

# The impact of Child to Parent Abuse: Who does it affect and how?

An executive summary of the 2022  
Parental Survey undertaken by social  
enterprise PEGS.



## ABOUT THE SURVEY

For the second year running, social enterprise PEGS asked parents to share their experiences of Child to Parent Abuse via an anonymous online survey.

The survey sought to establish the demographics and household make-up of those affected by CPA, the behaviours being experienced, how they impact the parent, and what role professionals have played in supporting them.

## ABOUT PEGS

PEGS provides peer support, virtual drop-ins, bespoke workshops and empowerment programmes for parents, guardians and carers impacted by CPA. All parent services are free and can be accessed whether the child is under or over 18, with advocacy and one-to-ones also available for those at highest risk.

Professional training courses have been developed for frontline services – ranging from introductory to more intense sessions, plus training in PEGS' PRAM risk identification model. Consultancy services are also available for organisations seeking to develop or enhance their CPA policy.

Visit [www.pegssupport.com](http://www.pegssupport.com) or search PEGS Support on social media for more information.

# KEY FINDINGS

**74%**

of working parents experiencing CPA have had to leave work or reduce their hours.

**A quarter**

of children were five or under when the abusive behaviours began.

**30%**

changed their mind about calling a professional in case their other children were taken away.

**More than half**

of parents are physically attacked every week.

**17%**

of parents are experiencing sexualised behaviours from their child.

**A quarter**

have had to call the police at least five times due to safety concerns.

**13%**

of children have strangled or suffocated another child living with them.

**Almost half**

of parents struggled for three or more years before seeking support.

**68%**

didn't get the support they wanted when they spoke to a professional.

# WHO EXPERIENCES CPA?

Parents from every walk of life are impacted by Child to Parent Abuse – there is no 'typical' family when it comes to age, location, career or any other demographic factor.

Married, divorced, co-parenting, single parenting. One child, three children, five children. Working full time, studying, retired, unable to work. There really isn't a mould into which the families who completed our survey fit.

Having said that, one question where there was an overwhelming skew in favour of one answer was when we asked about the gender of the adult filling in the survey – almost every single respondent was a woman.

The most obvious reason for this is the gendered nature of abuse, with most research showing female parents as much more likely to experience Child to Parent Abuse.

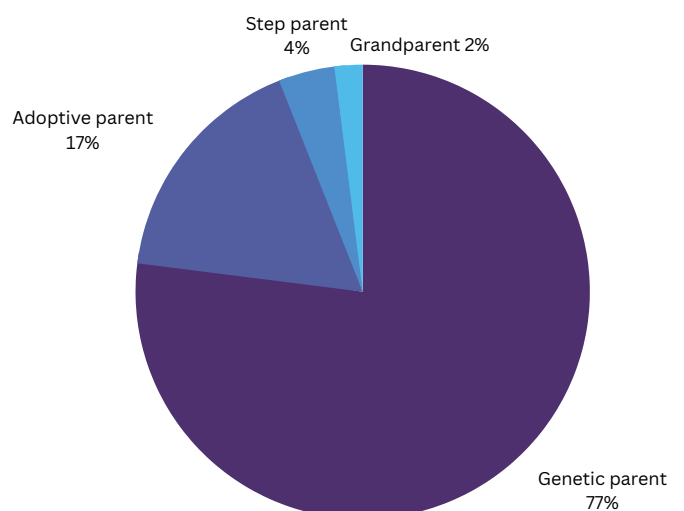
We know there are a proportion of male parents experiencing CPA – and indeed there are many more indirectly affected due to the impact on the entire household. So it's important to ensure services are open to any parent – regardless of gender, and regardless of any other demographic.

24% of parents experiencing CPA also have a long-term physical illness or disability.  
27% have a mental or emotional health issue.

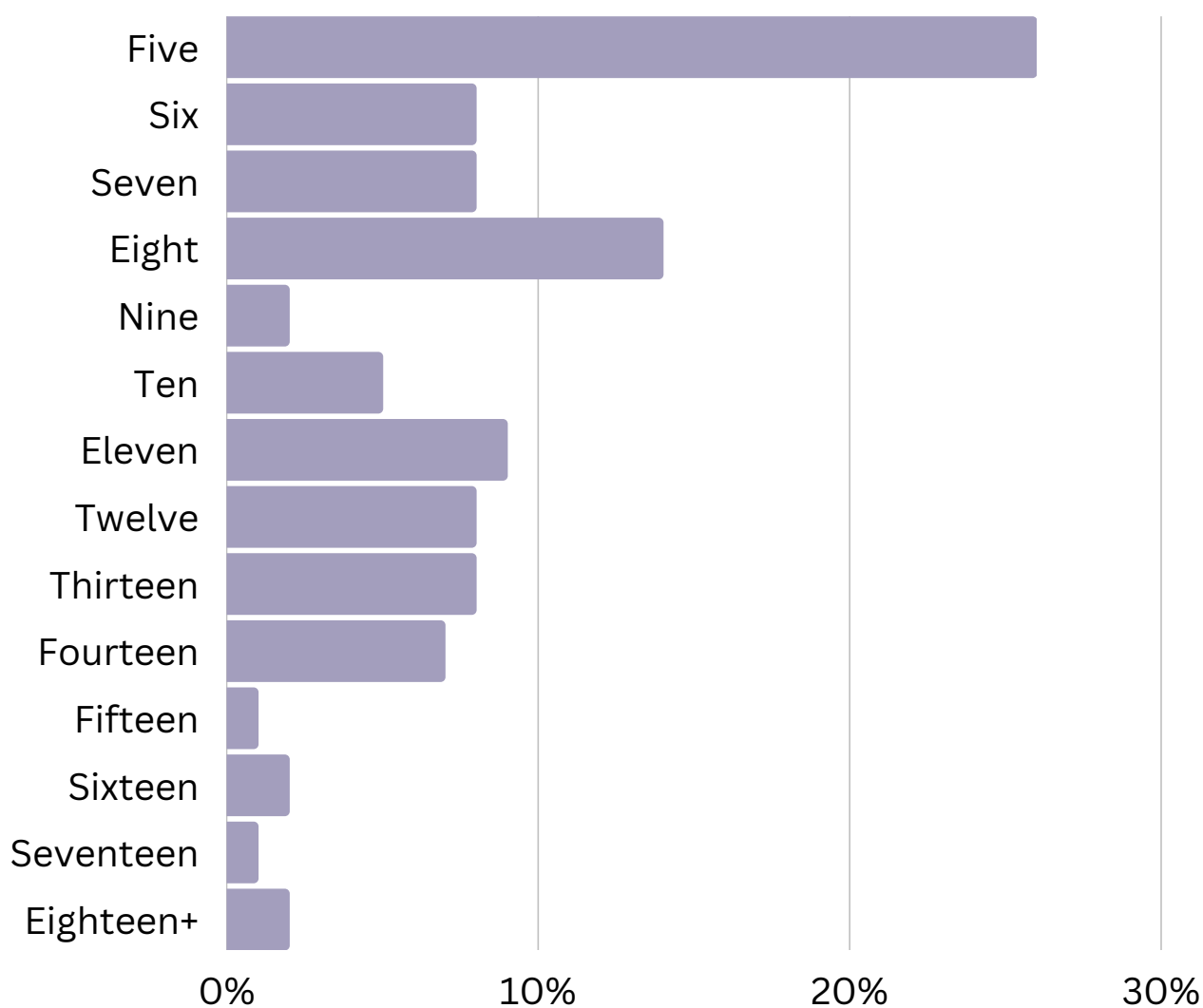
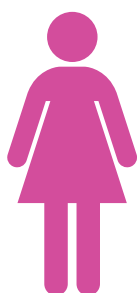
32% of respondents are employed part-time.  
28% are employed full-time.  
25% are unable to work.  
Others are looking for work, retired, or studying.

89% of parents have only one child who displays abusive behaviours towards them.

## RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD

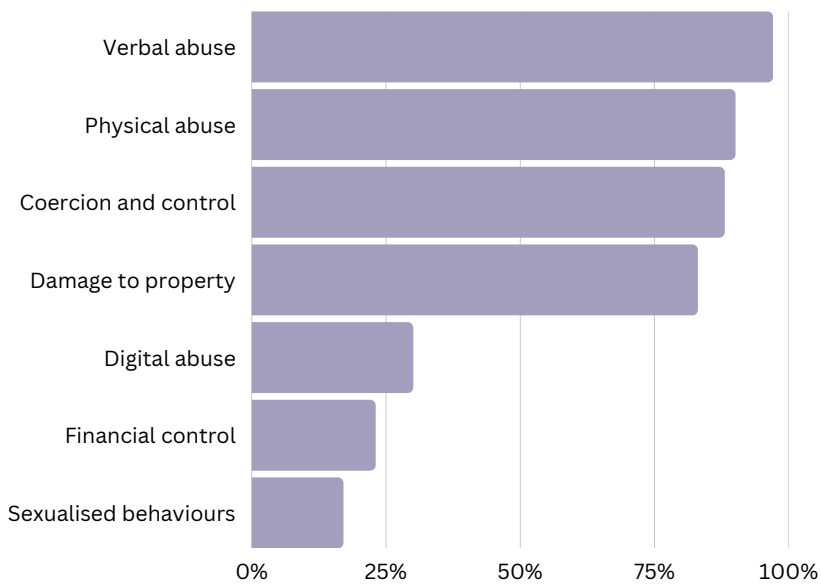


# AT WHAT AGE DO ABUSIVE BEHAVIOURS BEGIN?

**61%****35%****4% non-binary or transgender**

## GENDER OF CHILD

# THE BEHAVIOURS



Threats, intimidation, theft, hitting, kicking, strangling, humiliation...the types of abuse being experienced by parents on a regular basis make it clear that there is a huge distinction between 'typical' boundary-pushing behaviour and Child to Parent Abuse.

The behaviours also make it clear why parents need knowledgeable and supportive professionals who they can reach out to.

There is sadly no easy answer when it comes to 'solving' the problem, but having the right network of support in place can and does make a difference to the parents in these situations.

For the second year running, we see other children in the home being targeted too - of the 70% who live with other children, almost 60% are displaying behaviours including hitting, kicking, strangling and suffocation.

19% of parents are physically attacked every day by their child.

A further 35% are attacked weekly, and 22% monthly.

72% of parents are verbally abused by their child every day.

20% experience weekly verbal abuse, and 4% monthly.

34% also display abusive behaviours in public.

18% display these behaviours at school or college.

And 24% are abusive in front of family or friends.

97% of parents have changed their routines and lifestyle as a direct result of experiencing CPA.

73% have been cut off or had contact reduced by a loved one because of their home situation.

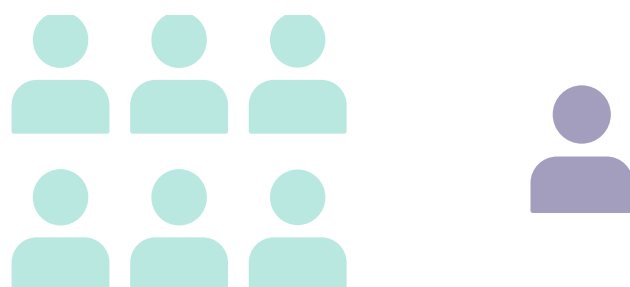
36% of children have hurt a pet/animal, 1% have killed an animal.

# THE IMPACT

The overwhelming majority of respondents described a complex and intense range of impacts – within this group of parents experiencing CPA, it's sadly not unusual to feel unable to cope with their child's behaviour, stressed or anxious, guilty, alone or isolated.

Four in five parents feel their health is suffering and almost nine in ten feel their wellbeing has been affected. And two in five feel unable to keep themselves and their family safe.

9% of parents have been threatened with eviction or needed to move house due to CPA.



## PARENTS FEEL:

Isolated/alone | 92%

Helpless | 89%

Worried | 89%

Frustrated | 83%

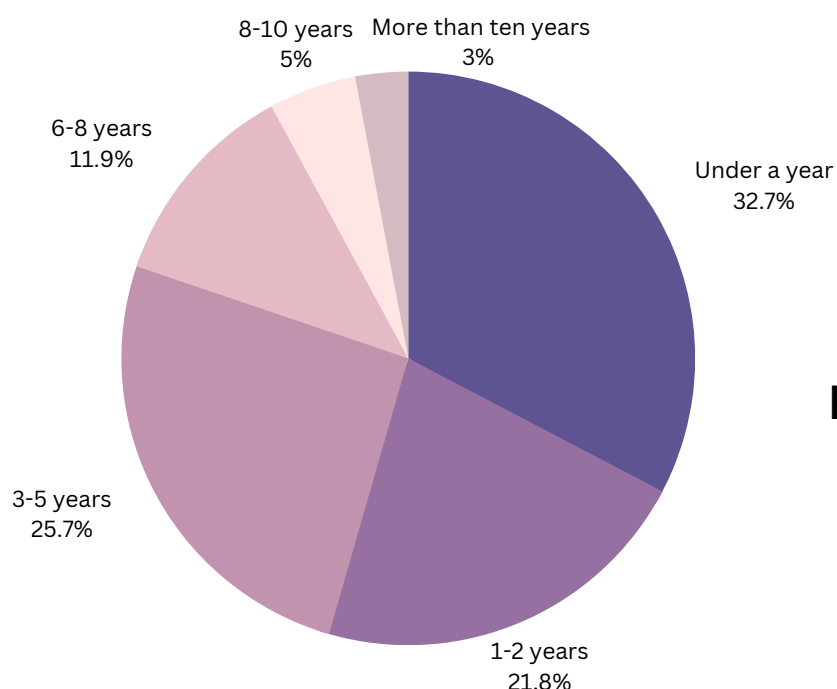
Blamed | 80%

Scared/frightened | 78%

Humiliated/ashamed | 73%

Guilty | 71%

## HOW LONG BEFORE YOU ASKED FOR SUPPORT?



# PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Parents are most likely to contact:

School | 86%

A doctor | 76%

CAMHS | 74%

Social services | 73%

64% don't feel they receive good support from support agencies or statutory services

48% feel their career makes them unable to ask for help or support

28% have been told there was a possibility they could be prosecuted for neglect or abandonment

85% have thought about calling a professional and then changed their mind?

## WHY?

They didn't want their child to be prosecuted or have a criminal record | 61%

Didn't think they'd understand | 53%

They hadn't been helpful in the past | 53%

They were worried the professional would think it was their fault (the parent's) | 48%

They were worried their other children would be taken away | 30%

They thought they could handle the situation themselves | 23%

They didn't know who to call | 20%





# HAS ANYTHING CHANGED?

More parents reporting they have had to leave work due to CPA



Slightly fewer parents are experiencing daily physical attacks



And there's also been a drop in those reporting weekly physical attacks



The percentage of parents who've had to call the police has risen



More parents are contacting domestic abuse services for support



And more have approached a charity or independent service



It's worth remembering these changes could be due to different parents completing the survey or a difference in reporting, and don't necessarily reflect a change in real terms.

# WHAT NOW?

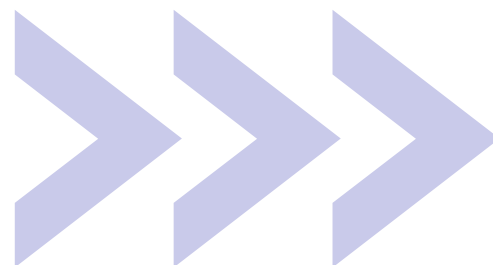
Collating as much information as possible about the parents impacted by CPA is crucial – we need to understand what's going on behind closed doors in order to identify the resources needed and put in place the support which could make a difference to these families.

Statistics around CPA can be thought-provoking, sometimes surprising, sometimes shocking. But it's vital that they become the backbone of national and regional policies, effective practices for frontline professionals, and a heightened sense of knowledge and understanding among all of us.

As an organisation, PEGS has four core areas of focus when it comes to reducing the individual, family and societal impact of CPA:

- Raising awareness
- Supporting parents
- Training professionals
- Influencing policy

These surveys, which we intend to continue undertaking annually, enable us to pinpoint specific actions which need to take place, specific questions which need further thought, and specific work we'd like to complete with the help of our valued partner organisations.



## OUR PLAN

**Survey finding:** Schools and doctors are the professionals most likely to be contacted by parents.

**PEGS plan:** We will focus on the upskilling of education and health professionals through 2023 and beyond.

**Survey finding:** Too many people are having their careers impacted by CPA.

**PEGS plan:** We will refresh our CPA Employer Covenant resources, and work with employers from across public, private and third sectors to encourage better understanding and responses to staff experiencing CPA.

**Survey finding:** Many parents report abusive behaviours beginning at the age of five.

**PEGS plan:** We will seek to establish deeper connections with organisations who specifically work with this age group – so we can reach more parents earlier on.

**Survey finding:** 68% of parents didn't feel well supported by professionals.

**PEGS plan:** Extending our training provision, and encouraging the use of our PRAM identification model across statutory services.

