

# Investigation and Placement Types in Off Reserve Investigations Involving First Nations Children Aged 0-17 in Canada in 2019



## Introduction

This information sheet describes the types of investigations conducted and placements made in off reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children in Canada in 2019. These data were collected as part of the First Nations/Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019 (FN/CIS-2019), a data collection effort to produce estimates of the incidence of reported and investigated child maltreatment in Canada. For the purposes of this information sheet, “on reserve” investigations are those which involved a First Nations child whose primary or secondary caregiver was noted to be living on reserve, whereas “off reserve” investigations are those in which neither caregiver was noted to be living on reserve.

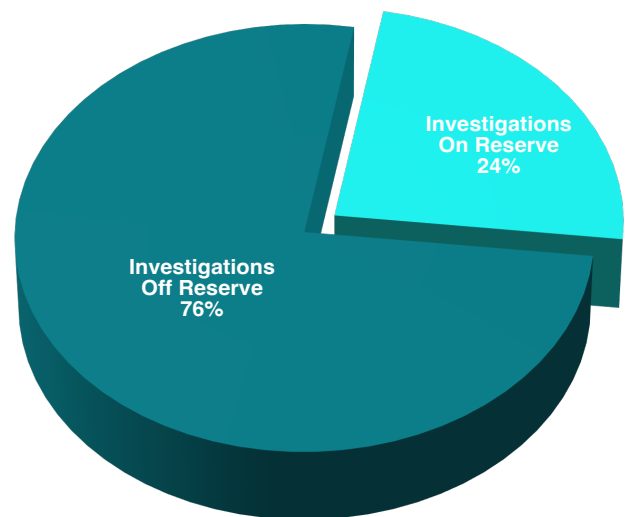
The information presented must be understood within the context of the ongoing legacy of colonialism, discrimination, and poverty that First Nations communities in Canada continue to face. Further information on the colonial practices that drive these disparities is available in Section 1 of the FN/CIS-2019 Major Findings Report (available at: <https://cwrp.ca/publications/denouncing-continued-overrepresentation-first-nations-children-canadian-child-welfare>).

## On and Off Reserve Investigations

Figure 1 shows the proportion of on and off reserve investigations involving First Nations children. Approximately three quarters of child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children in 2019 were conducted off reserve (76 percent).

The remaining figures and tables in this information sheet describe the 76 percent of off reserve investigations involving First Nations children that were conducted in 2019.

Figure 1. Estimated on and off reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children in Canada in 2019



Based on a sample of 4,433 investigations. Whether or not the investigation is considered on reserve was dependent on the participating workers endorsing that either the primary or secondary caregiver was living on reserve.

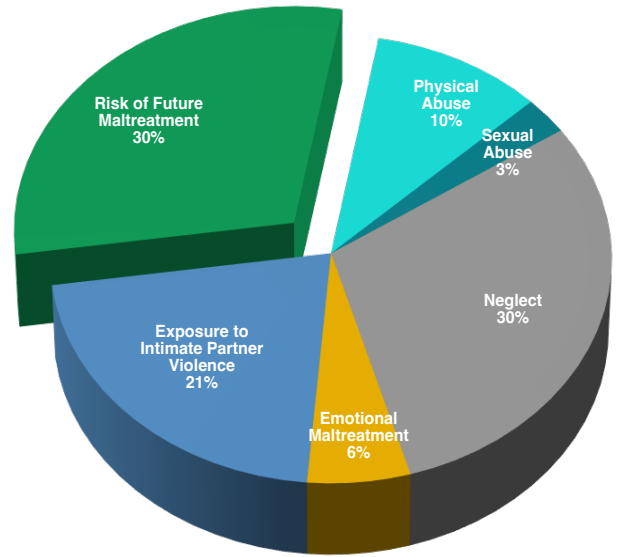
**Investigation Type**

Figure 2 describes the type of investigation conducted in off reserve investigations involving First Nations children in 2019. Investigating workers were first asked to indicate if the investigation was focused on alleged maltreatment (*maltreatment investigation*) or investigating concerns of risk of future maltreatment (e.g., caregiver mental health issues, drug abuse, etc.; *risk investigation*). Once workers indicated they had conducted a maltreatment investigation, they were asked to indicate the type of maltreatment from the following list: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional maltreatment, and intimate partner violence. Sixty percent of off reserve investigations involving First Nations children were either focused on neglect (30 percent of investigations) or risk of future maltreatment (30 percent of investigations).

Participating workers were asked to indicate the level of substantiation in maltreatment investigations and could indicate that maltreatment was either substantiated, suspected, or unfounded. Maltreatment was substantiated when the balance of evidence indicated that the maltreatment had occurred. At the end of their investigations, workers were asked if they believed the child was at risk of future maltreatment, endorsement of this in risk investigations was conceptualized as confirmed risk of future maltreatment.

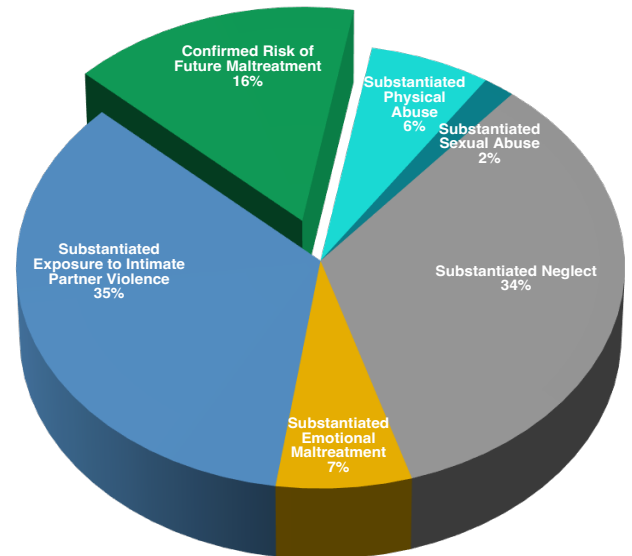
Figure 3 describes the types of investigations in which there was either substantiated maltreatment or confirmed risk of future maltreatment. Thirty-five percent of these investigations were for substantiated exposure to intimate partner violence, and 34 percent were for substantiated neglect.

Figure 2. Type of investigation in estimated off reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children in Canada in 2019



Based on a sample of 2,609 investigations.

Figure 3. Type of investigation in substantiated maltreatment and confirmed risk of future maltreatment off reserve investigations involving First Nations children in Canada in 2019



Based on a sample of 1,291 investigations.

### Placement Type

Placement type in off reserve investigations involving First Nations children is described in Table 1. One in ten off reserve investigations involving First Nations children resulted in an out-of-home placement for the investigated child. Non-kinship foster care placements were the most frequently made placement type in these investigations (made in four percent of investigations).

Table 1. Placement type in estimated off reserve child maltreatment-related investigations involving First Nations children in Canada in 2019

|   | n      | %    |
|---|--------|------|
| Informal Placement (Kinship Out of Care and Customary Care) | 1,117  | 3%   |
| Kinship in Care   | 689    | 2%   |
| Foster Care (Non-Kinship)                                   | 1,345  | 4%   |
| Group Home/Residential or Secure Placement                  | 123    | <1%  |
| Other Placement (e.g., places of safety)                    | 205    | 1%   |
| Subtotal: Placement Made                                    | 3,479  | 10%  |
| No Placement Made   | 30,804 | 90%  |
| Total Investigations Off Reserve                            | 34,283 | 100% |

Based on a sample of 2,609 investigations. Percentages are column percentages.

## Methods

The First Nations/Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect used a multi-stage cluster sampling design for all jurisdictions other than Quebec. First, a sample of 47 mainstream and 16 First Nations agencies was selected from a sampling frame that included all child welfare agencies in Canadian jurisdictions outside of Quebec. A three-month sampling period (October 1 – December 31, 2019) was then used to select cases within these sites. The final stage involved identifying child-level investigations meeting the study criteria. Complex survey weights were used to derive an estimate of child maltreatment-related investigations conducted in Canada in 2019 from these sampled cases. In Quebec, data were extracted from information systems from all agencies able to participate (six First Nations agencies and 11 mainstream agencies).

For all jurisdictions except for Quebec, participating investigating workers completed data collection instruments and provided information directly on their investigations (see the *FN/CIS-2019 Major Findings Report*<sup>1</sup> for the data collection instrument used in the study). Administrative data extracted from Quebec child welfare information systems were matched to variables collected in the rest of Canada where possible.

<sup>1</sup> Fallon, B., Lefebvre, R., Trocmé, N., Richard, K., Hie, S., Montgomery, H. M., Bennett, M., Joh-Carnella, N., Saint-Girons, M., Filippelli, J., MacLaurin, B., Black, T., Esposito, T., King, B., Collin-Vézina, D., Dallaire, R., Gray, R., Levi, J., Orr, M., ... Soop, S. (2021). *Denouncing the continued overrepresentation of First Nations children in Canadian child welfare: Findings from the First Nations/Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect-2019*. Ontario: Assembly of First Nations.

## Study Limitations

Although every effort was made to make the FN/CIS-2019 estimates precise and reliable, several limits inherent in the nature of the data collected must be taken into consideration:

- The weights used to derive annual estimates include counts of children investigated more than once during the year; therefore, the unit of analysis for the weighted estimates is a child investigation;
- The national counts presented in FN/CIS-2019 reports are weighted estimates. In some instances, sample sizes are too small to derive publishable estimates;
- The FN/CIS-2019 tracks information during approximately the first 45 days of case activity, however there are slight provincial and territorial differences in this length of time; service outcomes such as out-of-home placements and applications to court included only events that occurred during those first approximately 45 days;
- The FN/CIS-2019 only tracks reports investigated by child welfare sites and does not include reports that were screened out, cases that were investigated only by the police and cases that were never reported;
- The study is based on the assessments provided by the investigating child welfare workers and could not be independently verified.

**Suggested citation:** Fallon, B., Joh-Carnella, N., Saint-Girons, M., & Livingston, E. (2022). *Investigation and placement types in off reserve investigations involving First Nations children aged 0-17 in Canada in 2019*. CWRP Information Sheet #236E. Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal.