



CIS-2008 Major Findings Supplementary Tables: Child Welfare Court by Primary Substantiated Maltreatment and Risk

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Trocmé, N., Fallon, B., MacLaurin, B., Sinha, V., Black, T., Fast, E., Felstiner, C., Hélie, S., Turcotte, D., Weightman, P., Douglas, J., & Holroyd, J. (2010) *Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect – 2008: Major Findings, Chapters 1-5*. Public Health Agency of Canada: Ottawa, 2010.

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 applications to child welfare court.

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).

Table 1 displays whether an application to child welfare court was made or considered by the investigating worker in substantiated maltreatment and confirmed risk investigations. Court applications during the investigation period were relatively rare. Overall, an application to court was made or considered in 11% of cases of substantiated maltreatment or confirmed risk investigations. Specifically, an application to child welfare court was made or considered in 17% of investigations where emotional maltreatment was the primary category of substantiated maltreatment, 16% of substantiated neglect investigations, 13% of confirmed risk investigations, 13% of investigations where sexual abuse was the primary category of substantiated

maltreatment, 9% of substantiated physical abuse investigations, and 6% of investigations where the primary category of substantiated maltreatment was intimate partner violence (IPV).

Table 1.

Child welfare court by primary category of substantiated maltreatment, including confirmed risk of future maltreatment, in Canada in 2008[^]

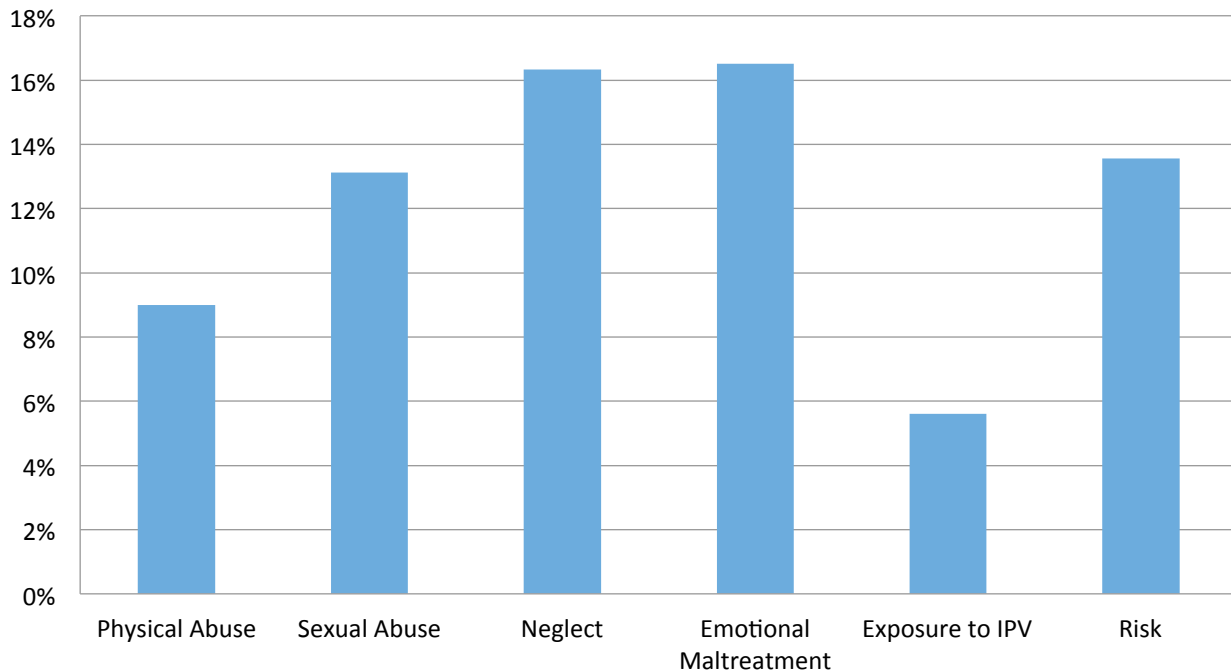
	Primary Category of Maltreatment												Total	
	Physical Abuse		Sexual Abuse		Neglect		Emotional Maltreatment		Exposure to IPV		Risk			
Child welfare court	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Court	1,589	9	342	13	4,725	16	1,226	17	1,639	6	1,631	14	11,152	11
No Court	15,614	91	2,265	87	24,195	84	6,197	83	27,620	94	10,378	86	86,269	89
Total	17,203	100	2,607	100	28,920	100	7,423	100	29,259	100	12,009	100	97,421	100

[^] Based on a sample of 7,027 substantiated child maltreatment-related investigations with information about child welfare court. Percentages are column percentages.

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

Figure 1.

Child welfare court by primary category of substantiated maltreatment, including confirmed risk of future maltreatment, in Canada in 2008



Workers were also asked to report whether they had made a referral to mediation or an alternative response designed to avoid adversarial court proceedings. Table 2 outlines these referrals by primary category of substantiated maltreatment including confirmed risk.

Table 2.

Referrals to mediation/alternative response by primary category of substantiated maltreatment, including confirmed risk of future maltreatment, in Canada in 2008[^]

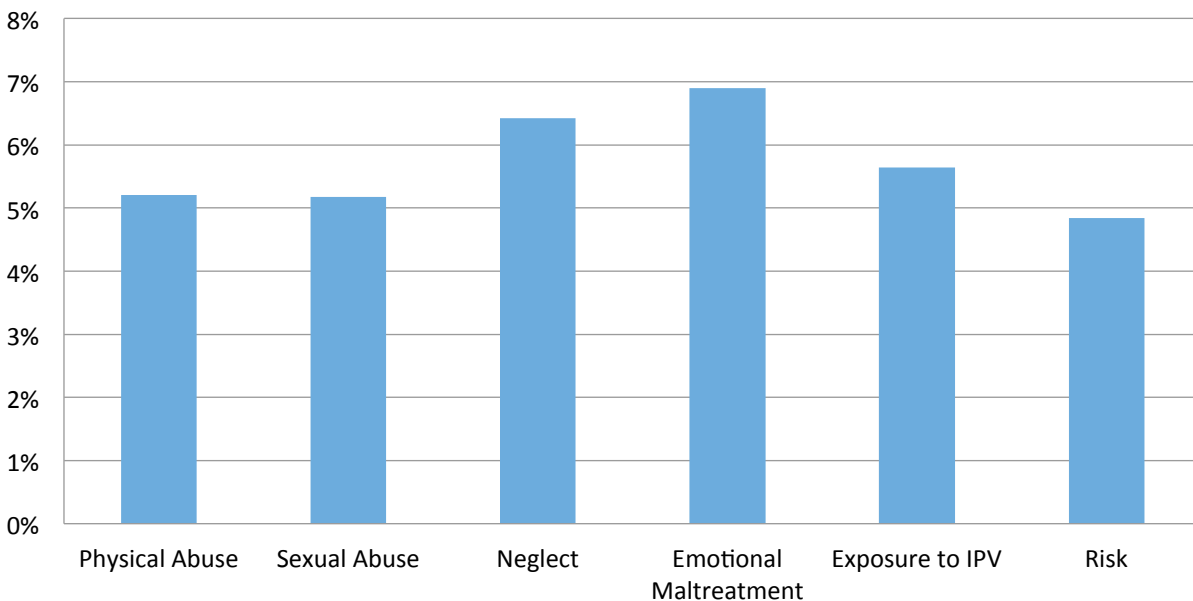
	Primary Category of Maltreatment												Total	
	Physical Abuse		Sexual Abuse		Neglect		Emotional Maltreatment		Exposure to IPV		Risk			
Referral to mediation/alternative response	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	895	5	135	5	1,857	6	512	7	1,651	6	582	5	5,632	11
No	16,318	95	2,472	95	27,082	94	6,911	93	27,608	94	11,437	95	91,828	89
Total	17,213	100	2,607	100	28,939	100	7,423	100	29,259	100	12,019	100	97,460	100

[^] Based on a sample of 7,032 substantiated child maltreatment-related investigations with information about referrals to mediation/alternative response. Percentages are column percentages.

Referrals to either mediation or alternative response did not differ significantly by primary category of substantiated maltreatment. These types of referrals were made in 7% of investigations where the primary category of substantiated maltreatment was emotional maltreatment, 6% of substantiated exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) and substantiated neglect investigations, and 5% of substantiated physical abuse, substantiated sexual abuse, and confirmed risk investigations. Please see Figure 2 for a visual representation of these findings.

Figure 2.

Referrals to mediation/alternative response 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.

For court involvement during the initial investigation, workers could choose from three possible statuses:

No application: court involvement was not considered.

Application considered: the child welfare worker was considering whether or not to submit an application to child welfare court.

Application made: an application to child welfare court was submitted.

Applications to child welfare court can be made for a number of reasons, including orders of supervision with the child remaining in the home, as well as out-of-home placement orders, temporary or permanent.

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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