



# CIS-2008 Major Findings Supplementary Tables: Ongoing Child Welfare Services and Referrals to Services 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 ongoing child welfare services and referrals to services beyond the parameters of ongoing child welfare services.

## 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). Of the estimated 85,440 substantiated maltreatment investigations, 44% remained open for ongoing child welfare services (37,402) at the end of the initial investigation while almost two thirds of confirmed risk investigations (62%) remained opened.

As shown in Table 1, transfers to ongoing child welfare services varied by primary category of substantiated maltreatment. Confirmed risk investigations were the most likely to be opened for ongoing child welfare services (62%) followed by substantiated neglect investigations (58%),

emotional maltreatment investigations (50%), sexual abuse investigations (44%), exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) investigations (35%), and physical abuse investigations (32%).

Table 1.

*Ongoing child welfare services by primary category of substantiated maltreatment, including confirmed risk of future maltreatment, in Canada in 2008<sup>^</sup>*

	Primary Category of Maltreatment												Total	
	Physical Abuse		Sexual Abuse		Neglect		Emotional Maltreatment		Exposure to IPV		Risk			
Ongoing Child Welfare Services	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	5,582	33	1,156	45	16,755	58	3,701	50	10,207	35	7,443	62	44,844	46
No	11,577	67	1,442	55	12,145	42	3,702	50	19,044	65	4,548	38	52,458	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,159</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,598</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>28,900</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7,403</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>29,251</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>11,991</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>97,302</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>^</sup> Based on a sample of 7,016 substantiated child maltreatment-related investigations with information about case transfers to ongoing child welfare services. Percentages are column percentages.

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

Figure 1.

*Ongoing child welfare services by primary category of substantiated maltreatment, including confirmed risk of future maltreatment, in Canada in 2008*

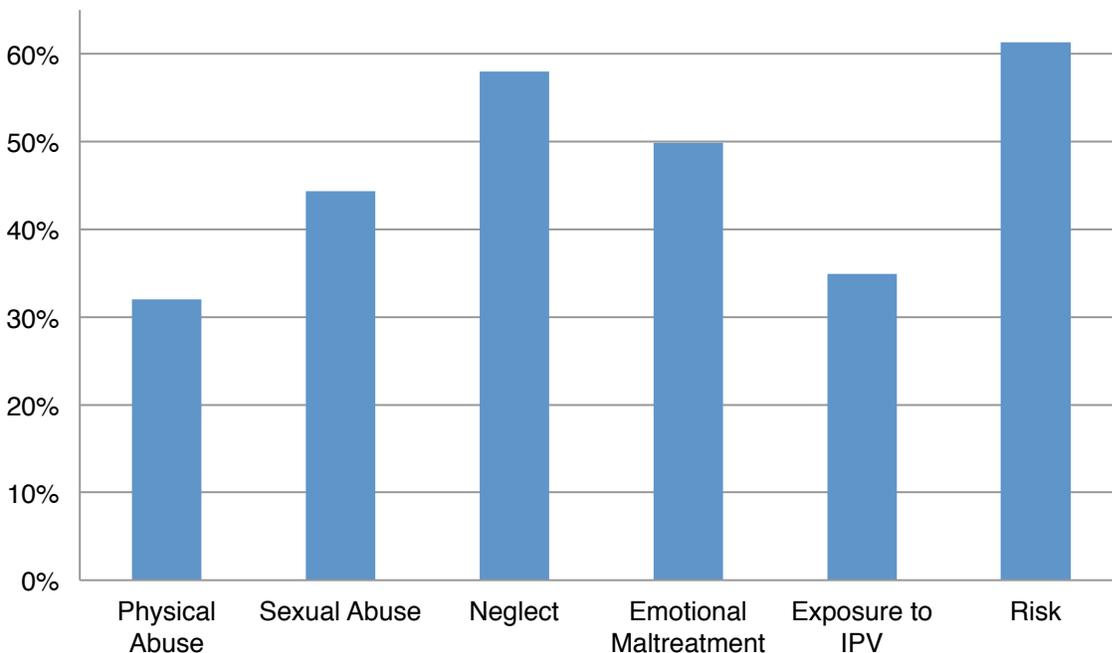


Table 2 outlines whether or not a referral was made to services which were beyond the parameters of ongoing child welfare services by primary category of substantiated maltreatment including confirmed risk. Other than in substantiated sexual abuse investigations, in a majority of

all other substantiated maltreatment investigations and confirmed risk investigations a referral was made. Investigations where the primary category of substantiated maltreatment was emotional maltreatment were the most likely to be referred for services (76% of investigations) while substantiated sexual abuse investigations were the least likely to have a referral made (28% of investigations).

Table 2.

*Referrals to services beyond the parameters of ongoing child welfare services by primary category of substantiated maltreatment, including confirmed risk of future maltreatment, in Canada in 2008<sup>^</sup>*

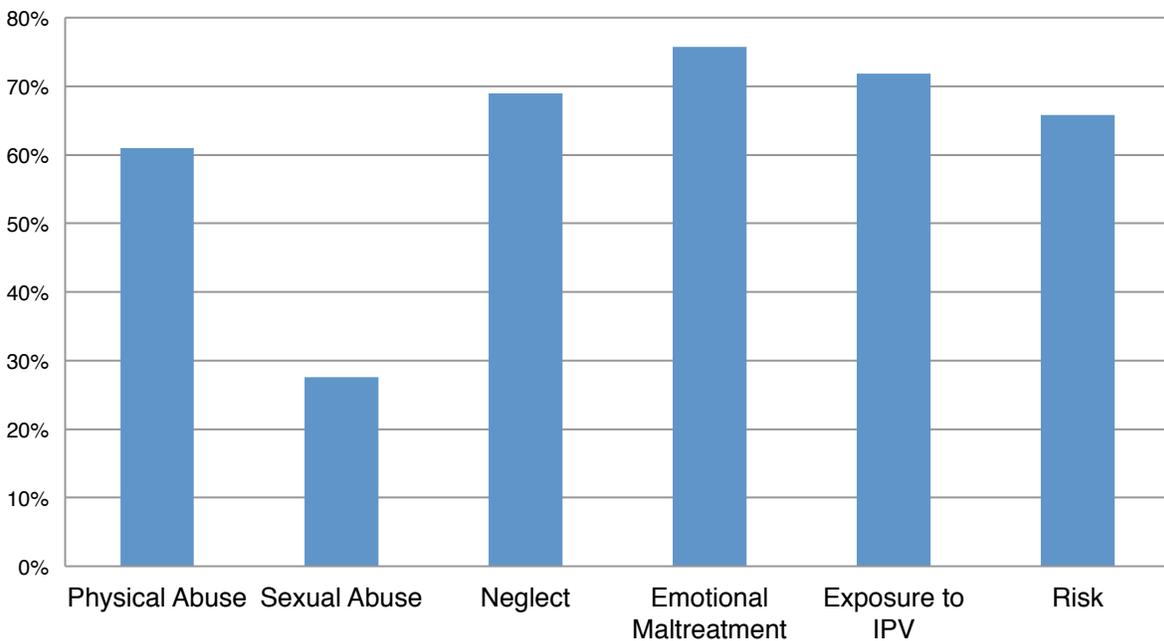
	Primary Category of Maltreatment												Total	
	Physical Abuse		Sexual Abuse		Neglect		Emotional Maltreatment		Exposure to IPV		Risk			
Referral to Services Made	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	10,499	61	1,889	73	19,941	69	5,621	76	21,016	72	7,989	67	66,955	69
No	6,713	39	718	27	8,998	31	1,802	24	8,243	28	4,029	33	30,503	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,212</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,607</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>28,939</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7,423</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>29,259</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>12,018</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>97,458</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>^</sup> Based on a sample of 7,032 substantiated child maltreatment-related investigations with information about referrals to services. Percentages are column percentages.

Please see Figure 2 for a visual representation of these findings.

Figure 2.

*Referrals to services beyond the parameters of ongoing child welfare services 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.

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 reopened 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.

**Suggested Citation:** Lefebvre, R., Trocmé, N., & Fallon, B. (2012). Ongoing Child Welfare Services and Referrals to Services by Primary Substantiated Maltreatment and Risk. Based on, Trocmé, N., Fallon, B., MacLaurin, B., Sinha, V., Black, T., Fast, E. et al. (2010). *Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect – 2008: Major Findings, Chapters 1-5*. Public Health Agency of Canada: Ottawa, 2010. CWRP Information Sheet #110E. Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal: Toronto, ON.