



Protecting and promoting the well-being of First Nations children through child welfare systems in Canada:

Background considerations for the Commission of Inquiry into the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of Phoenix Sinclair

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McGill Centre for Research on
Children and Families



Outline

- Examine the overrepresentation of First Nations children in Canadian child welfare programs (FNCIS)
- Disentangle protection and well-being in understanding the nature of child welfare services and policies across Canada (CIS 98-08)
- Describe the National Child Welfare Outcomes Indicator Matrix (NOM)

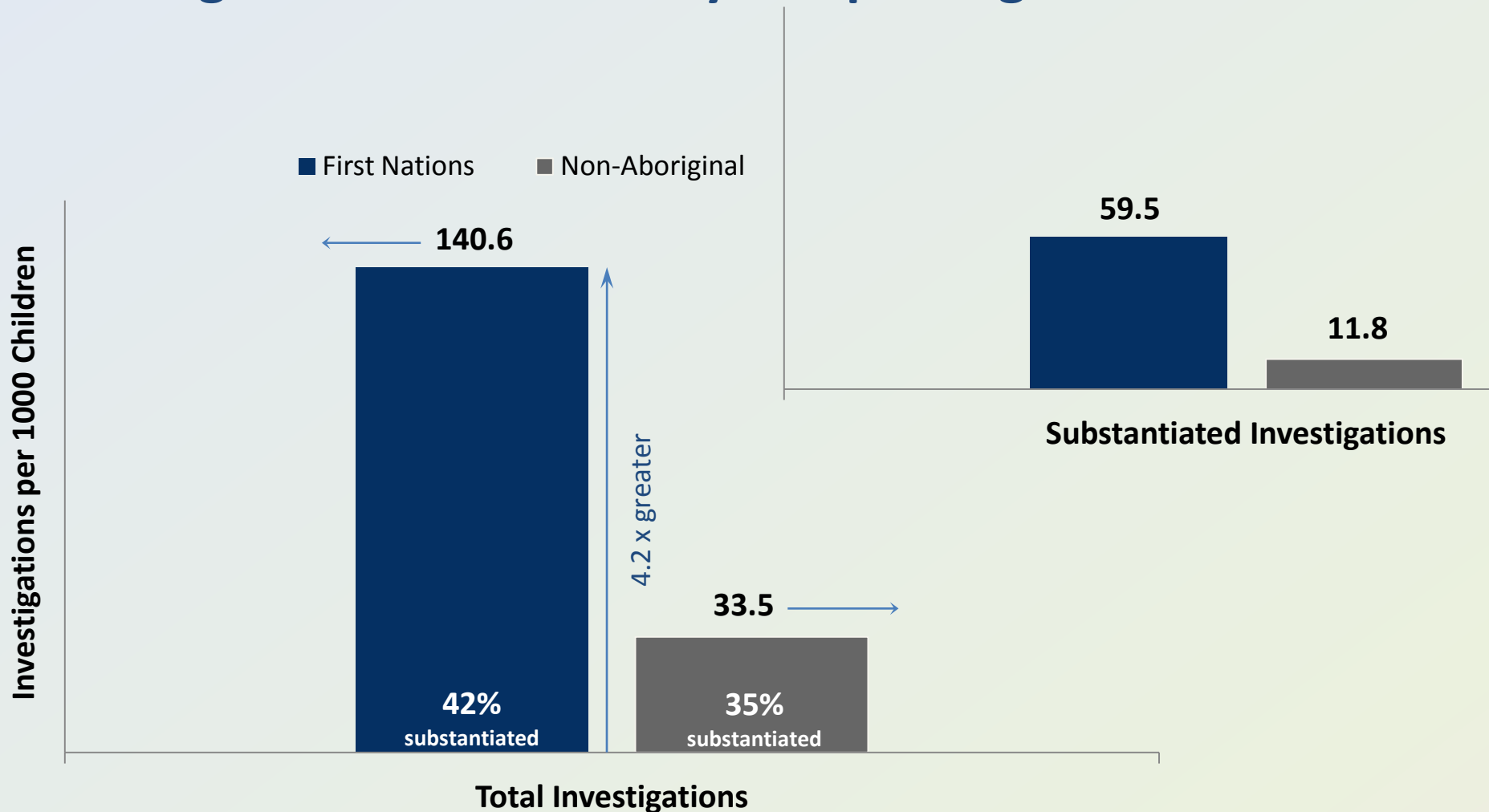


The First Nations component of the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Abuse & Neglect

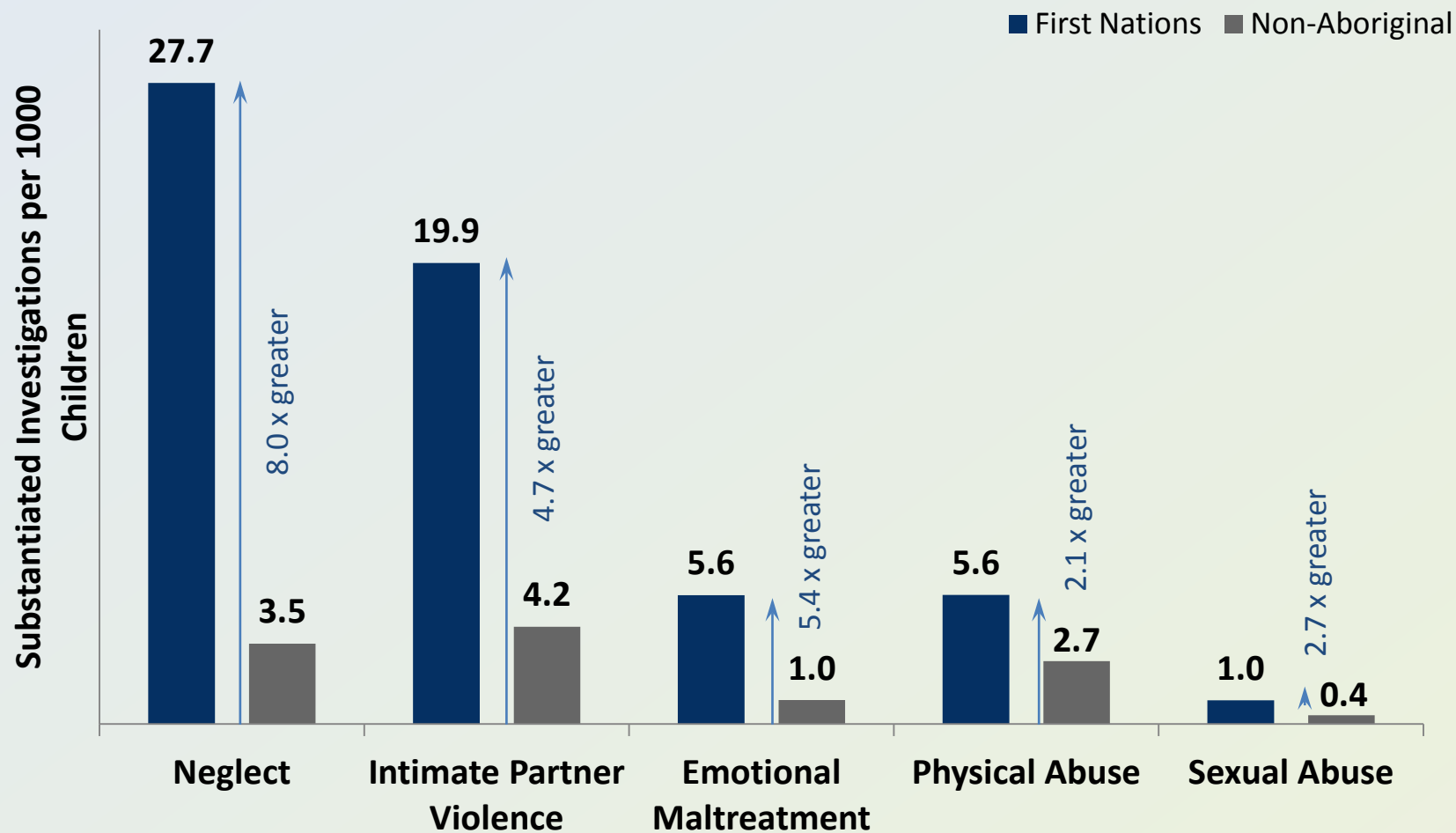
- **First two cycles guided by First Nation Child & Family Caring Society of Canada**
 - CIS 1998 - 3 First Nations agencies
 - CIS 2003 - 8 First Nations agencies
- **2008 cycle overseen by FNCIS-2008 Advisory Committee**
 - 22 (out of 85) First Nations and 1 Métis agency
 - 89 (out of 330) provincial and territorial agencies
 - Compares 3,106 First Nations investigated children to 12,240 non-Aboriginal children.
 - Annual estimates, not national.



Rates of First Nations & non-Aboriginal child investigations conducted by sampled agencies in 2008

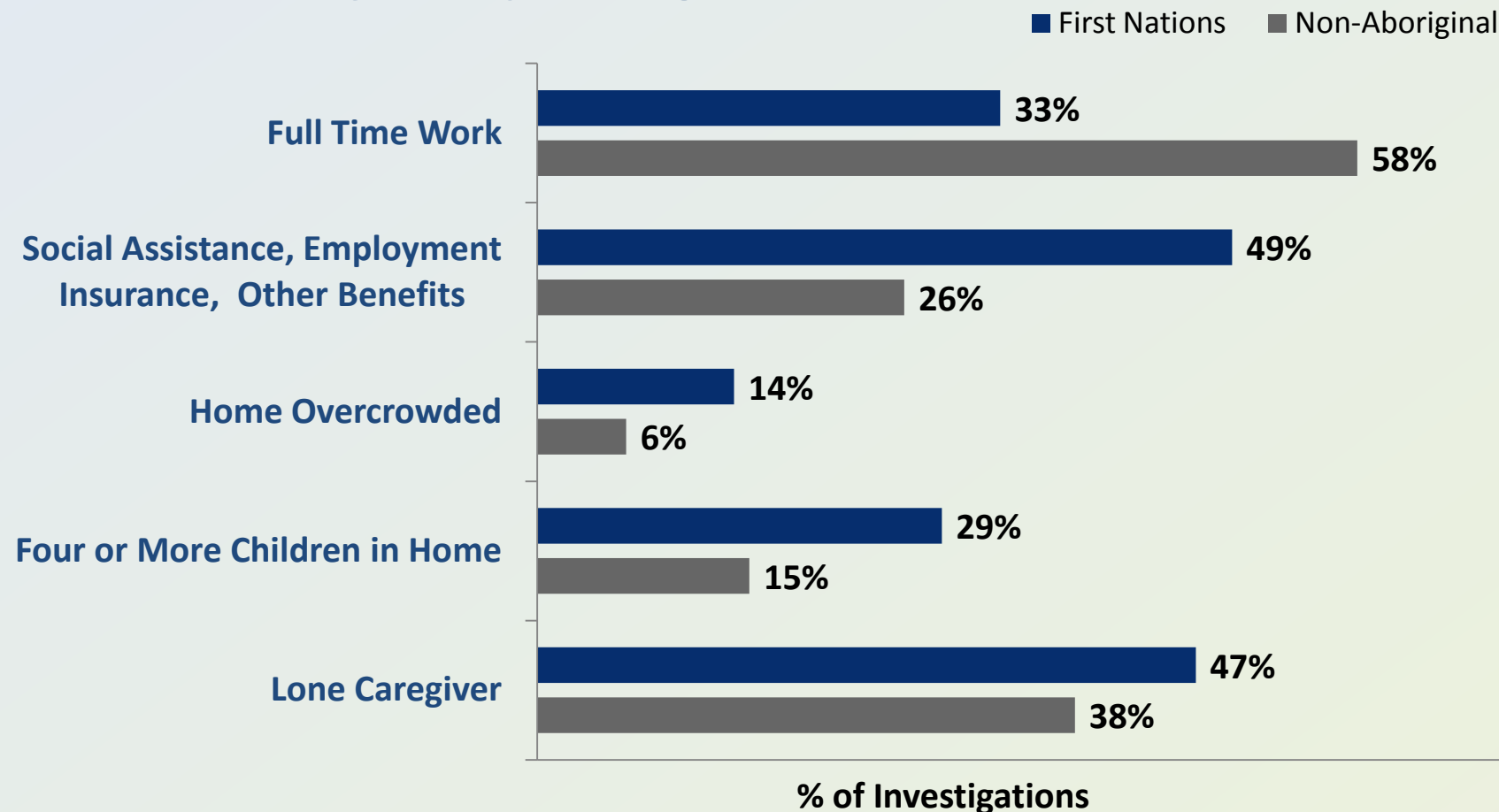


Primary categories of maltreatment in substantiated First Nations and Non-Aboriginal maltreatment investigations conducted by sampled agencies



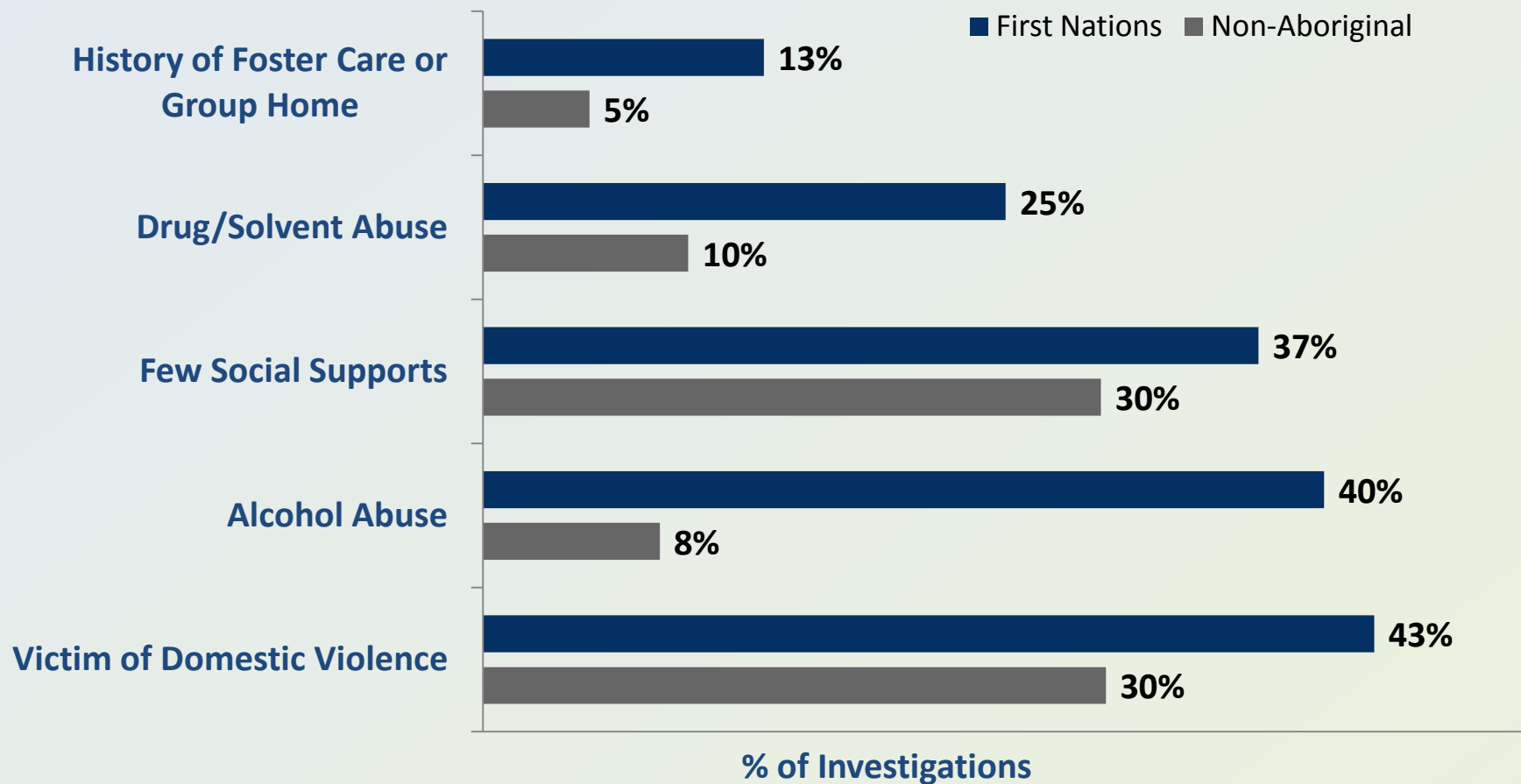


Family and household structural characteristics for First Nations and non-Aboriginal investigations conducted by sampled agencies

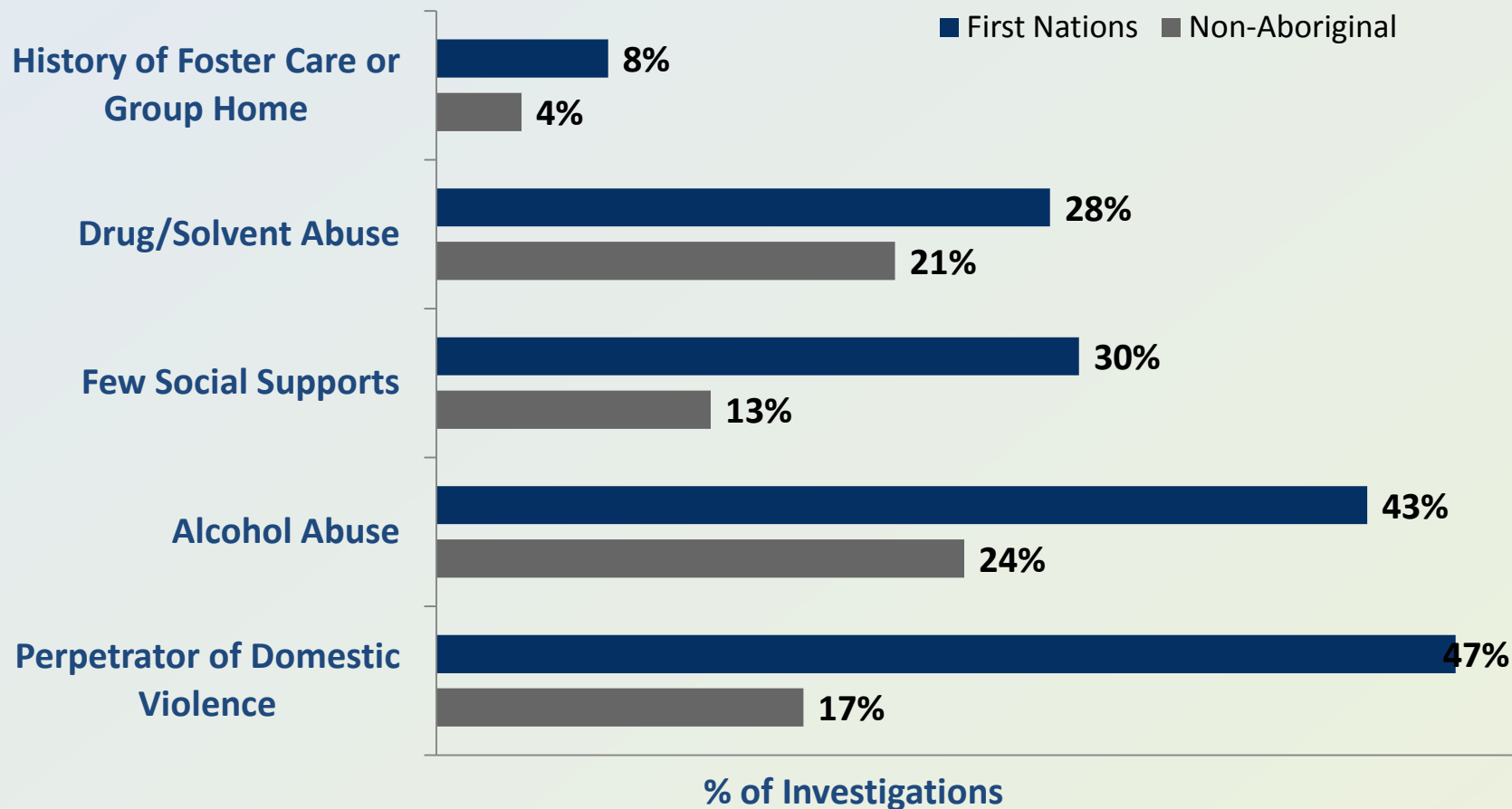




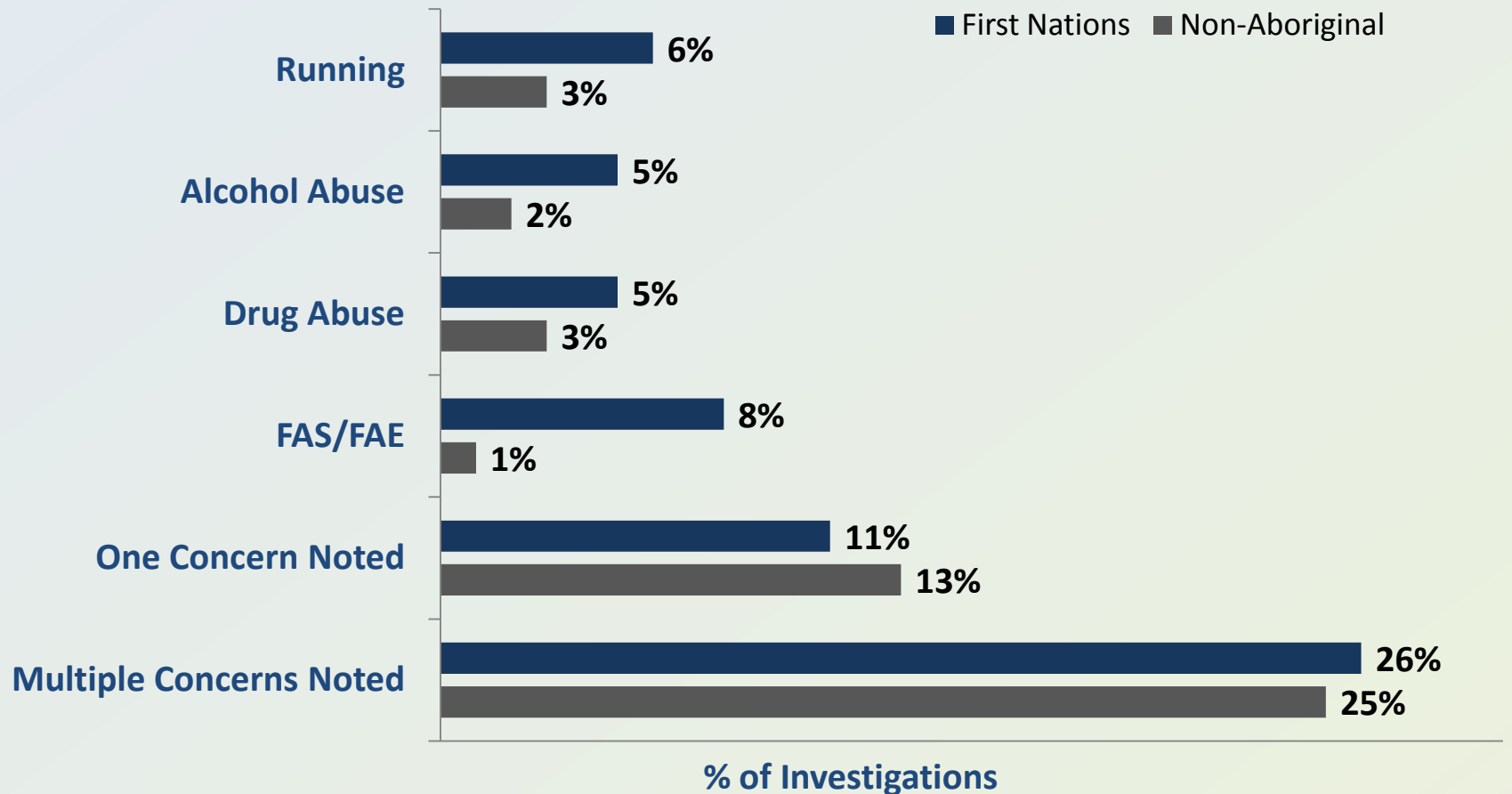
Risk factors identified for primary female caregivers in First Nations and non-Aboriginal investigations conducted by sampled agencies



Risk factors identified for primary male caregivers in First Nations and non-Aboriginal investigations conducted by sampled agencies

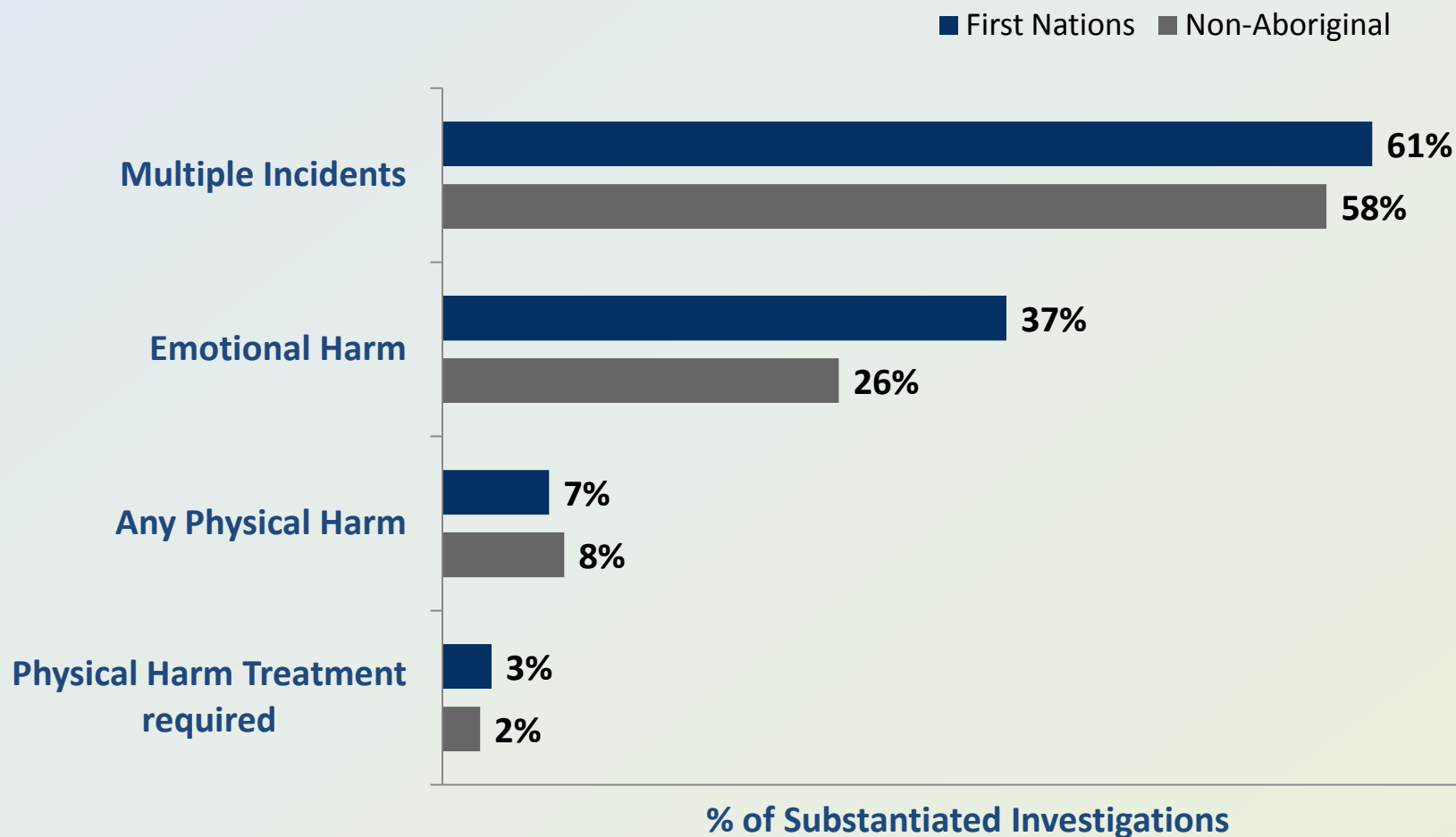


Child functioning concerns noted in First Nations and non-Aboriginal investigations conducted by sampled agencies

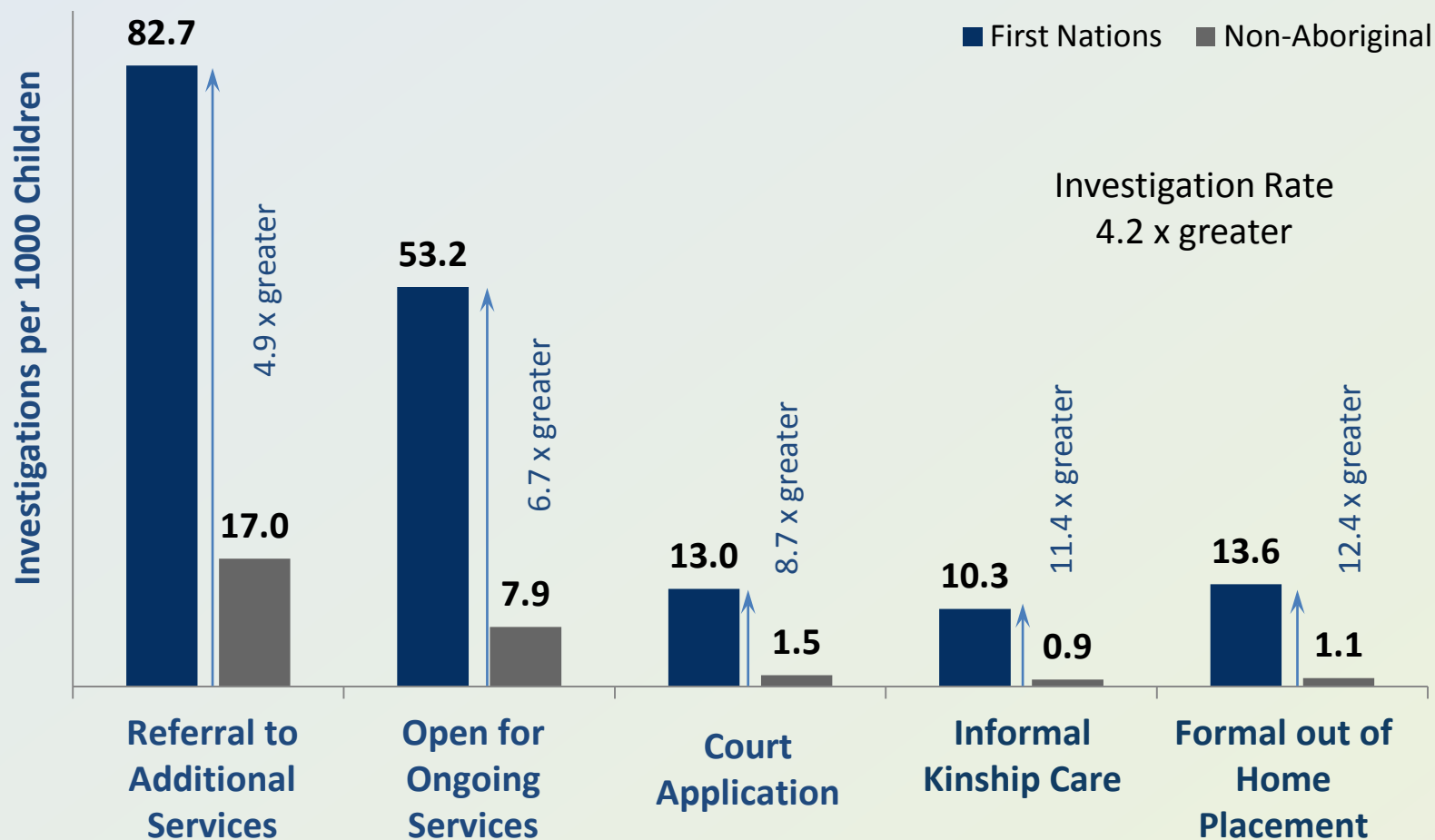




Harm and duration of maltreatment for children in First Nations and non-Aboriginal substantiated investigations conducted by sampled agencies



Cases remaining open for services, referrals to outside services, court applications and out of home care for investigations conducted in sampled agencies





FNCIS: Key Findings and Implications

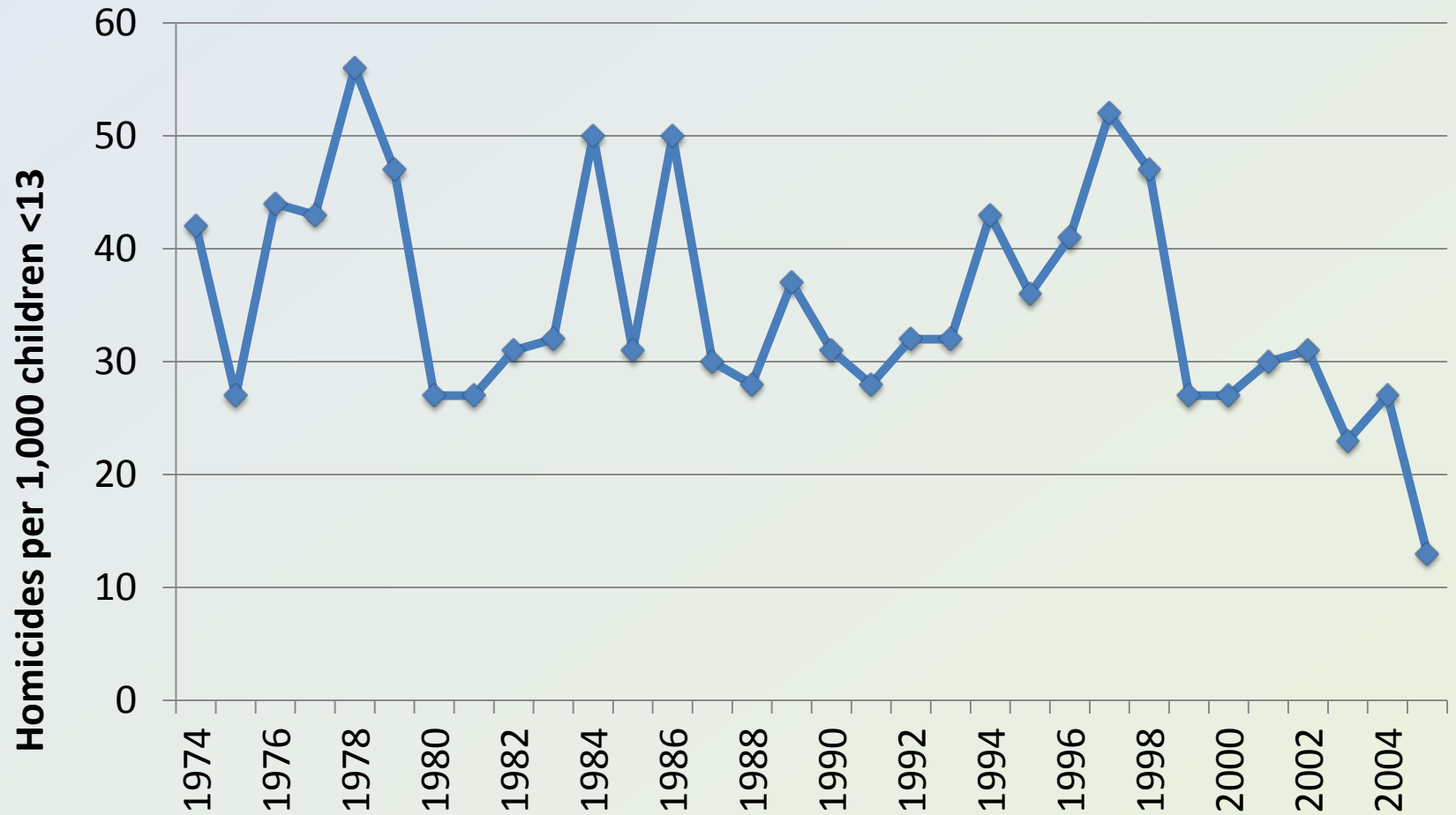
- Overrepresentation of First Nations children is amplified at every stage of the investigation
- Overrepresentation is driven primarily by situations involving neglect
- Neglect is linked with poverty/structural issues and caregiver risk factors (substance abuse and intimate partner violence)
- Short term, protection focused strategies do not address underlying needs



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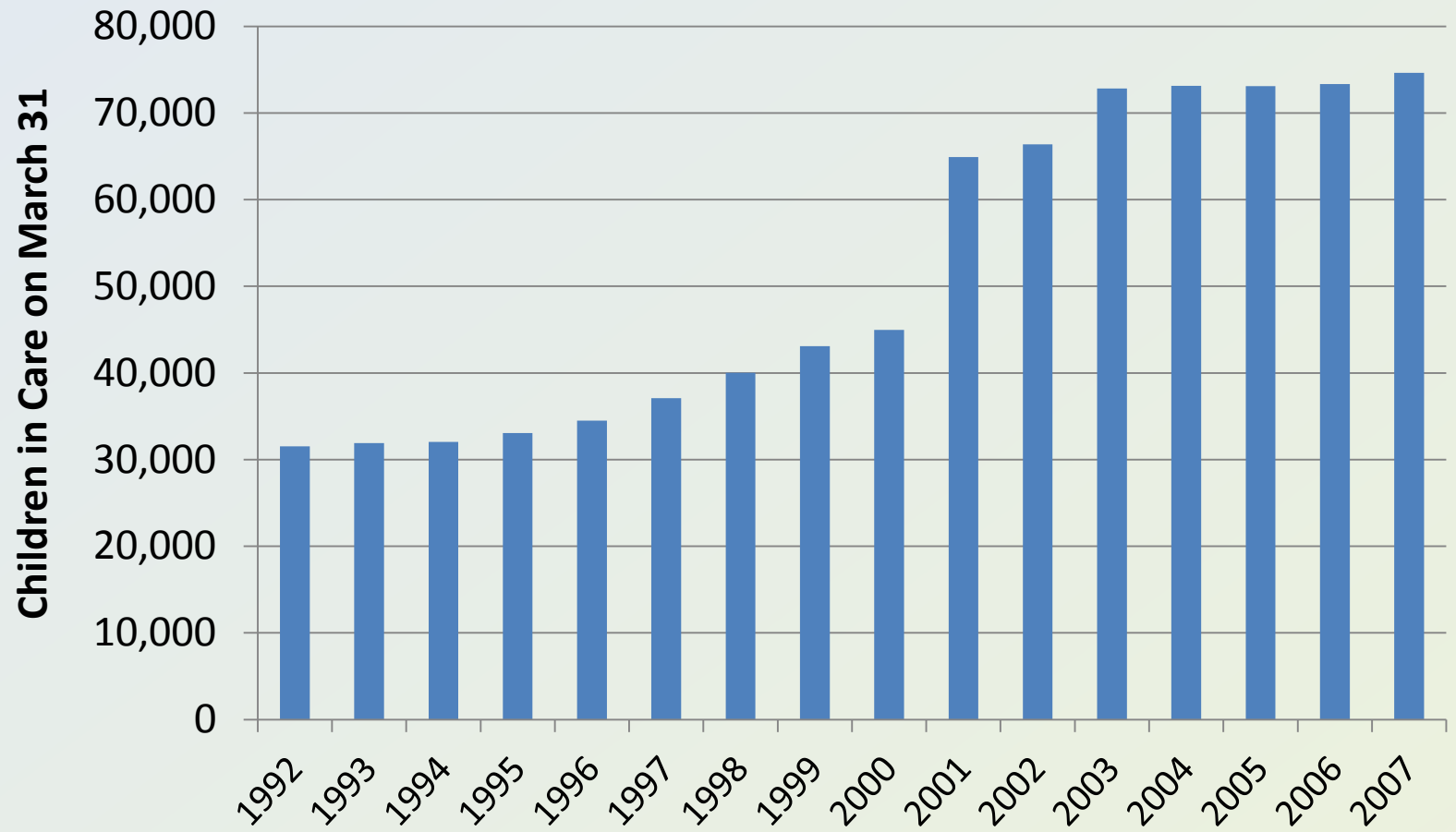
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Filicides (<12) in Canada

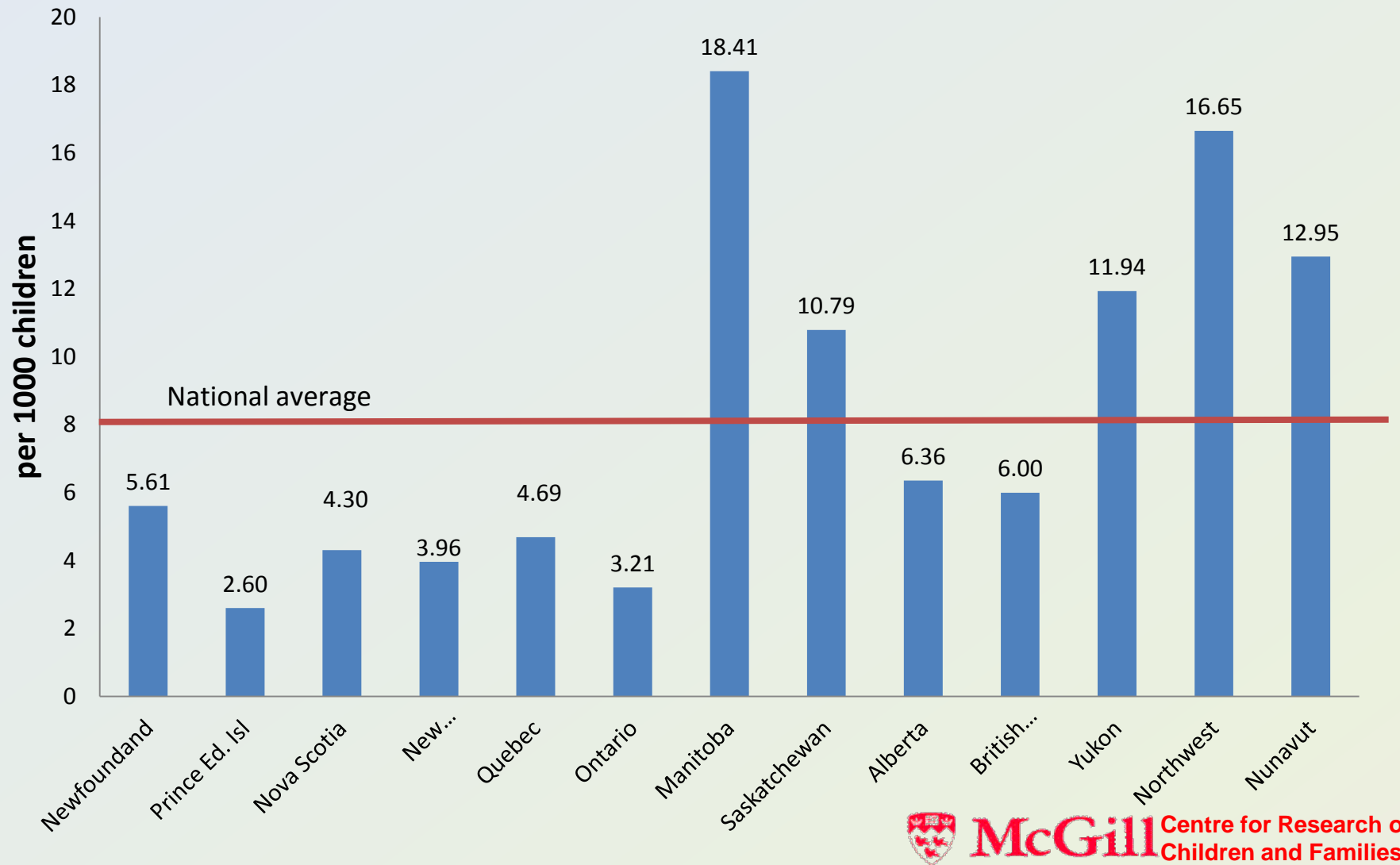




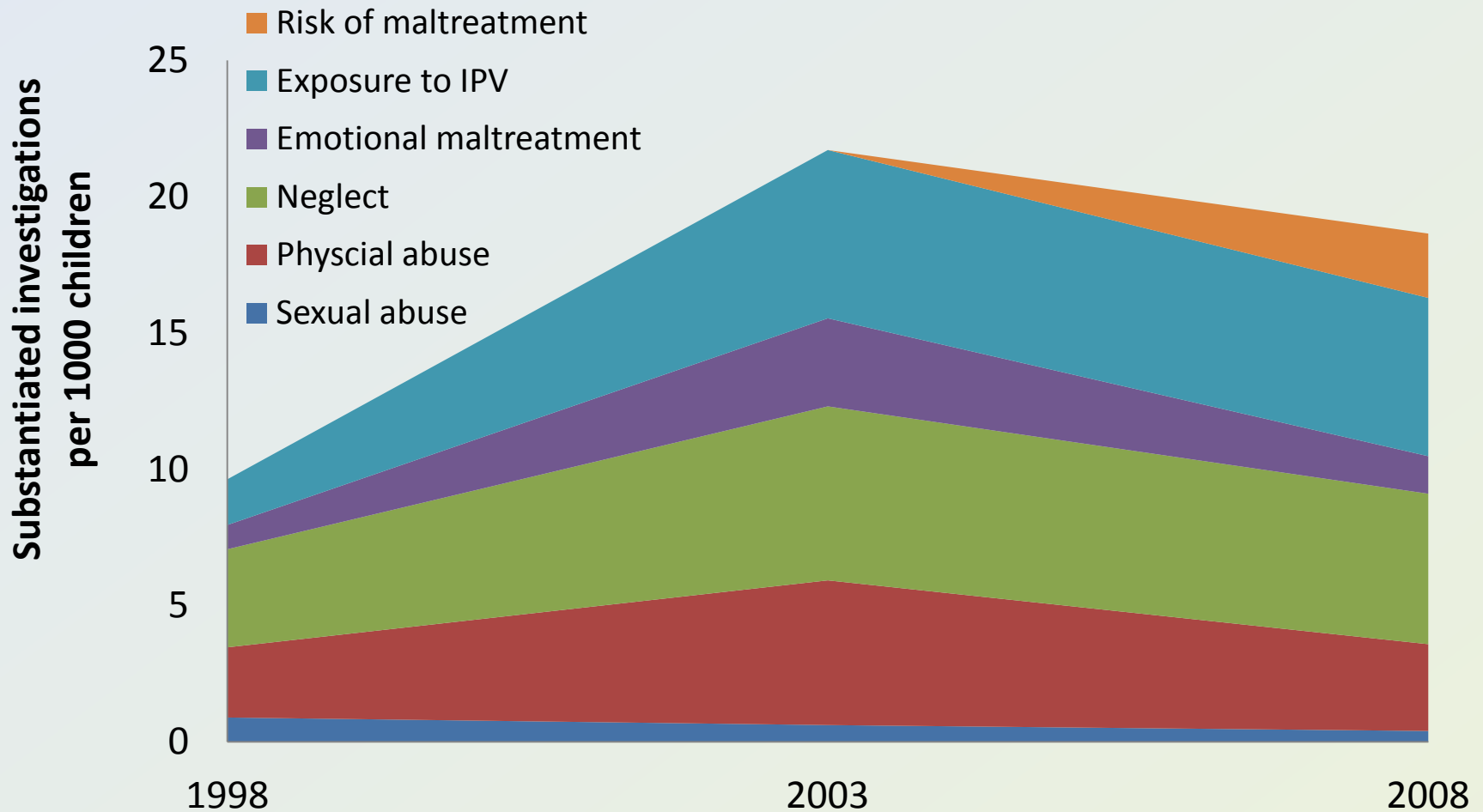
Children in care in Canada: 1992-2007



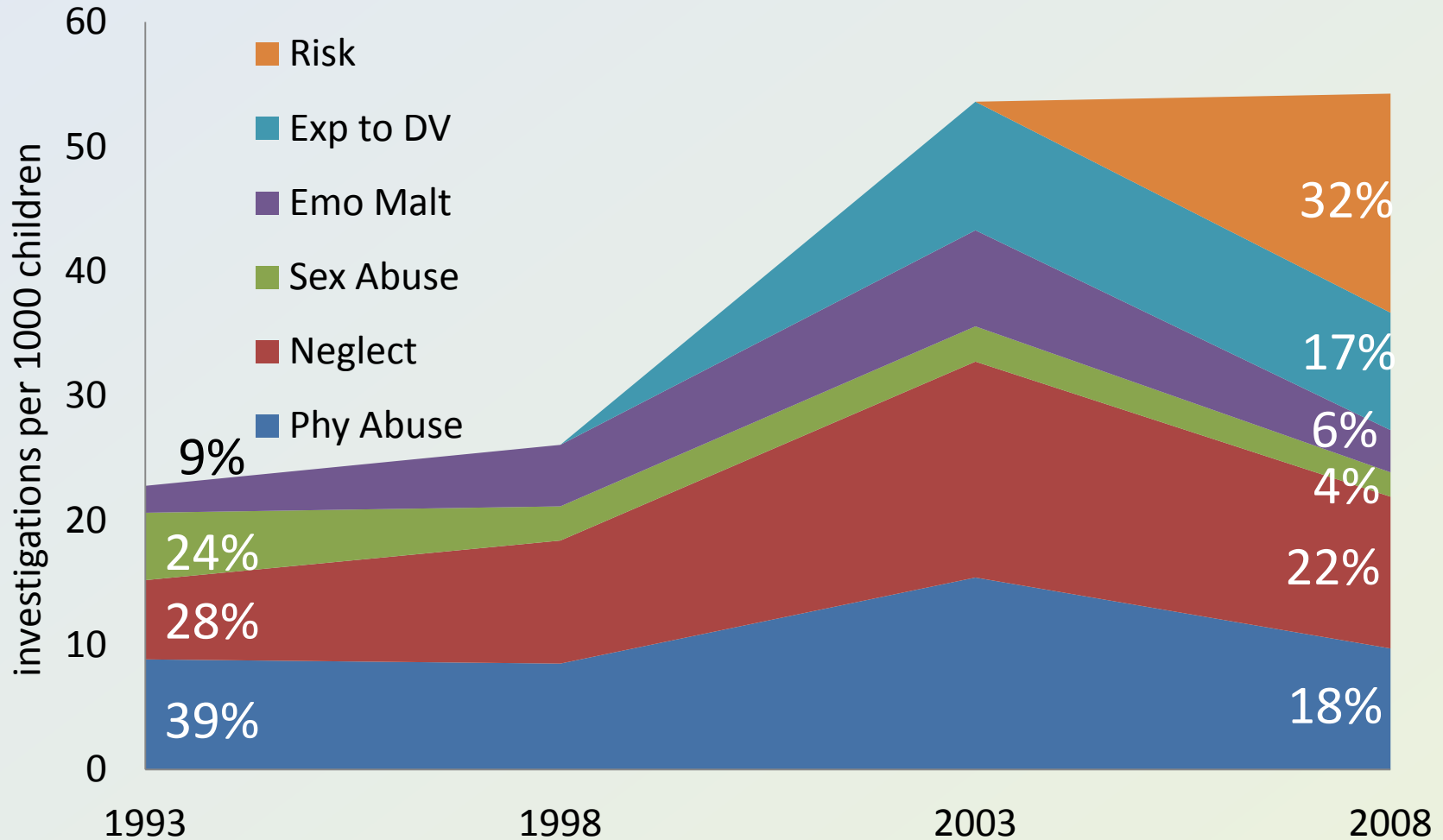
Children 0-14 in Foster Care on Census day per 1,000 children (2011)



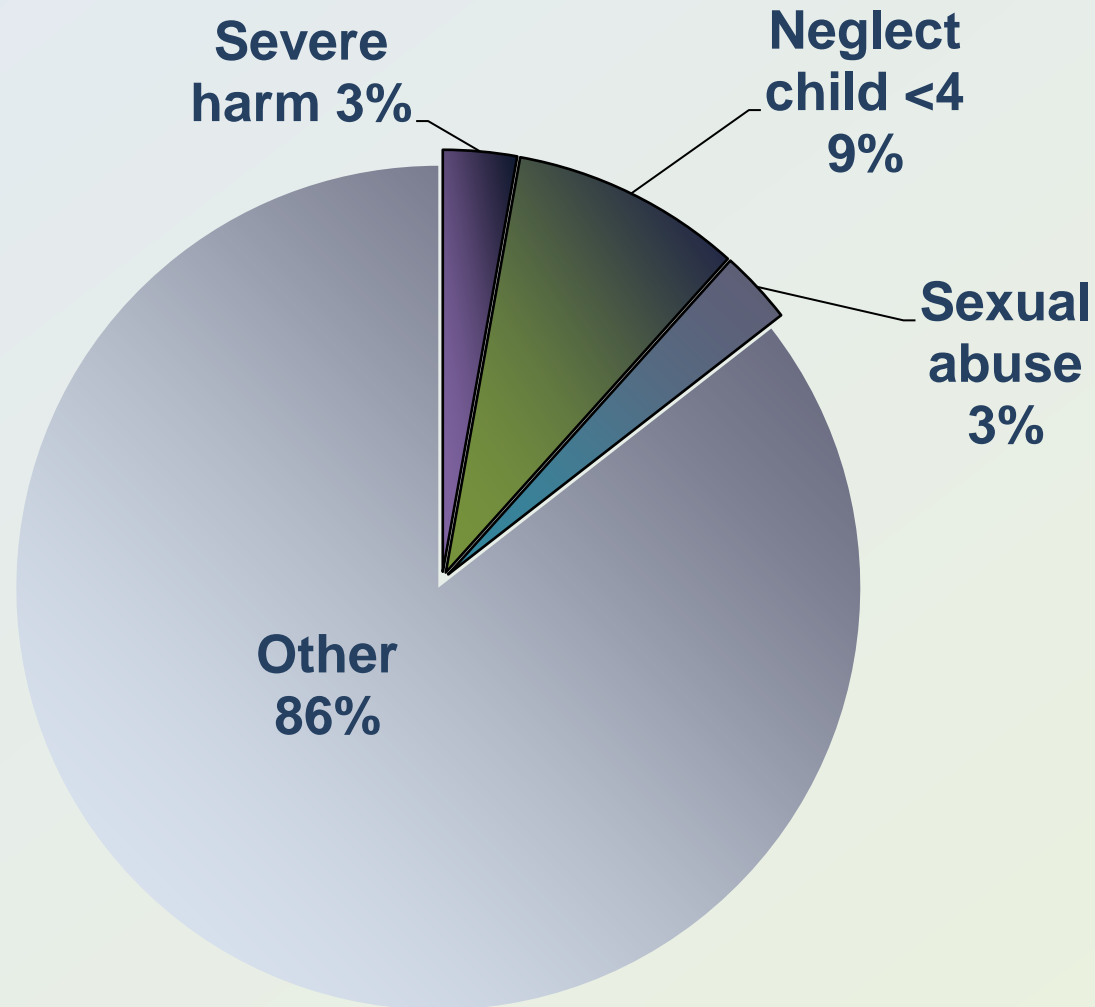
Primary category of substantiated investigation CIS 98, 03 & 08 (Qc excl.)



Maltreatment related investigations in Ontario: 1993 to 2008



Endangered safety in cases of substantiated maltreatment (CIS 08)





The other 86%...

- at risk of harm?

or

- endangered development & well-being



Endangered development & well-being:

Children

- Language delays
- Aggressiveness
- Anxiety/depression
- Disorganized Attachments
- Educational delays
- Early drop-out
- Tobacco & substance abuse
- Social isolation & marginalization

Parents & families

- Extreme poverty
- Mental health problems
- Substance abuse
- Spousal violence
- Social isolation & mistrust
- Feeling of parental incompetence
- Limited support for school activities
- Poor self-esteem



Safety & well-being paramount principles in child welfare legislation across Canada

- **British Columbia:** *the safety and well-being of children are the paramount considerations...*
- **Alberta:** *For the purposes of this Act, a child is in need of intervention if there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that the survival, security or development of the child is endangered...*
- **Saskatchewan:** *The purpose of this act is to promote the well-being of children under 16 who are in need of protection...*
- **Manitoba:** *The best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration...*
- **Ontario:** *The paramount purpose of this Act is to promote the best interests, protection and well being of children.*
- **Quebec:** *loi s'applique à un enfant dont la sécurité ou le développement est ou peut être considéré comme compromis.*
- **Newfoundland:** *every child is entitled to be assured of personal safety, health and well-being..*
- **New Brunswick:** *“protective care” means a service which provides an immediate safeguard for a child’s security and development...*
- **PEI:** *...the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration.*
- **NWT:** *the paramount objective of this act is to promote the best interests, protection and well-being of children.*





Urgent protection and chronic need require different approaches

- A **forensic approach** with clear reporting and investigation protocols and rapid response times is critical in cases where serious physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect of young children are the central concern.
- Cases involving **chronic family problems** call for comprehensive, flexible and collaborative assessments that identify and build on all potential resources (family, communities, education, recreation & health care)
- Confounding **urgent protection** and **chronic need** puts both groups of children at further risk





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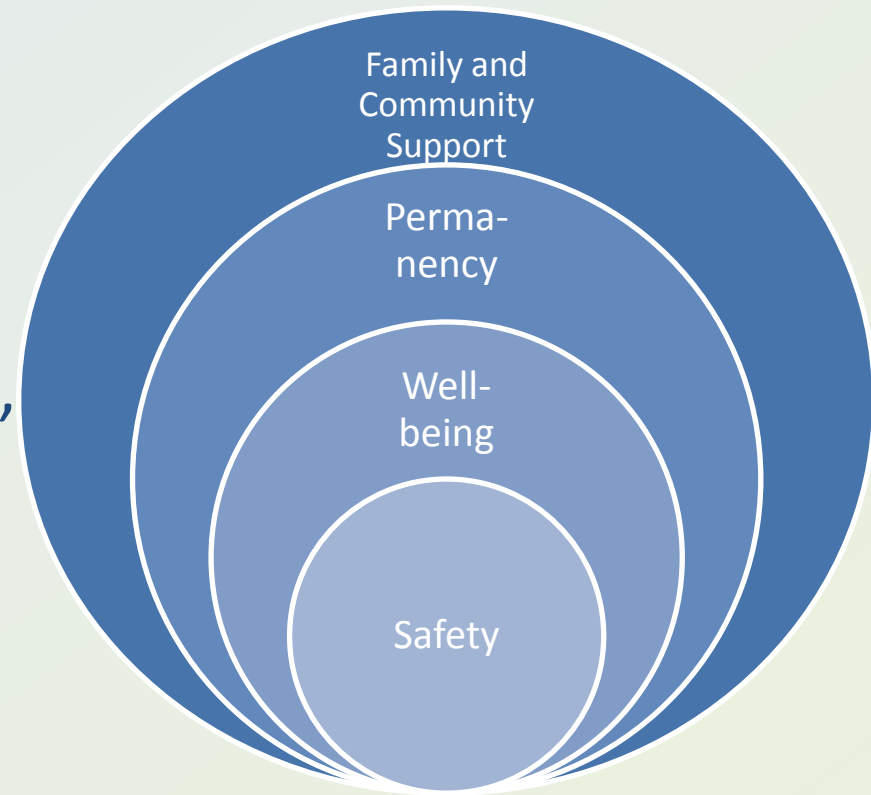


National Child Welfare Outcomes Indicator Matrix (NOM)

- Initiated by the PT-DCWs seeking a common framework for tracking outcomes;
- Reviewed PT information systems and legislation, as well as outcome systems in the US, UK & AU;
- Key informant interviews and a consensus building National Roundtable;
- PT technical group operationalizing and contextualizing indicators.

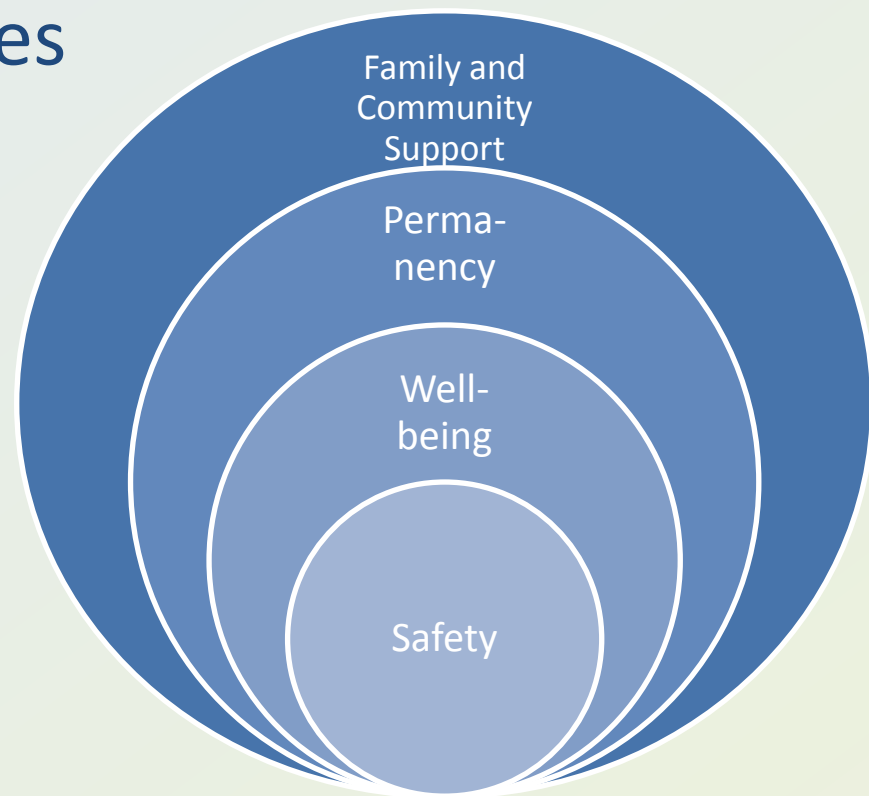
Four nested domains reflecting the complex balance between:

- a child's immediate need for protection;
- a child's long-term requirement for a nurturing and stable home;
- a family's potential for growth, and;
- the community's capacity to meet a child's needs.

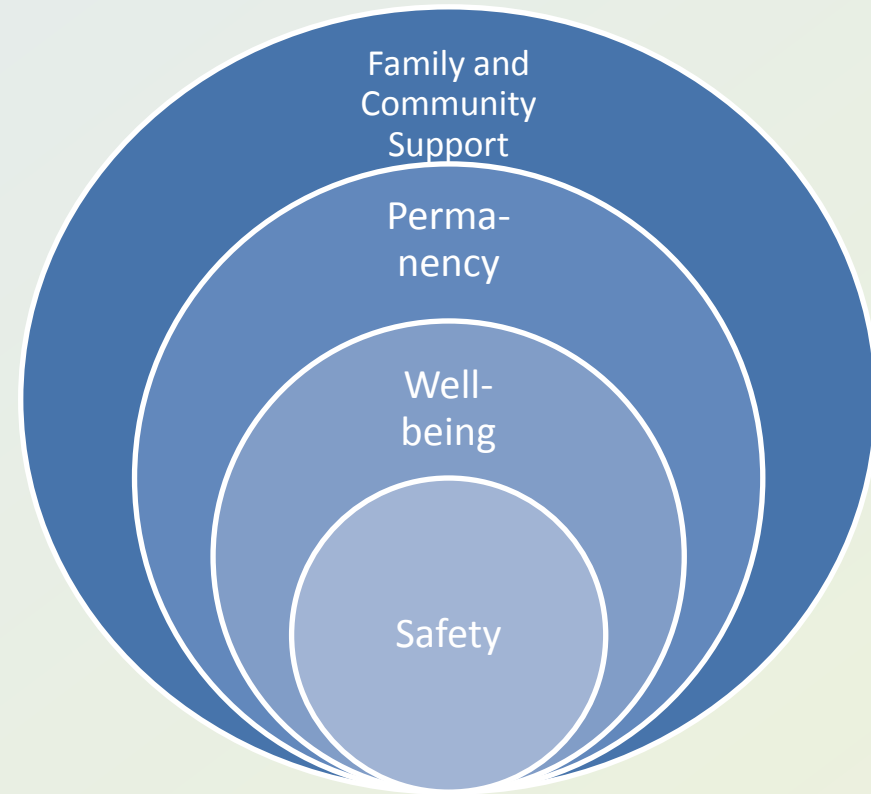
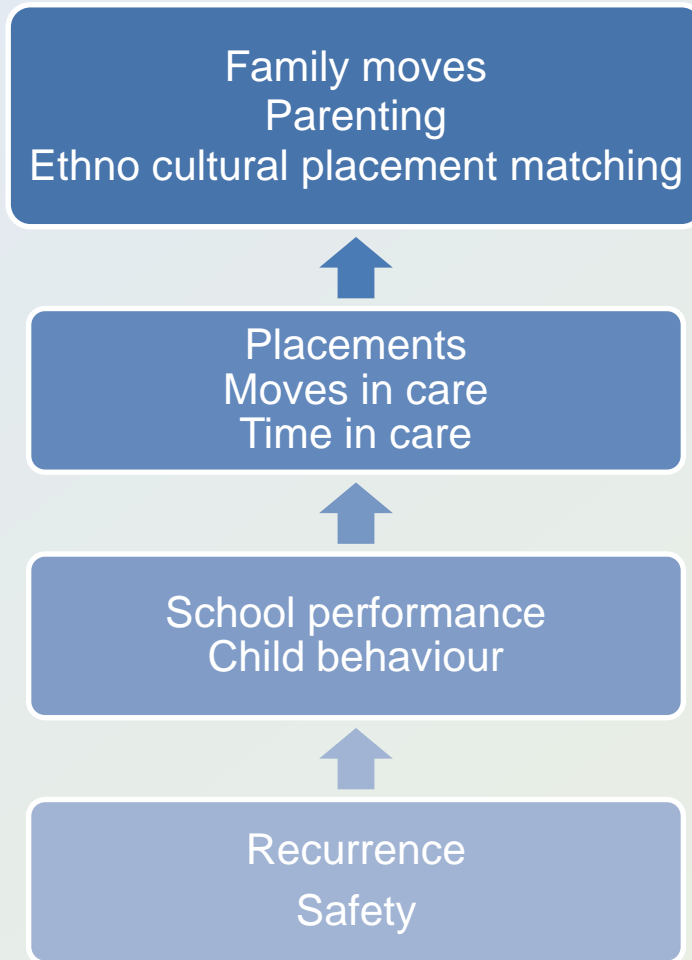


Criteria for selecting NOM indicators

- Linked to service objectives
- Easily understood
- Measurable using administrative data



NOM: Four domains and ten indicators



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