



Placement in Out of Home Care During the Investigation in Ontario in 2018

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Introduction

The Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2018 (OIS-2018)¹ is the sixth provincial study to examine the incidence of reported child maltreatment and the characteristics of children and families investigated by child welfare authorities in Ontario. This Information Sheet compares investigations in which there is an out of home placement during the investigation to those where there is not a placement for the following factors: the child demographics, child functioning issues, primary caregiver characteristics, family household characteristics, and characteristics of the investigation.

Findings

An estimated 158,476 children 0-17 years of age were referred to a child welfare authority in Ontario in 2018 for a child maltreatment-related concern. Among a somewhat smaller estimate of 155,650 children and youth living with primary caregivers at the time of the investigation (youth living independently and community caregiver investigations were excluded), 4,385 were placed in out of home care during an investigation in Ontario in 2018, while 151,265 were not; this represents about 2.8 percent of investigations. Detailed findings comparing investigations in which there is an out of home placement during the investigation to those where there is not a placement are presented in Table 1 in the appendix.

Figure 1 presents child age comparisons of investigations where there was a placement to those where there was no placement. Investigations involving infants (under one year), represented a greater proportion of placements (15.3%) compared to those where there was no placement (5.2%). On the other hand, investigations involving young children between the ages of 1 and 5 were a smaller proportion of placements (18.4%) than those that weren't (26.9%). Among investigations involving children aged 6 to 10 and adolescents aged 11 to 17, the differences in the proportions

¹ Fallon, B., Filippelli, J., Lefebvre, R., Joh-Carnella, N., Trocmé, N., Black, T., ... Stoddart, J. (2020). Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect-2018 (OIS-2018). Toronto, ON: Child Welfare Research Portal.

were more similar, with adolescent investigations being slightly higher proportion (37.8% vs. 34.1%) and school-aged children being a somewhat smaller proportion of investigations where there was a placement (28.5% vs. 33.9%).

Figure 1: Child Age

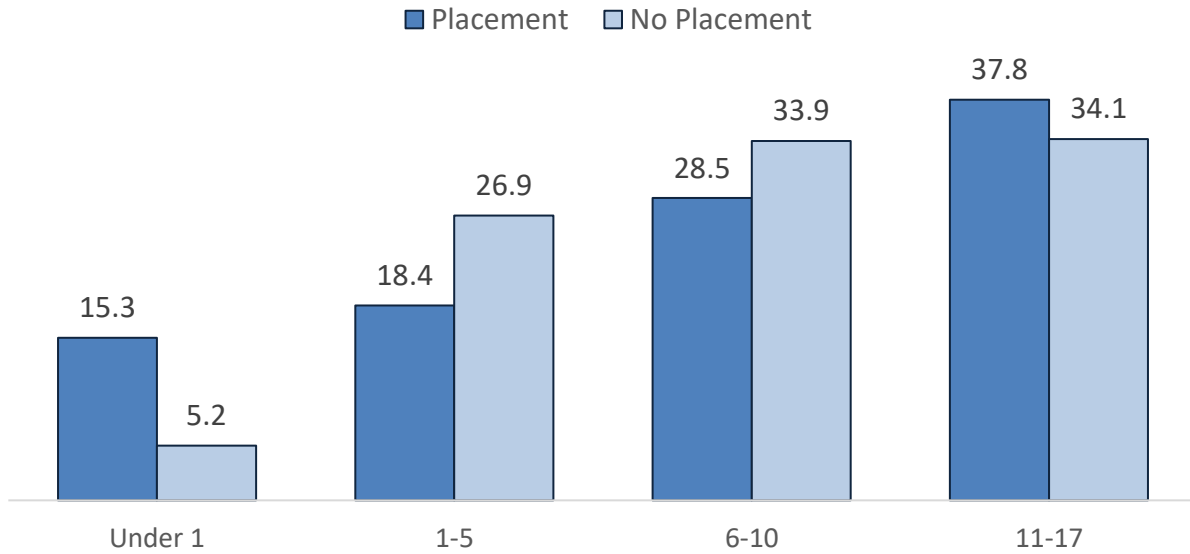


Figure 2: Child Functioning Concerns

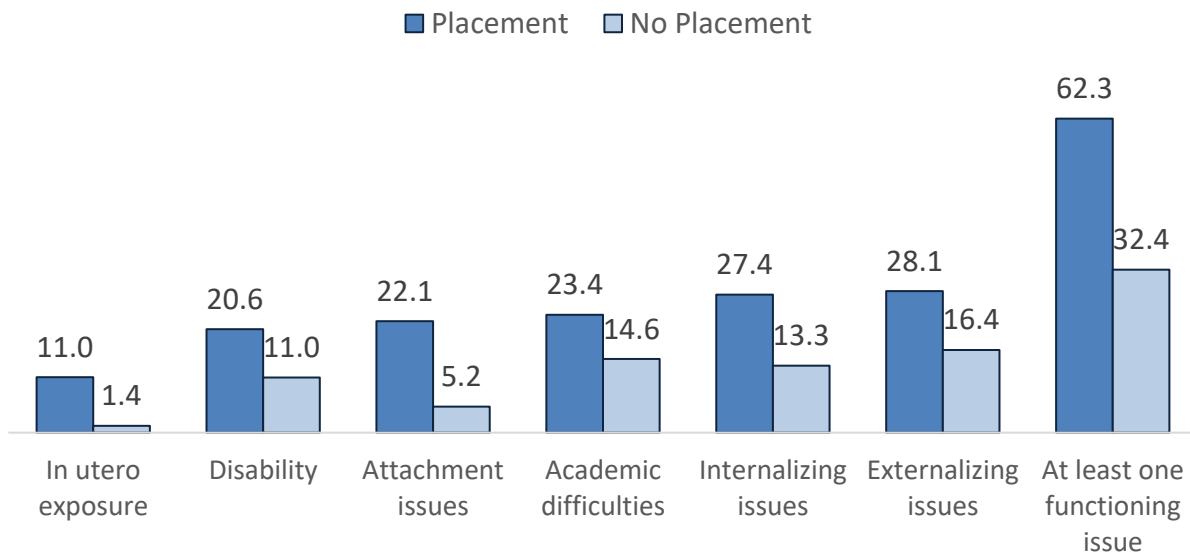


Figure 2 presents findings related to child functioning issues, which reflect physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural concerns. Investigations involving children in which at least one functioning concern was noted represented a greater proportion of cases that resulted in a placement (62.3%) compared to those where there was no placement (32.4%). For each of the

functioning concerns, proportions were higher among cases with placement in out of home care compared to those without placement. For example, investigations where externalizing issues (28.1% vs. 16.4%), internalizing issues (27.4% vs. 13.3%), or attachment issues (22.1% vs. 5.2%) were noted were more common among that resulted in placements vs. those that did not.

Figure 3: Primary Caregiver Risk Factors

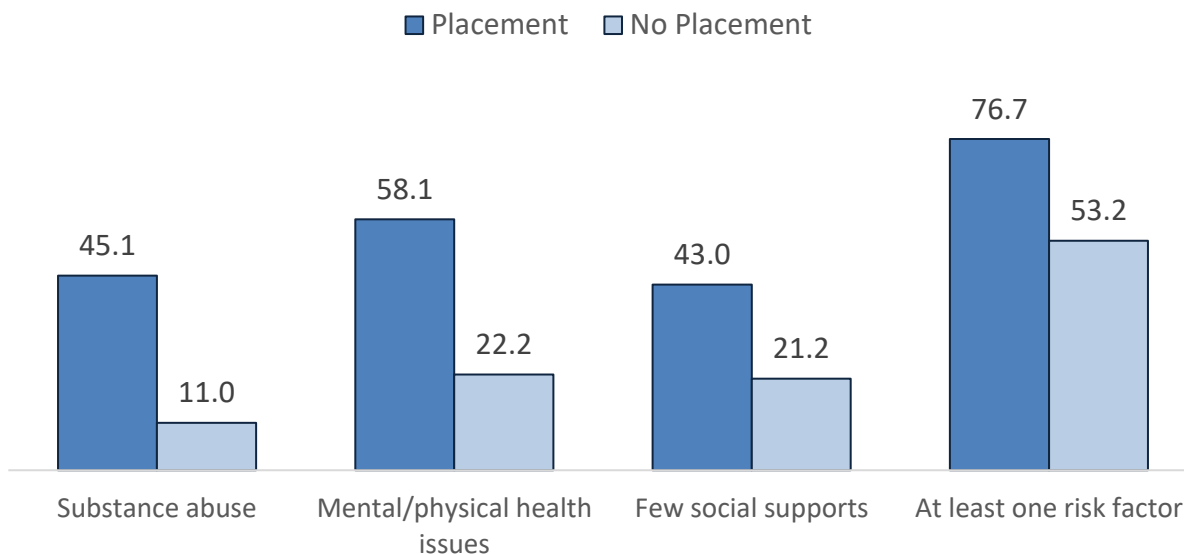


Figure 3 presents findings related to primary caregiver risk factors. Investigations involving children where at least one primary caregiver factor was noted represented a greater proportion of cases that resulted in a placement (76.7%) compared to those where there was no placement (53.2%). For each of the risk factors associated with the primary caregiver, proportions were higher among cases with placement in out of home care compared to those where there was no placement. For example, investigations where a worker noted that the primary caregiver had mental or physical health related issues (58.1% vs. 22.2%), substance abuse issues (45.1% vs. 11.0%), or few social supports (43.0% vs. 21.2%) were more common among those resulting in placements vs. those that did not.

Household factors are presented in Figure 4, which include whether the household’s primary source of income was social assistance or other benefits, whether there was economic hardship (running out of money for food, housing, utilities, telephone/cell phone service, or transportation), or whether there was any kind of housing concern (overcrowding, unsafe conditions, or moving more than twice in the last year). Investigations where children were living in households that were receiving social assistance represented a greater proportion of cases resulting in placement (44.9%) compared to those where there was no placement (24.3%). Investigations where children were living in households that were contending with any housing concern represented a greater proportion of investigations resulting in placement (32.5%) compared to those where there was no placement (23.5%). Investigations where households were facing economic hardship represented

a greater proportion of cases resulting in placement (30.0%) compared to those where there was no placement (2.0%).

Figure 4: Household Factors

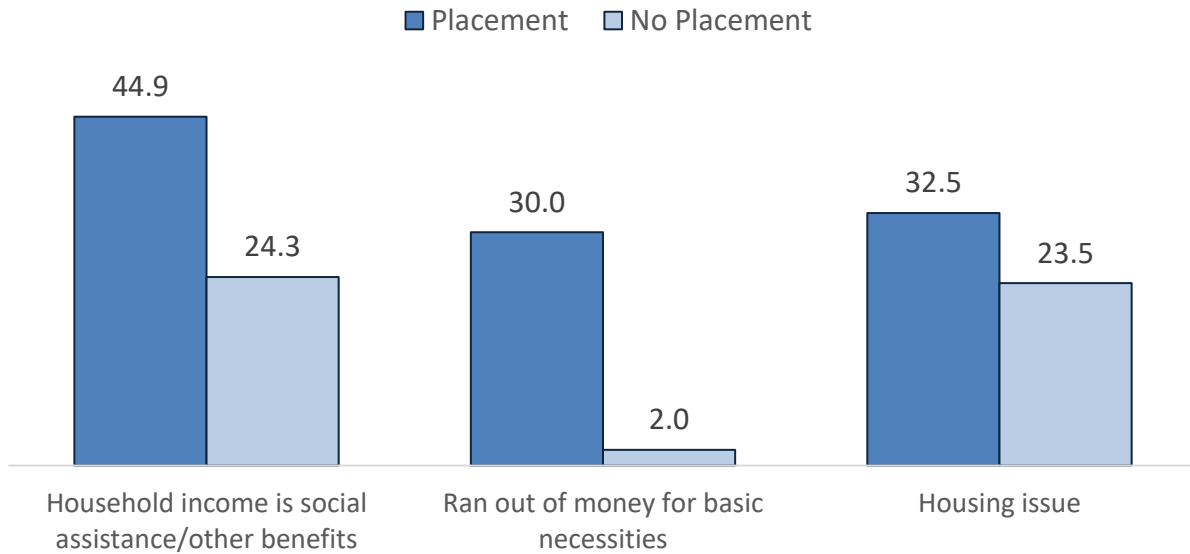


Figure 5: Primary Reason for Investigation

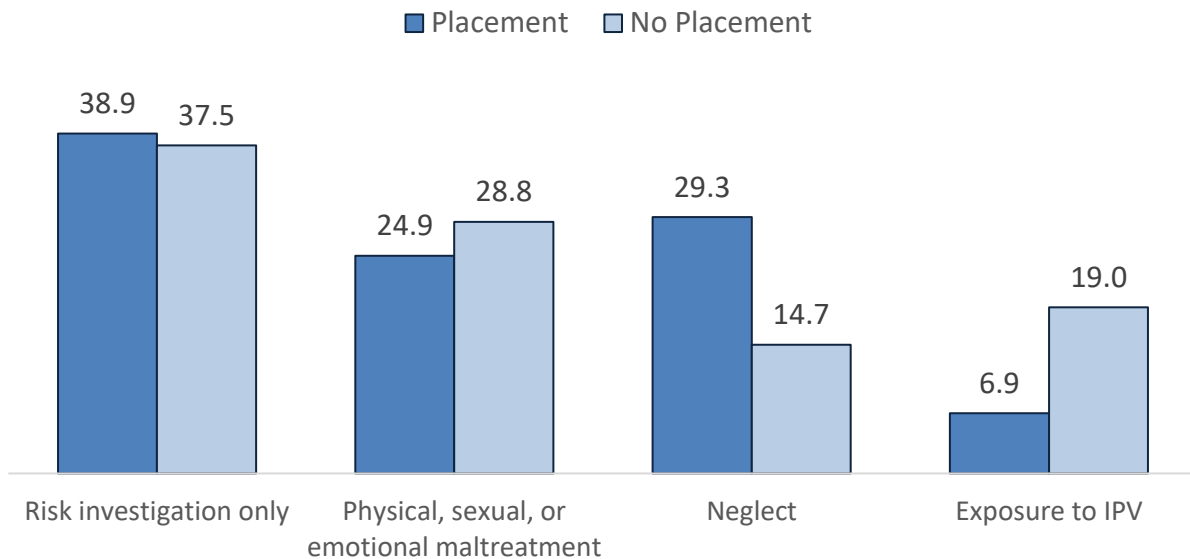


Figure 5 presents findings related the primary investigation reason. There were five major categories of maltreatment in the OIS-2018, which included: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional maltreatment, and exposure to intimate partner violence. In addition, investigations in

Ontario can be initiated for a concern about circumstances presenting a risk of future maltreatment (risk only investigations). For this analysis, we combined physical and sexual abuse and emotional maltreatment into a single category. Investigations where the primary investigation reason was neglect represented nearly double the cases resulting in a placement (29.3%) compared to those where there was no placement (14.7%). Investigations where the primary reason for investigation was risk only represented a slightly higher proportion of cases resulting in a placement (38.9%) compared to those where there was no placement (37.5%). On the other hand, investigations where the primary reason for investigating was physical, sexual, or emotional maltreatment were a smaller proportion of cases resulting in a placement (24.9%) than those that weren't (28.8%). Similarly, investigations where the child had been exposed to intimate partner violence represented a smaller proportion of cases resulting in a placement (6.9%) compared to those that weren't (19.0%).

Methodology

The OIS-2018 used a multi-stage sampling design to select a representative sample of 18 child welfare agencies across Ontario and then to sample cases within these agencies. Information was collected directly from child protection workers on a representative sample of 7,590 child protection investigations conducted during a three-month sampling period in 2018. This sample was weighted to reflect provincial annual estimates. After two weighting procedures were applied to the data, the estimated number of maltreatment-related investigations (i.e., maltreatment and risk-only investigations) conducted in Ontario in 2018 was 158,476.

For maltreatment investigations, information was collected regarding the primary form of maltreatment investigated as well as the level of substantiation for that maltreatment (substantiated, suspected, or unfounded). Thirty-three 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 risk investigation, workers determined whether the child was at risk of future maltreatment. The worker could decide that the child was at risk of future maltreatment (confirmed risk), that the child was not at risk of future maltreatment (unfounded risk), or that the future risk of maltreatment was unknown.

Workers were asked to provide information on various other aspects of their investigations, including the characteristics of the household, caregivers, and children; history of previous child welfare case openings; and short-term child welfare service dispositions, including transfers to ongoing services and referrals made to internal and external services.

Limitations

The OIS 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 OIS 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 the estimation method used to derive provincial annual estimates should also be noted. The agency size correction uses service volume as a proxy for agency size; this does not account for potential variation in investigations across agencies. 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 OIS 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 OIS-2008 was the first to explicitly track risk-only investigations.

Suggested Citation: Risidore, J., Edwards, T. & King, B. (2020). Placement in out of home care during investigations in Ontario in 2018. CWRP Information Sheet #203E. Toronto, ON: Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal.

Appendix

Table 1: Characteristics of Children in Investigations, Children Placed in Out of Home Care During the Investigation, and Differences in Rates of Placement

	All Investigations		No Placement During Investigation		Placement During Investigation	
	count	%	count	col %	count	col %
All investigations	155,650	--	151,265	--	4,385	--
Demographics						
Child age						
<i>Under 1</i>	8,489	5.5	7,817	5.2	672	15.3
<i>1-5</i>	41,440	26.6	40,634	26.9	806	18.4
<i>6-10</i>	52,521	33.7	51,271	33.9	1,250	28.5
<i>11-17</i>	53,200	34.2	51,543	34.1	1,657	37.8
Race/ethnicity						
<i>White</i>	86,589	55.6	84,332	55.8	2,257	51.5
<i>First Nations, Métis, Inuit</i>	14,448	9.3	13,635	9.0	813	18.5
<i>Black</i>	21,199	13.6	20,477	13.5	722	16.5
<i>Other visible minority</i>	33,414	21.5	32,821	21.7	593	13.5
Child functioning issues						
<i>In utero exposure</i>	2,535	1.6	2,052	1.4	483	11.0
<i>Disability</i>	17,505	11.2	16,603	11.0	902	20.6
<i>Attachment issues</i>	8,819	5.7	7,849	5.2	970	22.1
<i>Academic difficulties</i>	23,112	14.8	22,086	14.6	1,026	23.4
<i>Internalizing issues</i>	21,343	13.7	20,141	13.3	1,202	27.4
<i>Externalizing issues</i>	26,084	16.8	24,852	16.4	1,232	28.1
<i>Substance abuse</i>	3,035	1.9	2,793	1.8	242	5.5
<i>At least one functioning issue</i>	51,702	33.2	48,968	32.4	2,734	62.3
Family/caregivers						
Primary caregiver risk factors						
<i>Substance abuse</i>	18,549	11.9	16,571	11.0	1,978	45.1
<i>Mental/physical health issues</i>	36,164	23.2	33,615	22.2	2,549	58.1
<i>Few social supports</i>	33,957	21.8	32,071	21.2	1,886	43.0
<i>At least one risk factor</i>	83,789	53.8	80,424	53.2	3,365	76.7
SES risk factors						
<i>Social assistance/other benefits</i>	38,705	24.9	36,736	24.3	1,969	44.9
<i>Ran out of money for basic necessities</i>	4,385	2.8	3,068	2.0	1,317	30.0
<i>Housing issue</i>	36,964	23.7	35,538	23.5	1,426	32.5
Case characteristics						
Primary investigation reason						
<i>Risk investigation only</i>	58,465	37.6	56,760	37.5	1,705	38.9
<i>Physical, sexual, or emotional maltreatment</i>	44,628	28.7	43,537	28.8	1,091	24.9
<i>Neglect</i>	23,528	15.1	22,242	14.7	1,286	29.3
<i>Exposure to IPV</i>	29,028	18.6	28,726	19.0	302	6.9