



Alberta incidence study of reported child abuse and neglect (AIS-2003): Rates of child maltreatment¹

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Alberta incidence study background

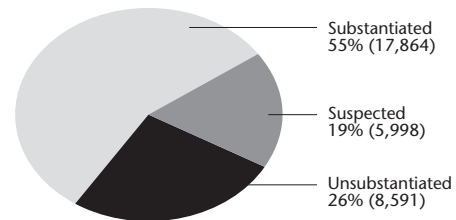
Child welfare caseloads are increasing across Alberta but the factors driving this increase are not clearly understood. This is one in a series of fact sheets highlighting key findings from an Alberta-wide study of child welfare investigations conducted in 2003.

The 2003 Alberta Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (*AIS-2003*) is the first study conducted in this province to examine the incidence of reported child maltreatment. The *AIS-2003* collected information on a sample of 2,653 child maltreatment investigations conducted at 11 child welfare offices in Alberta. Figures presented here are weighted estimates and do not include maltreated children who were not reported to a child welfare authority.

Substantiated maltreatment

An estimated 32,453 child investigations were conducted in Alberta in 2003. Fifty-five percent of these investigations were substantiated, involving an estimated 17,864 child investigations, an incidence rate of 23.76 substantiated investigations per 1,000 children. In a further 19% of investigations (an estimated 5,998 child investigations, a rate of 7.98 per 1,000 children) there was insufficient evidence to substantiate maltreatment, although it remained suspected by the investigating worker. Twenty-six percent of investigations (an estimated 8,591 child investigations, a rate of 11.42 per 1,000 children) were unsubstantiated at the end of the initial investigation period.

Figure 1: Level of substantiation in child maltreatment investigations in Alberta, in 2003*



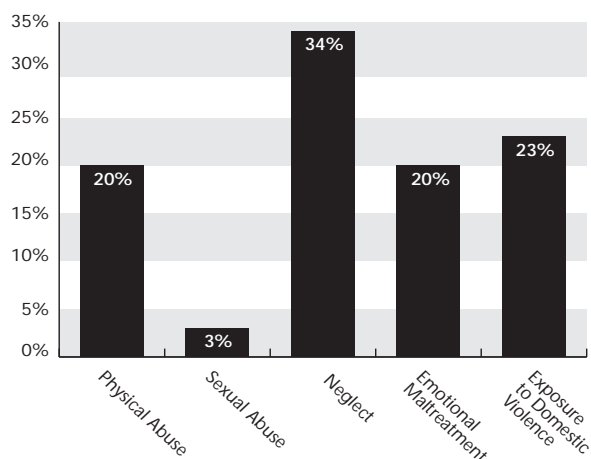
* Based on a sample of 2,653 child maltreatment investigations

Source: *AIS-2003 Major Findings Report*, Table 3-1

Primary category of substantiated maltreatment

Over a third of all substantiated investigations involved neglect as the primary category of maltreatment, an incidence rate of 8.06 substantiated investigations per 1,000 children. Exposure to domestic violence was the second most frequently identified category of substantiated maltreatment, with an incidence rate of 5.46 per 1,000 children. Emotional maltreatment was the primary category of substantiated maltreatment in 20% of cases, a rate of 4.85 substantiated investigations per 1,000 children. Physical abuse, as the primary category of substantiated maltreatment, followed closely behind with an incidence rate of 4.66 substantiated investigations per 1,000 children. Sexual abuse was the primary category of maltreatment in 3% of all substantiated investigations, with an incidence rate of 0.72 per 1,000 children.

Figure 2: Primary category of substantiated child maltreatment in Alberta, in 2003*



* Based on a sample of 1,584 substantiated child maltreatment investigations

Source: *AIS-2003 Major Findings Report*, Table 3-3

Forms of substantiated maltreatment

Physical abuse

AIS-2003 collected information on five forms of physical abuse and an estimated 4,011 substantiated investigations identified physical abuse as either the primary or secondary form of maltreatment. An estimated 1,787 substantiated investigations identified the child was hit with a hand (incidence rate of 2.38 per 1,000 children), while 1,255 child investigations were substantiated for children who were shaken, pushed, grabbed or thrown (incidence rate of 1.67 per 1,000 children).

Sexual abuse

Information was collected on eight forms of sexual abuse ranging from penetration to sexual exploitation. It should be noted that the *AIS-2003* only identified cases reported to child welfare and did not include cases investigated only by the police in situations where the perpetrator was not a parent or relative in the home. An estimated 598 substantiated child investigations identified sexual abuse as the primary or secondary form of maltreatment and included fondling of the genitals (incidence rate of 0.35 per 1,000 children), exploitation (incidence rate of 0.18 per 1,000 children), and penetration (0.17 per 1,000 children).

Neglect

The *AIS-2003* collected data from investigating workers on eight forms of neglect. A total of 7,295 substantiated investigations identified a form of

neglect as either the primary or secondary form of maltreatment. Substantiated neglect cases most frequently involved reports of physical neglect (an incidence rate of 4.01 per 1,000 children) followed by failure to supervise leading to physical harm (an incidence rate of 3.28 per 1,000 children).

Emotional maltreatment

Information on four forms of emotional maltreatment was collected by *AIS-2003*. In total, 6,629 substantiated investigations involved one of these forms as either the primary or secondary form of maltreatment. The form of substantiated emotional maltreatment identified most frequently was emotional abuse with an incidence rate of 6.76 per 1,000 children, followed by emotional neglect (incidence rate of 2.53 per 1,000 children).

Exposure to domestic violence

The *AIS-2003* collected information on only one form of exposure to domestic violence. In total, 5,738 substantiated investigations involved exposure to domestic violence as either the primary or secondary form of maltreatment.

1 This information sheet is based upon the peer-reviewed report, MacLaurin, B., Trocmé, N., Fallon, B., McCormack, M., Pitman, L., Forest, N., Banks, J., Shangreux, C., & Perrault, E. (2006). *Alberta incidence study of reported child abuse and neglect, AIS-2003: Final report*. Calgary: University of Calgary.

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Suggested citation: MacLaurin, B., Trocmé, N., Fallon, B., McCormack, M., & Pitman, L. (2008). *Alberta incidence study of reported child abuse and neglect (AIS-2003): Rates of child maltreatment*. CECW Information Sheet #65E. Toronto, ON, Canada: University of Toronto Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work.

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The Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare (CECW) is one of the Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the official policy of the CECW's funders.

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