

Canadian daycare desires

IT'S NOT OFTEN enough that Canadians are actually asked about their daycare preferences. This poll shows three quarters of Canadians believe it is best for children under six to be at home with a parent, failing that, their second choice is a relative, with institutional daycare coming in last. These results hold steady across age, income, gender, working arrangements and, to a lesser extent, regional lines. If governments should support families, Canadians prefer the money should go to them, rather than to schools or public daycare institutions.

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QUESTIONS AND MARGINS OF ERROR - FOUND ONLINE AT IMFCANADA.ORG/DAYCAREDESIRES

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CANADIAN PARENTS MATTER. They are the most important input into their children's lives. They are the ones doing the hard work of raising children.

Unfortunately, those designing public policy don't often turn to parents to ask what they prefer when it comes to childcare choices.

When Canadians are asked what the best childcare arrangements are for children under six, the majority at 76% believe it is good when a parent is home. This is their distinct preference

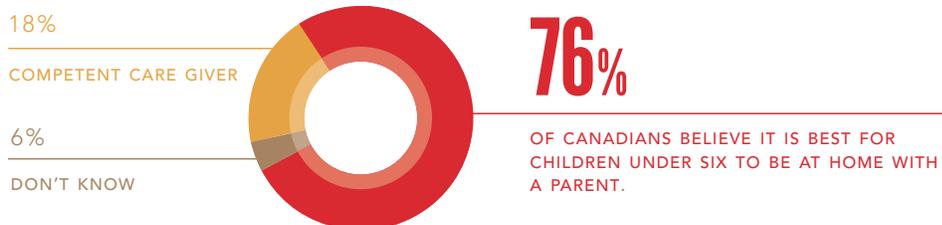
when contrasted with a competent caregiver.

This holds true across age, income, gender, working arrangements and, to a lesser extent, across regional lines.

On funding, Canadians prefer, not surprisingly, to see funding go directly to them, rather than into school bureaucracies or institutional daycare. A total of 61% of Canadians believe that when it comes to government funding of childcare, funding should go directly to parents.

PART I

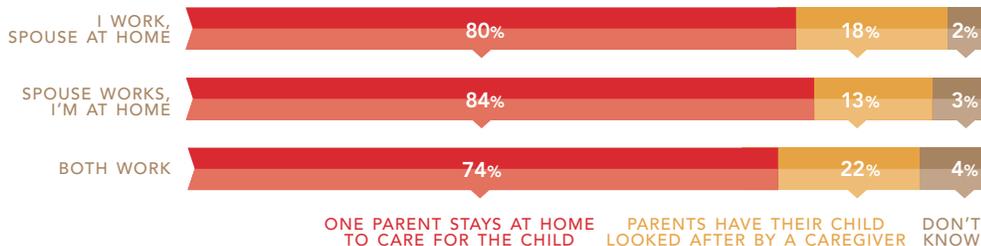
Parent or competent caregiver?



DO FAMILIES WHERE BOTH PARENTS WORK FEEL DIFFERENTLY?

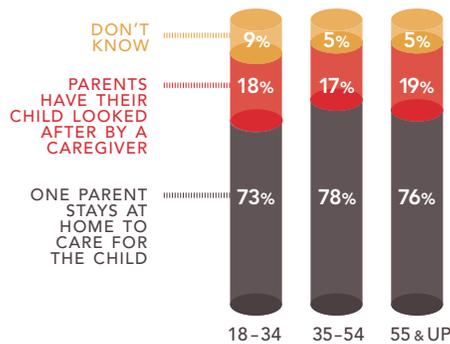
One might assume that there would be a drop in this percentage for families where both parents are working, however, this is not the case. In families where both parents are working, 74% of Canadians still believe that it is best for children under six to be cared for by a parent. It is worth nothing

that often parents go to extraordinary lengths to rearrange schedules so that children can be home with a parent. Therefore, the category of "both parents working" need not always mean that children are being watched by an outside caregiver.



BY AGE

Canadians agree on what is best for children under six regardless of age. That children under six are better off with a parent at home is not the view of those who have long ago raised their own children and are now telling younger parents what to do.

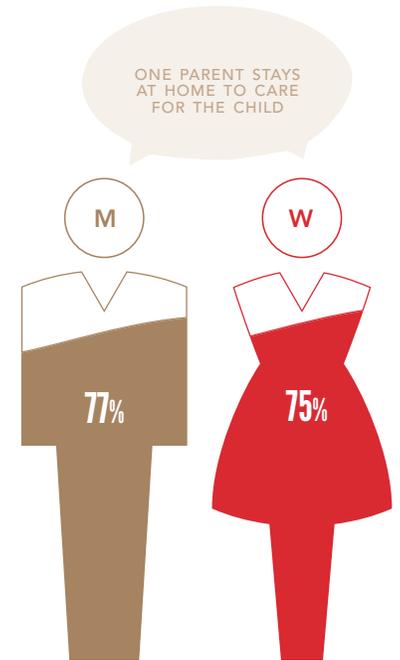


BY GENDER

Women feel roughly the same as men. 75% of women think it's best if one parent stays at home to care for their child. 77% of men say the same.

When we look at the various age categories, there is little variation of any substance: 70% of Canadian women age 18 to 34 think that it is best for children under six to be home with a parent, contrasted with 75% of men age 18 to 34.

The same percentage of men and women age 35 to 54, 78%, think it is best for children under six to be at home with a parent.



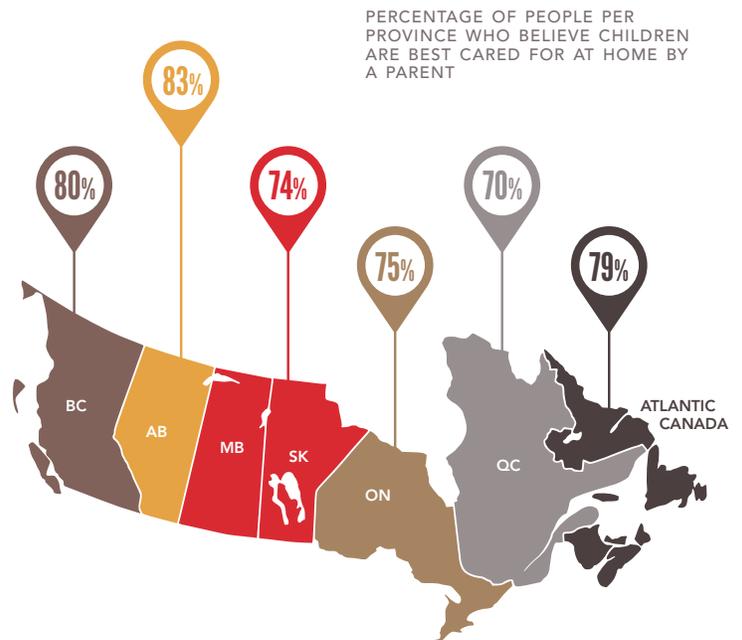
INCOME

Whether Canadians are high income earners or low income earners, they believe in high percentages the best arrangement for children under six is a parent at home. The following are the percentages of Canadians who believe this to be true:



Regardless of whether Canadians are high income or low income earners, there is a very high consistency in the results.

BY REGION, THE CONSISTENCY REMAINS:



Ironically, given the taxpayer funded daycare system in Quebec, only 26% of Quebecers believe it is better for a child under six to be cared for by a competent caregiver.

HOW DO CANADIANS WITH CHILDREN UNDER SIX RIGHT NOW FEEL?

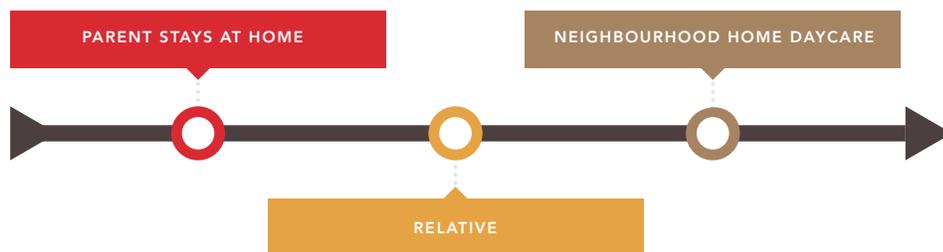
76% of Canadians prefer a parent to a competent caregiver when asked what is best for children under six. The response is not markedly different when considering those who are parenting children under six *right now*.

69% of Canadians with children under six right now believe that having one parent at home to care for their child is the best option when contrasted with a competent caregiver.

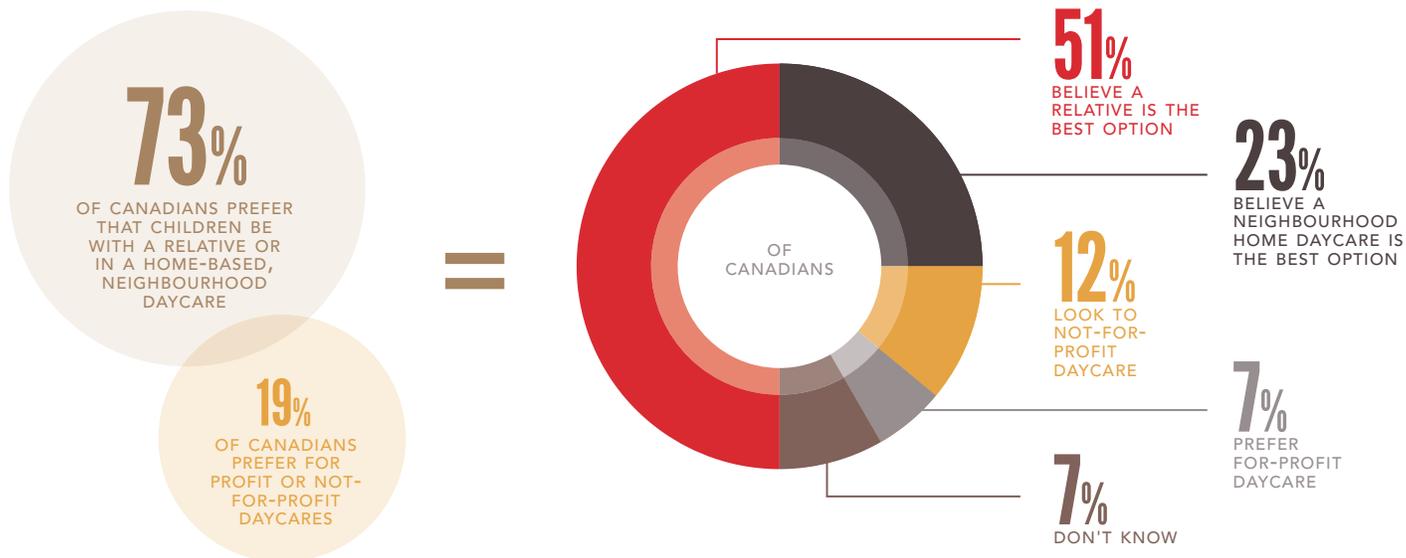
WHAT ABOUT WHEN PARENTS CANNOT BE AT HOME?

For many Canadian families, it is impossible to have one parent at home. When parents cannot be home with children under six, 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. The smallest percentage of parents prefer centre-based care, whether not-for-profit or for-profit.

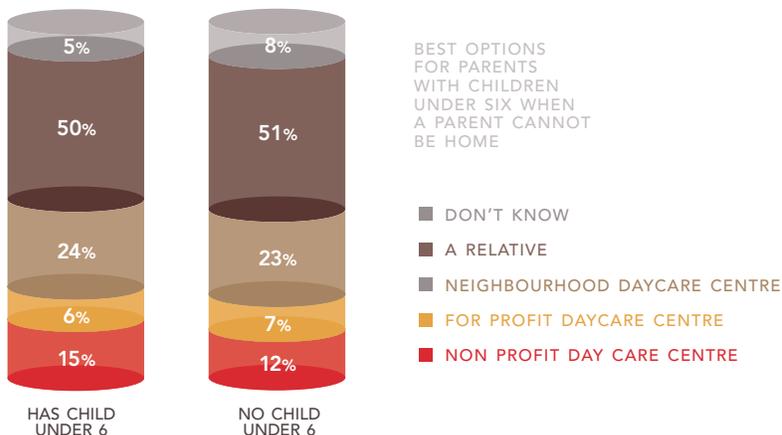


WHEN IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR PARENTS TO BE HOME WITH THEIR CHILDREN

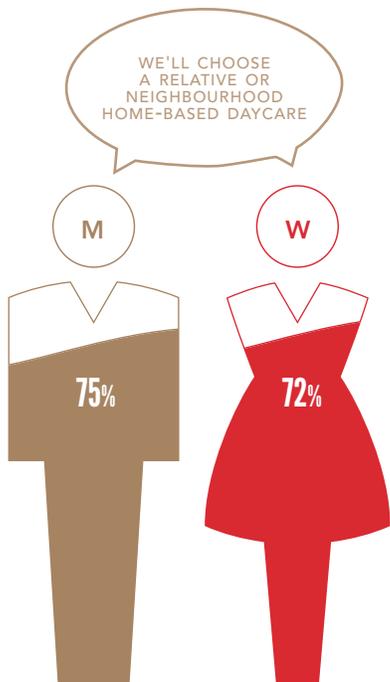


Parents with children under six concur with Canadians views in general on best options when a parent cannot be home:

74% of Canadians with a child under six think relatives or neighbourhood home-based daycares are the best option.



OPTIONS FOR WHEN A PARENT CANNOT STAY HOME BY GENDER



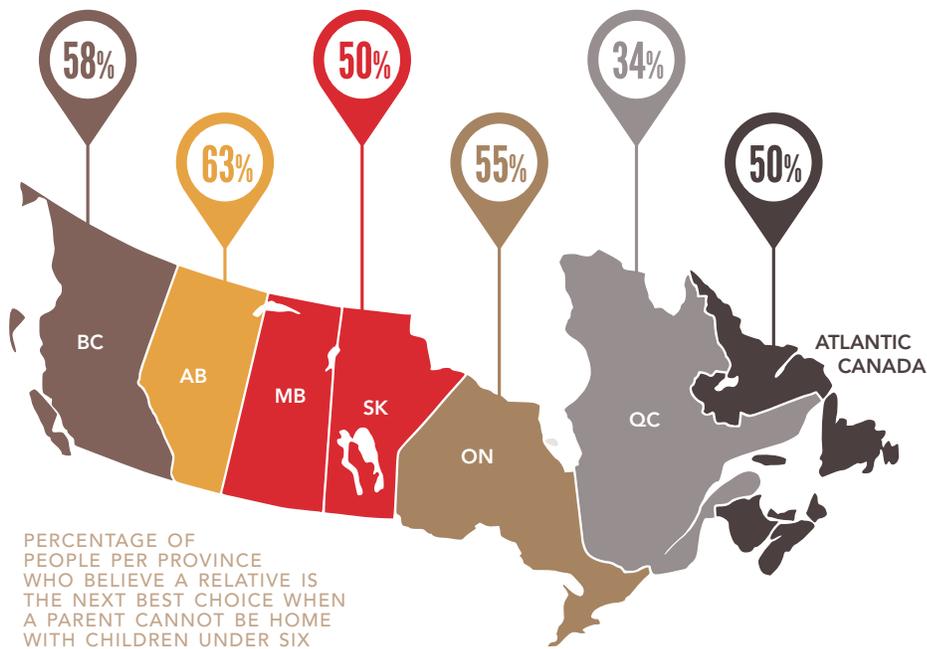
72% of women believe the best choices after a parent are a relative or a neighbourhood home-based daycare. 75% of men believe the same.

OPTIONS FOR CARE BY INCOME, WHEN A PARENT CANNOT STAY HOME

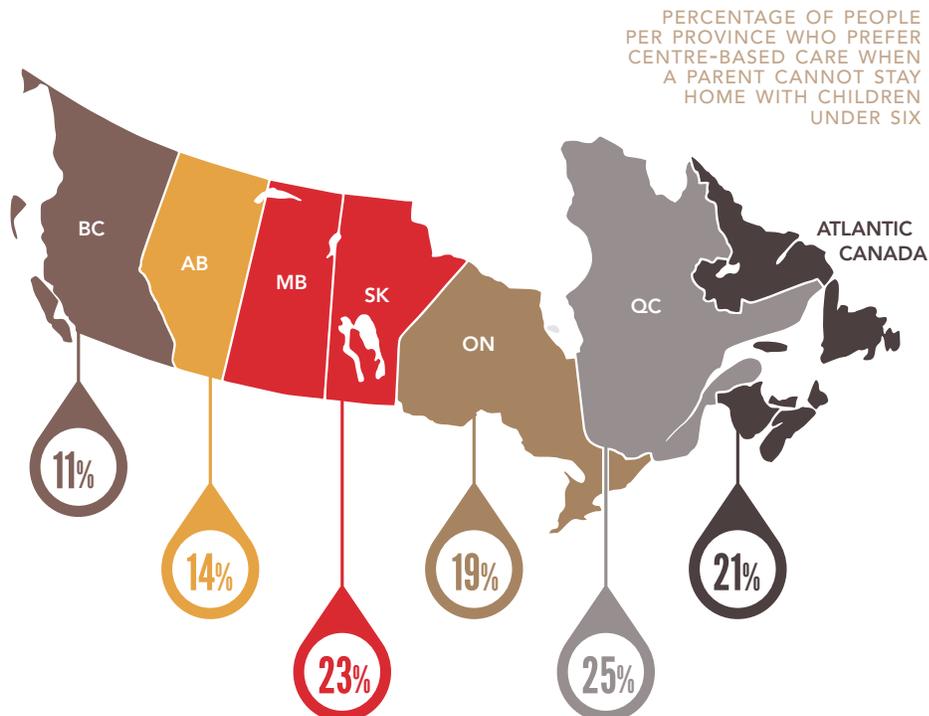


When a parent cannot stay home, the majority choose parents or neighbourhood-based options over centre-based daycare, when looking at the data by income.

REGIONALLY, THERE IS SOME VARIATION:



Only a minority of Canadians choose centre-based care as a good choice, if a parent cannot stay at home with children under six. This is the form of care most often promoted by government policy in British Columbia and Ontario.



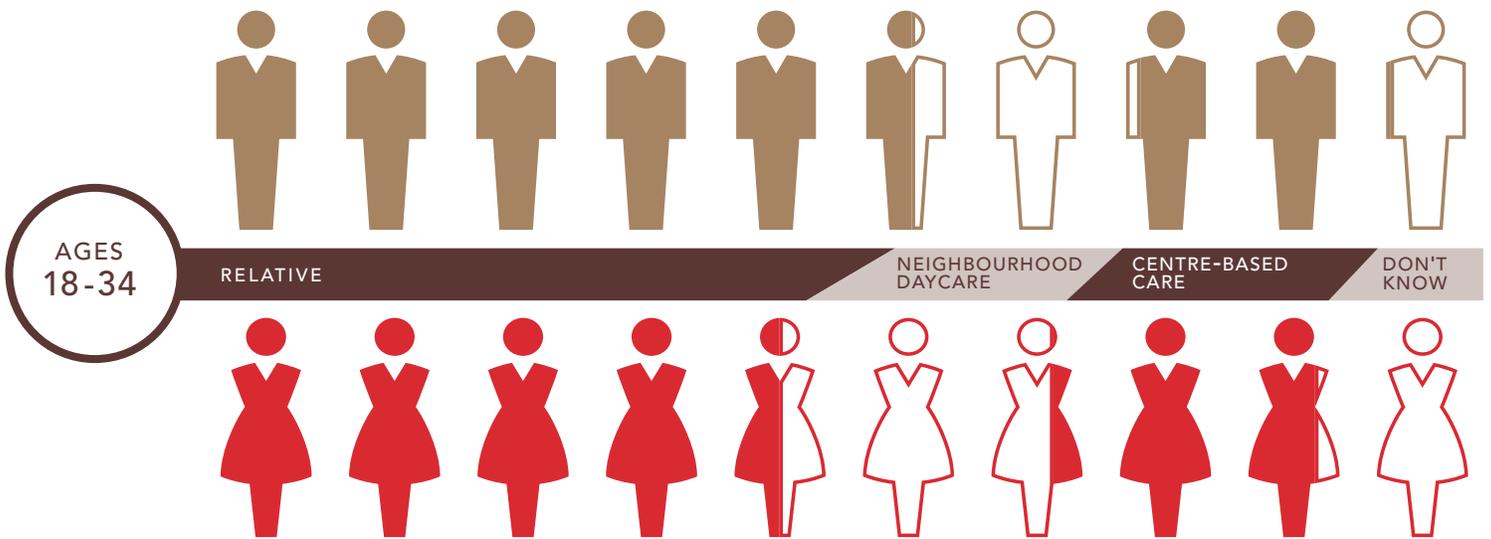
IF A PARENT CANNOT BE HOME, BY GENDER

If it is not possible for a parent to be home with children, 47% of all women believe a relative is the next best option. This remains true for women who are most likely to have small children. 45% of women age 18 to 34 believe a relative is the best option. The next choice for women in that age range is a neighbourhood daycare at 23%.

For men in age range of 18 to 34, 56% believe a relative is

the best option, while 17% believe a neighbourhood home daycare is the best option.

Of note, neither men nor women choose centre-based care in high percentages: Only 20% of women and 18% of men think centre-based care, whether not-for-profit or for-profit, is a good option if a parent cannot be home with children under six.



ON THE WHOLE, Canadians strongly believe that it is preferable that a child under six be home with a parent as contrasted with a competent caregiver. Seventy-six percent of Canadians in general believe this to be true and 69% of Canadian parents with children under six right now agree.

When this is not possible, Canadians prefer the option closest to the home environment, either care by a relative or in a neighbourhood home-based daycare. The last option is centre-based daycares.

PART II

Canadian daycare funding preferences: If governments should fund daycare, how should they do so?

THE NEXT QUESTION concentrates on how parents believe governments should help families, if at all. Here, there is consensus on the idea that money should go to parents, not school bureaucracies or daycare centres. In this poll we see that Canadians' desires differ from the direction being taken by provincial governments in Canada today.

In 2007 in Ontario, then premier Dalton McGuinty hired an education consultant, Dr. Charles Pascal, who proposed public schools but turned into community hubs where parents could drop their kids off and have access to daycare, school and other resources. The immediate result of this was an expansion of all-day kindergarten. It appears that due to the poor state of Ontario's finances, that's where the expansion will stop.

British Columbia too, has seen an increase in calls for inexpensive or free daycare, with Dr. Paul Kershaw of "Generation Squeeze" leading the charge. His "new deal for families" calls for \$10 dollar-a-day daycare.

Now thanks to these poll results, we can see how the policy push in these two provinces counters the desires of Canadians, who prefer to see funding go directly to them, rather than into school systems or institutional daycare.

CANADIANS' DESIRES FOR FAMILY FUNDING

A total of 61% of Canadians believe that when it comes to government funding of childcare, funding should go directly to parents. Canadians were given seven options and asked to choose one to answer the question: "If government should spend money to look after children, how should they do so?"

THE 61% IS MADE UP OF THE FOLLOWING:

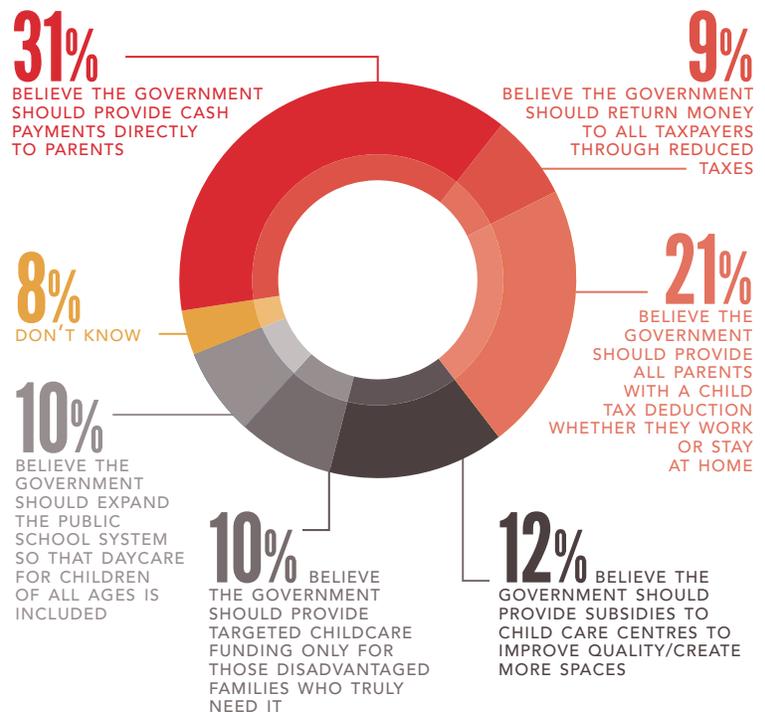
- 31%--the largest group--believe the government should provide cash payments directly to parents

- 21% believe the government should provide all parents with a child tax deduction whether they work or stay at home
- 9% believe the government should return money to all taxpayers through reduced taxes

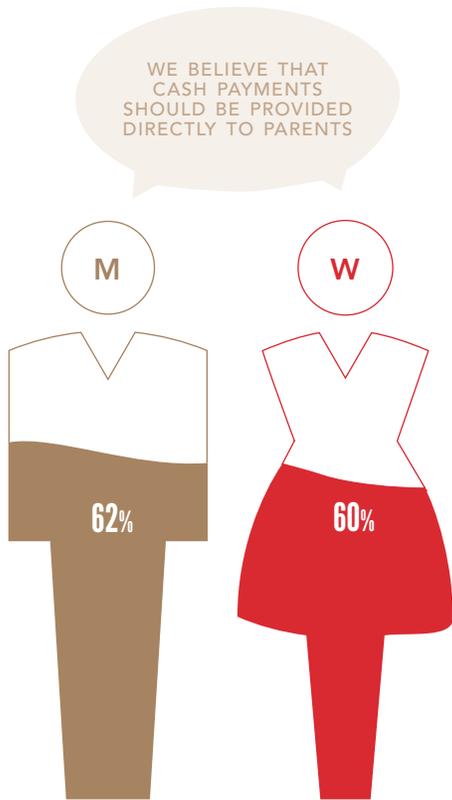
At most, 32% believe governments should provide money to bureaucracies or institutions. At most, because included in this category are the 10% of Canadians who believe that government should provide targeted childcare funding only to those who need it, and this does not provide clarity on how that targeted funding should reach those who most need it.

- 12% believe the government should provide subsidies to child care centres to improve quality/create more spaces
- 10% believe the government should provide targeted childcare funding only for those disadvantaged families who truly need it
- 10% believe the government should expand the public school system so that daycare for children of all ages is included

CANADIAN BELIEFS ABOUT HOW TO BEST FUND CHILD CARE: SHOW PARENTS THE MONEY DIRECTLY!



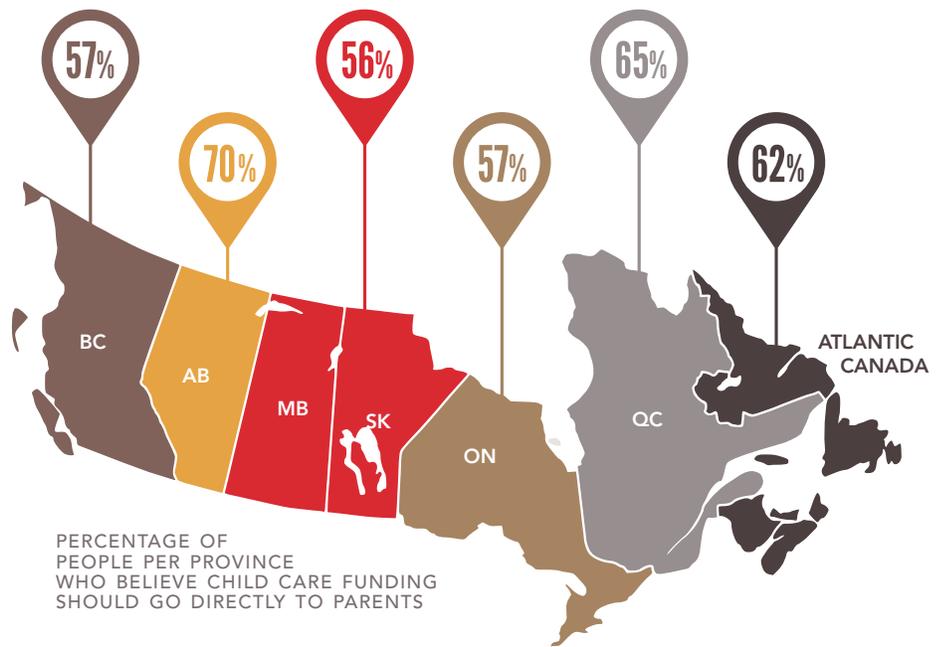
FUNDING OPTIONS—BY GENDER



The belief that cash payments should be provided directly to parents holds between men and women. 60% of women believe that cash payments directly to parents are the best way for government to fund childcare, 62% of men believe the same.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING PREFERENCES BY REGION

When we look by region, we see the largest percentage of Canadians who believe child care funding should go directly to parents are in Alberta, 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 system they have, which offers parents subsidized daycare, with the money flowing to daycare centres, not parents.



Very interesting to note is that the idea of a direct subsidy to parents is most popular with Quebecers, at 45%. After that, it is most popular with parents with children under six, at 43% and females age 35 to 54 at 36%.

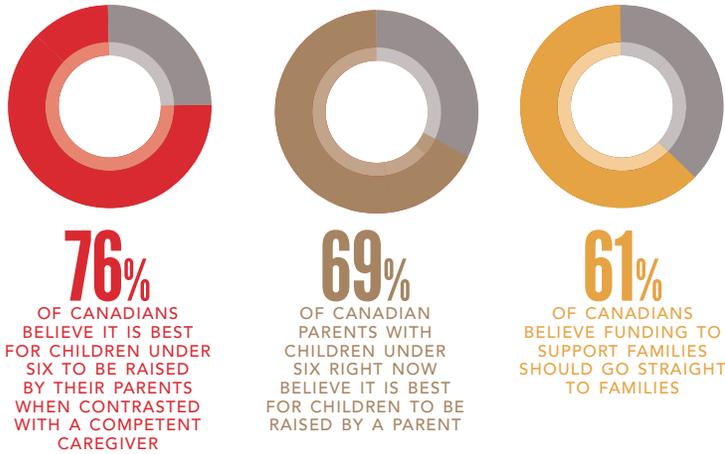
The child tax deduction is most popular with Albertans, at 34%, followed by the Atlantic provinces at 27% and then BC and Ontario at 21%.

BEST WAY FOR GOVERNMENT TO SPEND ON CHILDCARE - BY REGION

Based on question #5: If the government should spend money to look after children, how should they do so? Please choose the option that is closest to your point of view.

	BC	AB	MB+SK	ON	QUEBEC	ATLANTIC
PROVIDE ALL PARENTS WITH A CHILD TAX DEDUCTION WHETHER THEY WORK OR STAY AT HOME	21%	34%	26%	21%	13%	27%
PROVIDE SUBSIDIES TO CHILD CARE CENTRES TO IMPROVE QUALITY OR CREATE MORE SPACES	12%	8%	14%	12%	15%	9%
PROVIDE CASH PAYMENTS DIRECTLY TO PARENTS WHO COULD CHOOSE ANY FORM OF CHILDCARE THEY DEEM BEST	26%	28%	19%	27%	45%	26%
EXPAND THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM SO THAT CHILDCARE FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES IS INCLUDED	13%	9%	12%	12%	6%	11%
RETURN THE MONEY TO ALL TAX PAYERS THROUGH REDUCED TAXES	10%	8%	11%	9%	7%	9%
PROVIDE CHILDCARE FUNDING EXCLUSIVELY FOR DISADVANTAGED FAMILIES	11%	8%	9%	10%	9%	9%
DON'T KNOW	7%	7%	9%	9%	5%	7%

Conclusion



Government policy ought to maximize flexibility for families. Parents across the country face unique circumstances with regards to work and childcare arrangements. In spite of this diversity, there is a remarkable level of consensus in the belief that it is best for a parent to care for children under six.

There is also consensus on how to fund childcare. Given that the infrastructure for funding parents already exists, it remains the most efficient way in which to fund childcare choice. It is very expensive and less efficient to create new bureaucracies to fund additional childcare spaces or schools and then regulate those same spaces or schools.

Ultimately, public policy decisions to fund more daycare spaces overlooks both parental desires to have one parent care for their children under six and for parents to receive funding directly. 🍁

Please note that statistics have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

E-Pendix: Questions and methodology

POLL QUESTIONS

C1. First, do you have any children under the age of 6 currently living in your household?

- Yes
- No

C2. Below are some possible arrangements for caring for children under six. Please tell me which arrangement you would ideally prefer for your children, even if you don't have children under six. Would you prefer to:

- Have one parent stay home to care for your child
- Have your child looked after by a competent care giver
- Don't know

C3. 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 day care centre
- A for-profit day care centre
- A family daycare (that is in a neighbourhood home)
- A relative, such as the child's aunt or grandparent
- Don't know

C4. 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

C5. 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 day care centre
- A for-profit day care centre
- A family daycare (that is in a neighbourhood home)
- A relative, such as the child's aunt or grandparent
- Don't know

C6. If the government should spend money to look after children, how should they do so? Please choose the option that is closest to your own point of view.

- Change the tax system to provide all parents with a child tax deduction whether they work or stay at home with their children
- Provide subsidies directly to child care centres in order to improve quality and/or create more spaces
- Provide 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
- Expand the public school system to include younger children so that eventually, childcare for children

of all ages exists within the public school system

- Return the money to all tax payers through reduced taxes
- Provide targeted childcare funding exclusively for disadvantaged families
- Don't know

D1. Now we are going to ask you some demographic questions to help us analyze the results. What is your current employment status?

- 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)

D2. What is your current marital status?

- Single and never married
- Married
- Common-law
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed or Widower

ASK D3 ONLY IF D2 IS MARRIED OR COMMON-LAW

D3. What is your spouse's or partner's current employment status?

- 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)

D5. In what year were you born?

D6. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

D7. What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed?

- Grade 8 or less
- Some high school
- Complete high school
- Technical, vocational post-secondary , CEGEP
- Some university
- Complete university degree
- Post graduate degree

D8. 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?

- Under \$25,000
- \$25,000 to just under \$50,000
- \$50,000 to just under \$75,000
- \$75,000 to just under \$100,000
- \$100,000 to just under \$125,000
- \$125,000 to just under \$150,000

- More than \$150,000

Thank you for your time.

METHODOLOGY

2,022 Canadians were interviewed using a representative online panel between January 25 and 28, 2013.

The margin of error is +/- 2.2%, nineteen times out of twenty.

Questions were asked in English or French, depending on the preference of the respondent.

The results have been weighted according to the most recent Statistics Canada by region, age and gender.

The poll was conducted by Abingdon Research, <http://www.abingdon.ca/>