

# The pandemic created a perfect storm for rising rates of family violence in Hawai'i

Trends in family violence in Hawai'i are alarming.

The Covid-19 pandemic upended the country, with enormous economic and social implications. Given the increased number of families living in virtual confinement coupled with massive economic disarray, the pandemic created the conditions for a rise in family violence.

Violence occurs in all types of families, regardless of socio-economic status. At the same time, there is a strong association between economic crisis, parental stress and rising rates of child maltreatment.<sup>1</sup> Lockdowns and pandemic-related economic impacts exacerbated factors typically associated with family violence.



*"I'm hearing some of the physical abuse cases are more serious, with more children in hospitals as a result of abuse."*

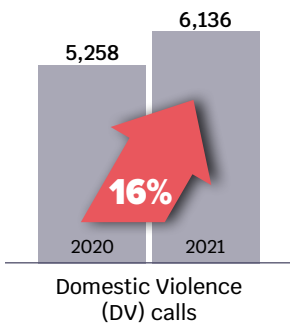
Jasmine Mau Mukai,  
Statewide Director for the Children's Justice Centers

Calls and caseloads related to family violence increased during the pandemic.

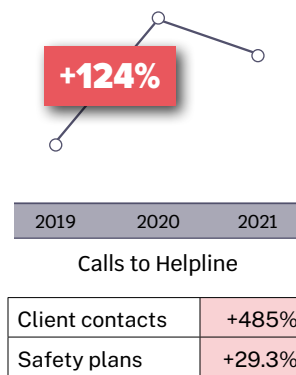
Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN)

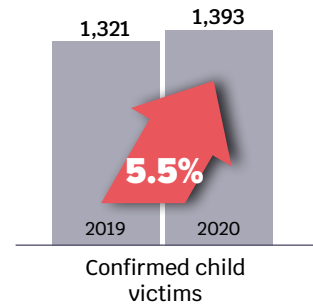
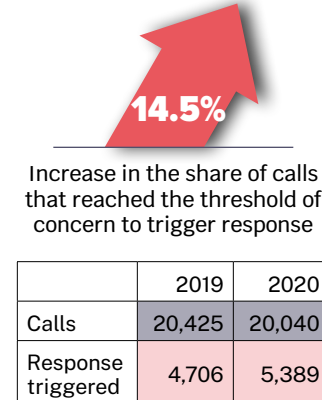
HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT



HONOLULU DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTION CENTER (DVAC)<sup>4</sup>



HI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS) CHILD WELFARE SERVICES<sup>5,6</sup>



During the pandemic lockdown:

Households without a previous history of domestic violence were a driving factor behind the increases in domestic violence calls.<sup>7</sup>

Isolation prevents reports of Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN).

COVID-19 left parents and children confined to their homes, cut off from friends, neighbors, teachers, and others who might have reported signs of abuse and violence and intervened to help potential victims escape violent situations.

*"When our state was on lockdown, our calls dropped by 24%."*

Robert Boyack,  
Child and Family Services<sup>2</sup>

NATIONWIDE<sup>8</sup>  
Child maltreatment reports  
dropped by 40 – 60%

HAWAII<sup>9</sup>  
100 fewer child welfare  
petitions filed in family court

US, 2019 vs 2020

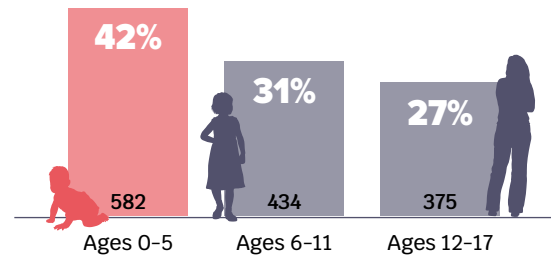
HI, 2019 vs 2020



Children under age 1 are more than twice as likely as older children to be victims of CAN.

AGE OF VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT<sup>6</sup>

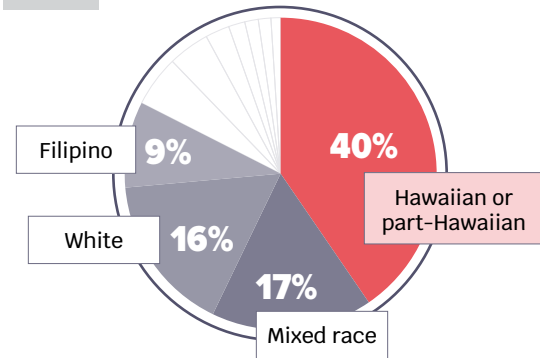
DHS 2020



In 2020, 40% of child victims were Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian, almost 60% higher than what we would expect based on their representation in the state population.

CHARACTERISTICS OF VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

DHS 2020



Others include: Other Pacific Islander, Samoan, Black, Japanese, Chinese, American Indian/Alaskan Native

Native Hawai'i women experience intimate partner violence at higher rates than non-Hawaiian women, beginning early in their lives. For women ages 18-29, rates of IPV among Native Hawaiians are 55% higher than among non-Hawaiian women.<sup>6</sup>

Higher rates of family violence among Native Hawaiians cannot be divorced from oppressive external conditions such as colonialization, denial of self-determination, racialized systems and structures, and economic stress.<sup>10</sup>

Family violence can undermine the health and wellbeing of parents and children alike. Preventing violence in the home is a key to healthy early childhood development.

Children have the greatest chance to develop to their full capacity when they live in safe, secure and nurturing homes. Young children who endure abuse and neglect and are exposed to intimate partner violence experience emotional, mental, and social damage that can affect their development, school readiness and longer-term school success. Victims of intimate partner violence have a more difficult time holding jobs, have fewer educational opportunities and earn lower wages, and suffer other consequences such as higher rates of substance abuse, homelessness and mental health issues.



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1 Alex R. Piquero, et. al., Impact report: covid-19 and domestic violence trends. February 23, 2021. National commission on covid-19 and criminal justice. <https://covid19.counciloncj.org/2021/02/23/impact-report-covid-19-and-domestic-violence-trends/>

2 Robert Boyack quoted in Peter Boylan. 2021. Isabella Kalua case exposes limits of child welfare system. The Star Advertiser. November 21. <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2021/11/21/hawaii-news/kalua-case-exposes-limits-of-child-welfare-system/>

3 Jolanie Martinez. 2021. Advocacy groups see rise in domestic violence survivors seeking help as COVID restriction loosen. Hawai'i News Now. October 5. <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2021/10/06/advocacy-groups-see-rise-do->

[mestic-violence-survivors-seeking-help-covid-restrictions-loosen/?outputType=apps](https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2021/10/06/advocacy-groups-see-rise-domestic-violence-survivors-seeking-help-covid-restrictions-loosen/?outputType=apps)

4 DVAC: Domestic Violence Action Center. 2020. New Challenges: Steady Commitment. 2020 Annual Report. [https://domesticviolenceactioncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/DVAC\\_2020\\_v6.pdf](https://domesticviolenceactioncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/DVAC_2020_v6.pdf)

5 <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Attachment-A-2021-APSR-Data-Booklet.pdf>

6 State of Hawaii, Department of Human Services, Databook. December 2020. p. 16. <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/DHS-Databook-2020-FINAL.pdf>

7 Emily Leslie and Riley Wilson. August 2020. Sheltering in place and domestic violence: evidence from calls for service during covid-19. <https://>

[covid19.counciloncj.org/2020/08/18/domestic-violence/](https://covid19.counciloncj.org/2020/08/18/domestic-violence/)

8 Schmidt & Natanson, 2020

9 Zero to Three Court 2021

10 Office of Hawaiian Affairs. N.d. Issue Brief: Covid-19 and Native Hawaiian Communities: Native Hawaiians Over-Represented in COVID-19 At-Risk Populations. [https://19of32x2yl33s8o4x-za0gf14-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/Issue-Brief.-Covid-19\\_corrected.pdf](https://19of32x2yl33s8o4x-za0gf14-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/Issue-Brief.-Covid-19_corrected.pdf)