



Sexual abuse of children in Canada¹

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The 2003 Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS-2003) is the second nation-wide study to examine the incidence of reported child maltreatment and the characteristics of the children and families investigated by child welfare services. The CIS-2003 tracked a sample of 14,200 child maltreatment investigations² as a basis for deriving national estimates. Information was collected directly from the investigating child welfare workers using a standard set of definitions.³ This information sheet describes cases of sexual abuse that were tracked by the CIS-2003 in Canada, excluding Quebec.⁴

Primary forms of sexual abuse

The CIS-2003 tracked eight forms of sexual abuse, ranging from penetration to sexual exploitation. If several forms of sexual activity were involved, investigating workers were instructed to identify the most intrusive form.

An estimated 2,935 substantiated investigations involved sexual abuse as the primary category of maltreatment. Ten percent of

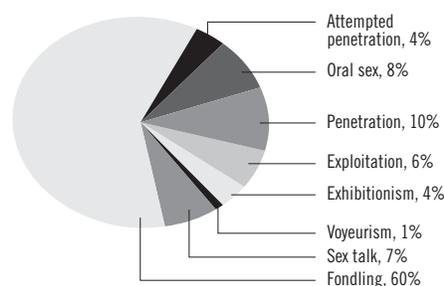
the investigations involved penetration, 8% involved oral sex, and another 4% were for attempted penetration. An estimated 60% involved touching or fondling of genitals. Sexual talk was investigated in 7% of substantiated cases, voyeurism in 1%, and exhibitionism was investigated in another 4% of substantiated cases. Sexual exploitation was substantiated in 6% of cases (See Figure 1).

Perpetrators

The perpetrator refers to the person or persons considered to have abused the child. As shown in Figure 2, 22% of perpetrators were biological fathers or step-fathers, another 40% were other relatives, and 38% were not related to the victim.

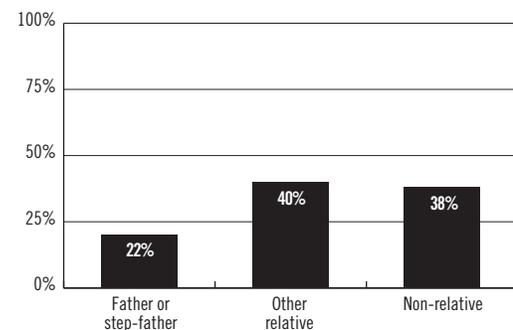
It is important to note that unless there are concerns about parental supervision, many sexual abuse allegations involving non-family members are investigated by the police alone. Cases that are only investigated by the police and are not referred to child welfare services are not included in the CIS estimates.

Figure 1: Estimated primary forms of substantiated sexual abuse



Source: *CIS Major Findings Report 2003*, Table 3-6. Estimates based on a sample of 153 substantiated child maltreatment investigations

Figure 2: Estimated identified perpetrator for primary substantiated sexual abuse investigations

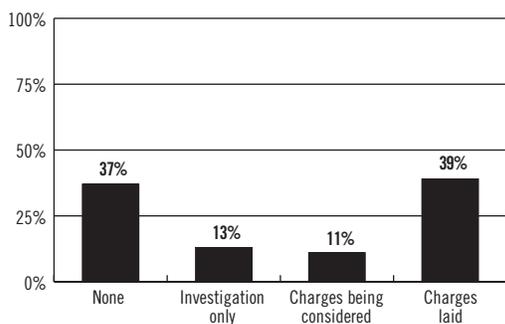


Source: *CIS Major Findings Report 2003*, Table 4-4(a). Estimates based on a sample of 153 substantiated investigations

Police involvement and criminal charges

Sixty-three percent of all cases that indicated sexual abuse as the primary substantiated maltreatment involved a police investigation for child maltreatment (an estimated 1,848 investigations). As shown in Figure 4, charges were laid in 39% of cases where sexual abuse was the primary substantiated maltreatment category, while charges were considered in an additional 11%. The police investigated but did not lay charges in 13% of cases that indicated sexual abuse as the primary substantiated maltreatment.

Figure 3: Estimated Police Investigations and charges laid on cases of substantiated sexual abuse



Source: *CIS Major Findings Report 2003*, Table 5-6.
Estimates based on a sample of 153 substantiated investigations

- 1 This information sheet is based upon the report, Trocmé, N., Fallon, B., MacLaurin, B., Daciuk, J., Felstiner, C., Black, T., et al. (2005). *Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect—2003: Major Findings*. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.
- 2 The CIS does not track incidents that were not reported to child welfare services, reported cases that were screened out by child welfare services before being fully investigated, new reports on cases already opened by child welfare services, or cases that were investigated only by the police.
- 3 In Quebec information was extracted directly from the administrative information systems.
- 4 National estimates including Quebec are excluded from this information sheet because of incomplete or unavailable data. Where available, estimates including Quebec can be obtained from the CIS-2003 Major Findings Report.

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