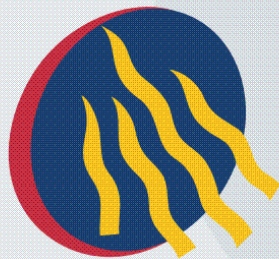


# 25 Years of Child Abuse and Neglect Data from the Royal Children's Hospital, Brisbane; Abuse Trends and Associated Demographic Variables

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Child Advocacy Service  
RCH & HSD



**Queensland Government**

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Queensland **Health**

# SCAN Teams

- Established by CCOCA in 1980
- Children experiencing or at risk of abuse and neglect
- State-wide system
- Core members:
  - Queensland Health
  - Queensland Police Service
  - Department of Child Safety

# SCAN Function

- Provides an inter-agency forum for case discussion and planning
- Makes recommendations for actions by the core departments
- Reviews the effectiveness of the implemented recommendations

# RCH SCAN

- Royal Children's Hospital, Brisbane
- 1980 – 2005
- 6669 cases of children experiencing or at risk of experiencing harm
- Study examining demographic information and abuse and neglect trends

# Study Method

- All cases from 1980 – 2005 entered by trained CAS data entry staff
- Randomly selected sample of 5% of charts reviewed for validation
- Ethics approval obtained from RCH & HSD HREC

# Study Results- Demographics

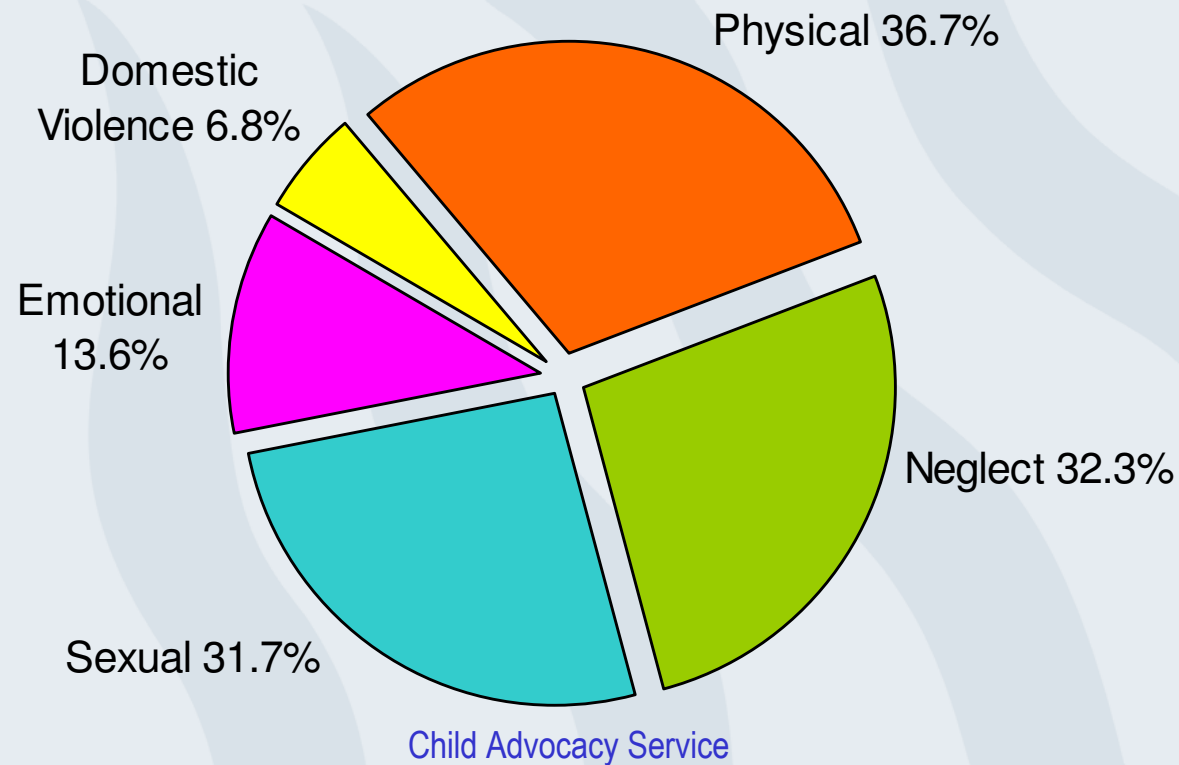
Over the 25 years:

- Significantly more female children (54.6%), Pearsons  $\chi^2(1, N = 6637) = 56.98, p = .00$
- Mean child age 6 years, 2 months
- Slightly more single parent families than two-biological parent families (*ns*), followed by blended families
- Perpetrator significantly more likely to be intra-familial (84.7%), Pearsons  $\chi^2(1, N = 6206) = 4200.97, p = .00$ .

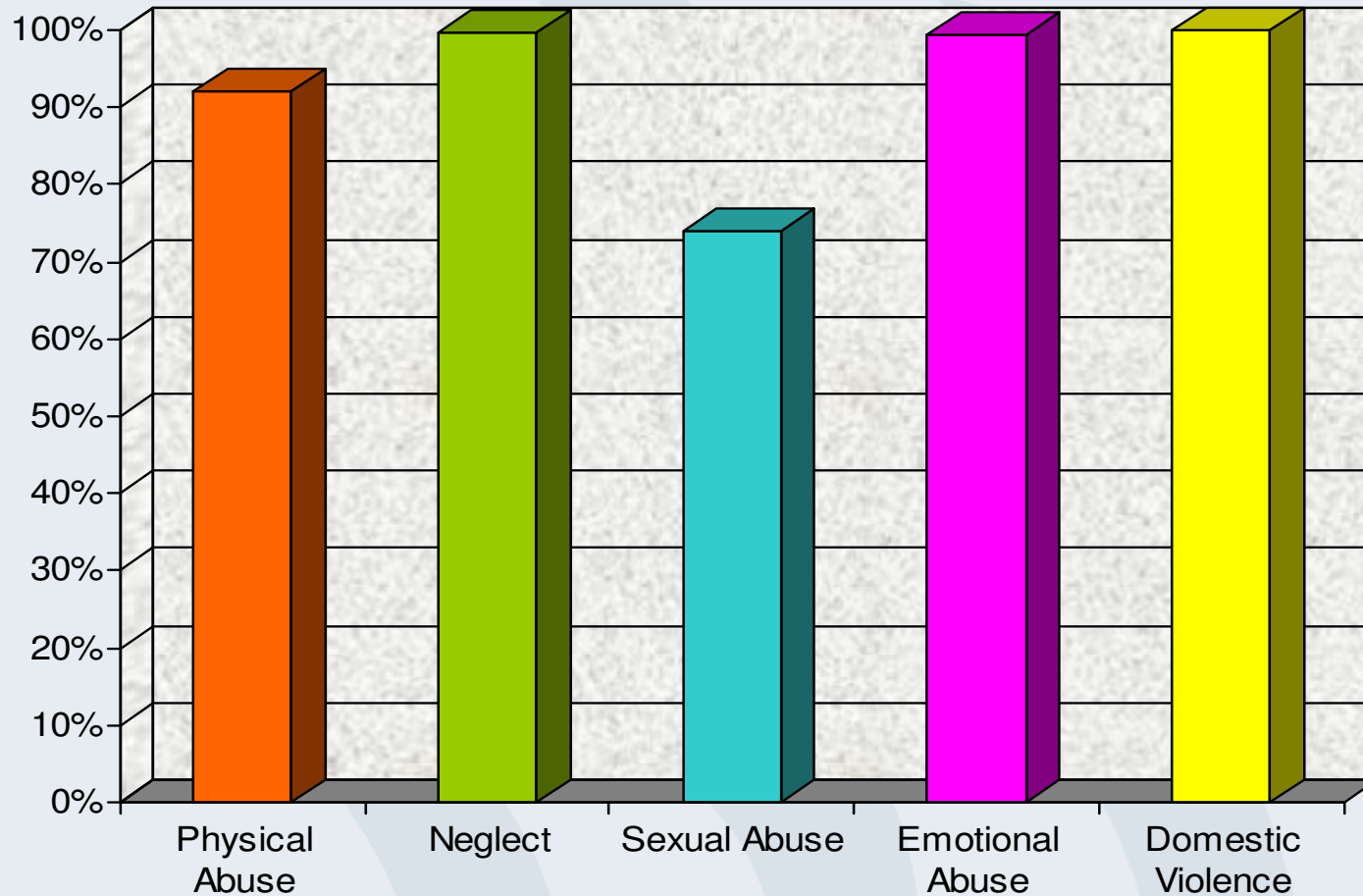
# Study Results

## Presenting Concerns

- Single abuse or neglect type as concern in majority of cases

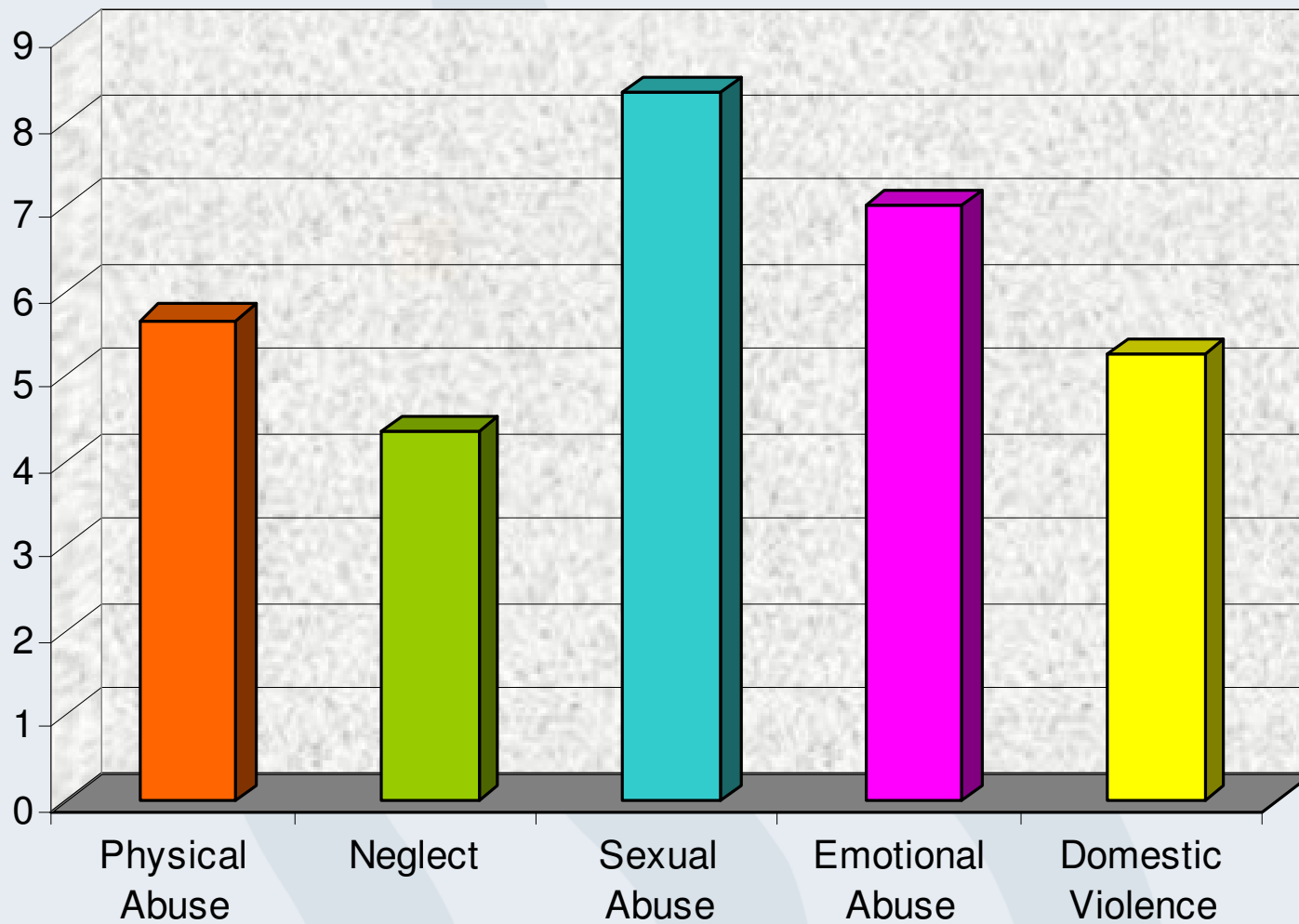


# % Intrafamilial Alleged Perpetrator



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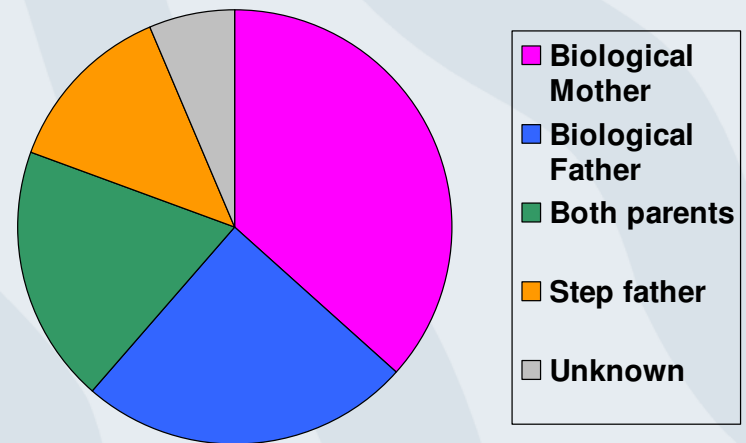
# Abuse Type and Average Age



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# Physical Abuse Concerns

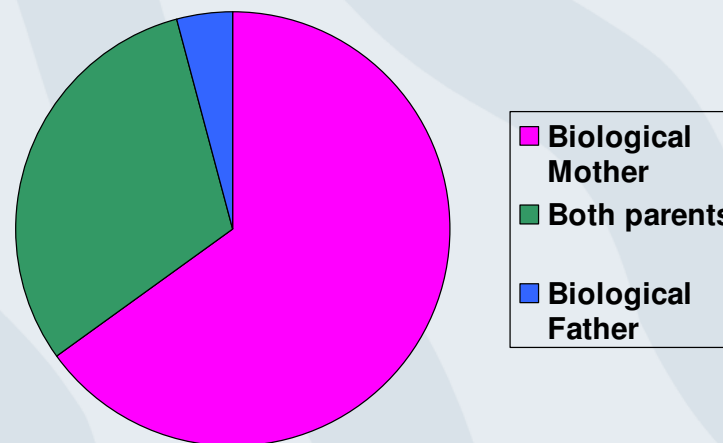
- Significantly more male children with concerns of physical abuse, Pearsons  $\chi^2$  (1, N = 6637) = 89.81,  $p = 00$ .
- Most frequently alleged perpetrators of physical abuse
  - Biological mother (34%)
  - Biological father (23%)
  - Both parents (18%)
  - Step father (12%)
  - Unknown (6%)



# Neglect Concerns

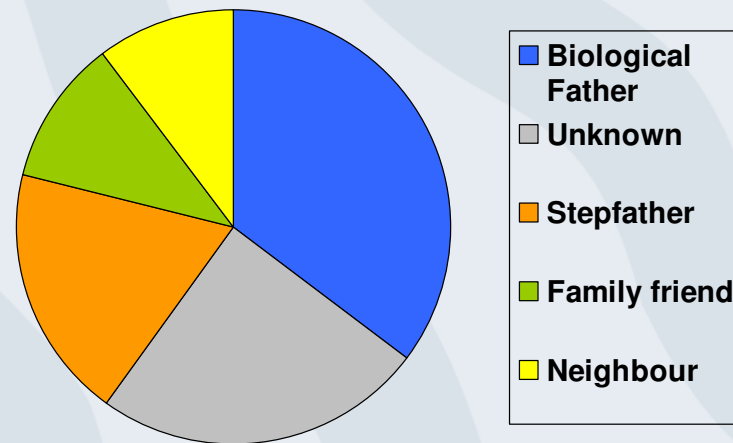
- Significantly more male children with concerns of neglect, Pearsons  $\chi^2$  (1, N = 6637) = 59.526,  $p = 00$ .
- Most frequently alleged perpetrators of neglect

- Biological mother (61%)
- Both parents (29%)
- Biological father (4%)



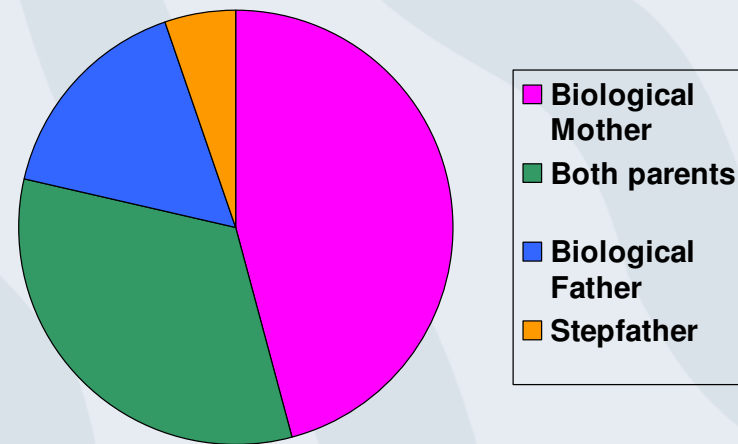
# Sexual Abuse Concerns

- Significantly more female children with concerns of sexual abuse,  $\text{Pearsons } \chi^2 (1, N = 6637) = 442.34, p = 00.$
- Most frequently alleged perpetrators of sexual abuse:
  - Biological father (26%)
  - Unknown perpetrator (18%)
  - Step father (14%)
  - Family friend (8%)
  - Neighbour (7.5%)



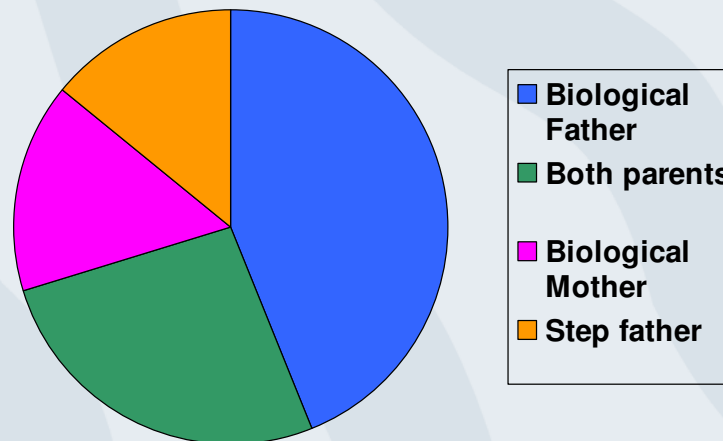
# Emotional Abuse Concerns

- Slightly but significantly more male children with concerns of emotional abuse, Pearsons  $\chi^2$  (1, N = 6637) = 6.41,  $p = 01$ .
- Most frequently alleged perpetrators of emotional abuse:
  - Biological mother (43%)
  - Both parents (31%)
  - Biological father (15%)
  - Step father (5%)



# Domestic Violence Concerns

- Slightly but significantly more male children with concerns of domestic violence exposure, Pearsons  $\chi^2$  (1, N = 6637) = 6.43,  $p = .01$ .
- Most frequently alleged perpetrators of domestic violence:
  - Biological father (43%)
  - Both parents (26%)
  - Biological mother (15%)
  - Step father (14%)



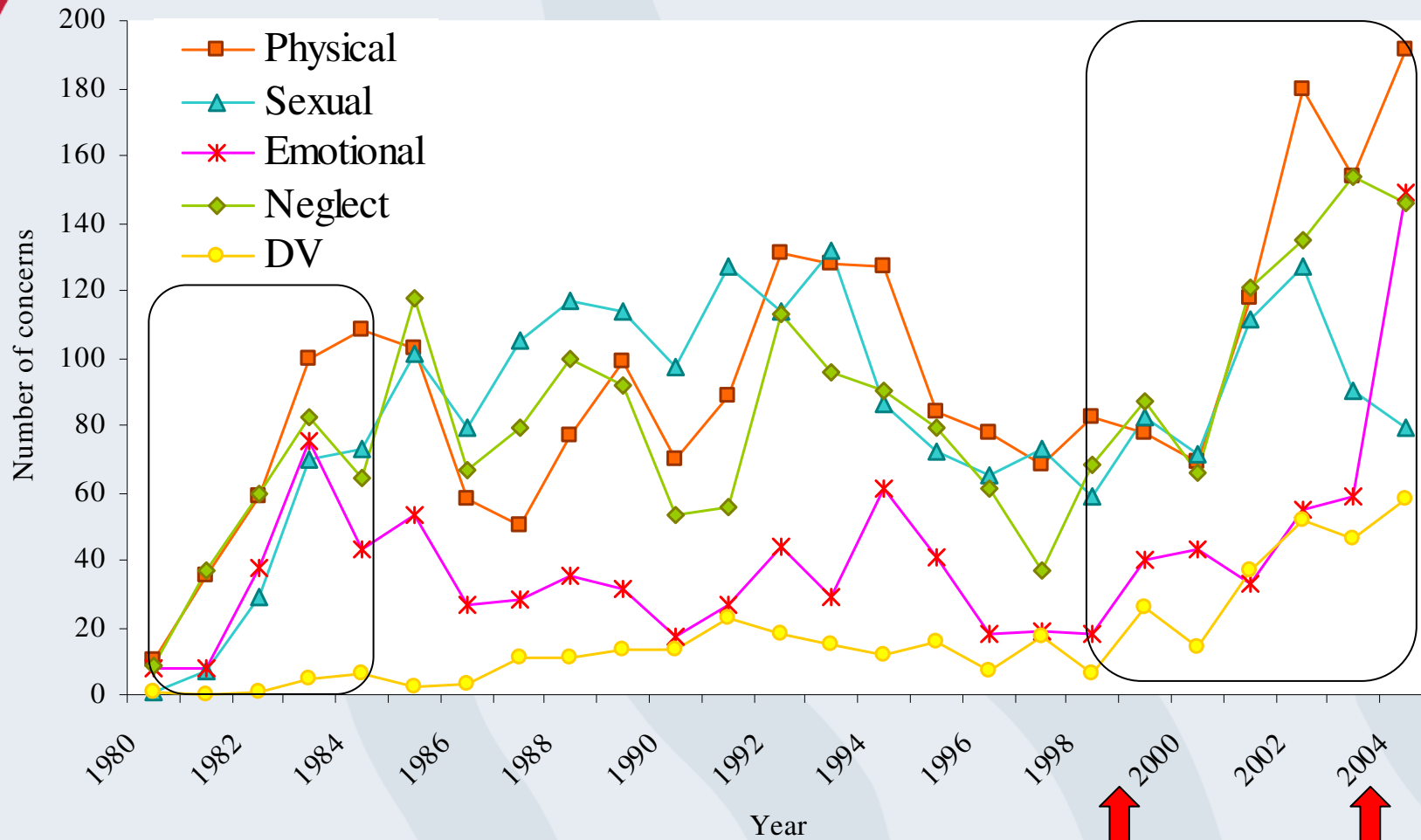
# Summary- Concern Types

- Child mean age youngest in neglect concerns, followed by DV and physical abuse
- Child mean age oldest in sexual abuse concerns
- Male children significantly more likely to be listed for all concern types aside from sexual abuse

# Summary- Alleged Perpetrators

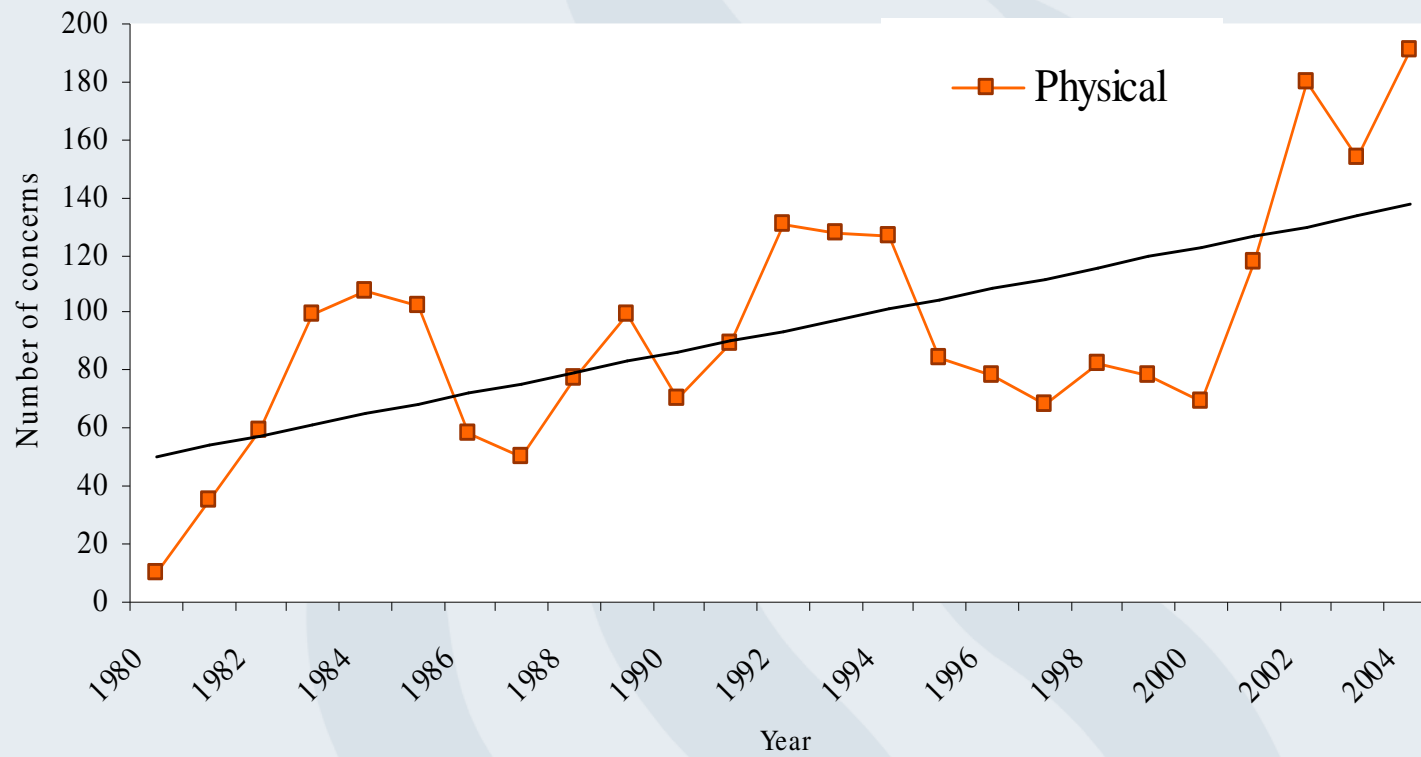
- Intra-familial perpetrators more likely in all concern types
- In all concern types aside from sexual, the child's biological mother, father or both parents were the most frequently listed alleged perpetrators.

# Data Trends

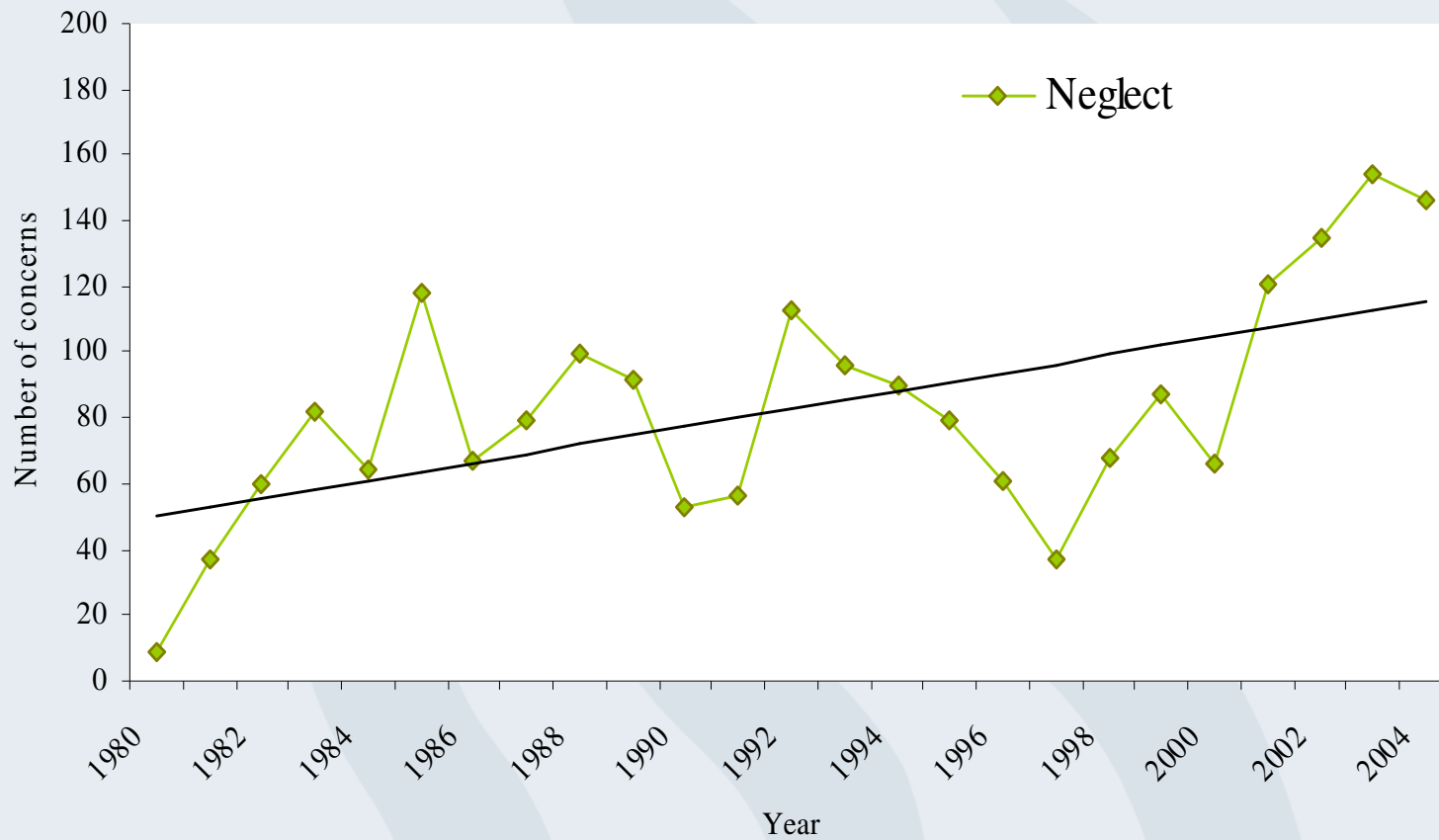


Child Advocacy Service Child Protection Act 1999 CMC Inquiry

# Physical Abuse Trends

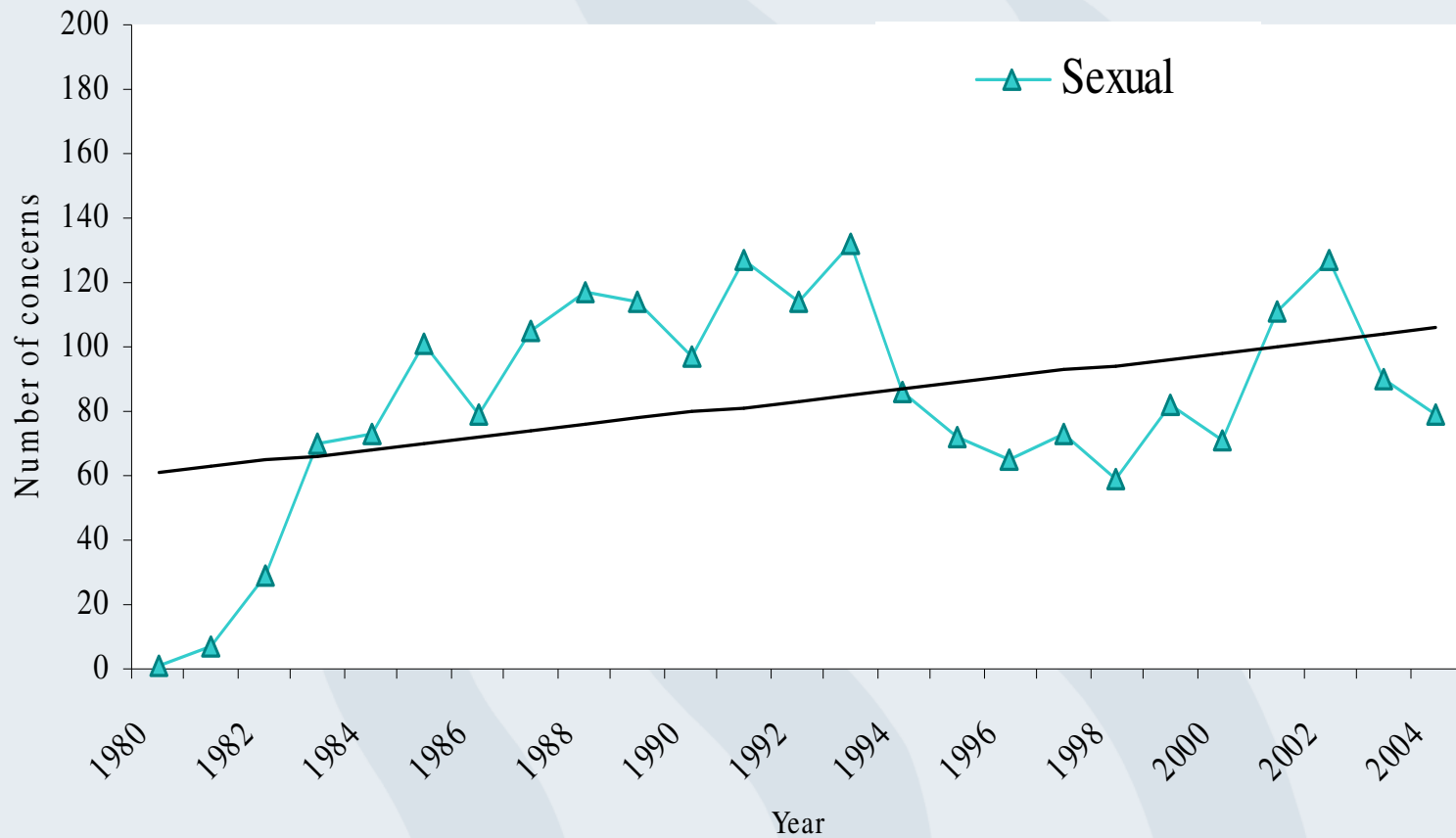


# Neglect Trends



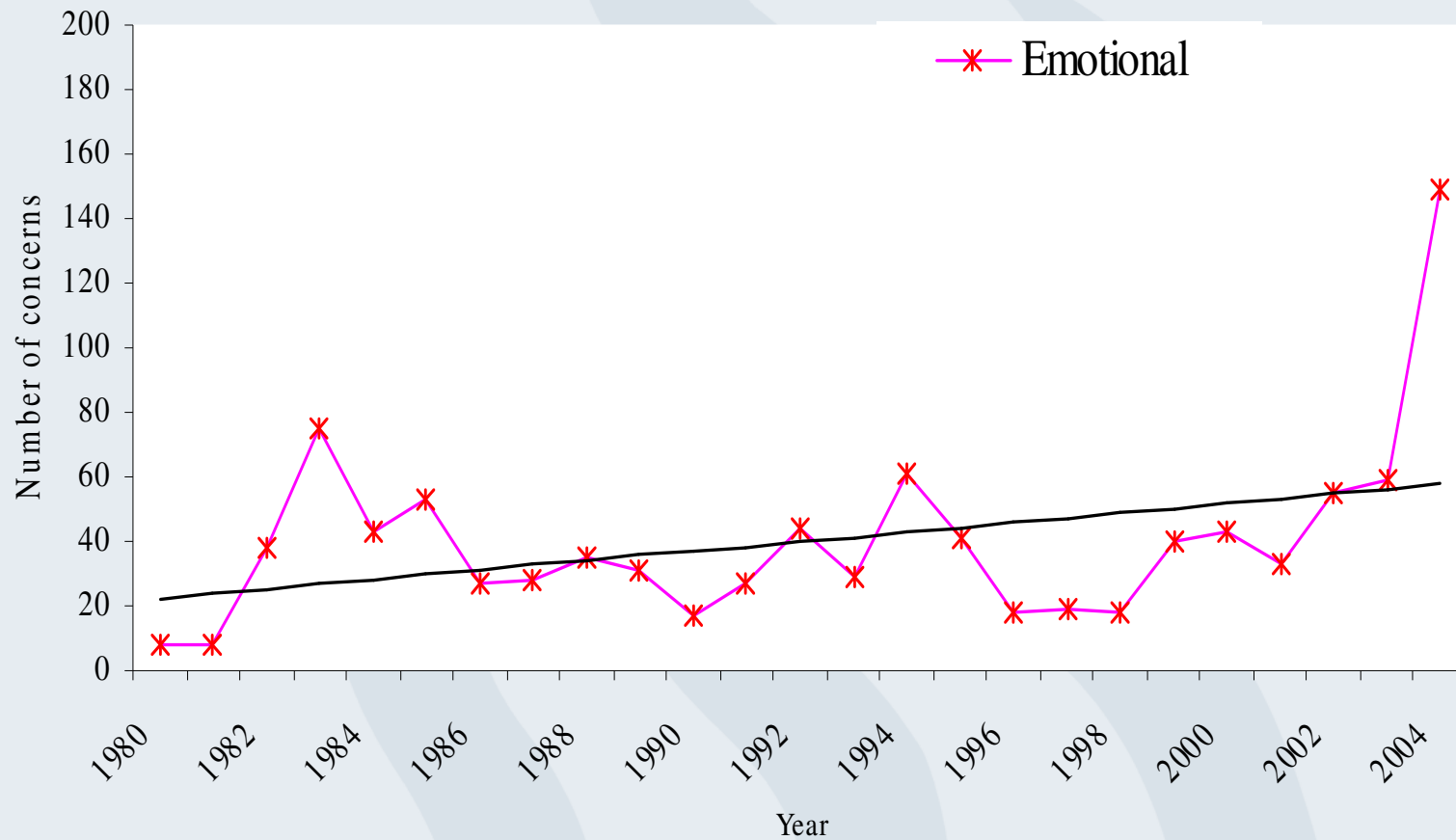
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# Sexual Abuse Trends



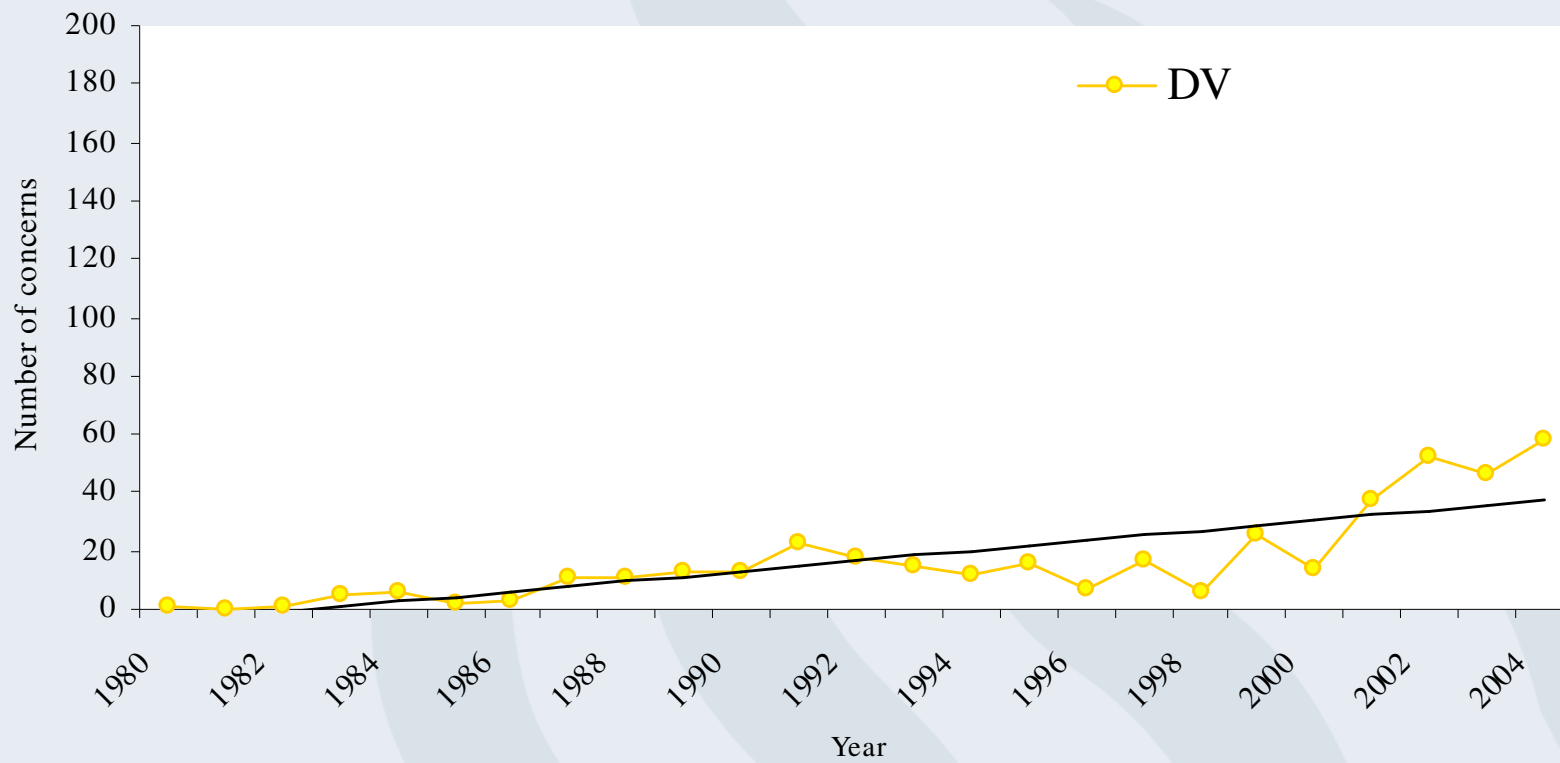
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# Emotional Abuse Trends



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# Domestic Violence Trends



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# Abuse Trends

- 70.3% increase in Brisbane population

Number concerns	Physical Abuse	Neglect	Sexual Abuse	Emotional Abuse	DV
1984	108	64	73	43	6
2004	191	146	79	149	58
Percent Increase	<b>76.8%</b>	<b>128.1%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>246.5%</b>	<b>866.7%</b>

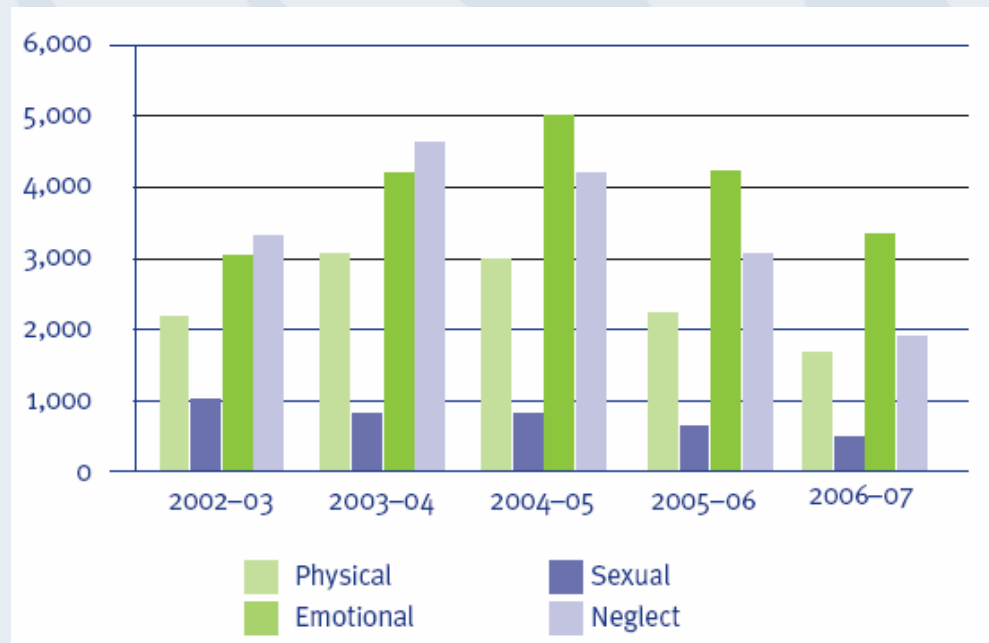
# Child Sexual Abuse Trends

- Internationally and within Australia, various studies have documented a decline in sexual abuse
  - Dunne et al (2003), telephone survey 1784 Australian residents
    - Younger males reported experiencing significantly less child sexual abuse than older males
    - Younger women who had intercourse before the age of 16 were more likely to report that they were a willing participant on first occasion

# Child Sexual Abuse Trends

- DChS substantiation data
  - 2002 – 2006 decreases in sexual abuse  
(DChS 2006 – 07 Performance report)

Number of children subject to substantiations by most serious harm type, 2002 – 03 to 2006 - 07



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# Child Sexual Abuse Trends

- Possible reduction in incidence due to:
  - Parental awareness
  - Education
  - Self-protection
  - Perpetrator awareness
  - Economic conditions
- Alternatively, emphasis on parental willingness and ability to protect made within the *Child Protection Act 1999*
  - decrease in the number of extra-familial sexual abuse cases being referred

# Abuse Trends

- 70.3% increase in Brisbane population

Number concerns	Physical Abuse	Neglect	Sexual Abuse	Emotional Abuse	DV
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# Trends Summary

- Concern numbers peaked in all abuse types aside from sexual in final two years of study
- Emotional abuse and DV reporting very low for majority of study
- *Child Protection Act 1999* legislation impact
  - Increased reporting of abuse
  - Large increases in emotional abuse and domestic violence

# Data Limitations

- ‘Suspected’ child abuse and neglect only
  - Trends in abuse **reporting** rather than incidence
- Child abuse and neglect under-reported
  - Actual incidence likely to be higher than represented

# Study Conclusions

- Understanding of abuse and neglect within the context of the Brisbane Royal Children's Hospital and Health Service District SCAN team
- Highlights the impact that legislation changes can have upon concern reporting levels
- Raises questions regarding incident trends in the community

# Acknowledgments

- Royal Children's Hospital Foundation Brisbane



working wonders for sick kids



- Jennifer Crimmins, Director Child Advocacy Service
- QPS & Queensland Health SCAN Members

# Questions?



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