

# CANADIAN FAMILY VIEWS

INSTITUTE OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY CANADA 

---

CANADIANS MAKE CHOICES ON CHILDCARE

---

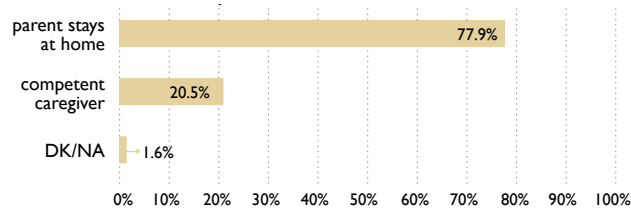


TALKED ABOUT SINCE THE 1980S, THE ISSUE OF CHILDCARE continues to get a lot of attention from policy makers. Childcare policy was a dominant issue in the most recent Canadian federal election and is a hotly-debated topic in the early days of the current Parliament. It seems that politicians, academics, industry organizations and special interest groups are all eager to share their views of what is best for parents and their children. However, the views of ordinary Canadians are all too often lost in these discussions. So, the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada commissioned a survey of over 2000 Canadians by GPC Research (now Fleishman-Hillard Canada) to get their perspectives. The findings reveal that everyday Canadians know what they want and it is not always what the “experts” say.

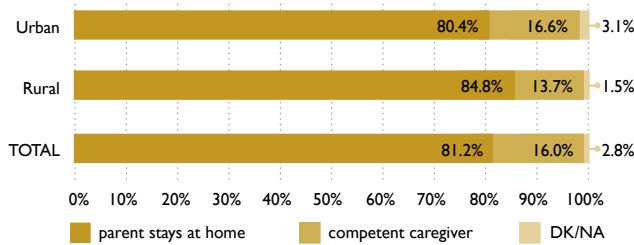
## THE RESULTS

To begin with, respondents were asked which child care arrangement they would prefer: having a parent stay at home or using a competent care giver. Overwhelmingly (over 80%) Canadians preferred to have one parent stay at home with their children.

### Do you think it's better for children if...?\*

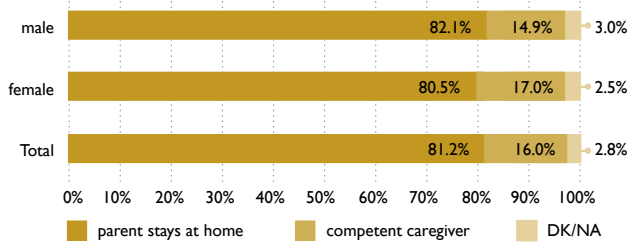


### Childcare Choice by Urban/Rural



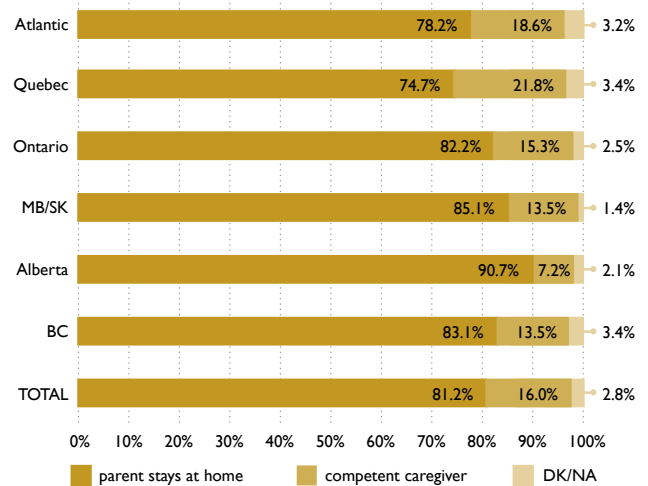
The so-called urban – rural divide is barely noticeable on this issue as 80% of urbanites would prefer to have one parent stay at home whereas 85% of rural Canadians would prefer the same option.

### Childcare Choice by Gender



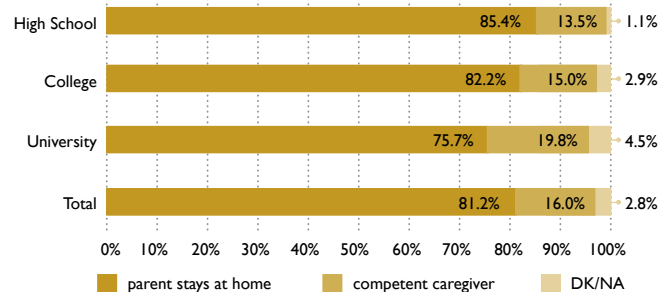
Overwhelming differences among men and women respondents were almost non-existent, with 82% of males and 81% of females preferring a parent stay at home.

### Childcare Choice by Geographic Region



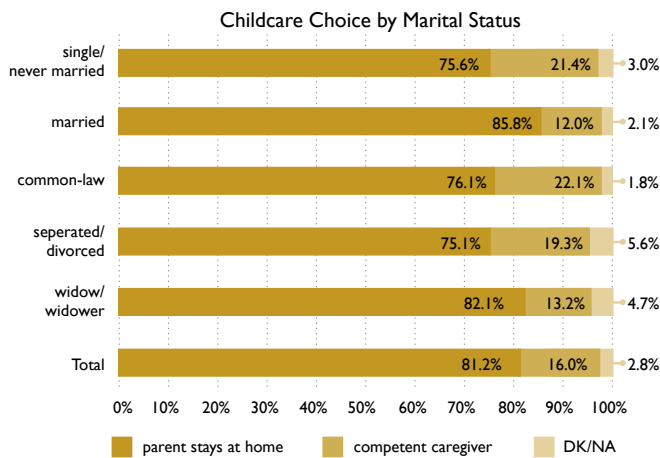
On a regional basis support for having a parent stay at home ranged from a high of 91% in Alberta to a low of 75% in Quebec, still an overwhelming majority.

### Childcare Choice by Education Level

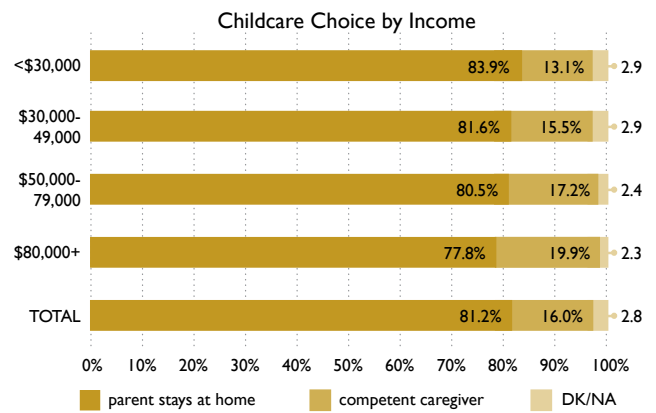


Educational attainment impacted respondents answers slightly, but again significant majorities in all education categories preferred having a parent stay at home compared to a competent care giver.

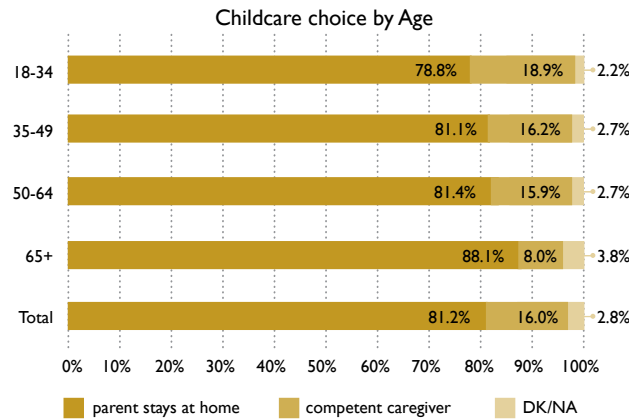
\*Question was worded slightly differently depending on if the respondent had children under the age of 6 living at home See pages 13-18 for full survey questionnaire.



Married Canadians (86%) were significantly more likely to favour having a parent stay at home. However, even single-never married respondents (76%) strongly supported having a parent stay at home.



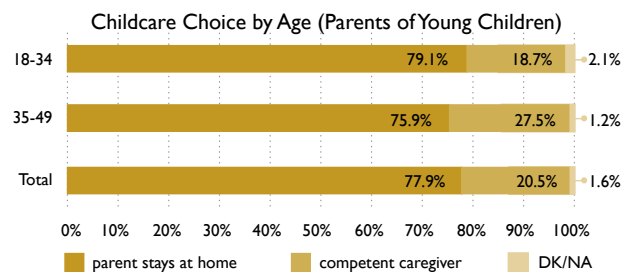
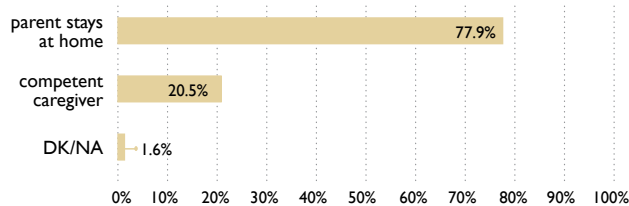
Among various income groups the difference was even less, with 84% of respondents whose annual household income was below \$30,000 preferring to have a parent stay at home while 78% of respondents with annual household incomes \$80,000 or more preferring to have a parent stay at home.



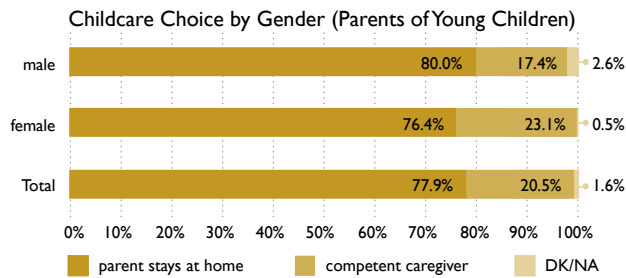
As might be expected, older Canadians (those 65 and over) strongly supported (88%) having one parent stay at home, but younger Canadians were also massively supportive (79%).

What about parents of young children? After all, they are the ones who are most impacted by child care choices. So what is their preference? We posed the question specifically to parents with children under the age of 6 living at home. The results were not remarkably different. It seems that most (78%) parents of young children prefer to have one parent at home with their kids.

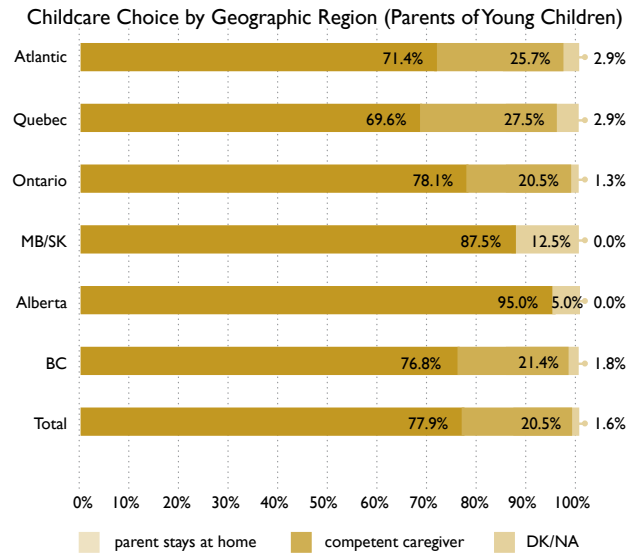
Would you prefer a...?



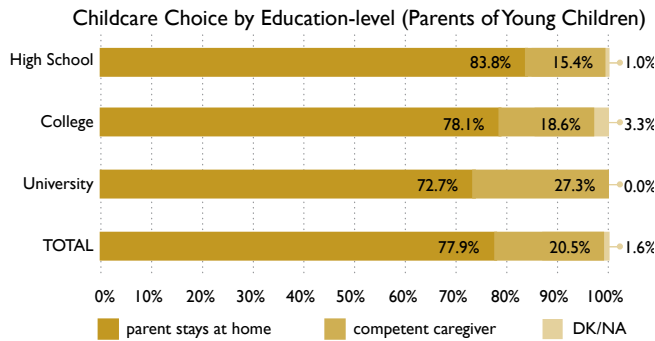
Parents of young children strongly supported one parent staying at home regardless of the respondent's age.



Gender differences were again almost non-existent with 80% of male and 76% of female parents with young children at home preferred to have a parent stay at home with their child.



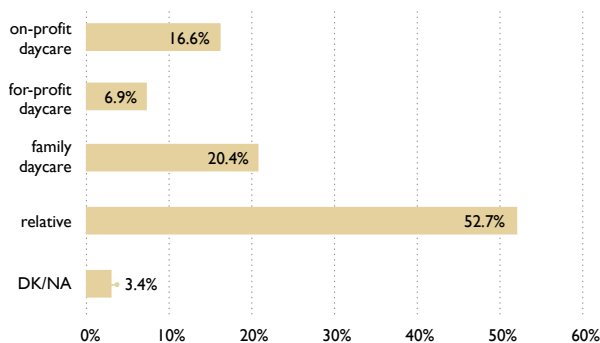
A majority of Quebec and Ontario parents of young children preferred that a parent stays at home 70% and 78% respectively. While the sample sizes were quite small, significant majorities of parents with young children at home in all other regions also preferred having a parent stay at home with their child.



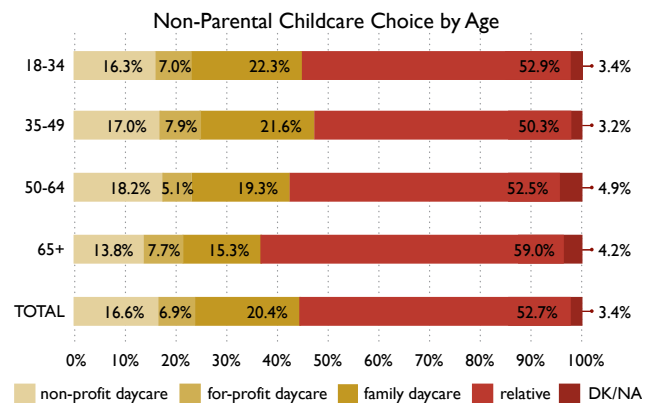
Across all educational levels parents of young children preferred own parent staying home.

Preferences are just that, preferences and often reality dictates that we can't have what we want. Who wouldn't prefer a Honda Accord to a Pontiac Firefly? Other research has found that financial matters are the number one challenge for Canadian families. As a result, parents of young children may want to have one parent stay at home, but the financial and career realities of today may make that simply too difficult for most to achieve. So if a parent cannot stay at home to care for their young children, the natural question is what type of non-parental care would Canadians want for children? The answer turns out to be the type of care that most resembles most parents' first choice, parental care.

*If the parents have to work full time and cannot stay at home with their child, which one of the following arrangements is best for young children\*?*



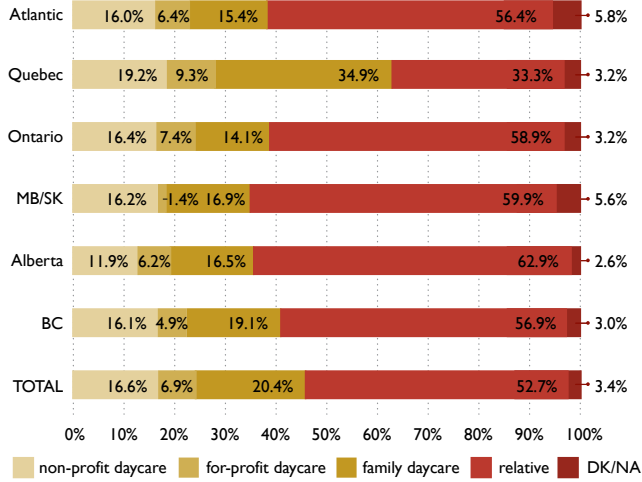
Again the responses are very similar across demographic segments; however, there are some noticeable exceptions.



Across age categories the differences were much less with 50% of 35-49 year-old respondents while 59% of those 65 and over preferred having a relative care for the children.

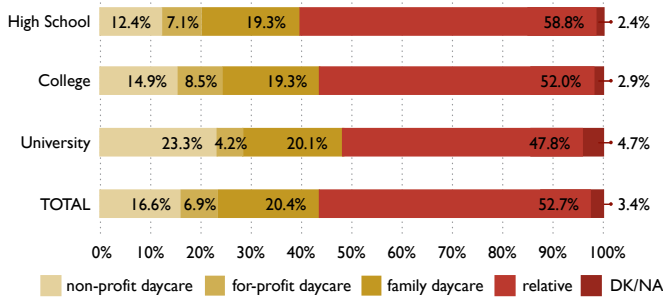
\*Question was worded slightly differently depending on if the respondent had children under the age of 6 living at home See pages 13-18 for full survey questionnaire.

### Non-Parental Childcare Choice by Geographic Region



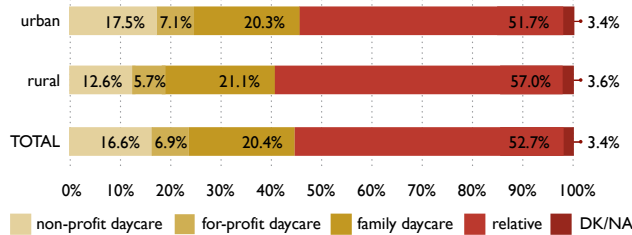
While a majority of respondents across Canada prefer a relative to other types of non-parental child care, in Quebec only 33% chose this option. Thirty-five percent of Quebec respondents chose a family daycare (that is in a neighbourhood home).

### Non-Parental Childcare Choice by Education Level



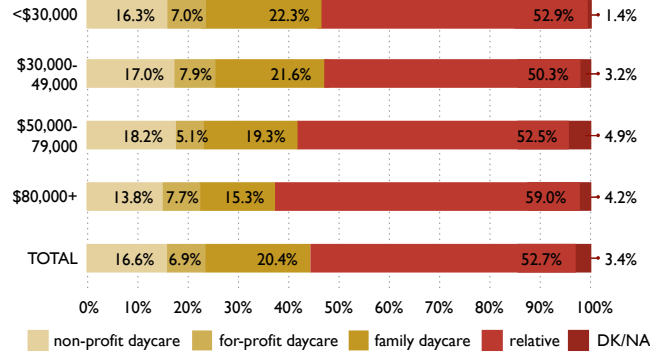
Educational attainment had an impact with higher levels of education resulting in more support for a non-profit daycare centre.

### Non-Parental Childcare Choice by Urban/Rural



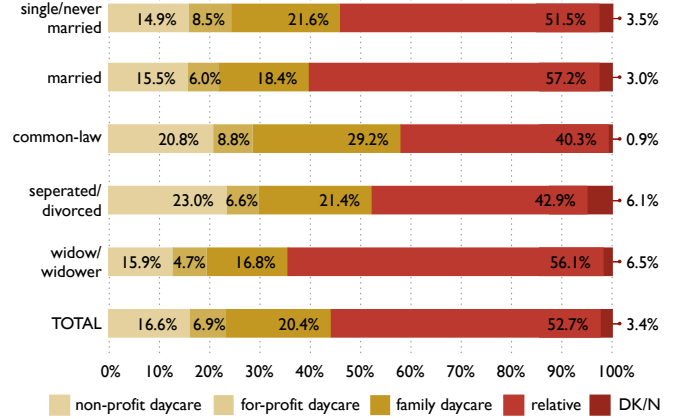
The urban – rural divide is very narrow.

### Non-Parental Childcare Choice by Income



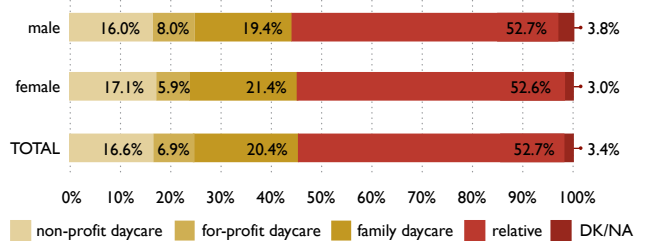
Annual household income made very little difference with a majority of respondents across income levels choosing a relative over the other types of non-parental care.

### Non-Parental Childcare Choice by Marital Status



Marital status had some impact on responses as legally married respondents were more likely to choose a relative compared to respondents living in a common-law relationship.

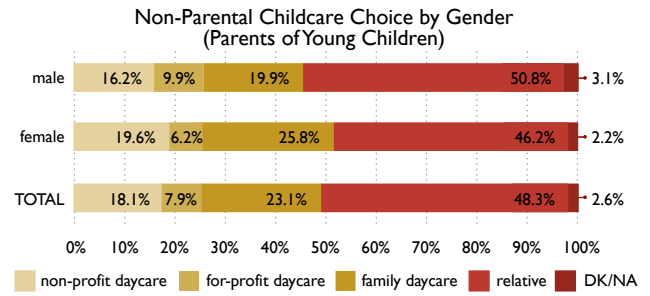
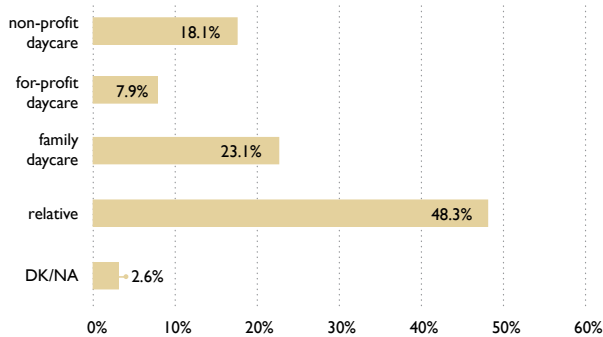
### Non-Parental Childcare Choice by Gender



Men and women had very similar preferences with 53% of both groups choosing a relative over the other types of non-parental care.

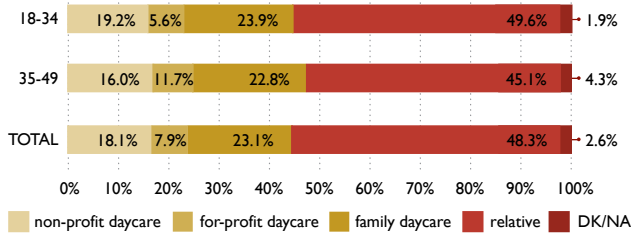
✿ If we focus our analysis only on parents with children under the age of 6 living at home, the results change only slightly.

*If you had to work full time and could not have a parent stay at home with your child, with which of the following would you prefer to leave your child while you work?*



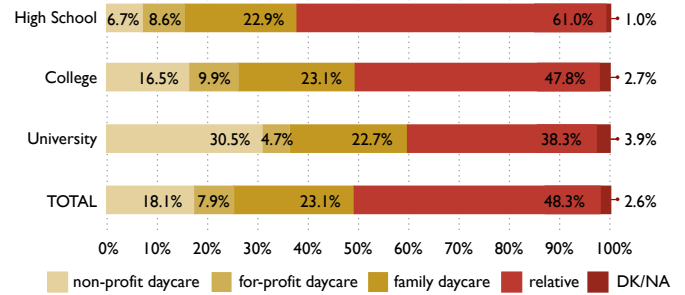
However, the gender of respondents made little difference with 51% of men and 46% of women preferring a relative over other forms of non-parental care.

Non-Parental Childcare Choice by Age (Parents of Young Children)



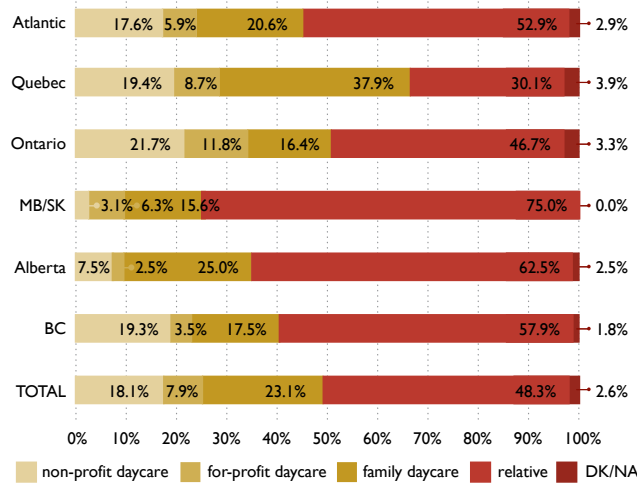
The age of parents had little impact on their preference for a relative to provide non-parental care.

Non-Parental Childcare Choice by Education Level (Parents of Young Children)



Education level did have a slight impact on a parent's preference for non-parental care.

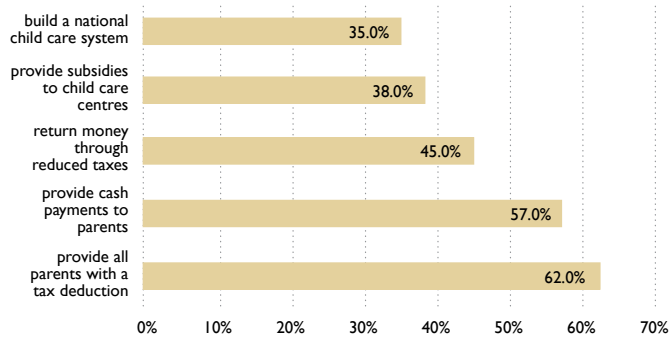
Non-Parental Childcare Choice by Geographic Region (Parents of Young Children)



Quebec parents of young children are more likely to prefer a family day care in a neighbourhood home over a relative providing care.

After briefly outlining the government of the day's plan for childcare (Note: The survey was conducted before the November 30, 2005 start to the election campaign) we asked respondents how they would instruct the federal government to spend the money that might have been earmarked to daycare. There were 5 options in total; however each respondent was presented only 4 options. These options were presented in pairs and the respondent was asked to choose their preference within each pair. As a result of these tradeoffs we can see how often an option was chosen as opposed to the other option it was paired against.

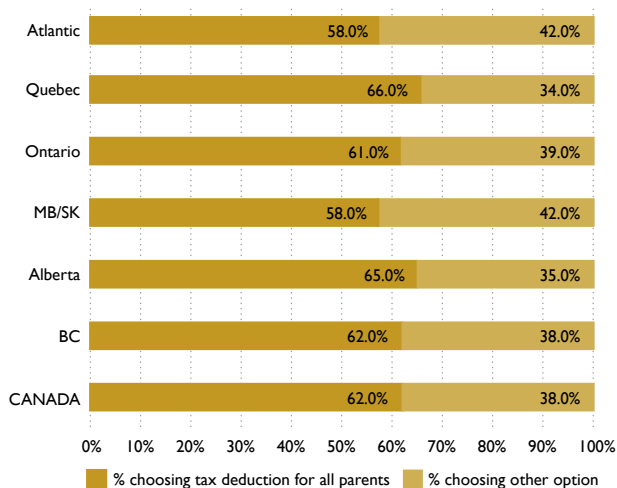
*The federal government has proposed to spend \$5 billion over the next five years building a national daycare program (that could cost up to \$13 billion/year once complete). Given this intention, how would you instruct the government to spend this money?*



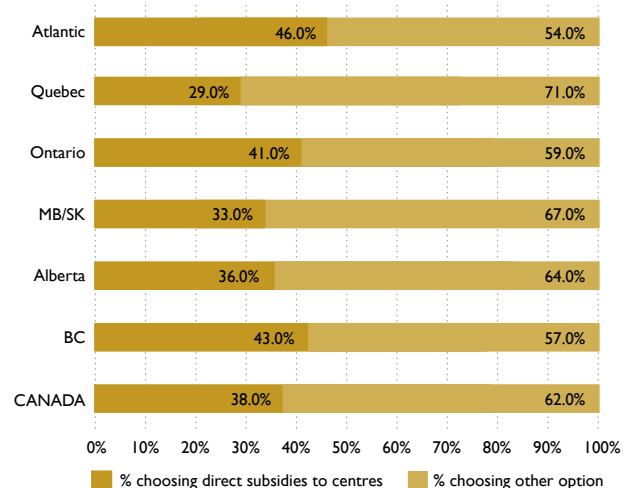
The number one choice was to change the tax system to provide all parents with a child tax deduction whether they work or stay at home with their children with 67% of respondents choosing this option over an alternative option. Close behind at 57% was providing cash payments directly to parents who could choose any form of childcare they deem best including having a parent stay at home and care for their children. Less popular options were to return the money to all taxpayers through reduced taxes (45%), provide subsidies to child care centres in order to improve quality and/or create more spaces (38%), and build a national child care system that provides subsidized child care to parents who want it (35%).

There were no real dramatic differences across the regions.

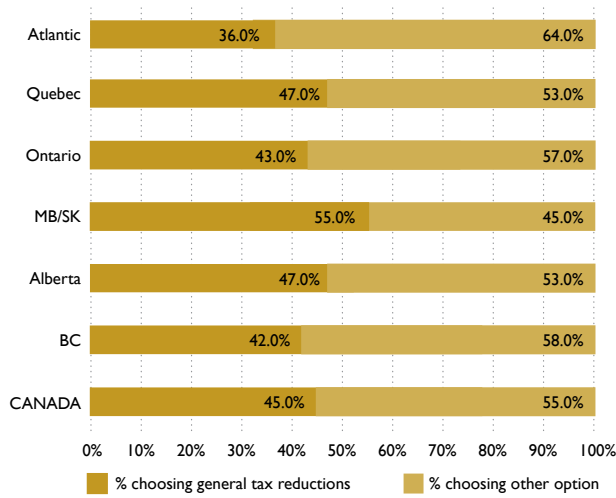
*Would you instruct the government to change the tax system to provide all parents with a child tax deduction whether they work or stay at home with their children?*



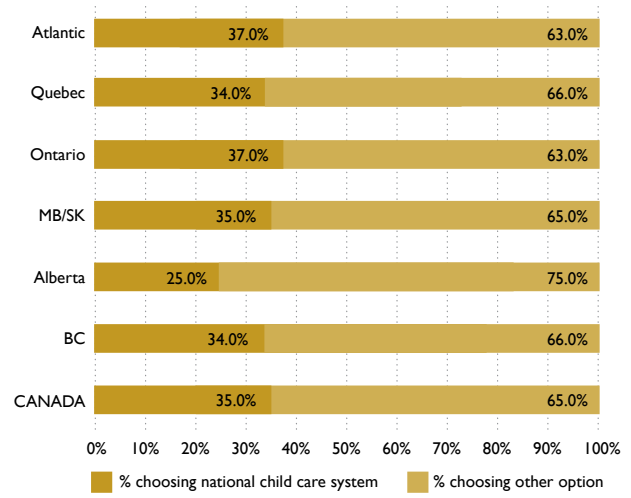
*Would you instruct the government to provide subsidies directly to childcare centres in order to improve quality and/or create more spaces?*



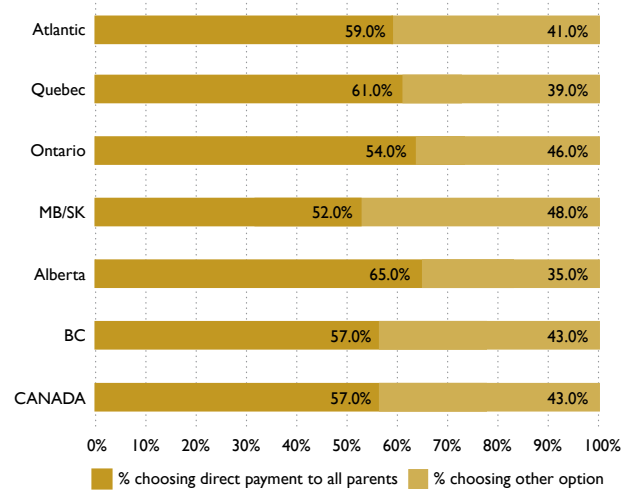
*Would you instruct the government to return the money to all tax payers through reduced taxes?*



*Would you instruct the government to build a national child care system that provides subsidized childcare to parents who want it?*



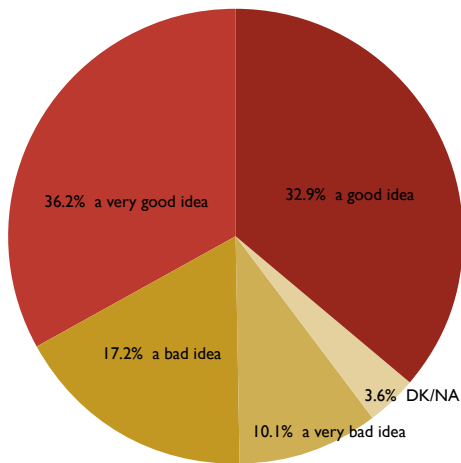
*Would you instruct the government to provide cash payments directly to parents who could chose any form of childcare they deem best including having a parent stay at home and care for their children?*





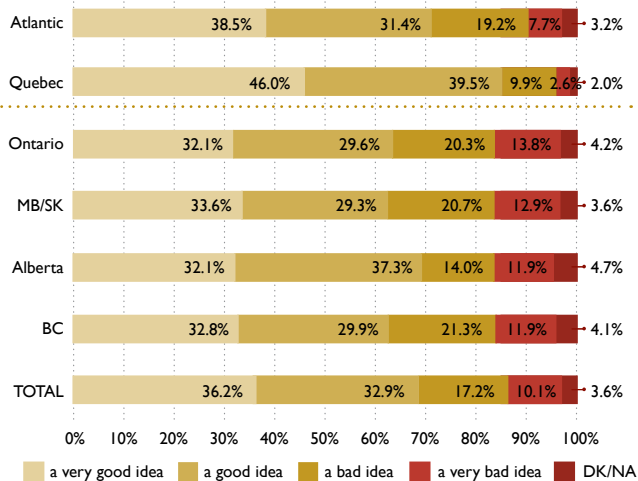
Finally we looked at some other policy alternatives for assisting families in caring for their children. The first alternative was a paid parental leave to parents who stay at home with their young child up to the first three years regardless of whether the parent had worked before the child's birth or not. This idea was popular among all Canadians especially women.

*Some countries and Europe provide paid parental leave to parents who stay at home with their young child up to the first three years regardless of whether the parent had worked before the child's birth or not. For Canada this would be...*

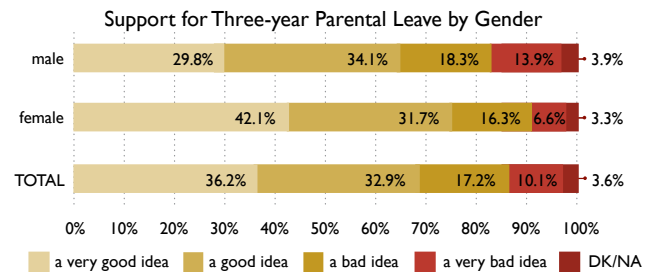


Nearly seven out of ten Canadians thought a three year parental leave was either a good idea (33%) or a very good idea (36%).

Support for Three-year Parental Leave by Geographic Region

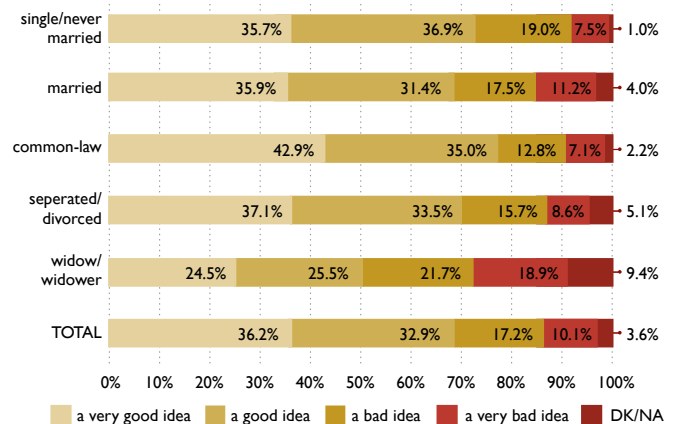


There was support for the idea across all the regions with the highest support in Quebec.



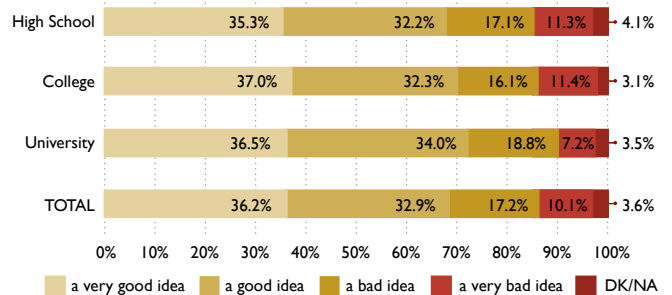
Male respondents were less supportive of the idea than women, but still a sizeable majority of men supported the idea.

Support for Three-year Parental Leave by Marital Status



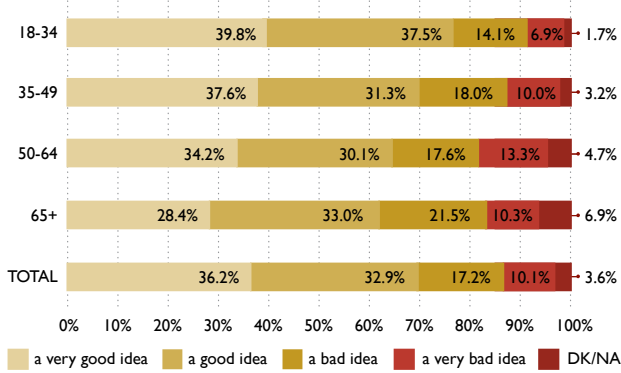
Respondants living in a common-law relationship were more supportive of the idea than other respondents.

Support for Three-year Parental Leave by Education Level



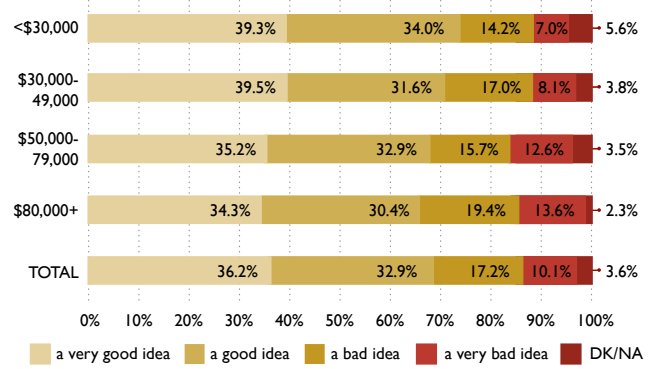
There was almost no difference among levels of educational attainment.

Support for Three-year Parental Leave by Age



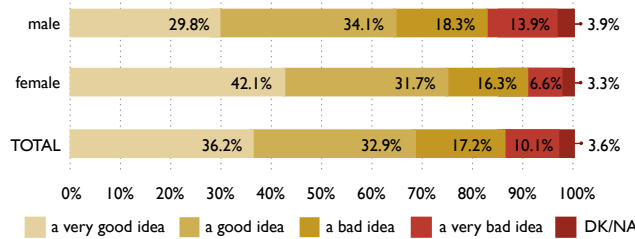
Older respondents were less favourable of the idea, but still over 60% thought it was either a good (33%) or very good (28%) idea.

Support for Three-year Parental Leave by Income



Nor was there any real differences based on annual household income.

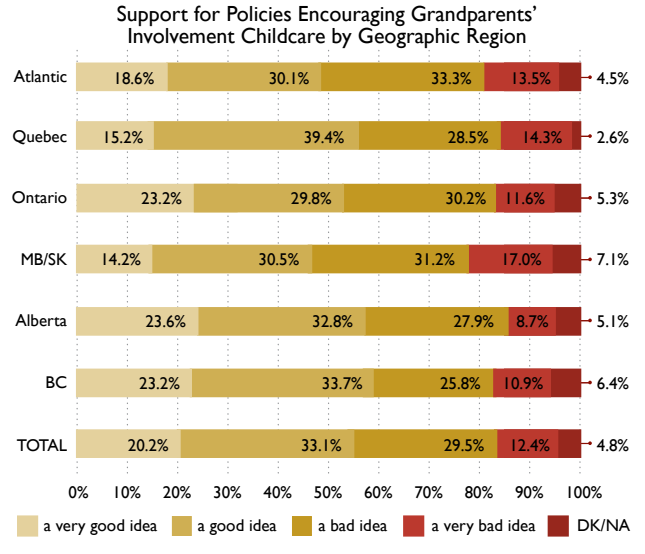
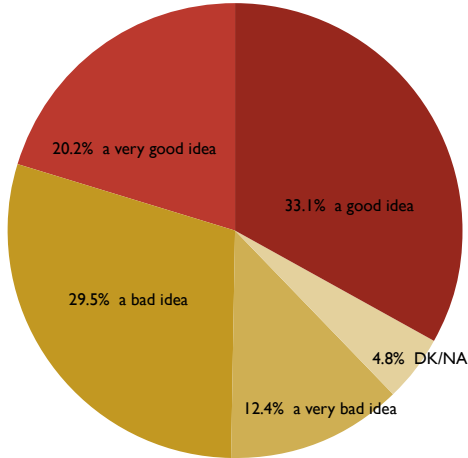
Support for Three-year Parental Leave by Gender



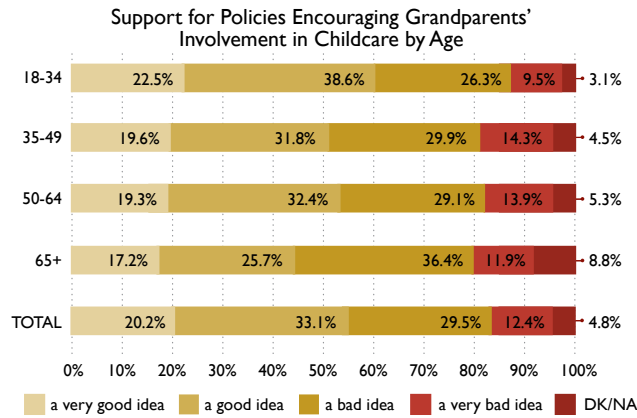
Male respondents were less supportive of the idea than women, but still a sizeable majority of men supported the idea.

The other option explored was whether the Government of Canada should implement policies that encourage grandparents to provide child care for their grandchildren when the parents are working. Although not as strong as the support for extended paid parental leave, a majority of Canadians still supported the idea.

*Some people have suggested that the Government of Canada should implement policies that encourage grandparents to provide childcare for their grandchildren when the parents are working. For Canada this would be...*



Overall support across regions was very similar



Older Canadians were less supportive of the idea.

## ✿ CONCLUSION

The survey findings contrast with four commonly stated “beliefs” about child care policy in Canada.

1. The myth that a majority of Canadians support a national day care system is dispelled when Canadians are offered alternatives.

This survey found that:

- Canadians prefer child care provided by parents to day care provided by “competent care givers”;
- Canadians prefer day care offered by relatives to non-profit day care centres;
- Canadians, when offered a *choice* between child care supported by the tax system or through direct payments, *strongly* prefer both these systems to either subsidizing day care centres or a national day care system.

2. The myth that Quebecers favour a national daycare system does not hold when other alternatives are offered.

The survey found that:

- Quebecers prefer child care provided by parents to day care provided by “competent care givers”;
- Quebecers prefer “family day care centres” or day care offered by relatives to non-profit day care centres;
- Quebecers, when offered a *choice* between child care supported by the tax system or through direct payments, *strongly* prefer both these systems to either subsidizing day care centres or a national day care system.

3. There exists “yet-another-myth” that non-profit day care is a Women’s cause; this survey finds that most Women do not favour the national daycare system when other alternatives are offered.

The survey found that:

- Women prefer child care provided by parents to day care provided by “competent care givers”;
- Women prefer day care offered by relatives to non-profit day care centres;
- Women, when offered a *choice* between child care supported by the tax system or through direct payments, *strongly* prefer both these systems to either subsidizing day care centres or a national day care system.

4. Finally, the myth that lower-income people prefer a national day care system is disproved. This survey

finds that most people with incomes below \$30K do not favour the national daycare system when other alternatives are offered.

The survey found that:

- People with incomes below \$30K prefer child care provided by parents to day care provided by “competent care givers”;
- People with incomes below \$30K prefer child care offered by relatives to non-profit day care centres;
- People with incomes below \$30K, when offered a *choice* between child care supported by the tax system or through direct payments, *strongly* prefer both these systems to either subsidizing day care centres or a national day care system.

In addition the survey indicates that Canadians are open to exploring new alternatives in child care policy that promote parental care of young children and to a lesser extent encourage the involvement of relatives.

They believe the following would be “good ideas”:

1. Providing paid leave to all parents in the first three years of the child’s life regardless of whether or not they were previously in the labour force;
2. Encouraging grandparents to get involved in the care of their grandchildren when the parents are working.

## METHODOLOGY

- The survey consisted of 2,012 randomly selected adult respondents from across Canada (see Appendix A for the complete questionnaire).
- The margin of error of a survey of this size is +/- 2.2%, 19 times out of 20; margin of error is larger for sub-groups – (See Appendix B for details on smaller segments).
- The survey was conducted by telephone on May 6, 7 and 8, 2005
- The sample of 2012 included interviews in
  - Atlantic Region: 310
  - Quebec: 401
  - Ontario: 500
  - Manitoba and Saskatchewan: 200
  - Alberta: 301
  - British Columbia: 300

## SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

### Q1:

First, do you have any children under the age of 6 currently living in your household?

Yes

No

### Q2:

I am going to read you some possible arrangements for caring for children under six. Please tell me which arrangement you would ideally prefer for your children. Would you prefer to:

Have one parent stay at home to care for your child

Have your child looked after by a competent care giver

Don't know/ refused

### Q3:

If you had to work full time and could not have a parent stay at home with your child, with which one of the following would you prefer to leave your child while you work:

A non-profit daycare centre

A for-profit daycare centre

A family daycare (that is in a neighbourhood home)

A relative, such as the child's aunt or grandparent

Don't know/Refused

**Q4:**

I am going to read you some possible arrangements for caring for children under six. Please tell me which arrangement you think is best for children in general. Do you think it is better for children if:

One of the parents stays at home to care with their child

Parents have their child looked after by a competent care giver

Don't know/ refused

**Q5:**

Sometimes, staying at home full-time with children is not option for many parents. If the parents have to work full time and cannot stay at home with their child, which one of the following arrangements is best for young children:

A non-profit daycare centre

A for-profit daycare centre

A family daycare (that is in a neighbourhood home)

A relative, such as the child's aunt or grandparent

Don't know/Refused

**Q6:**

The federal government has proposed to spend \$5 billion over the next five years building a national daycare program. Some argue that this program could cost \$10 billion to \$13 billion per year when complete. Given this intention, how would you instruct the government to spend this money?

**Q6a:**

Would you instruct the government...

To provide subsidies directly to child care centres in order to improve quality and/or create more spaces

To build a national child care system that provides subsidized child care to parents who want it.

To provide cash payments directly to parents who could chose any form of childcare they deem best including having a parent stay at home and care for their children.

To change the tax system to provide all parents with a child tax deduction whether they work or stay at home with their children

To return the money to all tax payers through reduced taxes

Don't know/Refused

**Q6b:**

Would you instruct the government...

To provide subsidies directly to child care centres in order to improve quality and/or create more spaces

To build a national child care system that provides subsidized child care to parents who want it.

To provide cash payments directly to parents who could chose any form of childcare they deem best including having a parent stay at home and care for their children.

To change the tax system to provide all parents with a child tax deduction whether they work or stay at home with their children

To return the money to all tax payers through reduced taxes

Don't know/Refused

**Q7:**

Some countries in Europe provide paid parental leave to parents who stay at home with their young child up to the first three years regardless of whether the parent had worked before the child's birth or not. For Canada to have this system, would this be a good or bad idea? [PROBE: Would that be very good,/very bad idea]

A very good idea

A good idea

A bad idea

A very bad idea

Don't know/Refused

**Q8:**

Some people have suggested that the Government of Canada should implement policies that encourage grandparents to provide childcare for their grandchildren when the parents are working. For Canada to have this system, would this be a good or bad idea? [PROBE: Would that be very good,/very bad idea]

A very good idea

A good idea

A bad idea

A very bad idea

Don't know/Refused

**D1:**

Now I am going to ask you some demographic questions to help us analyze the results. What is your current employment status? Please stop me when I reach your category? Are you [READ ALL ITEMS - ACCEPT ONE ANSWER ONLY]?

Working full-time (35 or more hours per week)

Working part-time (less than 35 hours per week)

Self-employed

Unemployed, but looking for work

Attending school full-time/A student

Retired

Not in the workforce (Full-time homemaker/Unemployed, not looking for work)

Other (DO NOT READ)

Don't know/Refused

**D2:**

What is your current marital status? Please stop me when I reach your category? Are you [ACCEPT ONE ANSWER ONLY]?

Single and never married

Married

Common-law

Separated

Divorced

Widowed or Widower

Don't know/Refused



**D3:**

What is your spouse's or partner's current employment status? Please stop me when I reach their category? Is that person [READ ALL ITEMS - ACCEPT ONE ANSWER ONLY]?

Working full-time (35 or more hours per week)

Working part-time (less than 35 hours per week)

Self-employed

Unemployed, but looking for work

Attending school full-time/A student

Retired

Not in the workforce (Full-time homemaker/Unemployed, not looking for work)

Other (DO NOT READ)

Don't know/Refused

**D4:**

In what year were you born?

**D5:**

What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed? [READ LIST]

Grade 8 or less

Some high school

Complete high school

Technical, vocational post-secondary , CEGEP

Some university

Complete university degree

Post graduate degree

Don't know/Refused

**D6:**

Which of the following categories best describes your total household income? That is, the total income of all persons in your household combined, before taxes? Please stop me when I reach your category. [READ LIST]

- Under \$10,000
- \$10,000 to just under \$20,000
- \$20,000 to just under \$30,000
- \$30,000 to just under \$40,000
- \$40,000 to just under \$50,000
- \$50,000 to just under \$60,000
- \$60,000 to just under \$70,000
- \$70,000 to just under \$80,000
- \$80,000 to just under \$100,000
- \$100,000 and over
- Don't know/Refused

**MARGINS OF ERROR**  
(at 95% confidence level)

**All Respondents**

Canada	+/- 2.2%
Male	+/- 3.2%
Female	+/- 3.0%

Urban	+/- 2.4%
Rural	+/- 5.0%

<\$30,000	+/- 5.0%
\$30,000 - \$49,000	+/- 4.6%
\$50,000 - \$79,000	+/- 4.4%
\$80,000 +	+/- 4.7%

Single/Never Married	+/- 4.9%
Legally Married	+/- 3.0%
Common-law	+/- 6.5%
Separated/Divorced	+/- 8.1%
Widow/Widower	+/- 9.5%

High School	+/- 3.9%
College	+/- 3.6%
University	+/- 4.0%

18-34	+/- 4.0%
35-49	+/- 3.9%
50-64	+/- 4.3%
65+	+/- 6.0%

Atlantic	+/- 7.9%
Quebec	+/- 4.4%
Ontario	+/- 3.6%
MB/SK	+/- 8.3%
Alberta	+/- 7.0%
BC	+/- 6.0%

**Parents with Young Children**

Canada	+/- 4.8%
Male	+/- 7.1%
Female	+/- 6.5%

Urban	+/- 5.4%
Rural	+/- 11.0%

<\$30,000	+/- 12.3%
\$30,000 - \$49,000	+/- 9.8%
\$50,000 - \$79,000	+/- 8.3%
\$80,000 +	+/- 10.7%

Single/Never Married	+/- 16.1%
Legally Married	+/- 6.0%
Common-law	+/- 10.8%
Separated/Divorced	-
Widow/Widower	-

High School	+/- 9.6%
College	+/- 7.2%
University	+/- 8.7%

18-34	+/- 6.4%
35-49	+/- 7.7%
50-64	-
65+	-

Atlantic	+/- 16.6%
Quebec	+/- 9.7%
Ontario	+/- 8.0%
MB/SK	+/- 17.4%
Alberta	+/- 15.5%
BC	+/- 13.1%