The Overrepresentation of Latin American Children in Canada's Child Welfare System

Findings from the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect-2019

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Tables - continued

Section I

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

This study examined Latin American children and families involved in Canadian child protection systems. It is a secondary data analysis, using data from the Canadian Study of Reported Child Abuse & Neglect, 2019, and a collaborative effort between the Rights for Children and Youth Partnership (RCYP) and the University of Toronto to:

1. Provide the first report of national-level data on investigations involving Latin American children compared to white children, including:

   - Investigating the type and severity of maltreatment
   - Documenting caregiver, household and child characteristics of families investigated
   - Monitoring short-term investigation outcomes such as placement;

2. Ensuring the appropriate contextualization of findings;

3. Disseminating research results to Latin American communities.

Methodology

The CIS-2019 is a multi-stage cluster design survey. The first stage involved selecting provincial and territorial mainstream child welfare organizations as well as Indigenous child welfare agencies from a sampling frame including all child welfare agencies. 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. The following methodological considerations must be taken into account when interpreting the data:

1. The data are limited to maltreatment-related reports investigated by child welfare. This does not include screened-out cases, cases not reported, or cases that were only investigated by the police.
2. Information is collected directly from investigative workers and is reflective of their clinical judgment The information is not independently verified.
3. Data from this cycle include data collected in Ontario in 2018 and administrative data from Quebec.
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Context

According to the 2021 Canadian census, there are approximately 580,235 Latin Americans in Canada (excluding mixed-raced individuals), accounting for 1.6 percent of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2022a). A majority of this population was born in South America (40.7%), Central America (31.9%) or the Caribbean and Bermuda (4.2%), while the remaining 21% were born in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022b). The cultural origins reported most often by Latin American Canadians were "Spanish" (15.7%), "Mexican" (14.6%) and "Colombian" (13.4%) (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

Similar to the diverse cultural backgrounds, Latin American Canadians also reported having various religious affiliations, with over half of the population (i.e., 51.9%) reported being Catholic, followed by having no religion (24.4%) and Christian (13.6%). This population also speaks multiple languages: 78.8% reported Spanish as their first language, 16.0% reported English, 6.3% reported Portuguese, and 4.0% reported French (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

Latin Americans are relatively invisible in Canada because of the small percentage of the total population they make up (Veronis, 2007). Even in provinces where they are most visible (i.e., Quebec, Ontario, and Alberta), Latin Americans still account for less than 2 percent of the total population in that province (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Canada's urban centres are home to the majority of racialized populations, with more than 25% of the Latin American community living in the city of Toronto (i.e., 156,455 people), followed by 23% of the population living in Montreal (i.e., 137,850 people) (Government of Canada, 2021a, 2021b).

Major Findings

LATIN AMERICAN IDENTITY OF THE CHILD

Figure 1 - Rates of Maltreatment-Related Investigations involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019
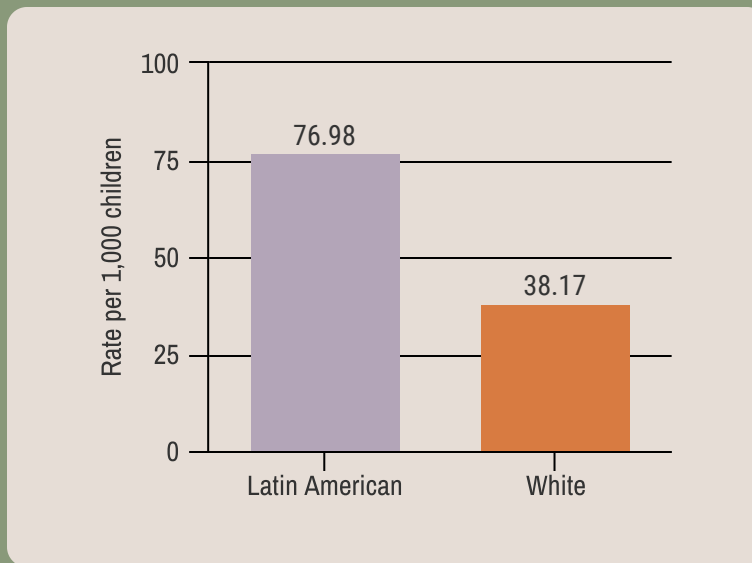
An estimated 299,217 child maltreatment-related investigations were conducted in Canada in 2019. Of these investigations, 5,902 involved Latin American children (2% of the total number of investigations) and 153,372 involved white children (51% of total investigations).

In 2019, for every 1,000 Latin American children 15 years of age and under in Canada, there were an estimated 77 child welfare investigations. Latin American children were 2.02 times as likely to be involved in a child welfare investigation compared to white children in 2019.

CHILD AGE AND FUNCTIONING CONCERNS

Investigating workers were asked to identify the age of the child as well as whether there were any child functioning concerns identified during the investigation.

In 2019, the greatest proportion (33 percent) of child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children involved older children aged 12 to 15 years. Investigations involving white children more commonly included children aged 4 to 7 years and 8 to 11 years (27 and 28 percent of all investigations involving white children, respectively).
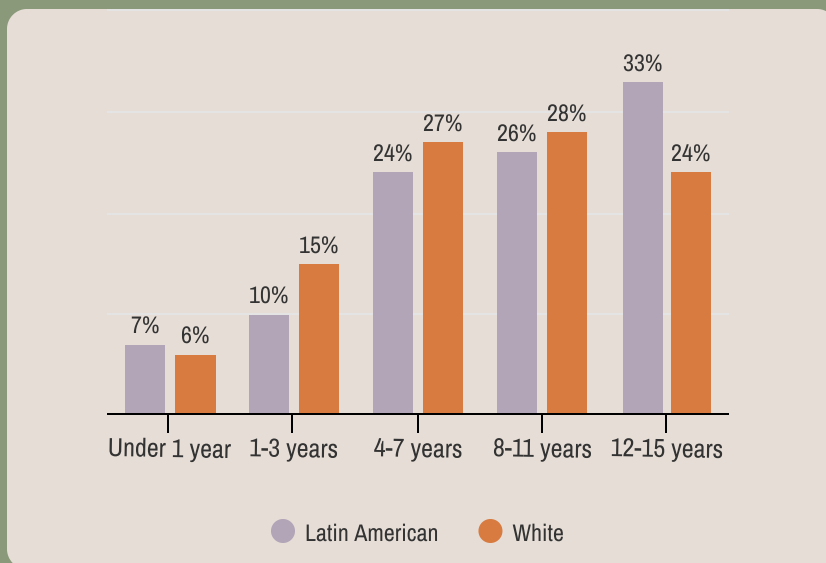
Figure 2 - Child Age in Maltreatment-Related Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019

Investigating workers identified at least one child functioning concern in only 24% of child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children compared to 37% of investigations involving white children.
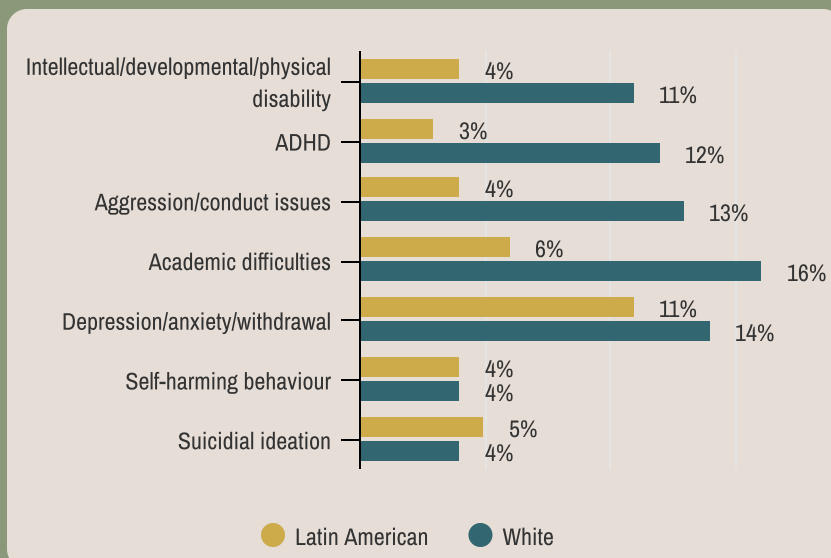
Figure 3 - Child Functioning Concerns in Maltreatment-Related Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019 (Excluding Quebec)

PRIMARY CAREGIVER CHARACTERISTICS

Investigating workers were asked whether the child's primary caregiver experienced any risk factors during the past six months, moved to Canada within the last five years and whether the primary language spoken was one other than English or French.

All the primary caregiver risk factors analyzed were more likely to be noted in investigations involving white children compared to Latin American children. Primary caregivers in investigations involving Latin American children were more likely to have recently moved to Canada and to primarily speak a language other than English or French.

Figure 4 - Primary Caregiver Risk Factors and Characteristics in Child Maltreatment-Related Investigations in Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019 (Excluding Quebec)

Risk Factor	Latin American	White
Alcohol Abuse	6%	11%
Drug/solvent abuse	5%	11%
Mental health concerns	17%	30%
Physical health issues	5%	8%
Few social supports	22%	24%
Victim of intimate partner violence (IPV)	25%	27%
Perpetrator of IPV	5%	9%
Moved to Canada in the last 5 years	18%	1%
Primary language not English or French	42%	2%
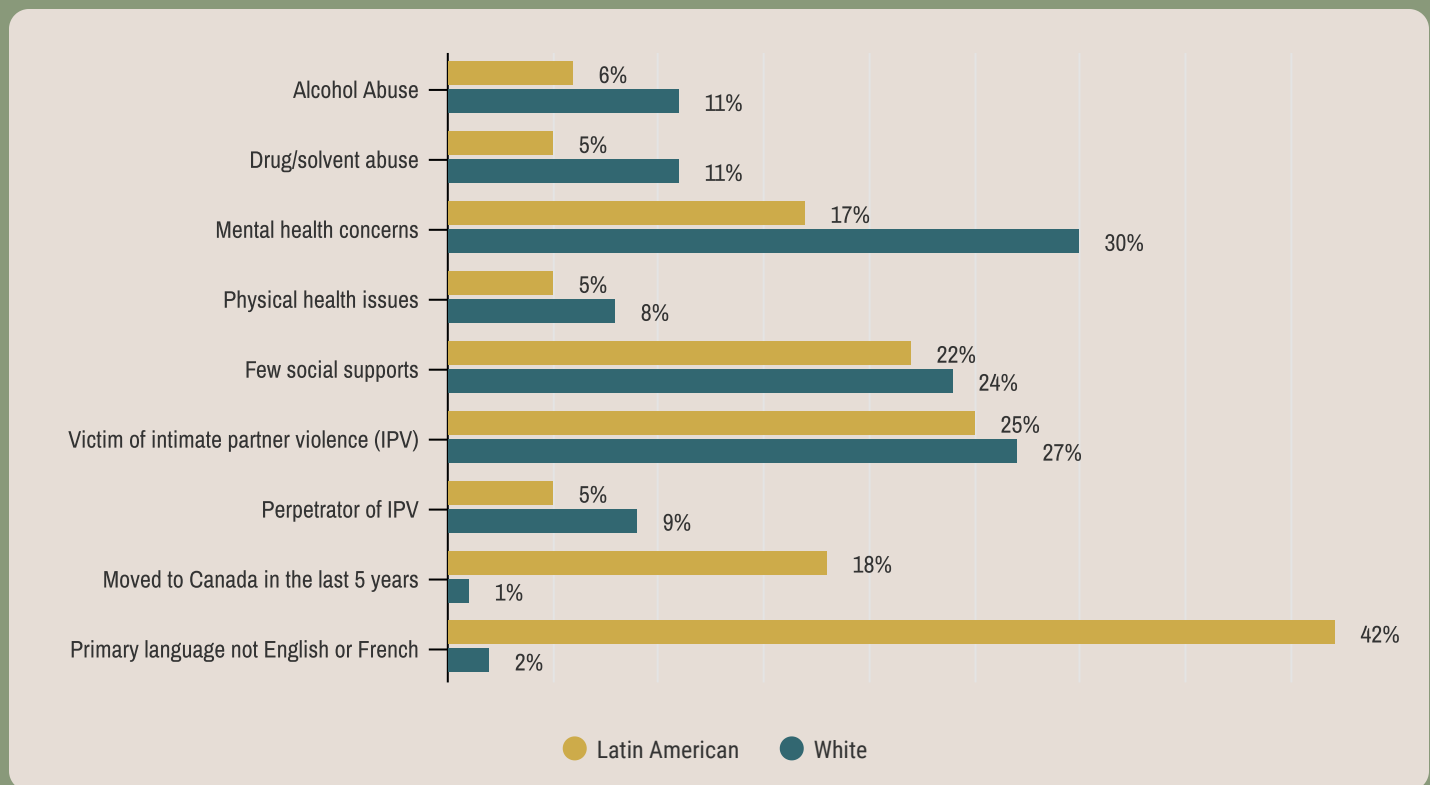
Investigating workers were two times as likely to identify at least one primary caregiver risk factors in investigations involving Latin American children and families compared to investigations involving white children and families.

HOUSING CONDITIONS

Investigating workers were asked about the source of household income and various housing conditions. Household risk factors captured by the CIS-2019 were equally or less likely to be noted in investigations involving Latin American children as those with white children. Despite a greater proportion of households with full-time employment, families in investigations involving Latin American children were less likely to own their home.

Latin American   White
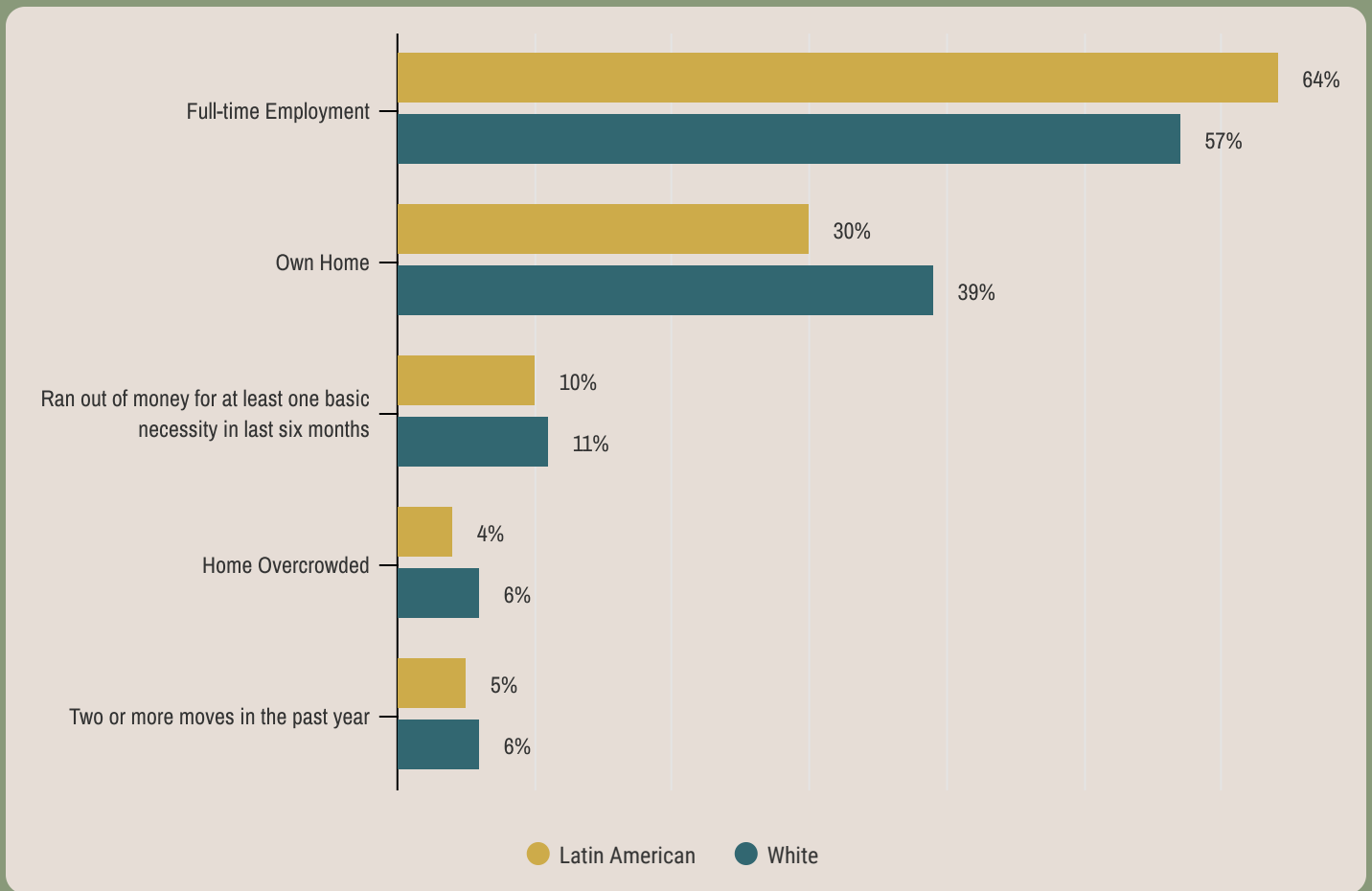
Figure 5 - Housing Conditions in Maltreatment-Related Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019 (Excluding Quebec)

INVESTIGATION TYPE AND SUBSTANTIATION DECISION

Two types of child maltreatment-related investigations were included in the CIS-2019:

1. Investigations focused on an alleged incident of maltreatment (maltreatment investigations)

2. Investigations in which there was no specific concern of an alleged incident of maltreatment but where assessing the risk of future maltreatment for the child was the primary concern of the investigation (risk-only investigations).

Figure 6 - Type of Investigation and Level of Substantiation in Maltreatment-Related Investigations Involving Latin American Children in Canada in 2019

29% Risk-only Investigations

71% Maltreatment Investigations

34% Substantiated

3% Suspected

33% Unfounded
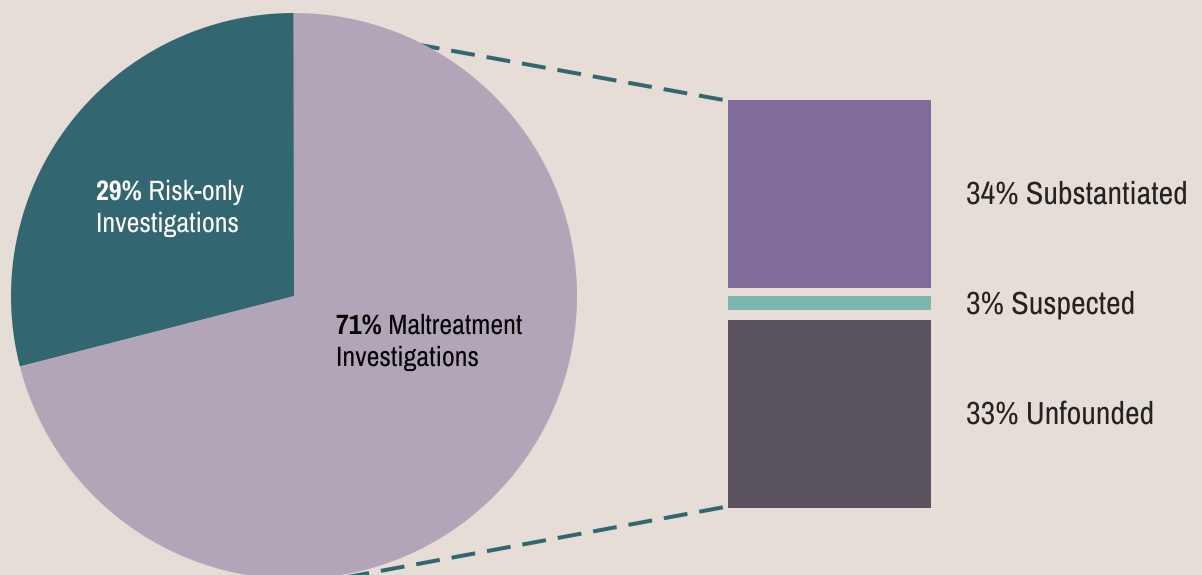
The primary concern in maltreatment investigations involving Latin American children was most often physical abuse (37%), followed by exposure to intimate partner violence (31%), neglect (16%), sexual abuse (9%), and emotional maltreatment (8%).

Figure 7 - Primary Category of Maltreatment in Maltreatment Investigations Involving Latin American Children in Canada in 2019

Legend: Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Neglect, Emotional Maltreatment, Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence
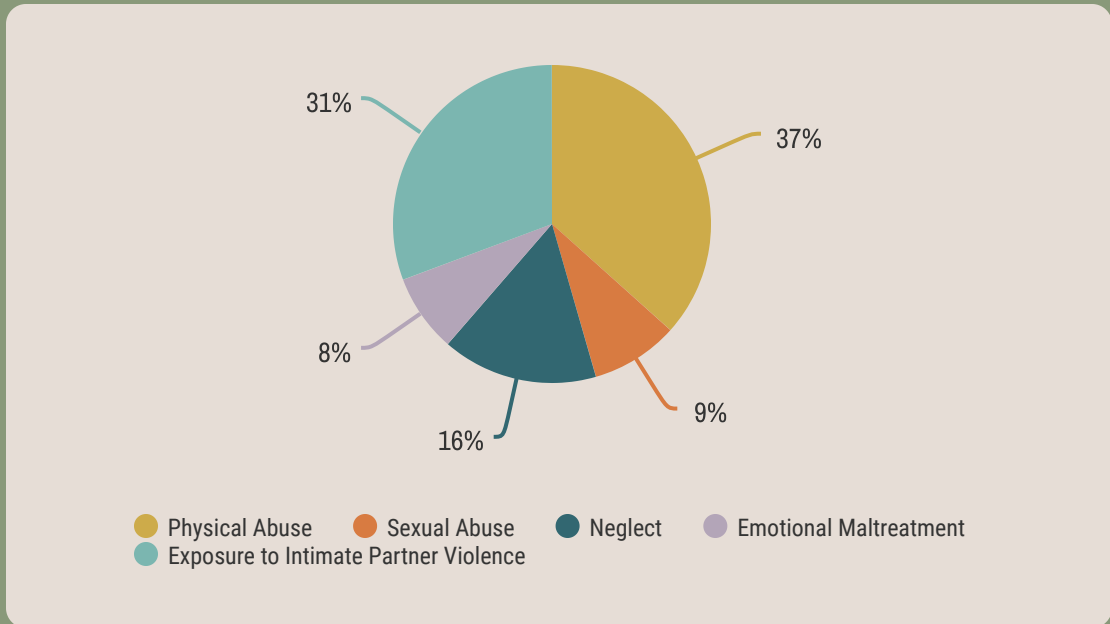
The rate of substantiated investigations whose primary focus was sexual abuse or physical abuse was 8.47 and 4.05 times as high, respectively, for investigations involving Latin American children compared to investigations involving white children.
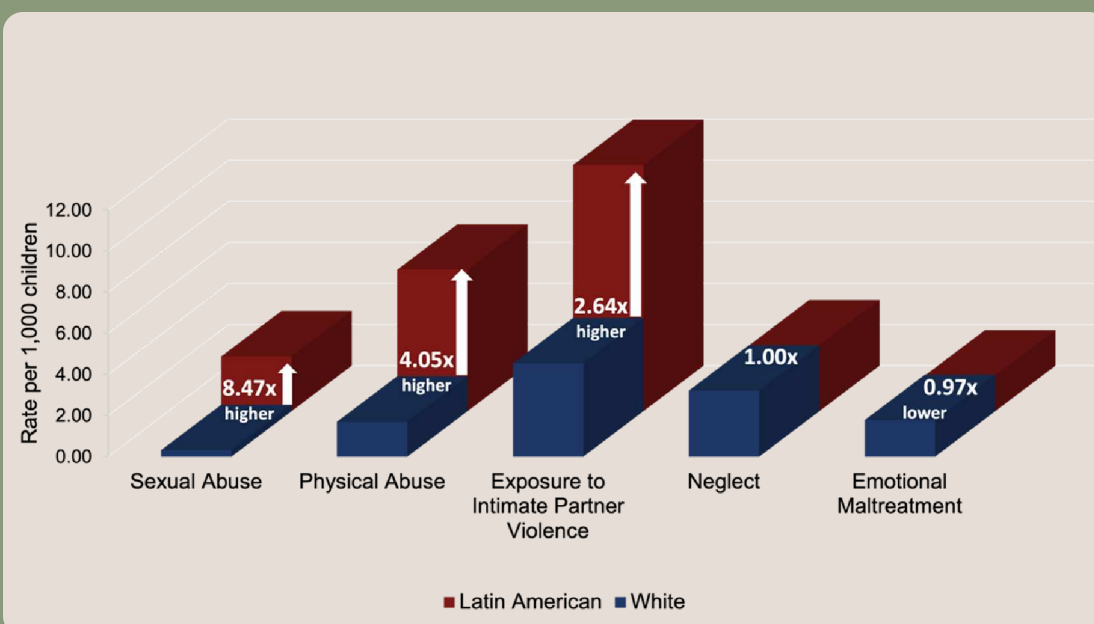
Figure 8 - Rates of Substantiated Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019 by Primary Category of Maltreatment

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL HARM

Physical harm was noted in 9% of substantiated maltreatment investigations involving Latin American children. Emotional harm was documented in 45% of substantiated investigations involving Latin American children.

Figure 9 - Documented Physical and Emotional Harm in Substantiated Maltreatment Investigations Involving Latin American Children in Canada in 2019 (Excluding Quebec)

9%

91%

● Physical harm documented   ● No physical harm documented

16%

29%

55%

● Emotional harm, no therapeutic treatment required
● Emotional harm, therapeutic treatment required
● No emotional harm documented
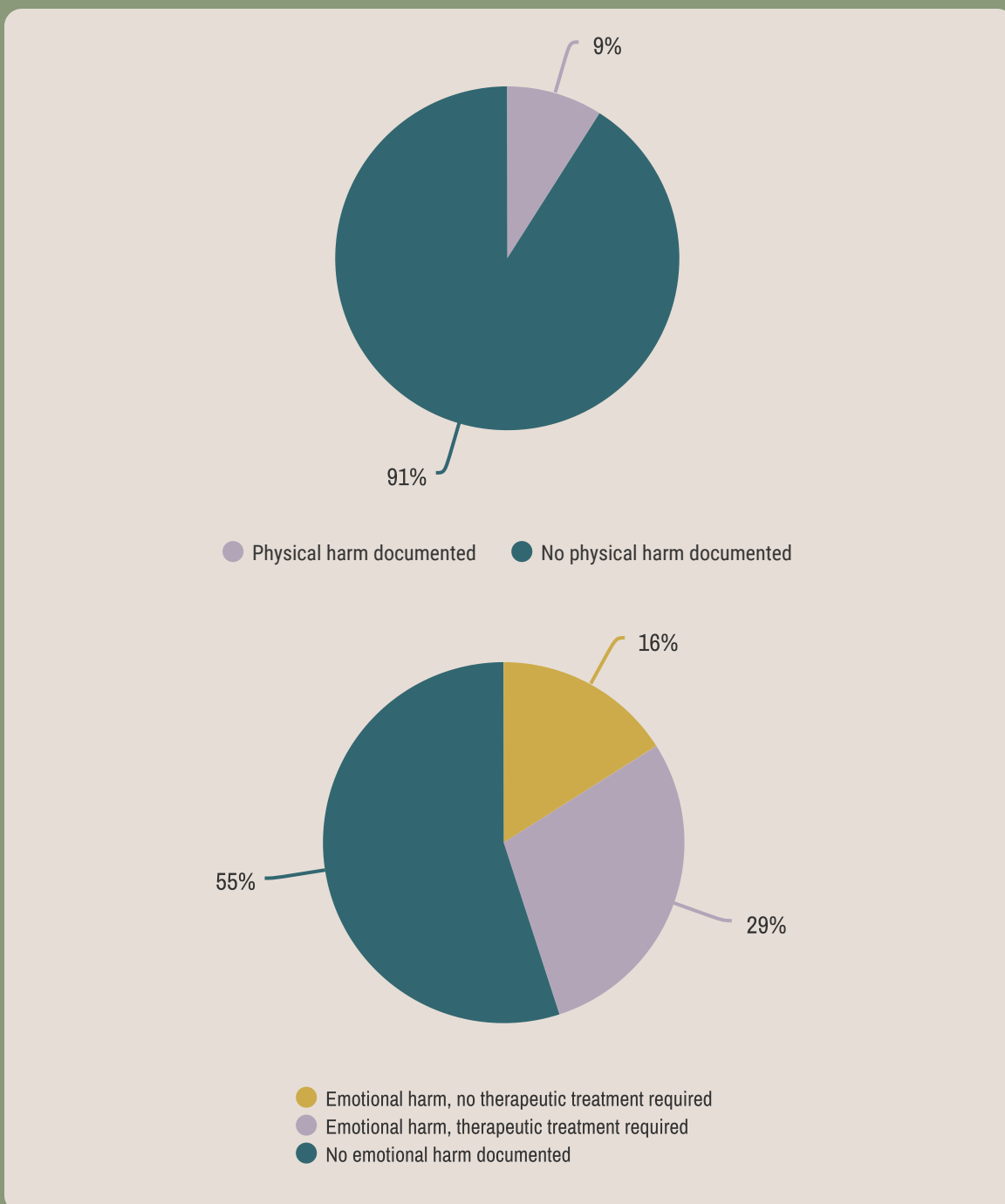
SERVICE DISPOSITION
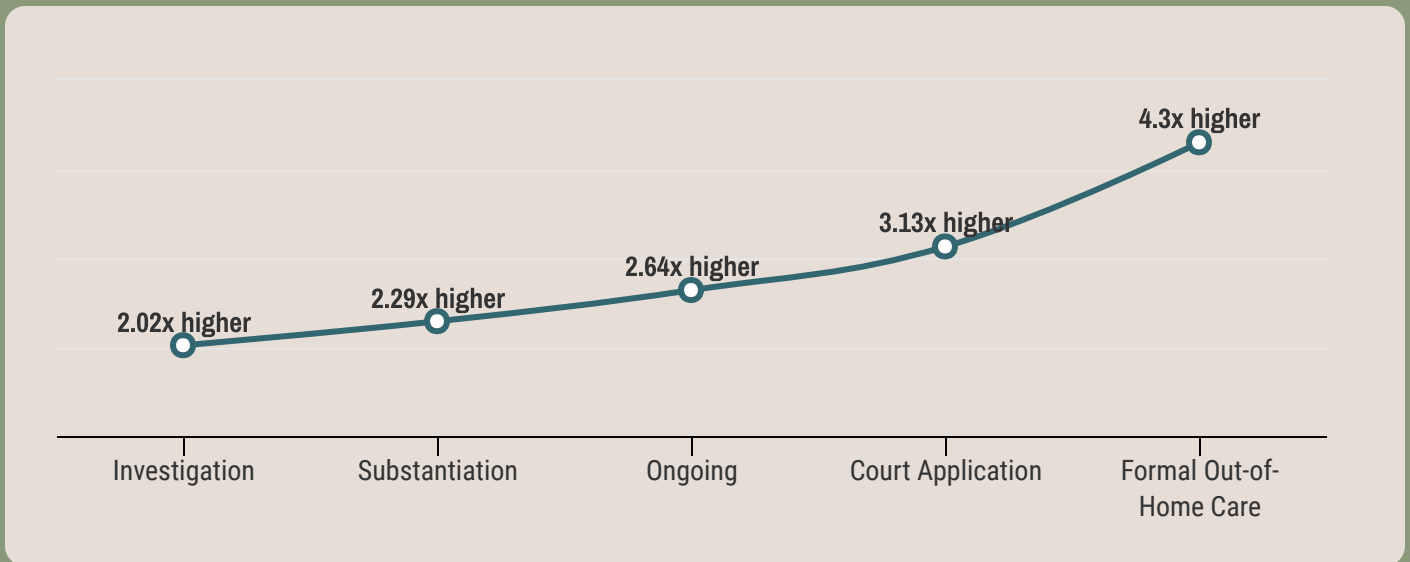
In 2019, disparities between rates of child welfare service dispositions for Latin American and white children grew with every decision across the service continuum. At the point of entry into child welfare, Latin American children were 2.0 times more likely to be investigated. They were up to 4.3 times more likely to be placed in formal out-of-home care during the investigation period.

Seven percent of investigations involving Latin American children resulted in an out-of-home placement for the child compared to only five percent of investigations involving white children. The investigating workers were asked to specify the type of placement that was made when a placement in out-of-home care was noted for the investigated child. Formal placements (including foster care and formal kinship), represented the most frequently noted placement type for Latin American children, followed by non-formal placements including with relatives.

Section II

Context

Latin Americans in Canada

According to the 2021 Canadian census, there are approximately 580,235 Latin Americans in Canada (excluding mixed-raced individuals), accounting for 1.6 percent of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2022a). A majority of this population was born in South America (40.7%), Central America (31.9%) or the Caribbean and Bermuda (4.2%), while the remaining 21% were born in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022b). The cultural origins reported most often by Latin American Canadians were "Spanish" (15.7%), "Mexican" (14.6%) and "Colombian" (13.4%) (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

Similar to the diverse cultural backgrounds, Latin American Canadians also reported having various religious affiliations, with over half of the population (i.e., 51.9%) reported being Catholic, followed by having no religion (24.4%) and Christian (13.6%). This population also speaks multiple languages: 78.8% reported Spanish as their first language, 16.0% reported English, 6.3% reported Portuguese, and 4.0% reported French (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

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Immigration

Latin American immigrants in Canada come from various countries of origin, including but not limited to Mexico, Colombia, El Salvador, Peru, Brazil, Chile, and Venezuela (Statistics Canada, 2022). Mexico and Colombia are Latin American immigrants' most prominent countries of origin (i.e., 90,585 and 80,570 people, respectively) (Statistics Canada, 2022a). In the recent decade, the Latin American community in Canada has multiplied, accounting for approximately 10% of all newcomers between 2005 and 2014 each year, with a growth rate three times higher than the overall immigrant population (Babis et al., 2019). This rapid increase can be attributed to the slow erosion of their quality of life, limited economic opportunities, generalized situations of political violence, crime and public insecurity, and domestic violence (Babis et al., 2019).

The migratory patterns of Latin American immigrants to Canada are shaped not only by economic and political crises in their home countries but also by Canada's labour market demands and commitments to protect refugees and other vulnerable populations during societal unrest (Mata, 2021). Throughout history, several Latino communities have originated through distinct demographic processes, such as refugee waves (e.g., Chilean, Salvadorean, and Colombian populations), economic factors (e.g., Mexican, Brazilian, Venezuelan, and Peruvian populations), or family-related immigrant arrivals (e.g., Ecuadorian and Dominican populations) (Mata, 2021).

After the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signing in 1994, providing greater employment mobility for Mexican workers, the migration relationship between Canada and Mexico was strengthened (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2020). In 2021, approximately 27,065 Mexican workers entered Canada through the temporary foreign worker program (TWP), making Mexico the sender of Canada's largest temporary worker population (Government of Canada, 2022b). Canada's history of recruiting temporary agricultural workers from Latin America dates back to 1974 with the bilateral agricultural worker agreement (Valarezo, 2010). Employers in Canada's agricultural sector hire foreign workers temporarily to fill labour shortages through the Canadian Agricultural Worker Program (CAWP) (Government of Canada, 2023). These workers are typically employed in various agricultural sectors, including fruit and vegetable production, greenhouse operations, and livestock production (Government of Canada, 2023). The work is typically seasonal, with many workers coming to Canada for several months to work on farms (Government of Canada, 2023). According to data from the Government of Canada (2021b), in 2017, approximately half of the temporary workers under CAWP working in agriculture and crop production came from Mexico, followed by workers from Jamaica and Guatemala (Zhang et al., 2021).

Working temporarily in Canada, however, does not guarantee permanent residency. Instead, Canada remains selective in the number and type of migrants who qualify for permanent residence, prioritizing education, professional experience, and other criteria (Zhang et al., 2021). Therefore, most Mexicans in temporary status, especially those in the agricultural sector, experience difficulty obtaining permanent residency (Zhang et al., 2021). Those who started as temporary workers and successfully got permanent residency usually apply through the economic class in the express entry stream (Armony, 2014). To be eligible for this stream, applicants must also meet other eligibility criteria, such as education requirements, health and security checks, and proof of funds (Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, 2022). Thus, those who obtained permanent residency in this way predictably have higher levels of education (Armony, 2014). Over half of Canada's Mexican permanent resident population have a university degree, and almost 75% have post-secondary education (Van Haren & Masferrer, 2019). However, this high rate of post-secondary education has not been reported in (im)migrant populations from other Latin American and Caribbean countries (Van Haren & Masferrer, 2019).

Discrimination

Institutional whiteness in Canada refers to how the dominant white culture is ingrained in the policies, practices, and systems of institutions in Canada, such as government, education, and healthcare (Evans, 2021). The emphasis on the dominant white culture often reinforces white supremacy and excludes the histories and contributions of other racialized groups. Racialized groups experience systemic discrimination and marginalization, are excluded from decision-making processes, and experience barriers to accessing services and opportunities (Evans, 2021). Institutional whiteness includes underfunding Indigenous communities, racial profiling by law enforcement, and the Eurocentric curriculum taught in schools (Evans, 2021). It is also essential to acknowledge and understand Canada's role in perpetuating systemic racism. The historical injustices, including but limited to the abduction and murder of indigenous communities (Morin, 2021), the enslavement and expulsion of Black individuals (Jean-Pierre & James, 2020), and the exclusion and containment of Asian migrants (Yu, 2022). These historical injustices have been perpetuated through policies and practices (e.g., underfunding, over-policing) that continue to marginalize racialized communities.

Compared with other racialized minority communities in Canada, Latin Americans arriving in this country do not have to face the challenge of navigating a historically set and highly salient system of racial relations (Raijman et al., 2022). In other words, no significant events in Canadian history directly target the Latin American population. This situation also directly contrasts with the US, where Latin Americans face a documented history of oppression (Raijman et al., 2022).

On the surface level, it seems that most Latin Americans in Canada have integrated well and that there are no apparent barriers against this particular population in a similar way that other racialized communities are treated (Armony, 2014; Raijman et al., 2022). Even then, the government's 2019 General Social Survey (GSS) on Canadians' Safety found that the Latin American population still reported experiencing significantly more discrimination for any reason compared to non-Indigenous, non-visible minority populations (Government of Canada, 2022c). There have been news reports and blog articles of narratives of racism and discrimination against this community (e.g., Pinto, 2020; Vancouver Latin American Cultural Centre (VLACC), 2021). Unfortunately, the nature of such experience remains underexplored in academia.

Income Inequality

According to the Government of Canada (2022a), many recent immigrants are at risk of living below the low-income cut-off due to contributing factors such as language barriers, discrimination, and lower employment or underemployment rates because of a lack of credential recognition and Canadian work experience. While Latin Americans are present across various Canadian labour markets, their incomes are generally lower than the Canadian median total income (Hernandez 2021, as cited in Hernandez & Mata, 2021).

Another area contributing to income inequality faced by the Latin American communities in Canada is related to the inequality experienced by temporary foreign workers, particularly in provinces such as Alberta and Manitoba. Although Canada provides different pathways for foreign workers to gain entrance and employment in Canada, a noticeable trend is that Latin Americans predominantly apply through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) (Chartrand & Vosko, 2021). Those who work in Canada under the TFWP earn fewer wages and experience longer workdays than those in the US, even though migrant workers in both countries come from similar backgrounds (Pren & González-Araiza, 2019). Although Canada's labour accord requires employers to provide housing for temporary workers, which should relieve some financial burden, the workers in the US still return home with more savings (Pren & González-Araiza, 2019).

Moreover, much of the community is employed in the frontline workforce in healthcare settings, increasing their vulnerability during COVID-19 (Wellesley Institute, 2021). In 2021, the Wellesley Institute published a report that indicated that Latin Americans had confirmation rates of contracted COVID-19, 7.1 times higher than their white counterparts. The same report revealed that between June 2020 and April 2021, Latin Americans had the highest confirmed number of cases among all racialized groups (Wellesley Institute, 2021). The wages paid in Canada may be higher than that in Latin American countries. Latin American immigrants participate in a wide range of careers. They are willing to work in jobs that Canadian workers avoid, usually due to the low socioeconomic status of the positions (Wilson-Forsberg, 2015). Low socioeconomic status contributed to the negative health impacts on Latin Americans. High infection rates were due to priority vaccinations in higher-income neighbourhoods, lack of workplace policies to protect lower-income frontline workers and inequitable access to health services (Wellesley Institute, 2021). Additionally, Latin Americans were more likely to be exposed due to their concentration on frontline work, crowded housing, and reliance on public transit (Wellesley Institute, 2021).

Commuting can be an essential indicator of income bracket and mental health. Frequent, lengthy, no-discretionary travel comes at the expense of time for other activities and can negatively impact one's well-being (Allen et al., 2022). In Canada, the average commute time is 26 minutes, while 9.7% of the workforce has to travel over 60 minutes for work, compared to 14.7% of Latin Americans (Allen et al., 2022).

Mental Health

Research on Latin American immigrants' mental health in a Canadian setting has been limited in the last ten years. A health report published by Statistics Canada found that immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean self-reported more mental health struggles than Canadian-born respondents; this difference between populations further increased after controlling for economic factors and a sense of belonging (Zhang & Ng, 2020). Shakya and colleagues (2018) argued that the different health/mental health outcomes between the immigrant and Canadian-born populations are due to the stress experienced during migration and the acculturation process. They reported that settlement stressors related to linguistic barriers, adjusting to the Canadian educational system, and cultural differences are related to migrant youth expiring increased stress levels, low self-esteem, anxiety, worry, sadness and depression (Shakya et al., 2018).

Similarly, the abovementioned Statistics Canada report also highlights the impact of economic and social factors on the mental health of Latin American immigrants and refugees, suggesting that cultural and language proximity can play a role in the challenges they face during the settlement process (Zhang & Ng, 2020). In other words, immigrants with more knowledge of culture and language, similar to Canada, will encounter fewer barriers and stress during settlement (Zhang & Ng, 2020).

In light of the challenges Latin American immigrants and refugees face in Canada, it is essential to consider how their reluctance to seek help impacts their overall well-being. Kuo et al. (2015) indicate that Latin American immigrants' reluctance to seek professional support is influenced by cultural values such as familism and the resulting inclination to seek advice from social referents instead of professionals (e.g., parents and siblings when making health-related decisions). Robinson and colleagues (2016) also point out that migration loss of social capital is particularly salient for collectivist cultures like Latin America, where familial and culturally relevant support is deeply embedded in social ties.

The lack of familial relations after they migrate to Canada may explain why inadequate social support is prevalent among (im)migrant Latin American women. The extended family is commonly the primary source of social support in Latin American cultures (Robinson et al., 2016).

Although male-headed households are still typical in Latin America, it is increasingly more common to see female-headed homes. Women are becoming the sole provider, which motivates them to migrate and search for better economic opportunities and living environments (Socioeconomic Database for Latin America and the Caribbean (SEDLAC), 2022). Besides migrant stress associated with challenges in the settlement process, their social and economic limitations also impact their well-being. (Ramos Salas and colleagues (2016) reported that many Latin American immigrant women lack leisure activities as a form of self-care because they already have high levels of unpaid non-leisure activities at home and paid work. Overall, understanding the cultural values and challenges Latin American immigrants face in Canada can inform the development of effective interventions to support their health and well-being.

Education

Toronto District School Board (TDSB) study found that Latin American students have lower levels of reaching system-determined benchmarks of academic achievement (e.g., high school competitions and post-secondary education attendance) compared to their peers (Guerrero, 2014; Parada et al., 2021a; 2021b). While the TDSB is making efforts to improve academic results for specific groups, including Spanish-speaking students (Brown et al., 2015), a study by Arraiz Matute (2022) indicated that Spanish-speaking students in Toronto are still experiencing systemic marginalization and push-out in the mainstream education system that emphasizes English fluency.

Latin American parents' interaction with the schools also involves challenges. The differences between the Canadian and Latin American education systems can create barriers for parents supporting their children enrolling in public schools (Myers et al., 2020). For example, it is common for children in middle-class families in Latin America to attend private schools, which gives parents a sense of empowerment to interact with the school and exercise influence in children's education as paying parents (Myers et al., 2020). However, such authorization decreased once they enrolled their children in public education in Canada, which tasked the family to transform their understanding of education and form new strategies to interact with the education system (Myers et al., 2020). Although interested in participating in the education system, some parents met institutional constraints that led them to experience a lack of power in their interactions with the school. Thus, they had little influence on their children's studies (Myers et al., 2020; Parada et al., forthcoming).
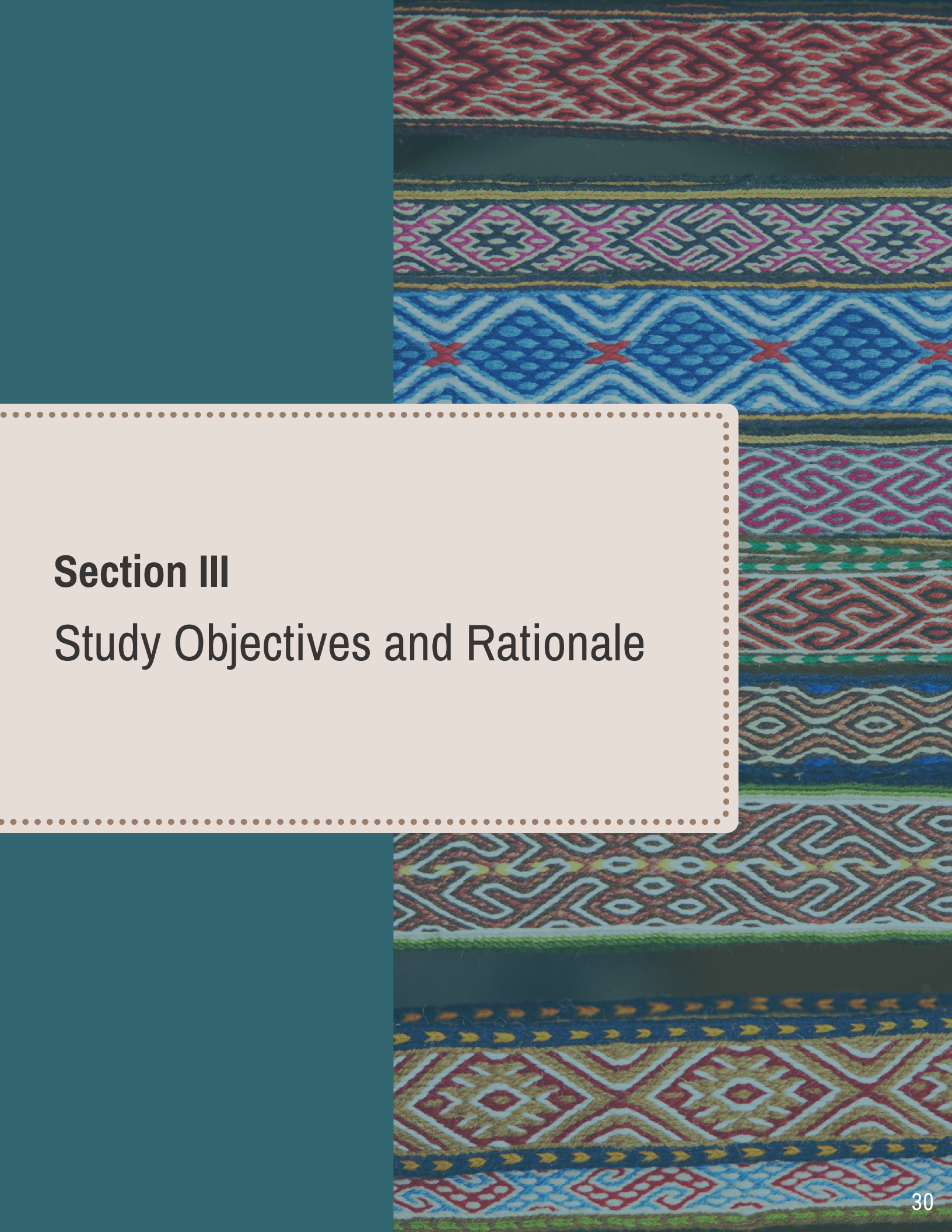
Support mechanisms and means of communication vary from school to school, resulting in parents reporting conflicting experiences and some experiencing confusion after their children transferred to another school (Myers et al., 2020). Similarly, parents' English fluency also impacts their interactions within the system (Parada et al., forthcoming). For example, some parents participate in self-censorship because they fear others will not understand their English (Myers et al., 2020). Such communication challenges are exacerbated by school staff's stereotypes and negative assumptions about immigrants, leading them to treat Latin American parents in condescending ways (Myers et al., 2020; Parada et al., forthcoming). Therefore, the decreased ability of parents to advocate also influences their children's experience in the education system (Myers et al., 2020).

Child Welfare System

The child welfare system in Canada is administered by the provincial governments (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2023). Each province is responsible for creating and implementing policies and has been tasked to safeguard children and youth's safety and permanency when taken from their guardians (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2023). For example, in Ontario, child protection services are delivered by children's aid societies. They are governed by the Child, Youth and Family Services Act 2017 (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2023). The system can conduct investigations and, if needed, remove children from their homes when there are concerns of abuse or neglect (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2023). When a child is removed from their home, they are considered "in care" of the child protection system, and efforts are made to place them in a safe and stable environment (e.g., out-of-home care, kinship or foster care, group home) (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2023).

Researchers and professionals have argued, however, that the provincially regulated systems have been influenced by an invisible but powerful White Eurocentrism, which has shaped and continues to shape institutional practices, including parenting processes, expectations, and healthy family dynamics, according to Western ideals and standards (Amponsah & Stephen, 2020). As a result, systemic racism and bias against racialized communities are firmly rooted in the provincially mandated child welfare systems, leading to an over-representation of visible racial minorities in the child welfare systems in Canada (e.g., Amponsah & Stephen, 2020; Bonnie & Facey, 2022; Edwards et al., 2020; Fallon et al., 2021). Notably, emerging evidence in Canada shows a racial disparity between Black and White children's involvement in the child welfare systems (e.g., Edwards et al., 2020; Mohamud et al., 2021). Mohamud and colleagues (2021) found that Black families need to navigate the larger systemic discrimination and face a lower threshold for being reported to the child welfare system than White families. This racial disparity was also documented by Bonnie and Facey's report (2022), which indicates that Black families in Ontario are more likely to be investigated, substantiated, and have their children placed in ongoing services than their white counterparts. Latin American children also experience disproportionate contact with the Ontario child welfare system: in 2018, Latin American families were 2.3 times more likely to be investigated than White families in Ontario (Parada et al., 2020).

One factor contributing to the over-representation of racial minority children in the child welfare system is poverty and social inequality. Racialized communities in Canada are more likely to experience poverty and other disadvantages, making it difficult for families to provide adequate care for their children (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2017). Families may sometimes be separated due to poverty-related issues such as inadequate housing, lack of access to healthcare, or unemployment (Fallon et al., 2021). Latin Americans must also deal with over-surveillance and biases of racialized communities and are overreported to the child welfare system from the education system. Negative assumptions and prejudices about racialized families result in educators overreporting them families (Fallon et al., 2021; College of Early Childhood Educators, 2022). Institutional bias and discrimination can also lead to racialized families being subject to more frequent and intrusive investigations and more likely to have their children placed in out-of-home care or adopted out of their home community (Fallon et al., 2021; Bonnie et al., 2022).

Section III

Study Objectives and Rationale

Objectives

The CIS-2019 is the fourth national study examining the incidence of reported child abuse and neglect in Canada. The primary objective of the CIS-2019 is to provide reliable estimates of the scope and characteristics of child abuse and neglect investigated by child welfare services in Canada in 2019.

Rationale

The objectives and design of the CIS-2019 are best understood within the context of the decentralized structure of Canada's child welfare system and with respect to changes over time in mandates and intervention standards. In Canada, child welfare legislation and services are organized at the provincial and territorial levels. Child welfare is a mandatory service, directed by provincial and territorial child welfare statutes. Although all child welfare systems share certain basic characteristics organized around investigating reports of alleged maltreatment, providing various types of services and supervision, and looking after children in out-of-home care, there is considerable variation in the organization of these service delivery systems (see Table 1). Some provinces and territories operate under a centralized, government-run child welfare system, while others have opted for decentralized models run by mandated agencies. Several provinces and territories have recently moved towards regionalized service delivery systems.

Table 1 - Provincial and Territorial Child Welfare Administrations

Province	Administration	Child Welfare Status	Age Coverage
Alberta	In Alberta child protection rests with the Ministry of Children's Services. Services are delivered by Child and Family Service Offices.	Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act	Under 18
British Columbia	Child Protection is the responsibility of the Director of Child Protection under the Ministry of Children and Family Development. Services are provided through 429 local ministry offices as well as 23 Indigenous agencies which have various degrees of delegation. All service offices are supported by the provincial office of the Child Protection Division.	Child, Family and Community Service Act	Under 19
Manitoba	Child welfare falls to the Child and Family Services System under the Ministry of Families. The system is administered through four Child and Family Services Authorities.	Child and Families Services Act, Child and Family Services Authorities Act	Under 18
New Brunswick	Child welfare is the responsibility of the Department of Social Development and child protection services are delivered through eight Social Development Regional Offices.	Family Services Act	Under 19
Newfoundland and Labrador	Responsibility for the provision of child welfare programs and services fall to the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development under the Department of Health and Community Services. Services are provided through four regional integrated health authorities.	Children and Youth Care and Protection Act	Under 18

Table 1 - Provincial and Territorial Child Welfare Administrations

Province	Administration	Child Welfare Status	Age Coverage
Northwest Territories	Child protection falls to the Department of Health and Social Services, Child and Family Services and is administered by eight regional health and social services authorities.	Child and Family Services Act	Under 16
Nova Scotia	Child welfare programs and services fall under the Division of Child, Youth and Family Supports under the Department of Community Services. Child Protection Services are provided by four regional district offices and seventeen county and municipal Child Welfare Service Offices.	Children and Family Services Act	Under 19
Nunavut	The Ministry of Family Services is responsible for child protection, and services are provided by 25 local Community, Children and Family Services Offices.	Child and Family Services Act	Under 16
Ontario	The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services funds child welfare services and programs, provided by Children's Aid Societies throughout the province. There are 49 such agencies, which are governed by Boards of Director elected from local communities.	Child, Youth and Family Services Act	Under 18
Prince Edward Island	Child protection is the responsibility of the Department Child and Family Services under the Ministry of Family and Human Services. Services are provided by six regional centres and twelve Child Protection Teams.	Child Protection Act	Under 18

Table 1 - Provincial and Territorial Child Welfare Administrations

Province	Administration	Child Welfare Status	Age Coverage
Quebec	The Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux, Department of Youth Protection is responsible for child protection. Services are provided by 34 integrated health and social service centres.	Youth Protection Act	Under 18
Saskatchewan	Child protection falls to the Ministry of Social Services and services are provided through local Social Services offices.	Child and Family Services Act	Under 16
Yukon	The Department of Health and Social Services, Family and Children's Services is responsible for the provision of child welfare programs and services and their delivery through Regional Services Offices.	Child and Family Services Act	Under 19

Child welfare statutes also vary considerably. Some jurisdictions limit their investigation mandates to children under 16, while others extend their investigations to youth under 19. Provincial and territorial statutes also vary in terms of the specific forms of maltreatment covered, grounds for removal, and timelines for determining permanent wardship. In addition to these legislative differences, there are important differences in regulations and investigation policies. These differences may be further accentuated by the implementation of different structured assessment tools and competency-based training programs. Varying legislation and investigation practices across provinces and territories, as well as changes over time have posed challenges in documenting the annual incidence of reported maltreatment in Canada. Using a standard set of definitions, the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS)-1998, 2003, 2008 and 2019 provide the best available estimates of the incidence and characteristics of reported child maltreatment across Canada over a twenty-year period. Caution should be used in comparing results across cycles as there have been considerable changes to the methodology and survey design weights over time.

*Table adapted from the Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal: cwrp.ca

Section VI
Methodology

Methodology

This section is a brief overview of the CIS-2019. As with any sample-based survey, estimates must be understood within the constraints of the survey instrument, the sampling design, and the estimation procedures used. A full description of the methodology is available upon request.

Sampling
The CIS-2019 captured information about children and their families as they came into contact with child welfare services over a three-month sampling period. Children who were not reported to child welfare services, reports that were screened out without an investigation, or new allegations on cases currently open at the time of case selection were not included.

Stage 1: Child Welfare Authority Selection
In all of Canada, except Quebec, child welfare authorities were first stratified by province except for the Atlantic provinces (one stratum) and the territories (one stratum). A separate stratum was developed for all Indigenous child welfare authorities. Child welfare authorities were then further stratified by size within these strata (large and medium/small for mainstream child welfare authorities and very large, large, and medium/small for Indigenous child welfare authorities). Child welfare authority size was determined by the service volume of investigations conducted in the year prior to the study. Sites were selected using stratified random sampling within their respective strata with a minimum number of selected child welfare authorities in each stratum determined by the variability in the service population across strata. All sites, including those that were geographically remote, were eligible for inclusion because the survey instrument was completed online by the investigating worker for this cycle of the study.

Methodology

Stage 2: Case Selection
The second sampling stage involved selecting cases opened in the study sites during the three-month period from October 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019. Three months was considered to be the optimum period to ensure high participation rates and good compliance with study procedures. Consultation with service providers indicated that case activity from October to December was typical of the whole year.

Stage 3: Identification of Investigated Children
The final sampling stage involved identifying children who had been investigated as a result of concerns related to possible maltreatment. As noted above, cases are opened at the family level in most jurisdictions. Therefore, procedures had to be developed to determine which child(ren) in each family were investigated for maltreatment-related reasons.

In Quebec, there were 28,079 children who were investigated in 2019. In Ontario and the rest of Canada there were 13,869 children who were investigated and identified in a data collection form. When the data were weighted using complex design weights a final estimate of 299,217 child maltreatment-related investigations of children aged 15 and younger was calculated for 2019. Of these investigations, there was an estimated 5,902 involving Latin American children.

The CIS-2019 data collection and data handling protocols and procedures were reviewed and approved by the Health Sciences Research Ethics Board. The study utilized a case file review methodology and a secure web-based delivery system for data collection. The case files are the property of the agency. Therefore, the permission of the agency was required to access the case files. Confidentiality of case information and participants, including workers and agencies, was maintained throughout the process. No directly identifying information was collected on the data collection instrument. The Intake Information section collected partially identifying information about the children. The Intake Information section also included the file/case number assigned by the agency. This information was used only for verification purposes. Any names on the forms were deleted during verification.

Any analyses of ethno-racial data will be governed/informed in consultation with applicable ethno-cultural communities and will reflect their perspectives and input. The analyses contained in this report were conducted with support and direction from Rights for Children and Youth Partnership (RCYP).*

 * www.rcypartnership.org
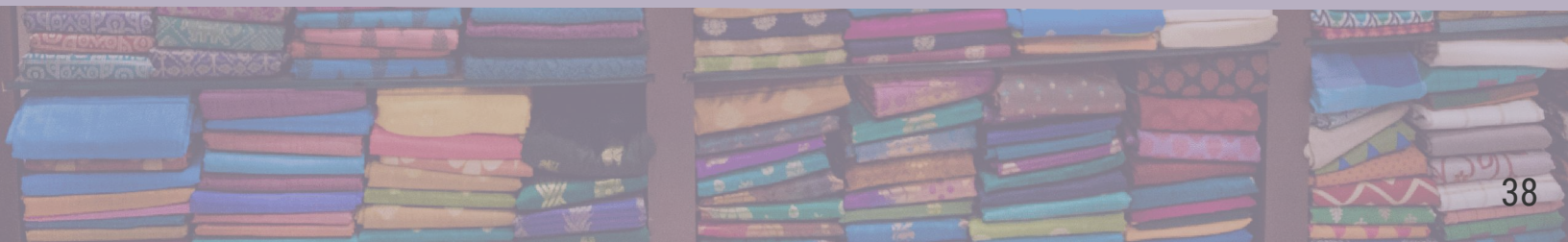
Study Limitations

Although every effort was made to make the forthcoming CIS-2019 estimates precise and reliable, several limits inherent to 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 that will be presented in CIS-2019 reports are weighted estimates. In some instances, sample sizes are too small to derive publishable estimates.

The 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 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.

The data used to estimate 2019 Canadian child maltreatment-related investigations include data collected in Ontario in 2018 and annual administrative data from the Quebec information system.

Section V
Major Findings

DESCRIPTION OF STATISTICS PRESENTED

This section compares investigations involving Latin American and white children. Data provided include estimates of the numbers of investigations, proportions of investigations, and rates per 1,000 children. Proper interpretation of these findings requires distinguishing between investigation percentages and rates per 1,000 children.

PERCENTAGES

Percentages presented in the tables below represent the distribution of investigations involving either Latin American or white children in Canada in 2019 across different categories. Percentage estimates provide an overview of the proportions of investigations within the child welfare system. Differences in percentages between Latin American and white children reflect differences in the profile of investigations involving these two populations in 2019.

Calculation:

$$\frac{\text{Estimated number of investigations for variable of interest}}{\text{Total number of investigations}} \%$$

INCIDENCE RATES

Incidence rates represent the number of investigations for every 1,000 Latin American or white children within the general population in Canada in 2019. They are used to determine how likely it is for a Latin American child or a white child to experience an event during an investigation in 2019.

$$\frac{\text{Estimated number of investigations for variable of interest}}{\text{Child population in Canada}} \times 1{,}000$$

DISPARITY

Disparity indices compare incidence rates of investigations involving Latin American and white children. While these are not reported in each table presented, they are referenced throughout the report (e.g., the rate of investigation for Latin American children is 2.0 times as high as the rate of investigation for white children).

Calculation:

$$\frac{\text{Incidence rate for Investigations involving Latin American Children}}{\text{Incidence rate for Investigations involving White Children}}$$

CHILD AND FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

An estimated 299,217 child maltreatment-related investigations were conducted in Canada in 2019. As shown in Table 2, two percent of these investigations involved Latin American children.

This report focuses on investigations involving Latin American children (an estimated 5,902 investigations; a rate of 76.98 investigations per 1,000 Latin American children in Canada), compared to investigations involving white children (an estimated 153,372 investigations; a rate of 38.17 per 1,000 white children in Canada). Latin American children (aged 0-15 years) in Canada were 2.0 times as likely to be the subject of a child maltreatment-related investigation compared to white children in 2019.

Table 2 - Incidence of Child-maltreatment Related Investigations involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019

Child Ethnicity	Estimate	%	Rate per 1,000 children
Latin American	5,902	2%	76.98
White	153,372	51%	38.17
Total Maltreatment-Related Investigations	**299,217**	**100%**	**48.23**
Canadian Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect 2019			
Estimated total investigations is based on a sample of 28,079 cases extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019, 7,115 investigations in Ontario in 2018, and 6,754 investigations in the rest of Canada in 2019.			
Estimated investigations involving Latin American children is based on a sample of 348 cases extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019, 182 investigations in Ontario in 2018 and 83 investigations in the rest of Canada. Estimated investigations involving white children is based on 11,558 cases extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019, 3,920 investigations in Ontario in 2018 and 2,940 investigations in the rest of Canada in 2019.			

Table 3 - Child Age in Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019

	LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN			WHITE CHILDREN		
Child Age	#	%	Rate per 1000 children	#	%	Rate per 1000 children
Under 1 year	399	7%	102.44	8,712	6%	23.66
1-3 years	596	10%	47.85	23,481	15%	20.71
4-7 years	1,424	24%	75.50	41,424	27%	25.98
8-11 years	1,523	26%	76.02	43,418	28%	27.55
12-15 years	1,960	33%	91.50	36,336	24%	23.72
Total Investigations	5,902	100%	76.98	153,371	100%	24.72

Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019

Percentages are column percentages. Columns do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Estimated investigations involving Latin American children is based on a sample of 348 cases extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019, 182 investigations in Ontario in 2018 and 83 investigations in the rest of Canada. Estimated investigations involving white children is based on 11,558 cases extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019, 3,920 investigations in Ontario in 2018 and 2,940 investigations in the rest of Canada in 2019.

A greater proportion of investigations involving Latin American children involved older children with one-third involving children twelve and older. Of the investigations involving white children, only one-quarter involved white children twelve and older. The proportions of investigations involving Latin American and white children aged 4 to 7 or 8 to 11 years old were similar: 24 and 26 percent of investigations involving Latin American children, respectively, compared to 27 and 28 percent of those involving white children.

Latin American children aged under one (102.44 investigations per 1,000 children) were 4.3 times as likely to be investigated compared to white children in the same age group (23.66 investigations per 1,000 children). Latin American children aged 12 to 15 years old (91.50 investigations per 1,000 children) were 3.9 times as likely to be investigated compared to white children in the same age group (23.72 investigations per 1,000 children). Latin American children in other age groups were 2 to 3 times more likely to be investigated than white children.

Table 4 - Child Functioning Concerns in Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019 (excluding Quebec)

Child Functioning Concern	LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN			WHITE CHILDREN		
	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children
Positive toxicology at birth	-	-	-	1,849	1%	0.63
FASD	-	-	-	1,523	1%	0.52
Failure to meet developmental milestones	105	2%	2.06	9,248	7%	3.18
Intellectual/developmental/physical disability	223	4%	4.37	15,574	11%	5.35
Attachment issues	149	3%	2.92	10,137	7%	3.48
ADHD	147	3%	2.88	17,349	12%	5.96
Aggression/conduct issues	230	4%	4.51	17,974	13%	6.17
Physical disability	-	-	-	2,425	2%	0.83
Academic difficulties	360	6%	7.05	22,110	16%	7.59
Depression/anxiety/withdrawal	613	11%	12.01	19,466	14%	6.69
Self-harming behaviour	201	4%	3.94	5,540	4%	1.90
Suicidal thoughts	269	5%	5.27	5,922	4%	2.03
Suicide attempts	-	-	-	1,895	1%	0.65
Inappropriate sexual behaviour	151	3%	2.96	3,573	3%	1.23
Running (multiple incidents)	112	2%	2.19	3,212	2%	1.10
Substance (alcohol or drug/solvent) abuse	117	2%	2.29	3,547	3%	1.22
Youth Criminal Justice Act	-	-	-	1,104	1%	0.38
Other	-	-	-	2,028	1%	0.70
At least one functioning concern	1,343	24%	26.32	52,170	37%	17.92
Total Investigations	**5,553**	**100%**	**108.82**	**141,768**	**100%**	**48.69**

Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019

Percentages are column percentages and do not add up to 100% as investigating workers could identify more than one child functioning concern.

Based on a sample of 265 child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children (182 in Ontario in 2018 and 83 in the rest of Canada in 2019) and 6,860 child maltreatment-related investigations involving white children (3,920 in Ontario in 2018 and 2,940 in the rest of Canada in 2019) with information about child functioning. Information on child functioning was not available when the case was extracted from Quebec administrative data.

— Estimate was <100 investigations.

Table 4 reflects the types of functioning concerns associated with children's physical, emotional and/or cognitive health, or with behaviour-specific concerns that workers may be aware of during their initial investigations. In 24 percent of child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children (an estimated 1,343 Latin American child investigations), at least one child functioning concern was indicated by the investigating worker. At least one child functioning concern was noted in a greater proportion of investigations involving white children (37 percent, representing an estimated 52,170 white child investigations). The incidence rate of investigations involving children with noted child functioning concerns was 1.5 times as high for Latin American children (26.32 per 1,000 children) compared to white children (48.69 per 1,000 children).

Depression/anxiety/withdrawal was the most frequently reported child functioning concern for investigations involving Latin American children, followed by academic learning difficulties (11 and six percent of Latin American child maltreatment-related investigations, respectively). For investigations involving white children, academic learning difficulties was the most commonly reported child functioning concern (16 percent of investigations involving white children), followed by depression/anxiety/withdrawal (14 percent). The next most common child functioning concerns for investigations involving Latin American children were suicidal thoughts (5 percent), self-harming behaviour, aggression/conduct issues and an intellectual/developmental/physical disability (4 percent each). For investigations involving white children, the next three most commonly noted concerns were aggression/conduct issues (13 percent), ADHD (12 percent), and an intellectual/developmental disability (11 percent).

It is important to consider that this data was collected at the time of the child welfare investigation and therefore do not include any child functioning concerns that may have become evident after that stage.

Table 5 - Primary Caregiver Characteristics in Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019 (excludes Quebec)

	LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN			WHITE CHILDREN		
Primary Caregiver Characteristic	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children
Moved to Canada in the last 5 years	1,002	18%	19.64	1,964	1%	0.67
Primary Language is not English or French	2,307	42%	45.21	2,518	2%	0.86
Caregiver Risk Factor						
Alcohol Abuse	329	6%	6.45	15,801	11%	5.43
Drug/solvent Abuse	284	5%	5.57	15,551	11%	5.34
Cognitive Impairment	-	-	-	5,955	4%	2.05
Mental Health Concerns	934	17%	18.30	42,391	30%	14.56
Physical Health Issues	257	5%	5.04	10,891	8%	3.74
Few Social Supports	1,177	22%	23.06	33,288	24%	11.43
Victim of Intimate Partner Violence	1,346	25%	26.38	38,106	27%	13.09
Perpetrator of Intimate Partner Violence	293	5%	5.74	12,505	9%	4.29
History of Foster Care/Group Home	-	-	-	7,294	5%	2.50
At least one caregiver risk factor	2,817	52%	55.20	84,630	60%	29.06
Total Investigations	5,453	100%	106.86	140,302	100%	48.18

Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019

Percentages are column percentages and do not add up to 100% as investigating workers could identify more than one child functioning concern.

Based on a sample of 265 child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children (182 in Ontario in 2018 and 83 in the rest of Canada in 2019) and 6,782 child maltreatment-related investigations involving white children (3,858 in Ontario in 2018 and 2,924 in the rest of Canada in 2019) with information about the household source of income. Information on the household source of income was not available when the case was extracted from Quebec administrative data.

— Estimate was <100 investigations

Table 5 presents characteristics of the primary caregivers involved in child maltreatment-related investigations, as noted by the investigating worker. In 18 percent of investigations involving Latin American children (representing a rate of 19.64 investigations per 1,000 Latin American Children), the primary caregiver had moved to Canada within the last five years, and in 42 percent (45.21 investigations per 1,000 Latin American children), the primary language spoken at home is neither English nor French. Investigations involving white children were much less likely to involve a primary caregiver who moved to Canada in the last five years (1 percent; 0.67 investigations per 1,000 white children) or a primary language other than English or French (2%; 0.86 investigations per 1,000 white children).

With respect to caregiver risk factors, at least one risk factor was identified in 52 percent of maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children (an estimated 2,817 investigations) and 60 percent of investigations involving white children. The incidence rate of investigations involving at least one primary caregiver risk factor was 1.9 times as high for Latin American children (55.20 per 1,000 children) compared to white children (29.06 per 1,000 children).

Table 6 - Primary Household Income in Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019 (excludes Quebec)

Household Income Source	LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN			WHITE CHILDREN		
	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children
Full-time Employment	3,489	64%	68.37	79,798	57%	27.40
Part-time/Multiple Jobs/Seasonal Employment	287	5%	5.62	13,280	9%	4.56
Benefits/EI/Social Assistance	1,073	20%	21.03	34,417	25%	11.82
None/Unknown Income	604	11%	11.84	12,806	9%	4.40
Total Investigations	5,453	100%	106.86	140,301	100%	48.18
Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019.						
Percentages are column percentages.						
Based on a sample of 265 child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children (182 in Ontario in 2018 and 83 in the rest of Canada in 2019) and 6,782 child maltreatment-related investigations involving white children (3,858 in Ontario in 2018 and 2,924 in the rest of Canada in 2019) with information about the household source of income. Information on the household source of income was not available when the case was extracted from Quebec administrative data.						

The primary source of income for families involved in child maltreatment-related investigations in 2019 is presented in Table 6. Investigations involving Latin American children were more likely to involve families whose primary source of income was from full-time employment and less likely to involve families whose primary source of income from part-time or seasonal work, multiple jobs, benefits, employment insurance, or social assistance. Specifically, families in investigations involving Latin American children were almost half as likely to rely on multiple jobs/part-time or seasonal employment (5 percent) compared to those in investigations involving white children (9 percent). In contrast, a greater proportion of investigations involving families with Latin American children relied on full-time employment (64 percent) compared to those involving families with white children (57 percent), suggesting comparable income sources for families involved in investigations with Latin American children.

Table 7 describes several household characteristics captured in the CIS-2019. Investigating workers were asked to report the type of housing that the family resided in; for example, whether they owned or rented their home. Approximately half of the families involved in investigations involving Latin American children rented their home, while 30 percent owned their home. In comparison, families involved in investigations involving white children were almost equally likely to own or rent their home (39 and 43 percent of investigations, respectively).

Workers were also asked about various household risk factors. They were asked to indicate whether the household had run out of money for housing, food, utilities, telephone/cell phone, transportation or medical care in the past six months, whether overcrowding or unsafe housing was present and how many moves the family had experienced in the past 12 months. Investigations involving Latin American children were not more likely than those involving white children to involve families facing these challenges.

Table 7 - Household Risk Factors in Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019 (excludes Quebec)

	LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN			WHITE CHILDREN		
Household Risk Factor	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children
Type of Housing						
Own Home	1,650	30%	32.33	54,714	39%	18.79
Rental	2,791	51%	54.69	60,375	43%	20.73
Public Housing	454	8%	8.90	8,878	6%	3.05
Hotel/Shelter/Living with Family or Friends	227	4%	4.45	8,289	6%	2.85
Other	-	-	-	326	0%	0.11
Ran out of money for at least one basic necessity in last six months	549	10%	10.76	15,931	11%	5.47
Home Overcrowded	207	4%	4.06	8,191	6%	2.81
Two or more moves in the past year	256	5%	5.02	9,110	6%	3.13
Unsafe Housing Conditions	-	-	-	6,099	4%	2.09
Total Investigations	**5,453**	**100%**	**106.86**	**140,353**	**100%**	**48.20**
Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019						
Percentages are column percentages.						
Based on a sample of 265 child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children (182 in Ontario in 2018 and 83 in the rest of Canada in 2019) and 6,785 child maltreatment-related investigations involving white children (3,858 in Ontario in 2018 and 2,927 in the rest of Canada in 2019) with information about the household. Information on the household was not available when the case was extracted from Quebec administrative data.						
— Estimate was <100 investigations.						

INVESTIGATION CHARACTERISTICS AND DISPOSITIONS

As described in the methods section, maltreatment-related investigations included maltreatment investigations where a specific alleged incident was being investigated as well as risk-only investigations where concerns related only to the risk of future maltreatment.

As presented in Table 8, approximately 70 percent of investigations were focused on alleged incidents of maltreatment and approximately 30 percent assessed the risk of future maltreatment for both Latin American and white children.

Table 8 - Investigation Type in Child Maltreatment-Related Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019

	LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN			WHITE CHILDREN		
Type of Investigation	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children
Maltreatment Investigations	4,183	71%	54.56	103,867	68%	25.85
Risk of Future Maltreatment Investigations	1,719	29%	22.42	49,504	32%	12.32
Total Investigations	**5,902**	**100%**	**76.98**	**153,371**	**100%**	**38.17**
Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019						
Percentages are column percentages.						
Based on a sample of 613 child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children (182 in Ontario in 2018, 83 in the rest of Canada in 2019 and 348 cases extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019), and 18,418 child maltreatment-related investigations involving white children (3,920 in Ontario in 2018, 2,940 in the rest of Canada in 2019 and 11,558 cases extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019).						

Table 9 - Substantiation Decisions in Child Maltreatment Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019

	LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN			WHITE CHILDREN		
Substantiation Decision	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children
Unfounded Maltreatment	1,965	47%	25.63	50,963	49%	12.68
Suspected Maltreatment	189	5%	2.47	6,452	6%	1.61
Substantiated Maltreatment	2,029	49%	26.47	46,453	45%	11.56
Total Maltreatment Investigations	4,183	100%	54.56	103,868	100%	25.85
Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019						
Table does not include information on risk-only investigations.						
Based on a sample of 495 child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children (124 in Ontario in 2018, 69 in the rest of Canada in 2019 and 302 cases extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019), and 14,394 child maltreatment-related investigations involving white children (2,408 in Ontario in 2018, 2,229 in the rest of Canada in 2019 and 9,757 cases extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019), with information about substantiation.						

The level of substantiation in the estimated 4,183 maltreatment investigations involving Latin American children and the estimated 103,868 investigations involving white children is presented in Table 9. Of those, 48 percent of maltreatment investigations involving Latin American children were substantiated (an estimated 4,183 investigations) compared to 45 percent for white children. The rate of substantiated investigations was 2.11 times as high for Latin American children (54.56 investigations per 1,000 Latin American children) compared to white children (25.85 investigations per 1,000 white children) in Canada in 2019.

In a further five percent of maltreatment investigations involving Latin American children there was insufficient evidence to substantiate maltreatment; however, maltreatment remained suspected by the investigating worker at the conclusion of the investigation. Forty-seven percent of investigations involving Latin American children (an estimated 1,965 maltreatment investigations or 25.63 investigations per 1,000 Latin American children) were unfounded, compared to 49 percent of investigations involving white children.

With respect to the 1,673 total risk of future maltreatment investigations involving Latin American children, 24 percent (an estimated 397 investigations) were found to have a substantiated future risk of maltreatment, as shown in Table 10. In contrast, only 15 percent of the total 47,696 risk of future maltreatment investigations involving white children were noted as having a future risk of maltreatment. The rate of substantiated risk of future maltreatment was 2.9 times higher for Latin American children than white children.

Table 10 - Substantiation Decisions in Risk of Future Maltreatment Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019

	LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN			WHITE CHILDREN		
Risk of Future Maltreatment	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children
No Risk of Future Maltreatment	1,187	71%	15.48	35,948	75%	8.95
Risk of Future Maltreatment	397	24%	5.18	7,229	15%	1.80
Unknown Risk of Future Maltreatment	-	-	-	4,519	9%	1.12
Total Risk of Future Maltreatment Investigations	1,673	100%	21.82	47,696	100%	11.87
Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019						
Table does not include information on maltreatment investigations.						
Based on a sample of 72 child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children (58 in Ontario in 2018 and 14 in the rest of Canada in 2019), and 2,223 child maltreatment-related investigations involving white children (1.512 in Ontario in 2018 and 711 in the rest of Canada), with information about risk of future maltreatment.						
— Estimate was <100 investigations.						

Table 11 - Specific Referral Source in Child Maltreatment-Related Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019

	LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN			WHITE CHILDREN		
Referral Source	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children
Non Professional						
Custodial or Non Custodial Parent	558	9%	7.28	23,570	15%	5.87
Child	-	-	-	1,260	1%	0.31
Relative	217	4%	2.83	7,391	5%	1.84
Neighbour/friend	258	4%	3.37	8,588	6%	2.14
Professional						
Community, Health or Social Services	590	10%	7.70	9,453	6%	2.35
Hospital (any personnel)	126	2%	1.64	7,886	5%	1.96
School	2,065	35%	26.94	42,661	28%	10.62
Other child welfare service	167	3%	2.18	2,494	2%	0.62
Day care centre	-	-	-	1,667	1%	0.41
Police	1,866	32%	24.34	37,539	24%	9.34
Other	268	5%	3.50	5,544	4%	1.38
Total Investigations	**5,902**	**100%**	**76.98**	**153,372**	**100%**	**38.17**

Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019
Percentages are column percentages and do not add up to 100% as an investigation could have more than one referral source.
Based on a sample of 613 child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children (182 in Ontario in 2018, 83 in the rest of Canada in 2019 and 348 cases extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019), and 18,418 child maltreatment-related investigations involving white children (3,920 in Ontario in 2018, 2,940 in the rest of Canada in 2019 and 11,558 cases extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019), with information on referral source.
— Estimate was <100 investigations.

Table 11 presents the various sources through which an allegation of child maltreatment or risk of future maltreatment was reported to child welfare authorities. It is possible that one investigation had multiple referral sources. For investigations involving Latin American or white children, the majority of allegation referrals came from school and police. Specifically, 35 and 32 percent of referrals leading to investigations involving Latin American children, respectively, compared to 28 and 24 percent of investigations involving white children. The next most common referral source was community, health or social services for Latin American children (10 percent of investigations) and a parent for white children (15 percent of investigations).

Table 12 - Primary Category of Maltreatment in Investigated and Substantiated Maltreatment Investigations in Canada in 2019 for Latin American and White Children

| Nature of Investigation | INVESTIGATED | | | | | | SUBSTANTIATED | | | | | |
| | LATIN AMERICAN | | | WHITE | | | LATIN AMERICAN | | | WHITE | | |
	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children
Physical Abuse	1,528	37%	19.93	26,663	26%	6.64	527	26%	6.87	6,817	15%	1.70
Sexual Abuse	379	9%	4.94	5,094	5%	1.27	204	10%	2.66	1,263	3%	0.31
Neglect	651	16%	8.49	31,890	31%	7.94	245	12%	3.20	12,910	28%	3.21
Emotional Maltreatment	323	8%	4.21	12,734	12%	3.17	133	7%	1.73	7,148	15%	1.78
Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence	1,300	31%	16.96	27,397	26%	6.82	918	45%	11.97	18,238	39%	4.54
Total Maltreatment Investigations	4,183	100%	54.56	103,868	100%	25.85	2,027	100%	26.44	46,453	100%	11.56

Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019

Percentages are column percentages. Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Based on a sample of 10,059 cases (7,678 substantiated cases) extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019, 2,532 sampled investigations (1,009 substantiated investigations) in Ontario in 2018, and 2,298 sampled investigations (1,066 substantiated investigations) in the rest of Canada in 2019.

Table does not include information on risk-only investigations.

Table 12 describes the primary category of investigated maltreatment in all maltreatment investigations as well as in substantiated maltreatment investigations. The highest proportion of maltreatment investigations involving Latin American children were focused on allegations of physical abuse (37 percent; or a rate of 19.93 investigations per 1,000 Latin American children), followed by exposure to intimate partner violence (31 percent or a rate of 16.96 investigations per 1,000 Latin American children), neglect (16 percent or a rate of 8.49 investigations per 1,000 Latin American children), sexual abuse (nine percent or a rate of 4.94 investigations per 1,000 Latin American children), and emotional maltreatment (eight percent or a rate of 4.21 investigations per 1,000 Latin American children).

In investigations involving white children, the most common primary categories of maltreatment typologies were neglect (31 percent or 7.94 investigations per 1,000 white children), followed by exposure to intimate partner violence (26 percent or 6.82 investigations per 1,000 white children), allegations of physical abuse (26 percent or 6.64 investigations per 1,000 white children), emotional maltreatment (12 percent or a rate of 3.17 investigations per 1,000 white children) and sexual abuse (five percent or a rate of 1.27 investigations per 1,000 white children).

Substantiated investigations in each maltreatment category are also displayed in Table 12. The most common primary concern in substantiated maltreatment investigations involving either Latin American or white children were those involving exposure to intimate partner violence (45 percent of substantiated investigations involving Latin American children and 39 percent of those involving white children). The overall disparity index for substantiated investigations involving Latin American children was 2.3, with rates of 26.44 and 11.56 substantiated investigations per 1,000 Latin American or white children, respectively. This disparity index varied by primary concern category such that Latin American children were 8.5 times as likely to be the subject of substantiated sexual abuse, 4 times as likely to be the subject of substantiated physical abuse, and 2.6 times as likely to be the subject of substantiated exposure to intimate partner violence. For substantiated investigations involving neglect or emotional maltreatment, Latin American and white children were equally as likely to be involved.

Table 13 - Characteristics of Substantiated Maltreatment Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019 (excluding Quebec)

Characteristics of Maltreatment	LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN			WHITE CHILDREN		
	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children
Police Involvement						
Police Involvement, Investigation Only	328	18%	6.43	8,539	22%	2.93
Police Involvement, Charges Laid	425	24%	8.33	9,270	24%	3.18
No Police Involvement	1,013	56%	19.85	20,788	53%	7.14
Unknown	-	-	-	382	1%	0.13
Emotional Harm						
Emotional Harm, No Therapeutic Treatment Required	289	16%	5.66	5,740	15%	1.97
Emotional Harm, Therapeutic Treatment Required	529	29%	10.37	8,684	22%	2.98
No Emotional Harm Documented	977	54%	19.15	24,555	63%	8.43
Physical Harm						
Physical Harm Documented	159	9%	3.12	1,819	5%	0.62
No Physical Harm Documented	1,635	91%	32.04	37,161	95%	12.76
Total Substantiated Maltreatment Investigations	**1,794**	**100%**	**35.16**	**38,979**	**100%**	**13.39**
Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019						
Percentages are column percentages. Columns do not add up to 100% as a single investigation could involve multiple characteristics.						
Based on a sample of 86 substantiated child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children (57 in Ontario in 2018 and 29 in the rest of Canada in 2019) and 1,989 child maltreatment-related investigations involving white children (952 in Ontario in 2018 and 1,037 in the rest of Canada in 2019) with information about the nature of the substantiated investigation. Information about the nature of the substantiated investigation was not available when the case was extracted from Quebec administrative data.						
— Estimate was <100 investigations.						

Information about the nature of substantiated investigations, including police involvement and emotional or physical harm related to the maltreatment incident(s), was collected using a series of questions for the investigating workers. As shown in Table 13, a police investigation took place in 18 percent of substantiated investigations involving Latin American children and 22 percent of those involving white children. Charges were laid in one quarter of substantiated investigations involving both Latin American or white children, and police were not involved in the other half of substantiated investigations.

To evaluate whether emotional harm was present, workers were asked to indicate whether the child was showing signs of mental or emotional harm (e.g., nightmares, bed-wetting, or social withdrawal) following the maltreatment incident(s). To rate the severity of this mental/emotional harm, workers indicated whether therapeutic treatment was required to manage the resulting symptoms. As shown in Table 13, emotional harm was noted in 46 percent of substantiated investigations involving Latin American children and only 37 percent of those involving white children. In 29 percent of substantiated investigations involving Latin American children (an estimated 529 investigations or 19.15 investigations per 1,000 Latin American children) symptoms were severe enough to require treatment compared to 22 percent of substantiated investigations involving white children.

As shown in Table 13, physical harm was not noted by investigating workers in the majority of substantiated investigations involving Latin American or white children; however of the small proportion of substantiated investigations that involved physical harm, the disparity index indicates that investigations involving Latin American children were almost five times as likely to involve physical harm compared to those involving white children (rates of 3.12 and 0.62 substantiated investigations per 1,000 children, respectively).

Table 14 - Service Referrals Following Child-maltreatment Related Investigations involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019 (excluding Quebec)

	LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN			WHITE CHILDREN		
Service Referrals	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children
Service Referral Made for Any Family Member	2,617	47%	51.28	53,928	38%	18.52
No Service Referral Made	2,935	53%	57.52	87,840	62%	30.17
Total Investigations	5,553	100%	108.82	141,768	100%	48.69

Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019

Based on a sample of 265 child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children (182 in Ontario in 2018 and 83 in the rest of Canada in 2019) and 6,860 child maltreatment-related investigations involving white children (3,920 in Ontario in 2018 and 2,940 in the rest of Canada in 2019) with information about the service referrals. Information on service referrals was not available when the case was extracted from Quebec administrative data.

The number of investigations in which the investigating worker made a service referral for any family member involved in the investigation is presented in Table 14. In just under half of investigations involving Latin American children (47 percent), a service referral was made, compared to 38 percent of investigations involving white children in which a service referral was made. The rate of investigations leading to a service referral was 2.8 times as high for Latin American children (51.28 investigations per 1,000 Latin American children) compared to white children (18.52 investigations per 1,000 white children).

Table 15 shows the number of cases that remained opened for ongoing services following an initial child welfare investigation. Twenty-one percent of investigations involving Latin American children remained open for ongoing services in Canada in 2019, compared to only 18 percent of investigations involving white children. The rate of investigations that remained open for ongoing services was 2.6 times as high for Latin American children (23.20 investigations per 1,000 Latin American children) compared to white children (8.80 investigations per 1,000 white children).

Table 15 - Provision of Ongoing Services Following Child-maltreatment Related Investigations involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019 (excluding Quebec)

Provision of Ongoing Services	LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN			WHITE CHILDREN		
	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children
Case to Stay Open for Ongoing Services	1,184	21%	23.20	25,621	18%	8.80
Case to be Closed	4,369	79%	85.62	116,147	82%	39.89
Total Investigations	5,553	100%	108.82	141,768	100%	48.69
Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019						
Based on a sample of 265 child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children (182 in Ontario in 2018 and 83 in the rest of Canada in 2019) and 6,860 child maltreatment-related investigations involving white children (3,920 in Ontario in 2018 and 2,940 in the rest of Canada in 2019) with information about ongoing services. Information on ongoing services was not available when the case was extracted from Quebec administrative data.						

The number of cases that involved an application to child welfare court following an initial child welfare investigation are shown in Table 16. An application to court was filed in five percent of investigations involving Latin American children, compared to only three percent of investigations involving white children. The rate of investigations in which an application to court was made was 3.1 times as high for Latin American children (3.73 investigations per 1,000 Latin American children) compared to white children (1.19 investigations per 1,000 white children).

Table 16 - Applications to Child Welfare Court in Child Maltreatment-Related Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019

Child Welfare Court Application Status	LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN			WHITE CHILDREN		
	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children
No Application to Court	5,616	95%	73.25	148,579	97%	36.98
Application Made	286	5%	3.73	4,792	3%	1.19
Total Investigations	5,902	100%	76.98	153,372	100%	38.17
Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019						
Based on a sample of 613 child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children (182 in Ontario in 2018, 83 in the rest of Canada in 2019 and 348 cases extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019), and 18,418 child maltreatment-related investigations involving white children (3,920 in Ontario in 2018, 2,940 in the rest of Canada in 2019 and 11,558 cases extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019), with information about child welfare court applications.						

Table 17 - Out-of-Home Placements in Child Maltreatment-Related Investigations Involving Latin American and White Children in Canada in 2019

Placement Status	LATIN AMERICAN CHILDREN			WHITE CHILDREN		
	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children	#	%	Rate per 1,000 children
Child with Relative (Not a Formal Child Welfare Placement)	182	3%	2.37	4,083	3%	1.02
Foster Care (Includes Foster and Kinship Care)	218	4%	2.84	2,656	2%	0.66
Group Home/Residential Secure Treatment	-	-	-	841	1%	0.21
Other (e.g., places of safety)	-	-	-	105	0%	0.03
Subtotal: Placement Made	442	7%	5.77	7,687	5%	1.91
Child Remained at Home	5,460	93%	71.22	145,687	95%	36.26
Total Investigations	5,902	100%	76.98	153,372	100%	38.17
Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2019						
Percentages are column percentages.						
Based on a sample of 613 child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children (182 in Ontario in 2018, 83 in the rest of Canada in 2019 and 348 cases extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019), and 18,418 child maltreatment-related investigations involving white children (3,920 in Ontario in 2018, 2,940 in the rest of Canada in 2019 and 11,558 cases extracted from the Quebec administrative system in 2019), with information about placement in out-of-home care.						
— Estimate was <100 investigations.						

Information about out-of-home placements made in child maltreatment-related investigations in Canada in 2019 is presented in Table 17. Seven percent of investigations involving Latin American children resulted in an out-of-home placement for the child compared to only five percent of investigations involving white children. When comparing the rates per 1,000 children, the rate of placement for Latin American children (5.77 investigations per 1,000 Latin American children) is 3.0 times the rate of placement for white children (1.91 investigations per 1,000 white children). The rate of placement in formal out-of-home care (i.e., excluding informal care such as with a relative) for Latin American children (2.84 investigations per 1,000 Latin American children) is 4.3 times the rate of placement in formal out-of-home care for white children (0.66 investigations per 1,000 white children).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

These are the first preliminary descriptive statistics comparing child maltreatment-related investigations involving Latin American children and those involving white children in Canada. While the differences in rates of maltreatment-related investigations despite much smaller population levels of Latin American children are consistent with findings from previous studies, careful examination of structural factors should always be considered. Follow-up studies are needed to systematically explore the extent to which seasonal variation in the types of cases referred to child welfare agencies may affect estimates that are based on a three-month sampling period. In addition, future longitudinal studies could provide a better understanding of the experiences of child welfare-involved Latin American children and families beyond the initial investigation.

Section VI
Glossary

Appendix A – Glossary of Terms

The following is an explanatory list of terms used throughout this report.

Age Group

The age range of children included in the CIS-2019 sample. All data are presented for children between newborn and 15 years of age.

Annual Incidence

The number of child maltreatment-related investigations per 1,000 children in a given year.

Case Duplication

Children who are subject of an investigation more than once in a calendar year are counted in most child welfare statistics as separate "cases" or "investigations." As a count of children, these statistics are, therefore, duplicated.

Case Openings

Cases that appear on agency/office statistics as openings. Openings do not include referrals that have been screened-out.

Categories of Maltreatment

The five key classification categories under which the 33 forms of maltreatment asked about in the CIS-2019 Data Collection Instrument were subsumed: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional maltreatment and exposure to intimate partner violence.

Child

The CIS-2019 defined child as age newborn to 15 inclusive.

Child Investigations

Case openings that meet the CIS-2019 inclusion criteria.

Child Welfare Agency

Refers to child protection services and other related services. The focus of the CIS-2019 is on services that address alleged child abuse and neglect. The names designating such services vary by jurisdiction.

Childhood Prevalence

The proportion of people maltreated at any point during their childhood. The CIS-2019 does not measure prevalence of maltreatment.

Community Caregiver

Child welfare agencies in Canada usually open cases under the name of a family (e.g., one or more parent). In certain cases, child welfare agencies do not open cases under the name of a family, but rather the case is opened under the name of a "community caregiver." This occurs when the alleged perpetrator is someone providing care to a child in an out-of-home setting (e.g., institutional caregiver). For instance, if an allegation is made against a caregiver at a day care, school, or group home, the case may be classified as a "community caregiver" investigation. In these investigations, the investigating child welfare worker typically has little contact with the child's family, but rather focuses on the alleged perpetrator who is a community member. For this reason, information on the primary caregivers and the households of children involved in "community caregiver" investigations was not collected.

Definitional Framework

The CIS-2019 provides an estimate of the number of cases of alleged child maltreatment (physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional maltreatment, and exposure to intimate partner violence) reported to and investigated by child welfare services in 2019 (screened-out reports are not included). The estimates are broken down by three levels of substantiation (substantiated, suspected, and unfounded). Cases opened more than once during the year are counted as separate investigations.

Forms of Maltreatment

Specific types of maltreatment (e.g., hit with an object, sexual exploitation, or direct witness to physical violence) that are classified under the five CIS-2019 Categories of Maltreatment. The CIS-2019 captured 33 forms of maltreatment.

Latin American

In the Canadian context, refers to individuals who originate from countries in South, Central, or North America that were previously colonized and influenced by Spain or Portugal such as Caribbean countries, Mexico, and El Salvador*.

Level of Identification and Substantiation

There are four key levels in the case identification process: detection, reporting, investigation, and substantiation.

- **Detection** is the first stage in the case identification process. This refers to the process of a professional or community member detecting a maltreatment-related concern for a child. Little is known about the relationship between detected and undetected cases.
- **Reporting** suspected child maltreatment is required by law in all Canadian jurisdictions. The CIS-2019 does not document unreported cases.
- **Investigated** cases are subject to various screening practices, which vary across agencies. The CIS-2019 did not track screened-out cases, nor did it track new incidents of maltreatment on already opened cases.
- **Substantiation** distinguishes between cases where maltreatment is confirmed following an investigation, and cases where maltreatment is not confirmed. The CIS-2019 uses a three-tiered classification system, in which a suspected level provides an important clinical distinction for cases where maltreatment is suspected to have occurred by the investigating worker, but cannot be substantiated.

Maltreatment Investigation

Investigations of situations where there are concerns that a child may have already been abused or neglected.

Maltreatment-Related Investigation

Investigations of situations where there are concerns that a child may have already been abused or neglected as well as investigations of situations where the concern is the risk the child will be maltreated in the future.

*Ginieniewicz, J., & McKenzie, K. (2014). Mental health of Latin Americans in Canada: A literature review. International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 60(3), 263–273.

Multi-stage Sampling Design

A research design in which several systematic steps are taken in drawing the final sample to be studied. The CIS-2019 sample (for all jurisdictions except Quebec) was drawn in three stages. First, a stratified random sample of child welfare agencies was selected from across Canada. Second, families investigated by child welfare agencies were selected (all cases in small and medium sized agencies, a random sample in large agencies). Finally, investigated children in each family were identified for inclusion in the sample (non-investigated siblings were excluded).

Reporting Year

The year in which child maltreatment-related cases were opened. The reporting year for the CIS-2019 was 2019 (data from Ontario were collected as part of the Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2018, for which the reporting year was 2018).

Risk of Future Maltreatment

No specific form of maltreatment alleged or suspected. However, based on the circumstances, a child is at risk for maltreatment in the future due to a milieu of risk factors. For example, a child living with a caregiver who abuses substances may be deemed at risk of future maltreatment even if no form of maltreatment has been alleged.

Risk of Future Harm

Placing a child at risk of harm implies that a specific action (or inaction) occurred that seriously endangered the safety of the child. Placing a child at risk of harm is considered maltreatment.

Screened Out

Referrals to child welfare agencies that are not opened for an investigation.

Unit of Analysis

In the case of the CIS-2019, the unit of analysis is a child investigation.

Unit of Service

When a referral is made alleging maltreatment, the child welfare agency will open an investigation if the case is not screened out. Jurisdictions in Canada vary in terms of their units of service, for some, when an investigation is opened, it is opened under an entire family, while for others the investigations are opened under individual children.

Reporting Year

Risk of Future Maltreatment

Risk of Future Harm

Screened Out

Unit of Analysis

Maltreatment Investigations vs. Risk of Future Maltreatment Investigations

In jurisdictions outside of Quebec, children eligible for inclusion in the final study sample were identified by having investigating workers complete the Intake Information section of the online CIS-2019 Instrument. The Intake Information section allowed the investigating worker to identify any children who were investigated because of maltreatment-related concerns. These were further classified as either (1) maltreatment investigations, i.e., investigations involving a specific allegation of an incident of maltreatment or (2) risk of future maltreatment investigations, i.e., investigations where there was no specific allegation of a maltreatment incident but where the primary concern was related to the risk of future maltreatment.

Forms of Maltreatment included in the CIS-2019

The CIS-2019 definition of child maltreatment includes 33 forms of maltreatment, subsumed under five categories of maltreatment: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional maltreatment, and exposure to intimate partner violence. This classification reflects a broad definition of child maltreatment and includes forms of maltreatment that are not specifically indicated in some provincial and territorial child welfare statutes (e.g., exposure to intimate partner violence). The CIS-2019 tracked up to three forms of maltreatment for each investigation. A source of potential confusion in interpreting child maltreatment statistics lies in inconsistencies in the categories of maltreatment included in different statistics. Most child maltreatment statistics refer to both physical and sexual abuse, but other categories of maltreatment, such as neglect, emotional maltreatment, and exposure to intimate partner violence are not systematically included. There is even less consensus with respect to subtypes or forms of maltreatment.

Weighting

The data collected for the CIS-2019 were weighted to derive national, annual incidence estimates of child maltreatment-related investigations. Design weights were applied to each case selected in sampled agencies during the three-month case selection period. The weighting approach was developed in consultation with a statistical expert. A full description of the weighting procedure will be available on the cwrp.ca website.

Investigated Maltreatment vs. Substantiated Maltreatment

Child welfare statutes in most jurisdictions require that professionals working with children and the general public report all situations where they have concerns that a child may have been maltreated or where there is a risk of future maltreatment. The investigation phase is designed to determine whether the child was in fact maltreated or not. Some jurisdictions use a two-tiered substantiation classification system that distinguishes between substantiated and unfounded cases or verified and not verified cases. The CIS-2019 uses a three-tiered classification system for investigated incidents of maltreatment, in which a "suspected" level provides an important clinical distinction in certain cases: those in which there is not enough evidence to substantiate maltreatment, but maltreatment cannot be ruled out.* In reporting and interpreting maltreatment statistics it is important to clearly distinguish between risk of future maltreatment investigations, maltreatment investigations and substantiated cases of maltreatment.

Risk of Harm vs. Harm

Cases of maltreatment that draw public attention usually involve children who have been severely injured or, in the most tragic cases, have died as a result of maltreatment. In practice, child welfare workers investigate and intervene in many situations in which children have not yet been harmed but are at risk of harm. For instance, a toddler who has been repeatedly left unsupervised in a potentially dangerous setting may be considered to have been neglected, even if the child has not yet been harmed. Provincial and territorial statutes cover children who have suffered demonstrable harm due to abuse or neglect and children at risk of harm. Substantiation standards in all jurisdictions across Canada include situations where children have been harmed as a result of maltreatment as well as situations where there is no evidence of harm but where children are at substantial risk of harm as a result of maltreatment. The CIS-2019 includes both types of situations in its definition of maltreatment. The study also gathers information about physical and emotional harm attributed to substantiated or suspected maltreatment. There can be confusion around the difference between risk of harm and risk of future maltreatment. A child who has been placed at risk of harm has experienced an event that endangered their physical or emotional health.

*For more information on the distinction between these three levels of substantiation, please see: Trocmé, N., Knoke, D., Fallon, B., & MacLaurin, B. (2009). Differentiating between substantiated, suspected, and unsubstantiated maltreatment in Canada. Child Maltreatment, 14(1), 4 – 16.

Risk of Harm vs. Harm (continued)

Placing a child at risk of harm is considered a form of maltreatment. For example, neglect can be substantiated for an unsupervised toddler, regardless of whether or not harm occurs, because the parent is placing the child at substantial risk of harm. In contrast, risk of future maltreatment refers to situations where a specific incident of maltreatment has not yet occurred, but circumstances, for instance parental substance abuse, indicate that there is a significant risk that maltreatment could occur in the future.

Rate per 1,000 Calculations

In this report, a rate per 1,000 calculation was performed for Latin American children and white children (0 to 15 years old) using data from the 2016 Census. Service volume estimates for Latin American children were divided by the census population (i.e., 76,665) and then multiplied by 1,000. Service volume estimates for white children were divided by the census population (4,018,330) and then multiplied by 1,000. For variables for which data were not available from the Quebec data extraction, the Quebec child population (0 to 15 years old) was subtracted from the total Canadian child population. This resulted in population estimates of 51,030 for Latin American children and 2,911,870 for white children.

The CIS-2019 Instrument

The CIS-2019 Instrument was the main data collection instrument used for the study. This instrument was completed by the primary investigating child welfare worker upon completion of each child welfare investigation. This data collection instrument consists of an Intake Information section, a Household Information section, and a Child Information section.*

*To view a copy of the CIS-2019 Data Collection Instrument please visit cwrp.ca and see: Fallon, B., Lefebvre, R., Trocmé, N., Richard, K., Hélie, 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., Petti, T., Thomas Prokop, S., & 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.

Intake Information Section

Information about the report or referral as well as partially identifying information about the child(ren) involved was collected on the Intake Information section. This section requested information on: the date of referral; referral source; number of caregivers and children in the home; age and sex of caregivers and children; the reason for referral; which approach to the investigation was used; the relationship between each caregiver and child; whether the child was investigated; whether there were other adults in the home; and whether there were other caregivers outside the home.

Household Information Section

The household was defined as all of the adults living at the address of the investigation. The Household Information section collected detailed information on up to two caregivers living in the home at the time of referral. Descriptive information was requested about the contact with the caregiver, caregiver risk factors, household risk factors, transfers to ongoing services, and referral(s) to other services.

Child Information Section

The Child Information section was completed for each child who was investigated for maltreatment or for risk of future maltreatment. The Child Information section collected information on the type of investigation (a risk investigation or an investigated incident of maltreatment). For maltreatment investigations, it documented up to three different forms of maltreatment and included levels of substantiation, alleged perpetrator(s), and duration of maltreatment. In addition, it collected information on child functioning, physical harm, emotional harm to the child attributable to the alleged maltreatment, previous reports of maltreatment, spanking, child welfare court activity, and out-of-home placement. Workers who conducted investigations of risk of future maltreatment did not answer questions pertaining to substantiation, perpetrators, and duration, but did complete items about child functioning, placement, court involvement, previous reports of maltreatment, and spanking. In both types of investigations, workers were asked whether they were concerned about future maltreatment.

Guidebook

A significant challenge for the study was to overcome the variations in the definitions of maltreatment used in different jurisdictions. Rather than anchor the definitions in specific legal or administrative definitions, a single set of definitions corresponding to standard research classification schemes was used. All items on the CIS-2019 Instrument were defined in an accompanying CIS-2019 Guidebook.

Data Collection and Verification Procedures

Each participating agency was offered a training session conducted by a Site Researcher to introduce participating child welfare workers to the CIS-2019 instrument and procedures. Most agencies opted to receive the training session. In addition, many agency representatives requested one-on-one support for participating child welfare workers completing the CIS-2019 instruments throughout the data collection period. Additional support was built into the CIS-2019 online platform, including direct access to the CIS-2019 Guidebook, containing definitions for all of the items and study procedures; written instructions for each item on the instrument available through a help pop-up; and audio instructions for a selection of items. Site Researchers were assigned to coordinate data collection activities at each agency participating in the CIS-2019. Site Researchers were trained on the study instruments and procedures and each Site Researcher was assigned between three to six agencies. Prior to travel restrictions required for the COVID-19 pandemic, Site Researchers visited their agencies on a regular basis to provide participating workers with one-on-one support in completing their data collection instruments, respond to questions, and monitor study progress. Since the instrument for this cycle of the study was online for the first time, additional support strategies were developed, and many workers preferred to complete the instruments over the phone with their assigned Site Researcher. This type of one-on-one phone support continued during the pandemic.

In Quebec, the Quebec Incidence Study team, in consultation with the CIS-2019 study team and First Nations partners in Quebec, extracted and matched fields from the Quebec administrative case management system to the items in the CIS-2019 data collection instrument.

Timing of Form Completion

The data collection instrument was completed at the point when workers finished their written report of the investigation. The length of time between the receipt of the referral and the completion of the written assessment differed according to provincial, regional, and site practices, although in most instances some type of report was required within six weeks of the beginning of an investigation. There were many instances where a complex investigation took more time. Additionally, due to the unprecedented situation of child welfare agencies serving children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic, timing of instrument

Design

The study design was implemented for the purpose of point estimation and the estimation of variance. The population of agencies was stratified by size. Agencies were selected from each stratum using systematic random sampling in order to take agency size into consideration. The three months (corresponding to October, November, and December) were assumed to be a random sample of the 12 months comprising the calendar year for each agency selected. In each selected month, cases at large agencies were selected using simple random sampling. Quebec investigations represent a universal sample and are, therefore, self-representing.

Case Duplication

Although cases reported more than once during the three-month case sampling period were unduplicated, the weights used for CIS-2019 annual estimates include an unknown number of "duplicate" cases, i.e., children or families reported and opened for investigation two or more times during the year. Although each investigation represents a new incident of maltreatment, confusion arises if these investigations are taken to represent an unduplicated count of children. To avoid such confusion, the CIS-2019 uses the term "child investigations" rather than "investigated children."

An estimate of how often maltreated children will be counted more than once can be derived from jurisdictions that maintain separate investigation-based and child-based counts. The U.S. National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), reports that for substantiated cases of child maltreatment, the six-month recurrence rate during 2016 was 5.1 percent.* In Quebec, the six-month recurrence rate is estimated to be 2.1 percent. In a 12-month follow-up with 30 Ontario agencies, there was a 15.40 percent recurrence rate after an investigation closed.**

Unit of Service

When a referral is made alleging maltreatment, the child welfare agency will open an investigation if the case is not screened out. Jurisdictions in Canada vary in terms of their units of service, for some, when an investigation is opened, it is opened under an entire family, while for others the investigations are opened under individual children.

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*https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cwo2016.pdf
**Ocands 2013-2014, http://www.oacas.org/Wp-Content/Uploads/2016/08/Fact-Sheet-ServiceRecurrence-Spi-4-And-5-Final-March-2016.pdf

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