

# The Canadian child welfare system response to exposure to domestic violence investigations<sup>1</sup>

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The 2003 Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS-2003)<sup>2,3</sup> is the third child abuse and neglect incidence study to be conducted in Canada. The first cycle was completed in Ontario in 1993. The second and third cycles were Canada-wide studies, completed in 1998 and 2003 with the Public Health Agency of Canada. The CIS-2003 tracked a sample of 14,200 child maltreatment investigations, which were the basis for deriving national estimates. Information was collected directly from the investigating workers using a standard set of definitions. This fact sheet is based on a secondary analysis of data collected in the 2003 Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS-2003) and summarizes the results of analyses of substantiated exposure to domestic violence cases.

Three categories of substantiated maltreatment were created in order to compare exposure to domestic violence to other forms of maltreatment: investigations involving only exposure to domestic violence, investigations involving exposure to domestic violence that co-occur with at least one other form of maltreatment, and other forms of maltreatment that occur in single or multiple forms (physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and emotional maltreatment). Over one third of substantiated child maltreatment investiga-

tions in Canada<sup>4</sup> involved some form of exposure to domestic violence (34%); 25% of substantiated child maltreatment investigations involved exposure to domestic violence and 9% of substantiated child maltreatment investigations involved exposure to domestic violence co-occurring with another form of substantiated maltreatment. The other maltreatment category includes single and multiple forms of substantiated cases of maltreatment. That is, the category includes cases involving only physical abuse, only sexual abuse, only neglect, only emotional maltreatment, and all combinations of these four forms (see Figure 1).

## Profiles of substantiated exposure to domestic violence cases

Forty-four per cent of exposure to domestic violence cases had never been opened before compared to 33% for co-occurring exposure to domestic violence cases and 35% for other forms of maltreatment (see Figure 2). Approximately one third of domestic violence only cases (36%) and other child maltreatment cases (33%) involved chronic maltreatment (multiple incidents over more than six months). In contrast, 62% of co-occurring cases of exposure to domestic violence were multiple incidents over more than six months.

Figure 1: Estimates for categories of substantiated maltreatment in Canada, excluding Quebec, in 2003

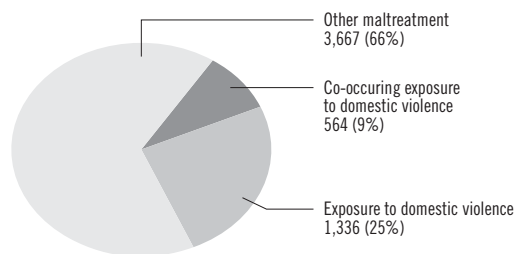


Figure 2. Estimates for cases previously opened in Canada, excluding Quebec, in 2003

