# Childhood Neglect Leads to More Delinquency

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## Research Question
- Does experiencing neglect in childhood lead to higher rates of delinquency among young adults?  
- Does gender have any effect on this outcome?

## Significance
- In 2015, about 7.2 million children (9.8%) were reported to Child Protective Services as alleged victims of maltreatment.  
- Nearly 700,000 of these children were verified as victims of maltreatment.  
- Neglect is the most common form of maltreatment: ¾ of children who went through maltreatment experienced neglect.  
- Almost 1,700 children died from neglect.

## Background
- Childhood neglect leads to higher rates of alcoholism and violent crime in adulthood, especially for women (Widom & White, 1997).
- There is a positive relationship between parental rejection and adolescent illicit drug use for both men and women (Pires & Jenkins, 2007).
- Parental neglect is related to lower self-esteem in children, regardless of gender, which is related to a higher risk of drug and alcohol abuse (Bolger et al., 1998).

## Hypothesis
- Young adults who experienced neglect in childhood will be more likely to participate in delinquent activities.  
- Males will have higher rates of delinquency than females who experienced the same level of neglect.

## Data
- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health)  
- Wave 3 (2001-2002) public data (N = 4,882)  
- Age 18-26

## Dependent Measure
- Delinquency Scale  
- Contains 12 questions (e.g., stealing, selling drugs, fights) during the previous 12 months (0 = never, 1 = 1-2 times, 2 = 3-4 times, 3 = 5 or more times)  
- The scale (0 – 36) was condensed to be dichotomous where:  
  - 0 = No delinquent acts: 73.4%  
  - 1 = Any delinquent acts: 26.6%  

## Control Measure
- Gender of respondents  
  - Male: 46.1%  
  - Female: 53.9%

## Analytical Plan
- Cross tabulation and Chi-square test using SPSS

## Results

### Figure 1. % Delinquency by Childhood Neglect: Men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neglect Level</th>
<th>Male Delinquency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 times</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-10 times</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11+ times</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>53.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square test shows that differences by childhood neglect was significant at $p < .01$.

### Figure 2. % Delinquency by Childhood Neglect: Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neglect Level</th>
<th>Female Delinquency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 times</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-10 times</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11+ times</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square test shows that differences by childhood neglect was significant at $p < .001$.

## Summary of the Findings
- Young adults who experienced neglect in childhood are more likely to commit delinquent acts, except for those who reported 11+ times of neglect.  
- Gender seems to have little effect on the pattern of delinquency when looking at the effect of neglect.

## Discussion and Policy implications
- It could be that young adults who experienced parental neglect 11+ times during childhood might have been removed from their parents into a more loving/caring household with better guardians.  
- There should be more emphasis on the importance of school teachers recognizing early signs of neglect.

## References