

Our Voice Greek Survivors

Experiences of Victims and Survivors of
Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation



Introduction

One out of six children in Greece experience some form of sexual abuse throughout their lives.¹ Additionally, one out of three are subjected to sexual abuse through physical contact and one in 30 experience rape or attempted rape.² In Greece, the organisation The Smile of The Child reported low disclosure rates of sexual abuse of children with only 4 out of 729 reports concerning sexual abuse.³ In addition, increasing the vulnerability and exposure of children to sexual abuse are structural factors such as the financial struggles of the country and geopolitical tensions, influencing intersectional harms.⁴ On one hand, structural factors like poverty has been reported to contribute to the increase of child abuse in Greece, while on the other, unaccompanied refugee minors arriving in the country remain especially susceptible to various forms of abuse.⁵

Given the scale of sexual violence against children and the urgent need for action, this report presents insights from 1,103 Greek-speaking victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and exploitation in response to the [Global Our Voice Survivor Survey](#), collected from 8 January 2024 to 9 September 2025. The survey was available online, anonymous and in 35 languages and was designed to amplify the knowledge and voices of those who had experienced sexual abuse as children, highlight their experiences and guide effective prevention and support strategies. A detailed overview of the survey methodology can be found here: <https://www.suojellaanlapsia.fi/en/post/our-voice-global-report>.

This report aims to raise awareness about the experiences of survivors of childhood sexual abuse in Greece, highlighting the challenges they face in disclosure and support. This report also aims to showcase the long-term impacts that childhood sexual abuse can have on the lives of survivors. The findings seek to inform prevention, support and healing initiatives, helping policymakers to create more responsive and effective systems.

The full data presented in this report can be found in the **Data Annex** here: https://4d226c6f-2fb2-4166-936f-bae8f2513b5a.usrfiles.com/ugd/4d226c_af9ac1af07b147b28e62d36f7e1961ce.pdf.



I wish and hope that I added a grain of sand in this battle.



Survivor in response to the Greek Our Voice Survivor Survey.

¹ Petroulaki K, Tsirigoti A, Zarokosta F, Nikolaidis G. (2013) [Epidemiological characteristics of minors' exposure to experiences of violence in Greece: the BECAN study]. *Psychiatriki*; 24(4):262-71. Greek, Modern. PMID: 24486975. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24486975/>.

² Ibid.

³ The Smile of The Child (2019) The urgent need to take specific measures against Sexual Abuse of Children, due to the dramatic increase of cases that occur daily was highlighted at the International Conference organized by "The Smile of the Child" in Athens. <https://www.hamogelo.gr/gr/el/ta-nea-mas/tin-epitaktiki-anagki-lipsis-metron-enantia-sti-seksoualiki-kakopoiisi-paidion-logo-tis-dramatikis-aiksis-ton-peristatikon-se-kathimerini-vasi-anedeikse-to-diethnes-sinedrio-pou-diorganose-to-chamogelo-tou-paidiou/>.

⁴ ECPAT International. (2019). ECPAT Country Overview: Greece. Bangkok: ECPAT International. <https://ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ECPAT-Country-Overview-Report-Greece-2019.pdf>.

⁵ Warbuton, J. (2016). Preventing the sexual exploitation of children: A mapping of practice and interventions. ECPAT International Journal. 11. 4-24 <https://ecpat.org/resource/preventing-the-sexual-exploitation-of-children-frameworks-for-intervention/>.

Key Findings



Over half of Greek-speaking survivors reported experiencing sexual abuse between the ages of 7-9.



A majority of the Greek-speaking survivors were subjected to sexual abuse on multiple occasions and in various forms.



9 out of 10 respondents reported that the perpetrator was a close family member or in the family's circle of trust.



Almost half of survivors who disclosed abuse waited over 10 years, reporting shame or lack of courage as the main barriers to disclosure.



A majority of Greek-speaking survivors reported enduring long-term consequences of the abuse, for which they had not received adequate support.

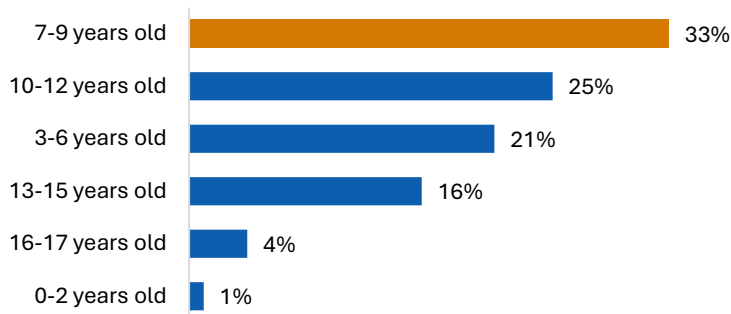
1. Over half of Greek-speaking survivors reported experiencing sexual abuse between the ages of 7-9.

The majority of survivors of childhood sexual violence who responded to the survey identified as female (89%), while 9% identified as male, and 1% as non-binary and other. Most respondents (81%) were aged 35–64, while younger (<35) and older (65+) adults were underrepresented, together accounting for 19% of respondents.

Three in five Greek-speaking survivors combined (58%) reported that they were first subjected to sexual violence between the ages of 7 and 12, with 33% reporting they were between 7-9 and 25% between 10-12.

“My young then uncle would come and rub between my thighs while I was sleeping and tell me not to scream... I was so scared I was ready to scream.”.

Survivor who experienced childhood sexual violence at ages 10–12.



2. A majority of the Greek-speaking survivors were subjected to sexual abuse on multiple occasions and in various forms.

For most Greek-speaking respondents, the abuse was not an isolated incident. Instead, the majority (67%) reported that they were subjected to sexual violence on more than one occasion experiencing varied forms of abuse.

Over half of Greek-speaking respondents (66%) reported having their genitals touched, either nude or clothed, by another person, or touching another person's genitals nude or clothed, due to the other person allowing it to happen or asking, manipulating or forcing them to do it. In addition, other types of sexual violence reported by survivors included the imitation of penetration without it leading to penetration (26%), exposing of the other person's genitals or exposing their genitals to the other person (23%), with tech-facilitated forms of abuse occupying the lowest percentages. It is important to note that these results do not reflect overall prevalence of technology-facilitated crimes of sexual violence

Is there anything you would like to say to strengthen the rights of victims and protect children? [Number of respondents: 584]

Speak because you're not alone.

It's very important how the family environment will react. It should be with love and understanding towards the victim, without blaming and hysteria.

Sexual violence against boys from women should stop being considered consensual and legal action needs to be taken.

Informing parents and kids is important about what is wrong and what is right, as well as the ways to handle this situation.

That sexual abuse is not limited to the case of an adult offender towards a minor but like my case, from a minor to a minor.

Children should not feel ashamed and scared! They should be able to speak up, otherwise the violence can continue with horrible consequences.

Sexual crimes of that nature should not be subject to statute of limitations, so that victims can find justice no matter how many years have passed.

Sex education should be integrated into all educational institutions especially elementary school.

Greek society has the tendency to blame the victim, and the justice system is too slow. This subjects the victims into a long and public process.

How long did the sexual violence last? [Number of respondents: 594]

Whenever my relative would get the chance to isolate me from ages 7 until 21.

From when I was a baby until I was 6 years old.

From 5 years old until I was 17 years old.

With the same person, we were in a relationship since we me (me 16 years old) until I reached 20.

A long time. Years. The abuse was verbal too. It creates fear, stress, guilt.

A whole scary night in a place I did not know because he sprayed me, and I passed out.

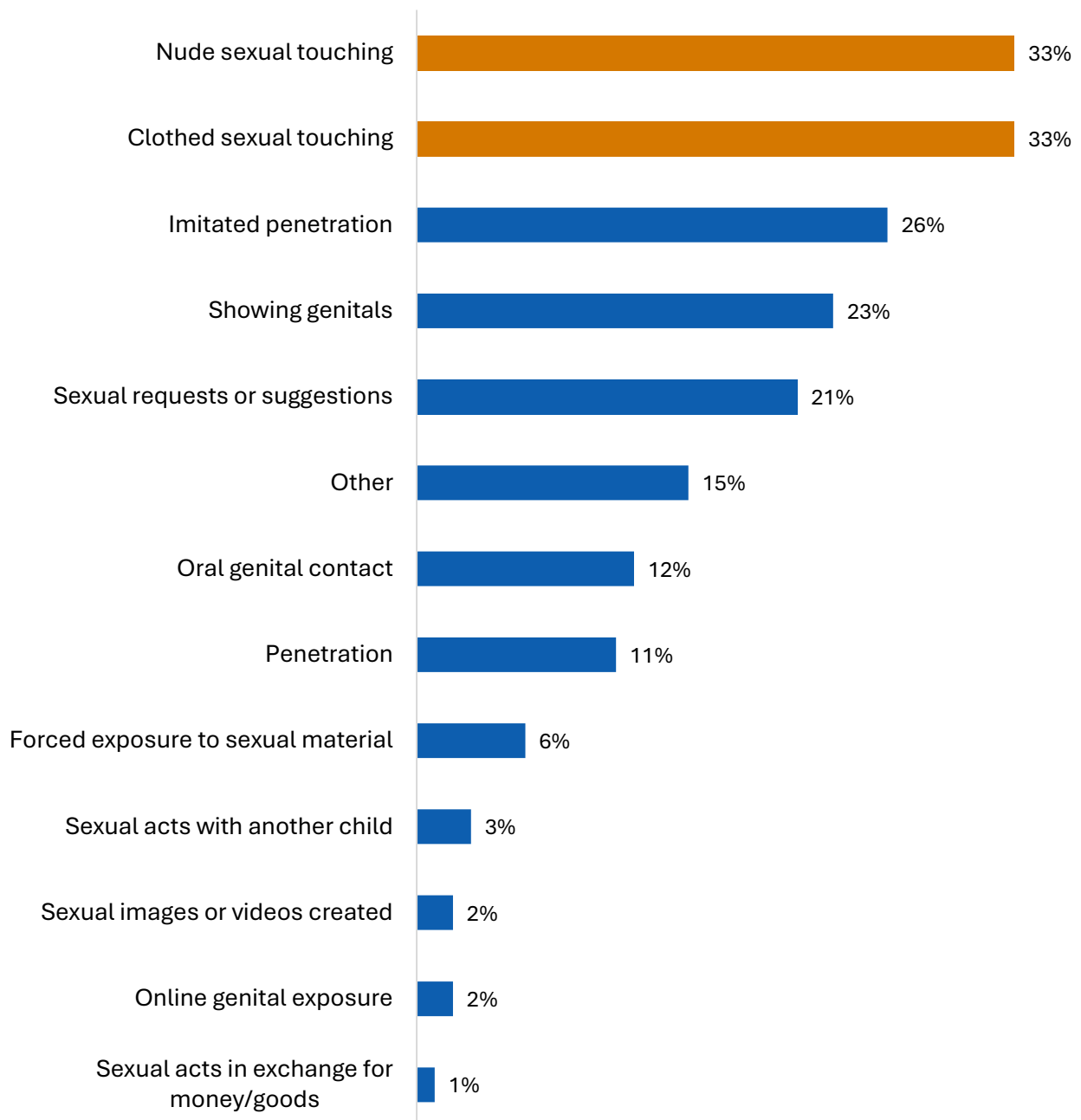
against children, but rather the experiences of the specific group of survivors reached by this survey.

Almost all of the respondents (99%) reported that the abuse they experienced did not lead to trafficking/commercial sexual exploitation, however some indicated that they received monetary compensation or discounts following the abuse.

“He would touch me clothed, give me a massage, and talk indecently and sexually. I never spoke out because I was attending his tutoring classes and was giving my family a discount because of financial troubles.”

Survivor in response to the Greek Our Voice Survivor Survey.

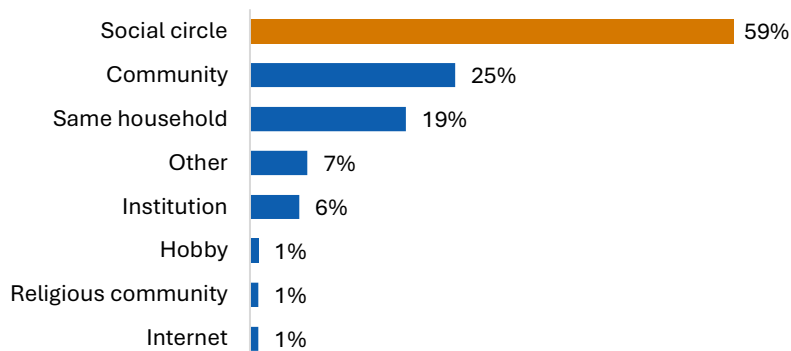
Types of childhood sexual violence experienced by respondents



3. 9 out of 10 respondents reported that the perpetrator was a close family member or in the family's circle of trust.

Almost all survivors (97%) reported that the perpetrator was male. Additionally, 43% indicated that the perpetrator was between 25 - 44 years old at the time of the sexual violence. Concerningly, 23% of survivors reported that the perpetrator was under 18, indicating that many experienced peer-to-peer sexual abuse, including sibling sexual abuse.

How did you know the perpetrator(s)?



The vast majority of respondents (91%) reported the perpetrator was someone they knew from before, and a slightly higher percentage (92%) noted that the perpetrator was a person within the family's circle of trust. A majority (59%) identified the perpetrator as part of the family's social circle (e.g., a relative, friend, or family friend), followed by community members (25%). Additionally, 19% reported that the perpetrator lived in the same household, highlighting the risk of sexual violence within close familial contexts.

4. Almost half of survivors who disclosed abuse waited over 10 years, reporting shame or lack of courage as the main barriers to disclosure.

The majority of Greek-speaking respondents (73%) reported they have disclosed the sexual violence they experienced as a child, while one out of four reported not disclosing. Although a high percentage have disclosed, only 23% disclosed the abuse immediately after it occurred. Combined, most respondents (60%) reported they disclosed more than 6 years after the abuse, and a quarter (26%) waited over two decades to do so.

Almost half (42%) disclosed the abuse to a parent, followed by friends (34%) and partners (23%). A significant portion (18%) also disclosed to a therapist, highlighting the importance of professional support for survivors.

How did you know the perpetrator(s)? Or, if you did not know the perpetrator(s) from before, how did you come into contact?

[Number of respondents: 1,091, selected answers: 1,311]

Stepfather.
My grandfather.
Nurse.
Family dentist.
A neighbour who used to teach me English and bring his friends to abuse me.
My aunt's husband.
Camp counsellor.
Tutor.
Family friend.
A neighbour's kid his cousins all about 18-20 years old.
Religious leader.
Orthodox church.
Sister's husband.
My father but I would see him only in summers because he was living abroad and was divorced from my mother.

What could have helped you disclose the sexual violence sooner? [Number of respondents: 419]

Bigger trust in the family.

I was a kid that felt like I had no protection from my environment My father abused me and my sister, while beating and manipulating my mother.

If the family had a different stance, believed me and weren't so concerned with what people could say. This created guilt because they could not handle the situation.

To have had a family environment more open to discussion, where I would feel less ashamed.

To not be afraid of getting grounded or scolded from the perpetrator or my parents.

If I knew that this behaviour is inappropriate. I felt weird, awkward and did not know why.

To be more informed about sexual violence beforehand and have someone in school I could talk to.

The knowledge that it was sexual violence. It happened gradually for 3 years, and then I thought it was too late to disclose.

Survivors seeking to disclose the abuse can face several structural, psychological and financial barriers. The vast majority of Greek-speaking respondents reported feelings of shame (52%) and lacking the courage (37%) as barriers to immediate disclosure. In addition, a concerning 41% reported doubts about receiving support, including feeling that nobody would care (16%) or believing that disclosure would not help them (25%).

These feelings are reflected in the finding that only one in four respondents who disclosed actually received support.

Almost all of the Greek-speaking respondents (95%) who disclosed, reported that it did not lead to a police investigation. Of the small proportion (5%) whose disclosed, did lead to a police investigation, nearly half (47%) reported that it resulted in prosecution or a sentence, and unfortunately only 13% received any form of compensation.



reported they did not receive support or help.

5. A majority of Greek-speaking survivors reported enduring long-term consequences of the abuse, for which they had not received adequate support.

The responses of Greek-speaking survivors highlight the significant impact sexual violence have on children's lives. The majority of respondents (71%) reported that the abuse led to long-term consequences, including depression, anxiety disorders and panic attacks, difficulty forming and maintaining personal relationships, sexual dysfunction, eating disorders and somatic symptoms.

Despite these consequences, three in five respondents (74%) reported not receiving support to cope with these long-term consequences. Most respondents reporting coping with the long-term consequences by talking to someone about their feelings (43%) or letting their emotions out (32%), with 42% reporting that talking to someone had the most positive impact on their recovery. By contrast, the factors with the most negative impact on recovery included criticising themselves for what happened (33%), going along as if nothing happened (32%), and convincing themselves that things are not quite as bad as they seem (24%).

Which of the following describe [the long-term consequences] the best?

[Number of respondents: 762, selected answers: 2,892]

False perception of interpersonal relationships.

I can't open myself up to people and I can't trust anyone. I always keep an eye open even with people I have known for years.

I keep changing home and work.

Aversion to touch in specific body parts.

Introversion, suspiciousness, uncomfortable with socialising.

Learning difficulties and attention issues that only got better after psychotherapy.

Fear of socialising. I was hiding my body with a lot of clothes both in winter and summer.

Tonsillitis, migraines.

How do you feel after having participated in this survey? [Number of respondents: 587]

I hope my story can help prevent future victims.

My heart beats fast and I feel like I want to cry, but at the same time I feel good that this topic is being researched. I feel relieved that adults that have been victims can have a voice!

I feel a bit upset but happy that I contributed.

I am glad that there are easily accessible actions that can help people in need.

You are the first to know about this. For years I thought that I could only write about my experiences, and I thank you for the opportunity.

I feel satisfied with my participation but feel anxiety, sadness and anger every time I have to revisit those traumatic events.

Conclusion

The findings from 1,103 Greek-speaking survivors who took part in the Global Our Voice Survivor Survey reveal the shortcomings in Greece's mechanisms for preventing child sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as in the support systems available for survivors. Their experiences expose the severe and enduring impact of sexual violence against children, alongside the systemic obstacles and challenges they encounter in their pursuit for justice and healing.

The report findings underscore the importance of preventative frameworks, and how important systemic, sufficient and comprehensive support can be for victims of sexual violence against children.

In line with the Council of Europe's Resolution 2533, policymakers in Greece should establish holistic and survivor-centred prevention and support frameworks. This involves examining systemic conditions that enable child sexual abuse, formally acknowledging the suffering of victims and survivors and facilitating access to long-term assistance, compensation and healing. Furthermore, policymakers must assess the extent of violence against children occurring in both public and private contexts and create safe and supportive conditions that encourage disclosure.

By adopting the recommendations of the Council of Europe, Greece can move toward a future where children are safeguarded from abuse, survivors are recognised and supported, and the systemic failures that perpetuate child sexual abuse and exploitation are eliminated.



*Maybe anonymity gives a small voice...
or a silent scream.*

Survivor in response to the Greek Our Voice Survivor Survey.





About Protect Children

Protect Children is a non-governmental child-rights organization based in Finland, working globally to end all forms of sexual violence against children. We adopt a holistic, research-based approach to address the issue from multiple angles.

Learn more about Protect Children: protectchildren.fi

About the Justice Initiative

The Justice Initiative is a European initiative aiming to restore justice for past victims of abuse across Europe and strengthen child protection for future generations. Protect Children, the leader of the Justice Initiative Nordic Hub, developed the Global Our Voice Survivor Survey with support from the Justice Initiative.

Learn more about the Justice Initiative: justice-initiative.eu

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<https://www.suojellaanlapsia.fi/en/post/our-voice-greek-survivors>

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