



# CIS-2008 Major Findings Supplementary Tables: Child Functioning Concerns by Primary Substantiated Maltreatment and Risk

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## Introduction

The Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect-2008 (CIS-2008) is the third nation-wide study to examine the incidence of reported child maltreatment and the characteristics of children and families investigated by child welfare authorities in Canada. In addition to the tables presented in the Major Findings report, the Supplementary Tables Information Sheet Series describes key child, household and investigation characteristics by primary category of substantiated maltreatment including confirmed risk. This Information Sheet examines child functioning concerns.

## Findings

There were an estimated 235,842 maltreatment-related investigations conducted in Canada in 2008. An estimated 174,411 investigations were for an incident of maltreatment and an estimated 61,431 were risk-only investigations. At the end of the initial investigation, 49% of maltreatment investigations were substantiated (85,440 investigations) and in 20% of risk investigations, the worker determined there was a significant risk of future maltreatment (12,018 investigations). At least one child functioning concern was noted in 46% of both substantiated maltreatment (39,460 investigations) and confirmed risk investigations (5,478 investigations).

Table 1 outlines documented child functioning concerns by primary category of substantiated maltreatment, including confirmed risk. In investigations where the primary form of substantiated maltreatment was physical abuse, neglect, emotional maltreatment, or exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV), as well as in confirmed risk investigations, externalizing

behaviours were the most common noted child functioning issues. Internalizing behaviours were the most common child functioning concerns noted in investigations where the primary form of substantiated maltreatment was sexual abuse. An intellectual/developmental disability, failure to meet developmental milestones, and FAS/FAE were most frequently noted in substantiated neglect investigations. Positive toxicology at birth and a physical disability were most frequently noted in confirmed risk investigations.

Table 1.

*Documented child functioning concerns by primary category of substantiated maltreatment, including confirmed risk of future maltreatment, in Canada in 2008<sup>^</sup>*

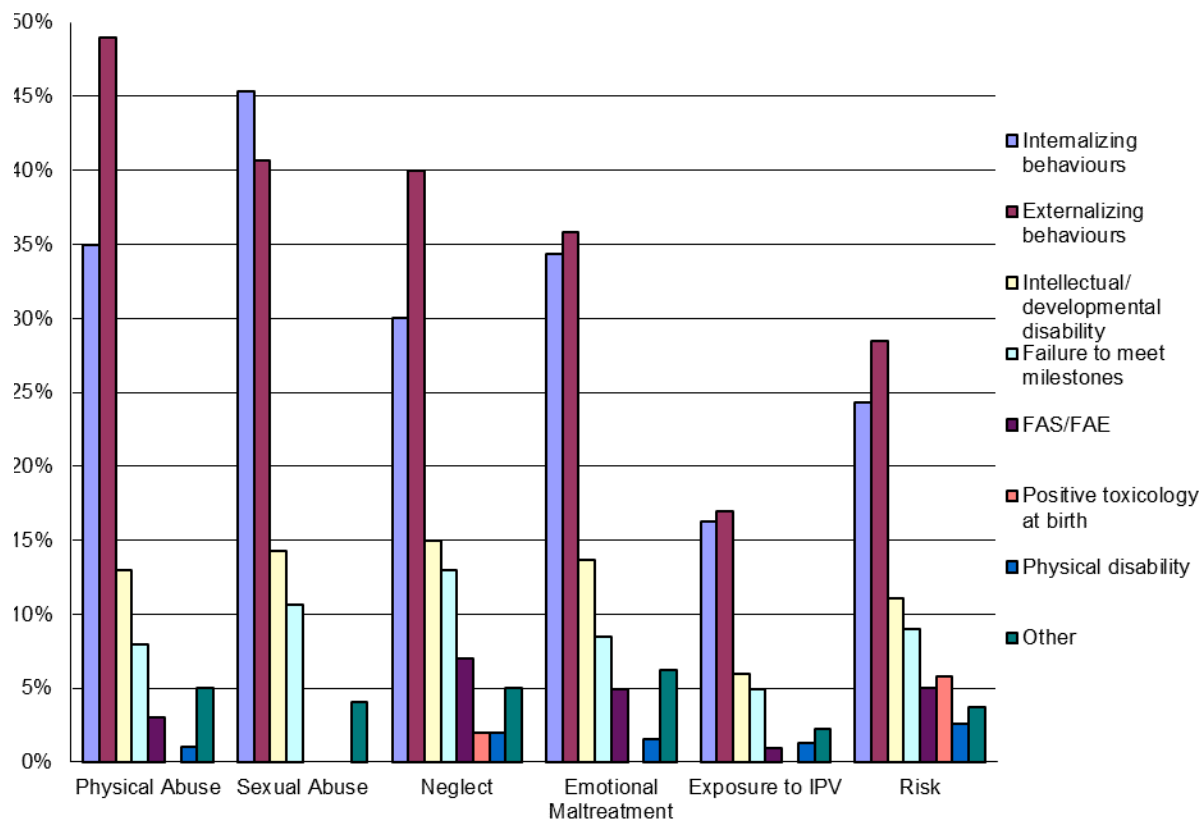
	Primary Category of Maltreatment												Total	
	Physical Abuse		Sexual Abuse		Neglect		Emotional Maltreatment		Exposure to IPV		Risk			
<b>Child Functioning Concerns</b>	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
No child functioning concerns	6,685	39	997	38	13,566	47	3,562	48	21,171	72	6,541	54	52,522	54
Type of child functioning concerns														
Internalizing behaviours	6,014	35	1,181	45	8,725	30	2,550	34	4,753	16	2,948	25	26,171	27
Externalizing behaviours	8,357	49	1,060	41	11,482	40	2,659	36	4,963	17	3,457	29	31,978	33
Intellectual/developmental disability	2,216	13	373	14	4,461	15	1,013	14	1,743	6	1,339	11	11,145	11
Failure to meet milestones	1,349	8	278	11	3,810	13	627	8	1,444	5	1,091	9	8,599	9
FAS/FAE	522	3	94	4	1,926	7	367	5	269	1	613	5	3,791	4
Positive toxicology at birth	-	-	-	-	620	2	-	-	-	-	701	6	1,547	2
Physical disability	257	2	-	-	629	2	117	2	372	1	314	3	1,742	2
Other	863	5	105	4	1,393	5	463	6	659	2	451	4	3,934	4
At least one child functioning concern	10,528	61	1,610	62	15,373	53	3,861	52	8,088	28	5,478	46	44,938	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,213</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,607</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>28,939</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7,423</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>29,259</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>12,019</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>97,460</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>^</sup> Based on a sample of 7,032 substantiated child maltreatment-related investigations with information about child functioning. Percentages are column percentages. Columns are not additive as investigating workers could identify more than one child functioning concern.

- Estimates of less than 100 investigations are not shown, but are included in the total.

Please see Figure 1 for a visual representation of these findings.

Figure 1.  
*Documented child functioning concerns by primary category of substantiated maltreatment, including confirmed risk of future maltreatment, in Canada in 2008*



## Background

Responsibility for protecting and supporting children at risk of abuse and neglect falls under the jurisdiction of the 13 Canadian provinces and territories and a system of Aboriginal child welfare agencies which have increasing responsibility for protecting and supporting Aboriginal children. Because of variations in the types of situations that each jurisdiction includes under its child welfare mandate as well as differences in the way service statistics are kept, it is difficult to obtain a nation-wide profile of the children and families receiving child welfare services. The Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS) is designed to provide such a profile by collecting information on a periodic basis from every jurisdiction using a standardized set of definitions. With core funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada and in-kind and financial support from a consortium of federal, provincial, territorial, Aboriginal and academic stakeholders, the CIS-2008 is the third nation-wide study of the incidence and characteristics of investigated child abuse and neglect across Canada.

## Methodology

The CIS-2008 used a multi-stage sampling design to select a representative sample of 112 child welfare agencies in Canada and then to select a sample of cases within these agencies. Information was collected directly from child welfare workers on a representative sample of

15,980 child protection investigations conducted during a three-month sampling period in the fall of 2008. This sample was weighted to reflect provincial annual estimates.

For maltreatment investigations, information was collected regarding the primary form of maltreatment investigated as well as the level of substantiation for that maltreatment. Thirty-two 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 form of maltreatment listed, workers assigned a level of substantiation. Maltreatment could be substantiated (i.e., the balance of evidence indicated that the maltreatment had occurred), suspected (i.e., the maltreatment could neither be confirmed nor ruled out), or unfounded (i.e., the balance of evidence indicated that the maltreatment had not occurred).

For each risk investigation, workers determined whether the child was at significant risk of future maltreatment. The worker could decide that the child was at significant risk of future maltreatment (confirmed risk), that the child was not at significant risk of future maltreatment (unfounded risk), or that the future risk of maltreatment was unknown.

For child functioning concerns, workers were asked to indicate problems that had been confirmed by a diagnosis and/or directly observed by the investigating worker or another worker, or disclosed by the parent or child, as well as issues that they suspected were problems but could not fully verify at the time of the investigation. Workers rated child functioning items as “confirmed”, “suspected”, “no”, and “unknown”. For the purposes of this analysis, the categories of confirmed and suspected have been collapsed. In addition, the 18 child functioning concerns were collapsed into 8 categories: internalizing behaviours (depression/anxiety/withdrawal, suicidal thoughts, self-harming behaviour, and attachment issues), externalizing behaviours (ADD/ADHD, aggression, running (multiple incidents), inappropriate sexual behaviour, *Youth Criminal Justice Act* involvement, academic difficulties, alcohol abuse, and drug/solvent abuse), intellectual/developmental disability, failure to meet developmental milestones, FAS/FAE, positive toxicology at birth, physical disability, and other child functioning concerns.

A detailed presentation of the study methodology and of the definitions of each variable is available at <http://cwrp.ca/publications/cis-2008-study-methods>.

## **Limitations**

The CIS 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 CIS 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 estimation method used to derive annual estimated 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.

Comparisons across CIS 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 CIS-2008 was the first to explicitly track risk-only investigations. In addition, readers are cautioned to avoid making direct comparisons with provincial and First Nations oversampling reports because of differences in the way national and oversampling estimates are derived.

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