



# Halloween and sexual abuse prevention: The mythical “Halloween effect”

*From the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers*

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As October arrives and families begin preparing for Halloween, it is always a priority to ensure children’s safety during this holiday. It is important to learn the facts and know the risks to your child during this festive time. A heightened risk of being sexually abused is NOT one of the dangers children face at Halloween.

The simple fact is that there are no significant increases in sexual crimes on or around Halloween. There is no “Halloween effect.” There is no change in the rate of sexual crimes by non-family members during Halloween. That was true both before and after communities enacted laws to restrict the activities of registrants during Halloween.

The crimes that do increase around Halloween are vandalism and property destruction, as well as theft, assault, and burglary. In addition, according to the Centers for Disease Control, children are four times more likely to be killed by a pedestrian/motor-vehicle accident on Halloween than on any other day of the year.

Fully 93% of sexual assaults on children are perpetrated by someone known to, and trusted by, the child and the child’s family. But due to the myths regarding child sexual abuse that focus on “stranger danger,” communities and lawmakers often endorse policies that do little to prevent sexual abuse and instead unnecessarily stretch limited law enforcement resources.

Jurisdictions that ban individuals on sex offender registries from participating in any Halloween activities, require registrants to post signs in their yards during Halloween, or round up registrants for the duration of trick-or-treating do not make children safer. Instead, these approaches create a false sense of safety while using law enforcement resources that could be better spent protecting children against the higher risk they do face during Halloween – injury or death from motor vehicles.

Child sexual abuse is a serious public health issue that faces all communities. Although the prevalence of child sexual abuse can be difficult to determine due to under-reporting, researchers estimate that [one in four girls and one in six boys](#) will be victims of sexual abuse before age 18.

For concerned parents, the best way to protect children from sexual abuse is to know the facts about sexual offending and take precautions based on facts, not fears. Parents can visit [www.atsa.com](http://www.atsa.com) to learn more about sexual abuse and prevention.

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