



# Child neglect in Canada<sup>1</sup>

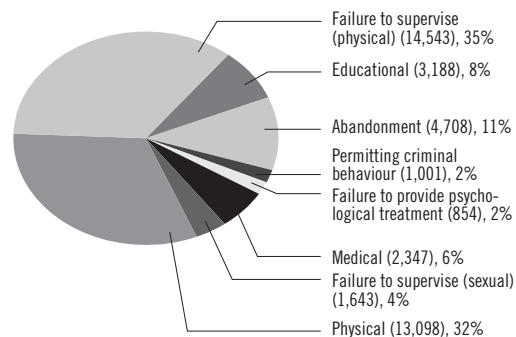
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The 2003 Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS-2003) is the second nation-wide study to examine the incidence of reported child maltreatment and the characteristics of the children and families investigated by child welfare services. The CIS-2003 tracked a sample of 14,200 child maltreatment investigations<sup>2</sup> as a basis for deriving national estimates. Information was collected directly from the investigating child welfare workers using a standard set of definitions.<sup>3</sup> This information sheet describes cases of neglect that were tracked by the CIS-2003 in Canada, excluding Quebec.<sup>4</sup>

## Child neglect

Child neglect includes situations in which children have suffered harm or their safety or development has been endangered as a result of their caregiver's failure to provide for or protect them. All provincial and territorial statutes include neglect or some reference to acts of omission, such as failure to supervise or protect, as grounds for investigating maltreatment. Figure 1 shows the distribution of substantiated cases for each of the eight types of neglect investigated by the CIS. The CIS-2003 tracked eight forms of neglect.

**Figure 1. Primary or secondary forms of substantiated neglect (CIS-2003)**  
Estimates based on a sample of 5,653 child investigations



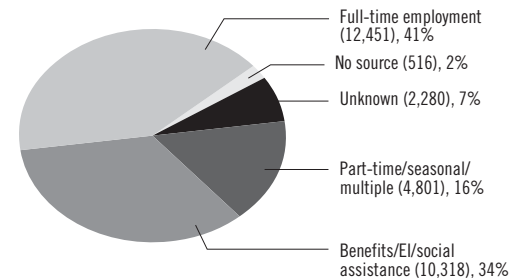
Source: CIS-2003 Major Findings, Table 3-7.

In the CIS-2003, neglect was the most frequently investigated primary category of maltreatment (an estimated 30,366 child investigations; a rate of 6.38 per 1,000 children). Nearly a third of all cases in which maltreatment was substantiated involved neglect as the primary category of maltreatment (30%).

## Household characteristics

The CIS-2003 tracked household characteristics suspected or known to be associated with investigated categories of maltreatment. Investigating workers were asked to choose the source that best described the household income. Compared with other investigated families, families in which neglect was the primary form of substantiated maltreatment were least likely to have full-time employment as their primary source of income (see CIS-2003 Major Findings Report, Table 7-5). On the other hand, more than one-third (34%) of cases of substantiated neglect were identified in families receiving some form of benefits, employment insurance, or social assistance; a proportion higher than in any other category of substantiated maltreatment (Figure 2).

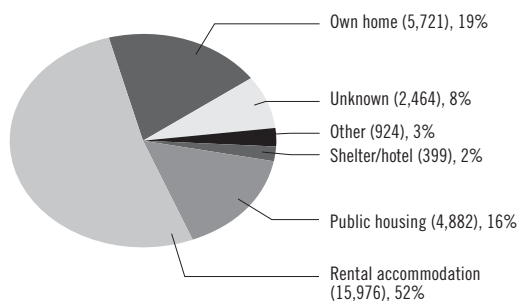
**Figure 2. Source of household income for cases of substantiated neglect (CIS-2003)**  
Estimates based on a sample of 5,659 child investigations



Source: CIS-2003 Major Findings, Table 7-5.

Investigating workers were also asked to select the housing category that best described the investigated child's household situation. Substantiated cases of neglect differed from other cases of substantiated maltreatment (Figure 3). A smaller proportion of child victims of neglect were living in purchased homes (19% compared with 37% for physical abuse, 42% for sexual abuse, 38% for emotional maltreatment, and 37% for exposure to domestic violence) and more were living in private market rentals or public housing complexes (68% compared with 48%, 47%, 51%, and 53% respectively).

**Figure 3. Housing type for cases of substantiated neglect (CIS-2003)**  
Estimates based on a sample of 5,660 child investigations



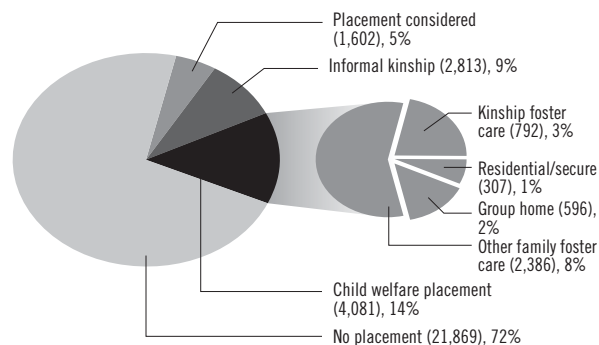
Source: CIS-2003 Major Findings, Table 7-6.

Compared with other investigated families, families in which neglect was the primary form of substantiated maltreatment were more likely (35%) to have moved at least once during the last 12 months (see CIS-2003 Major Findings Report, Table 7-8).

### Out-of-home placement

Child victims of neglect experienced the greatest rate of placement, with an estimated 23% of children being moved to a placement outside their home. A child welfare placement occurred for 14% of all investigations that indicated neglect as the primary substantiated maltreatment, primarily into foster family care (8%). A child placement in informal kinship care occurred for an additional 9% of the substantiated neglect investigations, while placement was considered for an additional 5% (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Out-of-home placement for cases of substantiated neglect**  
Estimates based on a sample of 5,655 child investigations



Source: CIS-2003 Major Findings, Table 5-4.

- 1 This information sheet is based upon the peer-reviewed 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, and 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 fact 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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