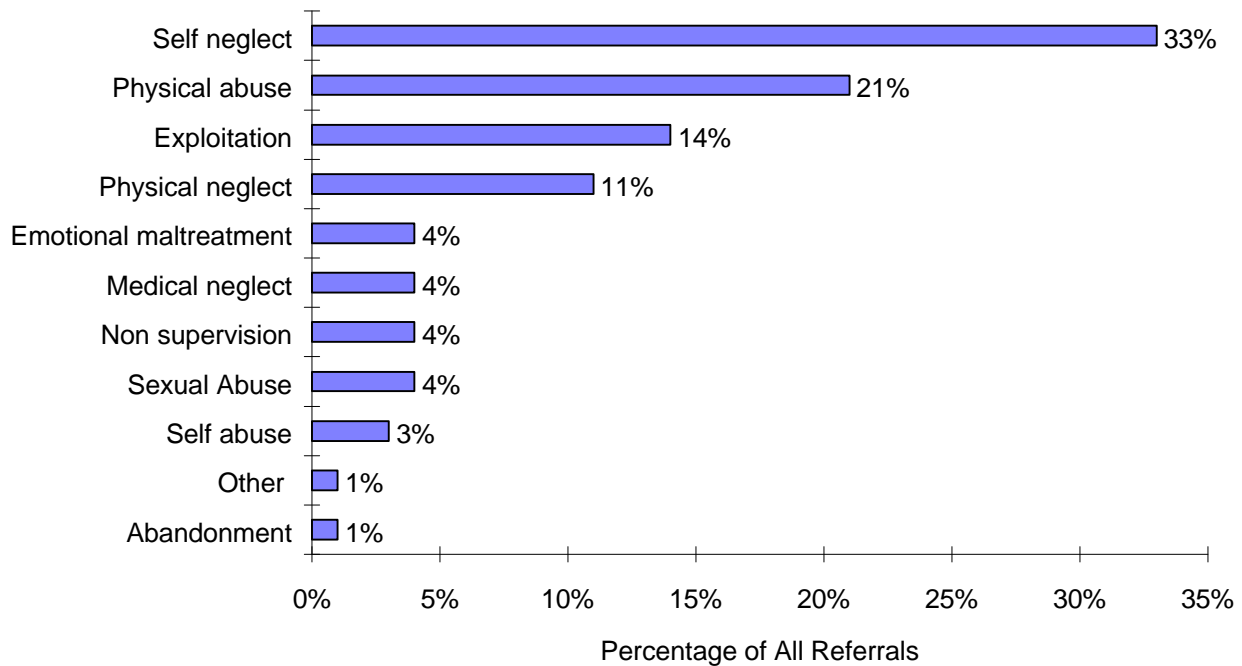
older women made up 62 percent of adult abuse victims Utah. Of the perpetrators, 53.4 percent were males and 46.6 percent were females.<sup>10</sup>

Utah Adult Protection Referrals: 1995		
	Victim	Perpetrator
Male:	38.4%	53.4%
Female:	61.6%	46.6%

Source: Utah State Division of Aging and Adult Services.

Gender specific data on older adult abuse in Utah are scarce. The following figure describes the types of older adult abuses that were investigated in Utah in 1995. Self neglect, physical abuse, exploitation, and physical neglect are the most common types of abuses experienced by older Utahns.

**Percentage Distribution of Completed Adult Abuse Investigations by Referral Reason, Utah, 1995**



Source: Utah State Division of Aging and Adult Services, 1996.

\* Percentages do not total 100 because of rounding.

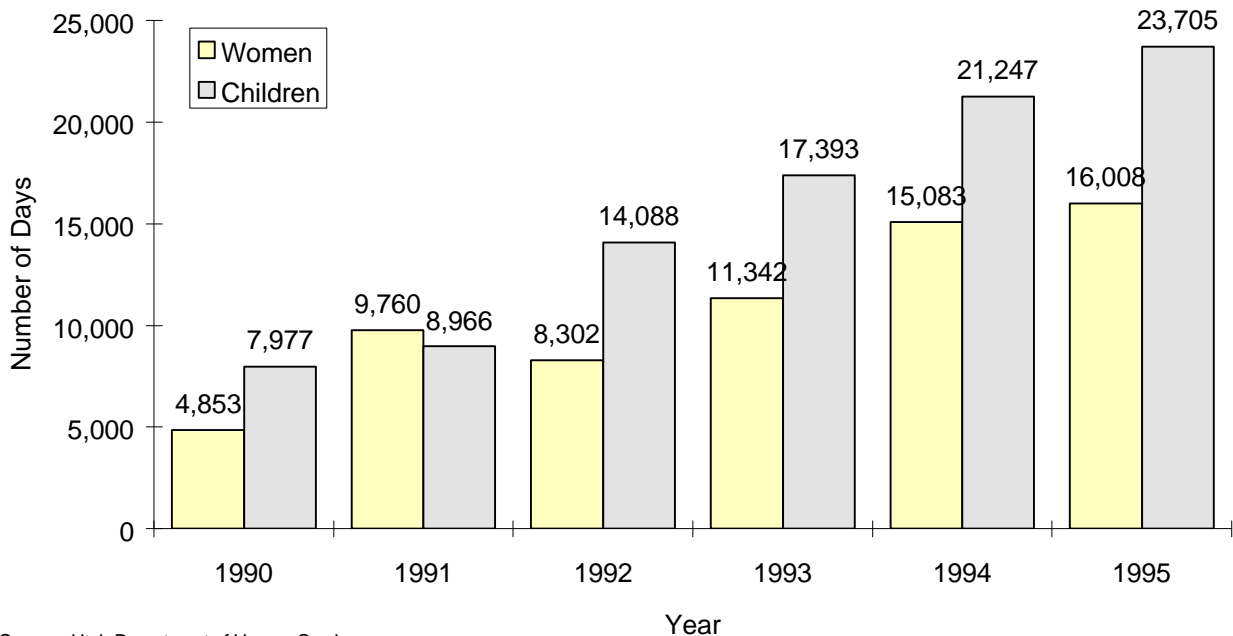


Public and Community Efforts

During the period July 1, 1994 through June 30, 1995, 1,974 abused women were served in Utah shelters for a total of 16,008 days. Those shelters

also served 2,722 children during that period for a total of 23,705 days. Only about 12 percent of victims who reported abuse entered the shelters.

Number of Days Served in Shelters for Abused Women and Children: Utah, 1990-1995



Source: Utah Department of Human Services  
Division of Family Services

There is considerable variability, both nationally and locally, in estimates of violence against women. The information provided here is based on reported data. These data provide conservative estimates because they rely only on those incidents that were reported.

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