
POLL: Three quarters of Canadians think it is best when children under six are cared for by a parent at home

New national poll also asks about funding preferences

Ottawa, Canada, May 23, 2013 – Seventy-six percent of Canadians believe it is best for children under six to be cared for at home by a parent, according to a [new poll released today by the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada](#).

The results hold steady regardless of age, income, gender and working status. They also are fairly consistent across regional lines.

Among parents of children under six, 69% believe that having one parent at home to care for their child is the best option.

When parents are unable to be at home with their children, Canadians choose options that most closely replicate the home environment. Canadians believe that after a parent, a relative is the next best option, followed by a neighbourhood home daycare.

Centre-based care was the last choice. Only 11% of respondents in B.C. consider centre-based care a good alternative for parents who are unable to stay at home. Western Canada is the region that most strongly believes home care is best.

On funding, Canadians take issue with the government funding of daycares instead of parents.

When asked, “If government should spend money to look after children, how should they do so,” a total of 61% of Canadians believe funding should go directly to parents. This would be in the form of cash payments, a child tax deduction (available regardless of whether children are cared for in or out of the home), or reduced taxes to all Canadians.

Only 12% believe the government should provide subsidies to child care centres to improve quality or create more spaces. A mere 10% would expand the public school system to include child care.

“This poll shows that the policy push in various provinces today stands in contrast to the desires of Canadians, who prefer to see funding go directly to them rather than into school bureaucracies or institutional care,” says Andrea Mrozek, Executive Director of the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada.

By region, Alberta has the strongest preference for child funding to go directly to parents, at 70%.

Surprisingly, Quebec follows Alberta, where 65% of Quebecers are in favour of direct payments to parents. This is in sharp contrast to the state-funded daycare system they currently have.

A direct subsidy to parents is also a popular choice among parents of children under six and females age 35 to 54.

“Parents aspire to spend more time with their small children. Across the country, it's clear this is a goal. Public policy ought to better support families in this desire. A top-heavy, one-size-fits-all government solution will never serve the diverse needs of each unique family,” concludes Mrozek.

Further details about the poll can be found online: www.imfcanada.org/daycaresires.

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