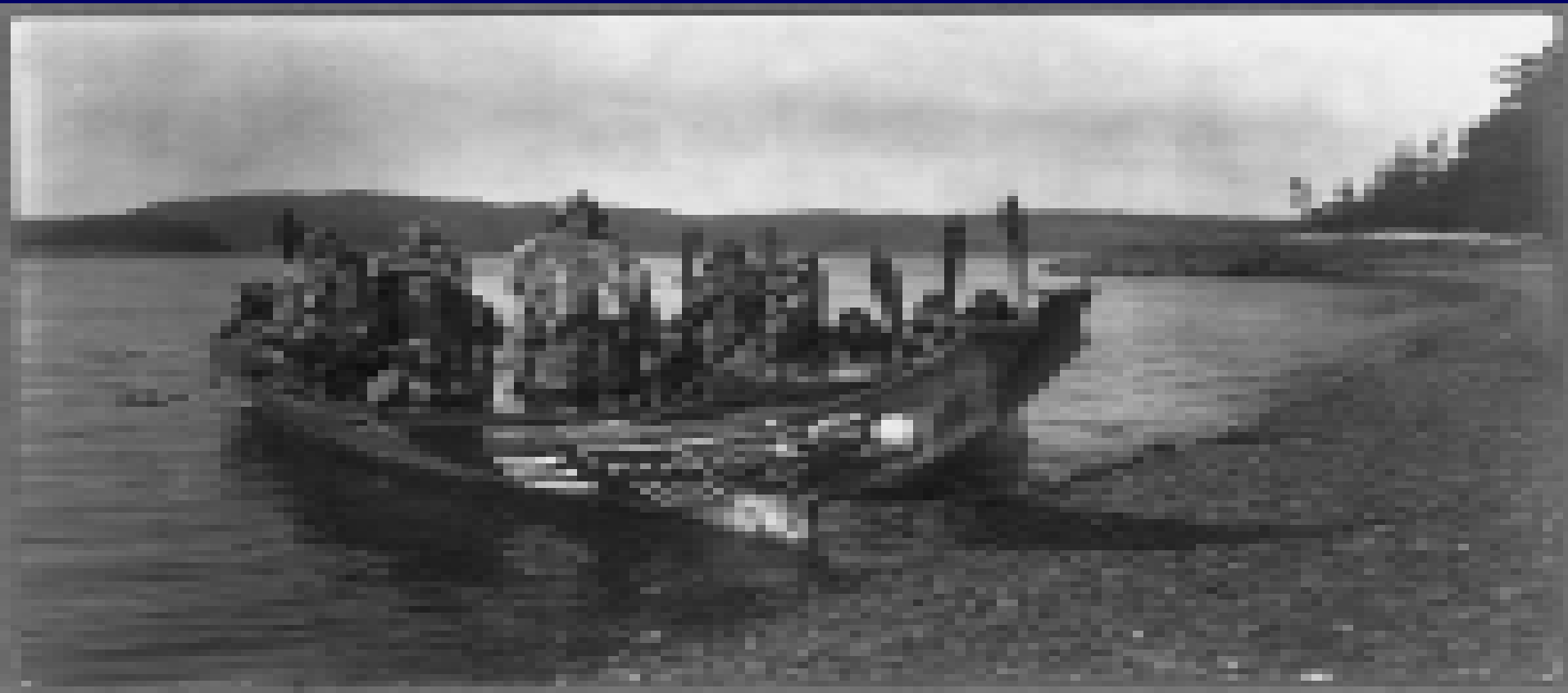




Pathways to overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system in Canada

**Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare
Nico Trocmé, Della Knoke and Cindy Blackstock**

Call them and they
were never gone



Residential schools



“What if they squeeze
all the Indian out of us?
What will be left? What
do they want, Howard?
We’re Indians. That’s
it. That’s what we are”

No time to Say
Goodbye

The last residential
school closed in 1996

Canada's Promise in the United Nations World Fit for Children

We stress our commitment to create a world fit for children in which human development... founded on principles of democracy, equality, non discrimination, peace and social justice and universality and indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights

This is the last year of the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Peoples and 14 years after Canada signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

How are First Nations children doing?



There are between 22,500 and 28,000 Aboriginal children in the care of the Canadian child welfare system... three times the number that attended residential schools in the 1940s.

First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, 2002; Child Welfare League of Canada, 2003; Blackstock, 2002

2002 INAC data suggests there are 8,828 Status Indian children in child welfare care on reserve. Meaning 1 in every 17 children on reserve are being removed and placed in child welfare care as compared to approx. 1 in every 200 children for non Aboriginal children*

INAC, 2002, *calculation based on 1998 data of 7.18 million children in Canada and the figure of 42,250 non Aboriginal children in care

According to Government of
Canada data the number of First
Nations children in care resident
on reserve increased by 71.5%
nationally between 1995-2001

McKenzie, 2002

Increase in Status Indian children on reserve in care 1995-2001

Atlantic 130%	Quebec 93.8%
Ontario 163.8%	Manitoba 11.4%
Saskatchewan 160.3%	Alberta 52.7%
British Columbia 90.4%	Yukon 5%

Census data suggests the North American Indian child population decreased 1% during this same time period

Statistics Canada, 2001

Data from BC indicates that only 2.5% of Aboriginal children in care of the province were placed in Aboriginal homes despite a statutory requirement to give preference to Aboriginal families

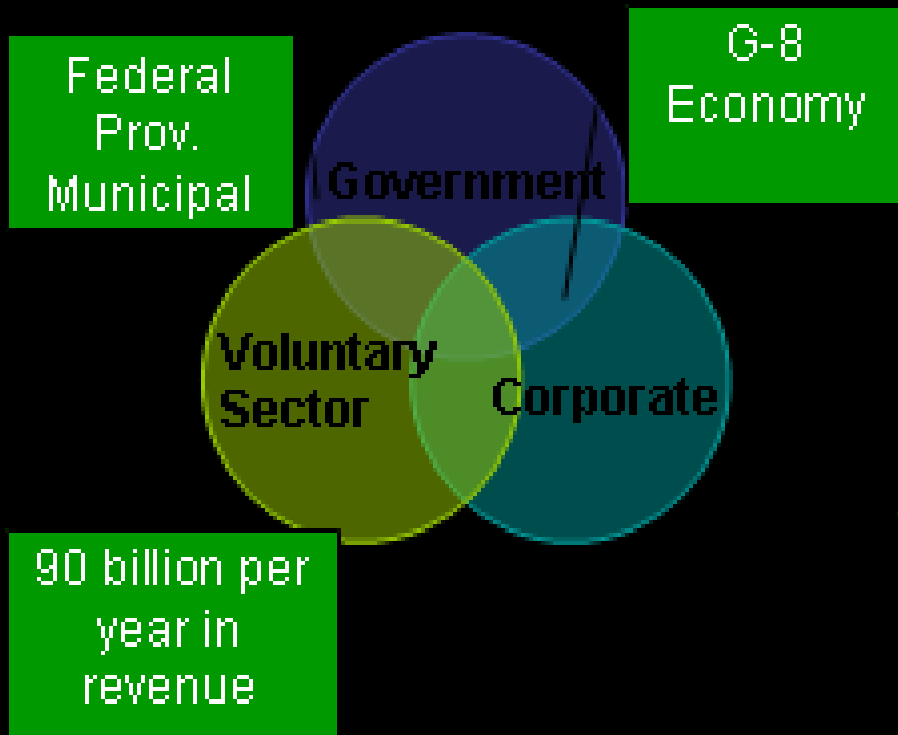
Children's Commission, 1998

Linking with Keeping the Promise

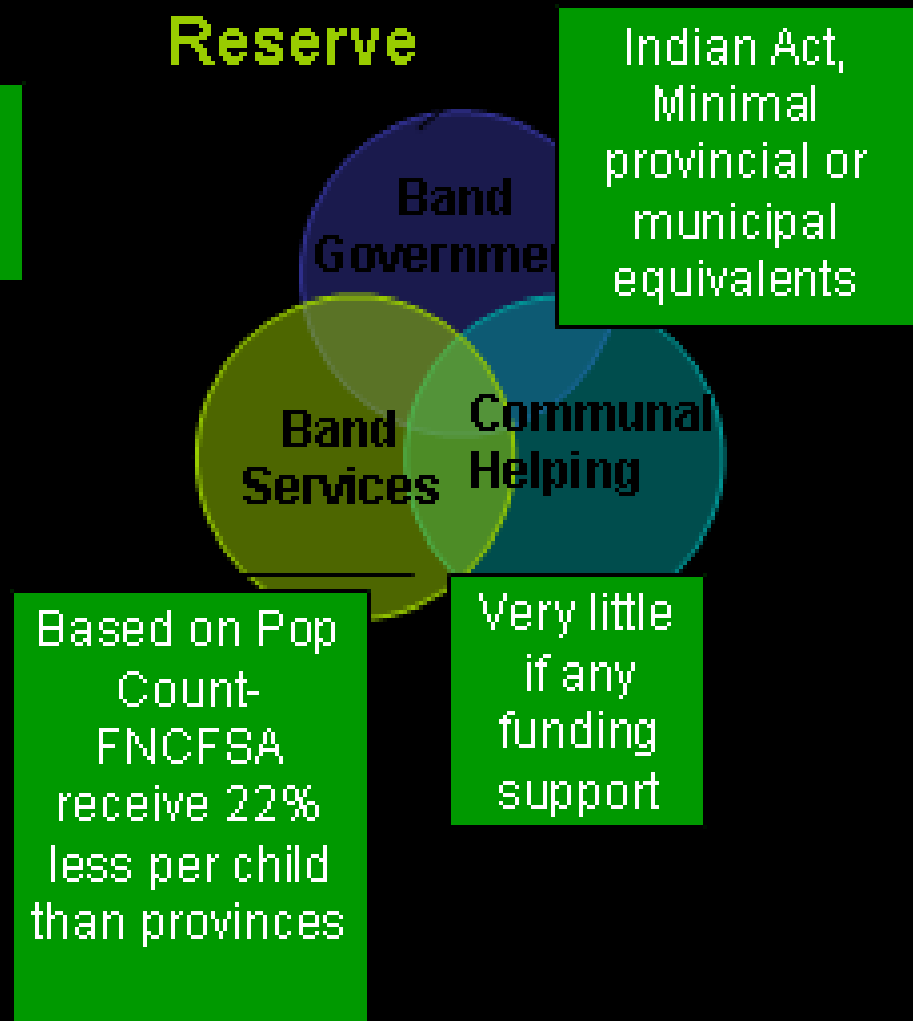
- **Poverty** – 3 of 5 Aboriginal children under 6 live in poverty- Average income on reserve 6400-7500 per annum.
- **Urbanization** – 70% of Aboriginal people live off reserve. Most move to access services, school, jobs
- **Substance Misuse**- Aboriginal youth 11 times more likely to misuse solvents- avg. age of initial use 9 years old.
- **Youth justice** – 78% of Aboriginal youth in prison are First Nations
- **Education** – 30.7% of First Nations youth on reserve graduate
- **Youth Suicide** – 38% of all First Nations youth (10-18 years) deaths are suicides
- **Accidental injury** – First Nations infants and toddlers die from accidents at 4-5 times the rate
- **Child Welfare** – 2/3 of all substantiated cases involving Aboriginal families were First Nations (status and non status)

Contrasting Community Supports

Canada



Living on Reserve



1998 Canadian incidence study of reported child maltreatment

- **7,672 investigations** carried out in **51 child welfare authorities** across Canada. This included **3 First Nations CFS agencies**
- Forms of maltreatment, investigation outcomes including placement, child & family socio-demographics, and selected child & family risk factors were collected.
- **Information collected from social workers** upon completion of investigation, no post investigation follow-up.

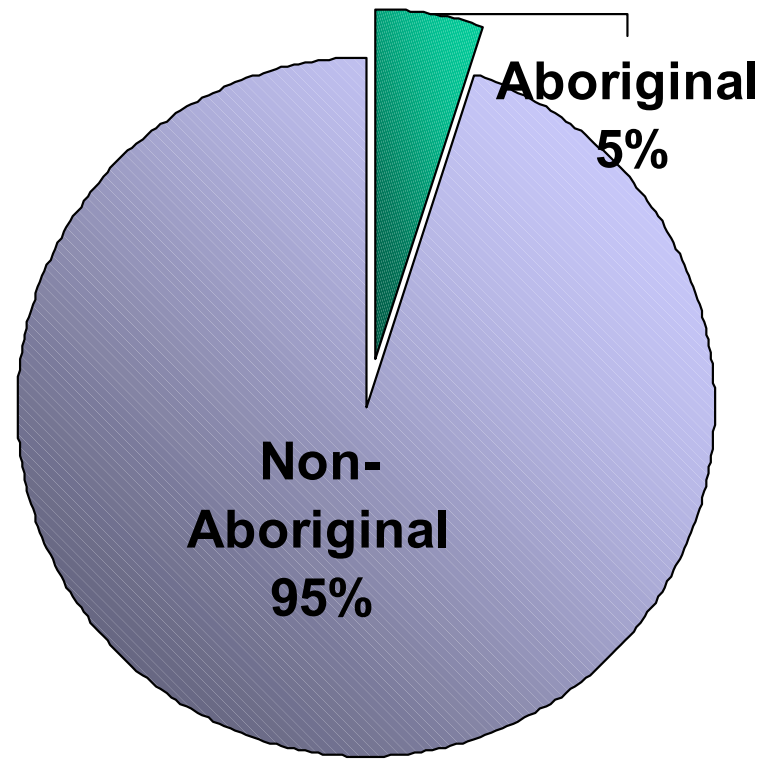
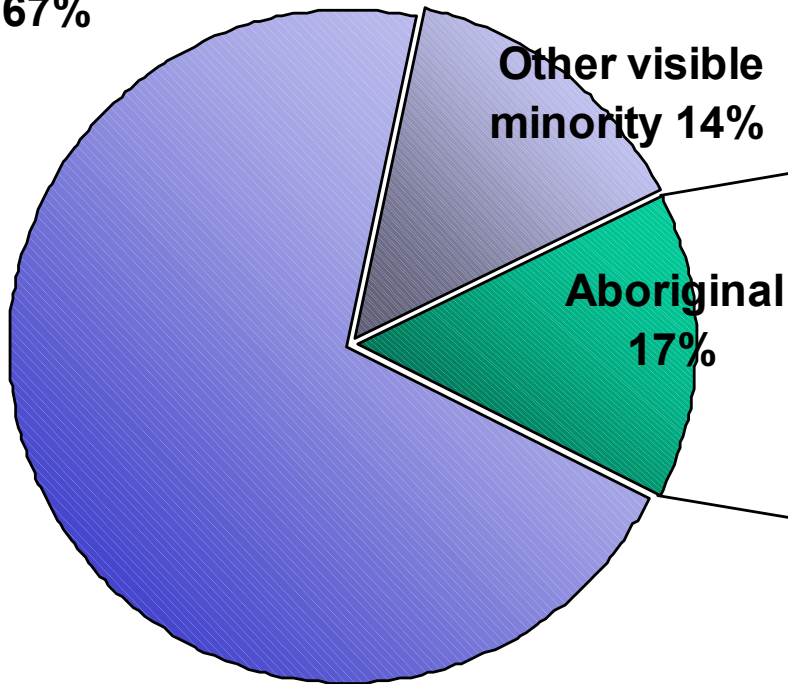
Aboriginal children in the CIS-98

- Analysis focuses on a sub-sample of **4,402 investigations** (excludes 2,309 cases from Quebec, 225 children not residing with bio parents, 726 other visible minority children, 10 cases with missing Aboriginal data). Because of missing data, regression **analyses limited to 2,898 cases.**
- **73 %** were Aboriginal children resident off reserve and **27%** were resident on reserve.

What did we find?

Aboriginal status and visible minority background for cases of investigated maltreatment, 1998 CIS* (N=4,402)

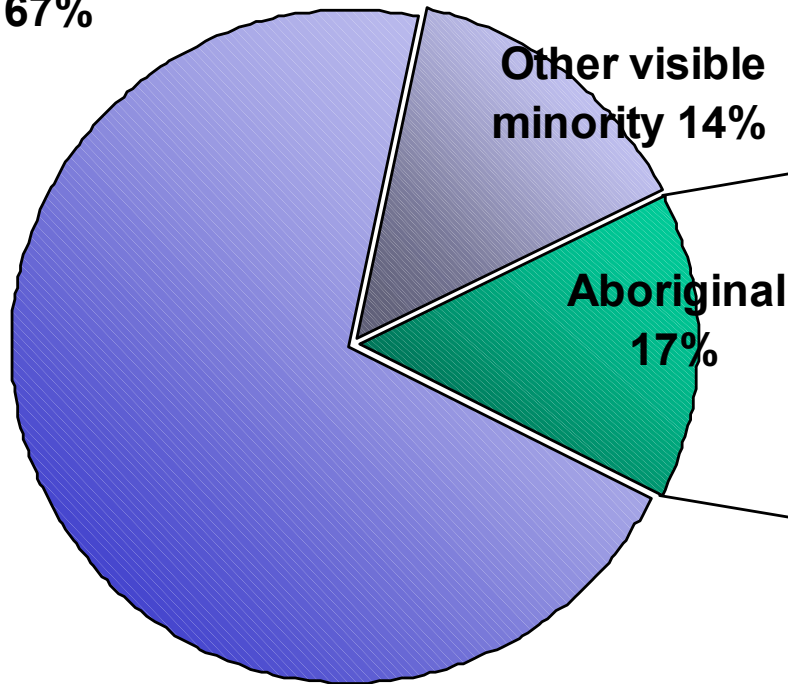
Non Aboriginal
67%



Aboriginal children in Canada

Aboriginal status and visible minority background for cases of investigated maltreatment, 1998 CIS* (N=4,402)

Non Aboriginal
67%



FN reserve
27%

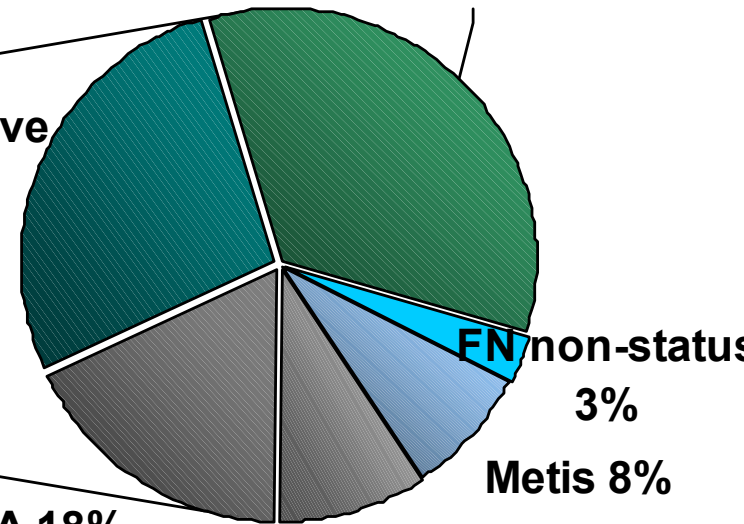
Other/NA 18%

FN status
34%

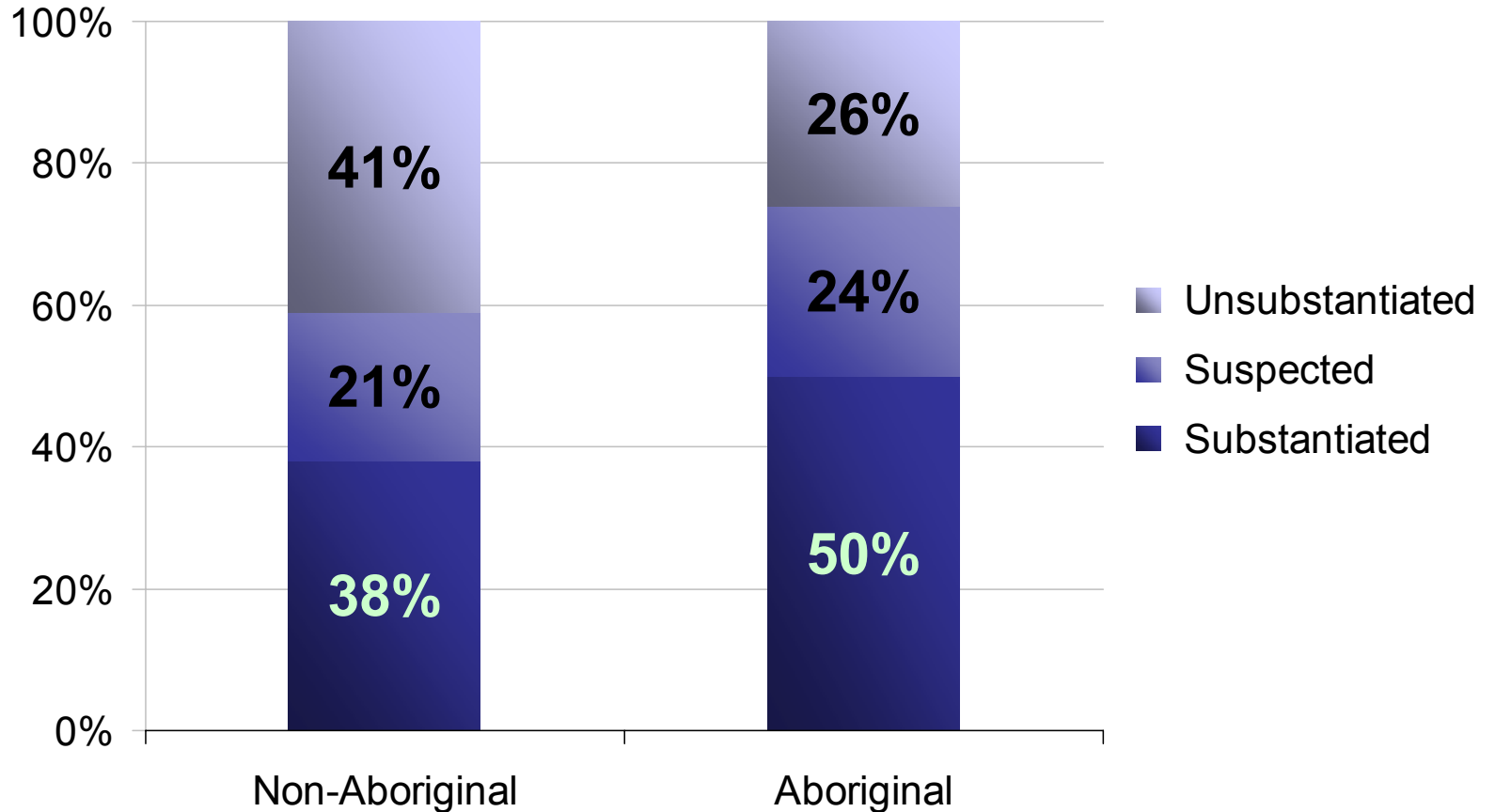
FN non-status
3%

Metis 8%

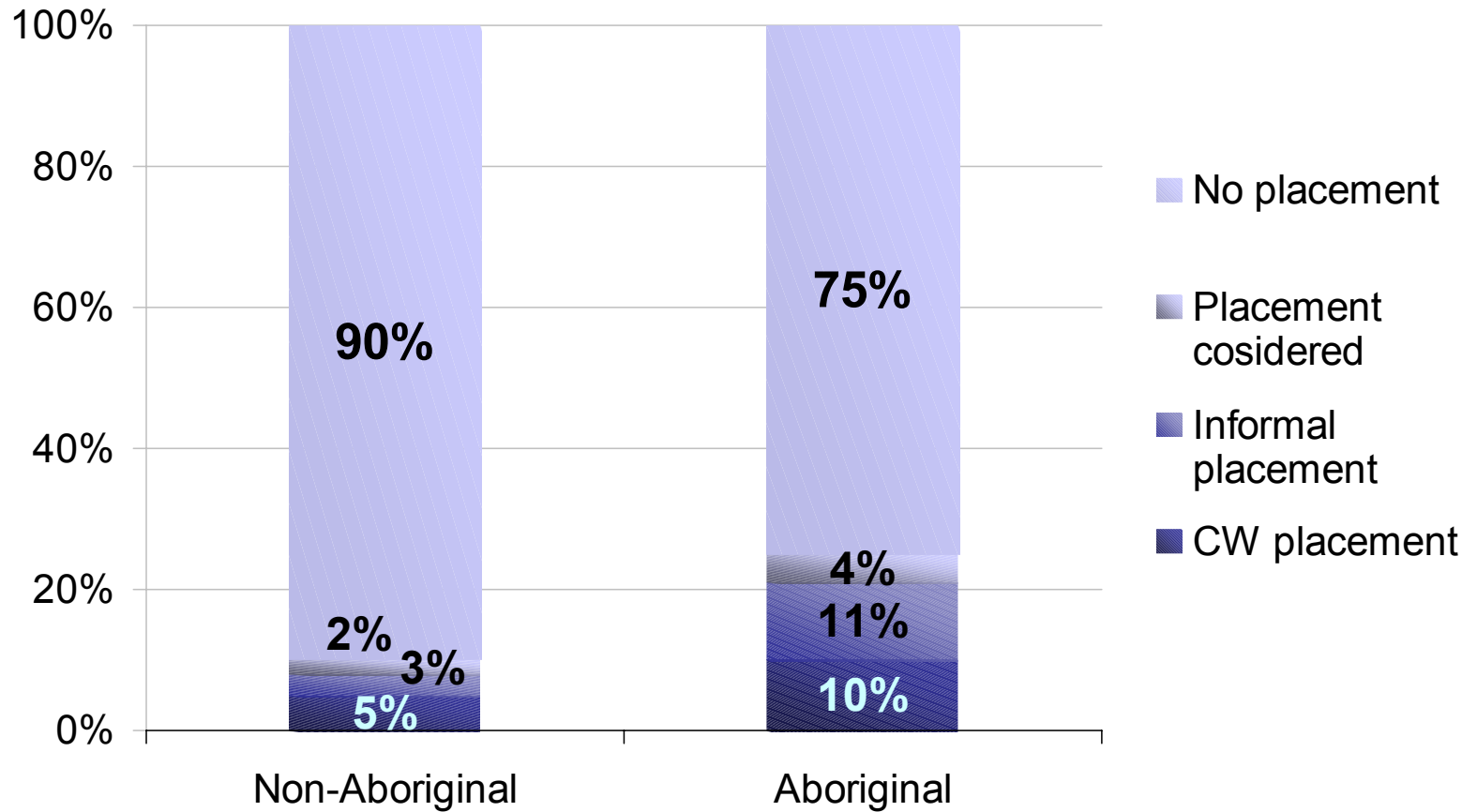
Inuit 10%



Substantiation rates by Aboriginal status



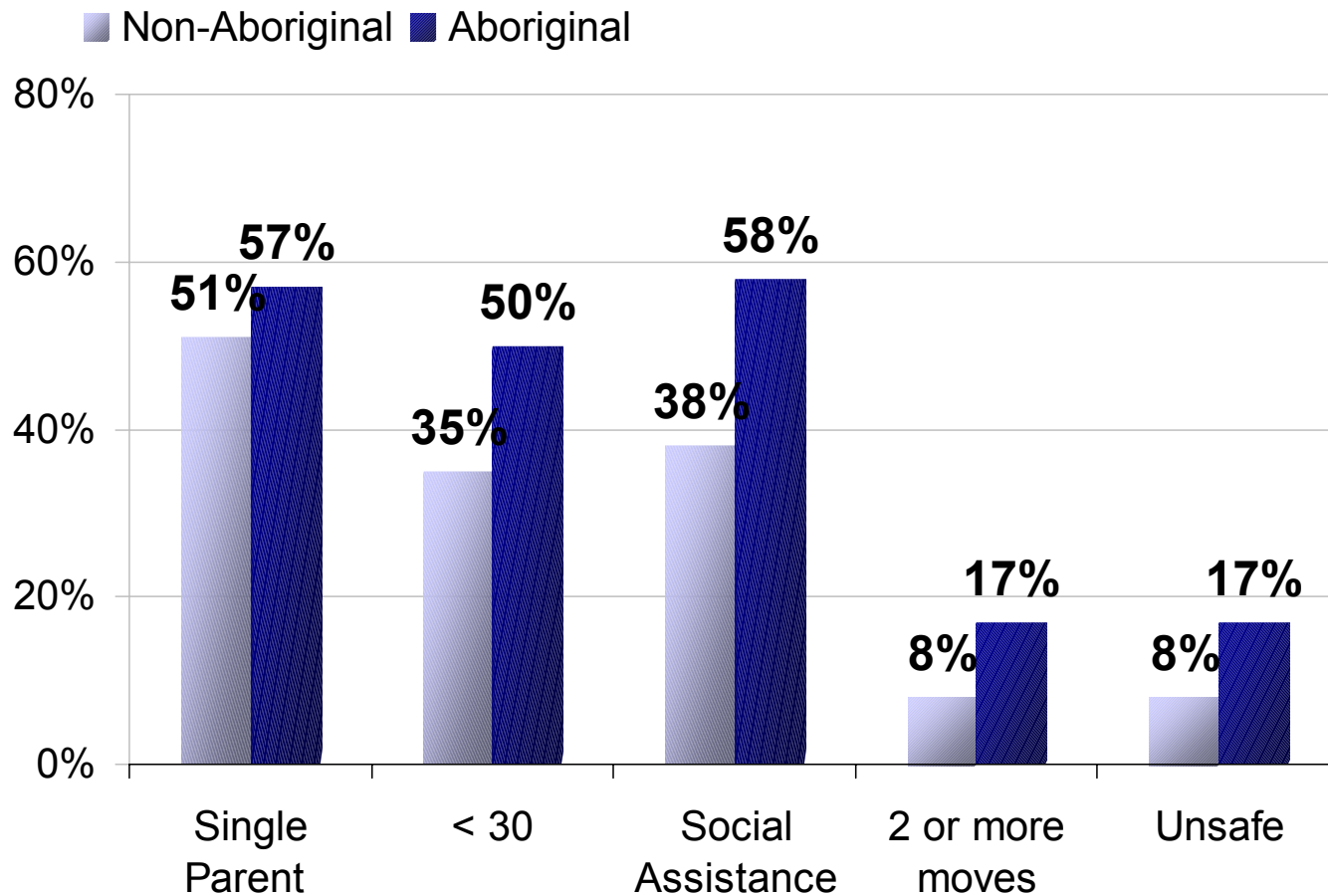
Placement rates by Aboriginal status



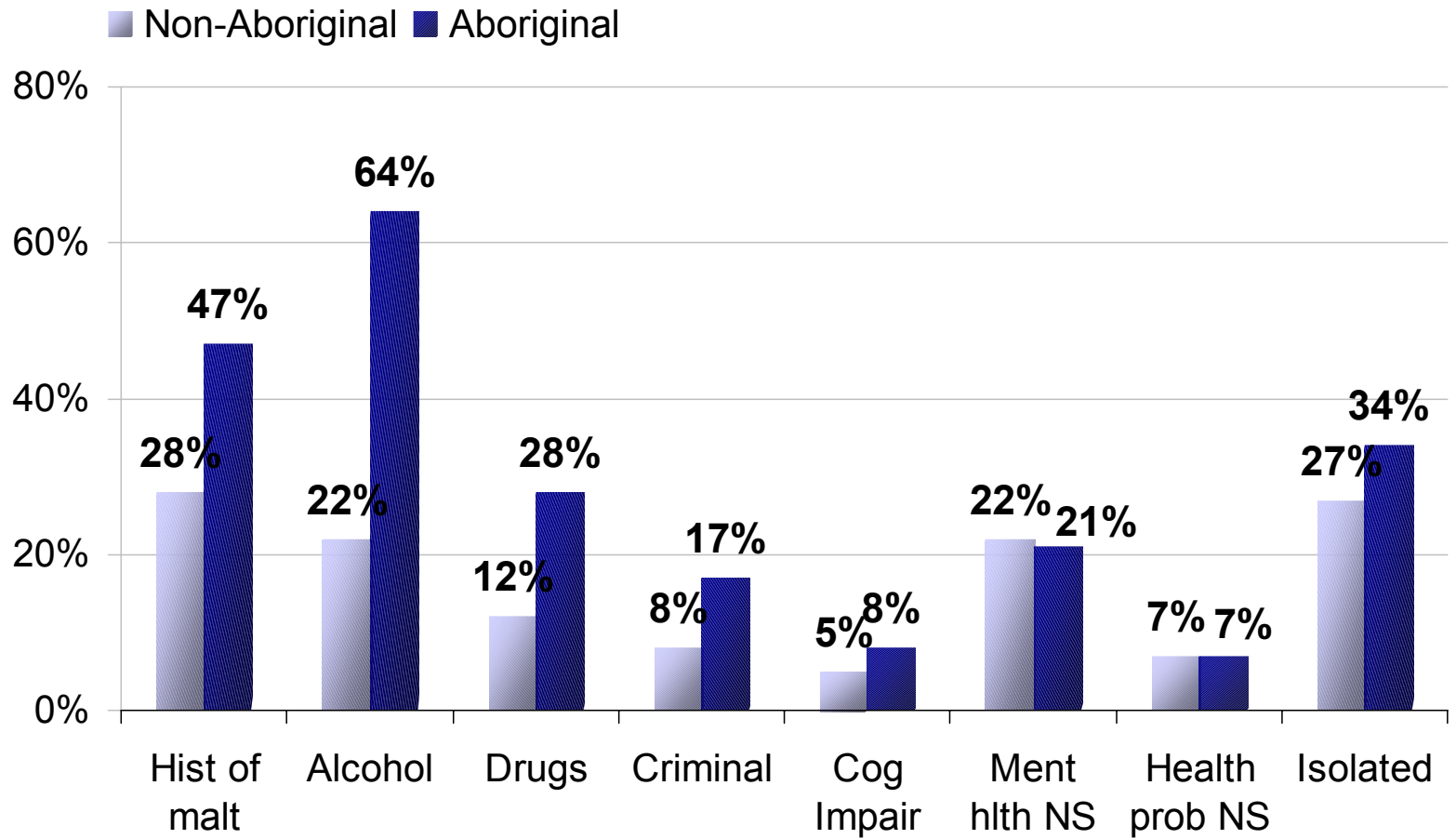
- **17% of children in CIS are aboriginal vs. 5% in Canada**
- **74% of Aboriginal cases substantiated or suspected vs. 59% of non-Aboriginal cases**
- **21% of Aboriginal children in formal or informal care vs. 8% on non-Aboriginal children**

Why?

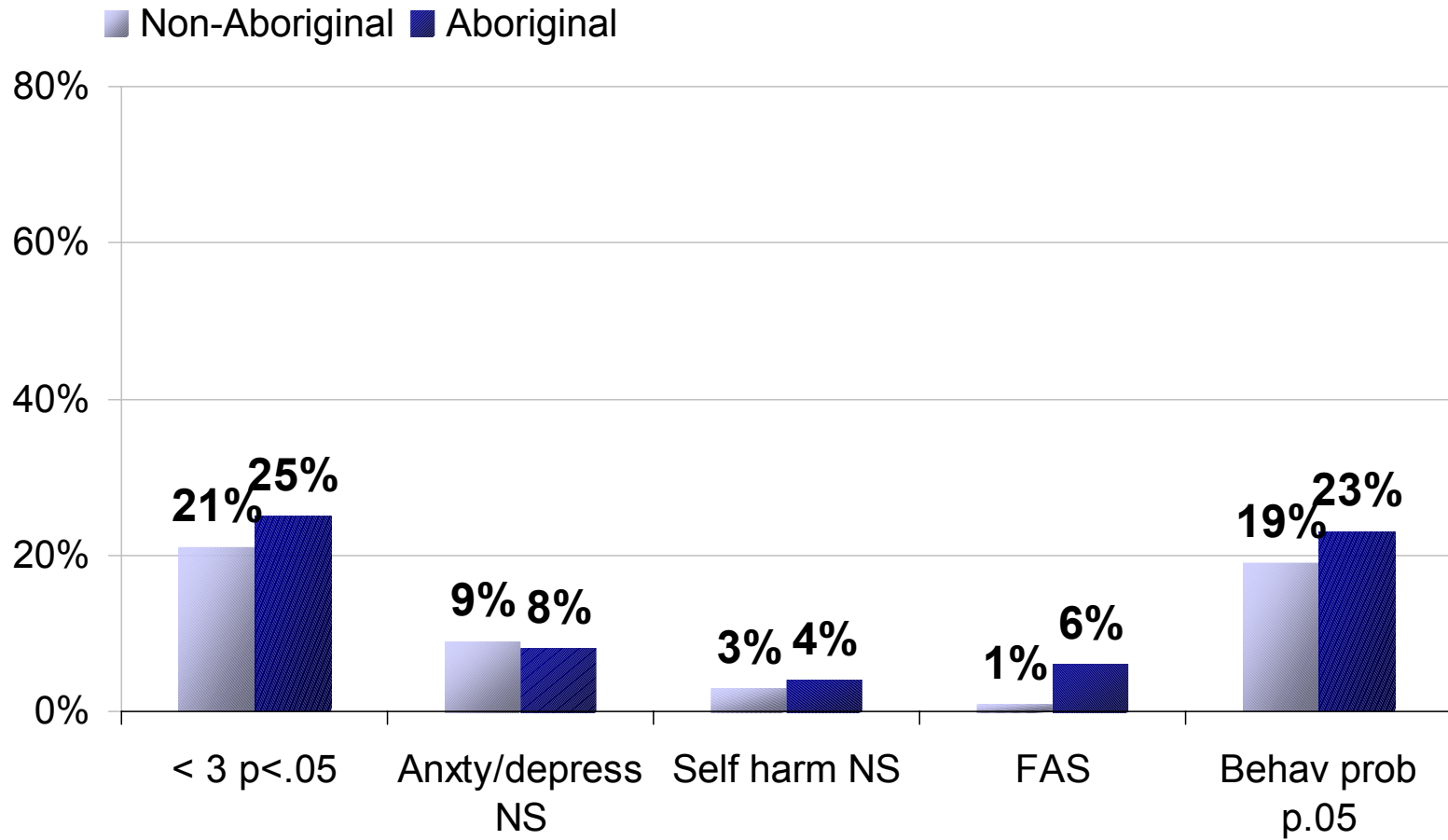
Household characteristics



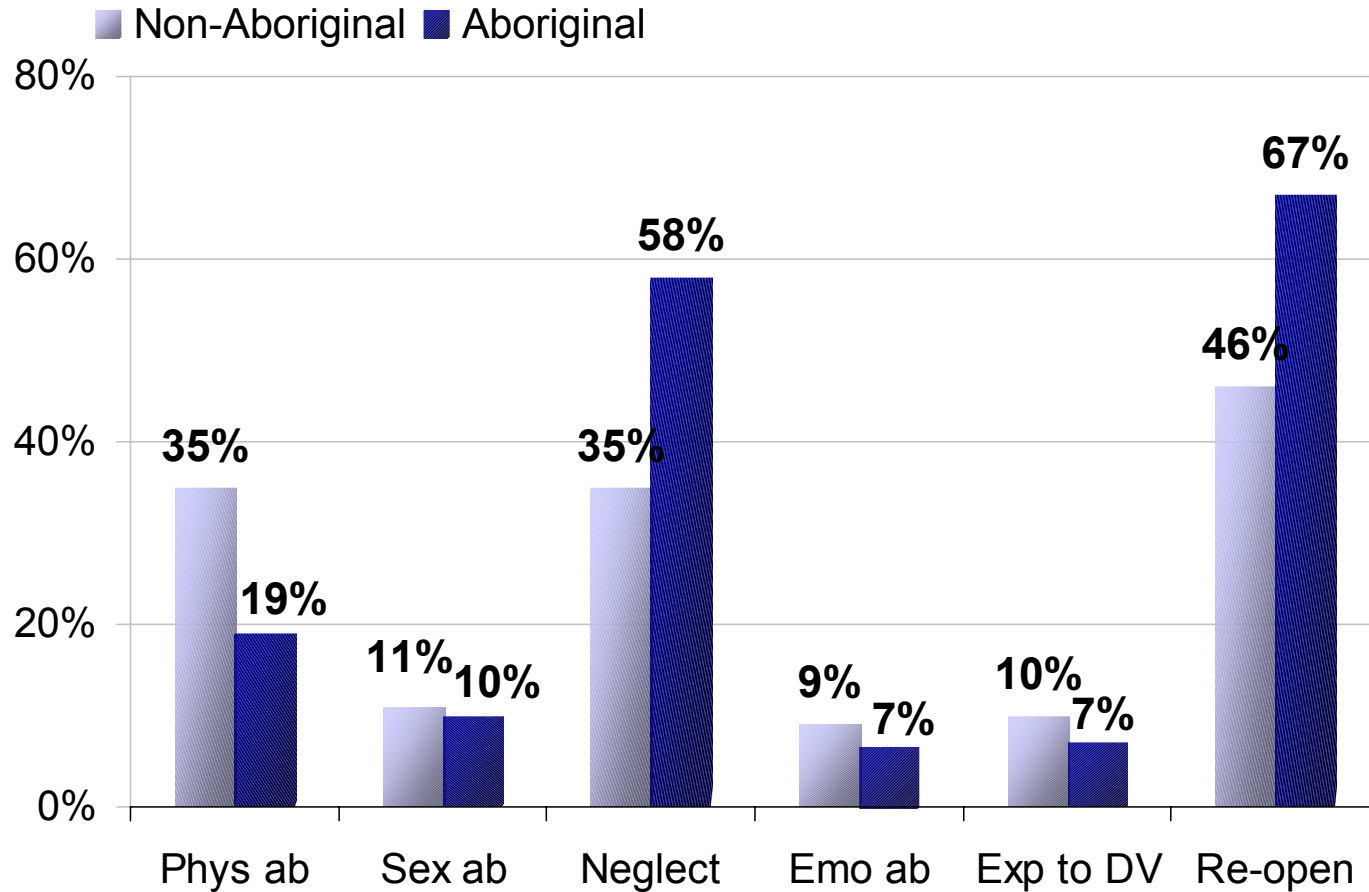
Parent risk factors



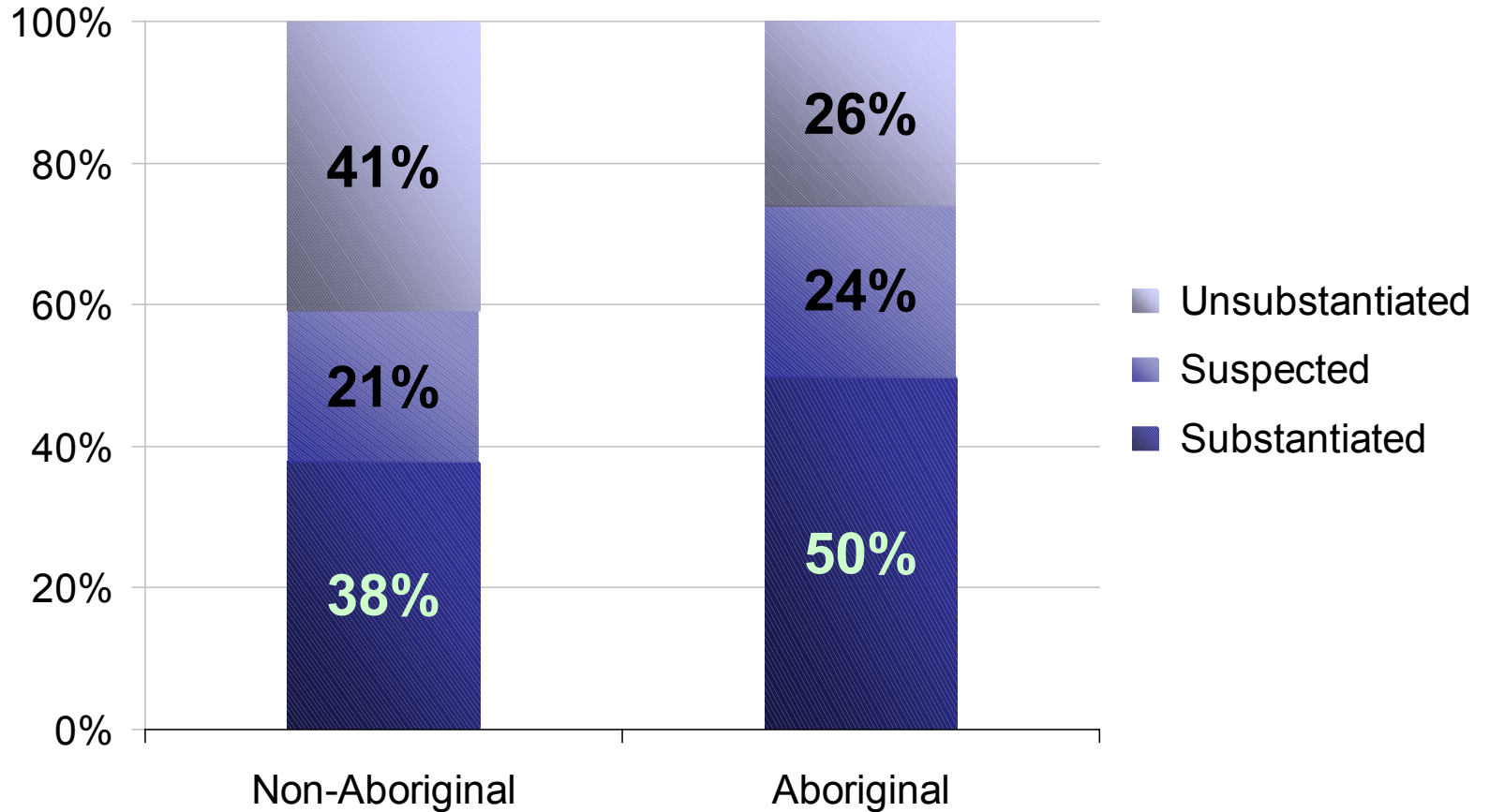
Child characteristics



Forms of investigated maltreatment



Substantiation rates by Aboriginal status



Substantiation Model

Effect of Aboriginal status on substantiation as each block

Block	χ^2 for Block
Aboriginal Status (vs. Non-Aboriginal)	13.66 (df=1)***
Family Characteristics	67.90 (df=8)***
Maltreatment Characteristics	177.93 (df=5)***
Child Factors	83.50 (df=6)***
Age of Youngest Parent	1.73 (df=3)
Parent Drug Concerns	22.34 (df=1)***
Parent Criminal Activity	40.96 (df=1)***
Parent Cognitive Impairment	7.79 (df=1)**
Parent Few Social Supports	43.84 (df=1)***
Parent History of Child Maltreatment	36.52 (df=1)***
Parent Alcohol Concerns	30.89 (df=1)***

Full Model

ChiSq = 527.05 (df=29)

Nagelkerke R2 = 0.225

Significant Odds Ratios in Full Model

Unsafe Housing OR = 2.40

2 or More Moves OR = 1.99

Emotional Maltreatment OR = 2.55

Exposure to DV OR = 5.81

Criminal Activity OR = 2.70

Few Social Supports OR = 1.67

Childhood Maltreatment OR = 1.70

Alcohol OR = 1.89

1.34 p=0.013

1.24 p=0.077

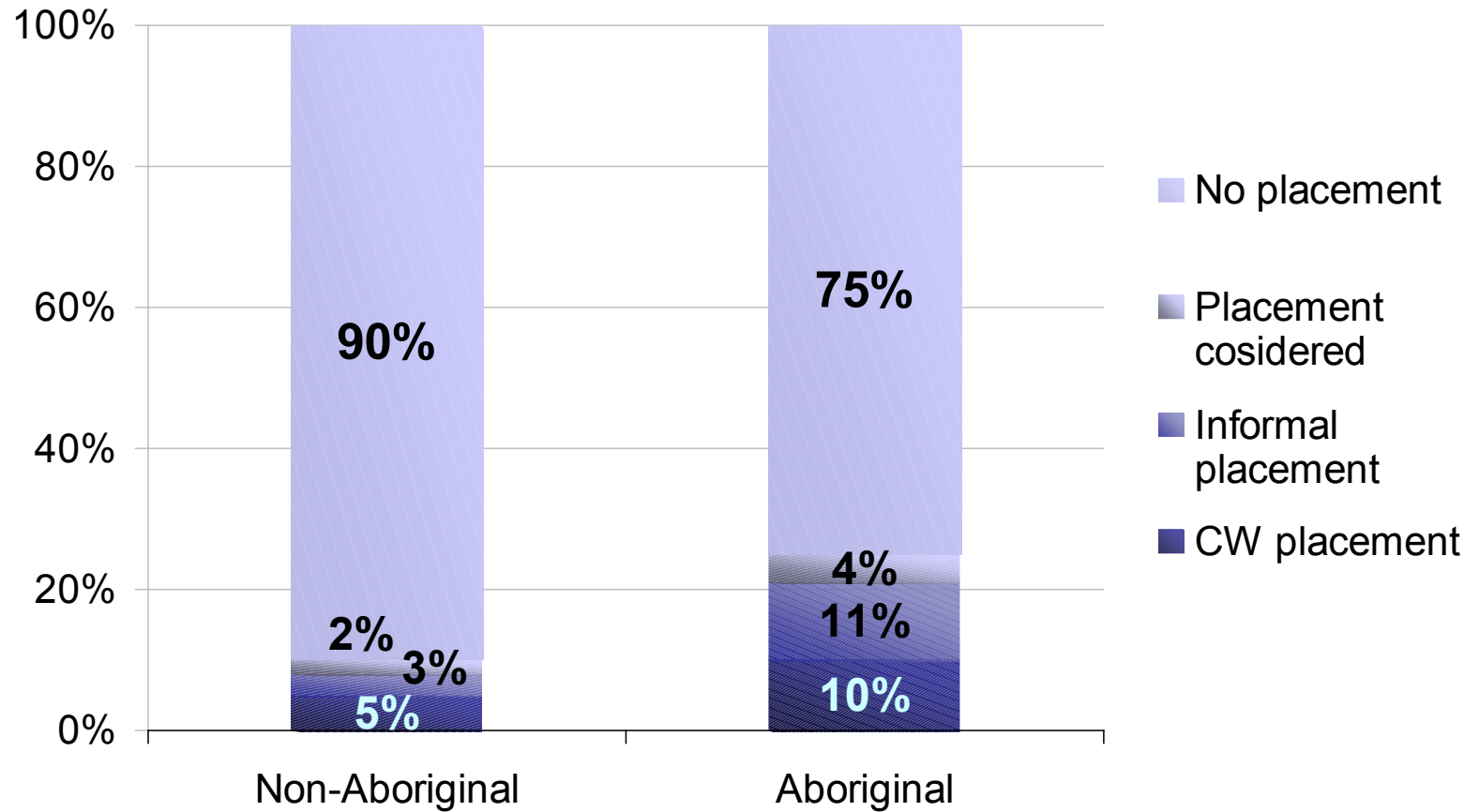
1.05 p=0.678

Substantiation Model

Effect of Aboriginal status on substantiation as each block of variables is added to the multivariate model

Block	χ^2 for Block	Adjusted Odds Ratio for Aboriginal Status	<u>Significance of Aboriginal Status</u>
Aboriginal Status (vs. Non-Aboriginal)	13.66 (df=1)***	1.46	p=0.000
Family Characteristics	67.90 (df=8)***	1.40	p=0.002
Maltreatment Characteristics	177.93 (df=5)***	1.56	p=0.000
Child Factors	83.50 (df=6)***	1.45	p=0.001
Age of Youngest Parent	1.73 (df=3)	1.46	p=0.001
Parent Drug Concerns	22.34 (df=1)***	1.39	p=0.005
Parent Criminal Activity	40.96 (df=1)***	1.35	p=0.011
Parent Cognitive Impairment	7.79 (df=1)**	1.36	p=0.010
Parent Few Social Supports	43.84 (df=1)***	1.34	p=0.013
Parent History of Child Maltreatment	36.52 (df=1)***	1.24	p=0.077
Parent Alcohol Concerns	30.89 (df=1)***	1.05	p=0.678

Placement rates by Aboriginal status



Placement model

Effect of Aboriginal status on placement as each block

Block	χ^2 for Block
Aboriginal Status (vs. Non-Aboriginal)	21.33 (df=1)
Family Characteristics	93.87 (df=8)
Maltreatment Characteristics	106.22 (df=7)
Child Factors	43.29 (df=6)***
Parent Factors	40.97 (df=9)***

Full Model

ChiSq = 305.68 (df=31)

Nagelkerke R2 = 0.280

Significant Odds Ratios in Full Model

2 or More Moves OR = 3.05

Substantiated Maltreatment OR = 7.93

Exposure to DV OR = 0.24

2 or More Child Problems OR = 3.38

Cognitive Impairment OR = 2.44

1.24 p=0.312

1.08 p=0.739

Placement model

Effect of Aboriginal status on placement as each block of variables is added to the multivariate model

Block	χ^2 for Block	Adjusted Odds Ratio for Aboriginal Status	Significance of Aboriginal Status
Aboriginal Status (vs. Non-Aboriginal)	21.33 (df=1)***	2.33	p=0.000
Family Characteristics	93.87 (df=8) ***	1.80	p=0.002
Maltreatment Characteristics	106.22 (df=7)***	1.38	p=0.108
Child Factors	43.29 (df=6)***	1.24	p=0.312
Parent Factors	40.97 (df=9)***	1.08	p=0.739

Conclusions

- **Socio-economic disadvantage and related parental problems (e.g. poverty) account for the over-representation of Aboriginal children.**
- **Child characteristics were not strongly associated with substantiation and placement decisions.**
- **More comprehensive measures are needed to address the social problems that put Aboriginal communities at risk**

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Forthcoming in Social Services Review





ReCONCiLiATION

Looking back, reaching forward

**Indigenous peoples
and child welfare**

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