



Child Maltreatment-Related Service Decisions by Ethno-Racial Categories in Ontario in 2013

Barbara Fallon, Tara Black, Melissa Van Wert, Bryn King, Joanne Filippelli, Barbara Lee & Brenda Moody

Introduction

The Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, 2013 (OIS-2013)¹ is the fifth 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 examines ethno-racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare investigation and service decisions using the OIS-2013 data. The analyses presented in this information sheet were prepared by the authors with funding from a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Connection Grant.

The child welfare statute in Ontario requires professionals working with children and the general public report all situations where they have concerns that a child may have been maltreated or where there is a risk of maltreatment (see <http://www.canlii.org/en/on/laws/stat/rso-1990-c-c11/97652/rso-1990-c-c11.html>). Child welfare authorities are responsible for investigating allegations of possible maltreatment, determining whether the allegations are substantiated, and providing services to children and families to address the consequences of abuse and neglect and prevent future maltreatment.

Analytic Strategies

Ethno-racial data was obtained through publically available data files (Statistics Canada - 2011 National Household Survey, Catalogue Number 99-011-X2011027 and Statistics Canada - 2011 National Household Survey, Catalogue Number 99-010-X2011029) using categories from the National Household Survey 2011 (see: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/ref/guides/99-010-x/99-010-x2011009-eng.cfm#a2>). The category 'Multiple visible minorities' includes more than one visible minority group. The 'Other' category ' includes responses such as 'Guyanese,' 'West Indian,' 'Tibetan,' 'Polynesian,' 'Pacific Islander'.

¹ Fallon, B., Van Wert, M., Trocmé, N., MacLaurin, B., Sinha, V., Lefebvre, R., et al. (2015). *Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect-2013 (OIS-2013)*. Toronto, ON: Child Welfare Research Portal.

There are several ways to understand and calculate disproportionality and disparity in child welfare services. For the purpose of this analysis, two measures are provided.

First, a disproportionality measure was calculated representing the incidence of child maltreatment-related investigations by ethno-racial category. This measure was calculated by dividing the estimated number of investigations by ethno-racial group, by the number of children in the Ontario population in the ethno-racial group, and multiplying by 1,000 to produce a rate per 1,000 children.

Next a measure of decision-based disparity is provided for investigations, substantiated maltreatment, transfers to ongoing service provision, and placement in out-of-home care. A reminder that the OIS captures decision-making at the initial investigation stage, or in other words approximately 30 to 60 days following referral. Decisions made beyond this point are not captured in these data. Decision based disparity is calculated by (1) dividing the estimated number of children within the ethno-racial category who experienced the disposition (investigation, substantiation, transfer to ongoing services, placement) by the number of children in the ethno-racial category who were investigated and (2) dividing that product by the number of White children who experienced the disposition by the total number of White children who were investigated. Therefore, White children will have a disparity index of 1, while other ethno-racial categories are compared to 1. A finding of more than 1 means that the disposition is more likely for the visible minority group compared to White children. A finding of less than 1 means that the disposition is less likely for the visible minority group than for White children (Shaw, Putnam-Hornstein, Magruder, Needell, 2008).

Findings

Table 1.

Estimated child maltreatment-related investigations (children age 0-14 years of age) by ethno-racial category in Ontario in 2013[^]

Ethno/Racial Category	# of		NHS 2011		Rate per	Investigation	Substantiation	Transferred	Placement
	Investigations	%	Visible Minority **	% NHS	1,000 children	Disparity (vs. White)	Disparity (vs. White)	Disparity (vs. White)	Disparity (vs. White)
White	76,202	65%	1,401,145	64%	54.39	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Black	10,649	9%	141,270	6%	75.38	1.39	1.18	1.08	1.13
Aboriginal*	9,414	8%	74,195	3%	126.88	2.33	1.15	1.41	2.68
Latin American	3,056	3%	29,375	1%	104.02	1.91	1.09	0.77	-
Arab	1,092	1%	37,420	2%	29.19	0.54	0.47	-	-
West Asian	2,507	2%	23,270	1%	107.73	1.98	0.27	-	-
South Asian	5,197	4%	223,925	10%	23.21	0.43	1.09	0.51	-
Chinese	3,852	3%	99,715	5%	38.63	0.71	1.37	0.53	-
Southeast Asian	1,362	1%	26,165	1%	52.07	0.96	1.32	0.80	-
Filipino	1,327	1%	54,010	2%	24.57	0.45	1.33	0.67	-
Japanese	-	0%	5,475	0%	-	-	-	-	-
Korean	373	0%	12,595	1%	29.65	0.55	1.10	-	-
Multiple visible minorities	1,386	1%	32,240	1%	42.98	0.79	1.52	1.33	-
Other	1,511	1%	17,330	1%	87.18	1.60	0.66	0.61	-
Total	118,011	100%	2,178,130	100%	54.18	-	-	-	-

^{*}Aboriginal Identity (8), Age Groups (20), Area of Residence: Inuit Nunangat (7) and Sex (3) for the Population in Private Households of Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2011 National Household Survey

^{**}Visible Minority (15), Generation Status (4), Age Groups (10) and Sex (3) for the Population in Private Households of Canada, Provinces,

Territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations

- Empty cells are <100 investigations

^Based on a sample of 4,961 child maltreatment-related investigations in 2013 with information about child ethno-racial status, substantiation, transfers and placement

Disproportionality

Several differences in child welfare service decisions by child's ethno-racial category are apparent. Investigations involving White children had a rate of investigation at 54.39 per 1,000 children, which is the overall incidence of investigation for all children age 0-14 years of age. The highest investigation rate per 1,000 children is Aboriginal children, who were investigated at a rate of 126.68 per 1,000 children; nearly 13 per cent of Aboriginal children were the subject of maltreatment-related investigations in Ontario in 2013. Investigations involving West Asian and Latin American children also had a higher rate per 1,000 children than investigations involving White children. Investigations involving "Other" ethno-racial categories had a rate of 87.18 per 1,000 children. Investigations involving Black children had a rate of 75.38 per 1,000 Black children or approximately 8 per cent of Black children in Ontario were the subject of a maltreatment-related investigation in Ontario in 2013.

Disparity

The decision-based disparity index, which adjusts for the service population, provides some important information about disparities when examining child welfare service decisions during a child maltreatment-related investigation (Morton, Ocasio, & Simmel, 2011). Aboriginal children are more than 130 percent more likely to be investigated than a White child (DI=2.33), 15 per cent more likely to be substantiated (DI=1.15), 40 percent more likely to be transferred to ongoing services (DI=1.41) and 168 percent more likely to be placed in out of home care during the investigation (DI=2.68).

Black children are 40 percent more likely to be investigated compared to White children (DI=1.39), 18 per cent more likely to be substantiated (DI =1.18); 8 percent more likely to be transferred to ongoing services (DI=1.08) and 13 percent more likely to be placed in out of home care during the investigation (DI=1.13). All other ethno-racial categories are less likely to be transferred to ongoing services or placed in out of home care compared to White children with the exception of Multiple Visible Minorities and Other ethno-racial categories. Multiple Visible Minorities are less likely to be investigated compared to White children but more likely to be substantiated, and transferred to service. Investigations involving "Other" ethno-racial categories are more likely to be investigated than White children, less likely to be substantiated and transferred to ongoing services.

Background

Due to changes in investigation mandates and practices over the last 15 years, the OIS-2008 and OIS-2013 differed from previous cycles in that they tracked both risk-only investigations and maltreatment investigations. Risk-only investigations were those in which a specific past incident of maltreatment was not suspected or alleged to have occurred, but rather a constellation of factors lead to concerns that a child may be maltreated in the future (e.g., caregiver with a substance abuse issue).

Methodology

The OIS-2013 used a multi-stage sampling design to select a representative sample of 17 child welfare agencies in Ontario and then to select a sample of cases within these agencies. Information was collected directly from child protection workers on a representative sample of 5,265 child protection investigations conducted during a three-month sampling period in 2013. 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 2013 was 125,281.

For the purposes of this analysis, a sample of children age 0-14 years of age (n=4,961) who were investigated for a maltreatment-related concern was used to calculate the incidence of investigation using the ethno-racial categories contained in the National Household Survey 2011. The estimated number of maltreatment-related investigations conducted in Ontario in 2013 for children age 0-14 years of age was 118,011.

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). A maltreatment investigation was substantiated when in the clinical judgment of the worker the child had been a victim of maltreatment.

Workers were also asked to provide information on various other aspects of their investigation, including the characteristics of the household, caregivers, and child subject of the investigation, as well as the short-term child welfare service dispositions such as transfers to ongoing child welfare services, use of child welfare court, and placement in out-of-home care.

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. Service outcomes such as out-of-home placement only include placements that occurred during the initial investigation.

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. Moreover, the OIS is based on the assessments provided by the investigating child welfare worker and could not be independently verified.

Three limitations to estimation method used to derive annual estimates 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 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. Since the counts presented in this information sheet are weighted estimates, in some instances sample sizes are too small to derive publishable estimates.

For further information on the methodology of the OIS, see Chapter 2 of the OIS-2013; Fallon et al., 2015.

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