



BARNAVERNDARSTOFA

The basic unit for child protection in Iceland is the Child Protection Committee (CPC) which is responsible for child protection services at the local level. To ensure consistency, all Icelandic CPCs must classify the reports they received by the same classification system.

Anyone, who has a reason to believe that a child is living in unacceptable circumstances, is exposed to violence or other degrading treatment or is seriously endangering their health and development, is obliged, by law, to notify child protective services. This obligation pertains to the police, those who work with children and the general public alike (Child Protection Act, No. 80/2002).

Notification and other obligations to child protection authorities.

Article 16

Public duty of notification.

All persons shall be obliged to notify a child protection committee if they have reason to believe that a child:

- a. is living in unacceptable circumstances of upbringing,
- b. is exposed to violence or other degrading treatment or
- c. is seriously endangering his/her health and maturity.

Furthermore, all persons are obliged to notify a child protection committee if there is reason to believe that the health or life of an unborn child is being endangered due to the unacceptable or dangerous life-style of an expectant mother, e.g. in the form of alcohol abuse or the consumption of drugs, or when an expectant mother is exposed to violence, or if there is reason to suspect that an expectant mother is exposed to violence, or of any incidents which may be regarded as falling within the child protection committee's concerns.

Article 17

Duty of notification by those who deal with children.

All persons involved in matters concerning children or expectant mothers, through their position or occupation, are obliged to notify a child protection committee, if they become aware of circumstances as described in Article 16.

Pre-school heads and teachers, child-minders, school heads, teachers, clergy, physicians, dentists, midwives, nurses, psychologists, social workers, developmental therapists, [career counsellors] and

those providing social services or counselling are under an especial obligation to monitor the behaviour, upbringing and conditions of children as far as possible, and to inform the child protection committee if the child's circumstances appear to be of the nature described in the first paragraph.

The duty of notification provided in this Article takes precedence over provisions in law or codes of ethics on confidentiality within the relevant professions.

Article 18

Police duty of notification and questioning of children.

If the police become aware that a child is in circumstances as described in Article 16, they shall notify a child protection committee. When there is a suspicion that a child has committed, or has been the victim of, an offence under the General Penal Code or under this Act, or an offence under another act that may entail a punishment of more than two years' imprisonment, the police shall, as soon as it receives such a case for treatment, notify a child protection committee and give it the opportunity to follow the investigation of the case. The child protection committee shall notify the parents of the child in such a case, unless the interests of the child make this inadvisable.

A representative of a child protection committee shall be given the opportunity of being present at the questioning of a child suspected of having committed a criminal act, in accordance with the Code of Criminal Procedure, and of a child who is a victim or witness. This shall apply both to questioning by the police and by a court. Other matters regarding the taking of testimony from children shall be subject to the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure and regulations issued thereunder.

Reports to Child Protection Committees

Reports to Child Protection Committees in Iceland in 2018-2020, categorised by the Definitions and Classification System in Child Protection (I. Skilgreiningar- og flokkunarkerfi í barnavernd).

Overall, there are four main categories to which a report falls under: neglect, abuse, youth's risk taking behaviour and the health or the life of an unborn baby is endangered. Each category, apart from the last one, has a subset of categories, further defining the nature of the report.

All numbers presented in this document are based upon a registration all CPCs in Iceland must turn in monthly. By the end of each year, CPCs turn in their final report where all reports and cases have been reviewed¹. For this reason, the numbers presented here below, are preliminary and should thus be treated as such. For consistency, the numbers from 2020 are compared with the monthly registration in 2019 and 2018.

	2018		2019		2020	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Neglect	4.241	41,5	4.759	42,0	5.670	43,1
Abuse	2.592	25,4	2.990	26,4	3.765	28,6
Youth's risk taking behaviour	3.264	32,0	3.509	30,9	3.554	27,1
Health or the life of an unborn baby is endangered	116	1,1	86	0,8	151	1,1
Reports, total	10.213	100	11.344	100	13.142	100

Most reports received by CPCs are due to suspected neglect, or over 40% of all reports. This holds true all three years here shown. In 2018 and 2019, roughly 30% of all reports were due to suspected youth's risk taking behaviour, accounting for second most common reason of reporting. In 2020 this changed, where number of reports due to suspected abuse exceeded the number of reports due to youth's risk taking behaviour. Next section will further detail reports received by CPCs and the breakdown of these reports.

¹ The end of year reports give a better picture of the number of reports in a year. They are usually very similar to the monthly registration but may vary slightly (+/-0,2-2%). In 2019, domestic violence was vastly underreported in the monthly registration (12%). Such a difference is rare, but emphasises the fact that these numbers presented are preliminary and should be treated as such.

NEGLECT

Neglectful behaviour towards a child is defined as the omission of care or absence of needs being met, that leads to harm or is likely to lead to harm on the child’s development. Neglect consists of four main components:

- **Physical neglect:** *A parent has failed their duty to provide for the child’s basic needs. Physical neglect can manifest in inadequate provision of basic needs across various different avenues, where failure to thrive is the most serious outcome.*
- **Neglect in safety and care:** *Parent does not provide the child with sufficient care and thereby endangers the child’s safety and welfare. This pertains to circumstances where the child does not have the physical, cognitive or emotional means to protect themselves.*
- **Educational neglect:** *Parent fails to provide for their child’s basic needs with regards to schooling and education.*
- **Emotional neglect:** *Parent fails to encourage the child’s emotional, social, and cognitive development and fails to discipline the child.*

	2018	2019	2020
Neglect*	4.241	4.759	5.670
Physical neglect	223	225	249
Neglect in safety and care	3.609	4.137	5.026
<i>Thereof due to parent’s substance abuse</i>	1.404	1.635	2.114
Educational neglect	217	220	239
Emotional neglect	329	331	438

*A report may fall in more than one subcategory. The sum of subcategories may thus exceed the total count of reports due to neglect.

ABUSE

Abuse is defined as an action on behalf of the parent or other individual that leads to harm or is likely to lead to harm on the child's development. Abuse consists of three main components:

- **Emotional abuse:** *Parent or another individual is demeaning towards a child, has unrealistic expectations of a child, or the child witnesses domestic violence or abusive behaviour.*
- **Physical abuse:** *Physical abuse is when a child is deliberately physically abused or is subjected to indirect abuse.*
- **Sexual abuse:** *Parent or another individual is sexually abusive if they commit a sexual act with a child or assists another person to commit a sexual act with a child. This entails the deception, persuasion, inducement, enticement, coercion or remarks of any sexually explicit conduct or alludes to such conduct, as per The General Penal Code (no. 19/1940).*

	2018	2019	2020
Abuse*	2.592	2.990	3.765
Emotional abuse	1.587	1.905	2.448
<i>Thereof due to domestic violence</i>	746	908**	1.167
Physical abuse	613	681	906
Sexual abuse	449	475	515

*A report may fall in more than one subcategory. The sum of subcategories may thus exceed the total count of reports due to abuse.

**Domestic violence was underreported in the monthly registration in 2019. According to the end of year review, reports regarding domestic violence were 1.017 in 2019.

HEALTH OR THE LIFE OF AN UNBORN BABY IS ENDANGERED

An action on behalf of the parent that may harm an unborn child.

- Mother's alcohol or substance abuse
- Mother is subjected to violence
- Other incidents that go against Act on Child Protection no 80/2002, Article 16.

Health or the life of an unborn baby is endangered

	N	%*
2018	116	1,1
2019	86	0,8
2020	151	1,1

*Proportion of all incidents reported to the Child Protection Committees that year.

YOUTH'S RISK TAKING BEHAVIOUR

Youth's risk taking behaviour is defined as an action or the lack of action that leads to, or is likely to have, harmful consequences for the youth or others. This category mainly refers to teens, 14 years of age and older.

- Substance abuse
- Endangers their own health and development
- Delinquency
- Violent behaviour
- School disengagement and truancy

	2018	2019	2020
Youth's risk taking behaviour*	3.264	3.509	3.554
Substance abuse	599	732	597
Endangers their own health and development	1.299	1.247	1.318
Delinquency	646	725	774
Violent behaviour	542	623	742
School disengagement and truancy	264	340	248

*A report may fall in more than one subcategory. The sum of subcategories may thus exceed the total count of reports due to youth's risk taking behaviour.