

Caregiver Characteristics in **On Reserve** Investigations Involving First Nations Children Aged 0-17 in Canada in 2019



Introduction

This information sheet highlights key caregiver characteristics in child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children on reserve in Canada in 2019. These data were collected as part of the First Nations/Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019 (FN/CIS-2019), a data collection effort to produce estimates of the incidence of reported and investigated child maltreatment in Canada. This information sheet specifically describes the number of caregivers in the home, the age and gender of the primary caregiver as well as risk factors related to the primary caregiver in on reserve investigations involving First Nations children in 2019. For the purposes of this information sheet, “on reserve” investigations are those which involved a First Nations child whose primary or secondary caregiver was noted to be living on reserve, whereas “off reserve” investigations are those in which neither caregiver was noted to be living on reserve.

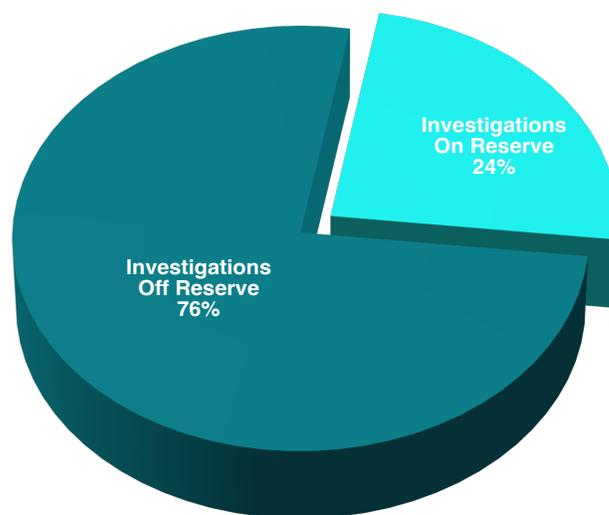
The information presented must be understood within the context of the ongoing legacy of colonialism, discrimination, and poverty that First Nations communities in Canada continue to face. Further information on the colonial practices that drive these disparities is available in Section 1 of the FN/CIS-2019 Major Findings Report (available at: <https://cwrp.ca/publications/denouncing-continued-overrepresentation-first-nations-children-canadian-child-welfare>).

On and Off Reserve Investigations

Figure 1 shows the proportion of on and off reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children in Canada. Approximately one quarter of investigations involving First Nations children in 2019 were conducted on reserve (24 percent).

The remaining figures and tables in this information sheet describe the 24 percent of investigations involving First Nations children on reserve in 2019.

Figure 1. Estimated on and off reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children in Canada in 2019



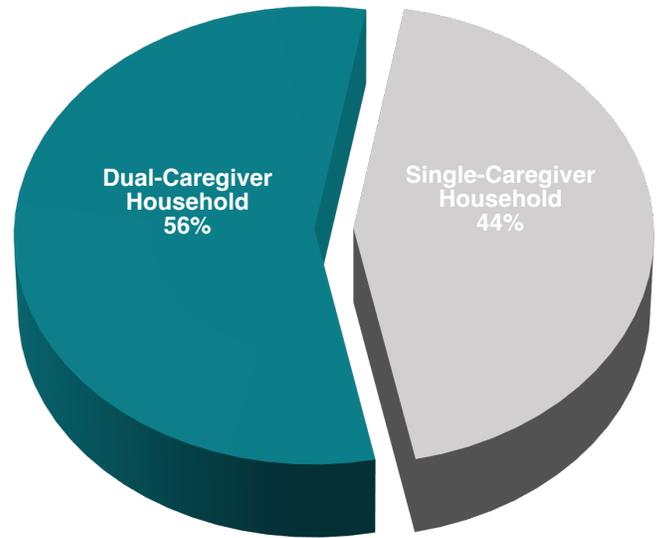
Based on a sample of 4,433 investigations. Whether or not the investigation is considered on reserve was dependent on the participating workers endorsing that either the primary or secondary caregiver was living on reserve.

Caregiver Characteristics

Figure 2 describes the number of single-caregiver households compared to the number of households in which investigating workers noted that there were two caregivers in the home. Just over half (56 percent) of on reserve investigations involving First Nations children had households with two caregivers.

Table 1 describes the age of primary caregivers in on reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children. Fifty-two percent of these investigations involved primary caregivers aged 31-50 years old. Ten percent of investigations involved primary caregivers who were either less than 22 years of age (five percent of investigations) or those who were over 60 (five percent of investigations).

Figure 2. Number of caregivers in the home in estimated on reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children in Canada in 2019



Based on a sample of 645 investigations.

Table 1. Age of primary caregivers in estimated on reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children in Canada in 2019

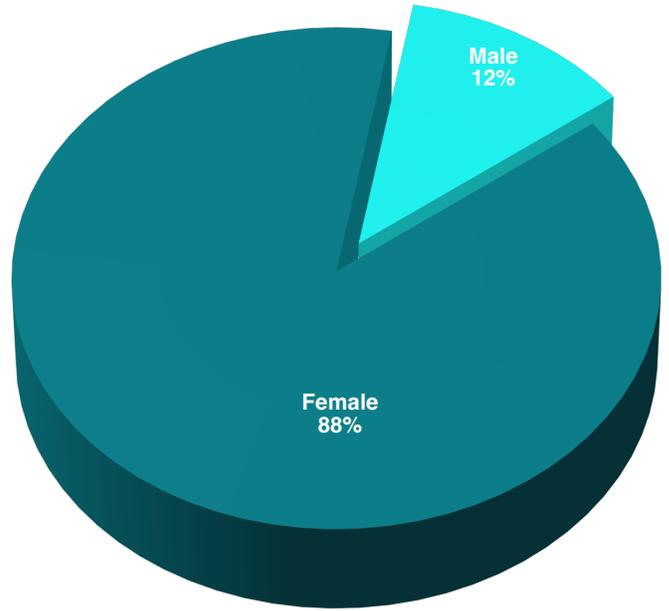
	n	%
<22 Years	576	5%
22-30 Years	3,659	31%
31-40 Years	3,859	33%
41-50 Years	2,186	19%
51-60 Years	802	7%
> 60 Years	628	5%
Total Investigations On Reserve	11,710	100%

Based on a sample of 645 investigations. Percentages are column percentages.

Primary caregivers' gender in on reserve investigations involving First Nations children is presented in Figure 3. Eighty-eight percent of these investigations involved a female primary caregiver.

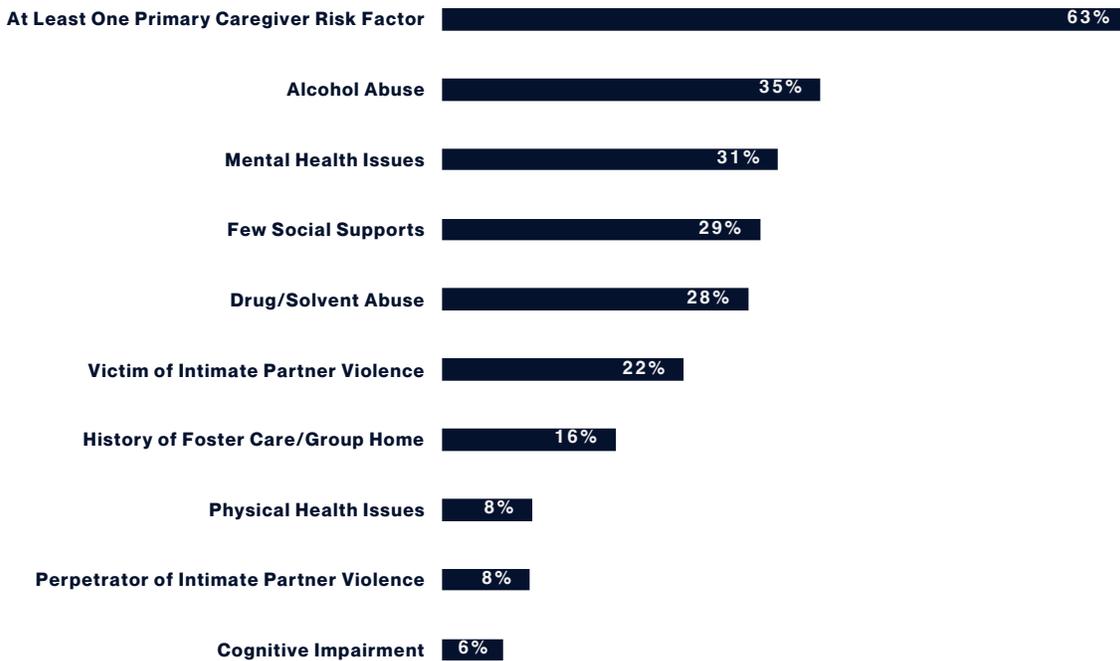
Primary caregiver risk factors captured in the FN/CIS-2019 in on reserve investigations involving First Nations children are shown in Figure 4. Workers indicated the presence of these nine risk factors on a scale of them being confirmed, suspected, not present, or unknown. These risk factors were considered to be "noted" when participating investigating workers indicated that these concerns were either "suspected" or "confirmed" for the primary caregiver. Overall, at least one primary caregiver risk factor was noted in 63 percent of on reserve investigations involving First Nations children. The most frequently noted concerns were alcohol abuse (noted in 35 percent of investigations), mental health issues (noted in 31 percent of investigations), few social supports (noted in 29 percent of investigations), and drug/solvent abuse (noted in 28 percent of investigations).

Figure 3. Gender of primary caregivers in estimated on reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children in Canada in 2019



Based on a sample of 645 investigations.

Figure 4. Primary caregiver risk factors in estimated on reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children in Canada in 2019



Based on a sample of 645 investigations. Percentages do not add to 100% because investigating workers could indicate multiple caregiver risk factors.

Methods

The FN/CIS-2019 used a multi-stage cluster sampling design for all jurisdictions other than Quebec. First, a sample of 47 mainstream and 16 First Nations agencies was selected from a sampling frame that included all child welfare agencies in Canadian jurisdictions outside of Quebec. A three-month sampling period (October 1 – December 31, 2019) was then used to select cases within these sites. The final stage involved identifying child-level investigations meeting the study criteria. Complex survey weights were used to derive an estimate of child maltreatment-related investigations conducted in Canada in 2019 from these sampled cases. In Quebec, data were extracted from information systems from all agencies able to participate (six First Nations agencies and 11 mainstream agencies).

For all jurisdictions except for Quebec, participating investigating workers completed data collection instruments and provided information directly on their investigations (see the *FN/CIS-2019 Major Findings Report*¹ for the data collection instrument used in the study). Administrative data extracted from Quebec child welfare information systems were matched to variables collected in the rest of Canada where possible.

¹ Fallon, B., Lefebvre, R., Trocmé, N., Richard, K., Hill, S., Montgomery, H. M., Bennett, M., Joh-Carnella, N., Saint-Girons, M., Filippelli, J., MacLaurin, B., Black, T., Esposito, T., King, B., Collin-Vézina, D., Dallaire, R., Gray, R., Levi, J., Orr, M., ... Soop, S. (2021). *Denouncing the continued overrepresentation of First Nations children in Canadian child welfare: Findings from the First Nations/Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect-2019*. Ontario: Assembly of First Nations.

Study Limitations

Although every effort was made to make the FN/CIS-2019 estimates precise and reliable, several limits inherent in the nature of the data collected must be taken into consideration:

- The weights used to derive annual estimates include counts of children investigated more than once during the year; therefore, the unit of analysis for the weighted estimates is a child investigation;
- The national counts presented in FN/CIS-2019 reports are weighted estimates. In some instances, sample sizes are too small to derive publishable estimates;
- The FN/CIS-2019 tracks information during approximately the first 45 days of case activity, however there are slight provincial and territorial differences in this length of time; service outcomes such as out-of-home placements and applications to court included only events that occurred during those first approximately 45 days;
- The FN/CIS-2019 only tracks reports investigated by child welfare sites and does not include reports that were screened out, cases that were investigated only by the police and cases that were never reported;
- The study is based on the assessments provided by the investigating child welfare workers and could not be independently verified.

Suggested citation: Fallon, B., Joh-Carnella, N., Saint-Girons, M., & Livingston, E. (2022). *Caregiver characteristics in on reserve investigations involving First Nations children aged 0-17 in Canada in 2019*. CWRP Information Sheet #229E. Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal.