



CIS-2008 Major Findings Supplementary Tables: Caregiver Risk Factors by Primary Substantiated Maltreatment and Risk

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Introduction

The Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect-2008 (CIS-2008) is the third nation-wide study to examine the incidence of reported child maltreatment and the characteristics of children and families investigated by child welfare authorities in Canada. . In addition to the tables presented in the Major Findings report, the Supplementary Tables Information Sheet Series describes key child, household and investigation characteristics by primary category of substantiated maltreatment including confirmed risk. This Information Sheet examines primary caregiver risk factors.

Findings

There were an estimated 235,842 maltreatment-related investigations conducted in Canada in 2008. An estimated 174,411 investigations were for an incident of maltreatment and an estimated 61,431 were risk-only investigations. At the end of the initial investigation, 49% of maltreatment investigations were substantiated (85,440 investigations) and in 20% of risk investigations, the worker determined there was a significant risk of future maltreatment (12,018 investigations). At least one primary caregiver risk factor was noted in 78% of substantiated maltreatment investigations (66,282 investigations) and in 87% of confirmed risk investigations (10,460 investigations).

Table 1 outlines noted primary caregiver risk factors in substantiated maltreatment and confirmed risk investigations. Few social supports was the most frequently noted primary caregiver risk factor in all categories of substantiated maltreatment except exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV), where victim of domestic violence was the most frequently noted

primary caregiver risk factor. Few social supports was also the most frequently noted primary caregiver risk factor in confirmed risk investigations.

Mental health issues were noted in 41% of confirmed risk investigations and in just over a third of substantiated emotional maltreatment investigations (36%) and substantiated neglect investigations (34%).

Alcohol abuse was noted in one third (33%) of substantiated neglect investigations, 28% of confirmed risk investigations, 24% of substantiated emotional maltreatment investigations, 18% of substantiated exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) investigations, and in under ten percent of substantiated physical abuse (9%) and sexual abuse (6%) investigations.

Drug/solvent use, cognitive impairment and history of foster care/group home were more likely to be noted in confirmed risk investigations than in any other category. Physical health issues were most likely to be noted in substantiated emotional maltreatment investigations and perpetrator of domestic violence was more likely to be noted in exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) investigations than any other category.

Table 1.

Primary caregiver risk factors by primary category of substantiated maltreatment, including confirmed risk of future maltreatment, in Canada in 2008[^]

	Primary Category of Maltreatment												Total	
	Physical Abuse		Sexual Abuse		Neglect		Emotional Maltreatment		Exposure to IPV		Risk			
Primary Caregiver Risk Factors	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Alcohol abuse	1,558	9	160	6	9,447	33	1,793	24	5,389	18	3,300	28	21,647	22
Drug/solvent abuse	1,245	7	139	5	8,343	29	1,258	17	3,372	12	3,656	30	18,013	19
Cognitive impairment	440	3	170	7	3,390	12	518	7	1,023	4	1,515	13	7,056	7
Mental health issues	3,427	20	384	15	9,848	34	2,633	36	6,699	23	4,888	41	27,879	29
Physical health issues	1,556	9	172	7	3,710	13	1,016	14	1,934	7	1,256	11	9,644	10
Few social supports	5,235	30	544	21	14,206	49	2,894	39	10,355	35	6,565	55	39,799	41
Victim of domestic violence	3,977	23	407	16	8,284	29	2,865	39	24,091	82	4,140	34	43,764	45
Perpetrator of domestic violence	1,363	8	139	5	2,665	9	827	11	6,162	21	1,434	12	12,590	13
History of foster care/group home	552	3	191	7	2,831	10	716	10	2,424	8	1,784	15	8,498	9
Total	17,213	100	2,607	100	28,939	100	7,423	100	29,259	100	12,018	100	97,459	100

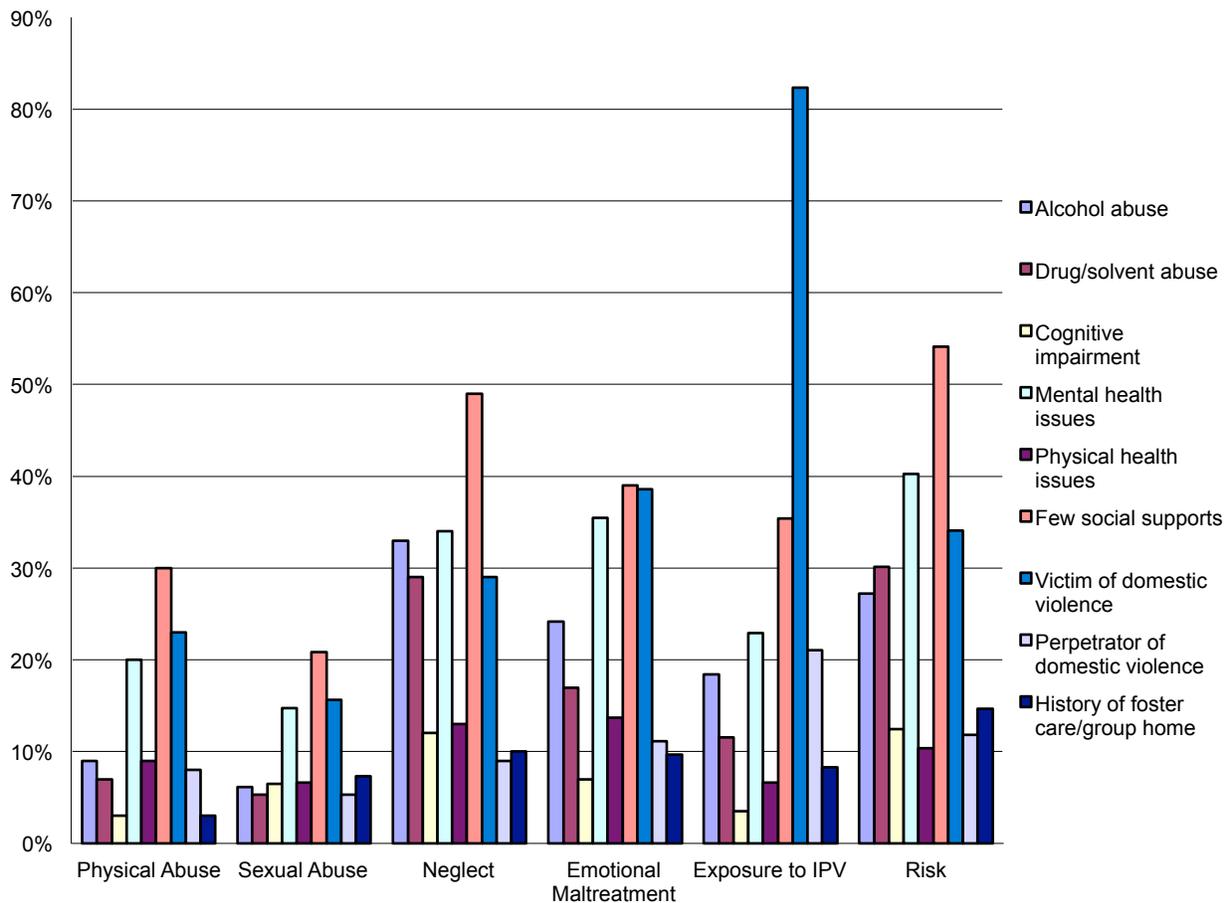
[^] Based on a sample of 7,032 substantiated child maltreatment-related investigations with information about primary caregiver risk factors. Percentages are column percentages. Columns are not additive because investigating workers could identify more than one primary caregiver risk factor.

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

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

Figure 1.

Primary caregiver risk factors by primary category of substantiated maltreatment, including confirmed risk of future maltreatment, in Canada in 2008



Background

Responsibility for protecting and supporting children at risk of abuse and neglect falls under the jurisdiction of the 13 Canadian provinces and territories and a system of Aboriginal child welfare agencies which have increasing responsibility for protecting and supporting Aboriginal children. Because of variations in the types of situations that each jurisdiction includes under its child welfare mandate as well as differences in the way service statistics are kept, it is difficult to obtain a nation-wide profile of the children and families receiving child welfare services. The Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS) is designed to provide such a profile by collecting information on a periodic basis from every jurisdiction using a standardized set of definitions. With core funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada and in-kind and financial support from a consortium of federal, provincial, territorial, Aboriginal and academic stakeholders, the CIS-2008 is the third nation-wide study of the incidence and characteristics of investigated child abuse and neglect across Canada.

Methodology

The CIS-2008 used a multi-stage sampling design to select a representative sample of 112 child welfare agencies in Canada and then to select a sample of cases within these agencies. Information was collected directly from child welfare workers on a representative sample of 15,980 child protection investigations conducted during a three-month sampling period in the fall of 2008. This sample was weighted to reflect provincial annual estimates.

For maltreatment investigations, information was collected regarding the primary form of maltreatment investigated as well as the level of substantiation for that maltreatment. 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 (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 form of maltreatment listed, workers assigned a level of substantiation. Maltreatment could be substantiated (i.e., the balance of evidence indicated that the maltreatment had occurred), suspected (i.e., the maltreatment could neither be confirmed nor ruled out), or unfounded (i.e., the balance of evidence indicated that the maltreatment had not occurred).

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

Concerns related to caregiver risk factors were reported by workers using a checklist of nine items that were asked about each caregiver. Where applicable, the reference point for identifying concerns about caregiver risk factors was the previous six months. Workers rated caregiver risk factors as “confirmed”, “suspected”, “no”, and “unknown”. For the purposes of this analysis, the categories of confirmed and suspected have been collapsed.

A detailed presentation of the study methodology and of the definitions of each variable is available at <http://cwrp.ca/publications/cis-2008-study-methods>.

Limitations

The CIS 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 CIS 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 estimated 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 CIS 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 CIS-2008 was the first to explicitly track risk-only investigations. In addition, readers are cautioned to avoid making direct comparisons with provincial and First Nations oversampling reports because of differences in the way national and oversampling estimates are derived.

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