

Canadian Attitudes on the Family

The Complete Report
2002



A Focus on the Family Canada National Survey
conducted by The Strategic Counsel

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Continuity and Change

“Family.” The word itself draws powerful memories and connections from within our hearts. For many, the experience of family is warm and cherished, based on sharing the milestones of life in a loving and supporting relationship. For some, the recollections are less positive: emotional or physical distance, missed opportunities, unrealized dreams. In all of this, though, for good or ill, “family” remains a cornerstone of our experience as individuals.

The word “family” is also an important part of our corporate experience. Governments have ministries of “Family Services”. Political parties campaign on the basis of “family-friendly policies.” And many groups—Focus on the Family included—exist to provide information and support to families according to their views of the world.

It is clear that Canadians care deeply about their families. Yet what do Canadians understand by this term “family” that so frequently comes at us from these many directions? Is there a shared understanding? What views are commonly held on family related issues, and how are they changing?

Certainly, “the Canadian family” has been going through much change in recent years. The rapid emergence of “alternative family structures” in preference to the “traditional family”—a married husband and wife living with children—is readily apparent. The 1996 census data from Statistics Canada, the most recent available, underlines this change:¹

- Between 1991 and 1996, common law families grew by 28% to represent 11.7% of all Canadian families.
- The number of common law families with children grew 47.2% over that period, although they still only account for 5.5% of all families.
- Single parent families increased by 19.3% between 1991 and 1996 and now represent 14.5% of all families.
- In 1996, 22% of single parents had never been married, up from 14% in 1986 and 17% in 1991.

None of these family structures is new, and they have always been part of our community make up. To an unprecedented extent, however, people are living

in households that are not based around a married husband and wife with children. And the speed with which these alternative household structures have emerged and the significant percentage of people living in them represents a striking and undeniable change in Canada’s social landscape.

Yet, at the same time, these changes point to an enduring—though less publicized—reality of Canadian family life. The fact is, the “traditional” family structure remains the environment for most Canadians. Here are other facts:

- Although down slightly from 1991, married couples still constitute the large majority of Canadian families—73.7%, or 5,779,720 families.²
- 73.3% of children live in families of married couples.³
- 75.7% of children under age 12 live with both their parents and siblings from the same relationship.⁴

Thus, perhaps, the more things change, the more they remain the same. For now, at least—the shape of things to come depends on the attitudes of Canadians. And that is what this report seeks to explore.

1.2 Purpose of this survey

Statistics, while useful, are only one part of the picture. How do Canadians themselves perceive their family relationships? How do they react to the “continuity and change” that they encounter? What does “family” mean to them in their day-to-day experiences of balancing work with home, taking the kids to hockey or soccer, saving for children’s education or their own retirement?

Focus on the Family decided to go directly to the source and ask Canadians what they thought about family life today. Working with The Strategic Counsel,

¹ “1996 Census: Marital status, common-law unions and families,” Statistics Canada, The Daily, October 14, 1997. The 2001 Census will provide more current data; however, to date only an overview of population, dwellings and geography has been released (12 March 2002). Data relevant to family research will be released throughout the next year, including: marital status (Oct 22, 2002) and income and socioeconomic characteristics of families and households (May 13, 2003).

² The Daily, October 14, 1997.

³ The Daily, October 14, 1997.

⁴ Nicole Marciel-Gratton, “Growing up with Mom and Dad? The intricate family life courses of Canadian children,” Statistics Canada, July 1998, Catalogue no. 89-566-XIE, pp. 5-6.

we questioned 1500 Canadians on a wide range of family issues. Because only so much can be covered in a twenty-minute telephone interview, this cannot claim to be a comprehensive survey of all family related topics. But we believe it will provide a useful overview of opinions on key questions, and serve as a base for future discussion.

We have tried to present our survey data in a dual context. First, we have referred to previous public opinion research, where such was available and relevant to the issues at hand, in order to indicate trends or variance. And second, where possible, we have attempted to illuminate the opinion of our respondents with information about Canadians’ actual behaviour. We believe that presenting attitudes in the context of actions will help to show where Canadians are, as well as where they **think** they are, and where they **want** to be. And we believe such detailed knowledge will be beneficial for family life researchers, policymakers, and social commentators.

1.3 Methodology

This report incorporates findings derived from 1500 random-digit-dialled telephone surveys with adult Canadians, eighteen years of age or older. Interviews were conducted with respondents from across the country. The sample was designed to give proportional representation to regional and demographic sub-samples within the Canadian population as a whole.

Sample Grouping	Sample Size (n=)	Margin of Error (at 95% Confidence)
Total Sample	1500	±2.6%
Households		
All parents with children	1098	±3.0%
Parents with children at home	640	±3.9%
Married parents	465	±4.6%
Single parents	88	±10.7%
Common-law parents	87	±10.7%
Demographics		
Males or females	750	±3.6%
> 40 years of age	999	±3.1%
< 40 years of age	501	±4.4%

Interviews for this project were completed between March 25 and April 11, 2002.

The margin of error on a total sample of 1500 Canadians is ±2.6 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Within sub-samples (e.g. regions, parents with children, etc.) the margin of error increases. The table below indicates the confidence interval (margin of error) for some key sub-samples in this study.

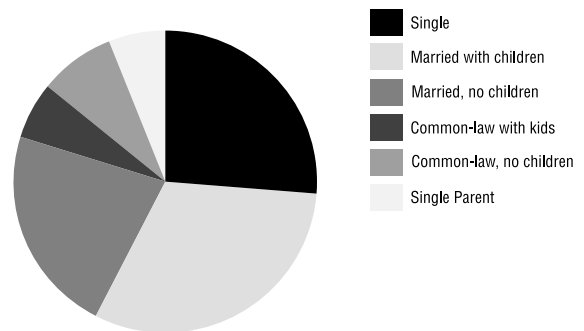
As much as is possible in any random-digit-dialled survey, the sample for this study was designed to be a reflection of the demographic composition of Canadian society. There will necessarily be deviations from the actual incidence of some sub-groups within the population.

1.4 Household Structure

In this study’s sample of the Canadian population, the variety of household types is represented as follows:

FIGURE 1: INCIDENCE OF HOUSEHOLD TYPES IN THIS STUDY

Q. 2: Which of the following best describes your current household situation. Are you ...?
Base: Total sample (n=1500)



As this graph indicates, the three largest household types within this sample of the Canadian population are “married with children” (31%), those who are “single” (27%), and those who are “married with no children” (22%); together, these groups account for 80% of households in this study. Those living “common-law with no children” (8%), those in common-law relationships with children (6%) and “single parents” (6%) make up the rest of the household types represented in this study. It is noteworthy that 75% of the “single parents” in this study are female.

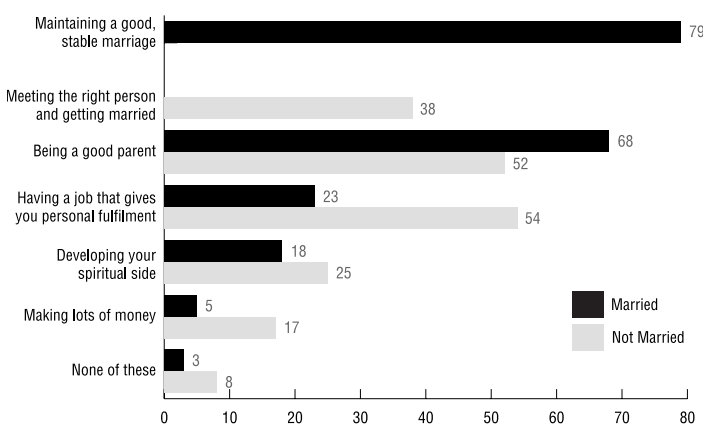


2. ISSUES FACING THE CANADIAN FAMILY

2.1 Perceptions of Importance and Satisfaction

Canadians are clear that family is *the* priority in their lives. When asked to identify what was important to them, significant majorities of married people ranked “*maintaining a good, stable marriage*” (79%) and “*being a good parent*” (68%) as either the most or second-most important priorities in their lives. And they did so in proportions far greater than those who identified “*having a job that gives you personal fulfillment and happiness*” (23%) or “*making lots of money*” (5%) as priorities. While the key priority among those who are not married (and who tend to be younger) is having a personally fulfilling job (54%), significant proportions nevertheless place importance on “*being a good parent*” (52%) and “*meeting the right person and getting married*” (38%). Clearly, Canadians give familial responsibilities and relationships a key spot in their lives.

FIRST AND SECOND MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITY IN LIFE COMBINED (NET)



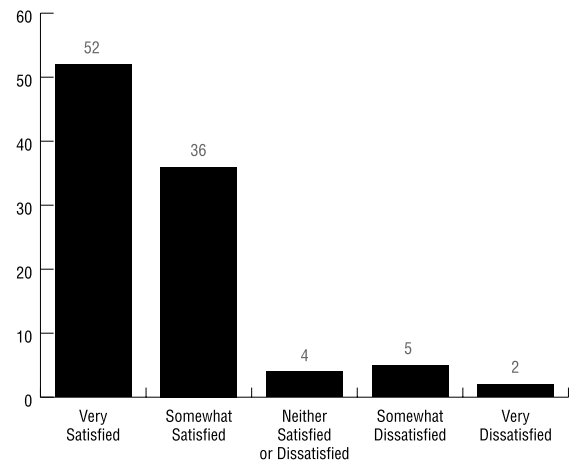
This ‘Net’ includes two responses; totals will add up to more than 100%

Although we asked the question in a different way, these findings accord with research by University of Lethbridge sociologist Reginald Bibby, who has consistently found that family is extremely important to Canadians. In 1995, he found that 86% of people ranked “family” as “very important”—ranking it third behind “happiness” (89%) and “freedom” (87%). His most recent study also finds that family life is seen as “extremely important” by 85% of respondents.⁵

Our survey found that just under nine-in-ten Canadians (89%) report that they are “satisfied” with their family life overall. This is 10% higher than the percentage of

people who, according to a Goldfarb study, expressed satisfaction with their family life five years ago.⁶ In our study, fully half (53%) report that they are “very” satisfied, a finding which suggests that the vast majority of Canadians feel that things are going well in regards to family.

SATISFACTION WITH FAMILY LIFE OVERALL



The overall finding of satisfaction with family life is supported by the high levels of reported satisfaction across almost all groupings within Canadian society. Most of the key demographic variables which tend to differentiate Canadians (e.g. region in which they live, level of income, level of education, age, etc.) have very little influence on reported satisfaction with family life overall. Men and women (89% and 88%, respectively), respondents under 40 years of age (87%) and those over 40 (90%), those with a high school education or less (90%) and the university educated (89%), are all equally likely to be at least “somewhat satisfied” with their “family life overall”.

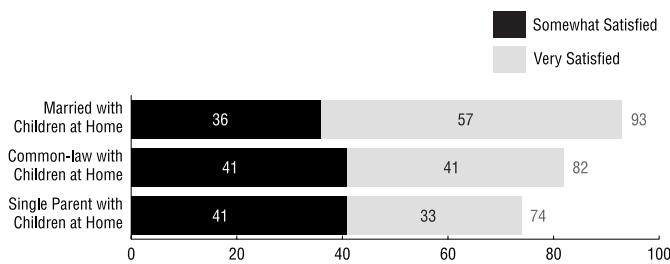
There are, however, some important exceptions to these generally high levels. Interestingly, 93% of married couples with children say they are “satisfied” with their family life overall, which is significantly higher than parents who are living in a common-law relationship (83%). Just three-quarters (74%) of single parents are satisfied with their family life overall, a proportion

⁵ Reginald Bibby, Project Canada: National Survey of Adult Canadians (1995). Data provided by the American Religion Data Archive. Also Bibby, The Bibby Report, 1995, and Reginald Bibby, Restless Gods: the Renaissance of Religion in Canada, (Toronto: Stoddart, 2002), p. 210.

⁶ Goldfarb Syndicated Study, 1997.

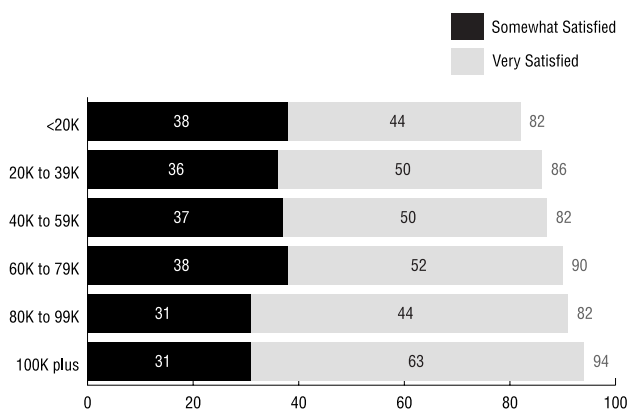
that is significantly lower than that of married or common-law parents who are raising their children with a partner (91%). This accords with earlier studies which also found that single parents are “less likely to strongly agree that their family lives are ‘happy’” and “more likely than average” to agree “that their family lives are ‘something I want to change.’”⁷

SATISFACTION WITH FAMILY LIFE OVERALL - BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE



Household income also appears to have an influence on satisfaction with family life overall. The data suggest a direct, positive association between household income and satisfaction: that is, as household income increases, so to does the likelihood of satisfaction with family life overall. In fact, the proportion reporting “satisfaction” increases steadily from 82% among those reporting yearly household income of less than \$20 000, to 94% among those whose household income is \$100 000 or more. It is noteworthy also that the strength of satisfaction increases significantly with income: Those who report annual household income of \$80 000 or more are significantly more likely to be “very” satisfied with their family life overall (62%) than are those whose annual household income is less than \$80 000 (49%).

SATISFACTION WITH FAMILY LIFE OVERALL - BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME



2.2 Perception of Most Important Issues

While generally agreeing that they are satisfied with their family life overall, Canadians are nonetheless feeling considerable stress. Not surprisingly, the source of much of the stress Canadians feel appears to be related to the necessities and fears associated with the cost of maintaining a household.

When asked to identify “the most important issue facing Canadian families” the most common responses relate to the general issue of household economics. The most frequently cited issue facing Canadian families is “money/supporting my family” (13%). Other concerns related to the broad issue of household economics include “the cost of living/rising costs for everything”, “affordable housing”, “poverty or having enough food” (5%), “job security or unemployment” or “the economy/recession” (8%), “tax/tax increases” (3%), and cutbacks to welfare (1%). Taken together, three-in-ten (30%) respondents indicate that the most important issues facing families in Canada relate to household revenues and costs. While other issues, including “education/good schools” (7%) and “health care/medicare” (7%) are mentioned by significant proportions, the responses to this question suggest that concern about money, where it’s coming from and where it’s going, is the primary issue for the plurality of Canadian families.

2.3 Balancing Work and Family

Related closely to the issue of household finances overall are the complicated issues around balancing the obligations of work and family.

Numerous studies have shown that families perceive themselves to be under significant time pressures. For example, COMPAS found in July 2000 that Canadians overwhelmingly identified “too little family time” as an “extremely serious” (28%), “very serious” (43%), or “somewhat serious” (25%) source of stress.⁸ And Statistics Canada’s General Social Survey on time use found “somewhat elevated levels of severe time-stress” in 1998 compared with 1992, and that one-third of Canadians aged 25 to 44 “identified themselves as workaholics and more than half do not have enough time to spend with their family and friends.”⁹

⁷ The State of the Family in Canada, Angus Reid Group (1994), p. 14

⁸ COMPAS, “Families in Crisis,” July 31, 2000.

⁹ Statistics Canada, The Daily, November 9, 1999.

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FACING CANADIAN FAMILIES TODAY – SINGLE MENTION

	Total (n=1500) %
Money/finance (general)/supporting my family	13
Education/good schools	7
Health care/medicare	7
Failure to stay married/divorces	6
Job security/unemployment/job stress	6
Lack of family time for parents/not enough time/too busy	4
Family cohesiveness/family stability	4
Children/raising children these days/No discipline for kids/Outside influence	4
Taxes/Tax increases/over-taxation	3
Communication/lack of communication with kids	3
The economy/economics/recession	2
Moral decline/family morals/family values	2
Love for each other/understanding/trust	2
Cost of living/rising cost for everything	2
Poverty/enough food	2
Violence (general)	2
Two parents working	1
Government/not enough welfare/cutbacks	1
Safety	1
Women having to do work/inability for mothers to stay at home	1
Drugs	1
War/terrorism/world peace	1
Religion/lack of faith/secularism	<1
Single parenting/single families	<1
Loyalties/infidelity	<1
Housing/affordable housing	<1
Other*	9
No concerns/nothing	1

What, in your opinion, is the most important issue facing Canadian Families today? That is, the one that concerns you the most.

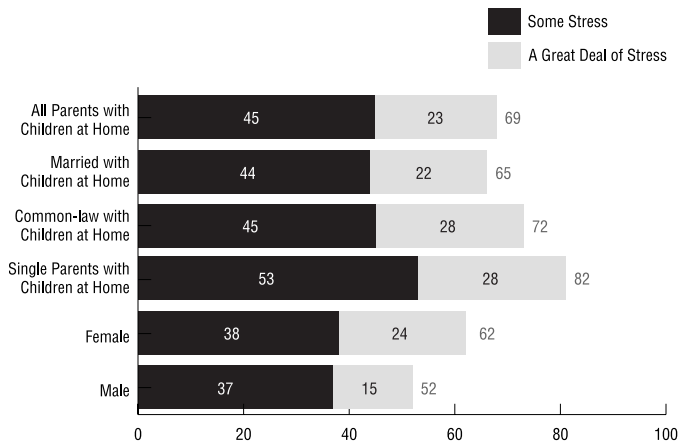
** Other includes responses of less than 1%*

Professors Linda Duxbury and Chris Higgins have similarly documented Canadians' difficulty balancing work and family responsibilities. In a major study of 31,000 workers across a ten-year period, they observed that the Canadian trend in 2000 was towards an increased work load and longer hours, abetted by new technology which allowed work to intrude at home after hours. In their view, "The 1990s was a decade of change, but many changes were for the 'worse'", especially for women who bear the primary responsibility for child care and report higher role overload than men.¹⁰

Our survey confirms these earlier studies and clearly indicates that work/family stress remains a very relevant concern for Canadian families.

A majority (56%) of Canadians report that balancing the demands of work and family causes them at least "some" stress; one-in-five (19%) report that balancing these demands causes them "a great deal" of stress.

AMOUNT OF STRESS CAUSED BY BALANCING "WORK" AND "FAMILY"

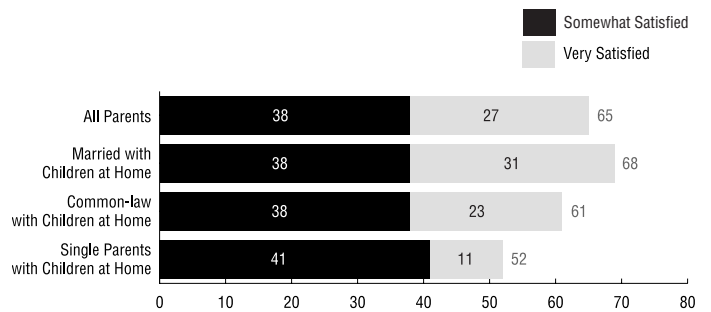


- Among parents with children at home, seven-in-ten (69%) report that balancing the demands of work and family causes them either "some" (46%) or "a great deal" (23%) of stress.
- Not surprisingly, the balance of work and family appears to be particularly stressful for single parents, fully 82% of whom report at least some stress. Twenty-eight percent of single parents indicate that they find the demands of the work/family balance to cause them "a great deal" of stress.
- Women (24%) are more likely than men (15%) to report that balancing the demands of work and family causes them "a great deal" of stress.

While a majority of the total sample report that balancing the demands of work and family causes them at least "some" stress, fully two-thirds (67%) also report that they are "very" (31%) or "somewhat" (36%) satisfied with the amount of time they spend at work versus the time they spend with their family. It is noteworthy that a similar proportion of parents with children at home (65%) also report that they are satisfied with the balance between the time they spend at work and the time they have with their family.

- Given that they are the group of parents most likely to report that balancing the demands of work and family causes them stress, it is not surprising that single parents are the *least* likely to be "satisfied" (52%) with the amount of time spent at work versus with their family. In fact, fully one-third (35%) of single parents report that they are *dissatisfied* with the arrangement of work and family time in their lives.

SATISFACTION WITH AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT AT WORK VERSUS WITH FAMILY



- It is noteworthy also that men (70%) are significantly more likely than women (63%) to be satisfied with the amount of time they spend at work relative to the time they have with their family.

Overall, 67% of respondents are satisfied with their work/life balance. This is consistent with the 68% who in 1994 reported to Angus Reid a "good balance between my job and time with my family." In 1994, women (73%) were more likely to express satisfaction than men (63%).¹¹ Today, however, this seems to have reversed; men (70%) are more likely than women (63%) to agree that they are satisfied with their work/family balance.

¹⁰ Linda Duxbury and Chris Higgins, "Work—Life Balance in the New Millennium: Where are We? Where do we need to Go?" Canadian Policy Research Networks, Discussion Paper W/12 (October 2001).

¹¹ Angus Reid, *The State of the Family in Canada* (1994) p.43.

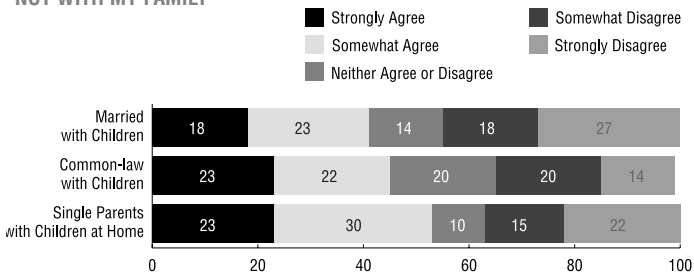
REPORTED SATISFACTION WITH TIME SPENT AT WORK VERSUS TIME WITH FAMILY

	Total Sample (n=1500) %	Gender		Amount of Work/ Family Stress	
		Male (n=750) %	Female (n=750) %	Great deal/ Some (n=851) %	Not much/ None (n=608)
TOTAL "SATISFIED"	67	70	63	56	83
Very satisfied	31	32	31	19	49
Somewhat satisfied	36	38	32	37	34
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	6	6	8	8	4
Somewhat dissatisfied	15	14	15	22	6

While it is not surprising that those who report at least "some" stress from balancing the demands of work and family are less likely than others to be satisfied on this measure, it is surprising that a majority (56%) of this group indicate that they are "very" (19%) or "somewhat" (37%) satisfied with the balance of work and family time in their lives. This may suggest that, for this segment of the population, the stresses caused by balancing the demands of work and family are not related to the amount of time they spend in each of these parts of their lives.

On a related question, 43% of respondents who have children living at home and work outside the home agree with the statement, "I often feel guilty about the amount of time I spend at work and not with my family." There is no difference between men and women, although those reporting annual household income under \$50,000 a year are more likely to "agree completely" (26%) than those reporting annual household income over \$50,000 a year (17%).

I OFTEN FEEL GUILTY ABOUT THE AMOUNT OF TIME I SPEND AT WORK AND NOT WITH MY FAMILY



2.4 Families and Taxation

As already mentioned, Canadians clearly perceive concerns related to household finances as their top-

of-mind "most important issue facing Canadian families." But to what extent is the taxation of families perceived as an issue? Mentions of taxes, tax increases and over-taxation are, at 3%, well back in the list of top-of-mind issues. However, since taxation is also logically bound up with concerns about money and supporting one's family (the most frequently mentioned issue cluster), additional questions were posed in order to explore Canadians' views on the family and taxation.

This is especially important since "family tax fairness" has been a much-discussed issue in the last few years. Studies have highlighted how families with a single income earner are taxed more heavily than families with two earners, and how the tax system fails to take into account the presence of children in a family (apart from social policy expenditure for low income households).¹² Earlier opinion polls have suggested that a majority of Canadians feel tax policies which treat parents unfairly are a serious source of family stress.¹³

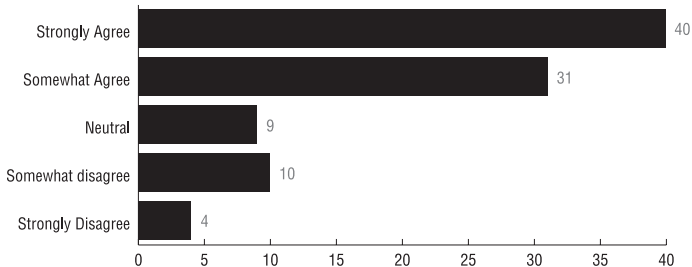
In our present survey, respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements. Seventy percent (73% among parents with children at home) agree that "the current tax system makes it more difficult for families to choose to have one parent stay at home with young children." There is substantial consensus across most demographic groups in agreement with this statement, although it is worth noting that: younger people are less likely to agree (58%) than other age groups; Canadian Alliance supporters (78%) are more likely to agree than Liberal supporters (68%); and, interestingly, residents in the Greater Toronto Area

¹² See Kenneth Boessenkool and James Davies, "Giving Mom and Dad a Break: Returning Fairness to Families in Canada's Tax and Transfer System," C.D. Howe Institute Commentary 117 (November 1998).

¹³ COMPAS, "Families in Crisis," July 19, 2000.

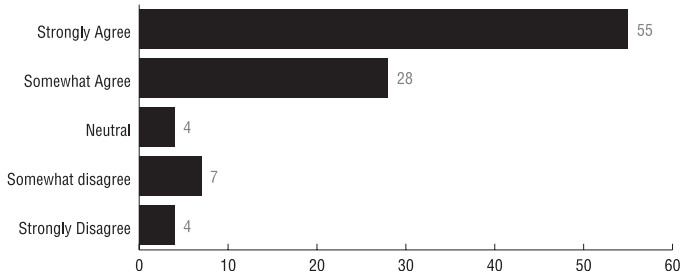
(74%) are more likely to agree than those in the rest of Ontario (66%). No significant differences arise from income, gender, region or religion.

THE CURRENT TAX SYSTEM MAKES IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR FAMILIES TO CHOOSE TO HAVE ONE PARENT STAY AT HOME WITH YOUNGER CHILDREN



An even larger majority (82% overall, including 85% among parents with children at home) agree with the statement that “Governments should change the tax law in Canada to make it easier for parents with young children to afford to have one parent stay at home if they choose.” Once again, agreement reflects consensus across demographic categories with only a few notable exceptions: individuals reporting annual household income over \$100,000 per year are less likely to agree (74%) than other income groups; Canadian Alliance supporters (94%) are more likely to agree than supporters for any other federal party; and single parents (90%) and

GOVERNMENTS SHOULD CHANGE THE TAX LAW IN CANADA TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR PARENTS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN TO AFFORD TO HAVE ONE PARENT STAY AT HOME IF THEY CHOOSE



FAIRNESS OF CURRENT TAX SYSTEM FOR STAY-AT-HOME PARENTS

	Total (n=1500) %	BC (n=196) %	Prairies (n=242) %	Ontario (n=561) %	Quebec (n=378) %	Atlantic (n=123) %
Current tax system is unfair to parents who stay at home with children and should be changed	64	62	63	63	69	60
Current system is fair and should not be changed	26	22	25	28	25	28
DK/NA/REF	10	16	12	9	6	11

married parents with children living at home (87%) are more likely to agree than single individuals (79%) or common-law couples without children (78%).

To examine the perceived fairness of the current approach to taxation specifically as it relates to the issue of child-care expenses, this survey posed the following statement to respondents:

As you may know, families in which one parent earns income and the other stays home to look after their children pay higher income taxes than a family with the same income where both parents work and pay someone else to look after their children.

Some people say that families who choose to have one parent stay home to look after the children should be treated the same as families in which both parents work and pay for child-care. These people believe that the income tax laws are unfair and should be changed.

Other people say that the current tax system recognises that working parents have more expenses and that the tax-system should compensate them for these costs. These people argue that on this issue the tax system is fair and should not be changed.

When asked which of these two opinions is closest to their own, just under two-thirds (64%) of respondents indicate that they agree more with the opinion “that families who choose to have one parent stay home to look after the children should be treated the same as families in which both parents work and pay for child-care” and that “the income tax laws are unfair and should be changed.” Perhaps not surprisingly, support for changing the law was voiced most frequently by married people with children (70%). On the other hand, single individuals (61%), people married without children (62%) and, surprisingly, people with children and living in a

common-law relationship (52%) are all significantly less likely to agree that the tax system is unfair.

Taken together with the strong indication that money and family finances are top-of-mind concerns, these results suggest that many Canadians feel the tax system overly restricts the choices families can make in how they arrange their affairs, and that they would support approaches to taxation which would make it easier for parents to stay home to raise their children, if they choose to do so.

2.5 Working Parents and Child Care

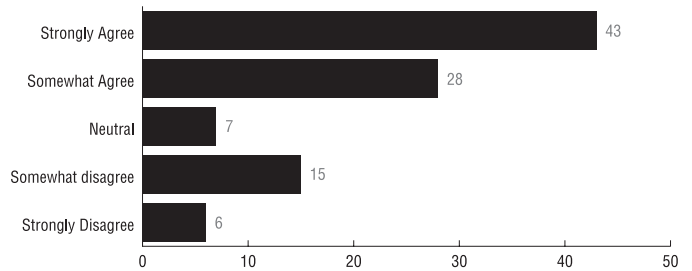
A strong majority (73%) of Canadian parents with children at home work at least part-time outside the home, suggesting that issues around care for children might be a primary concern. After all, the issue of child care impacts more broadly than just the cohort of parents who need outside childcare right now: grandparents and other relatives, parents with older children who have experienced the need for child care and parents or parents-to-be who expect to need it in the future are all part of a much wider group of people sensitive to this issue. This study suggests, however, that this is *not* a general concern for Canadians.

On an unaided basis, the issue of “working parents” does not appear to be a primary top-of-mind concern of Canadians. Even among parents with children at home, just 3% report that the *most* important issues facing Canadian families are those of “two working parents”, “women having to work” or “child-care”. This is the same as the number of Canadians overall who identified these as the most important issues. As noted above, other issues, particularly those related to

“money”, education and health-care are more likely to be identified as primary areas of concern.

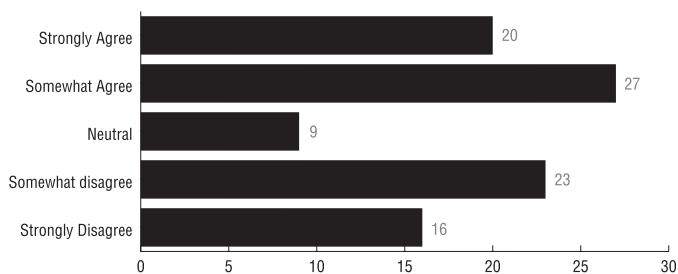
When prompted, however, Canadians do have opinions about child-care. Fully seven-in-ten (71%) agree either “strongly” (43%) or “somewhat” (28%) that “*The best child-care is a parent who does not work and stays home to raise the children*”. It is noteworthy that those who have children at home are as likely as the population overall to agree – or to disagree – with this statement, indicating that the perception that *parental* childcare is the “best” childcare is widespread. This supports research from the Canadian Policy Research Networks which has concluded that: “the polling data confirm that there have been longstanding tensions between paid employment for women and child care responsibilities. In terms of children’s well being, a majority of Canadians believe that ideally women should *not* work outside of the home while their children are young.”¹⁴

THE BEST CHILD-CARE IS A PARENT WHO DOES NOT WORK AND STAYS HOME TO RAISE THE CHILDREN

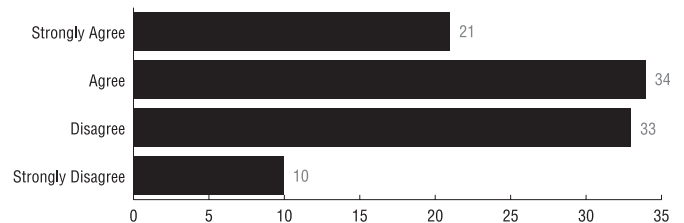


On the other hand, Canadians are not convinced that having a child in third-party care is harmful. Under half of respondents (47%) agreed with the statement that “*Pre-school children are less well-adjusted when their mothers work full time outside the home.*” Further, 44% of parents

PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN ARE LESS WELL-ADJUSTED WHEN THEIR MOTHERS WORK FULL TIME



A PRE-SCHOOL CHILD IS LIKELY TO SUFFER IF BOTH PARENTS ARE EMPLOYED? ANGUS REID 1999



Source: Angus Reid, “Family Matters: A look at issues concerning families and raising children in Canada Today.” September 29, 1999

¹⁴ Joseph H. Michalski, “Values and Preferences for the ‘Best Policy Mix’ for Canadian Children,” CPRN Discussion Paper no. f/05 (May 1999), p. vi.

with children at home *disagree* that mothers working full time leads to less well-adjusted children. Given this, Canadians today seem less willing to think third-party child care is harmful to children than even three years ago. A 1999 Angus Reid survey found 56% in agreement that “a pre-school child is likely to suffer if both parents are employed.”¹⁵

Given the strong preference for parental care in general, the question arises as to the reasons why parents use paid third-party child care. There are many potential reasons why married or common-law parents (single parents do not, by definition, have such a wide range of options) would choose to do so: a desire to pursue a career or education, to earn extra money for the family, or even to escape the house.¹⁶ However, there are widespread perceptions that some parents, at least, do not *choose* to work so much as they are *compelled* to do so in order to make ends meet. The Canadian Policy Research Networks has found that many Canadians feel that the government fails to respect women’s preferences and, instead, “women [are] often *forced* to work out of economic necessity and that women should have the option to focus on childrearing, particularly during the early childhood years.”¹⁷

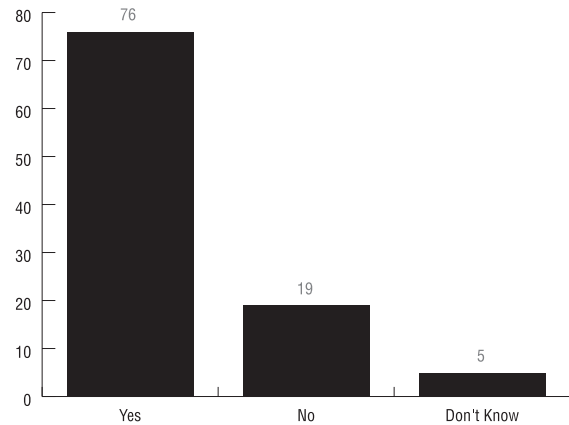
To test this, we asked the following question of those respondents who are either married or living common-law and who have children in child care while they work:

If money was not a consideration, and other circumstances made it possible to do so, would you prefer to stay at home with your children, or to have your partner stay at home with the children, instead of some other form of child-care during the day?

The results indicate that three-quarters (76%) of respondents would *prefer* to have a parent stay home with the children if finances and other circumstances made it possible.

In fact, it appears as though finances are the key roadblock to these parents staying home with their children. The most common reason these parents give

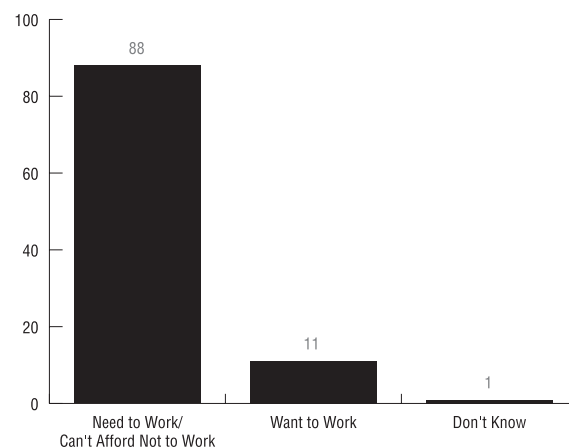
PREFERENCE FOR STAYING HOME WITH CHILDREN, ALL THINGS BEING EQUAL



for **not** staying home is that they “need to work/can’t afford not to work”. While this finding is based on a small sample (n=72) of those married or common-law parents with children in some form of child-care while they work **and** who would prefer that one parent stay at home with the children, it does suggest that concern about money is a key reason why parents choose to have neither parent stay home with the children. So, while a majority believe that a stay-at-home parent is the preferred approach to child-rearing, the financial realities families face appear to be determining factors in the choice to work and have the children cared for by others.

This perception that parents—and, one suspects, more particularly mothers—return to work out of economic

PRIMARY REASONS FOR NOT STAYING AT HOME WITH CHILDREN



¹⁵ Angus Reid, “Family Matters: a Look at Issues Concerning Families and Raising Children in Canada Today.” September, 1999.

¹⁶ 45% of respondents agreed with the statement that “It is better for both parents and children if the parents work at least part-time and the children spend some time each week being cared for by other people.” So clearly a significant portion of Canadians feel regular respite from the house is positive.

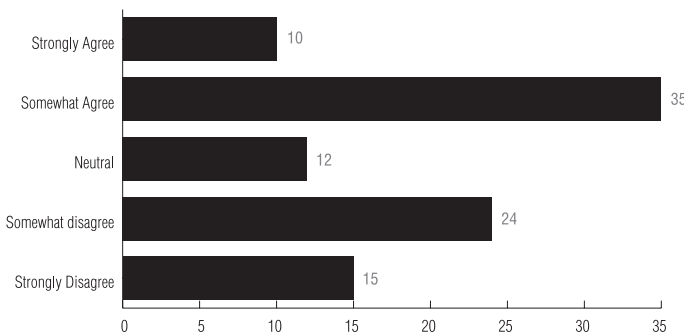
¹⁷ Michalski, “Values and Preferences for the ‘Best Policy Mix’”, p. vii.



necessity more than choice receives some support from Statistics Canada, which found that almost 9 out of every 10 working women who gave birth in 1993 or 1994 returned to work within one year. On average these women were on maternity leave for 6.4 months. According to StatsCan, Employment Insurance benefits “played major roles in determining the average return dates. However, self-employed women and those who did not receive maternity benefits returned more quickly than those who did receive benefits.¹⁸ This suggests that economic considerations are a very significant factor for women in deciding whether to return to work and, in most cases, whether to use child care.

It should be noted also, however, that there is a group of parents who are not convinced that one-parent at home with the children is the best or most appropriate option; Equal proportions of parents with children at home agree (44%) or disagree (42%) that “*it is better for both parents and children if the parents work at least part time and the children spend some time each week being cared for by other people*”.

IT IS BETTER FOR BOTH PARENTS AND CHILDREN IF THE PARENTS WORK AT LEAST PART-TIME AND THE CHILDREN SPEND MORE TIME EACH WEEK BEING CARE FOR BY OTHER PEOPLE



In addition, one-in-five parents with children at home (22%) do **not** agree that “*The best child-care is a parent who does not work and stays home to raise the children*”. Moreover, one-in-five (19%) married/common-law parents who work and have children in some form of child-care report that they would **not** prefer to have one parent stay at home with the children instead of using child-care. Taken together, these findings indicate that a minority of parents with children at home believe not only that using extra-parental child-care is good for both parents and children, but also that a stay-at-home parent is not necessarily the “best” form of child-care. For these parents it is likely that considerations other

than the financial influence their choice to have their children cared for by others.

In summary, then, Canadians’ opinion on the issue of child care is nuanced. On the one hand, they express a strong preference in general for having a parent at home, and believe it is the “best” form of child-care. On the other hand the majority of parents do not believe that it is the *only* “good” form of childcare for young children, and do not view alternatives as harmful. Perhaps this is because many parents are convinced that their personal financial realities preclude them from choosing their first option for child care. A strong majority of two-income families with young children would *prefer* to have one parent stay home, but cannot—because they do not think they can afford to.

2.6 “Ideal” Family Size—Declining by Choice?

At some point in the last decade, the aging of the baby boomers has become a reality in our social consciousness and has brought demographics from the social science classroom to the bestsellers list. Books such as David Foot’s *Boom, Bust and Echo* and David Cork’s *The Pig and the Python* have popularized the thesis that, as Foot says, “demographics explain about two-thirds of everything” and that paying close attention to the preoccupations of the baby boom generation can help one anticipate all manner of social trends.¹⁹ Certainly as a society we need to come to grips with the implications of our aging population and what it means for health care, pensions and retirement benefits, education, general levels of taxation and issues across the spectrum of public policy.

However, if our aging population is one side of the coin, Canada’s steadily declining birth and fertility rates are the other. According to Statistics Canada, 1999 (the most recent year for which data are available) marked the ninth straight year of decline in live births in Canada. That same year, the fertility rate (which estimates the average number of children a woman will have in her life time), also continued a nine-year decline, reaching a new low of 1,528 births per 1,000 women aged 15

¹⁸ Statistics Canada, “Employment after childbirth,” *The Daily*, September 1, 1999.

¹⁹ David Foot, *Boom, Bust and Echo 2000: Profiting from the Demographic Shift in the New Millennium*, (revised edition, 1998), p. 8. David Cork, *The Pig and the Python: How to Prosper from the Aging Baby Boom* (1996).

to 49—or 1.5 births per woman. This represents a 24% decrease in the fertility rate since 1990.²⁰

Urbanization, education, availability of contraception and female attachment to the labour force all contribute to declining birth rates, and in this regard Canada's experience is similar to that of many countries in the industrialized world—although it must be noted that the United States, sharing a common experience on all these issues, saw its fertility rate increase in 2000 to an average of 2.13 children per woman, up 2.5 percent from 1999 and the first time since 1971 that enough children will be born to offset deaths.²¹ According to Statistics Canada, young women are waiting longer to start having children, perhaps in order to concentrate on developing their careers. In 1996, mothers were on average 27.1 years old when having their first child, compared to 25.7 years old in 1986.²² This suggests that, as with child-care choices, economic factors are an important consideration for parents in deciding when to begin a family and how many children to have.

Do people willingly put career and work ahead of family or, in a perfect world, would they reverse the emphasis? In studying how Canadians balance work and family commitments, Professor Linda Duxbury of Carleton University has reached the latter conclusion. In an interview with the *Globe and Mail*, Professor Duxbury said “People are desperate. It’s really horrible... People are finding ways to have balance. They are finding that the way to balance is not to have kids.” She has concluded that 40% of professional women and 30% of professional men have not started a family because of work; and 25% of women and 15% of men say they have chosen to have fewer children because of work.²³

In the absence of these sorts of work and financial pressures, how many children would Canadian parents really like to have? Between 1945 and 1994, Gallup regularly asked Canadians for their opinion on the “ideal” number of children for a family. In 1994, 61% of Canadians felt the ideal number of children was two or less; 29% thought it was three children; 10% thought the ideal was four or more. Gallup noted that this had not changed substantively since 1991, but was very different from 1945, when 60% believed that the ideal family should have four or more children, and even from as recently as 1970 and 1974 when 24% and 17%

respectively chose four or more as the ideal number of children.²⁴

IDEAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN A FAMILY: GALLUP CANADA (VARIOUS YEARS)

	2 or less %	3 %	4 or more %
1945	17	23	60
1957	22	23	55
1970	34	33	33
1974	52	24	24
1979	53	30	17
1980	59	27	14
1982	63	25	12
1983	56	27	17
1984	61	26	13
1985	56	33	11
1986	61	26	13
1987	58	29	13
1988	58	29	13
1991	59	30	11
1994	61	29	10

Focus on the Family wanted to find out whether the attitudes of Canadians had changed. So we asked:

“Ideally, how many children would you like to have, or have had, in your family?”

Nationally, 55% of respondents chose two or less; 25% chose three; 20% chose four or more as their ideal number of children. Among the total sample, the average (mean) *ideal* number of children reported *per respondent* is 2.6

²⁰ Statistics Canada, “Births, 1999” *The Daily*, December 10, 2001. See also Annual Demographic Statistics 2001 (March, 2002).

²¹ Associated Press, February 13, 2002.

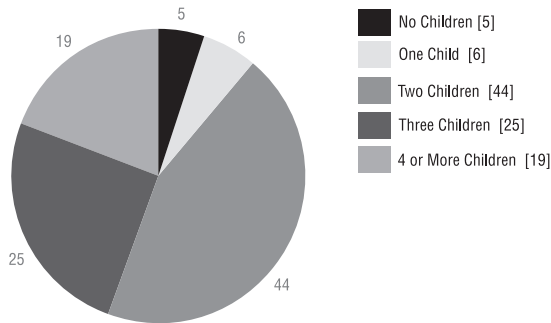
²² Statistics Canada, “Wives, mothers and wages: Does timing matter?” *The Daily*, May 1, 2002.

²³ “Work winning out over family in the struggle for balance,” *Globe and Mail*, February 13, 2002, B1.

²⁴ Gallup Canada, “Majority of Canadians believe two-child family is ideal,” (September 29, 1994).



IDEAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FAMILY



Gallup had concluded that age, language and religion played a part in shaping attitudes on this issue, and our survey confirms that these indicators are still relevant.

Twenty-seven percent of respondents aged 55 and over think that the ideal family has four or more children, but this percentage declines with each younger age cohort. On average those over age 55 identify an ideal of 3.01 children; this falls to 2.68 among those aged 46 to 54, and 2.27 among the youngest group, those aged 18 to 24.

Evangelical Christians (avg. 2.82) are more likely to choose four or more children (23%) than non-evangelicals (avg. 2.63), 18% of whom do so. People who attend religious services weekly are even more inclined towards large families. Twenty-nine percent of weekly attenders say that their ideal family has four or more children; they identify an average number of 3.1 children as ideal. By comparison, people who never attend religious services say that their ideal family is, on average, 2.4 children; only 12% of them say that they would want four or more children.

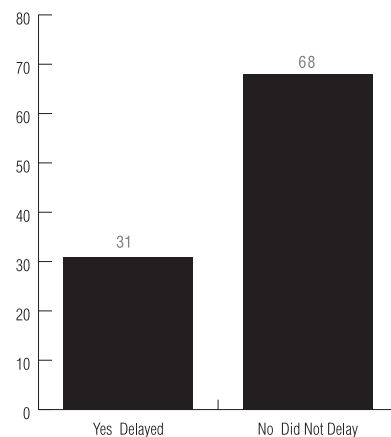
Although our survey did not take account of language, 23% of Quebec residents (avg. 2.74) respond that four or more children would be ideal, compared to 18% of people in the other provinces (avg. 2.55).

It is worth noting that the trend which Gallup had previously observed towards a smaller ideal family seems to have reversed. Twenty percent of respondents in the current survey believe that four or more children is an ideal family size—double the number found by Gallup in 1994. In fact, according to Gallup’s data, the last time that Canadians on aggregate favoured such a large family was sometime between 1974 (24%) and 1979 (17%).

Do the data show that Canadians desire to have larger families than they are, in fact, having? It is difficult to draw categorical conclusions on this point. Within the total sample the average number of *actual* children *per respondent* is 1.8, which is significantly less than the average ideal number of 2.6 children identified per respondent. Some of this discrepancy between *actual* and *ideal* may be accounted for by the fact that a number of younger respondents have not started their families yet, or have started but intend to have more children in the future. As a result, the number of children they indicate as their “ideal” is greater than the “actual” number of children they have. Even if this ideal represents their intent, however, the demographic reality described by Statistics Canada of 1.5 children per woman on average asserts convincingly that Canadians still in their child-bearing years are not currently having the number of children they say is ideal.

It is impossible to know exactly why this gap between *actual* and *ideal* family size exists. However, to the extent that putting off having children tends to reduce the number of children born into a family, people’s perceptions about why they delayed having children may be relevant.

INCIDENCE OF DELAYING OR PUTTING-OFF STARTING A FAMILY



Thirty-one percent of respondents agree that they decided to put off having children. When asked to identify the most important reason why they put off having children, their five most frequent responses were:

- 27% wanted to get established in their career
- 16% wanted simply to enjoy life and experience more of it
- 13% couldn't afford children
- 9% had not met the person they felt was the right mother or father for children
- 8% wanted to pursue more education.

Other answers included wanting to buy a house or have a house first (2%) and wanting to be financially stable (1%).

These answers suggest that many people defer having children for predominantly economic reasons. And undoubtedly for many of these people deferral eventually becomes denial. Of course, the point at which one is "financially stable" or sufficiently "established in a career" is a subjective appraisal, and these answers may be natural hesitation at making such a momentous life decision, masquerading as economic concern. However, as with the question of child-care options, the financial stresses facing many Canadian families seems to be an important factor in their family decision-making.

3. SOCIAL CHALLENGES

Writing an introductory “Historian’s Perspective” to the Vanier Institute of the Family’s *Profiling Canada’s Families II* study, Eric Sager, Director of the Canadian Families Project at the University of Victoria, argues that, because “variety and flexibility” have always characterized household formation, “families are best defined by their functions, not their form.”²⁵ Discarding any reference to structure or form in its definition of family, the Vanier Institute celebrates whatever household arrangements may emerge as a positive development, and as “the tapestry of Canadian families [growing] richer and more varied.”²⁶

For its part, Focus on the Family Canada cannot discuss “the family” entirely apart from structure, because family structure is undeniably a strong predictor of certain outcomes. In short, what a family looks like does indeed influence how well it does its job. As University of Montreal demographer Nicole Marcil-Gratton has remarked: “Without passing judgment on the rigidity of the ‘traditional family’ or the new flexibility of contemporary conjugal relationships, these relationships unfortunately result all too often in family instability for their children.”²⁷

The “Canadian Family” is changing, and it appears in 2002 that the majority of Canadians have accepted these changes. On an unaided basis, just 2% of respondents identify “moral decline/family morals/family values” as the most important issues facing Canadian families, which suggests that when Canadians think of family

issues, they do not think immediately of issues which might be classified as “moral”. As with most things, the top-of-mind issues tend to be the more immediate concerns.

When prompted, however, Canadians indicate that they have (sometimes strong) opinions on issues around family structure.

3.1 Marriage

Canadians are in no danger of rejecting “marriage”.

As noted earlier, Canadians consider “*maintaining a good, stable marriage*” a high priority in their lives. Seventy-nine percent of married people mention this as either their first (40%) or second (39%) priority. To put it in perspective, the second-highest priority is “*being a good parent*” (68%), followed at a distance by “*having a job that gives you personal fulfillment and happiness*” (23%). This certainly underscores the centrality of marriage and family concerns among Canadians’ personal priorities.

Interestingly, the survey also found that marriage is viewed as an important personal goal by single individuals, with 38% agreeing that “*meeting the right person*

²⁵ Eric Sager, “Canada’s Families—An Historian’s Perspective,” in *Profiling Canada’s Families II*, Vanier Institute of the Family (2000), www.vifamily.ca/profiling/historian.htm

²⁶ *Profiling Canada’s Families II*, Vanier Institute of the Family (2000), www.vifamily.ca/profiling/historian.htm

²⁷ Nicole Marcil-Gratton, “Growing up with Mom and Dad? The intricate family life courses of Canadian children,” Statistics Canada (1998), catalogue no. 89-566-XIE, p. 5.

FIRST AND SECOND MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITY IN LIFE COMBINED (NET)

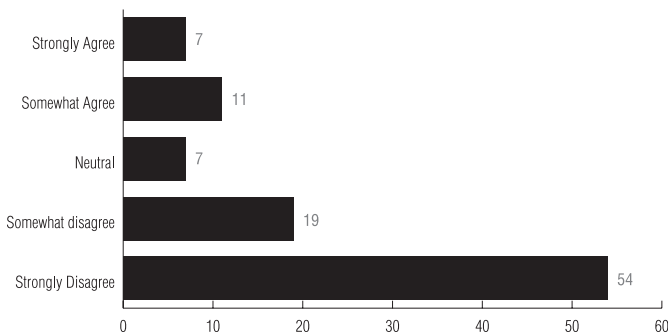
	Married (n=801) %	Not Married (n=699) %
Maintaining a good, stable marriage	79	n/a
Being a good parent	68	52
Having a job that gives you personal fulfillment and happiness	23	54
Developing your spiritual side	18	25
Making lots of money	5	17
Meeting the right person and getting married	n/a	38
None of these	3	8
DK/NA/REF	-	<1

This ‘Net’ includes two responses; column will add to more than 100%

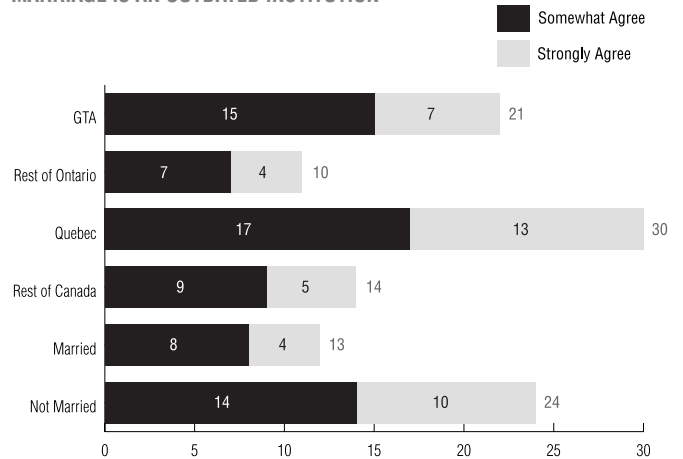
and getting married” is either their first (17%) or second (21%) most important priority in life. In the case of unmarried respondents, however, this was ranked a lower priority than “personal fulfillment and happiness” in a job (54%) and, perhaps surprisingly, “being a good parent” (52%).

Given the personal importance that Canadians place on marriage, it is no surprise that 73% disagree (54% disagree strongly) that “marriage is an outdated institution”. It is worth noting, however, that disagreement seems to be declining. The World Values Survey had found that in 1981 and 1990, respectively, 86.7% and 87.6% of Canadians disagreed with the same statement.²⁸ Further, according to our survey, those under the age of 40 are significantly more likely to agree (24%) that marriage is an outdated institution than are those over 40 years of age (15%). Quebecers are over twice as likely to agree (30%) as those living elsewhere in Canada (14%), and, perhaps reflecting more liberal urban attitudes, residents in the Greater Toronto Area are twice as likely to agree (21%) as people elsewhere in Ontario (10%). Perhaps reflecting their own life situation, single parents (24%), and those living common-law with children (28%) or without children (23%) are also more likely than married individuals (13%) to agree.

MARRIAGE IS AN OUTDATED INSTITUTION



MARRIAGE IS AN OUTDATED INSTITUTION



Given that young people, urban dwellers and those in non-traditional households are all growing segments of the population, attitudes towards the institution of marriage bear watching in future. Nevertheless, marriage in 2002 remains a strong institution with the continuing support of a large majority of Canadians.

3.2 Common-Law

Despite placing a high priority on marriage, however, when Canadians are pressed on more specific issues their tendency towards more liberal perspectives becomes clearer.

Past strictures against romantically involved partners “living together” outside of marriage have been fading for some time. Historical data show this evolution of opinion. In 1971, only 22% of Canadians agreed that “a couple should live together for a time before deciding to get married or not to get married.” This increased to 38% in 1976, and to 46% in 1981.²⁹ By 1994, 73% of Canadians agreed “it is OK for a couple to live together before they are married.”³⁰

Our survey shows that an acceptance of cohabitation before—or indeed, instead of—marriage remains strong. For example:

- a significant majority (76%) agrees either “strongly” (38%) or “somewhat” (38%) that “it doesn’t matter if a child’s parents are legally married as long as the child is safe and both parents live at home.” Younger people (80% of those under age 40), Quebec residents (88%) and those who attend a religious service infrequently (82%) or never (88%) are more likely to agree than older people

²⁸ World Values Study Group. WORLD VALUES SURVEY, 1981-1984 AND 1990-1993 [Computer file]. 2nd ICPSR version. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research [producer], 1999. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 1999.

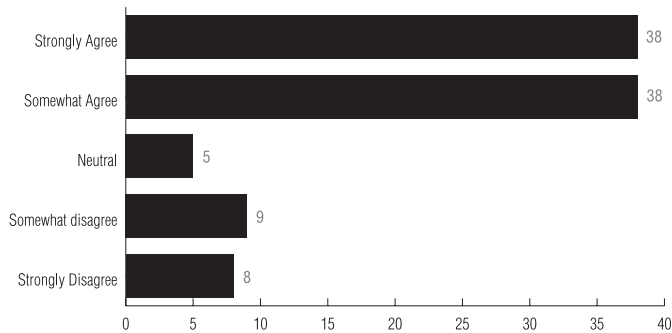
²⁹ Gallup Reports, August 11, 1971, July 21, 1976, and August 12, 1981.

³⁰ Angus Reid Group, State of the Family in Canada (1994), p. 65).



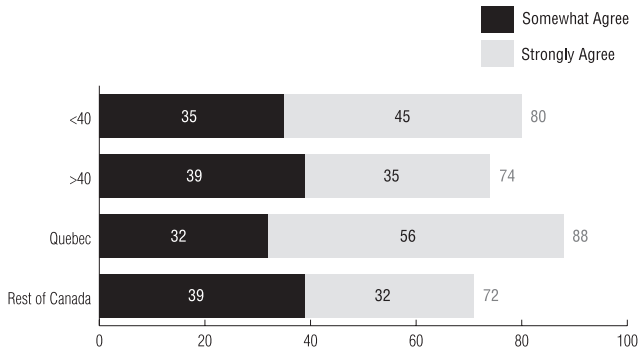
(74% of those over age 40), Canadians outside Quebec (72%) and those who attend a religious service at least once a month (64.8%). Canadian Alliance supporters are also less likely to agree (58%) than Bloc Quebecois (93%), NDP (83%), Liberal (78%) or PC (76%) supporters.

IT DOESN'T MATTER IF A CHILD'S PARENTS ARE LEGALLY MARRIED AS LONG AS THE CHILD IS SAFE AND BOTH PARENTS LIVE AT HOME



If money was not a consideration, and other circumstances made it possible to do so, would you prefer to stay at home with your children, or to have your partner stay at home with the children, instead of some other form of child-care during the day?
Base: Among respondents who are married/living as a couple with kids at home, who work and use child-care. Caution small sample size

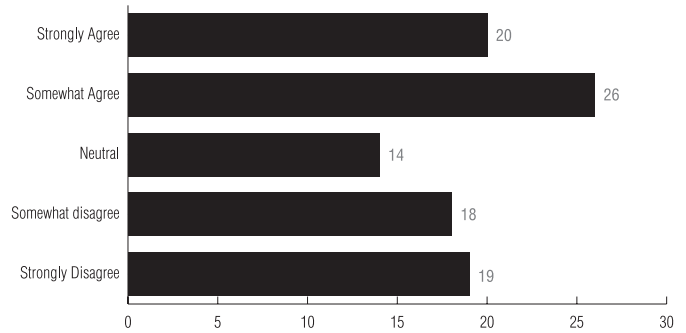
IT DOESN'T MATTER IF A CHILD'S PARENTS ARE LEGALLY MARRIED AS LONG AS THE CHILD IS SAFE AND BOTH PARENTS LIVE AT HOME



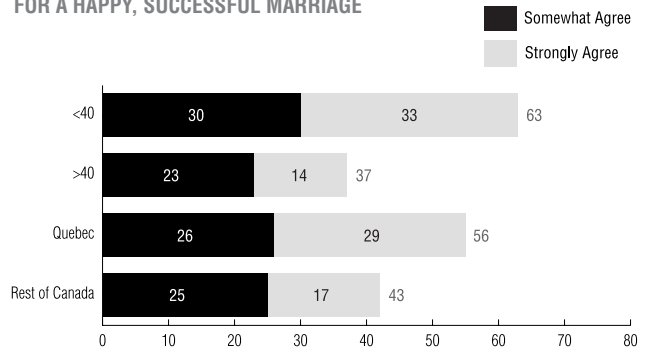
Base: Among those who would prefer to have one parent stay home with children and who have children in child-care. Caution small sample size

• Canadians are somewhat less convinced that “living together tends to improve the chances for a happy, successful marriage.” Still, 46% of Canadian agree with this statement, as opposed to 38% who disagree. Agreement, again, is strongest among those under 40 years of age (63%), Quebec (56%), Atlantic Canada (54%) and those who attend a religious service infrequently (54%) or never (61%) than among those over 40 years of age (37%), residents outside of Quebec (43%), the Prairie provinces (39%) or Ontario (41%), or those who attend a religious service at least once a month (31%). Women are also less likely to agree than men (39% versus 52%) and are significantly more likely to disagree strongly (24% versus 14%).

LIVING TOGETHER BEFORE MARRIAGE TENDS TO IMPROVE THE CHANCES FOR A HAPPY, SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE



LIVING TOGETHER BEFORE MARRIAGE TENDS TO IMPROVE THE CHANCES FOR A HAPPY, SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE



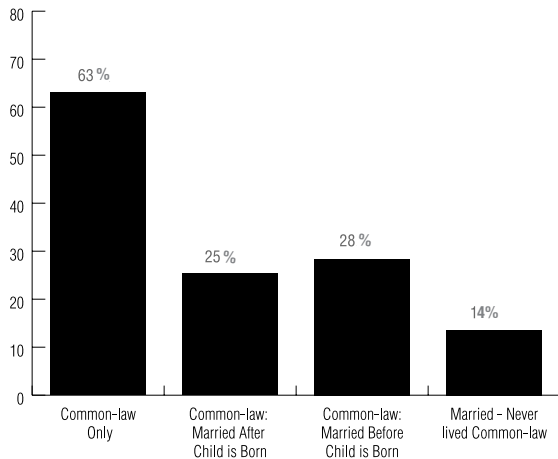
The opinion of the 38% who disagree that living together improves the chances for a successful marriage is substantiated by Statistics Canada’s findings. According to recent research arising from the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth (NLSCY), common-law relationships—even when they result in a subsequent marriage—are less stable than marriages where the individuals did not live together previously. According to Nicole Marcil-Gratton:

The results are fairly clear. In all the NLSCY birth cohorts, the children born to parents who are married and have not lived in a common-law union beforehand are approximately three times less likely to experience family breakdown than children whose parents were living in a common-law union when they were born and who did not subsequently marry.³¹

In practice, this means that 13.6% of children born into families with married parents who had not lived together before getting married saw their parents separate. But this percentage rises to 25.4% if the parents were living

³¹ Nicole Marcil-Gratton, “Growing Up with Mom and Dad?” (1998), p. 16

INCIDENCE OF PARENTAL SEPARATION BASED ON MARITAL STATUS



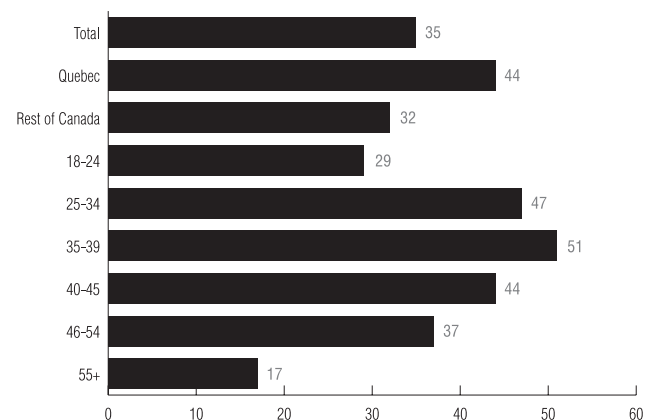
common-law, even if they got married later, to 28.4% if the parents were married but had lived common-law previously, and to 63.1% if the parents were living common-law and did not marry each other either before or after the child's birth.³² The parents' choice of family structure—whether marriage or a common-law relationship—has an impact, then, on whether the family will survive intact. And, as researchers have noted, the trend is towards children “experiencing family breakdown at a younger and younger age.” Compared with the 1983-1984 cohort studied in the NLSCY, children born in 1991-1992 were 56% more likely to live in a lone-parent home by the age of 2.³³

To a degree, this increased acceptance of cohabitation has been driven by acceptance of the practice by the youth of the “Trudeau-mania generation”—in 1971, 40% of Canadians under 30 endorsed the concept of “trial marriages” as opposed to only 9% of those overage 50.³⁴ And this opinion has gathered steam as the incidence of having “lived together” became widespread within the Canadian population. According to our survey, one-third (35%) of Canadians report that at some time they have been involved in a “*relationship where you were living with a romantic partner for six months or longer, but were not married*”. This proportion is significantly higher among those 25 to 34 (47%) and 35 to 39 years of age (51%).

Will this translate into increased acceptance of cohabitation outside of marriage as the population ages?

“Demographic determinism” would anticipate that conclusion. But it is important to remember that social change does not always follow a linear path. As Reginald Bibby sums up his analysis: “Canadians want good relationships. Sometimes they are finding them, sometimes they are not.”³⁵ The research based on NLSCY data discussed above clearly indicates that people are, on aggregate, far less likely to find satisfying and enduring relationships in common-law unions than in traditional marriage. Will this tendency create a swing of opinion and practice back towards more conservative positions in future? This, again, merits continued attention.

INCIDENCE OF EVER HAVING BEEN INVOLVED IN A “COMMON-LAW” RELATIONSHIP



3.3 Single Parents

Less than one percent of respondents identify “single parenting/single families” as the most important issue facing Canadian families today. Further, 76% of Canadians agree that “*Children raised in a loving single-parent household are just as likely as any other children to be happy and well-adjusted.*” The highest degree of agreement came, perhaps not surprisingly, from single parents themselves (90%). Women were significantly more likely to agree (81%) than men (70%), and residents of Atlantic Canada more likely to agree (81%) than those in Quebec (72%). Overall, only 19% disagreed with the expectation that the children of single-parents would be as well-adjusted as others.

So Canadians do not seem worried about negative outcomes arising from the recent rapid growth in the

³² NLSCY data (1983-1984 cohort) in “Growing Up with Mom and Dad?” (1998), pp. 16-17.

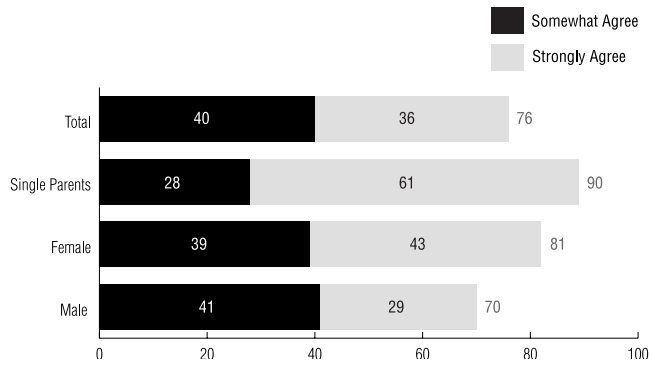
³³ “Growing Up with Mom and Dad?” (1998), p. 13.

³⁴ Gallup Report, August 11, 1971.

³⁵ Bibby, *Restless Gods*, p. 211.



CHILDREN RAISED IN A LOVING SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLD ARE JUST AS LIKELY AS ANY OTHER CHILDREN TO BE HAPPY AND WELL-ADJUSTED



number of single parent families. But is this conviction grounded in observation or hopeful thinking? Again, based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, the latter seems to be the case. Using data generated from 1994-1995, researchers from Human Resource Development Canada found that children in female lone-parent families “were at increased risk of a range of difficulties compared with children in two-parent families.” Further, “children from single-mother families were more likely to be poor. They were also 1.5 to 2 times more likely to have emotional or behavioural problems or academic or social difficulties, whether the family was poor or not.”³⁶

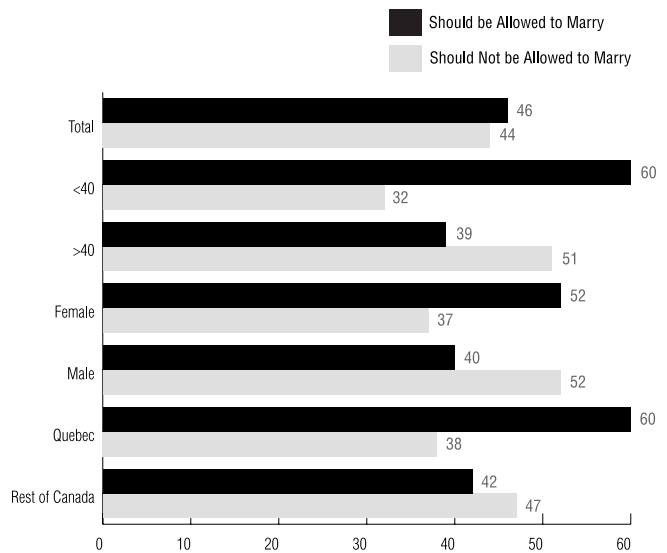
As is the case with data relating to common-law families, this is an overall statistical picture. There are many single parent families which do not experience these problems. Still, the statistical reality demonstrated by StatsCan and HRDC researchers is that single parenting dramatically reduces the likelihood of children being “happy and well adjusted.”

Interestingly, Canadians’ acceptance that single-parenting produces the same outcome as other family structures (76% agree) seems to contradict their strong belief that “a household with a mother and father who are legally married to each other is the best situation for raising children” (70% agree). This could be because people hold a general view of the “best” situation, but are unwilling to pass critical judgment on the individual single parents that they know by concluding that their heroic efforts to raise their families are somehow a “less than best” situation with negative consequences. Whatever the reason, it is again worth monitoring public opinion on this question as more data become available on the social consequences of the rise in single parenting in Canada.

3.4 Attitudes to Homosexual Marriage and Benefits

Canadians are split almost evenly on the issue of legalizing homosexual marriage. Just under half (46%) of Canadians interviewed for this study believe that homosexual couples should be allowed to become legally married, while 44% believe that legal marriage should not extend to homosexual couples. Younger respondents are significantly more likely to think that homosexuals should be allowed to marry: 60% of those under of the age of 40 support legalized homosexual marriage, a proportion which declines to 39% among those aged forty and over. Women (52%) and residents of Quebec (60%) are also more likely to agree than men (40%) or residents in the rest of Canada (42%).

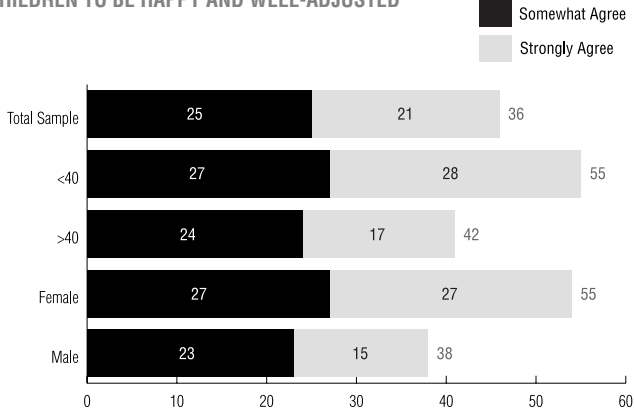
SUPPORT FOR LEGAL MARRIAGE FOR HOMOSEXUAL COUPLES



Forty-six percent of Canadians also agree that “children raised by same-sex couples are as likely as any other children to be happy and well-adjusted.” As with attitudes to homosexual marriage, age and gender are important determinants: 55% of those under age 40 and 55% of women agree, versus only 42% of those over age 40 and 38% of men. There are no significant regional differences on the question across the country; in particular, Quebec residents (46%) are as likely to agree as those elsewhere in Canada (47%).

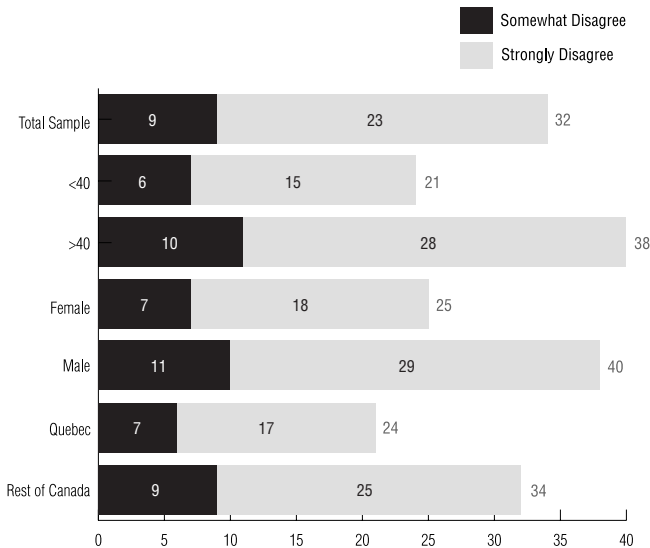
³⁶ “Growing Up in Canada: A detailed portrait of children and young people.” www.hrhc-drhc.gc.ca/arb/publications/books/class90/growing_up.shtml. Also see: Ellen L. Lipman, David R. Offord and Martin D. Dooley, “What do we Know about Children from Single-mother Families? Questions and Answers from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth.”

CHILDREN RAISED BY SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE AS LIKELY AS ANY OTHER CHILDREN TO BE HAPPY AND WELL-ADJUSTED



A slight majority of Canadians (55%) agrees either “strongly” (28%) or “somewhat” (27%) that “*homosexual couples should be entitled to the same tax, pension and other benefits as heterosexual couples*”. As with the question of homosexual marriage, people under 40 years of age are significantly more likely than those over 40 to agree with this statement (68% and 48%, respectively). Women (61%) are more likely to agree than men (49%) and Quebec residents are more likely to agree (65%) than residents elsewhere in Canada (51%) or, specifically, Ontario (49%). It is noteworthy that those who disagree with the statement above (32%), are likely to disagree “strongly” (23%), indicating that opposition, while limited, is nonetheless entrenched.

HOMOSEXUAL COUPLES SHOULD BE ENTITLED TO THE SAME TAX, PENSION, AND OTHER BENEFITS AS HETEROSEXUAL COUPLES



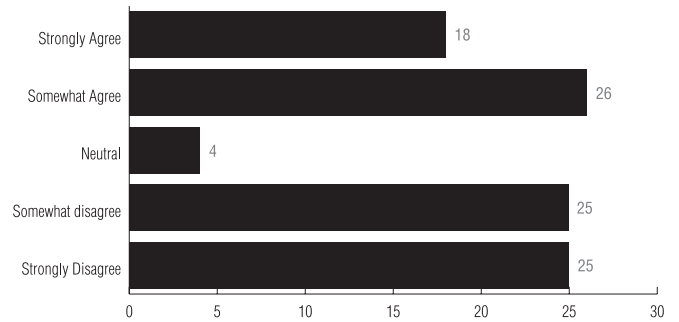
These findings accord with other public opinion polls which consistently show that Canadians are nearly evenly divided over the question of legal recognition for

homosexual marriage, with a small majority supporting extension of benefits to homosexual couples.

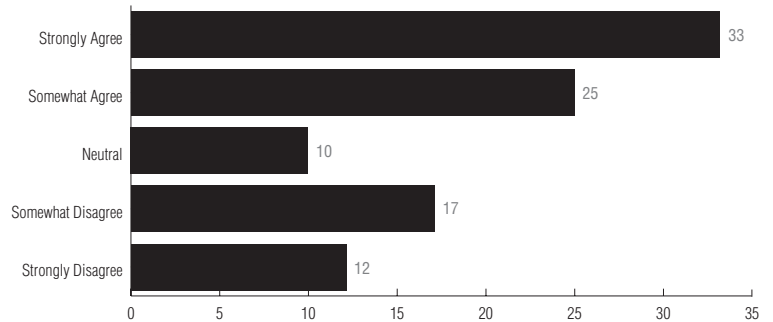
3.5 Families and Divorce

It is noteworthy that some of the issues mentioned most frequently when respondents are asked what concerns them most about Canadian families are “*failure to stay married/ divorce*” (6%) and “*family cohesiveness/family stability*” (4%). Taken together, 10% report that the “most important” issue facing Canadian families relates

DIVORCE, WHILE UNFORTUNATE, IS NOT HARMFUL FOR KIDS AS LONG AS THEY KNOW THEIR PARENTS LOVE THEM



IT IS SIMPLY TOO EASY FOR COUPLES WITH CHILDREN TO GET DIVORCED



DIVORCE IS THE BEST SOLUTION FOR COUPLES WHO CAN'T WORK OUT THEIR MARRIAGE PROBLEMS

	Total Sample (n=1500) %
TOTAL AGREE	60
Agree Strongly	25
Agree Somewhat	35
Neutral	6
Disagree Somewhat	18
Disagree Strongly	13
TOTAL DISAGREE	31
DK/NA/REF	2

to stability, a level of unprompted concern on par with that of “education” and “health-care” (both 7%).

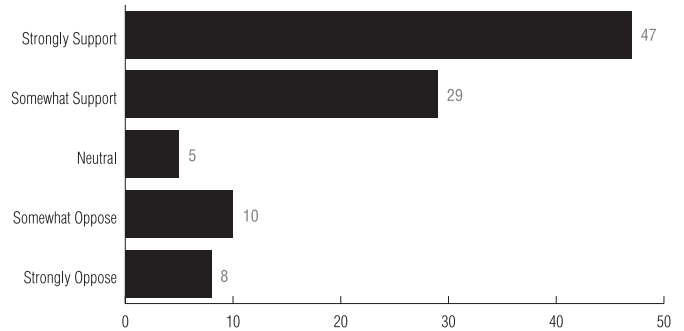
When probed on general attitudes towards divorce and its effects, Canadians appear to distinguish between what is best for the couple and what is best for children of the marriage. While the majority (60%) agree either “strongly” (25%) or “somewhat” (35%) that “*divorce is the best solution for couples who can’t work out their marriage problems*”, a similar proportion (57%) also agree either “strongly” (32%) or “somewhat” (25%) that “*it is simply too easy for couples with children to get divorced*”. The addition of children to the equation influences how open Canadians are to divorces of married couples. This is highlighted further by the finding that a **minority** (45%) agree that “*divorce, while unfortunate, is not harmful for the kids as long as they know their parents love them.*” Significantly, one-quarter (25%) “strongly” disagree with this statement.

It is interesting to note that Canadians under age 40 are significantly more likely to disagree (39%) than those over age 40 (28% disagree) that “*divorce is the best solution for couples who can’t work out their marriage problems.*” And the younger the respondent, the higher the level of disagreement (for example, 43% of those in the 18 to 24 age bracket disagree). This is notable because on most social questions, younger people are inclined towards less traditional positions. On divorce, however, they seem more conservative than their elders. It is impossible to know the exact reason for this. However, children born in the 1960s bore heavily the consequences of family breakdown precipitated by the liberalization of divorce laws beginning in 1968. And

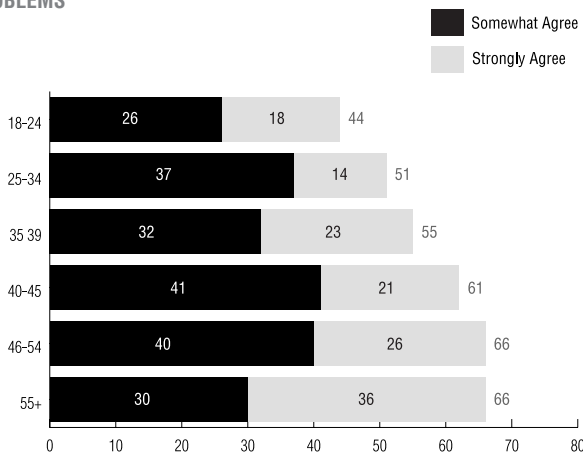
their response may be an acknowledgement of the pain that increased divorce has caused their generation.

Taken together, then, these responses suggest that while Canadians think, in general terms, that divorce should be an option for couples in a rocky marriage, they are concerned about the effect divorce has on children and are open to raising the bar for divorce when children are involved. To this end, fully three-quarters of respondents (76% overall, including 47% “strongly”) express support for a government initiative for “*mandatory marriage counselling for couples with children when the couple is considering divorce*”.

SUPPORT FOR PROGRAMS ENCOURAGING SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGES: MANDATORY MARRIAGE COUNSELLING FOR COUPLES WITH CHILDREN WHEN THE COUPLE IS CONSIDERING DIVORCE



DIVORCE IS THE BEST OPTION FOR COUPLES WHO CAN'T WORK OUT THEIR PROBLEMS



4. THE PRACTICE OF PARENTING

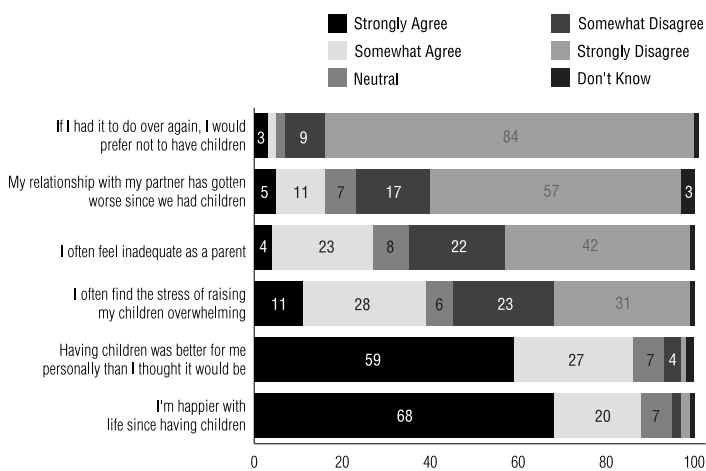
4.1 Impact of Having Children

This study contained a series of questions designed to measure the perceptions parents hold about the impact that having children has had on their lives. Responses on these measures indicate that Canadian parents are overwhelmingly pleased with the influence that children have had in their lives. Just under seven-in-ten (68%) agree “strongly” with the statement “I’m happier with my life since having children”, and a similarly high proportion (59%) also agree “strongly” that “having children was better for me personally than I thought it would be”. Overall, just under 90% of parents agree either “strongly” or “somewhat” with these statements, a result that suggests that, at least at a high level, Canadian parents are pleased with the experience of raising children.

On the more “day-to-day” issues, the majority of parents disagree with the statements “I often find the stress of raising my children overwhelming” and “I often feel inadequate as a parent”, indicating that most are confident in their ability to both raise children and handle the associated stress. These responses indicate again that parents are pleased with the experience of raising their children.

It should be noted, however, that the responses of women indicate that in some key ways their experi-

AGREEMENTS WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT PARENTING



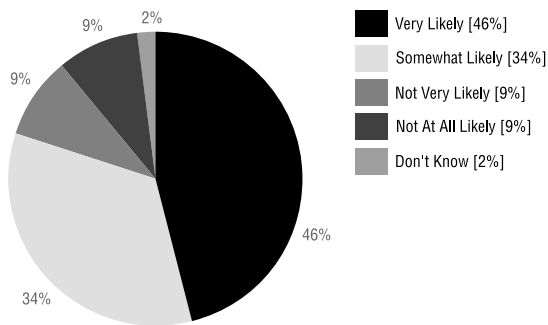
Among respondents who have children at home (n=640)

ences of parenthood are *less* positive than those of men. Women are significantly more likely than men to agree with the statement “*I often find the stress of raising children overwhelming*” (47% versus 31%, respectively), a result, perhaps, of the continuing reality of mothers being more closely involved in child-rearing than fathers. In addition, women are also more likely than men to agree that “*My relationship with my partner has gotten worse since we had children*” (21% versus 11%, respectively), suggesting, perhaps, that women are more likely to be impacted by the changes that children introduce into a relationship.

4.2 Intention to Have Children Among Non-Parents

The overall positive message about the experience of parenting appears to be getting out. Those respondents who are under the age of forty and childless were asked how likely they felt it was that they would have children in the future. Fully 80% of those who currently have no children indicate that it is “very” (46%) or “somewhat” (34%) likely that they will still have children at some point. It is noteworthy that this proportion is not significantly different between men (78%) and women (81%).

LIKELIHOOD OF HAVING CHILDREN IN THE FUTURE (AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE NO CHILDREN)



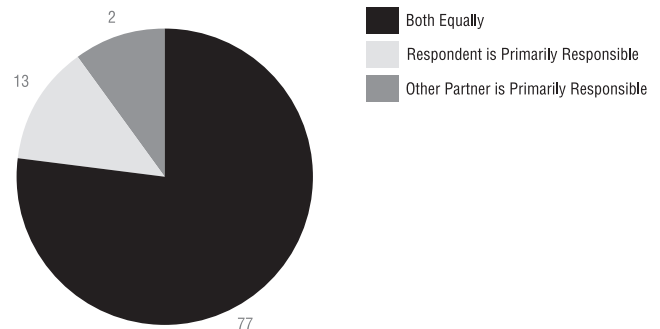
This finding suggests that younger Canadians consider having children a key part of their future lives.

4.3 Discipline

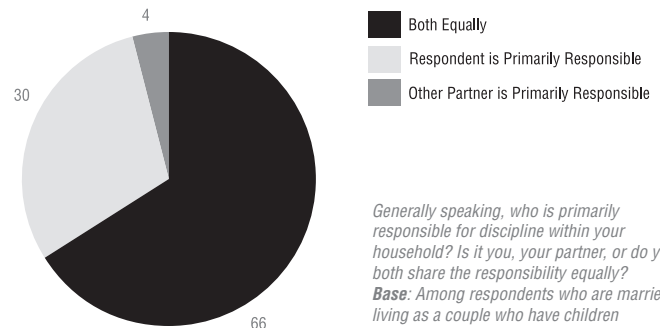
Canadian men and women who have children and who are married or living common-law have differing perceptions of who is primarily responsible for discipline within their household: men, are significantly more likely than women to believe that the responsibility for discipline is shared equally between both partners (77% and 66%, respectively), whereas women (30%) are more

than twice as likely as men (13%) to believe that they carry the primary responsibility for discipline.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR HOUSEHOLD DISCIPLINE (MEN)

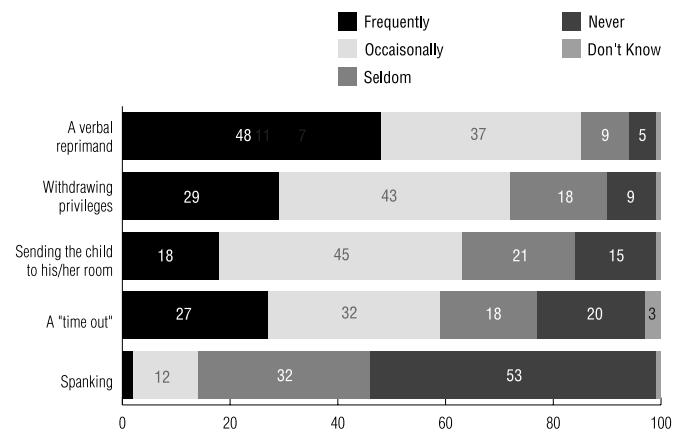


PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR HOUSEHOLD DISCIPLINE (WOMEN)



On the issue of the types of discipline they use, respondents report that they use non-physical approaches (i.e., a verbal reprimand, withdrawal of privileges, sending the child to his or her room, a “time out”) much more frequently than “spanking”. In fact, fully one-half (53%) of parents with children at home report that they “never” spank their children. Overall, 46% of parents

FREQUENCY OF VARIOUS TYPES OF DISCIPLINE



Base: Parents with children at home (n=640)

acknowledge that they spank their children either frequently (2%), occasionally (12%) or seldom (32%).

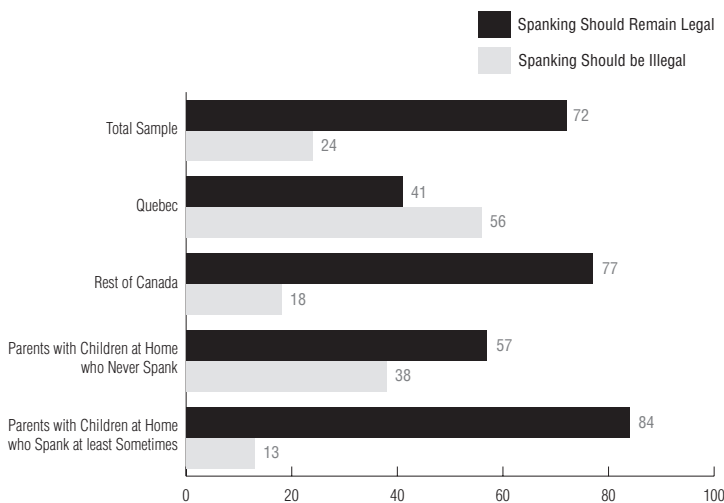
A strong majority of Canadians (72%) believe that spanking *should* remain a legal option for Canadian parents, including 57% of parents who report that they “never” spank their children. This suggests that Canadians recognize that responsible corporal punishment is a legitimate disciplinary option for parents—even when they themselves choose not to exercise it.

Given that women are more likely than men to believe that they are primarily responsible for discipline in their households, it is noteworthy that female respondents are significantly more likely than males to believe that spanking should be illegal (28% and 19%, respectively). Residents of Quebec (41%) are also much more likely than other Canadians (18%) to believe that spanking should be illegal.

such discipline. In December 1999, however, an Angus Reid Group/Globe and Mail/CTV poll found that only 16% of Canadians thought it should be a criminal offence for a parent to spank a child, while an overwhelming 83% disagreed.³⁷

The conclusion is clear. Despite the high-profile campaigns for a change in law, and equally high-profile court cases against parents for exercising corporal punishment, Canadians are consistent and overwhelming in their support for the legislative status quo.

PERCEPTION OF CONTINUING LEGALITY OF SPANKING



The 72% support for retaining the current law, which permits parents to spank children, is consistent with a January 2002 survey by Leger Marketing which also found that 70% opposed a law which would prohibit

³⁷ Canadian Press/Leger Marketing, “Child Abuse,” [January, 2002]; Ipsos-Reid, “Canadians overwhelmingly believe that spanking should not be made a criminal offence,” (December 7, 1999).

5. KEY CATEGORIES: REGION AND RELIGION

5.1 Quebec and the “Rest of Canada”

Statistics Canada has clearly demonstrated that the family habits of Quebec residents differ significantly from practice elsewhere in the country. For example, 43% of all Canadian common-law families live in Quebec. One out of every four couples (24%) in Quebec has lived common-law. In 1996, common-law and lone-parent families accounted for 36% of the nearly 900,000 families in the greater Montreal area—well above the national average of 26%, and the highest percentage among Canada’s four metropolitan areas over one million people (the others being Toronto, Vancouver and Ottawa-Hull). In addition, according to Statistics Canada, Montreal had the lowest proportion of married couples (64%) among these four largest census metropolitan areas.³⁸

It is instructive to contrast Ontario (the most traditional province) with Quebec using 1996 NLSCY data. In Ontario, 78.5% of children (1993-1994 cohort) were born to married couples. In Quebec, however, only half of children in the same cohort were born to married couples—and of those Quebec children, only 23.3% had parents who had no previous common-law arrangement, compared with almost half (48.7%) in Ontario.³⁹

Our survey found consistent cleavages between attitudes in Quebec and the rest of Canada.

Usually Quebec residents exhibited more liberal or “progressive” views on social issues. For example, Quebecers are much more likely to agree that:

- spanking should be illegal (41% versus 18%)
- living together before marriage tends to improve the marriage (56% versus 43%)
- homosexual couples should be entitled to the same tax, pension and other benefits as heterosexual couples (65% versus 51%)
- whether or not a child’s parents are legally married doesn’t matter as long as they live at home and the child is safe (88% versus 72%)
- divorce isn’t harmful to kids as long as they know their parents love them (56% versus 40%)
- homosexual couples should be allowed to marry (60% versus 42%)

Quebecers are significantly less likely than other Canadians to agree that:

- a household with a married mother and father is best for raising children (53% versus 75% elsewhere)
- encouraging strong families should be a top priority for governments in Canada (72% versus 86%)

On a few issues, however, Quebecers were more conservative:

- 69% agreed that “the current tax system is unfair to parents who stay home with children and should be changed”, versus 62% elsewhere
- divorce is the best solution for couples who can’t work out their marriage problems (55% to 62%)
- the best child-care is a parent who doesn’t work and stays home to raise the children (77% in Quebec agree versus 69% elsewhere)

These consistent cleavages on moral and social issues are deep and illustrate the challenge of presenting a program that will have appeal both in Quebec and throughout the other provinces.

5.2 Religious Inclination

While “institutional religion” has fallen out of favour in Canada, Canadians remain very interested in spiritual matters and take them seriously. According to Reginald Bibby, belief in God among Canadians is consistent over time at just above 80%. Bibby has found that in the year 2000, for example: 81% of Canadians believe in God, 73% are convinced that God cares about them personally, 74% of Canadians pray (28% pray daily) and 47% feel they have “experienced God’s presence.” As he observes, “The empirical data are decisive: God has not disappeared from the lives of the vast majority of Canadians,” and this is manifesting itself in “a significant amount of spiritual restlessness.”⁴⁰

³⁸ Statistics Canada, “Marital status, common-law unions and families” (The Daily, Oct. 14, 1997).

³⁹ “Growing Up with Mom and Dad?” (1998), p. 10.

⁴⁰ Reginald Bibby, *Restless Gods*, pp. 140-142, 147, 158, 164.

Carleton University political science professor Peter Emberley has identified this same “renewed interest in the sacred,” suggesting that “an increased number of baby boomers now recognize that they are sated but unfulfilled” and are looking for spiritual significance “often out of a genuine desire to experience resonance with a greater whole.”⁴¹

Other polls have borne out this level of spiritual awareness among Canadians. In April 2000, Ipsos-Reid found that 84% of Canadians believed in God, and that 67% agreed that faith was “very important to my day to day life.” Nevertheless, only 20% attended a religious service once a week or more frequently.⁴² In June 1998, Ipsos-Reid found that 60% of Canadians consider religion to be an important part of their life.⁴³

Our poll found that as of March 2002, 68% of Canadians say that “religious belief and practice are an important part” of their daily lives, and of these, 34% say they are a very important part. The tendency to view religion as at least somewhat important is higher among Canadians over 40 years of age (73%) than those under age 40 (59%), and among women (73%) than men (64%). There is also regional variation, with Canadians in Atlantic Canada (81%), Ontario (73%) and the Prairies (73%) more likely to consider religious belief and practice important in their daily lives than Quebecers (58%) or British Columbians (61%).

How many Canadian Christians personally identify themselves as “evangelical” or “born-again”? Nationally, we found that 40% of Christians place themselves in those categories.⁴⁴ Interestingly, 45% of Christians in Quebec and 44% of Prairie Christians self-identify as “evangelical” or born-again, and were statistically more likely to do so than believers in Atlantic Canada (32%). Exactly how these terms are understood deserves follow-up research since the generally liberal attitudes in Quebec seem at odds with evangelical mores as commonly portrayed.

Bibby has found that church attendance can make a difference to people’s attitudes. For example, those who attend a weekly worship service are the most likely to believe they have “found the answer to the meaning of life” (61%), while those who never attend are the most likely to say “there is no answer to such a question” (56%). Yet on other issues frequency of attendance does not produce such clear distinctions: half of people who never attend services believe that God cares for them

personally. Bibby concludes that the tendency to experience God’s presence is “not strongly associated with service attendance.”⁴⁵

Is frequency of attendance a significant factor in shaping attitudes towards family issues? According to our survey, it isn’t on all topics. For example, people who attend a religious service at least once a week are statistically equally likely to be satisfied with their family life (91%) as are those who say they never attend a religious service (88%). They are equally likely to spank their children at least sometimes (48% and 49%, respectively) as well as to believe that it should remain a legal option of child discipline for parents (74%). Even on the sometimes controversial issue of family taxation there is no discernable difference between “weekly” and “never” attenders: Canadians who never attend religious services are statistically just as likely as weekly attenders to agree: a) that the current tax system is unfair to parents who stay home with children and should be changed (“never” 66% versus “weekly” 61%); b) that tax laws should be changed to make it easier for parents with young children to afford to have a parent stay home if they choose (“never” 83% versus “weekly” 85%); and c) that the current tax system makes it more difficult for families who choose to have one parent stay at home with young children (“never” 74% versus “weekly” 69%).

However, there is a significant gap between their attitudes to life and other social issues. People who attend religious services at least weekly are, not surprisingly, far more likely to think that religious belief and practice are important in their daily lives (97%) as compared with 45% of those who never attend. Weekly attenders are also more likely to see a larger number of children as ideal for their family (mean response = 3.06) than never attenders (mean = 2.37) and, among Christians, to self-identify as “evangelicals” or “born again” (weekly 57% versus never 21%). They are far less likely to have ever been in a common-law relationship (16% versus 50.2% of never attenders). However, respondents in the two

⁴¹ Peter Emberley, *Divine Hunger: Canadians on Spiritual Walkabout*, (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2002), pp. 15-16

⁴² Ipsos-Reid, “Canada—a Nation of Believers,” April 21, 2000.

⁴³ Ipsos-Reid “Media misses the story, churchgoers say,” June 7, 1998.

⁴⁴ For comparison, note that the 1994 “State of the Family” survey, Angus Reid found that 45% of the survey sample identified themselves as “evangelical.” See page 104.

⁴⁵ Bibby, *Restless Gods*, pp. 142, 151.

groups are equally likely to have been divorced (18% of weekly and 17% of never attenders).

On social issues, weekly religious attenders seem far less accepting of cohabitation, single parenting or gay rights than those who never attend religious services, or even than the national average. They are less likely to agree with homosexual marriage (26%) or spousal benefits for same sex couples (34%) than never attenders (58% and 65%). They are less likely to agree that children raised by same sex couples (31%) or by single parents (64%) will be happy and well-adjusted, while this is accepted by 56% and 81% of never attenders. And weekly attenders are also much less likely to think that marriage is an outdated institution (8%) or to agree that a couple living together beforehand will improve their subsequent marriage (24%) as opposed to the 27% of never attenders who think that marriage is outdated or the 60% of that group who think living together improves marriage. On the other hand, weekly attenders are much more likely to agree that a household with a married mother and father is the best situation for raising children (86%) as opposed to never attenders (64%).

Despite clear differences in social attitudes, however, frequency of religious attendance does not seem to be a determining factor in how Canadians vote in the federal political arena. Thirty-seven percent of Canadians who attend a religious service at least weekly tend to support the Liberals. This is comparable to (though slightly higher than) the Liberals' overall support among Canadians found in this survey (33%). On the other hand, Liberal support among "never attenders" (30%) was somewhat lower than their support among Canadians generally.

Weekly attenders were significantly more likely to support the Canadian Alliance (15%) and the Liberals (37%) than were never attenders (CA 8% and Liberals 30%), and less likely to support the BQ (2% versus 12% of never attenders).

Overall, Canadian Alliance and Liberal supporters were equally likely statistically to be weekly attenders at a religious service (41% and 32% respectively), while PC (23%) and BQ (8%) were statistically less so. At 25%, NDP supporters were as likely as PC or Liberal supporters to attend weekly, though less so than CA supporters.

There was no significant statistical difference in the percentage of Christian supporters of each political party who self-identified as "born again" or "evangelical." Among CA voters, 46% self-identify as evangelical, as did 41% of PCs, 38% of Liberals, 45% of New Democrats and 49% of BQ supporters. The entire universe of evangelicals identified in the poll, however, divides its support politically in a manner close to that of Canadians overall: Liberal 31%, PCs 13%, CA 12%, NDP 10% and BQ 10%.

6. TOWARDS A PUBLIC POLICY RESPONSE

Our survey shows that Canadians individually value strong families. But they are not convinced that as a society we are doing enough to help families succeed. Nearly eight out of every ten Canadians (78%) agree that “*the importance of family life is under-valued in Canadian society*”, with the plurality (43%) agreeing “strongly” with this statement. An even larger majority (83%) agrees either “strongly” (56%) or “somewhat” (27%) that “*encouraging strong families should be a top priority of governments in Canada*.” Even Canadians who do not have children living at home overwhelmingly agree that family should be a social and governmental priority (75% and 80% respectively).

What is to be done, then, if government should make “encouraging strong families” a “top priority”? This paper does not purport to present a detailed policy framework. Nevertheless, public policy is about making choices, often between competing “goods” or between what is “good” and what is “better”. Through our survey Canadians suggest a number of key policy directions that should be considered and honed by legislators, policy makers and analysts.

6.1 Economic Concerns

Our survey finds that Canadians, while quite satisfied with their family lives overall, nevertheless face considerable stress in balancing the demands of work and family responsibility, and they are strongly inclined to see concerns about money as the primary issue for Canadian families. A significant majority of Canadian parents want to look after their own children, rather than use third-party day care, but feel they cannot afford to do so. Canadians think that the ideal number of children in a family is, on average, much larger than what they are actually having, again in part because of economic concerns. Canadians strongly believe that the tax system is unfair to families who choose to have one parent stay home to care for children, and should be changed.

Is there anything that can be done to address these problems—problems which are largely related to the constraints imposed by the Canadian tax system on families with children? Below are some suggestions for consideration.

6.1.1 Work/Family Balance

This study found that balancing the demands of work and family life is producing a high degree of stress among Canadians, and especially among parents with children at home. This is a major issue not just for families, but for all of society, since it has implications for economic productivity and workplace relations, for health care, for education and perhaps even the justice system, as children whose parents are stressed out and over-burdened may be expected to reflect that family stress in different ways. Focus on the Family recognizes other excellent research that has been done in this area and commends studies such as that by Linda Duxbury and Christopher Higgins for the consideration of policy makers.

Duxbury and Higgins present a list of recommendations for the private sector and for various levels of government that should be given serious attention.⁴⁶ Some of these suggestions include:

- Employers creating supportive work environments which allow mutually agreeable flexibility for employees in how, where and when they work, providing a limited number of paid days a year for child-care or elder-care needs, and making it easier for employees to shift from full- to part-time work (and vice versa), including introducing pro-rated benefits for part time workers.
- Unions including issues of work/family balance as a priority in collective bargaining.
- Legislative initiatives which may include enshrining the right of employees to refuse overtime work (except in emergencies) or to request time off in lieu of overtime pay.
- Governments—and especially the federal government—being among the largest employers in Canada, committing themselves to being model employers, implementing ideas for furthering work/life balance among their own employees before imposing those ideas generally.

Some creative thinking is needed to find tangible ways to alleviate the stress that parents, and especially mothers, feel in attempting to balance the demands of the

⁴⁶Duxbury and Higgins, “Work Life Balance in the New Millennium” (2001), pp. 65-69

workplace with the unending responsibility of caring for young children, and doing so in a way that does not create red tape or impose heavy burdens on small employers.

6.1.2 *Parents, Children, and Taxation*

Our study has found strong indications that many Canadian parents feel trapped by economic pressures and are not able to make the sort of choices they would like for their families. Sometimes, of course, this is unavoidable. Economic reality has a way of interfering with our dreams, and everyone has to live within their means. In this case, however, the Canadian tax system is clearly stacked against the interests of Canadian families, and especially families that choose to have one parent stay home to look after their children. The result is that in order to make ends meet many families have two parents pushed out into the work force, even when their children are young.

Canadians have told us clearly that they think the tax system is unfair to such families and that it should be changed. We suggest that a family-friendly tax policy would not provide new programs, but would instead step back and attempt to treat all family choices equally. How could this be done?

- One unfairness in the Canadian tax system stems from a discrepancy between the exemptions available to spouses. Two single people—or two married people who are both working—are each entitled to exempt a certain amount of their income from taxes. This is called the “basic personal amount”, and is set at \$7,634 in 2002. However, a spouse who does not work outside the home is only entitled to a lower, “spousal amount.” In 2002 this is set at \$6,482. This means higher taxes for families who choose to have a parent at home caring for children. Equalizing the basic personal amount and spousal amount would help to remove this impediment. Further, the basic personal amount should be increased; although now indexed to inflation, this amount—like all thresholds in the tax system—was seriously undercut over a decade or so, and is therefore currently lower than it ought to be.
- The tax system must be reformed to recognize the costs of raising children. Currently, as Boessenkool and Davies have pointed out, Canada’s personal income tax system treats children the same way it treats a luxury good, which must be paid for entirely out of after-tax earnings. Eager first-time parents (at least those at the middle-income level and above) search the federal tax form in vain for any recognition of their newborn

bundle of costs! Children are hardly a discretionary expense. We believe that some recognition must be provided for them and would encourage the federal government to create a universal per-child deduction. The amount would have to be determined in accordance with the available fiscal room.

- Seriously consider the merits of allowing spouses to file taxes jointly. Currently social program benefits (e.g. GST credits or the Child Tax Benefit) are delivered on the basis of family, not individual, income. Allowing married couples to file a joint tax return as a family unit would put an end to the preoccupation with income splitting (a good example being the spousal RRSP) and would allow families to make their own choices about how to structure work and family responsibilities. Also, since a high proportion of low-income families are single income, this would represent a redistribution towards poorer families.⁴⁷

Many of the same tax changes would provide greater economic flexibility for parents who might desire more children but don’t feel they can afford them under the current system. And encouraging families to have more children is definitely, given the demographic imbalance in Canada, a positive social policy.

If this is so, should the government not actively encourage more children by creating some sort of incentive program? Focus on the Family disagrees with this approach. We certainly believe that incentives matter, and that incentives work. In 1988 the Quebec government introduced the Allowance for Newborn Children, a program which paid families a cash award for having children. By 1992 any third or subsequent child born to a family was worth \$8,000 (paid over 5 years). The program was terminated in 1997, but not because it failed. According to University of British Columbia Assistant Professor of Economics Kevin Milligan, the program was responsible for a 14.5% increase in births over its eight years.⁴⁸

Despite this, we do not think that government should attempt to influence people’s decisions in this way. If government policy choices have, to date, pushed people one way, then the answer is not for the government to start pushing in the opposite direction, but to stop pushing and instead let Canadians make their own choices with as level a playing field between these

⁴⁷ Boessenkool and Davies, “Giving Mom and Dad a Break” (1998), p. 12

⁴⁸ Kevin Milligan, “Quebec’s Baby Bonus: Can Public Policy Raise Fertility?” C.D. Howe Institute Backgrounder, January 24, 2002.

choices as possible. We encourage policy makers to trust Canadians to make decisions which are in their own interest and in the interest of society.

6.2 Social Issues

6.2.1 Marriage and Divorce

We have seen that Canadians express strong support for marriage. At the same time, however, they are also generally in favour of retaining divorce as an option in difficult circumstances. We asked Canadians specifically about two measures which might be considered towards reducing the divorce rate.

1. A majority of Canadians (58%) support “*a reduced-cost marriage license for couples who take pre-marital counselling.*” Only 26% oppose such a measure. Of course, the specifics of such a plan—who would qualify to provide such counselling, for example—would need to be worked out before an idea like this could be implemented. But we would encourage provincial governments to explore this option, which has also been tested in Australia and implemented in other jurisdictions. For example, Florida’s Democratic governor Lawton Chiles in 1998 signed the Florida Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act, which encourages premarital preparation by reducing the marriage license fee by 50% for those who take a marriage preparation course before they wed.⁴⁹
2. Canadians are even more supportive of requiring “*mandatory marriage counselling for couples with children when the couple is considering divorce.*” Over three quarters of Canadians endorse this concept (76%), and nearly half (47%) are strongly supportive.

Our data suggest that Canadians are open to divorce law reform. While the majority of Canadians (60%) accept the idea that “*divorce is the best solution for couples who can’t work out their marriage problems*”, 57% also agree that “*it is simply too easy for couples with children to get divorced*”. Indeed, since 1986 Canada has allowed “unilateral no-fault divorce” which permits a husband or wife to end a marriage after one year of separation for absolutely no reason. Marriage is the most important relationship two people will ever enter into, yet a business contract is afforded more legal protection. Governments should consider reforming divorce laws to indicate the importance society places on marriage. Consideration should be given to making divorce more difficult to obtain, especially when contested or when children are involved. When contested, the waiting period should be longer,

providing a greater opportunity for reconciliation. Parents who wish to end their marriage should be fully informed of the impact their decision will have on their children; if they still choose divorce, they should receive instruction on how to minimize that impact.

6.2.2 Homosexual Marriage and Benefits

The subject of homosexual rights evokes strong reactions among supporters and opponents. Our survey shows that Canadians seem to have accepted the argument that “*homosexual couples should be entitled to the same tax, pension and other benefits as heterosexual couples,*” with, as noted above, 56% in support and 32% opposed. Largely, this is already done, or at least is well under way in most Canadian jurisdictions. Recognition for homosexual marriage, however, remains one of the final traditional bastions. And here, Canadians show that they are far less convinced. Our survey found an almost even split on the question of support for legalizing marriage for homosexual couples: 46% in favour and 44% opposed. And, as detailed above, once Quebec (60% support) is factored out, support in the rest of Canada drops to 42% and 47% are opposed.

We would encourage the federal government to maintain the current statutory definition of marriage which is exclusively reserved as a union of a man and a woman, and to resist attempts to change this definition through the courts.

6.2.3 Child Discipline

The message of our survey is very clear on this question. By a very large margin, Canadians believe that parents should have the right to use “spanking” as a form of discipline for their children, if they see fit. We agree with Canadians that the legislative status quo should be upheld. Government should not bow to the pressure groups that seek to undermine parental authority. And further, government should stop providing financial support to groups which are using taxpayers’ money to fuel their court interventions and media campaigns. While governments can, and should, be supportive of strong stable families, they should not interfere in the

⁴⁹ See Robyn Parker, “A framework for future research in premarriage education,” Australian Family Briefing, Australian Institute of Family Studies, No. 8, November 1999. Also see Patrick Fagan, “Encouraging Marriage and Discouraging Divorce,” Heritage Foundation Background Paper No. 1421, March 26, 2001.

most basic parental decisions, such as discipline, unless absolutely required to do so.

6.3 Importance of Family

As mentioned earlier Canadians value their family relationships and believe this is a very important aspect of their lives. Yet they also believe that family issues do not get the attention they deserve. Seventy-eight percent agree that “*the importance of family life is undervalued in Canadian society*”. And Canadians want their governments to pay more attention to family issues with over 80% agreeing that “*encouraging strong families should be a top priority of governments in Canada.*”

6.3.1 Identify “Family” Objectives

Governments clearly recognize that people are inspired and motivated by goals; and are continuously identifying benchmarks for all kinds of economic and social initiatives. And yet governments, though the evidence of their social value is overwhelming, have been reluctant to set goals for strong marriages and stable families. This is an area where governments can and should provide more leadership.

6.3.2 The Family in Policy-making

Whether through design or ignorance, laws that deal with very specific problems or issues sometimes have detrimental impacts on the family. Every policy proposal should therefore take into consideration how it might affect families. By making family issues a central concern in the development of new policies, policy makers would be forced to consider beforehand any detrimental effects their policies might have. To that end, we encourage governments to introduce a “Family Policy Filter” and review the impact new legislation or policies might have on Canadian families.

6.3.3 More Research

In Canada we fail to collect adequate data on marriages and families. We know very little about the people who get married or divorced, the family settings children are growing up in, the characteristics common to strong families, or the impact of marital status on domestic violence or poverty. These are important facts that must be known if we are to make wise public policy choices. Therefore governments need to collect accu-

rate data on marriage and family and produce regular and thorough reports on family-related matters. As has been highlighted throughout this report, good quality research is being conducted on family issues in Canada. Unfortunately the quantity is limited. We encourage governments to direct existing research funds into projects that explore family issues and the impacts of family structure. Given that family life plays such an important role in the lives of Canadians, it is essential that policy makers, community leaders, business leaders and others better understand how their actions impact families and how families impact their activities. To that end we hope this report is a meaningful contribution to the discussion and leads to further investigation of the issues raised.



APPENDIX

“Summary of Results” From The Strategic Council



The Strategic Counsel

**A Topline Presentation to
Focus on the Family (Canada)**

Canadian Perceptions of Issues Related to Family and Family Life

April 2002



Technical

- ◆ Data in this topline report are based on 1500 interviews with adult Canadians aged 18 and over.
- ◆ Random-digit dialed telephone interviews for this study were conducted between March 25 and April 11, 2002.
- ◆ The sample was drawn to provide provincial representation within the sample which reflects the proportional representation of the provinces within the population of Canada.
- ◆ The margin of error on a sample of 1500 is ± 2.6 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.
- ◆ Within sub-samples (e.g., parents with children at home) the margin of error will increase.



Most Important Issue Facing Canadian Families Today – Single Mention

	Total (n=1500) %	BC (n=196) %	Prairies (n=242) %	Ontario (n=561) %	Quebec (n=378) %	Atlantic (n=123) %
Money/finance (general)/supporting my family	13	14	13	10	13	15
Education/good schools	7	4	7	10	6	5
Health care/medicare	7	6	7	11	2	6
Failure to stay married/divorces	6	7	5	4	10	3
Job security/unemployment/job stress	6	6	3	5	6	14
Lack of family time for parents/not enough time/too busy	4	4	4	5	3	1
Family cohesiveness/family stability	4	4	5	4	2	3
Children/raising children these days/No discipline for kids/Outside influence	4	1	3	5	3	2
Taxes/Tax increases/over-taxation	3	5	5	3	1	3
Communication/lack of communication with kids	3	1	1	2	6	3
The economy/economics/recession	2	4	3	2	2	2
Moral decline/family morals/family values	2	2	3	3	2	3
Love for each other/understanding/trust	2	2	1	3	3	1

Q.3 What, in your opinion, is the most important issue facing Canadian families today? That is, the one that concerns you the most.

Base: Total respondents



Most Important Issue Facing Canadian Families Today – Single Mention – Cont'd

	Total (n=1500) %	BC (n=196) %	Prairies (n=242) %	Ontario (n=561) %	Quebec (n=378) %	Atlantic (n=123) %
Cost of living/rising cost for everything	2	1	2	1	4	4
Poverty/enough food	2	3	1	1	3	2
Violence (general)	2	2	2	1	3	1
Two parents working	1	1	2	1	2	-
Government/not enough welfare/cutbacks	1	3	1	-	2	2
Safety	1	2	1	1	-	2
Women having to work/inability for mothers to stay at home	1	2	1	<1	1	1
Drugs	1	1	1	1	1	-
War/terrorism/world peace	1	1	1	<1	1	-
Religion/lack of faith/secularism	<1	1	-	1	1	2
Single parenting/single families	<1	1	1	1	<1	-
Loyalties/infidelity	<1	-	<1	1	1	1
Housing/affordable housing	<1	1	1	1	<1	1
Other*	9	10	11	7	11	6
No concerns/nothing	1	1	1	1	1	1
DK/N/REF	14	16	15	16	9	19

Q.3 What, in your opinion, is the most important issue facing Canadian families today? That is, the one that concerns you the most.

Base: Total respondents

* Other includes responses of less than 1%



Amount of Stress Caused by Balancing “Work” and “Family”

	Total (n=1500) %	BC (n=196) %	Prairies (n=242) %	Ontario (n=561) %	Quebec (n=378) %	Atlantic (n=123) %
TOTAL A GREAT DEAL/SOME STRESS	56	46	59	59	56	60
A great deal of stress	19	12	19	20	21	18
Some stress	37	34	40	39	35	42
Not very much stress	18	22	19	17	15	18
No stress at all	23	27	18	21	28	18
TOTAL NOT VERY MUCH/NO STRESS	41	49	37	38	43	36
DK/NA/REF	3	5	4	3	1	4

Q.4 In recent years, there has been some discussion of the issue of balancing “work” and “family”. Thinking of your own, personal situation, would you say that balancing the demands of work and family causes you a great deal of stress, some stress, not very much stress or no stress at all?

Base: Total respondents



Satisfaction With Amount of Time Spent At Work Versus With Family

	Total (n=1500) %	BC (n=196) %	Prairies (n=242) %	Ontario (n=561) %	Quebec (n=378) %	Atlantic (n=123) %
TOTAL SATISFIED	67	68	65	63	72	65
Very satisfied	31	35	29	29	34	31
Somewhat satisfied	36	33	36	34	38	34
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	6	5	7	6	8	8
Somewhat dissatisfied	15	11	17	16	14	14
Very dissatisfied	6	5	6	8	5	4
TOTAL DISSATISFIED	21	16	23	24	19	18
DK/NA/REF	6	11	5	7	1	9

Q.5 Now, thinking of the amount of time you spend at work versus the time you spend with your family, would you say that you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the current balance?

Base: Total respondents



Incidence of Working at Least Part-Time Outside of the Home

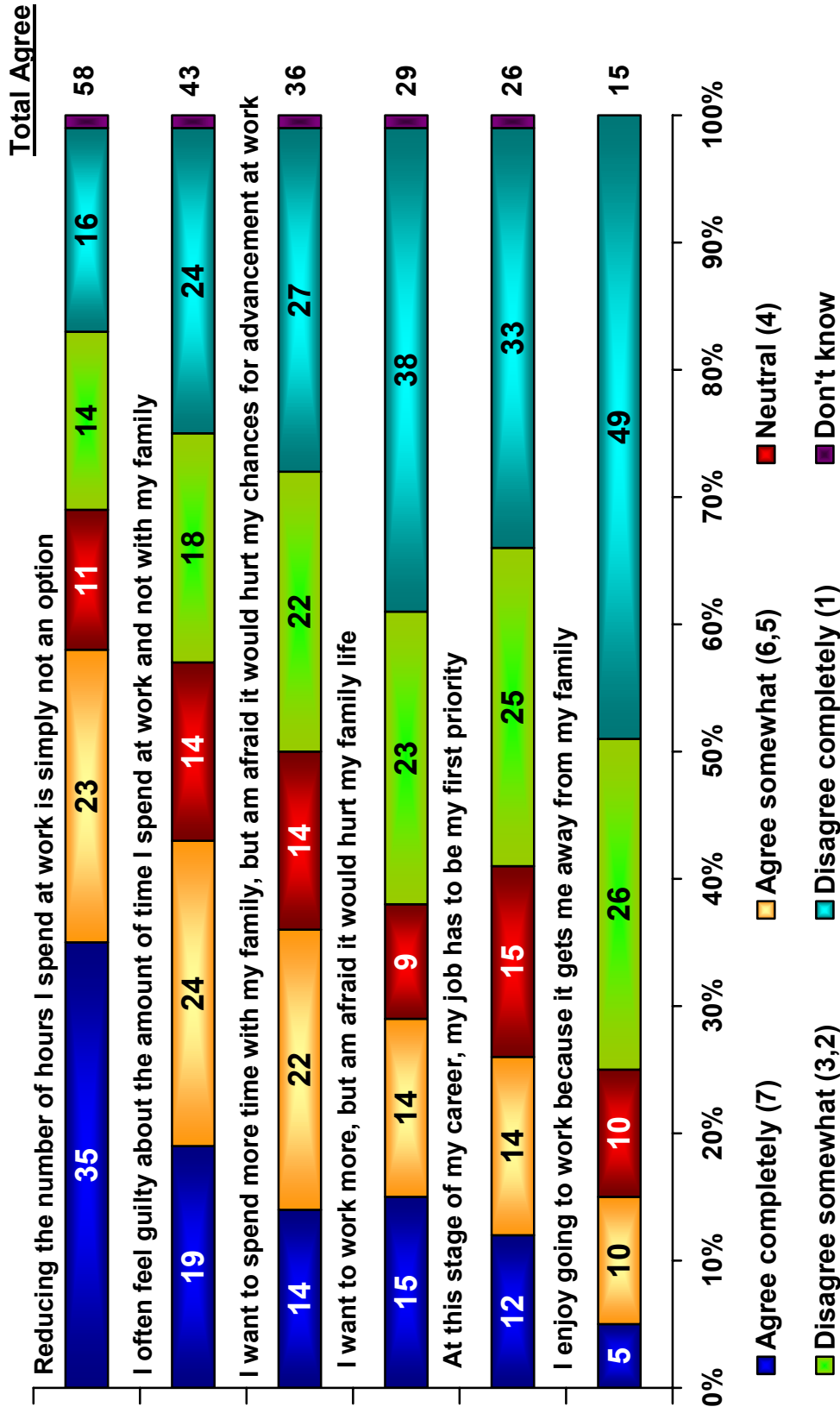
	Total (n=1500) %	Parents w/children at home (n=640) %	BC (n=196) %	Prairies (n=242) %	Ontario (n=561) %	Quebec (n=378) %	Atlantic (n=123) %
Yes	65	73	62	70	65	63	60
No	35	27	38	30	35	37	40
DK/NA/REF	<1	<1	-	-	<1	<1	-

Q.6 Do you currently work at least part-time outside of the home?

Base: Total respondents



Agreement With Statements



Q.7-12

Now, I'd like to read you a list of statements that different people have made. For each statement, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the statement. You can do this by giving me a number between one and seven, where "1" means you disagree completely and "7" means you agree completely with the statement. The first statement is...

Base:

Those respondents who have children at home and work outside home (n=464)



Incidence Of Children Aged Thirteen and Younger Living at Home

	Total (n=464) %	BC (n=54) %	Prairies (n=79) %	Ontario (n=178) %	Quebec (n=112) %	Atlantic (n=41)* %
Yes	65	56	63	65	70	63
No	35	44	37	35	30	37

Q.13 Do you have any children aged thirteen and younger living at home with you?

Base: Those respondents who have children at home and work outside the home

* Caution, small sample size



Incidence Of Having Any Children Under 13 Years of Age In Child-Care (Among Parents Who Work Outside the Home)

	Total (n=300) %	BC (n=30)* %	Prairies (n=50) %	Ontario (n=116) %	Quebec (n=78) %	Atlantic (n=26)* %
Yes	38	37	34	28	58	35
No	62	63	66	72	42	65

Q.14 Do you currently have any of your children in some sort of child-care while you work?

Base: Those respondents who have children at home and work outside the home

* Caution: Very small sample.



Satisfaction with Family Life Overall

	Total (n=1500) %	BC (n=196) %	Prairies (n=242) %	Ontario (n=561) %	Quebec (n=378) %	Atlantic (n=123) %
TOTAL SATISFIED	88	86	89	89	89	92
Very satisfied	52	57	53	56	45	59
Somewhat satisfied	36	29	36	33	44	33
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	4	4	2	3	5	2
Somewhat dissatisfied	5	6	7	6	4	4
Very dissatisfied	2	2	1	1	2	2
TOTAL DISSATISFIED	7	8	8	7	6	6
DK/N/REF	1	2	1	1	-	-

Q.15 Now thinking of your FAMILY life overall, would you say that you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or completely dissatisfied?

Base: Total respondents



Satisfaction with Work Life Overall

	Total (n=1500) %	BC (n=196) %	Prairies (n=242) %	Ontario (n=561) %	Quebec (n=378) %	Atlantic (n=123) %
TOTAL SATISFIED	74	70	74	72	76	75
Very satisfied	35	39	33	37	30	37
Somewhat satisfied	39	31	41	35	46	38
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7	10	7	6	8	9
Somewhat dissatisfied	10	10	14	12	6	7
Very dissatisfied	4	2	2	6	4	4
TOTAL DISSATISFIED	14	12	16	18	10	11
DK/N/REF	5	8	3	4	6	5

Q.16 And, thinking specifically of your WORK life overall, would you say that you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or completely dissatisfied?

Base: Total respondents



Most Important Priority In Life

	Married (n=801) %	Not married (n=699) %
Maintaining a good, stable marriage	40	n/a
Being a good parent	39	34
Having a job that gives you personal fulfillment and happiness	9	25
Developing your spiritual side	8	14
Making lots of money	1	5
Meeting the right person and getting married	n/a	17
None of these	2	3
DK/N/REF	1	1

Q.17 Please tell me which of the following you consider to be the most important priority in your life. Please listen to the whole list before answering. The options are ...

Base: Total respondents



Second Most Important Priority In Life

	Married (n=787) %	Not married (n=676) %
Maintaining a good, stable marriage	39	n/a
Being a good parent	30	19
Having a job that gives you personal fulfillment and happiness	15	30
Developing your spiritual side	10	11
Making lots of money	4	12
Meeting the right person and getting married	n/a	21
None of these	2	4
DK/NA/REF	<1	2

Q.18 And, which of these is the SECOND most important priority in your life?

Base: Among those respondents who provided an answer at Q.17



First and Second Most Important Priority In Life Combined (NET)

	Married (n=801) %	Not married (n=699) %
Maintaining a good, stable marriage	79	n/a
Being a good parent	68	52
Having a job that gives you personal fulfillment and happiness	23	54
Developing your spiritual side	18	25
Making lots of money	5	17
Meeting the right person and getting married	n/a	38
None of these	3	8
DK/N/REF	-	<1

Q.17 Please tell me which of the following you consider to be the most important priority in your life. Please listen to the whole list before answering. The options are ...

Q.18 And, which of these is the SECOND most important priority in your life?

Base: Among those respondents who provided an answer at Q.17

Note: This 'Net' includes two responses; column will add to more than 100%



Preference For Staying Home With Children, All Things Being Equal

	Total (n=95) %
Yes	76
No	19
DK/NA/REF	5

Q.19 If money was not a consideration, and other circumstances made it possible to do so, would you prefer to stay at home with your children, or to have your partner stay at home with the children, instead of some other form of child-care during the day?

Base: Among respondents who are married/living as a couple with kids at home, who work and use child-care



Primary Reason for Not Staying At Home With Children

	Total (n=72) %
Need to work/Can't afford not to work	88
Want to work	11
DK/NA/REF	1

Q.20 And, what is the primary reason why you or your partner do not stay at home with the children?

Base: Among those who would prefer to have one parent stay home with children and who have children in child-care



Fairness of Current Tax System For Stay-at-Home Parents

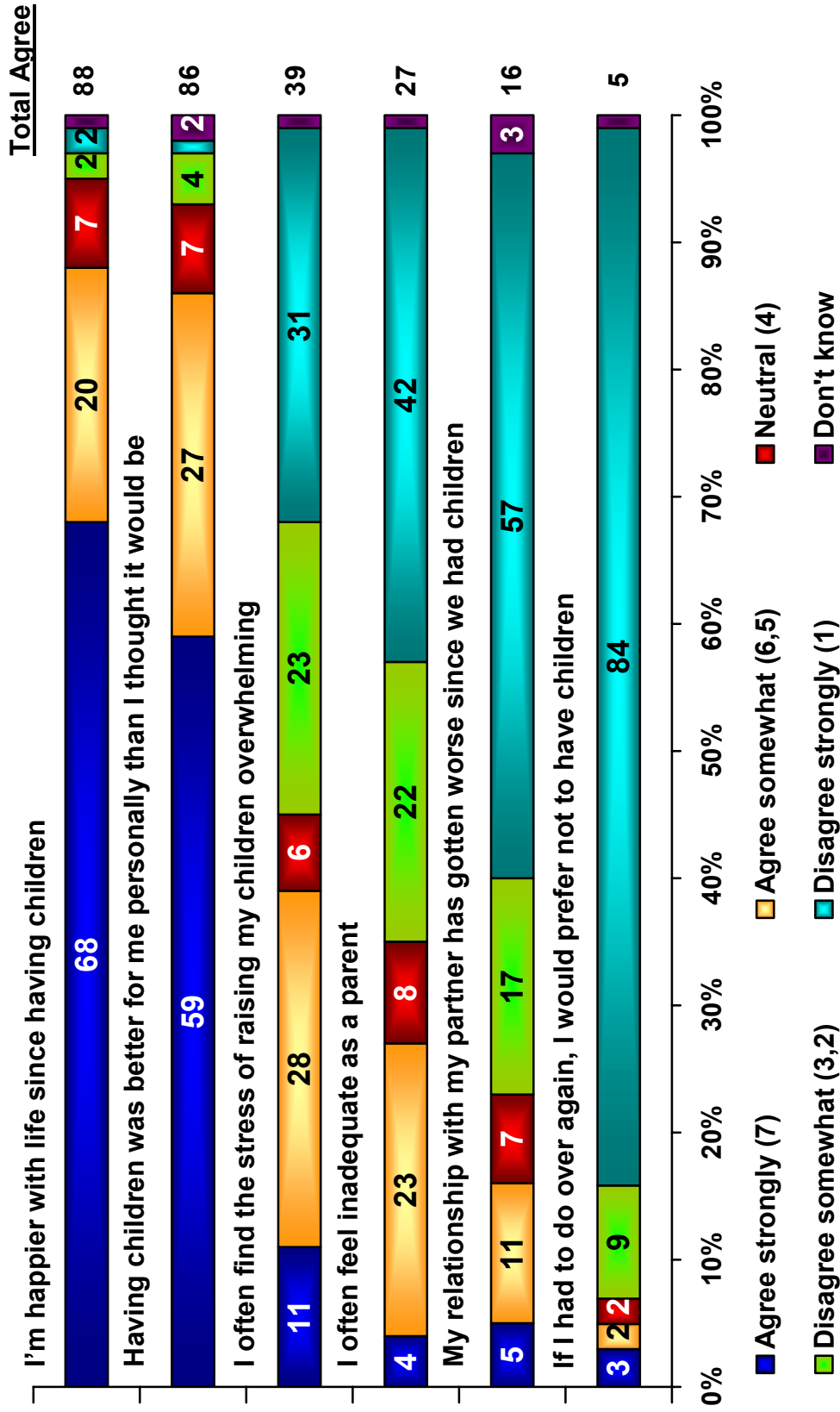
	Total (n=1500) %	BC (n=196) %	Prairies (n=242) %	Ontario (n=561) %	Quebec (n=378) %	Atlantic (n=123) %
Current tax system is unfair to parents who stay at home with children and should be changed	64	62	63	63	69	60
Current system is fair and should not be changed	26	22	25	28	25	28
DK/NA/REF	10	16	12	9	6	11

Q.22 As you may know, families in which one parent earns income and the other stays home to look after their children pay higher income taxes than a family with the same income where both parents work and pay someone else to look after their children. Some people say that families who choose to have one parent stay home to look after the children should be treated the same as families in which both parents work and pay for child-care. These people believe that the income tax laws are unfair and should be changed. Other people say that the current tax system recognises that working parents have more expenses and that the tax-system should compensate them for these costs. These people argue that on this issue the tax system is fair and should not be changed. Which of these two opinions is closest to your own?

Base: Total respondents



Agreement With Statements



Q.23-28 Now, thinking of your overall experience as a parent, for each of the following statements about parenthood please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with that statement. The first is...
 Base: Among respondents who have children at home (n=640)



Primary Responsibility for Discipline Within Household

	Total (n=552) %	BC (n=61) %	Prairies (n=89) %	Ontario (n=214) %	Quebec (n=139) %	Atlantic (n=49) %	Male (n=288) %	Female (n=264) %
Both equally	72	67	75	68	75	78	77	66
Respondent is primarily responsible	21	28	20	24	17	10	13	30
Other partner is primarily responsible	7	5	3	7	8	12	10	4
DK/NA/REF	1	-	1	<1	1	-	<1	<1

Q.29 Generally speaking, who is primarily responsible for discipline within your household? Is it you, your partner, or do you both share the responsibility equally?

Base: Among respondents who are married/living as a couple who have children



Age When Had First Child

	Total (n=640) %	Household Composition			
		Single Parent (n=88) %	Married with Children (n=465) %	Living Together With Children (n=87) %	
Under 18 years old	3	8	1	3	
18-23 years old	24	33	21	29	
24-27 years old	33	30	35	28	
28-30 years old	23	17	24	21	
31-34 years old	11	8	12	10	
35-40 years old	5	5	5	6	
Over 40 years old	1	-	1	2	
DK/NA/REF	1	-	1	-	

Q.30 How old were you when you had your first child? Were you ...

Base: Among respondents who have children



Incidence of Delaying or Putting-Off Starting a Family

	Education								
	Total (n=640) %	BC (n=73) %	Prairies (n=104) %	Ontario (n=248) %	Quebec (n=159) %	Atlantic (n=56) %	High School or less (n=236) %	College /Tech (n=194) %	University (n=207) %
Yes, delayed	31	18	17	39	32	34	23	32	38
No, did not delay	68	81	82	61	67	64	76	68	60
DK/NA/REF	1	1	1	<1	1	2	1	<1	<1

Q.31 Thinking about your decision to have children, did you delay or put-off starting a family for any reason?

Base: Among respondents who have children



Primary Reason for Delay in Having Children

	Total (n=197) %
Wanted to get established in career	27
Wanted simply to enjoy life and experience more of it	16
Couldn't afford children	13
Had not met the person felt was the right mother or father for children	9
To pursue more education	8
Not married	6
Wanted to but were unable to conceive	5
Building relationship first/To get to know each other better	5
Weren't sure if wanted children	3
Wanted to buy a house/Wanted to have house first	2
Wanted to do more travelling	2
My spouse wasn't ready/Partner wasn't ready/Waiting for the right moment	2
Wanted to be financially stable	1
Other	2
DKNA/REF	2

Q.32 And thinking about the primary reason why you delayed having children, which of the following best describes the most important reason why you put-off having children? Was it primarily because ...

Base: Among those respondents who put-off starting a family

* Caution, small sample size



Would Have Children Earlier if Had It To Do Over Again – Among Those Who Delayed

	Total (n=188) %
Yes	27
No	71
DK/NA/REF	2

Q.33 And, if you had it to do over again, would you have your children earlier?

Base: Among respondents who delayed having children



Ideal Number Of Children In Family

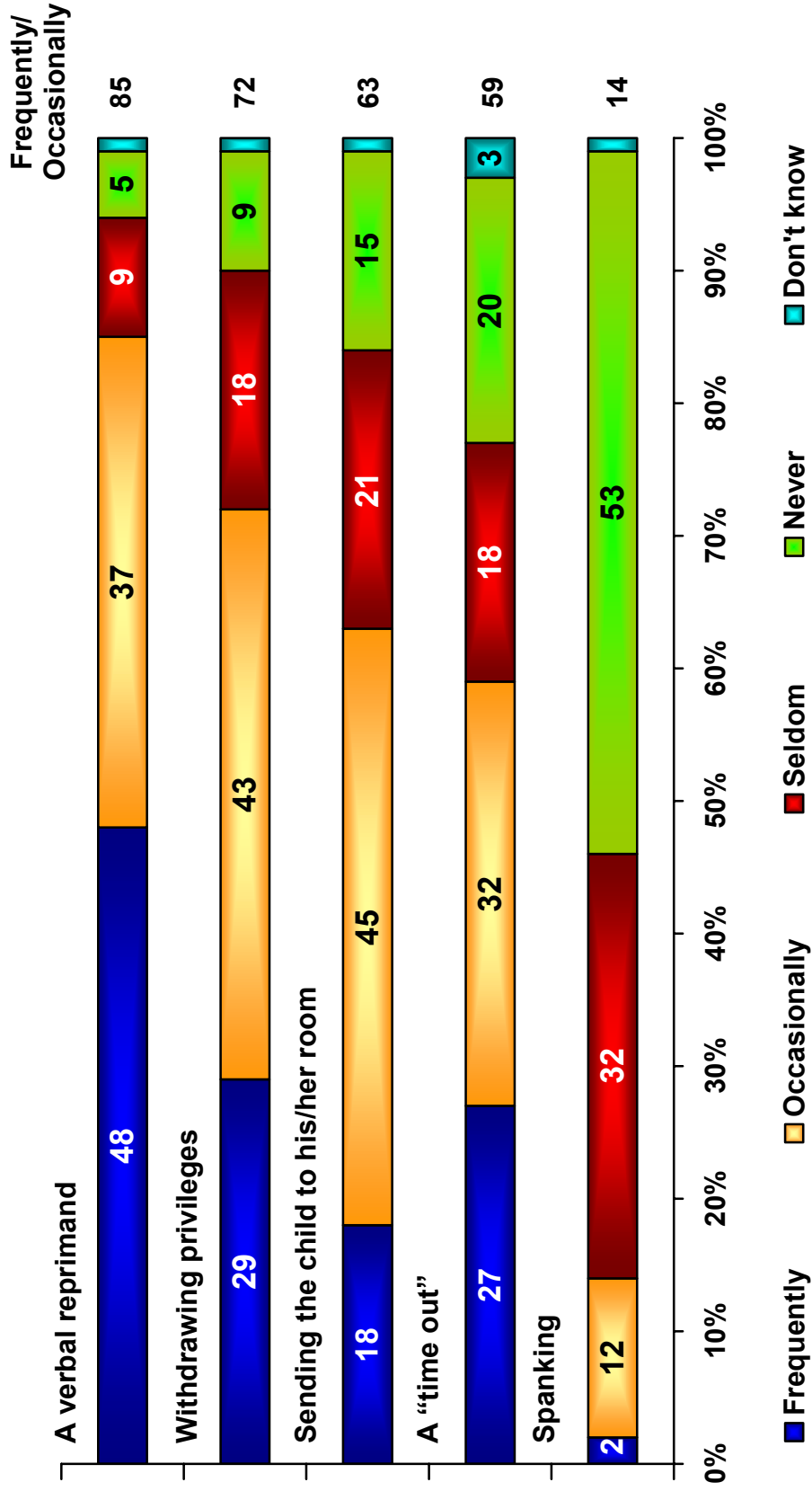
	Total (n=1500) %	BC (n=196) %	Prairies (n=242) %	Ontario (n=561) %	Quebec (n=378) %	Atlantic (n=123) %
0	5	7	7	4	2	5
1	6	5	8	7	5	6
2	44	44	38	47	45	41
3	25	25	26	24	24	30
4	13	12	14	10	16	12
5	3	2	3	3	4	2
6 or more	3	3	3	3	3	4
DK/N/REF	1	2	1	2	1	-

Q.34 Ideally, how many children would you like to have, or have had, in your family?

Base: Total respondents



Frequency of Various Types of Discipline



Q.35-39 As you know, parents use a variety of approaches when disciplining their children. I would like to read you a list of some of these approaches to discipline. For each one, please tell me how often, if ever, you or your partner use the following types of discipline. That is, do you use the approach frequently, occasionally, seldom, or never. The first is ...
Base: Parents with children at home (n=640)



Perception of Continuing Legality of Spanking

	Total (n=1500) %	BC (n=196) %	Prairies (n=242) %	Ontario (n=561) %	Quebec (n=378) %	Atlantic (n=123) %
Spanking should remain legal	72	77	86	75	56	69
Spanking should be illegal	24	18	11	19	41	24
DK/NA/REF	4	5	3	6	3	7

Q.40 *There has been some discussion lately about whether spanking children should be made illegal in Canada. Some people have argued that spanking is a violent approach to disciplining children. They say that there are other equally effective approaches to discipline and, therefore, that it should be illegal for parents to spank their children under any circumstances. And... Some people say that it is up to the parents to decide how to discipline their children and that spanking should be one of the choices available to them, even if they choose not to use it. These people argue, therefore, that it should remain legal. Thinking of these two opinions, which one comes closest to your own?*

Base: Total respondents



Frequency of Agreement With Partner on Child-Rearing Approaches

	Total (n=552) %	BC (n=61) %	Prairies (n=89) %	Ontario (n=214) %	Quebec (n=139) %	Atlantic (n=49)* %
TOTAL ALWAYS/ALMOST ALWAYS	81	77	82	80	84	82
Always	18	13	16	17	22	16
Almost always	63	64	66	63	62	66
Just some of the time	13	16	15	14	12	12
Almost never	2	-	2	2	1	2
Never	1	2	1	2	-	-
TOTAL NEVER/ALMOST NEVER	3	2	3	4	1	2
DK/N/REF	3	5	-	2	3	4

Q.41 Overall, would you say that you and your partner agree on approaches to child-rearing always, most of the time, just some of the time, almost never, or never at all.

Base: Among respondents married or living as a couple with children

* Caution, small sample size



Likelihood of Having Children in the Future (Among Those Who Have No Children)

	Total (n=258) %
TOTAL LIKELY	80
Very likely	46
Somewhat likely	34
Not very likely	9
Not at all likely	9
TOTAL NOT LIKELY	18
DK/NA/REF	2

Q.42 How likely do you think it is that you, personally, will have children in the future? Would you say it is ...

Base: Among those respondents living as a single/couple/married with no children and under 40 years of age



Reason for Not Having Kids In The Future

	Total (n=45)* %
Don't want them/I don't want any	18
Personal choice	16
Too many goals to attain/too busy/wouldn't have time/too selfish/my career	16
Can't have children/medical reason	13
Because I'm single/don't have a partner/haven't found the right one	13
Can't afford them/too expensive	9
We are too old	9
Want to enjoy ourselves	7
Not important/not interested	7
Homosexual (all mentions)	7
Don't like them	4
World is over-populated	4
Other	11
DK/NA/REF	2

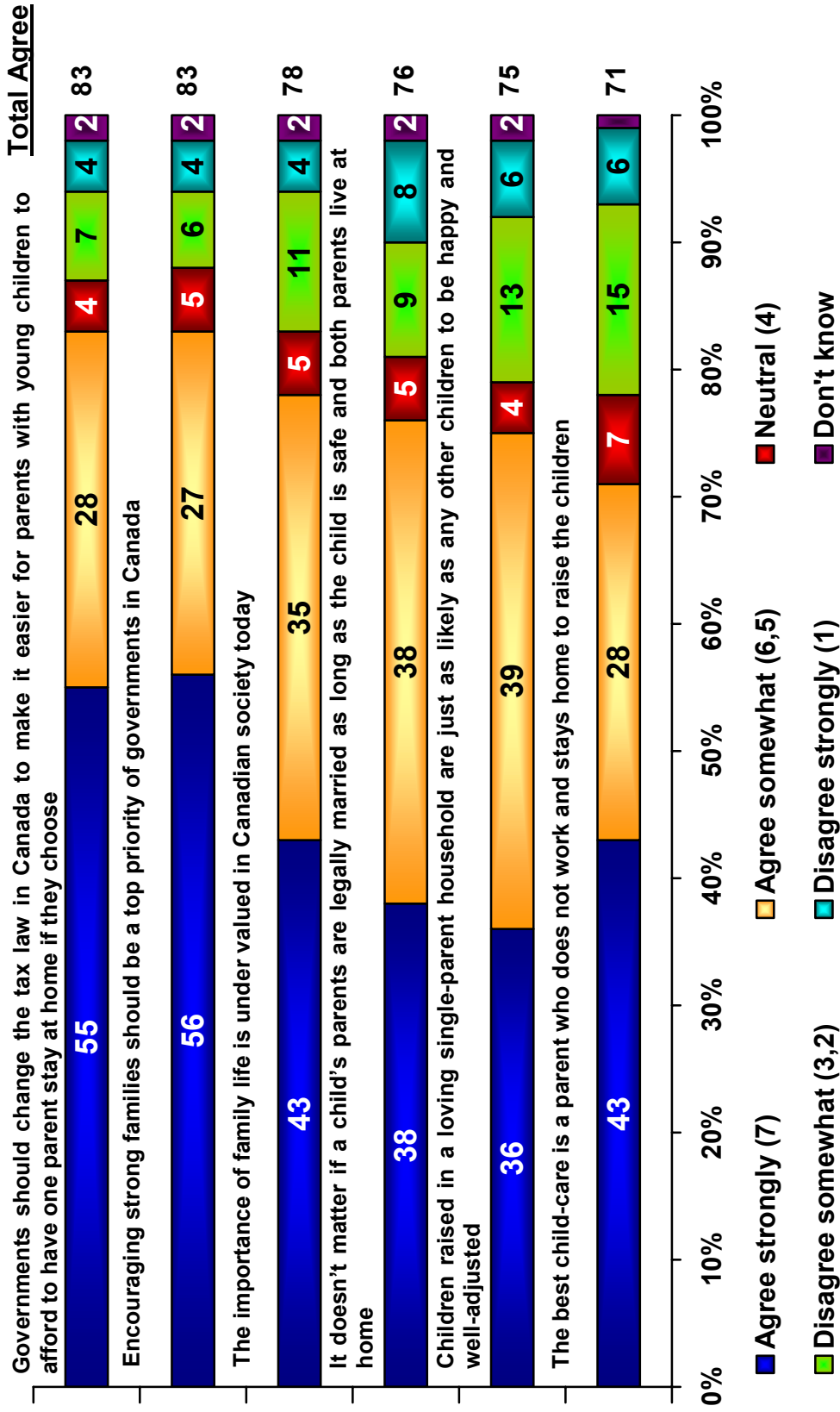
Q.43 Why don't you think you'll have kids in the future?

Base: Among those respondents living as a single/couple/married with no children and under 40 years of age who are "not likely" to have children in the future

Note: Multiple mentions allowed



Agreement With Statements About Marriage and Family

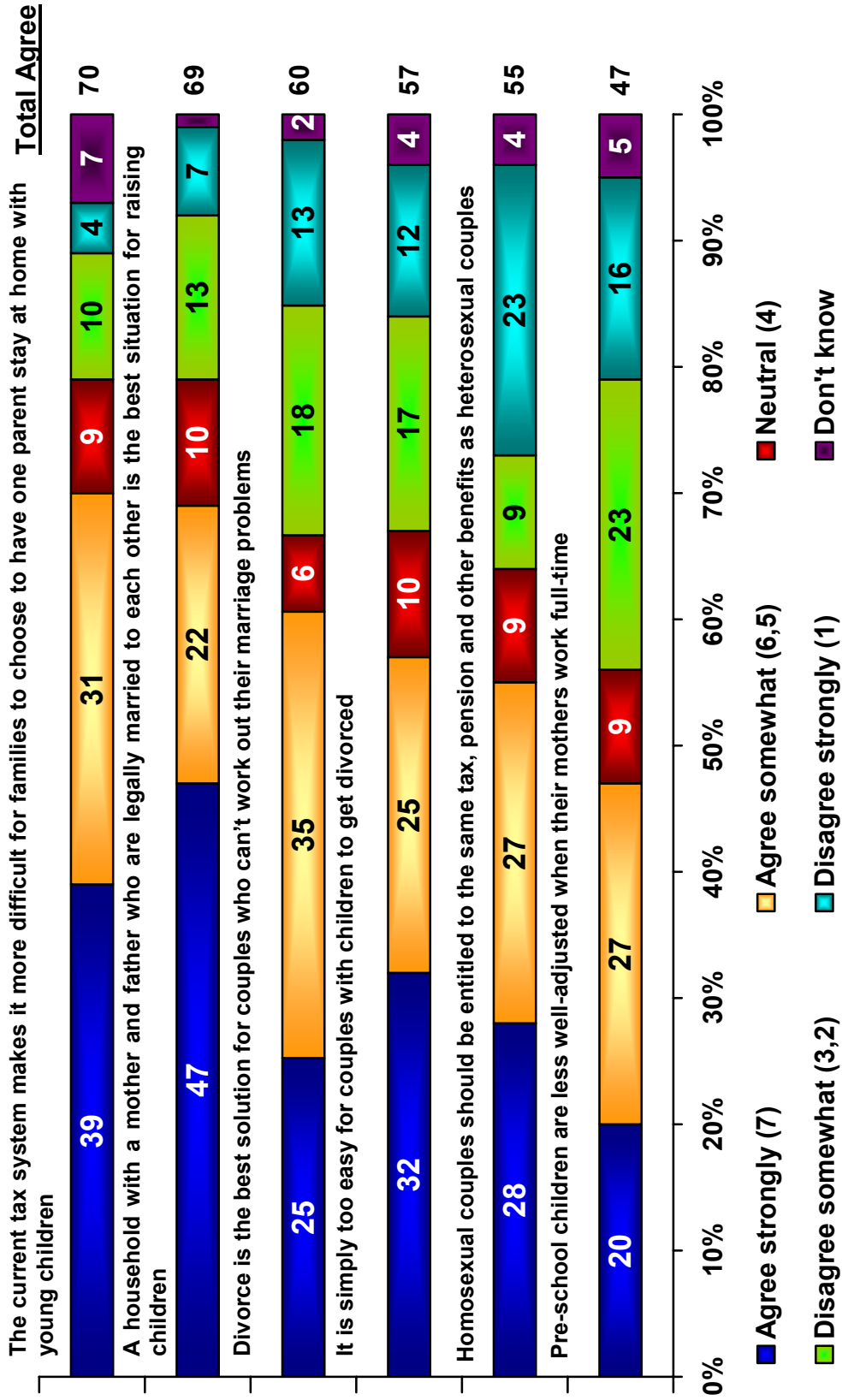


Q.44-60a I would like to read you some statements that people have made about marriage and family. For each one please tell me if you strongly agree, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with the statement. The first is, ...

Base: Total respondents



Agreement With Statements About Marriage and Family

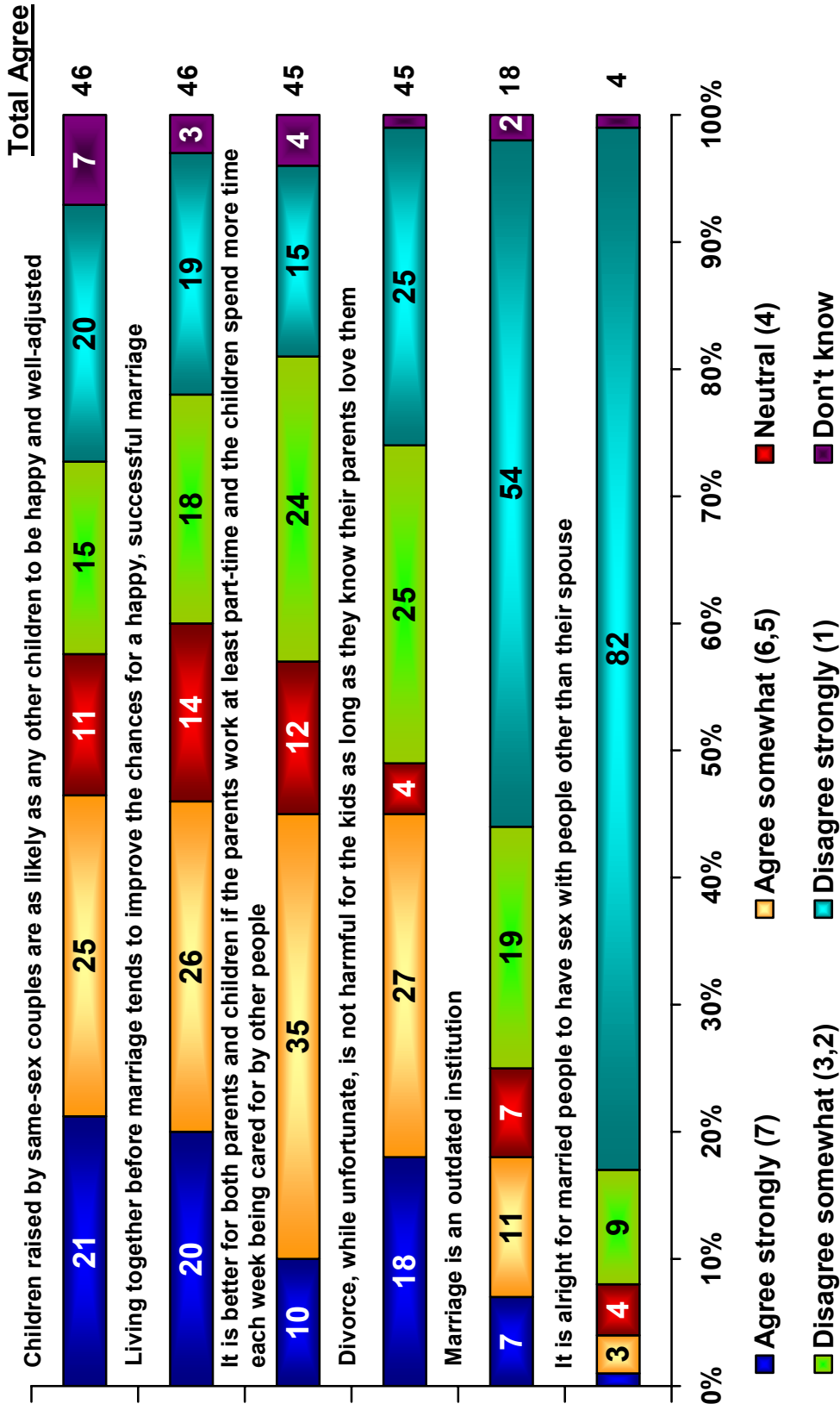


Q.44-60a I would like to read you some statements that people have made about marriage and family. For each one please tell me if you strongly agree, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with the statement. The first is, ...

Base: Total respondents



Agreement With Statements About Marriage and Family



Q.44-60a I would like to read you some statements that people have made about marriage and family. For each one please tell me if you strongly agree, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with the statement. The first is, ...

Base: Total respondents



Support for Legal Marriage for Homosexual Couples

	Total (n=1500) %	BC (n=196) %	Prairies (n=242) %	Ontario (n=561) %	Quebec (n=378) %	Atlantic (n=123) %
Should be allowed to marry	46	47	43	40	60	41
Should not be allowed to marry	44	43	48	47	38	49
DK/NA/REF	9	10	10	13	3	11

Q.61 As you may be aware, there has been discussion in the past few years about whether or not homosexual couples should be allowed to become legally married in Canada. Do you, personally, believe that homosexual couples should or should not be allowed to marry?

Base: Total respondents



Support for Programs Encouraging Successful Marriages

A reduced-cost marriage license for couples who take pre-marital counseling

	Total (n=1500) %	BC (n=196) %	Prairies (n=242) %	Ontario (n=561) %	Quebec (n=378) %	Atlantic (n=123) %
TOTAL SUPPORT	58	64	63	63	42	74
Strongly support	26	30	29	30	16	33
Somewhat support	32	34	34	33	26	41
Neither support nor oppose	13	10	14	12	15	9
Somewhat oppose	15	9	14	12	22	7
Strongly oppose	11	12	6	10	18	7
TOTAL OPPOSE	26	21	20	22	40	14
DK/NA/REF	3	5	3	3	3	3

Q.62 In other countries programs have been introduced which are designed to encourage more successful marriages and to help to reduce the number of divorces. I would like to read you a list of these programs. For each one, please tell me if you would strongly support, somewhat support, neither support nor oppose, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose government initiatives of this type in Canada. The first is ...

A reduced-cost marriage license for couples who take pre-marital counselling

Base: Total respondents



Support for Programs Encouraging Successful Marriages

Mandatory marriage counselling for couples with children when the couple is considering divorce

	Total (n=1500) %	BC (n=196) %	Prairies (n=242) %	Ontario (n=561) %	Quebec (n=378) %	Atlantic (n=123) %
TOTAL SUPPORT	76	78	85	76	69	75
Strongly support	47	48	51	52	38	49
Somewhat support	29	30	34	24	31	26
Neither support not oppose	5	3	3	4	8	3
Somewhat oppose	10	10	7	9	12	13
Strongly oppose	8	7	3	10	11	7
TOTAL OPPOSE	18	17	10	19	23	20
DK/NA/REF	1	2	2	1	-	2

Q.63 In other countries programs have been introduced which are designed to encourage more successful marriages and to help to reduce the number of divorces. I would like to read you a list of these programs. For each one, please tell me if you would strongly support, somewhat support, neither support nor oppose, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose government initiatives of this type in Canada.

Mandatory marriage counselling for couples with children when the couple is considering divorce

Base: Total respondents



Incidence of Divorce (Among the Total Population)

	Age			Gender	
	Total (n=1500) %	<40 (n=501) %	>40 (n=999) %	Male (n=750) %	Female (n=750) %
Ever been divorced?					
Yes, have been divorced	18	9	23	16	21
No, have never been divorced	82	91	77	84	79
DK/NA/REF	<1	-	<1	-	<1

Q.67 Have you ever been divorced

Base: Total respondents



Incidence of Ever Having Been Involved in a “Common-law” Relationship

	Total (n=1500) %	Age				
		18-24 (n=107) %	25-34 (n=107) %	35-39 (n=176) %	40-54 (n=558) %	55+ (n=441) %
Ever “lived with” romantic partner?						
Yes	35	29	47	51	40	17
No	65	71	53	49	60	83
DK/NA/REF	<1	-	-	-	<1	<1

Q.68 Have you ever been involved in a common-law relationship? That is, in a relationship where you were living with a romantic partner for six months or longer, but were not married?

Base: Total respondents



Personal Importance of Religious Belief and Practice

	Total (n=1500) %	Age	
		<40 (n=501) %	>40 (n=999) %
TOTAL IMPORTANT	68	59	73
Very important	34	24	40
Somewhat important	34	35	33
Neither important nor unimportant	8	13	5
Not very important	13	14	12
Not at all important	10	14	9
TOTAL NOT IMPORTANT	23	28	21
DK/N/REF	1	<1	1

Q.73 Would you say that religious belief and practice are a very important, somewhat important, neither important nor unimportant, not very important or not at all important part of your daily life?

Base: Total respondents



Faith Identify With Most Closely

	Total (n=1336) %
Christianity	88
Judaism	1
Islam	1
Buddhism	1
Hinduism	1
Other	3
None	3
DK/N/REF	2

Q.74 And, which faith tradition do you identify most closely

Base: Among respondents who mentioned that religious belief is at least a "not very important part of daily life".



Proportion Which Identify Themselves as “Christian” and “Evangelical or Born-Again”

	Self-Identified Christians					
	National (n=1136) %	BC (n=132) %	Prairies (n=188) %	Ontario (n=405) %	Quebec (n=302) %	Atlantic (n=109) %
Yes (self-identify as “evangelical” or “born-again”)	40	40	44	38	45	32
No (do <u>not</u> self-identify as “evangelical” or “born-again”)	51	48	49	56	44	59
Don't know/refused	9	12	7	6	11	9

Q.76 Thinking of the type of Christian belief you hold, would you, personally, identify yourself as an “evangelical” or “born-again” Christian?

Base: Those respondents who mentioned that religious belief is a very/somewhat important/neither important nor unimportant/not very important part of daily life and who indicate that the faith tradition with which they identify most closely is Christianity.



Frequency of Attending a Religious Service

	Total (n=1336) %	Evangelical* (n=459) %	Non- Evangelical (n=582) %
More than once a week	6	10	3
Weekly	24	34	19
Twice a month	9	9	10
Monthly	7	6	8
Once every two or three months	11	11	11
Once or twice all year, or	23	20	26
Never	19	9	22
DK/NA/REF	1	1	1

Q.75 In the past year, how often, on average, did you attend a regular, religious service in a church, mosque, synagogue or temple?

Base: Among respondents who mentioned that religious belief is very/somewhat important/neither important nor unimportant/not very important part of daily life

* Includes those who describe themselves as an "evangelical or born-again Christian".



Political Affiliation – Voting Intention

If federal election were held today, would you vote for or “favour slightly” ...	Total (n=1500) %	BC (n=196) %	Prairies (n=242) %	Ontario (n=561) %	Quebec (n=378) %	Atlantic (n=123) %
The Liberal candidate	33	29	21	41	33	33
The Progressive Conservative candidate	12	9	17	16	3	18
The Canadian Alliance Candidate	10	22	25	6	2	2
New Democratic Party Candidate	10	13	14	11	4	9
Bloc Quebecois Candidate**	8	-	-	-	32	-
Green Party Candidate	1	3	<1	1	<1	-
Other	1	1	<1	<1	1	-
Don't know/Undecided/don't vote	25	23	23	25	25	38

Q.71 If a federal election were being held today, and you had to make a choice which party's candidate would you vote for in your local riding?

Q.72 In that case, which party's candidate do you lean toward or support slightly? (Asked only of those who are “undecided” or reply that they “don't know” at Q. 71).

Note: Proportions in this table are derived from “netting” the responses to Q. 71 and Q. 72.

Base: Total sample.

** Asked only in Quebec.



Political Affiliation – Voting Intention – Continued

	Total (n=1500) %	Rest of Canada (n=1122) %	Quebec (n=378) %
If federal election were held today, would you vote for or "favour slightly" ...			
The Liberal candidate	33	33	33
The Progressive Conservative candidate	12	15	3
The Canadian Alliance Candidate	10	13	2
New Democratic Party Candidate	10	11	4
Bloc Quebecois Candidate**	8	-	32
Green Party Candidate	1	1	<1
Other	1	1	1
Don't know/Undecided/don't vote	25	26	25

Q.71 If a federal election were being held today, and you had to make a choice which party's candidate would you vote for in your local riding?

Q.72 In that case, which party's candidate do you lean toward or support slightly? (Asked only of those who are "undecided" or reply that they "don't know" at Q. 71).

Note: Proportions in this table are derived from "netting" the responses to Q. 71 and Q. 72.

Base: Total sample.

** Asked only in Quebec.



Political Affiliation – Voting Intention – Continued

If federal election were held today, would you vote for or “favour slightly” ...	Total (n=1500) %	Male (n=750) %	Female (n=750) %	Kids at home (n=640) %	Evangel* (n=459) %	Non-Evangel (n=582) %
The Liberal candidate	33	32	35	32	31	35
The Progressive Conservative candidate	12	13	11	12	13	13
The Canadian Alliance Candidate	10	12	8	9	12	10
New Democratic Party Candidate	10	8	11	9	10	9
Bloc Quebecois Candidate**	8	7	9	9	10	6
Green Party Candidate	1	1	1	1	-	1
Other	1	1	<1	<1	-	1
Don't know/Undecided/don't vote	25	26	25	28	24	25

Q.71 If a federal election were being held today, and you had to make a choice which party's candidate would you vote for in your local riding?

Q.72 In that case, which party's candidate do you lean toward or support slightly? (Asked only of those who are “undecided” or reply that they “don't know” at Q. 71).

Note: Proportions in this table are derived from “netting” the responses to Q. 71 and Q. 72.

Base: Total sample.

* Includes those who describe themselves as an “evangelical or born-again Christian”.

** Asked only in Quebec.

Who is Focus?

Status and structure

Focus on the Family Canada Association is an independently incorporated charitable organisation that maintains a relationship of communication and consultation with Focus on the Family USA. The organisation's board members provide guidance to management in areas such as finance, administration, family counselling and broadcasting, according to their individual fields of expertise.

Managing the organisation on a day-to-day basis are the president, vice-president, and departmental directors. There are currently 68 employees at the Canadian headquarters in British Columbia, with various other representatives working across the country.

Location

Focus on the Family Canada is located approximately 40 minutes east of downtown Vancouver in Langley. The facility houses both the office and warehouse in one location.

Revenue

Focus on the Family Canada receives no government funding and is completely listener and donor supported. The number of constituents that offer support for and participate in the organisation's objectives is currently approximately 140,000.

A full 92% of Focus Canada's budget goes directly to programs rather than administration costs.

Scope of Activities

Broadcasts: Daily radio programs are heard on 142 stations in Canada. These stations cover 70% of the nation, creating a potential audience of 22,000,000 Canadians. Programs deal with issues as wide-ranging as autism, education, parenting styles and marital infidelity. In early 2002, Focus Canada began airing television broadcasts in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia.

Constituent Contact: The Langley office receives approximately 90,000 phone calls and 70,000 letters each

year. The constituent services staff coordinate, in both English and French, the distribution of resource materials, including over 140,000 magazine subscriptions, as well as answer general questions such as requests for referrals to counsellors and community based service organisations. The various Focus resources accommodate the diversity of Canada's population through their availability in 28 languages.

Community Outreach Programs:

- How to Drug-Proof Your Kids
- Life on the Edge - parent-teen program
- Awareness campaigns such as the national Campaign Against Child Pornography
- Family concerns, research website: www.familyfacts.ca
- Financial management seminars
- Christian Citizen seminars
- Clergy conferences

"It is my view that our society can be no more stable than the foundation of individual family units upon which it rests." - James C. Dobson



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for more information on the *Canadian Attitudes on the Family* project, please visit Focus on the Family online at www.familyfacts.ca/attitudes

Focus on the Family is a charitable organization, built on Christian principles, which supports, encourages and strengthens the Canadian family through education and resources.