IFSD
IFPD

uOttawa

Survey of First Nations Child Welfare Agencies across Canada: Budgets, Operations, and Outputs

Winter 2018

About this Document

The Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD) is a Canadian think-tank sitting at the nexus of public finance and state institutions. Fiscal ecosystems include governments, legislatures, the public administration and other key actors and institutions in our political and economic life. This ecosystem, rooted in hundreds of years of political history and economic development, is composed of an intertwined set of incentives, public and private information and a complex and sometimes opaque set of rules and processes based on constitutional law, legislative law, conventions and struggles for power. The actors within this system depend on one another as well as the robustness and transparency of information and processes, all underpinned by a society's standards of accountability. It is at this dynamic intersection of money and politics that the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy @uOttawa aims to research, advise, engage and teach. The IFSD has been funded by the Province of Ontario to undertake applied research and student engagement in public finance and its intersection with public administration, politics and public policy. The IFSD undertakes its work in Canada at all levels of government as well as abroad, leveraging partnerships and key relationships with organizations such as the World Bank, OECD, IMF and US National Governors Association.

This report details the findings of a survey and analysis of First Nations child welfare agencies across Canada. This report was prepared by Helaina Gaspard, Director, Democratic Institutions, with research assistance provided by Janoah Willsie and Raghad Sheikh-Khalil, at the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, under the direction of Kevin Page. Data used in this analysis were collected from September 25, 2017 to November 22, 2017 using the survey in Annex G. The report was edited and designed by Jessica Rached. The final report and any errors or omissions rest solely with the IFSD.

First Printing: January 2018
No. 18001

115 Séraphin-Marion Private, Room 107
Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

613-562-5800 x 5628
ifsd.ca | info@ifsd.ca

uOttawa

KEY TERMS

Ancillary Services
Services offered by a child welfare agency beyond child protection services e.g. health services, family services etc.

Caseload
The number of active child protection cases handled by an agency.

Delegated Agency
An agency that is authorized under provincial or territorial child welfare laws to provide a full range of child welfare services including the investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect as well as family support services. (See The Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal.)

Directive 20-1
A funding arrangement introduced by INAC in 1990 to fund Child and Family Services for on-reserve populations. It includes funding for operational expenses and the maintenance of children in protection. It does not include built-in funding for prevention. It is still the active funding agreement in British Columbia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Yukon. (See the INAC National Social Programs Manual.)

Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach (EPFA)
A funding arrangement introduced by INAC in 2007 which includes funding for operations and maintenance, similar to Directive 20-1 as well as funding for prevention programs. It is the active funding agreement in Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, PEI, Quebec and Saskatchewan. (See the INAC National Social Programs Manual.)

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)
The federal government department responsible for meeting the Government of Canada's obligations to First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples. INAC is responsible for funding First Nations child and family services. (See INAC.)

Intake Case Worker
A social worker responsible for establishing first contact with families and performing initial investigations into the allegations of child neglect and abuse.

National Advisory Committee (NAC)
A committee struck in accordance with the mandate of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to provide advice on First Nations Child and Family Services program reform and oversee the recommendations related to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision. (See the NAC Terms of Reference.)

Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP)
A set of standards for conducting research with First Nations, defined as Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP). (See the First Nations Information Governance Centre.)

Ontario 1965 Agreement
The funding agreement between the federal and Ontario governments signed in 1965 (full title: The Memorandum of Agreement Respecting Welfare Programs for Indians of 1965). The agreement establishes a cost-sharing arrangement where INAC reimburses the Ontario government for approximately 93% of the cost of delivering child and family services on reserves in the province. (See the INAC National Social Programs Manual.)

Rural Agency
An agency whose main office is located in a rural location (i.e. low population density, small population), identified by postal code. (See Statistics Canada's definitions of 'rural'.)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

At the request of the Agency and Administration Table on First Nations Delegated and Non-Delegated Child and Family Services Agencies of the National Advisory Committee (NAC), the IFSD at the University of Ottawa was asked to undertake analysis of First Nations child welfare agencies across Canada. The purpose of the survey was to create a baseline of capital and operational costs, to develop an understanding of the current state of agencies, and to use data to identify and understand cost drivers in agencies, while accounting for contextual variables. In accordance with OCAP principles, only aggregated results were shared back with participating agencies and then made public. Following lists provided by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), all 109 First Nations child welfare agencies across Canada were contacted via email on September 25, 2017 and invited to complete the survey hosted on the SurveyMonkey platform. Agencies received no fewer than two reminder emails and two phone calls to complete the survey. In all, 63 agencies (57%) provided usable responses (on or before November 22, 2017). All provinces (except Saskatchewan), had participation rates of 50% or more (see charts 1 and 2). Rates of participation were bolstered by follow-up by INAC, as well as the efforts of individual agencies.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

There are three key takeaways from the results of this first survey:

1) Most agencies have budgets between $1 million and $10 million. There is little connection between the size of an agency's budget and the scope and breadth of its services, i.e. larger budgets neither imply more service offerings nor do they connect to the agency's rurality (see chart 3).
2) Nationally, regardless of agency size or region, caseloads correlate highly with number of staff and budgets, i.e. as the number of cases increase, so do staffing complements and value of budgets (see charts 4 and 5). (Note: one or more services may be applied to a single case. Thus, caseload and breadth of services may not correlate).
3) There is significant variance in the ability of agencies to remunerate social workers at the levels of provincial salary scales (see chart 6).

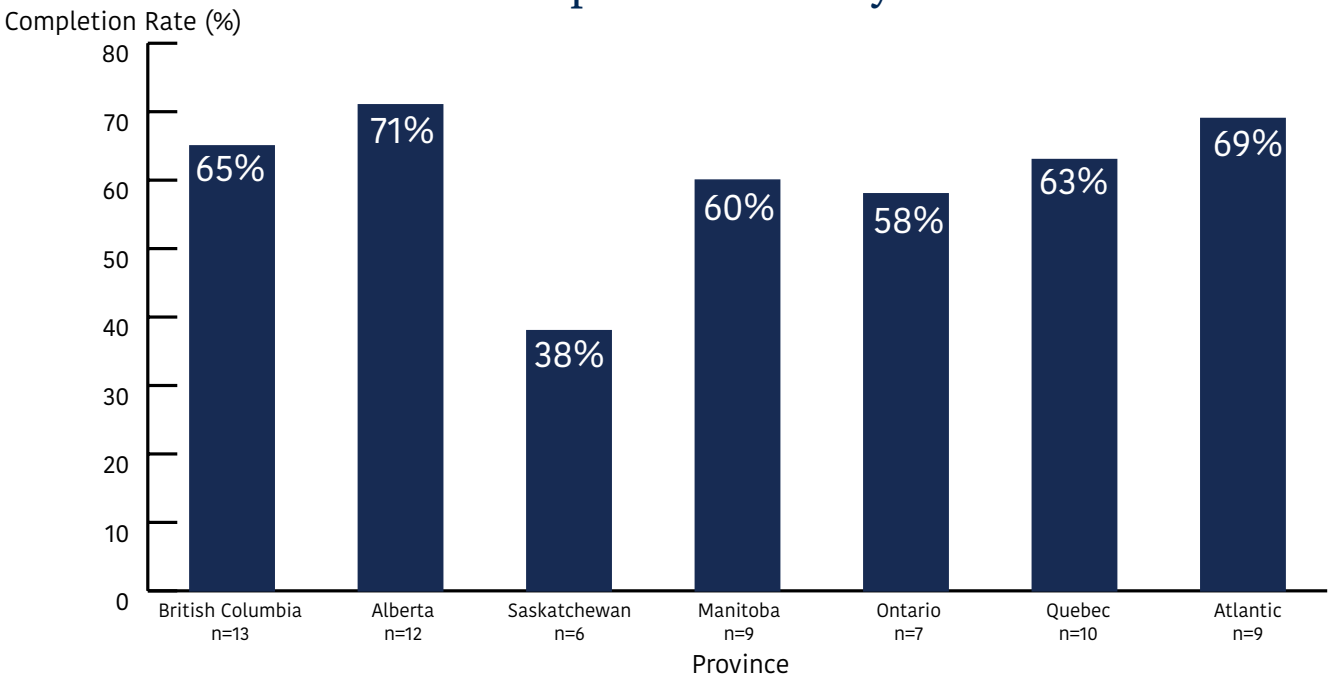
LIMITATIONS

As with any survey, the results are dependent on agency participation and their interpretation of the questions. Although participation rates were relatively high, participation may still be considered imperfect as a representative sample (e.g. urban v. rural, established agencies v. new agencies, etc.) cannot be guaranteed. Salary analysis was limited to the social worker job category as provincial salary scales were unavailable for other job categories.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

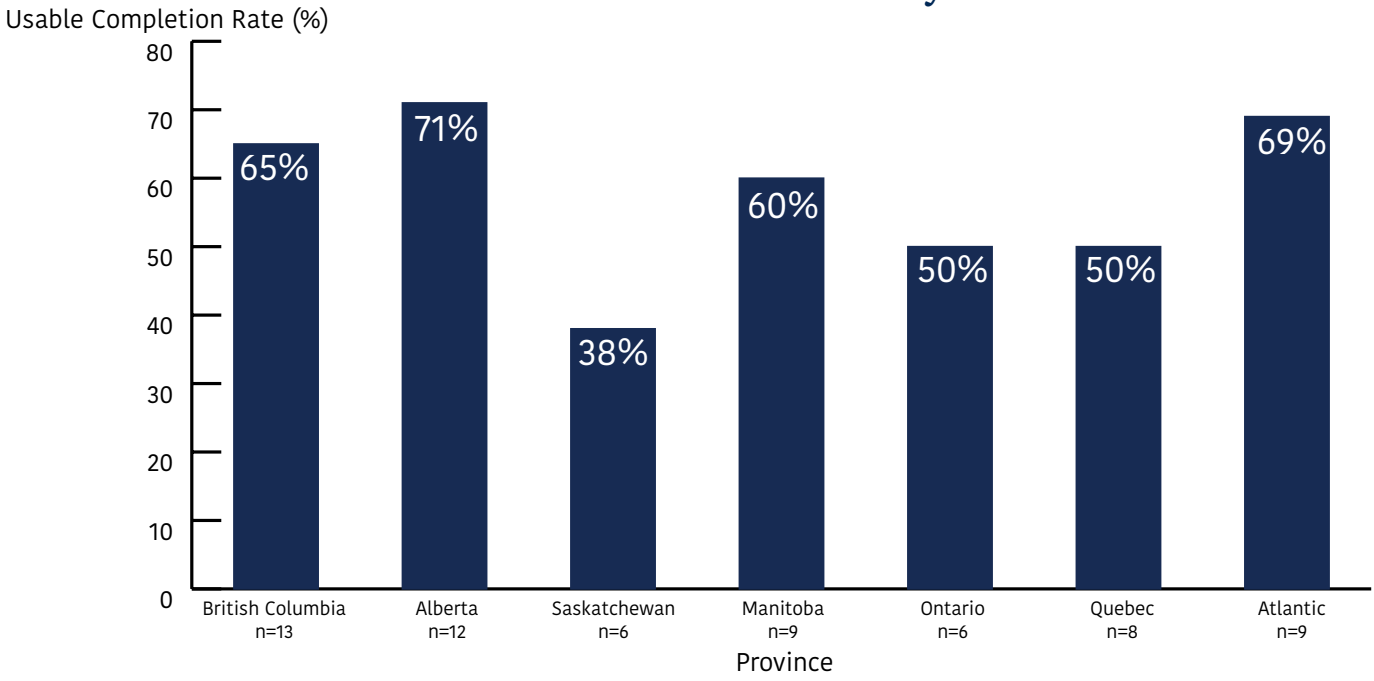
The survey results are a baseline that suggest greater information on cases (i.e. instigation, number and type per social worker, cost variance based on location, etc.), is needed. Further analysis is also needed on employee details, such as hiring challenges (especially in remote areas), salary, and benefits, to enhance understanding of how agencies manage financially and organizationally. To develop a time-series of this data, the IFSD anticipates conducting a slightly revised version of this survey in 2018 with the support of stakeholders.

Chart 1: Participation Rates by Province



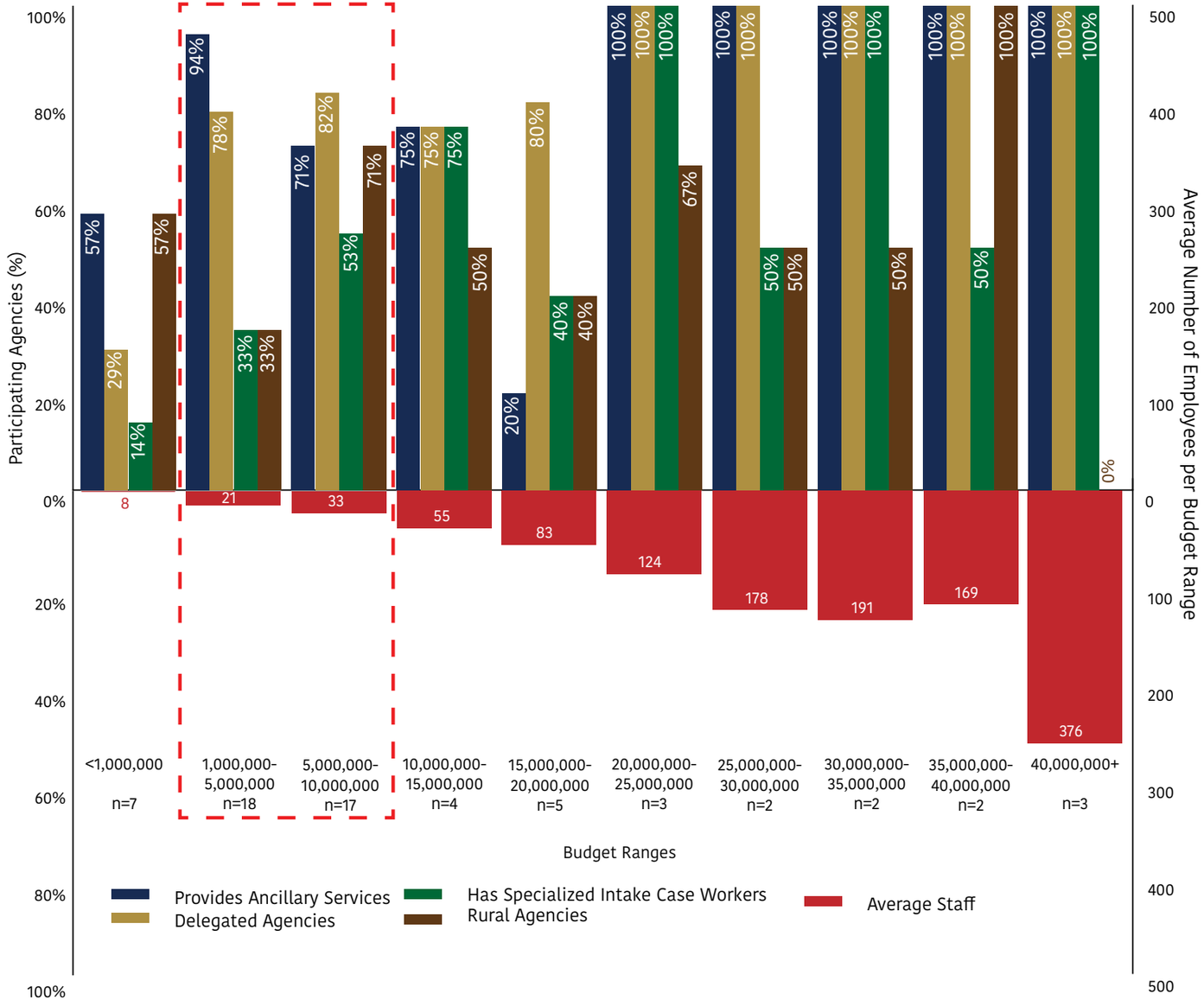
Note: Atlantic includes New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island.

Chart 2: Usable Submissions by Province



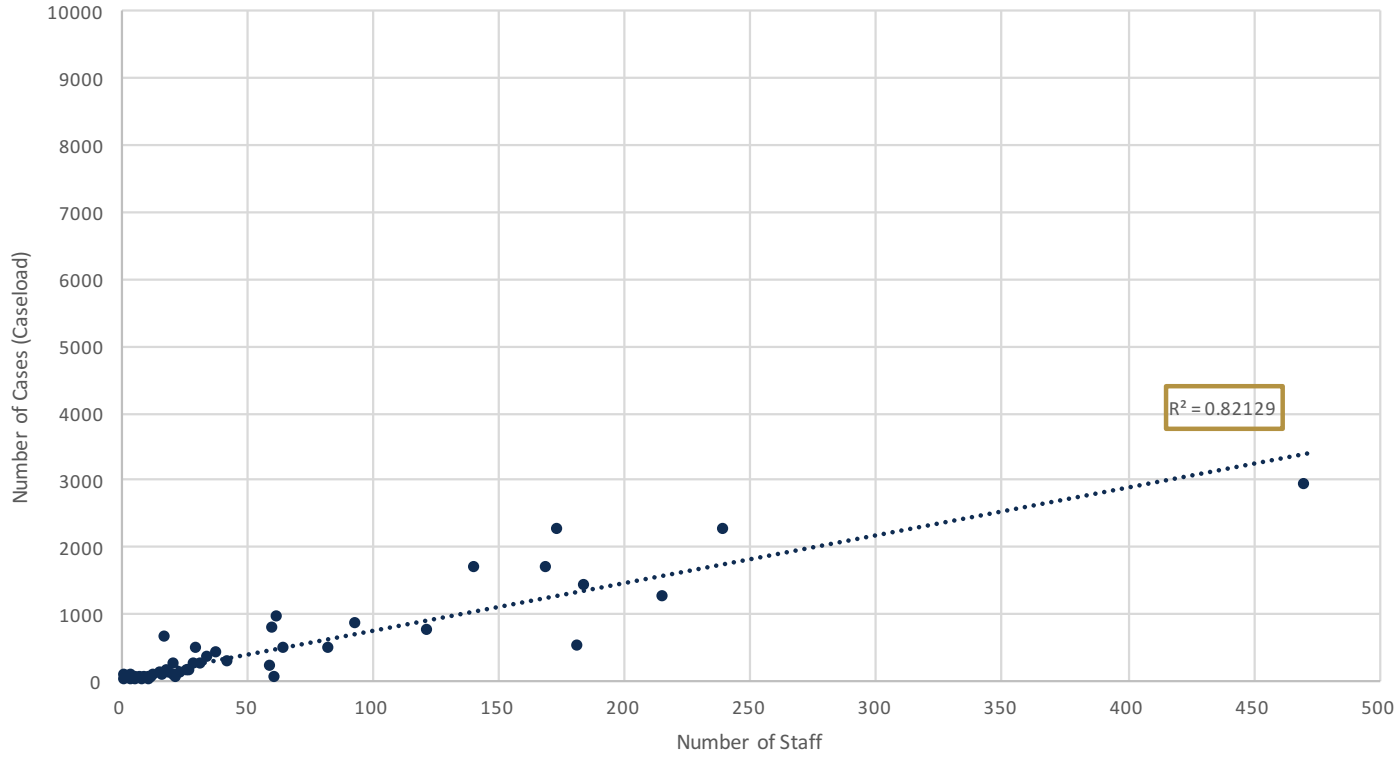
Note: Usable responses equal 63 out of 109. Usable responses were surveys with at least a 60% completion rate.

Chart 3: Agency Overview by Budget Range



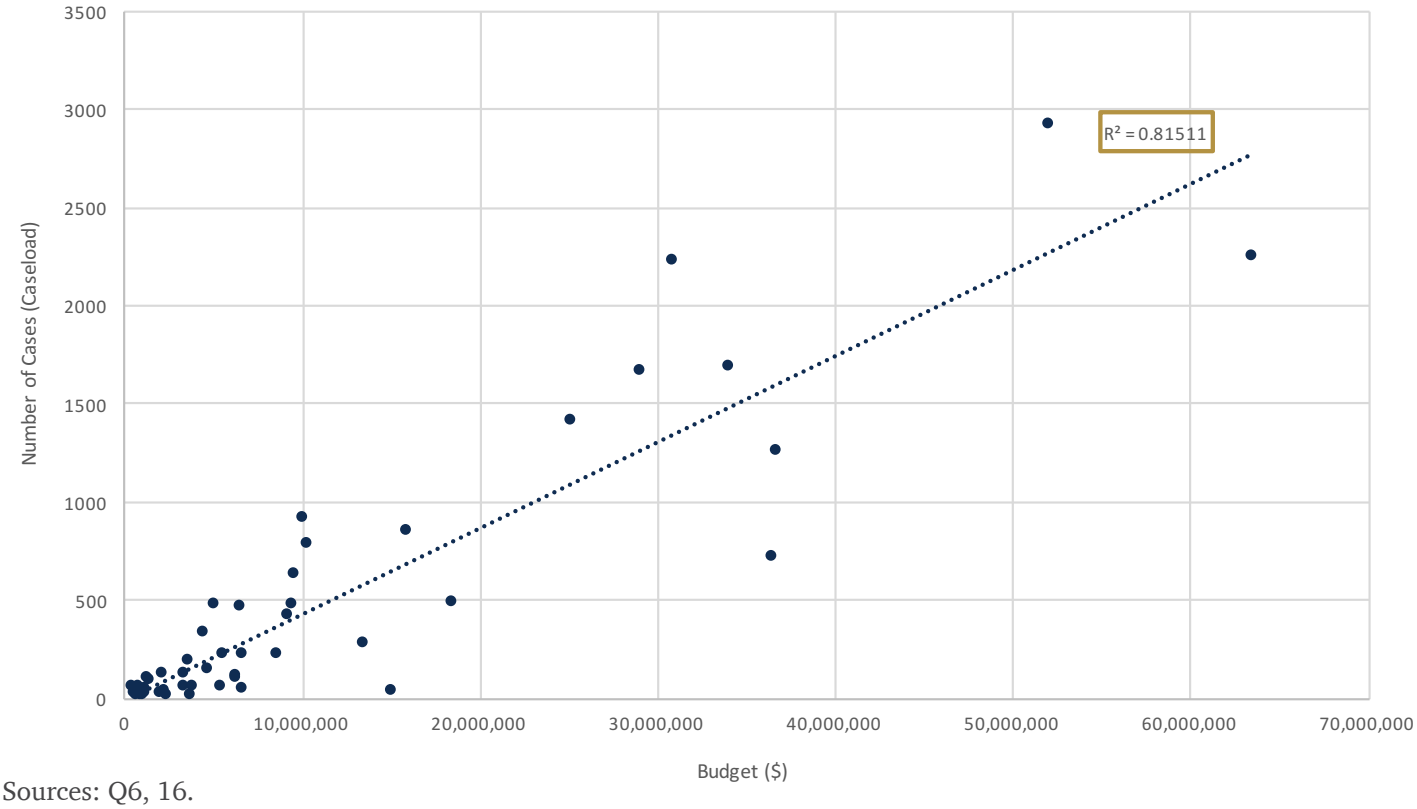
Sources: Q5, 6, 11, 13, 14, 30.

Chart 4: Caseload to Staff



Sources: Q13, 14, 16.
Note: n=59

Chart 5: Caseload to Budget



Sources: Q6, 16.
Note: n=48

SALARY ANALYSIS

The social worker job category was assessed as it was the most commonly reported job category by participating agencies (and a common job within child welfare agencies, generally). Provincial salary scales were used as benchmarks in the analysis with agency salary scales.

Relative to provincial scales, agency salary scales were classified as:

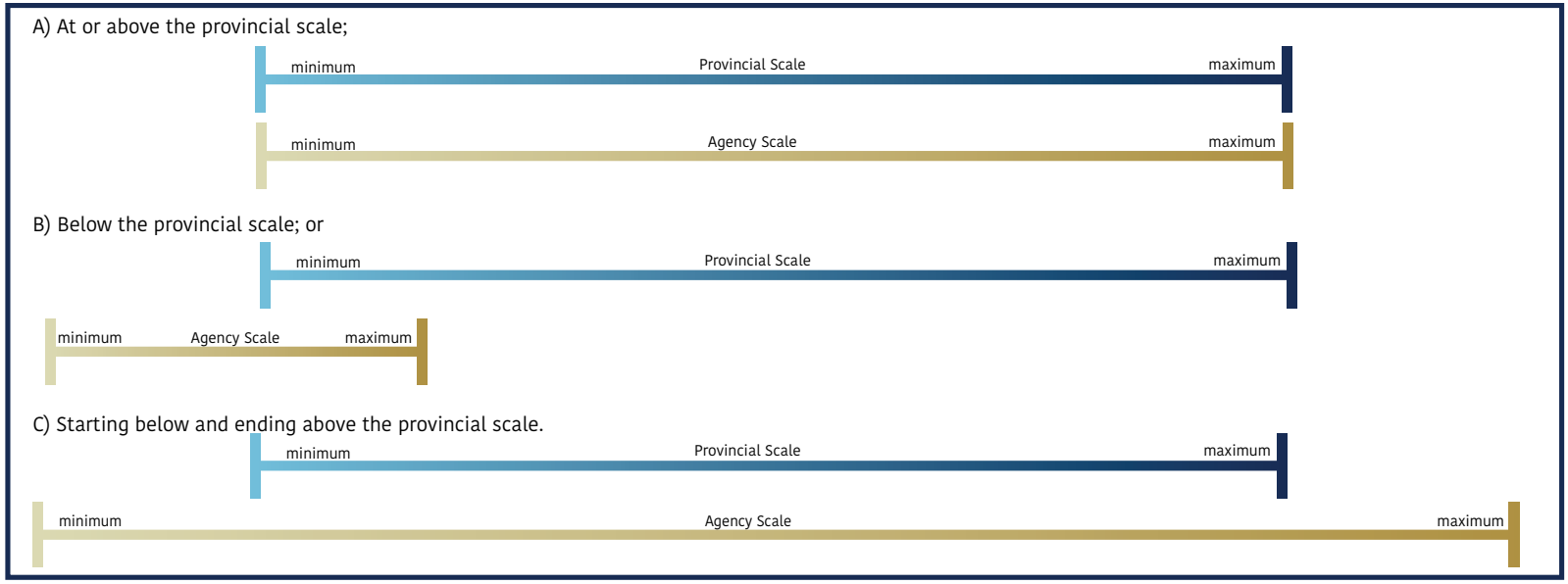
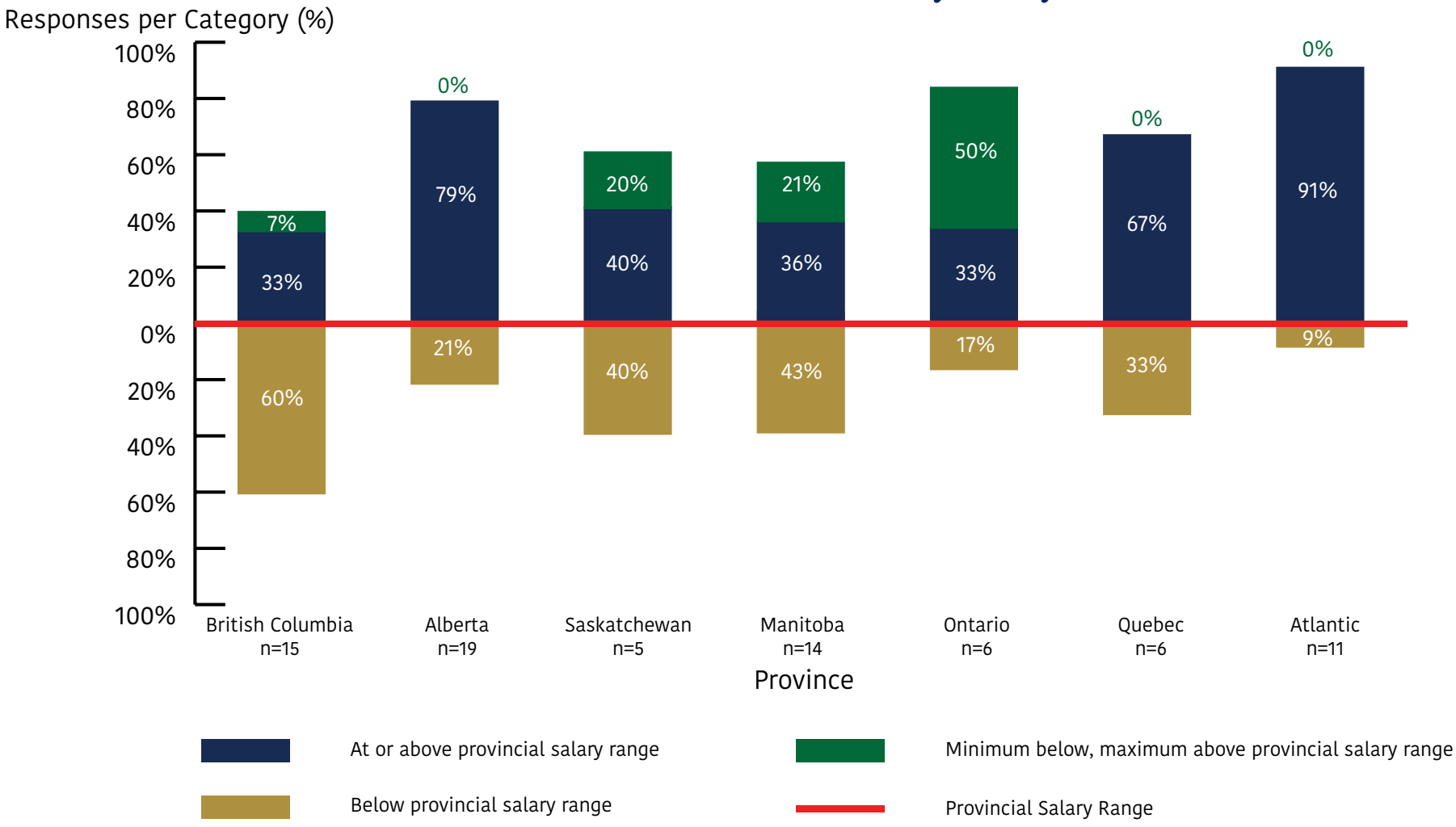
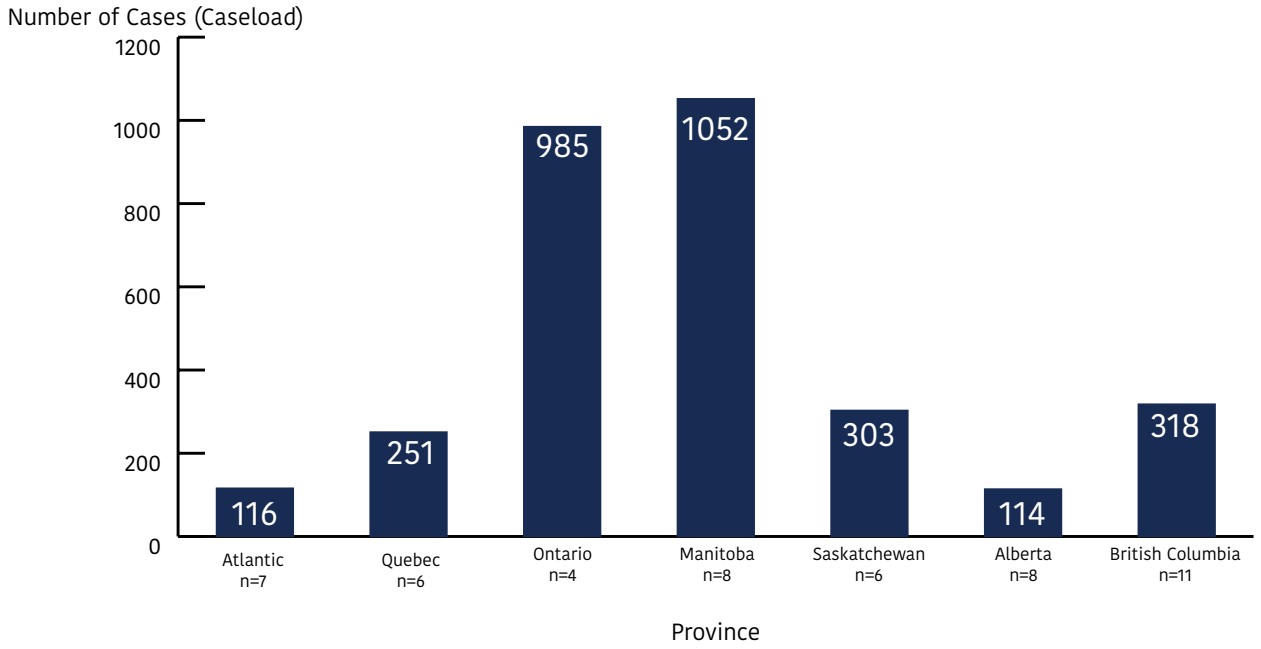


Chart 6: Social Worker Salary Analysis



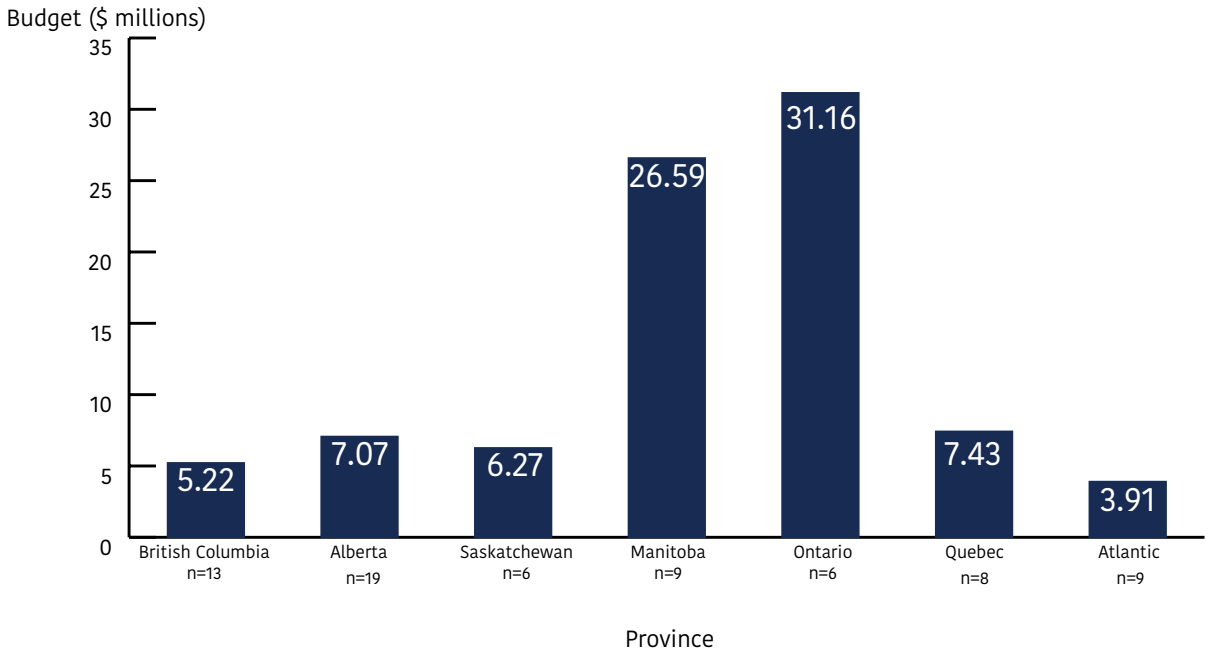
Annexes

Annex A: Average Caseload by Province



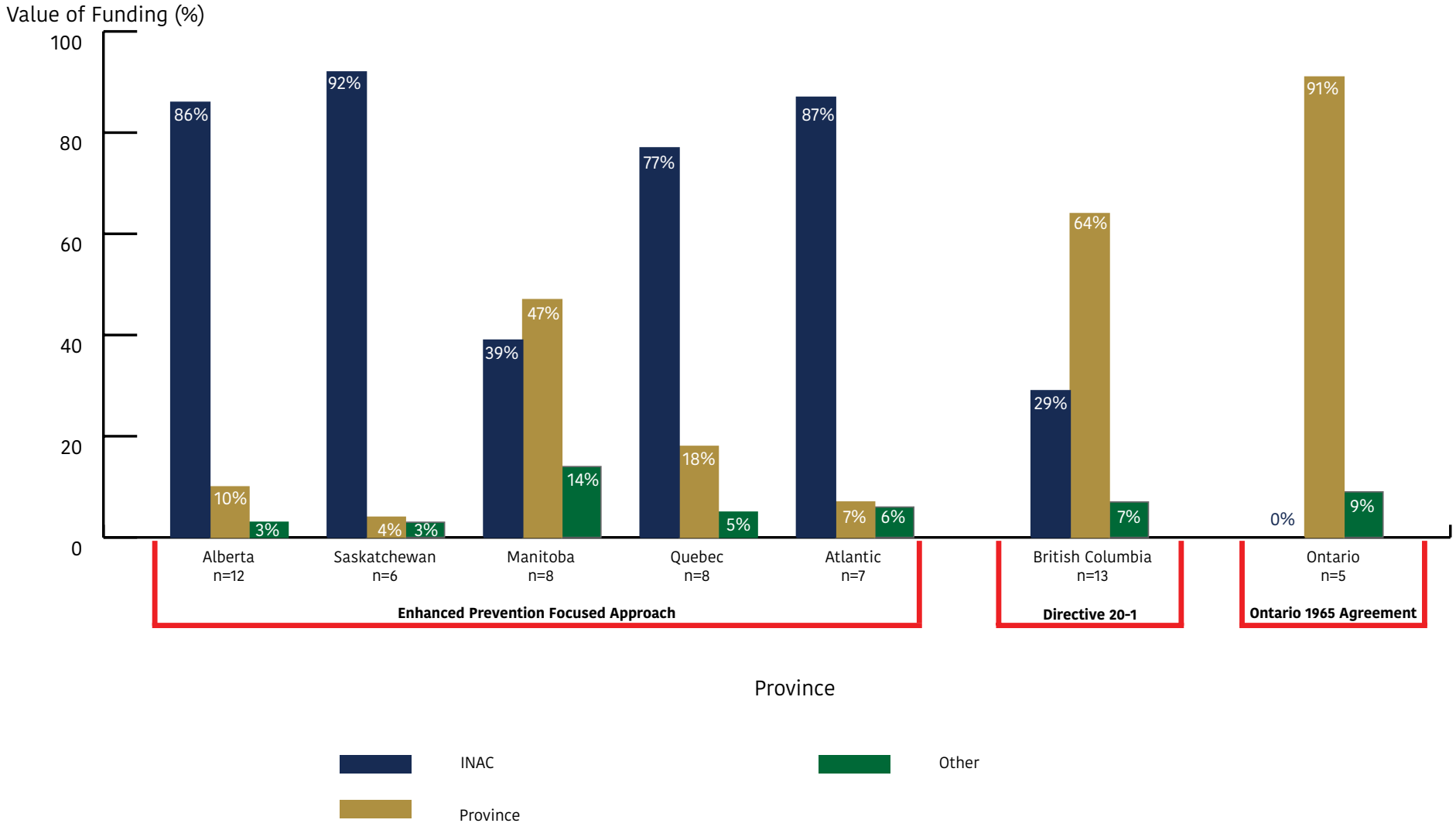
Source: Q16.
Note: Averages rounded.

Annex B: Average Budget by Province



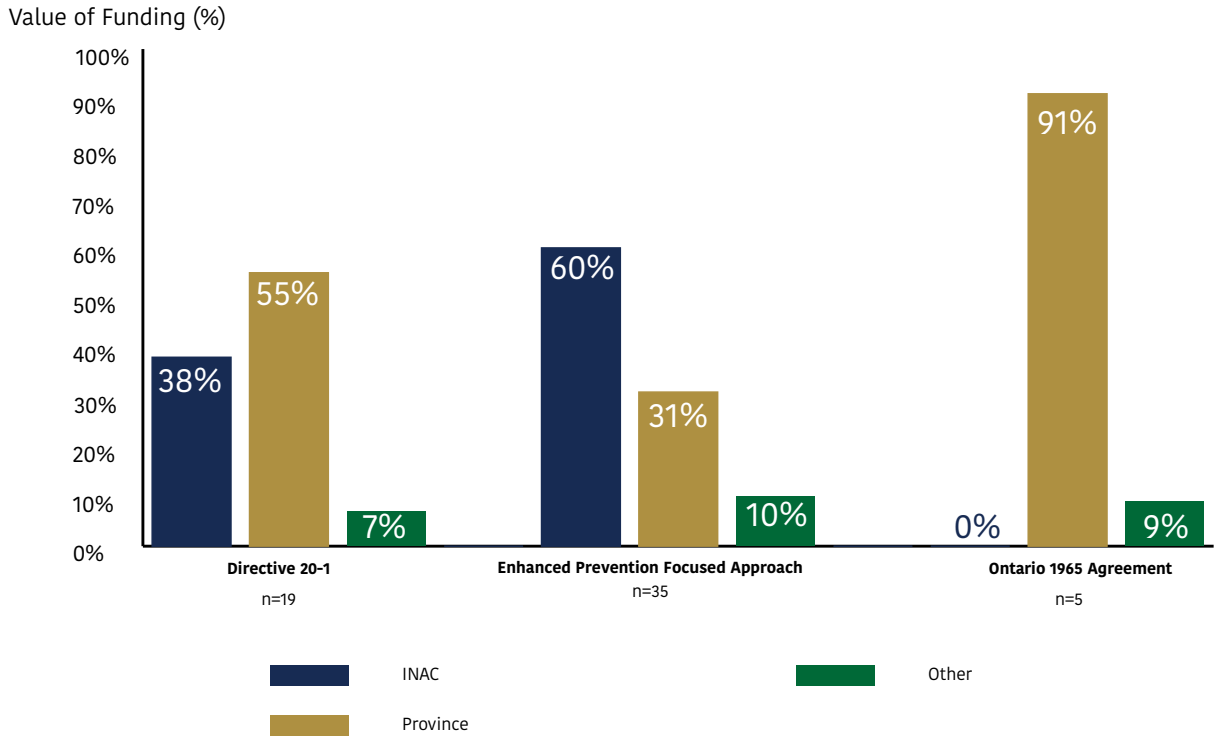
Source: Q6

Annex C: Funding Source Breakdown



Source: Q8 only (total budget Q6 not used as totals were not equivalent).
Note: By province and agreement.

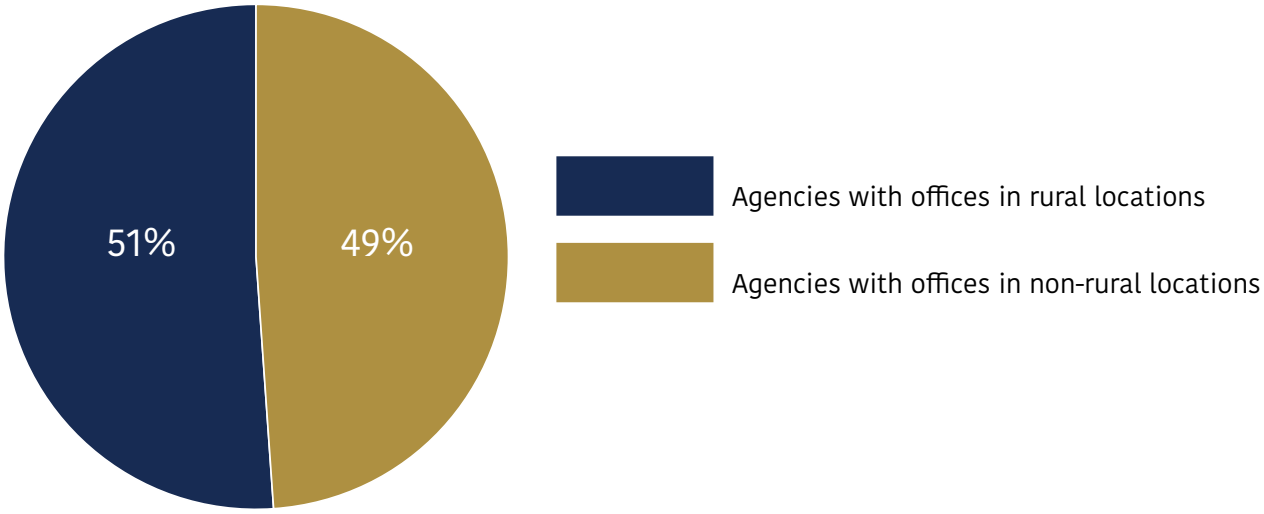
Annex D: Funding Source Breakdown



Source: Q8.
Notes: By agreement. **Directive 20-1** includes New Brunswick and British Columbia. Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach (EPFA) includes Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and PEI.

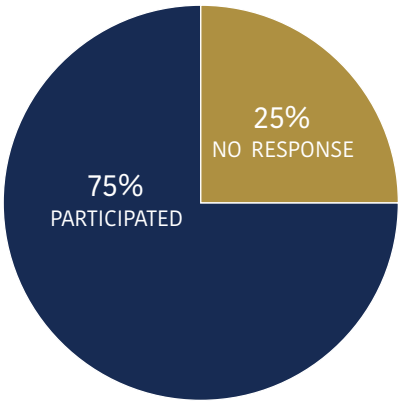
Annex E: Rurality of Participating Agencies

Postal codes of agency addresses were used to assess rurality (i.e. low population density, small populations). There was a nearly equal split between rural and non-rural agencies that participated in the survey. Please see Statistics Canada's Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin (2001).

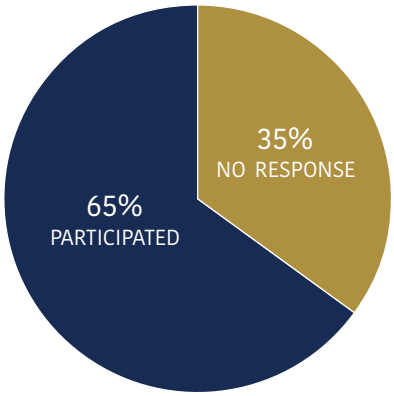


Source: Q3.
Note: n=63

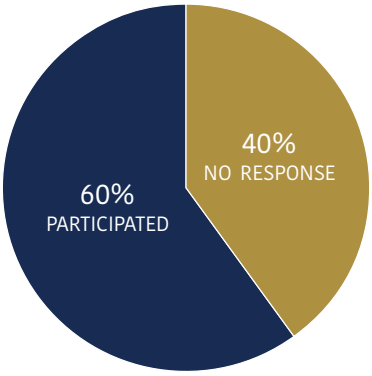
Annex F: Provincial Participation Rates



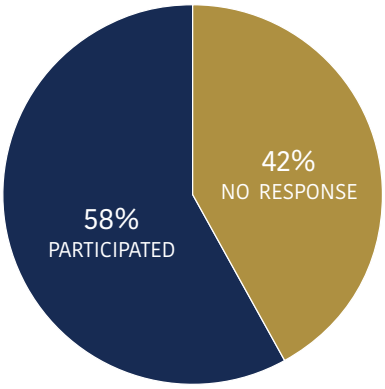
Alberta
n=17



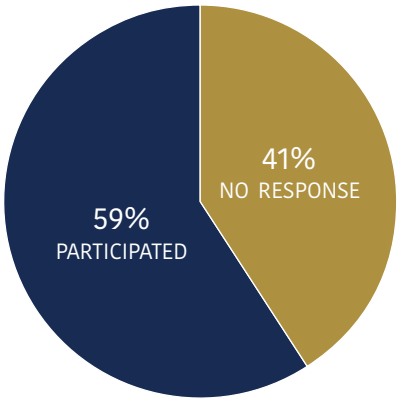
British Colombia
n=20



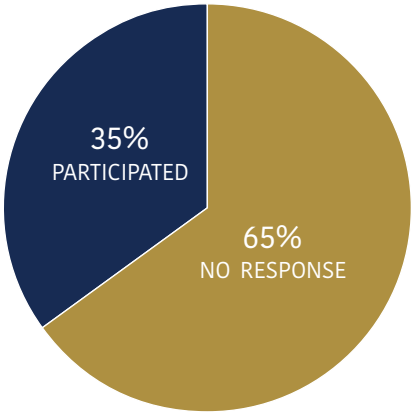
Manitoba
n=15



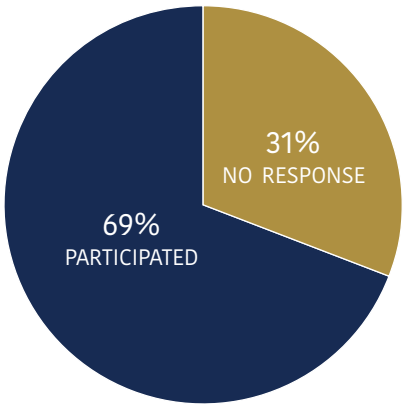
Ontario
n=12



Quebec
n=16



Saskatchewan
n=16



Atlantic
n=13

Notes: N is the total number of First Nations agencies in the province. Atlantic includes New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island.

Annex G: Survey

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

NOTE: The survey was made province-specific by changing the job categories in questions 22-28 to reflect those of the province. For illustrative purposes, examples of common job categories are listed here.

1) Agency Name:

2) Survey Contact Person:

3) Agency's Mailing Address:

4) Agency Catchment (i.e. area(s) served):

5) Is your agency child-protection delegated?

- Yes
- No
- Explain if necessary.

6) What is your agency's total annual budget ($000)?

7) What amount of that budget is dedicated exclusively to child and family services ($000s)?

8) What are your sources of funds and their amounts ($000s)?

- Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)
- Province
- Other—please define.

9) What are your agency's capital expenditures ($000s)? For the purpose of this survey, capital refers to the acquisition and maintenance of fixed assets, e.g. building, land, computers, vehicles.

10) Operating expenses. For the purpose of this survey, wages and benefits are the only operating costs captured. What does your agency spend on the following ($ 000s)?

- Total wages (annualized; based on full-time equivalents (FTE)) ($ 000s).
- Benefits (annualized; based on full-time equivalents (FTE)) ($ 000s). Please list type of benefits offered (e.g. health, dental, pension).
- Non-wage and other benefits.

11) Does your agency provide ancillary services outside of delegated duties? If yes, please explain. For the purpose of this survey, ancillary services include all services beyond child protection offered by the agency, e.g. health services, family services, etc.

- Yes—if yes, please explain.
- No

12) Does your agency remunerate for remoteness?

- Yes
- No

13) What number of full-time equivalents (FTE) are employed by your agency?

14) What number of part-time equivalents (PTE) are employed by your agency?

15) Can you pay your employees at the level of provincial employees for comparable work?

- Yes
- No

16) What is your agency's current total caseload (staff : cases)? In this category, please include any related child and family related services.

17) What is your agency's current exclusively child welfare caseload? Please refer to only child welfare cases for the remainder of the survey.

18) What adjusted number of FTEs would your agency require to achieve a 1:8 (staff : cases) caseload?

19) On average, what is the number of staff assigned to an open case?

20) What is the average number of open cases a social worker manages (eg. 5 cases/social worker)?

21) On average, how many other staff resources does a social worker engage on a single open case?

22) How many employees in your agency have the following job descriptions?

- Provincial job category 1 (e.g. Executive Director)
- Provincial job category 2 (e.g. Social Worker)
- Etc.

23) What is the salary ranges (wages only) for agency employees in the following job categories (e.g. $54,000-$75,000) ($ 000s)?

- Provincial job category 1 (e.g. Executive Director)
- Provincial job category 2 (e.g. Social Worker)
- Etc.

24) How many of the employees in each category are: a) full-time? b) part-time?

- Provincial job category 1 (e.g. Executive Director)
- Provincial job category 2 (e.g. Social Worker)
- Etc.

25) How many hours on average do employees in each job category work per week (e.g. 40 hours)?

- Provincial job category 1 (e.g. Executive Director)
- Provincial job category 2 (e.g. Social Worker)
- Etc.

26) What is the average tenure (in years) of the employees in each job category (e.g. 5 years)?

- Provincial job category 1 (e.g. Executive Director)
- Provincial job category 2 (e.g. Social Worker)
- Etc.

27) On average, do the actual scope of employees' duties in each job category fall within or exceed their contractually defined ones?

- Provincial job category 1 (e.g. Executive Director)
- Provincial job category 2 (e.g. Social Worker)
- Etc.

28) What's the current caseload of each category of employees (staff : cases)? Note: Use N/A for inapplicable job categories.

- Provincial job category 1 (e.g. Executive Director)
- Provincial job category 2 (e.g. Social Worker)
- Etc.

29) Do social workers at your agency perform child protection assessments/intake?

- Yes
- No

30) Does your agency have specialized intake/assessment social workers?

- Yes
- No

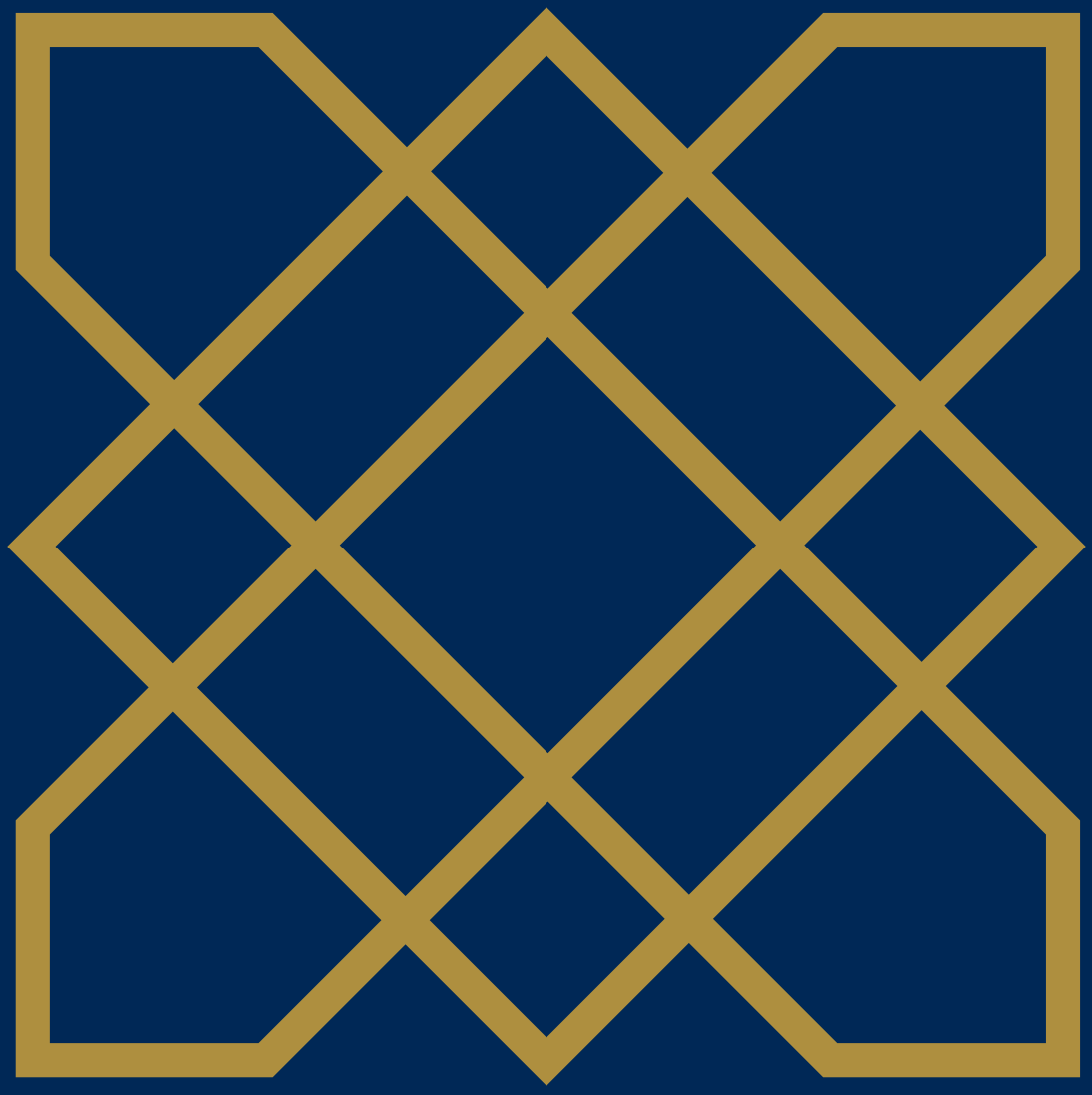
31) How many specialized social workers do you have?

32) Do your specialized social workers have open intake/assessment cases?

- Yes—if yes, how many?
- No

33) Do social workers in your agency manage intake/assessment along with guardianship duties?

- Yes
- No

34) On average, how many open intake/assessment cases do social workers have?

35) Please share any further comments, notably unique practices or services your agency provides or other details that may not have been captured in this survey.