

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



Introduction

This information sheet highlights key child characteristics in on reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children 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 gender and age of children as well as noted concerns that investigating workers had related to children's functioning. 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.

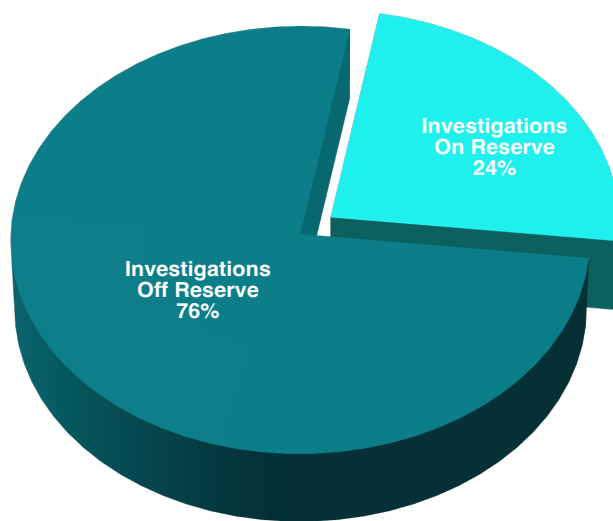
The information presented must be understood within the context of the ongoing legacy of colonialism, discrimination, and poverty that First Nations communities in Canada continue to face. Further information on the colonial practices that drive these disparities is available in Section 1 of the FN/CIS-2019 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 investigations involving First Nations children. 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 on reserve investigations involving First Nations children in 2019.

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



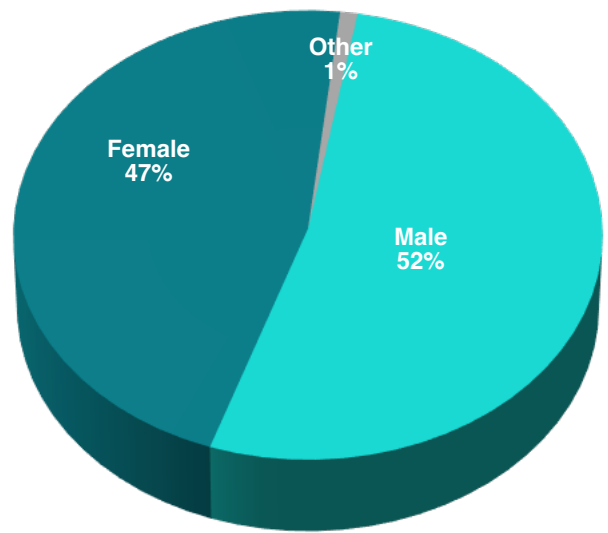
Based on a sample of 4,433 investigations. Whether or not the investigation is considered on reserve was dependent on the participating workers endorsing that either the primary or secondary caregiver was living on reserve.

Child Characteristics

Children’s gender in on reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children is described in Figure 2. Fifty-three percent of investigations involved children identified as male (an estimated 6,218 investigations) while 47 percent of investigations involved children identified as female (an estimated 5,462 investigations). Less than one percent of investigations involved a child who did not identify as either male or female.

Table 1 describes children’s age in on reserve investigations conducted for First Nations children. One quarter of these investigations involved children less than three years old (18 percent of investigations involved children one to three years old and seven percent of investigations involved children less than one year old).

Figure 2. Children’s gender in estimated on reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children in Canada in 2019



Based on a sample of 645 investigations.

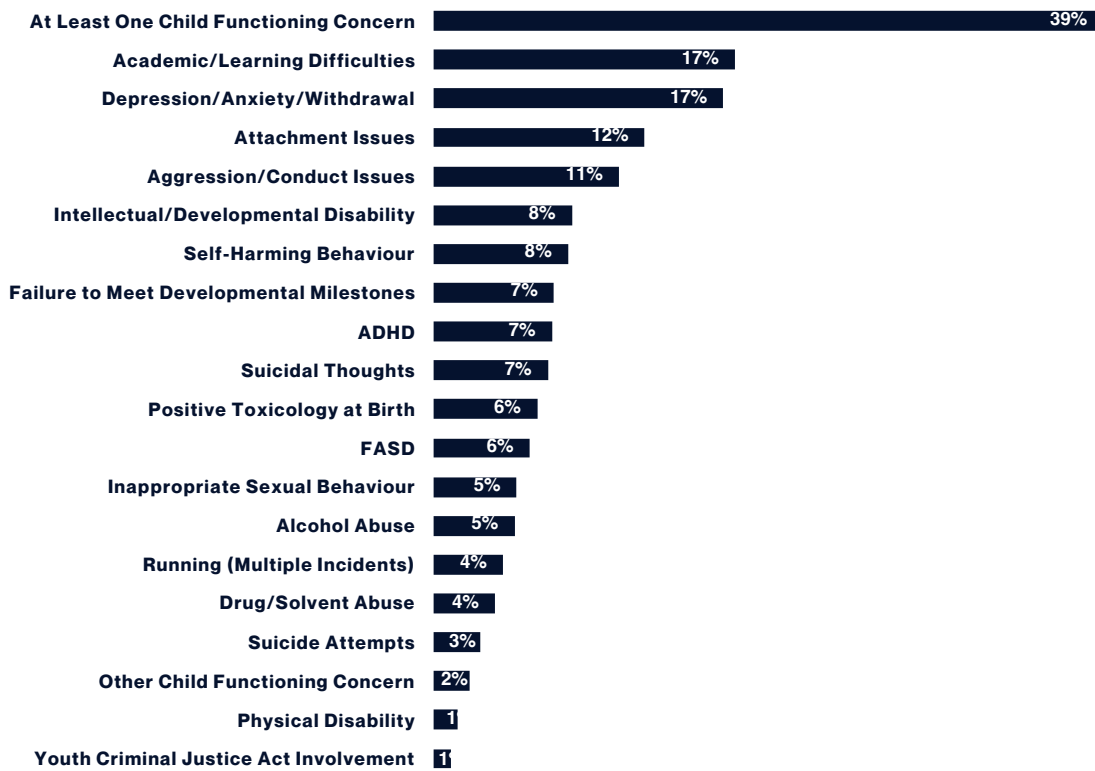
Table 1. Age of children in estimated on reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children in Canada in 2019

	n	%
<1 Year	766	7%
1-3 Years	2,082	18%
4-7 Years	2,773	23%
8-11 Years	2,711	23%
12-15 Years	2,792	24%
16-17 Years	586	5%
Total Investigations On Reserve	11,710	100%

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

Functioning concerns noted by the investigating worker are presented in Figure 3. Workers indicated the presence of these concerns on a scale of them being confirmed, suspected, not present, or unknown. Child functioning concerns were considered to be “noted” when participating investigating workers indicated that these concerns were either “suspected” or “confirmed” for the child. At least one child functioning concern was noted in 39 percent of on reserve investigations involving First Nations children. Academic/learning difficulties, depression/anxiety/withdrawal, and attachment issues were the most frequently noted concerns (noted in 17 percent, 17 percent, and 12 percent of investigations, respectively).

Figure 3. Noted child functioning concerns in estimated on reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children conducted on reserve in Canada in 2019



Based on a sample of 645 investigations.

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., Hillie, 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). *Child characteristics in on reserve investigations involving First Nations children aged 0-17 in Canada in 2019*. CWRP Information Sheet #233E. Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal.