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Unstated Paternity: Estimates and Contributing Factors

Stewart Clatworthy

Introduction

This report provides a summary of the main findings of two recent research studies, sponsored by the Research and Analysis Directorate of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, concerning unstated paternity among First Nations children. An initial study, completed in 2001, provided estimates of the incidence and prevalence of unstated paternity during the 1985–99 time period, and examined variations in levels of unstated paternity by region, location of residence and the age of mothers at the time of childbirth.¹ A second study was undertaken to gather and analyze information from several parties involved in the processes of birth and Indian Registration.² This information is believed to be central to gaining a better understanding of why unstated paternity is occurring, and what may be done to ensure that First Nations parents are better able to comply with the requirements of the birth and Indian registration processes.

Implications and Prevalence of Unstated Paternity

Why Is Unstated Paternity Important?

Unstated paternity refers to the situation where a child's father is not reported for purposes of birth registration and Indian registration. Interest in this issue emerges, in large part, from changes to the rules governing entitlement to Indian registration that were introduced as part of the 1985 amendments to the *Indian Act* (Bill C–31). Prior to these changes, children with unreported fathers were allowed to register provided that their registration was not successfully protested within twelve months (i.e., the father was proven to be non-Indian).

Under the rules introduced by the 1985 *Indian Act*, a child's entitlement to registration is based on the registration characteristics of the child's parents. Section 6 of the 1985 *Indian Act* allows for children to be registered under one of two sub-sections:

Section 6(1), where both parents of the child are entitled to registration; and

Section 6(2), where one of the child's parents is entitled to registration under Section 6(1) and the other parent is not registered.

When a child's father is not reported, the child's registration entitlement can only be based on the mother's entitlement. In cases where the father is unreported and the mother is registered under Section 6(1), the child would be entitled to registration under Section 6(2). Where a child's mother is registered under Section 6(2) and the father is unreported, the child is not entitled to registration. Under the current rules, *failure to report a registered Indian father results in either inappropriate registration of the child (i.e., under Section 6(2) as opposed to 6(1)), or denial of registration and loss of associated entitlements, benefits and privileges.*

How Common Is Unstated Paternity?

The Indian Register has been recording data on children with unstated fathers since 1983, although unstated paternity data for the 1983–88 time period are believed to be incomplete. The Register is also subject to late reporting of events, including births. Procedures have been used to adjust the Register data for late reported births.³ Unless otherwise noted, all estimates of incidence and prevalence of unstated paternity presented in this report have been based on the adjusted Register data.

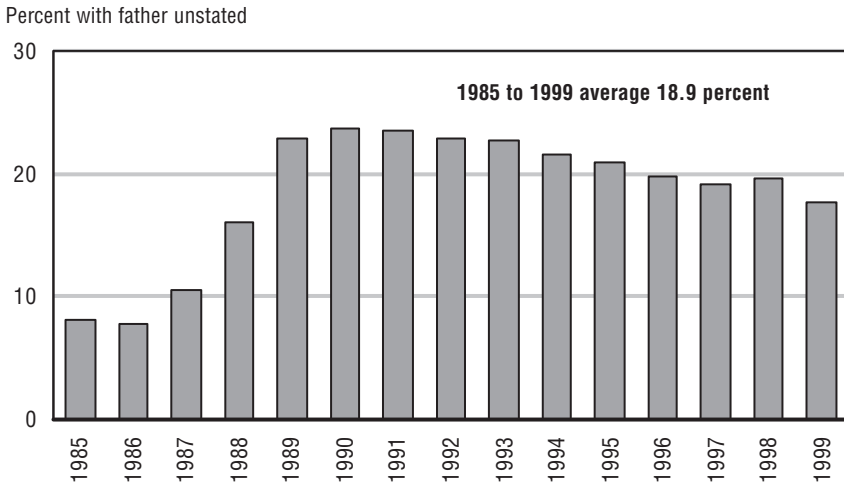
Direct estimates of the incidence and prevalence of unstated paternity can only be developed for children born to women registered under Section 6(1). Unstated paternity may also occur among children born to Indian women registered under Section 6(2) of the *Indian Act*. These children, however, are not entitled to Indian registration, and, as a consequence, a record of their birth is not contained in the Indian Register. As a result, this dimension of the issue cannot be addressed *directly* with the Register data.

Based on analysis of the Indian Register data from April 17, 1985, to December 31, 1999, roughly 37,300 children born to women registered under Section 6(1) have unstated fathers. This number represents about 19% of all children born to Section 6(1) women during this period.

Data from the Indian Register also allows one to identify the trend in the annual incidence (or rate) of unstated paternity over the 1985–99 time period.

Annual estimates for this time period are presented in Figure 1. As revealed in the figure, the annual rate of unstated paternity among children born to women registered under Section 6(1) peaked in 1990 (at nearly 24%). Since that time, the annual rate of unstated paternity has fallen to about 18% (in 1999), a level slightly lower than the average for the 1985–99 time period.

Figure 1: Percent of children with fathers unstated as a proportion of all children born to Section 6(1) mothers, Canada, 1985-99

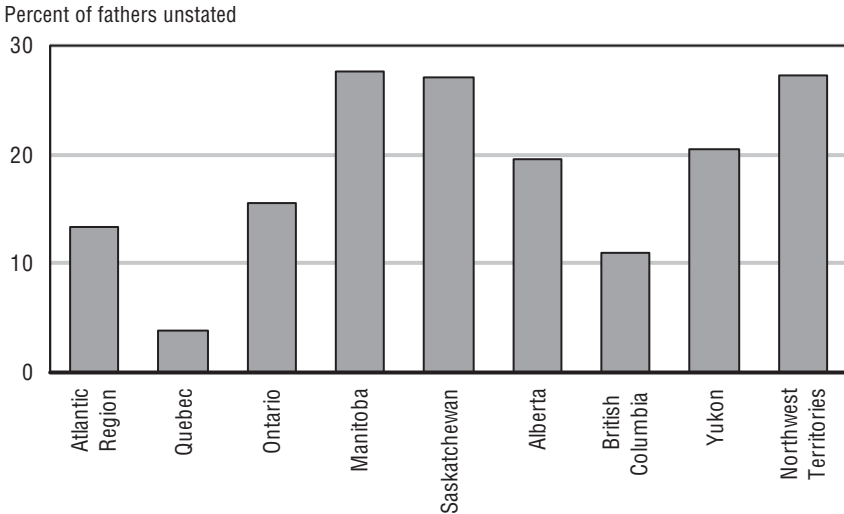


Source: 1999 Indian Register, adjusted for late birth reporting.

Regional level data, which are presented in Figure 2, reveal that the prevalence of unstated paternity varies widely by region and is especially high in the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. In these regions, more than one in every four children born to women registered under Section 6(1) during the 1985–99 period have unstated fathers.

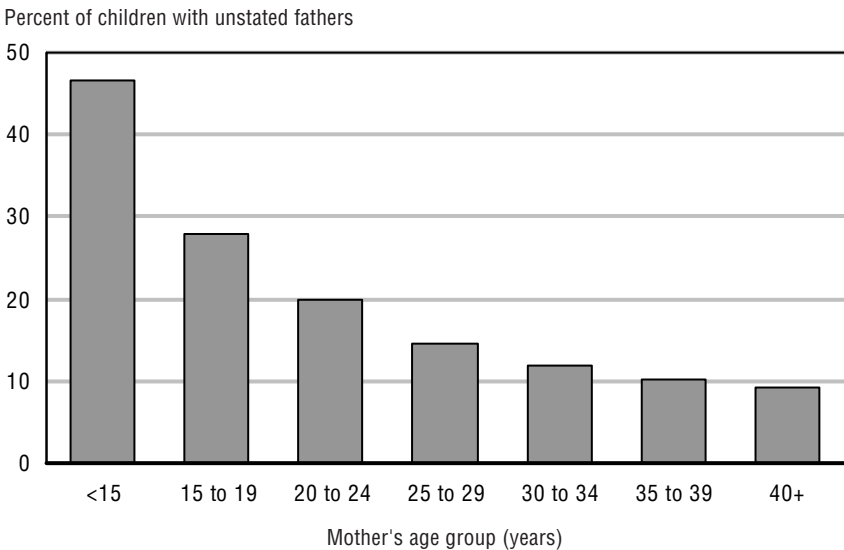
Empirical research has also shown that unstated paternity is highly correlated with the age of mothers at the time of birth. As illustrated in Figure 3, rates of unstated paternity among children born to teenaged mothers greatly exceed the national average. During the 1985 to 1999 period, about 30% of all children with unstated fathers were born to mothers under 20 years of age.

Figure 2: Percent of children with fathers unstated among children born to mothers registered under Section 6(1) by province/region, Canada, 1985-99



Source: 1999 Indian Register, adjusted for late birth reporting.

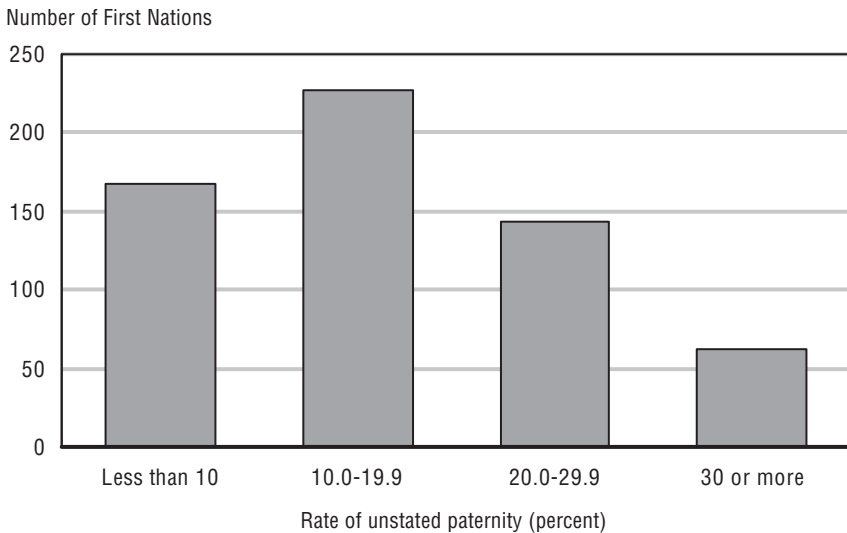
Figure 3: Percent of children with fathers unstated among children born to mothers registered under section 6(1) by age of mother at birth of child, Canada, 1985-99



Source: 1999 Indian Register, adjusted for late birth reporting.

Rates of unstated paternity also vary widely among individual First Nations. For the 1985–99 period, sufficient data concerning births were available to prepare estimates of the prevalence of unstated paternity for 599 First Nations. As revealed in Figure 4, unstated paternity is quite common among children born to many First Nations. Two hundred and five (about 34% of all) First Nations reported rates of unstated paternity of 20% or more. Sixty-two of these First Nations, representing about 10% of all those for which estimates could be prepared, reported rates of 30% or more.

Figure 4: Distribution of First Nations by prevalence of unstated paternity, Canada, 1985-99



Source: 1999 Indian Register, unadjusted for late birth reporting.

Although direct measures of unstated paternity cannot be developed for children born to women registered under Section 6(2), indirect estimates for the 1985–99 period suggest that as many as 13,000 of these children may have unstated fathers and do not qualify for Indian registration.⁴

Factors Contributing to Unstated Paternity

The widespread and persistently high levels of unstated paternity among First Nations children clearly raises many questions about why this is occurring. In designing this aspect of the research it was recognized that although unstated paternity may reflect the intentions of one or both parents, it may also result from a lack of knowledge or understanding of the issue and/or difficulties in complying with the requirements of the birth registration and

Indian registration processes. A large number of actors are involved in the birth and Indian registration processes, including parents, community health care staff, hospital maternity ward staff, provincial Vital Statistics, First Nations registration administrators (who administer the Indian registration process in First Nations communities) and regional INAC managers of Indian registration. All of these actors have some role in the process and may be in a position to provide information, which may be useful in understanding what is happening.

Efforts were made to obtain input from each of these groups, through either focus groups, structured telephone interviews, or e-mailed questionnaires. However, difficulties were experienced in obtaining (first hand) the views of First Nations parents. In this regard, the study attempted to arrange two focus groups with recent mothers and registration administrators for five First Nations were contacted to explore opportunities to conduct sessions in their communities. Two administrators reported that they were unable to obtain the support of their chief and council to hold focus groups. The remaining three administrators reported that few mothers were willing to participate in a focus group over the summer period. To partially compensate for the lack of direct input from recent mothers, the survey of First Nations registration administrators was increased from a sample of 100 to 135.

Telephone interviews were conducted with three groups, including

- a national sample of First Nations registration administrators concerning their role/practices in relation to the Indian registration process, paternal non-disclosure and perspectives concerning the reasons for paternal non-disclosure;
- regional INAC registration managers concerning the requirement of the Indian registration process and training of First Nations registration administrators;⁵ and
- provincial/territorial Vital Statistics department representatives (except in Prince Edward Island and Ontario)⁶ concerning their policies and procedures related to birth registration, paternal non-disclosure, requirements related to birth registration amendment, and fee and charges.

Resources available to the study did not permit a broad survey of community health staff or hospital maternity ward staff. Telephone interviews were held with three community health nurses and three unit managers responsible for hospital maternity wards. The interviews with community health nurses focussed on their role with respect to providing information to expectant parents about the requirements of the birth registration process. Interviews with maternity ward unit managers focussed on the nature of supports/assistance provided to parents in relation to registering their child's birth.

The Survey of First Nations Registration Administrators

The telephone survey of First Nations registration administrators constitutes the key source of information reported in this study. The interviews were designed to address the following issues:

- duration of employment as a registration officer;
- perceptions concerning the prevalence of unstated paternity among children born to members of their community;
- awareness and estimates of the numbers of children denied registration and First Nations membership as a result of unstated paternity;
- actions taken (and protocols) in relation to registration applications with unstated fathers;
- information provided to applicant's parents (or guardians) concerning birth registration amendment;
- the nature and sources of birth and Indian registration information provided to community members and expectant parents;
- perceived needs (and responsibilities) for provision of additional information or education concerning the unstated fathers issue;
- where most births to community members occur (i.e., within or outside the community) and the distance (degree of accessibility) to the nearest maternity facility;
- perceptions concerning why paternity information is not reported; and
- perceptions concerning parental intentions versus compliance difficulties.

The survey's sample was structured to capture the viewpoints from a broad cross-section of First Nations that have assumed responsibility for administering Indian registration. Three groups of First Nations were excluded from the sample, including:

- First Nations located in the Northwest Territories⁷ (where Indian registration is administered directly by the regional INAC office);
- First Nations where Indian registration is administered by a tribal council office; and
- First Nations who reported less than ten registered Indian births during the 1985-99 time period.

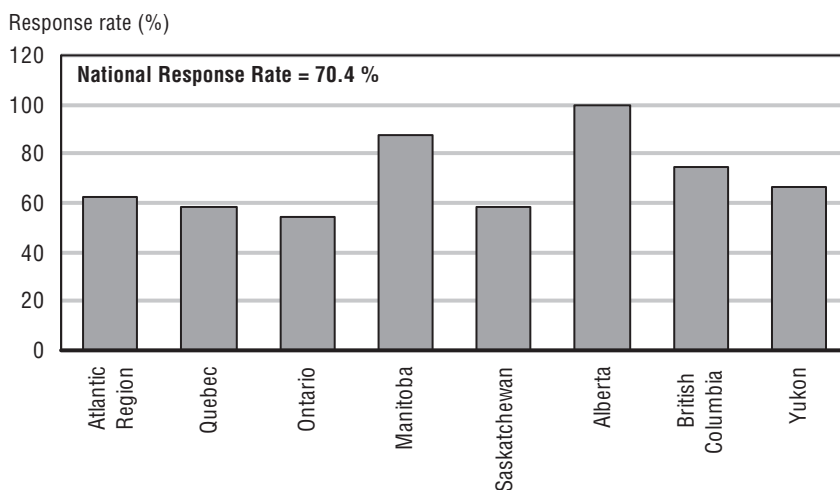
The remaining 414 First Nations were assigned to one of three groups based on their measured rate of unstated paternity during the 1985-99 period. The initial group (Group 1) included 113 First Nations with rates of unstated paternity below 10.0%. A second group (Group 2) included 260 First Nations

where rates of unstated paternity ranged from 10.0 to 29.9%. Forty-one First Nations with rates of unstated paternity of 30.0% or more formed a third group (Group 3).

Samples of 24.8%, 33.1% and 51.2% were drawn at random from the three groups, respectively, resulting in a total sample of 135 First Nations. Interviews were completed for 95 First Nations, representing a response rate of 70.4% at the national level. Group response rates ranged from 67.9% (for Group 1) to 71.4% (for Group 3). Response rates for all provinces/regions exceeded 50% (Figure 5).

The survey of First Nations registration administrators did not experience any refusals. Interviews could not be completed for forty First Nations (included in the sample), primarily as a result of difficulties in contacting the registration administrator.

Figure 5: Response rates for First Nations registration administrator survey by province/region, 2001



Select Research Findings

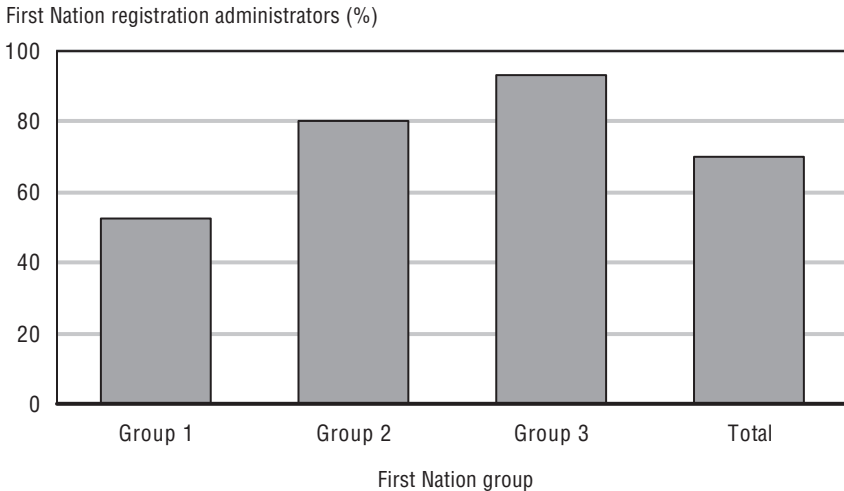
Recognition and Perceived Impacts of Unstated Paternity

All of the INAC regional registration managers interviewed for this study reported that unstated paternity was common within their region. This view was shared by a sizable majority (70.3%) of the First Nations registration administrators who participated in the survey. Not surprisingly, registration

administrators in First Nations with higher measured rates of unstated paternity were more likely to report unstated paternity to be common in their community (Figure 6).

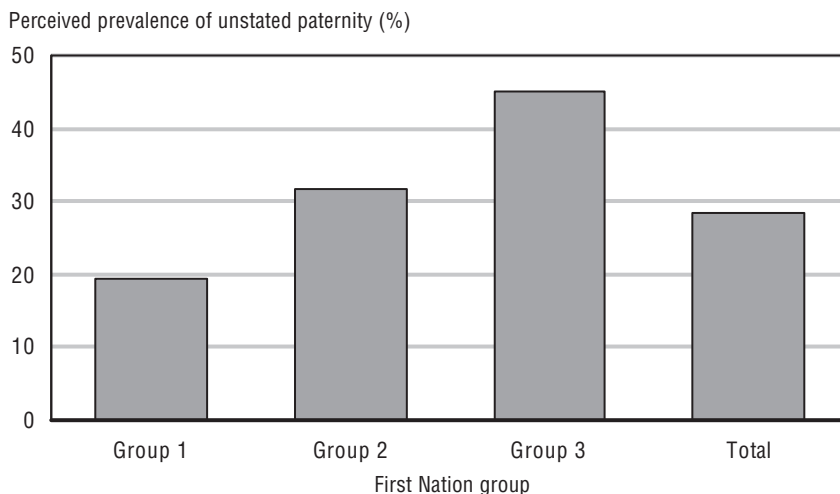
Rates of unstated paternity estimated by First Nations registration administrators varied widely and averaged 28% at the national level. This estimate is about 10% higher than that measured from data contained on the Indian Register. As expected, estimated rates of unstated paternity were clearly patterned over survey groups (Figure 7), and were reported to be substantially higher among First Nations with high (i.e., Group 3), as opposed to low (i.e., Group 1), measured rates of unstated paternity.

Figure 6: Proportion of First Nation registration administrators reporting unstated paternity to be common in their community by survey group, Canada, 2002



Unstated paternity is also widely believed by First Nations registration administrators to have resulted in loss of Indian registration entitlement among some children in their community. More than two-thirds of survey respondents reported that they knew of children who failed to qualify for registration due to unstated paternity. For First Nations with high measured rates of unstated paternity, loss of registration entitlement among children with unstated paternity was noted by more than 86% of the survey's respondents.

Figure 7: Rate of unstated paternity estimated by First Nations registration administrators by survey group, Canada, 2002



First Nations registration administrators surveyed for this study reported 1,271 children with unstated fathers who have been denied registration. Based on the estimates provided by survey respondents, about 4,480 children with unstated fathers have failed to qualify for Indian registration at the national level.

Paternal information may also be a critical factor in determining a child's eligibility for First Nations membership, especially in First Nations that use *Indian Act*, blood quantum or two-parent membership rules. Unstated paternity was identified by more than 37% of the respondents to this study's survey to have resulted in loss of eligibility of First Nations membership for some children. For First Nations with high measured rates of unstated paternity (i.e., Group 3), loss of membership eligibility among children with unstated fathers was reported by two-thirds of survey respondents (Figure 8).

Training, Experience and Resources of First Nations Registration Administrators

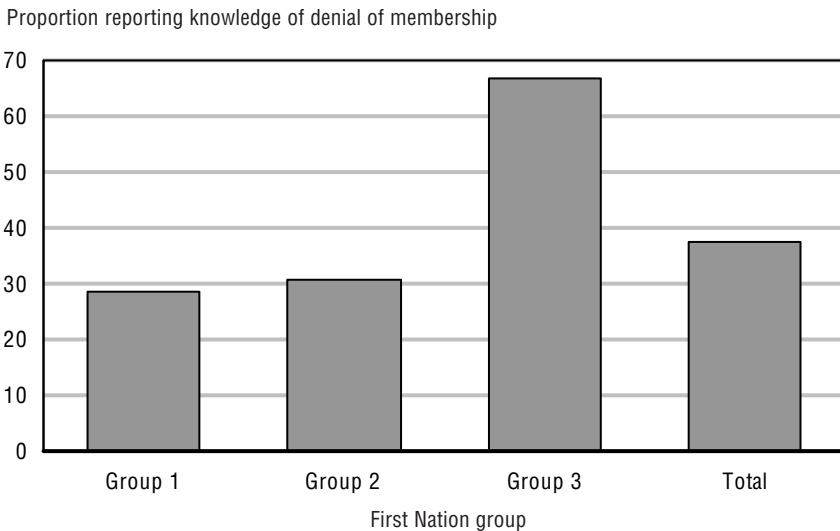
First Nations registration administrators receive training through INAC's Indian Registration and Band Lists (IRBL) unit. Among other things, this training covers the rules surrounding entitlement, required documentation and related forms, and includes the topic of unstated paternity. According to the INAC regional registration managers surveyed for this study, First Nations administrators have the knowledge and training necessary to accurately inform and assist parents in relation to complying with the

requirements of birth and Indian registration. Some INAC regional managers have arranged special information sessions on the topic of unstated paternity.

In addition to training, most of the survey's respondents reported considerable job experience as a registration administrator. Roughly three-quarters of those surveyed indicated that they had been employed as a registration administrator for more than three years. Nearly one-half of respondents reported employment at their job for at least six years. In general, lack of training or inexperience on the job does not appear to be a contributing factor to unstated paternity.

Although trained and experienced at the job, many First Nations registration administrators identified a shortage of resources in relation to responding to the needs of parents and the broader community on the issue of unstated paternity. More than 40% of survey respondents indicated that print materials (e.g., pamphlets and handouts) concerning birth, Indian registration and unstated paternity were needed. About 29% of respondents also felt that print materials needed to be augmented by other awareness and educational initiatives, such as group workshops or information sessions, and through personal contact with expectant parents. The need for additional resources to support increased awareness and educational initiatives was echoed by a majority of the INAC regional managers interviewed for this study.

Figure 8: Proportion of First Nations registration administrators reporting loss of membership eligibility among children with unstated fathers by survey group, Canada, 2002



Parental and Community Awareness and Knowledge

Based on the responses of First Nations registration administrators, some efforts are underway to inform expectant parents (specifically mothers) about birth and Indian registration in most (about 78% of) First Nations communities. Initiatives were most frequently undertaken by registration administrators themselves (57% of respondents) and by community health staff/nurses (32% of respondents). Several other agencies (mostly involved in social service provision) were also identified by a smaller number of respondents. Although some actions are being taken in most communities, most (90% of) respondents noted that their community did not have a comprehensive system in place for conveying information to all expectant parents. Eighty-nine percent of respondents did not view current information and educational efforts for expectant parents concerning the requirements of birth and Indian registration (and the consequences of unstated paternity) to be satisfactory.

The survey's findings also suggest that most communities presently lack a focal point or locus of responsibility related to awareness, information and educational activities pertaining to the issue of unstated paternity. About 40% of the First Nations registration administrators surveyed believed that they should assume the lead role in this regard. About 23% of respondents, however, thought that information should be delivered through community health staff as part of prenatal care programs. However, the latter view was not shared by the community health nurses interviewed for this study. They cited lack of adequate training on the issues and little time to take on additional job responsibilities.

A significant proportion (more than 25%) of respondents also stated that awareness and educational initiatives were required not only among parents but also among other segments of the community. There is a widespread perception among respondents that most people in their community do not understand the rules related to Indian registration, the distinction between registration under Section 6(1) and 6(2), and the impact of unstated paternity on a child's registration entitlement. Several respondents (about 20%) noted the need for a special focus on early teens and pre-teens, a concern that appears to be linked to frequent births to teenaged parents.

Requirements Concerning Birth and Indian Registration Processes

Information on the requirements and process of birth registration was obtained through telephone interviews with representatives of provincial/regional Vital Statistics departments in all provinces/regions, except Prince Edward Island and Ontario. Most of the required information for Ontario and

Prince Edward Island was available on their departmental websites. This subsection of the report provides a brief description of the processes followed in relation to birth registration in each region, as well as the requirements associated with amending paternal information once a birth has been registered.

Birth Registration

In general, the process of registering a birth is similar across provinces/regions. Up to three forms may be required to register a child's birth. A *notification of live birth* form, completed by medical facility staff, records information concerning the time and place of birth, the mother (including Indian registration status) and the baby (e.g., gender, birth weight, etc.). This form does not record information concerning the child's father. Copies of this form are forwarded to Vital Statistics and Health Canada within five days of the birth. A copy of the form is also provided to the mother.

A *registration of birth* form, completed by the parent(s), records information on the date and place of birth, the mother and (if reported) father, marital status of the parents and the name given to the child. Most provinces/regions (except Quebec) require that this form be completed prior to leaving the hospital. If the birth occurs outside of a medical facility, it must be filed within thirty days. Maternity ward unit managers contacted for this study indicated that their staff endeavours to be available to provide instructions to parents with respect to completing the required forms. It was also noted, however, that staff do not always have sufficient time to provide explanations, nor to ensure that the registration forms are being completed properly.

The requirements for parental identification on the registration of birth form differ among provinces/regions. In Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Alberta, this form must be signed by both parents in situations where the mother and father are not married. If the mother does not wish to identify the father, a declaration to that effect (signed by the mother) is required in Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, Quebec and Ontario. In all of these regions, when both parental signatures are required (but are not present) on the birth registration form, Vital Statistics informs the parent(s) of this requirement by mail (normally within thirty days). If all information and signatures are not submitted within roughly sixty days, the father's information (if present on the original form) is stricken from the birth registration.⁸

In other provinces/regions (including Manitoba, Yukon Territory, Nova Scotia and the Northwest Territories) only one parental signature is required on the birth registration form. In these regions, if information concerning the father is not reported on a birth registration form that has been signed by the mother, it is interpreted to mean that the mother does not wish to disclose the

father's identity. If the parents are unmarried and wish to have the father's information included, a *joint request form*, signed by both the mother and father, must also be submitted. This form must be filed within thirty days (although some flexibility appears to be exercised in some regions). In these regions, if the joint request form is required but not received within thirty days, Vital Statistics sends a letter reminding the mother of the requirement to submit the form (a copy of which is included in the letter). If the joint request form (signed by both parents) is not returned within roughly thirty days from the date of reminder, the father's information is stricken from the child's birth registration.⁹

Efforts to promote compliance with birth registration information requirements is shared between Vital Statistics and INAC in the Northwest Territories. In this region, INAC is notified (by Vital Statistics) of all births to Registered Indians and assumes some of the functions related to ensuring that required birth registration information is completed by parents.

Amending Birth Registration Information

In general, procedures for amending or adding to information contained on a birth registration are also similar among provinces/regions. Vital Statistics departments in most provinces/regions allow for changes to birth registration information to be made free of charge during the initial sixty days following the date of registration. After this time, paternity information may be added by filing a joint request form, affidavit, or declaration of paternity document identifying the father's particulars (e.g., name, current address, place and date of birth) and signed by both the mother and father. In all regions (except Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia) documentation must be witnessed and signed by a notary or some other person authorized to take oaths.

Administrative fees are charged by all provinces/regions for birth registration amendments. The charges range from \$20 to \$70. In the province of Quebec, the addition of paternal information to a birth registration may also require posting the amendment in a gazette. This would require an additional charge reported to be about \$100. In British Columbia, amendments to paternity information made after six years have an additional requirement of medical (DNA) proof and an administrative fee of \$27. In all provinces/regions, birth registration information can also be amended pursuant to a court order.

Indian Registration

Similar requirements exist across all INAC regions with respect to Indian registration. These requirements include

- parental consent forms requesting the child's registration;
- a "framing size" birth certificate for the applicant which identifies both the mother and father (if reported); and
- statutory declarations and guardianship papers (if applicable).

With the exception of the Northwest Territories, information needed for purposes of registration is compiled by First Nations registration administrators and forwarded to the regional INAC office where it is vetted for completeness and entered into the Register. Regional offices also receive registration requests and applications directly via mail, fax and "walk-in," as well as through provincial child and family services agencies (who have entitled children in their care).

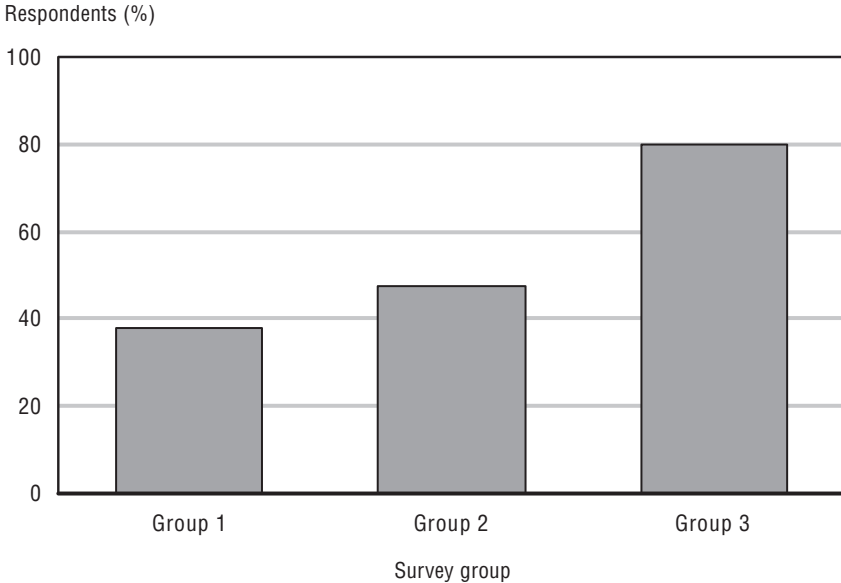
The Indian registration process in the Northwest Territories continues to be administered entirely through the regional INAC office. The regional office receives documentation from Vital Statistics for all birth registrations involving a Registered Indian parent and the office arranges to acquire the remaining documentation (e.g., parental consents, etc.) from the parent(s). The regional office also provides resources for notarizing birth registration amendment documents.

Compliance with Birth and Indian Registration Requirements

As noted previously in this report, a substantial majority of survey respondents noted that many parents are unaware of (or do not understand) the birth registration requirements and the importance of paternal information. Not surprisingly, difficulties experienced by parents in complying with the requirements of the birth registration process are widely viewed to be a contributing factor to unstated paternity. Slightly more than one-half (53%) of the respondents to the First Nations registration administrator survey attributed unstated paternity to birth registration compliance problems. As illustrated in Figure 9, the proportion of respondents that identified compliance difficulties was higher for communities with higher measured rates of unstated paternity (i.e., Groups 2 and 3). The most common explanation in this regard derives from the logistics of obtaining required signatures on registration forms. Most (more than 77%) of the First Nations contacted for this study reported that births normally occur at medical facilities located outside of the home community. In many cases (and especially in more remote communities), fathers do not accompany the mother and are not available to sign the required documents

at the medical facilities following the child's birth. This results in birth registration documents, which lack the father's signature, being forwarded to Vital Statistics by medical facility staff.

Figure 9: Proportion of registration administrators reporting birth registration compliance difficulties as the cause of unstated paternity by survey group, Canada, 2002



Vital Statistics staff in all of the regions contacted for this study confirm that they receive many birth registrations that contain the father's identity, but which have not been signed by the father or accompanied by a signed joint request form. Subsequent efforts by Vital Statistics to obtain signed documents frequently meet with no response.

Data collected in the study's survey of registration administrators concerning proximity to the nearest maternity facility lend support to the above explanation of events. As illustrated in Table 1, communities that display higher measured rates of unstated paternity (i.e., Groups 2 and 3) are more likely to lack community-based maternity facilities, and are more distanced from maternity facilities.

Table 1: First Nations respondent community showing proportion lacking community-based maternity facilities and average distance to nearest maternity facility, Canada, 2002

Accessibility Indicator	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Number of respondent First Nations	19	61	15
Percent lacking community facility	68.4	78.7	86.7
Average distance to nearest facility (km)	112.1	169.9	213.5

In many First Nations, lengthy delays between the time of birth registration and Indian registration are common. These delays in registration are believed by many respondents to result in additional barriers to paternal disclosure as they contribute to increased difficulties in relation to amending birth registration documents. These difficulties can result from many factors including

- dissolution of relationships between mothers and fathers;
- requirements for additional paternal evidence and document notarization; and
- administrative charges for changes requested after amendment deadlines have past.

The breakdown of relationships between parents and between the time of birth and the time of Indian registration was noted by 80% of the survey respondents as a factor resulting in unstated paternity.

Although difficulties related to complying with the requirements of the birth registration process are widely believed to be a frequent cause of unstated paternity, a large minority (about 47%) of First Nations registration administrators expressed the view that unreported paternity most often reflects the intentions of one or both parents (most commonly the mother). Many specific factors were noted in this regard, including

- unstable family and partnering relationships (e.g., mother wants nothing to do with the father, 80% of respondents);
- father's denial of paternity (21% of respondents);
- confidentiality concerns of the mother (e.g., mother does not want the father's identity to be known to other community residents, 17% of respondents);
- child custody concerns (e.g., mother afraid of father gaining access to the child, 10% of respondents);
- mother afraid of losing Indian registration or First Nations membership (3% of respondents); and
- unwillingness to pay administrative fees for birth registration changes (2% of respondents).

Other Possible Factors

Although the surveys conducted for this study were not designed to probe for the role of culture or traditions as possible causes of unstated paternity, this issue was raised within the specific context of some First Nations in the Northwest Territories. By tradition, some First Nations in this region do not name their children at birth. Names are given later—by grandparents—at the time of baptism or at ceremonies. For purposes of birth registration, a child is initially registered as “unnamed” and will remain unnamed (on the official birth registry system) unless an amendment is subsequently filed to name the child. This can give rise to situations where a father is (for legal purposes) “unnamed,” and lead to the requirement for the father’s birth registration to be amended in order to have his identity included on his child’s birth registration.

Conclusion

Changes introduced by the 1985 amendments to the *Indian Act* have altered the consequences of unreported paternity for the registration of First Nations children. Statistical evidence reported in this study suggests that nearly one in every five children born to Registered Indian women during the 1985–99 time period has an unreported father. Although unstated paternity is most common among First Nations in specific regions (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories), the issue is clearly of national significance. More than 37,000 children born to First Nations mothers registered under Section 6(1) during the 1985–99 period have unreported fathers. An additional 13,000 children, born to women registered under Section 6(2), are also estimated to have unreported fathers and do not qualify for registration under the rules of the 1985 *Indian Act*. Many of these children are believed to have been denied First Nations membership and its associated privileges and benefits.

Based on the evidence provided by respondents to the study’s surveys, unstated paternity frequently results from difficulties experienced by parents in complying with the requirements of the birth registration process. In many instances, these difficulties appear to be associated with a lack of awareness and understanding of the requirements and importance of paternal identity in the process of establishing a child’s registration entitlement.

At the same time, it is clear that a significant portion of unstated paternity reflects the intentions of parents. These intentions, however, are influenced by the social conditions of the community and by personal circumstances, especially the nature of the relationship between parenting partners. In the context of many First Nations communities, partnering frequently involves births to young and unmarried couples, and unstable and occasionally violent

relationships. These situations can, in turn, lead parents to believe that paternal non-disclosure is the best course of action. While it is recognized that interventions to promote constructive changes to community social conditions and relationships between parents are clearly needed, it is also clear that such changes are likely to be very difficult to achieve quickly.

Endnotes

1. S. Clatworthy, *Paternal Identity and Entitlement to Indian Registration: The Manitoba Context* (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2001).
2. S. Clatworthy, *Factors Contributing to Unstated Paternity* (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2003).
3. See note 1.
4. Estimates of the number of children with unstated fathers who have been born to women registered under Section 6(2) have been based on the assumption that rates of unstated paternity are similar among children born to these women. At the present time, there are no data available to substantiate this assumption.
5. Interviews were held with all INAC regional registration managers except in Saskatchewan and the Atlantic region.
6. Several unsuccessful efforts were made to contact Vital Statistics representatives in Ontario.
7. Not all First Nations have assumed the responsibility for administering Indian registration. In the case of First Nations in the Northwest Territories, the process is administered by the regional INAC office. A special interview was conducted with the INAC registration manager of the Northwest Territories to obtain information for First Nations in that region.
8. One additional reminder is provided in the province of Alberta.
9. One additional reminder is provided in the province of Manitoba.