



Previous Case Openings by Primary Form of Substantiated Maltreatment in Ontario in 2013

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Introduction

The Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, 2013 (OIS-2013) is the fifth provincial study to examine the incidence of reported child maltreatment and the characteristics of children and families investigated by child welfare authorities in Ontario. This Information Sheet examines previous child welfare case openings.

Findings

There were an estimated 125,281 maltreatment-related investigations conducted in Ontario in 2013. There were an estimated 97,951 investigations involving an incident of maltreatment and an estimated 27,330 risk-only investigations. At the end of the initial investigation, 34% of maltreatment investigations were substantiated (an estimated 43,067 investigations).

Workers were asked to indicate whether the family's case had been previously opened for investigation. Less than one third (32%) of all substantiated investigations had never been opened. As shown in Table 1, the number of previous openings for investigations varies by primary form of substantiated maltreatment. The majority of substantiated neglect investigations (79%) substantiated emotional maltreatment investigations (74%), substantiated physical abuse investigations (65%), substantiated exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) investigations (63%), and substantiated sexual abuse investigations (58%), had at least one previous case opening. Substantiated neglect investigations were the most likely to have more than three previous case openings.

Please see Figure 1 for a visual representation of these findings.

Table 1.

Previous case openings for investigation by primary form of substantiated maltreatment in Ontario in 2013[^]

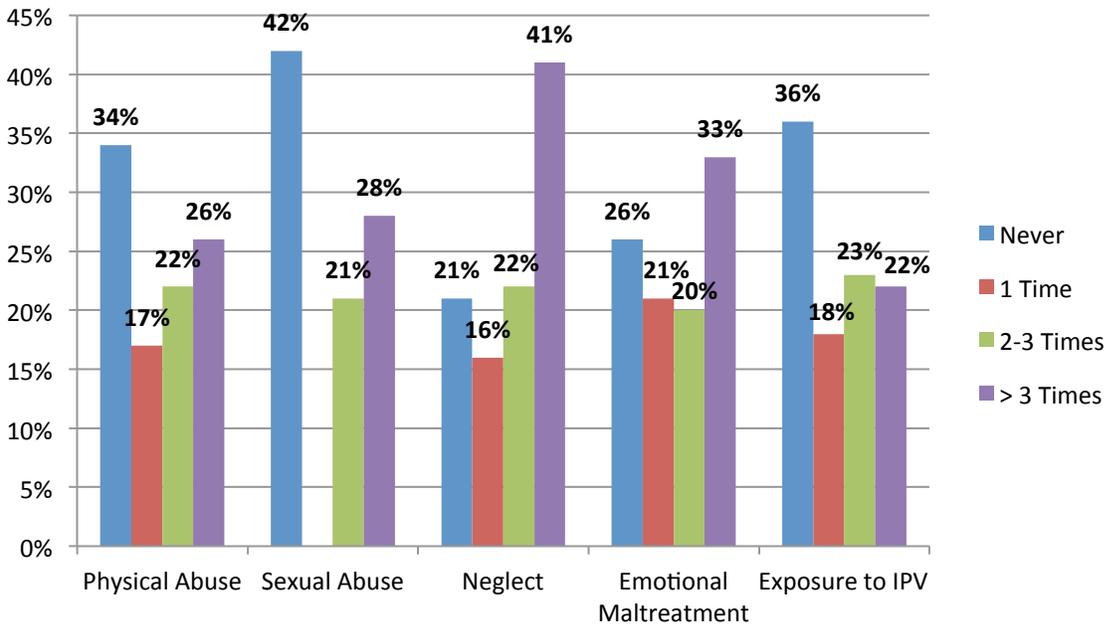
	Primary Form of Maltreatment										Total	
	Physical Abuse		Sexual Abuse		Neglect		Emotional Maltreatment		Exposure to IPV			
Previous Case Openings	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Never	1,872	34	346	42	2,123	21	1,476	26	7,301	36	13,118	31
1 Time	953	17	-	-	1,592	16	1,161	21	3,713	18	7,490	18
2-3 Times	1,211	22	173	21	2,197	22	1,107	20	4,732	23	9,420	22
> 3 Times	1,426	26	227	28	4,113	41	1,863	33	4,487	22	12,116	29
Unknown	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	211	1	317	1
Total	5,489	100	817	100	10,104	100	5,607	100	20,444	100	42,461	100

[^] Based on a sample of 1,811 substantiated child maltreatment-related investigations with information about previous case openings. Percentages are column percentages, and may not add to 100% because of rounding.

- Estimates of less than 100 investigations are not shown, but are included in the total.

Figure 1.

Previous case openings for investigation by primary form of substantiated maltreatment in Ontario in 2013



For investigations with a previous child welfare case opening, Table 2 describes the time since the case was previously closed.

Table 2.

Time since case was previously closed by primary form of substantiated maltreatment in Ontario in 2013[^]

	Primary Form of Maltreatment										Total	
	Physical Abuse		Sexual Abuse		Neglect		Emotional Maltreatment		Exposure to IPV			
Previous Case Opening	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<3 months	456	13	13	3	2,078	26	640	16	2,318	18	5,505	19
3-6 months	719	20	145	31	1,519	19	873	21	2,626	20	5,882	20
7-12 months	796	22	127	27	1,232	16	557	14	2,114	16	4,826	17
13-24 months	382	11	131	28	1,365	17	875	21	2,352	18	5,105	18
>24 months	1,237	35	55	12	1,709	22	1,187	29	3,421	27	7,609	26
Unknown	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	1	100	0
Total	3,590	100	471	100	7,903	100	4,132	100	12,931	100	29,027	100

[^] Based on a sample of 1,260 substantiated child maltreatment-related investigations with information about previous case openings. Percentages are column percentages, and may not add to 100% because of rounding.

- Estimates of less than 100 investigations are not shown, but are included in the total.

Less than 12 months had passed since a previous case opening in 61% of substantiated neglect investigations, 61% of substantiated sexual abuse investigations, 54% of substantiated exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) investigations, 51% of substantiated emotional maltreatment abuse investigations and 55% of substantiated physical abuse investigations. Please see Figure 2 for a visual representation of these findings.

Background

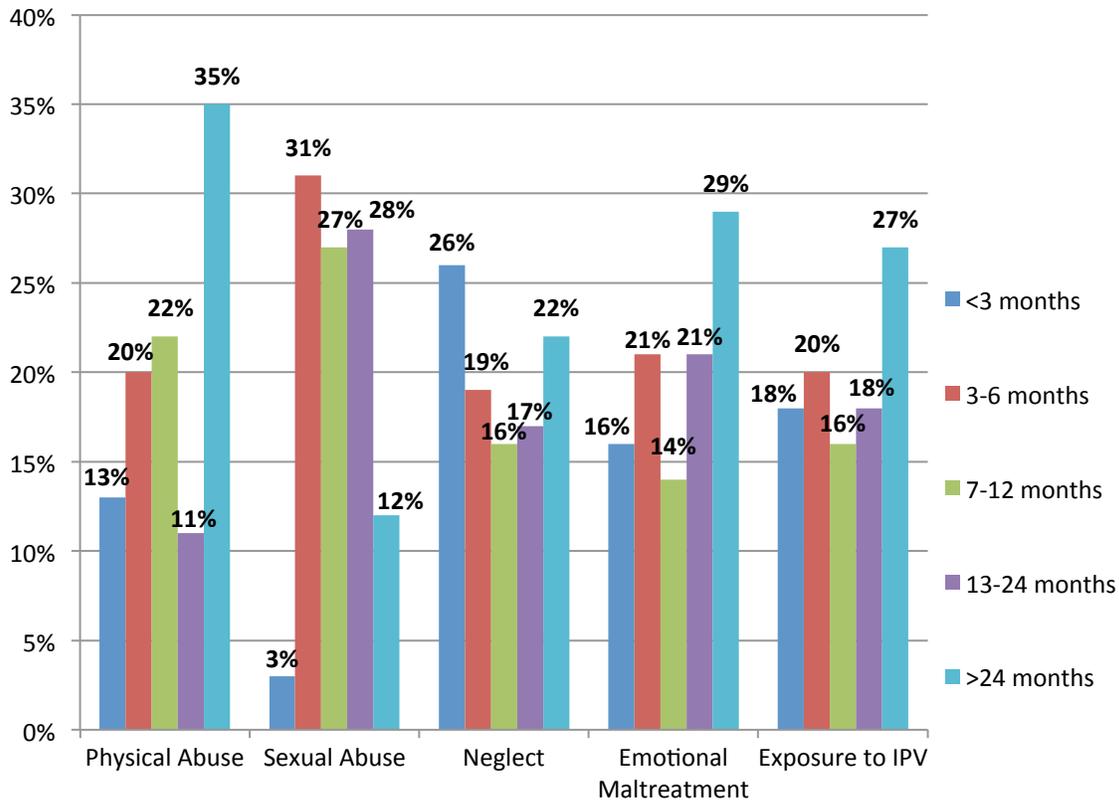
Due to changes in investigation mandates and practices over the last 15 years, the OIS-2008 and OIS-2013 differed from previous cycles in that they tracked both risk-only investigations and maltreatment investigations. Risk-only investigations were those in which a specific past incident of maltreatment was not suspected or alleged to have occurred, but rather a constellation of factors lead to concerns that a child may be maltreated in the future (e.g., caregiver with a substance abuse issue).

Methodology

The OIS-2013 used a multi-stage sampling design to select a representative sample of 17 child welfare agencies in Ontario and then to select a sample of cases within these agencies. Information was collected directly from child protection workers on a representative sample of 5,265 child protection investigations conducted during a three-month sampling period in 2013. This sample was weighted to reflect provincial annual estimates. After two weighting procedures were applied to the data, the estimated number of maltreatment-related investigations (i.e., maltreatment and risk-only investigations) conducted in Ontario in 2013 was 125,281.

Figure 2.

Time since case was previously closed by primary form of substantiated maltreatment in Ontario in 2013



For maltreatment investigations, information was collected regarding the primary form of maltreatment investigated as well as the level of substantiation for that maltreatment (substantiated, suspected, or unfounded). Thirty-two forms of maltreatment were listed on the data collection instrument, and these were collapsed into five broad categories: physical abuse (e.g., hit with hand), sexual abuse (e.g., exploitation), neglect (e.g., educational neglect), emotional maltreatment (e.g., verbal abuse or belittling), and exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) (e.g., direct witness to physical violence). Workers listed the primary concern for the investigation, and could also list secondary and tertiary concerns.

For each risk investigation, workers determined whether the child was at risk of future maltreatment. The worker could decide that the child was at risk of future maltreatment (confirmed risk), that the child was not at risk of future maltreatment (unfounded risk), or that the future risk of maltreatment was unknown.

Workers were asked to provide information on various other aspects of their investigation, including the characteristics of the household, caregivers, and child subject of the investigation, the history of previous child welfare case openings, and the short-term child welfare service dispositions.

Limitations

The OIS collects information directly from child welfare workers at the point when they completed their initial investigation of a report of possible child abuse or neglect, or risk of future maltreatment. Therefore, the scope of the study is limited to the type of information available to them at that point. The OIS does not include information about unreported maltreatment nor about cases that were investigated only by the police. Also, reports that were made to child welfare authorities but were screened out (not opened for investigation) were not included. Similarly, reports on cases currently open at the time of case selection were not included. The study did not track longer-term service events that occurred beyond the initial investigation.

Three limitations to estimation method used to derive annual estimates should also be noted. The agency size correction uses child population as a proxy for agency size; this does not account for variations in per capita investigation rates across agencies in the same strata. The annualization weight corrects for seasonal fluctuation in the volume of investigations, but it does not correct for seasonal variations in types of investigations conducted. Finally, the annualization weight includes cases that were investigated more than once in the year as a result of the case being re-opened following a first investigation completed earlier in the same year. Accordingly, the weighted annual estimates represent the child maltreatment-related investigations, rather than investigated children.

Comparisons across OIS reports must be made with caution. The forms of maltreatment tracked by each cycle were modified to take into account changes in investigation mandates and practices. Comparisons across cycles must in particular take into consideration the fact that the OIS-2008 was the first to explicitly track risk-only investigations.

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