

A large photograph of a woman with dark hair holding a baby in a dark blue shirt. The woman is looking at the baby with a smile, and the baby is looking back at her. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a play area with colorful toys.

A New Generation of Canadian Families RAISING YOUNG CHILDREN

A New Look at Data from National Surveys



A New Generation of Canadian Families

RAISING

YOUNG

CHILDREN



Human Resources
Development Canada
Applied Research
Branch

Développement des
ressources humaines Canada
Direction générale de
la recherche appliquée



Putting children and families first

INTRODUCTION



What a difference a generation can make! When Canadian parents look back on their own lives and the lives of their parents, they see changes across a generation that have profoundly affected their parenting experience, compared to when they themselves were young children. Supports for today's parents must take into consideration these changes that affect the care and nurturing of children.

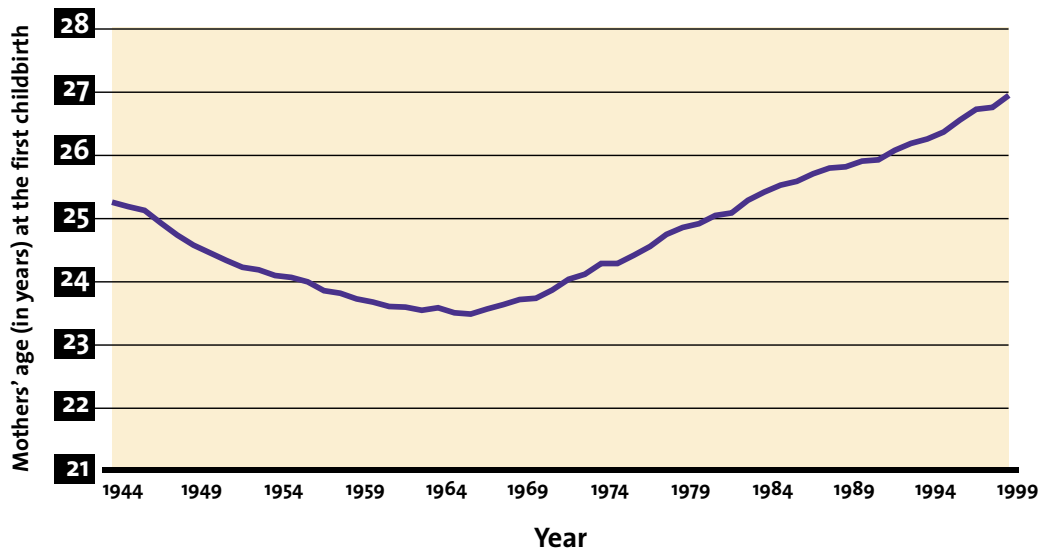
Over the past two decades, the family environment in which young children have grown up in Canada has changed dramatically. Today, most young women complete their education and begin their careers before they have children. Babies are born into many different types of families – married couples, common-law couples, single parent families, and blended families. Many children – even in the first five years of their lives – will experience a change in their family circumstances as their parents

separate or divorce, marry or remarry. Today, most young children have two parents who both hold jobs in the paid workforce because today it more often takes two earners to maintain a desirable family income. Nonetheless, more parents understand the importance of the first five years and, despite today's pressures of balancing work and family, they spend more time with their young children than parents did a decade ago. Today, young children are surrounded by more adults than children were a generation ago, mainly due to the rising importance of caregivers in a child's life. The following pages visually show how these changes relate to child development and explain how families have adapted their parenting roles. On each page, findings from current research are used to discuss the implications of the data presented in the chart. In the concluding section, policies to support families with young children are described.



TODAY, CANADIAN MOTHERS ARE OLDER AT THE BIRTH OF THEIR FIRST CHILD COMPARED TO MOTHERS IN THE 1960s.

Trends in maternal age at the birth of the first child, 1944-1999



Source:
Health Statistics Division,
Statistics Canada¹

DATA:

Since the 1960s, the average age of mothers at the birth of their first child has been increasing steadily, along with a decrease in the total number of childbirths.¹ By the mid-1990s, the proportion of women over 40 giving birth surpassed the proportion of women aged 15-19 years giving birth.² This is different from the period 1940 to 1965 when fertility rates were higher and maternal age decreased steadily.¹

RESEARCH:

On average, mothers are more educated and start their careers before having children. Children of these mothers are born into families with higher incomes, more stable careers and fewer siblings.³ However, older mothers may be at higher risk for complications during pregnancy.⁴



¹ Bélanger, A. (2002). Report on the demographic situation in Canada 2001: Current demographic analysis for Canada. Statistics Canada. 91-209-XPE.

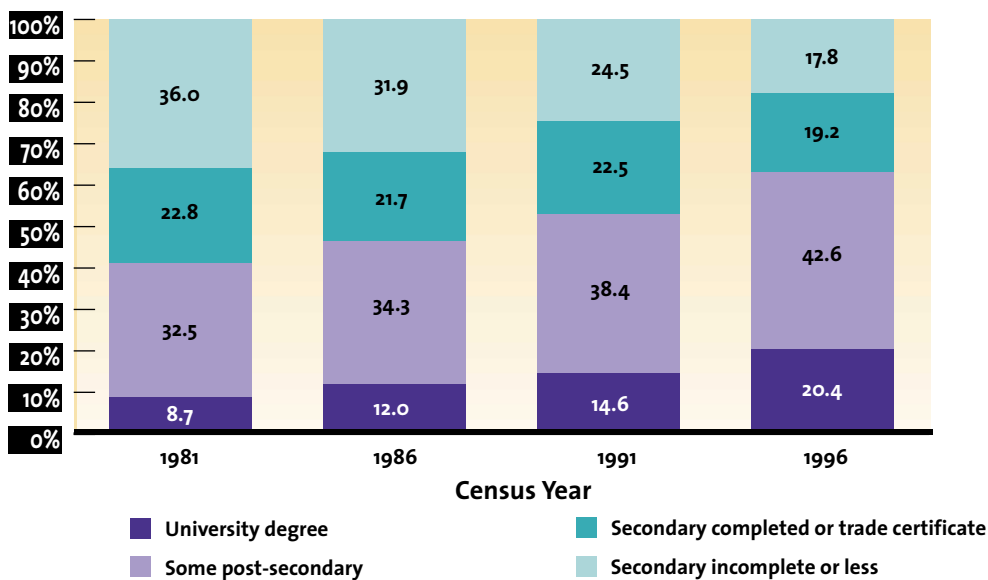
² Labour Force Survey, microdata files.

³ Ross, D.P., Scott, K., & Kelly, M.A. (1996). Overview: Children in Canada in the 1990s. In Growing up in Canada. Human Resources Development Canada & Statistics Canada.

⁴ Canadian Perinatal Health Report 2000. (2000). Health Canada. H49-142/2000E.

TODAY, MOTHERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN ARE MORE EDUCATED.

Trends in the percentage of highest education levels attained by mothers of young children (age 0-5 years), 1981-1996



Source:
Censuses – Statistics Canada

DATA:

Since the 1980s, the percentage of mothers with young children who have a university degree or college diploma has been increasing steadily. At the same time, the proportion of women with secondary school education or less has been decreasing. Today, more women graduate from university with bachelor's and master's degrees than men. More men than women graduate with doctorates, but the gap is narrowing.⁵

RESEARCH:

Maternal education level is positively associated with child outcomes such as academic achievement. Higher maternal education levels are also linked to higher family income and with the amount of time parents spend encouraging and helping children with schoolwork.⁶

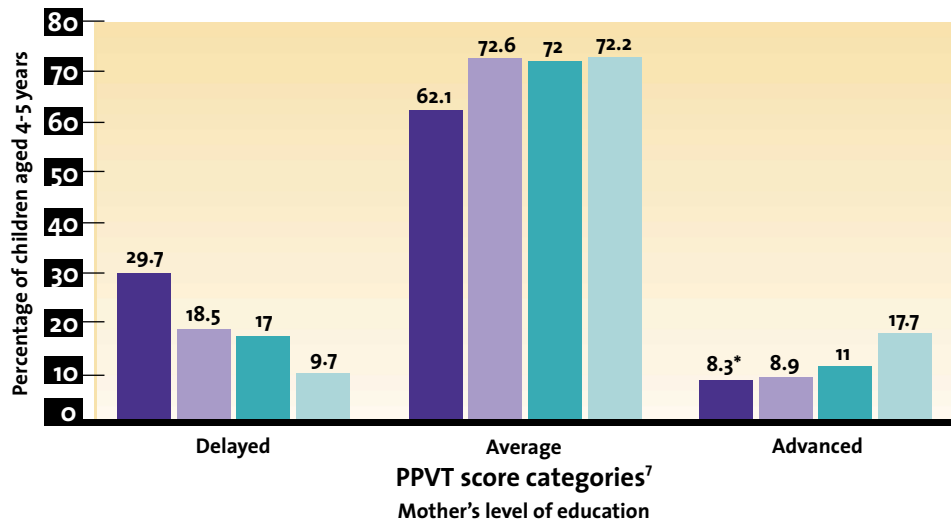


⁵ National Graduate Survey – The Class of 1995. Human Resources Development Canada & Statistics Canada.

⁶ Ross, D.P., Scott, K., & Kelly, M.A. (1996). Overview: Children in Canada in the 1990s. In *Growing up in Canada*. Human Resources Development Canada & Statistics Canada.

CHILDREN WITH MOTHERS WHO HAVE HIGHER EDUCATION LEVELS ARE LESS LIKELY TO HAVE DELAYED VOCABULARY SKILLS.

Mothers' level of education and their children's vocabulary scores (age 4-5 years), 1998/99



■ Less than secondary ■ Some post secondary education
■ Secondary school graduation ■ University or college degree

* – marginal data quality

Source:
National Longitudinal
Survey of Children and
Youth, (NLSCY) Cycle 3,
1998-99

DATA:

Most children have normal or advanced vocabulary skills at age 4-5 years. Children whose mothers have a university or college degree are much less likely to have low vocabulary scores⁷ than children whose mothers have secondary school graduation or less.

RESEARCH:

Current research suggests that maternal education has an important effect on child outcomes, particularly cognitive outcomes.⁸ Vocabulary skills are an important cognitive measure for children aged 4-5, and are considered a good predictor of early literacy at age 8-9.⁹



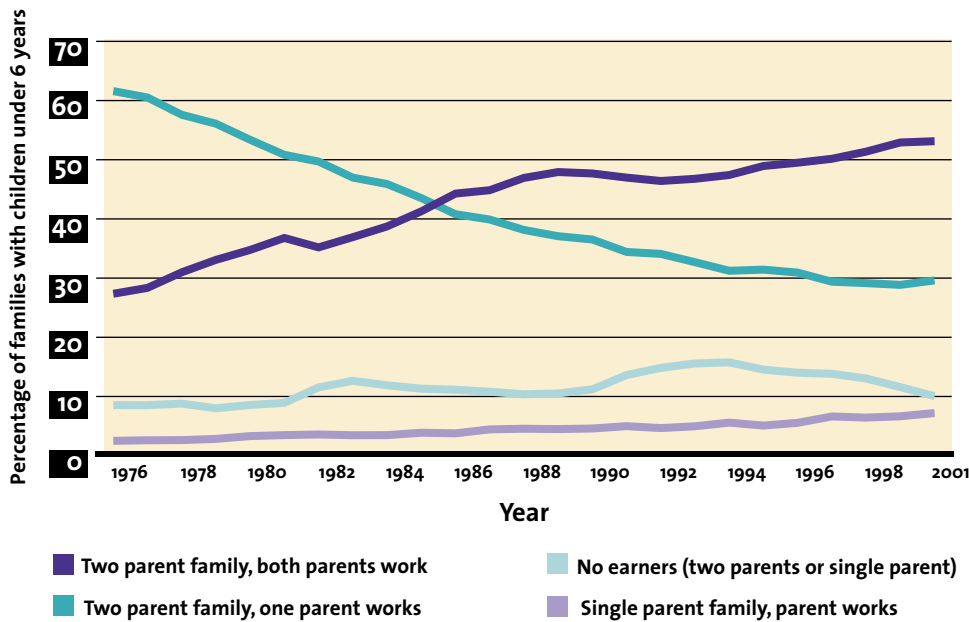
⁷ The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R) is a measure of receptive vocabulary skills for children.

⁸ Willms, J.D. (2002). Research findings bearing on Canadian social policy. In J.D. Willms (ed.) *Vulnerable children*. University of Alberta Press & Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada.

⁹ Hoddinott, J., Lethbridge, L., & Phipps, S. (in press). *Is history destiny? Resources, transitions and child education attainments in Canada*. Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada.

TODAY, IN MOST CANADIAN FAMILIES, BOTH PARENTS ARE EMPLOYED.

Trends in dual earner and single earner families, 1976-2001¹⁰



DATA:

In previous generations, most mothers were at home throughout the day to look after the children. However, by the mid-1980s, most mothers had paid employment. Today most young children have two employed parents and most single parents also have paying jobs.

RESEARCH:

Although today more parents are employed, on average, mothers of young children report working fewer hours of paid work compared to their spouses or to women with older children.¹¹

Source:
Labour Force Survey, Public
Use Micro-file

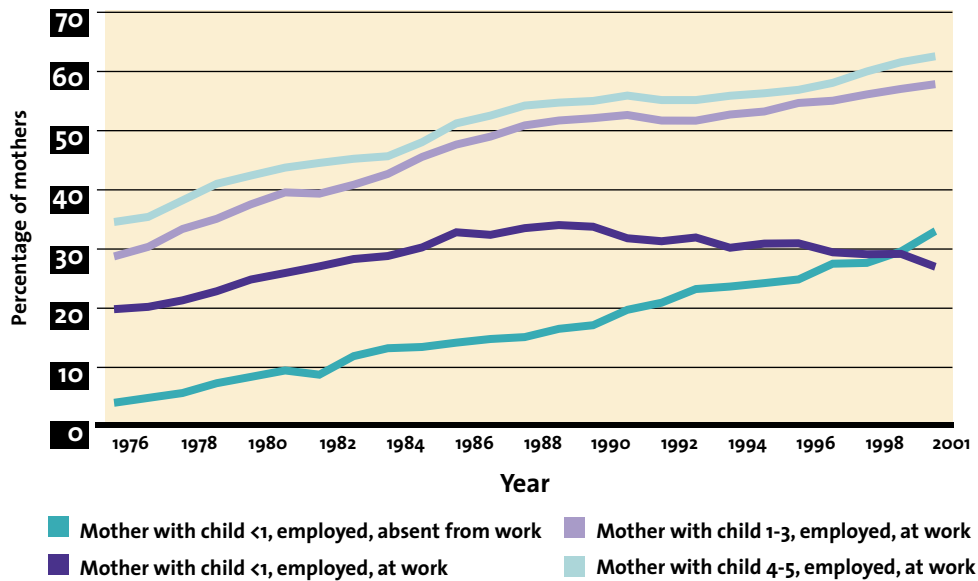


¹⁰ Due to data collection problems, data for 2000 has been omitted.

¹¹ Silver, C. (2001, Summer) *Being there: The time dual-earner couples spend with their children.* Canada Social Trends. Statistics Canada.

TODAY, A HIGHER PROPORTION OF EMPLOYED MOTHERS ARE STAYING AT HOME WITH THEIR INFANTS.

Trends in labour market participation rates and employment status of women with children under 6 years, 1976-2001¹²



Source:
Labor Force Surveys -
Statistics Canada

DATA:

Today, fewer mothers with children under one year are at paid work than were mothers with infants in the 1980s and the 1990s. Today, more employed mothers with children under one are staying at home with their children than were mothers with infants in the 1970s and the 1980s. The most recent data is also beginning to reflect the effect of extended maternity and parental leave, with a sharp increase in the percentage of mothers employed but absent from work.

RESEARCH:

Many more mothers of young children have been moving into or staying in the workforce than in previous generations of mothers. For employed mothers, the quality of the time that they spend with their children is also very important. Secure attachment between mothers and infants is associated with successful cognitive, social and emotional development throughout childhood.¹³

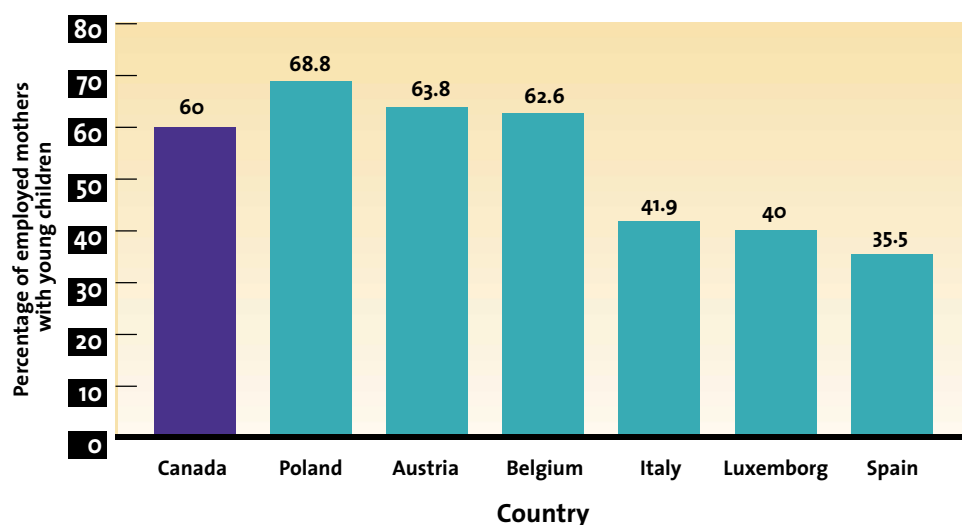


¹² Due to data collection problems, data for 2000 has been omitted.

¹³ Butkatko, D., and Daehler, M.W. (2001), *Child development: A thematic approach*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

COMPARED TO EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, CANADA HAS A RELATIVELY HIGH PROPORTION OF MOTHERS EMPLOYED.

Employment rate of women with at least one child under 6 years in Canada and selected European countries, 1996¹⁴



Source:
Eurostat, Canadian Census
(1996)

DATA:

Compared to the countries in the European Union, Canada has one of the highest proportions of employed mothers with young children, with only Poland, Austria and Belgium having higher percentages. The employment rates of mothers with young children in Spain, Luxembourg and Italy, each at less than 50 per cent, are among the lowest.

RESEARCH:

Current research has shown that families with both parents employed are more common today. The income generated by mothers entering the paid workforce accounts for a growing proportion of family income.¹⁵ Over the last two decades, it has become increasingly apparent that two earners are often necessary to maintain the standard of living in the family. The median income of two-parent families increased only slightly over the past decade, despite the increase in the number of families with both parents working.¹⁶



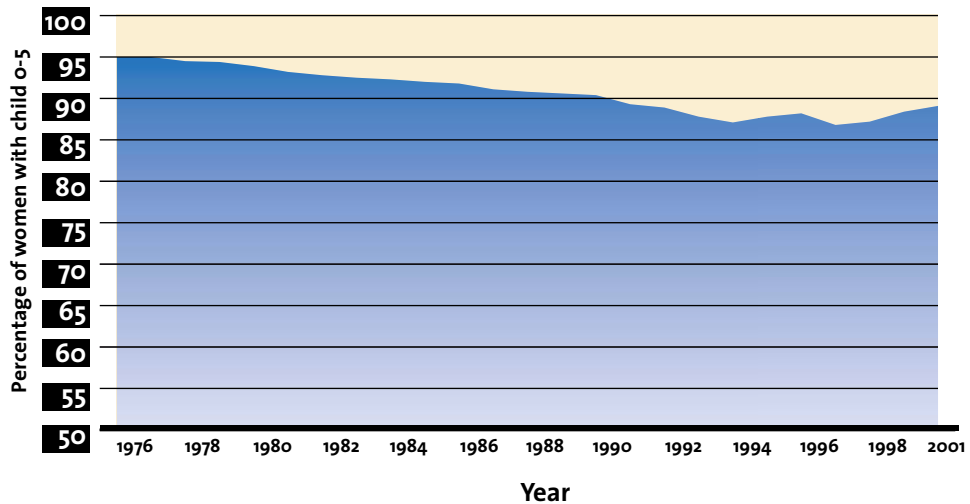
¹⁴ The three highest and three lowest European countries for which data was available are shown for comparison. Eurostat data only represents women who were a reference person or a spouse of a reference person. The Canadian Census data is slightly more inclusive than the Eurostat data, but the Canadian employment rate is not greatly affected.

¹⁵ Statistics Canada. (1999). *Characteristics of dual-earner families: 1997*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. 13-215-X1B

¹⁶ Statistics Canada. (2001). *Income in Canada: 1999*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. 75-202-XPE

TODAY, MOST YOUNG CHILDREN LIVE WITH TWO PARENTS.

Trends in the percentage of married women with children under 6 years, 1976-2001¹⁷



Source:
Labour Force Survey -
Statistics Canada

DATA:

While the number of married families with young children declined slightly over the past 25 years, almost 90 per cent of children aged 0-5 years live with two parents. These married families include both blended families and intact families.¹⁸ The percentage of single parent families has increased over the last decade and, according to the 2001 Census, is now 15.7 per cent of all families with children.

RESEARCH:

Since the majority of couples both have paid employment, children with two parents are likely to be raised in families with higher incomes. On the other hand, in order to more clearly capture the impact of having both parents involved in paid employment, it is important to look at how this influences the way parents arrange child care for their children, and whether they are able to spend the amount of quality time they want with their children. Single parent families have lower incomes, on average, than two parent families (see page 14).

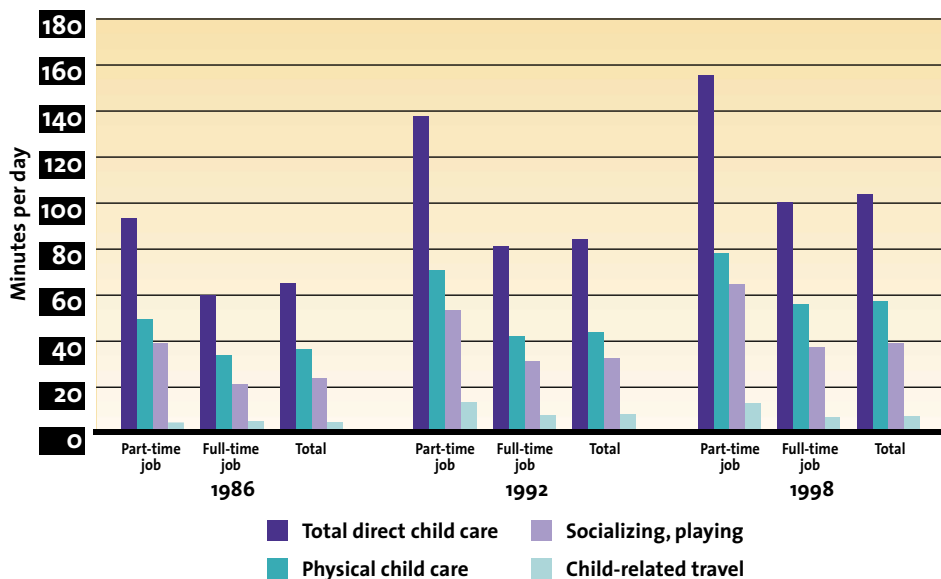


¹⁷ Due to data collection problems, data for 2000 has been omitted.

¹⁸ Blended families refer to married or common-law couples with 2 or more children, where one child does not have the same natural and/or adoptive parents as the other child or married or common-law couples where at least one child is in a step-relationship with at least one of the parents. Intact families refer to married or common-law couples where all of the children are the natural and/or adopted offspring of both members of the couple. This does not include foster children.

TODAY'S GENERATION OF EMPLOYED PARENTS SPEND MORE TIME WITH THEIR YOUNG CHILDREN.

Trends in time spent with children aged 0-5 years by an employed, married parent, 1986-1998



DATA:

The amount of time employed married parents spend directly with their young children has been steadily increasing over the last decade.¹⁹

RESEARCH:

Most parents recognize the importance of the early years. Current research suggests that the largest increase in time spent with children was seen among parents with at least one child less than 6 years of age. Despite the increase in time pressure arising from balancing work and family when both parents are employed, parents are finding even more time for their young children.²⁰

Source:
General Social Survey
(Time Use) 1986, 1992 and
1998 - Statistics Canada

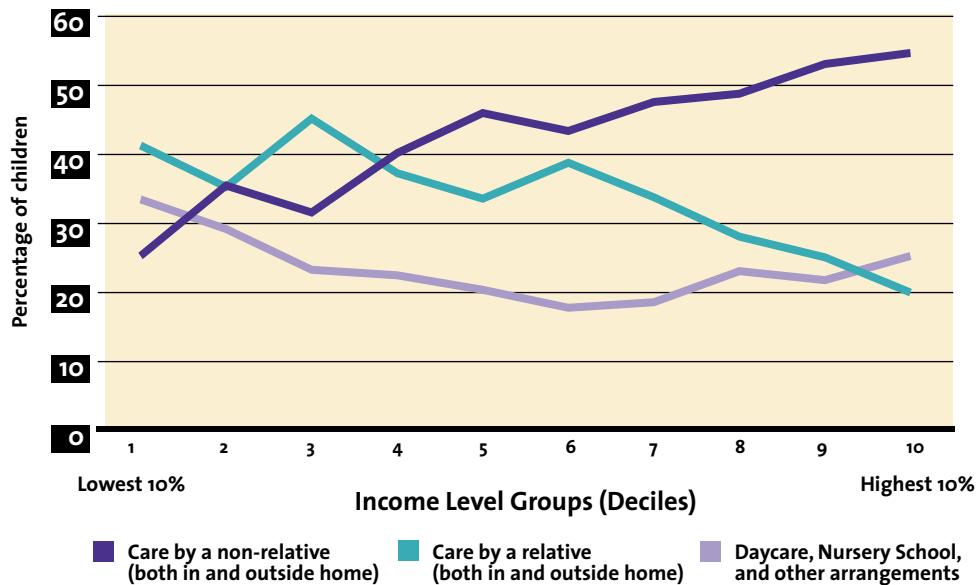


¹⁹ Time spent with children refers to the amount of time spent with the child by one or both parents and includes caring for the child.

²⁰ Zuzanek, J. (2001, Summer). Parenting time: Enough or too little? *Isuma*. Les presses de l'université de Montréal.

OF CHILDREN CURRENTLY IN CHILD CARE, CHILDREN IN THE HIGHEST 10% OF FAMILY INCOME ARE MOST LIKELY TO BE CARED FOR BY A NON-RELATIVE.

Family income level and type of child care arrangements for children aged 0-5 years, 1998/99



Source:
National Longitudinal
Survey of Children and
Youth, (NLSCY) 1998-99

DATA:

In Canada, about half of children aged 0-5 years are in child care. Of these children, 55 per cent of those in families with the highest incomes are cared for by a non-relative, whereas only 26 per cent of the lowest-income children are cared for by a non-relative. Most low-income children are cared for by a relative or are in subsidized centre-based care such as daycare centres or nursery schools.

RESEARCH:

Sustained, quality child care may provide the most benefit to children in the lowest family income group. Recent research suggests that low-income children receiving child care had vocabulary scores similar to those of children from higher-income families and higher than those of low-income children not in child care.²¹ The number of children cared for by a single provider, the level of training, and the types of stimulation and activities provided can all impact child development.²²

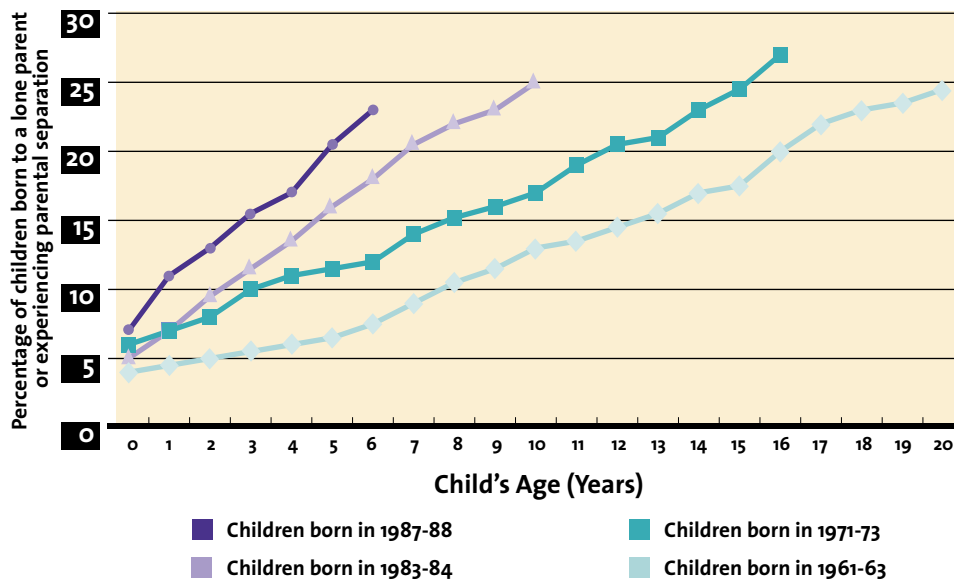


²¹ Seifert, T., Canning, P. & Lindermann, B. (2001). *A study of family, child care and well-being in young Canadian families*. Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada.

²² Doherty, G., Lero, D.S., Goelman, H., Tougas, J., & LaGrange, A. (2000). *You bet I care! Caring and learning environments: Quality in regulated family child care across Canada*. Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being, University of Guelph.

TODAY, ABOUT 1 IN 4 CHILDREN EXPERIENCE PARENTAL SEPARATION BEFORE AGE 6.

Trends in child's age at their parents' separation, 1960s-1990s



Source:
Adapted from Marcil-Gratton
(1998)

DATA:

Over the last three decades, the percentage of young children whose parents separated increased threefold. About 23 per cent of children growing up in the 1990s experienced parental separation before their 6th birthday, compared to about 8 per cent of children growing up in the 1960s.²³ However, most children continue to live in two parent families, either blended or intact.²⁴

RESEARCH:

Significant changes in the child's family are occurring earlier in life. Children may also experience

family disruption at older ages. Children benefit from having relationships with both biological parents.²⁵ Whenever there is a change in family structure, there may be short-term and long-term impacts on children's outcomes. Parental separation can have effects on the behaviour of the child, sometimes resulting in emotional problems. Parental separation can also have effects on family income.²⁶ However, other factors in the child's environment may mitigate the effects of early parental separation.²⁷

²³ Marcil-Gratton, N. (1998). *Growing up with Mom and Dad? Children and family instability*. Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada.

²⁴ Labour Force Survey Data File.

²⁵ Haddad, T. (1998). *Custody arrangements and the development of emotional or behavioural problems in children*. Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada. W-98-9E.

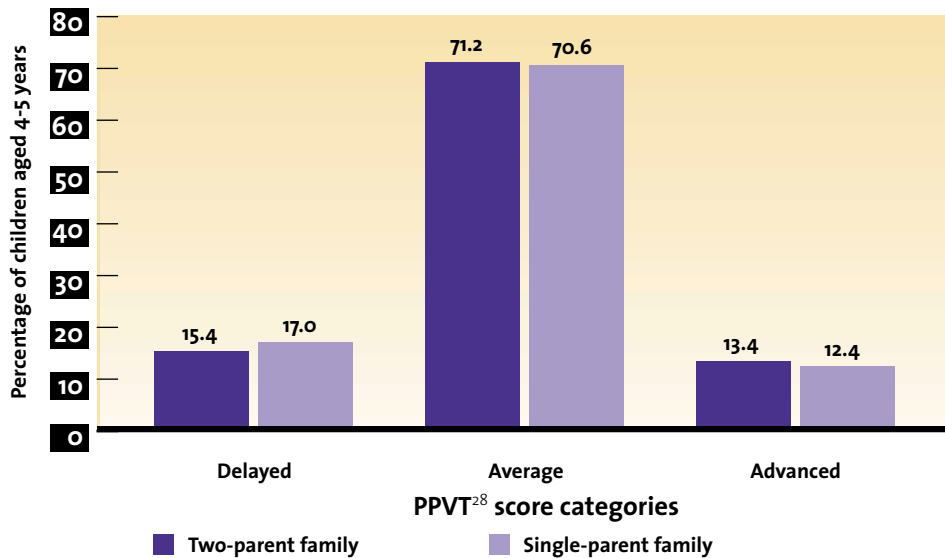
²⁶ Ross, D.P., Roberts, P.A., & Scott, K. (1998). *Mediating factors in child development outcomes: Children in lone-parent families*. Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada. W-98-8E.

²⁷ O'Connor, T.G., & Jenkins, J.M. (2001). *Marital transitions and children's adjustment: Understanding why families differ from one another and why children in the same family show different patterns of adjustment*. Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada. W-01-1-3E.



FAMILY STRUCTURE HAS LITTLE IMPACT ON VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT FOR CHILDREN AGED 4-5 YEARS.

Family structure and children's vocabulary scores (age 4-5 years), 1998/99



Source:
National Longitudinal
Survey of Children and
Youth, (NLSCY) Cycle 3,
1998-99

DATA:

Children living in single-parent families are no more likely to have delayed vocabulary scores than children living in two-parent families. In the chart above, there are no statistically significant differences between children from two-parent and single-parent families.

RESEARCH:

Children appear to be most at risk for experiencing difficulties immediately after parental separation.²⁹ However, when protective factors such as positive parenting practices are present, parental separation may have only minimal effects on children's development, including vocabulary skills.³⁰



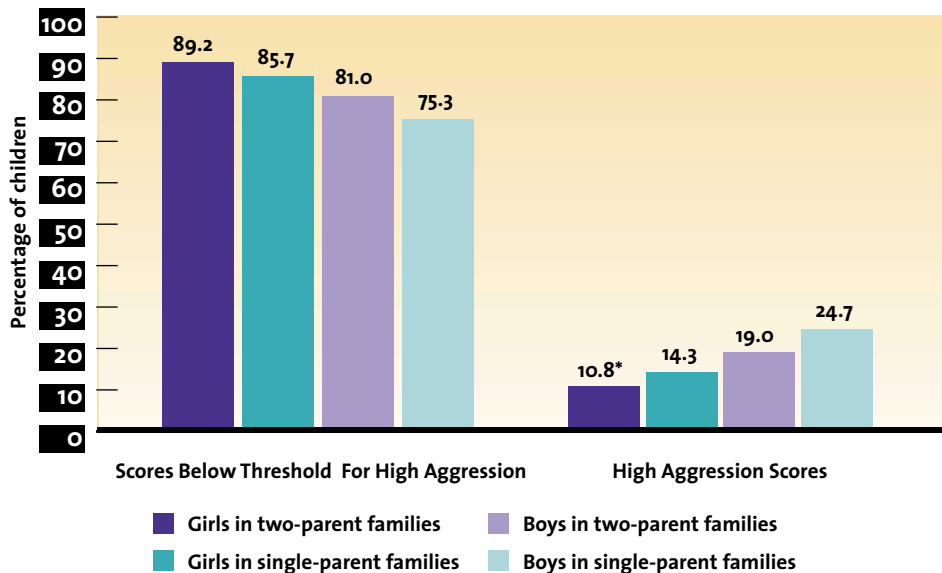
²⁸ The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R) is a measure of receptive vocabulary skills for children.

²⁹ Haddad, T. (1998). Custody arrangements and the development of emotional or behavioural problems in children. Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada. W-98-9E.

³⁰ O'Connor, T.G., & Jenkins, J.M. (2001). Marital transitions and children's adjustment: Understanding why families differ from one another and why children in the same family show different patterns of adjustment. Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada. W-01-1-3E.

BOYS IN SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE HIGH LEVELS OF AGGRESSION.

Family structure and aggressive behaviour of boys and girls (age 4-5 years), 1998/99



* - marginal data quality

DATA:

The majority of 4-5 year-old children do not have high levels of physical aggression. However, almost one in four boys in single-parent families is highly aggressive as reported by their parents. Aggressive behaviour is more common among girls living in single-parent families than girls living in two-parent families. However, when compared with boys in either two-parent or single-parent families, girls living in single-parent families appear less likely to be physically aggressive.

RESEARCH:

In recent surveys, many single parents report that their children have more developmental difficulties, including higher levels of aggression among children aged 4-5 years.³¹ Furthermore, high levels of aggression are more common among boys than girls³², and boys appear to be more vulnerable than girls in single-parent families.³³ However, family structure is only one of many factors related to a child's aggressive behaviour.

Source:
National Longitudinal
Survey of Children and
Youth, (NLSCY) Cycle 3,
1998-99

³¹ Ross, D.P., Roberts, P.A., & Scott, K. (1998). Variations in child development outcomes among children living in lone-parent families. *Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada*. W-98-7E

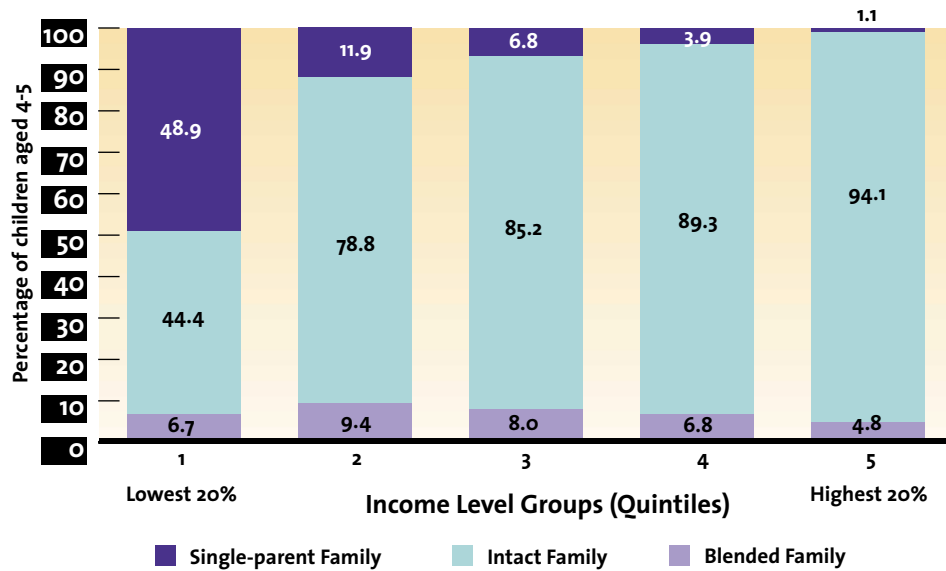
³² Baillargeon, R., Tremblay, R.E., & Willms, J.D. (1999). The prevalence of physical aggression in Canadian children: A multi-group latent class analysis of data from the first collection cycle (1994-1995) of the NLSCY. *Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada*. T-00-2E.

³³ Kerr, D., & Beaujot, R. (2001). Family relations, low income and child outcomes: A comparison of Canadian children in intact, step and lone-parent families. *University of Western Ontario, Population Studies Centre*.



SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE LOW INCOMES.

Family structure and family income for children (age 4-5 years), 1998/99



Source:
National Longitudinal
Survey of Children and
Youth, (NLSCY) Cycle 3,
1998-99

DATA:

Most children aged 4-5 years are living in intact families. There are more intact families among higher-income groups. About 7 per cent of children from all income groups live in blended families.³⁴

RESEARCH:

Changes in marital status, either by divorce or by remarriage, are associated with vulnerability in children.³⁵ By virtue of the fact that single parents only have one income they are more likely to have low family incomes.³⁶ Low-income families face more challenges and stresses in raising their children.



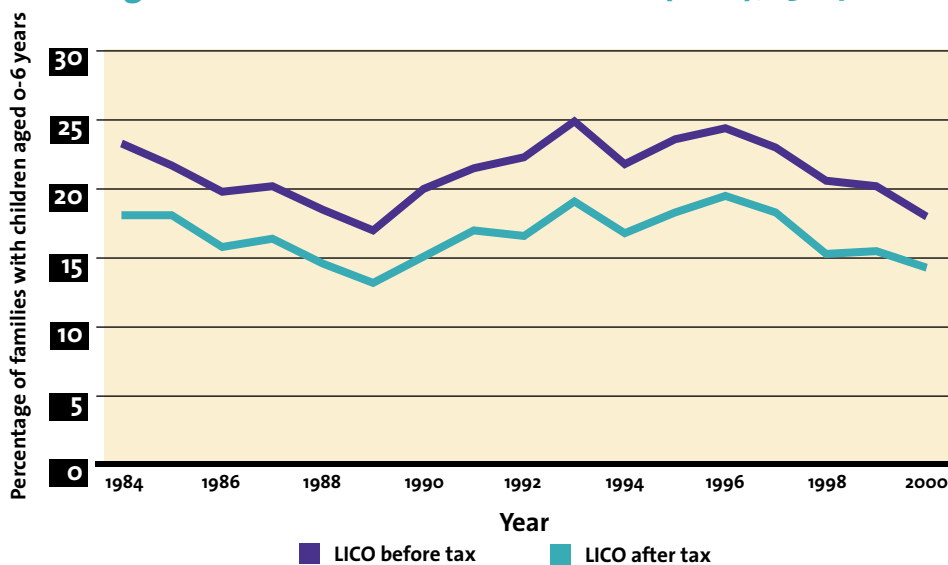
³⁴ Blended families refer to married or common-law couples with 2 or more children, where one child does not have the same natural and/or adoptive parents as the other child or married or common-law couples where at least one child is in a step-relationship with at least one of the parents. Intact families refer to married or common-law couples where all of the children are the natural and/or adopted offspring of both members of the couple. This does not include foster children.

³⁵ Applied Research Bulletin, a Special Edition on Child Development. Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada. Fall 1999.

³⁶ Statistics Canada. (2001). Income in Canada: 1999. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. 75-202-XPE

AFTER A PERIOD OF DECLINE IN THE EARLY 1980s, THE RATES OF YOUNG CHILDREN LIVING IN LOW INCOME FAMILIES HAVE FLUCTUATED BUT REMAINED ABOVE THE 1989 LEVEL.

Trends in the percentage of children (under age 7 years) living below the Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO), 1984-2000³⁷



DATA:

In 1989, the percentage of children under 7 living in low-income families – families with income below the 1992 after-tax Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO) – was at its lowest point, at 13 per cent. Rates of children living below the LICO have fluctuated with the business cycle, but have remained above the 1989 level.

RESEARCH:

The likelihood of poor outcomes is higher for children living in poverty. However, most poor children do not have poor outcomes. Low-income can affect child outcome in two ways, either directly through lower resources or indirectly through related family factors. Aboriginal children are at higher risk, with approximately 60 per cent of Aboriginal children living in poverty.³⁸ Children from low-income families are much more likely to be living with a parent with frequent signs of depression.³⁹

Source:
Survey of Consumer Finances
(1984-1995)
Survey of Labour and Income
Dynamics (1996-2000)



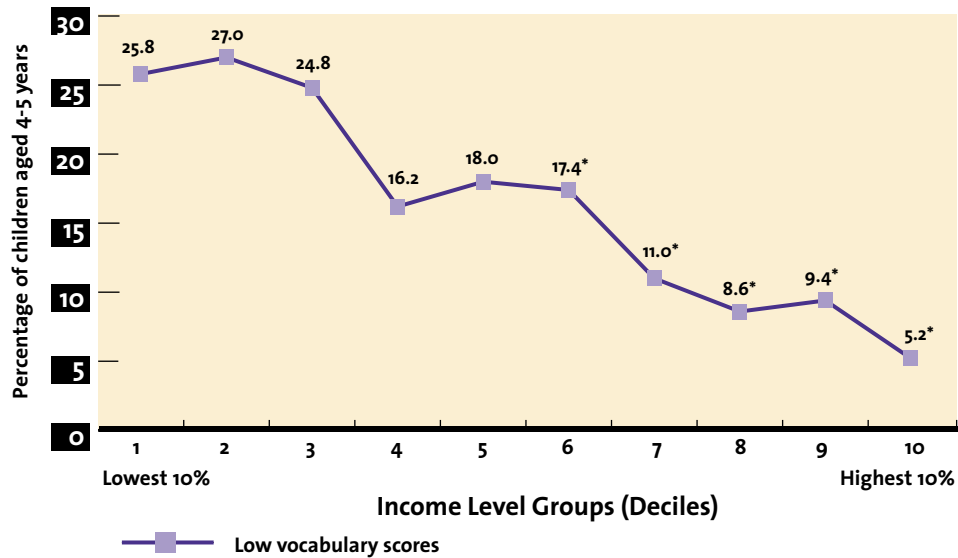
³⁷ Due to the content of the Survey of Consumer Finances, the chart refers to children under 7 years and LICO for 1992 was used.

³⁸ National Council of Welfare. (1998). *Child Poverty 1998*.

³⁹ Ross, D.P., & Roberts, P. (1999). *Income and Child Well-being: A new perspective on the poverty debate*. Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development.

YOUNG CHILDREN FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE VOCABULARY PROBLEMS.

Family income and low vocabulary scores in children (age 4-5 years), 1998/99



* - marginal data quality

Source:
National Longitudinal
Survey of Children and
Youth, (NLSCY) Cycle 3,
1998-99

DATA:

Most children are developing vocabulary skills appropriate for their age. Children with vocabulary difficulties come from all income groups. Nonetheless, there is a relationship between income and low PPVT scores⁴⁰, and the gradient shows a declining percentage of low scores as income increases. In Canada, a larger percentage of children from low-income families have low vocabulary scores than children from high-income families.

RESEARCH:

Research has shown that the vocabulary skills at ages 4-5 years are good predictors of early literacy when children reach 8-9 years. Young children who have low vocabulary scores are more likely to have low reading scores when they get older, whereas young children with high vocabulary scores are more likely to have higher reading scores at age 8-9. However, it is important to note that research also indicates that income is not the only factor that influences children's vocabulary development. Other factors, such as parental education and good parenting, have positive impacts on vocabulary scores and school success.⁴¹

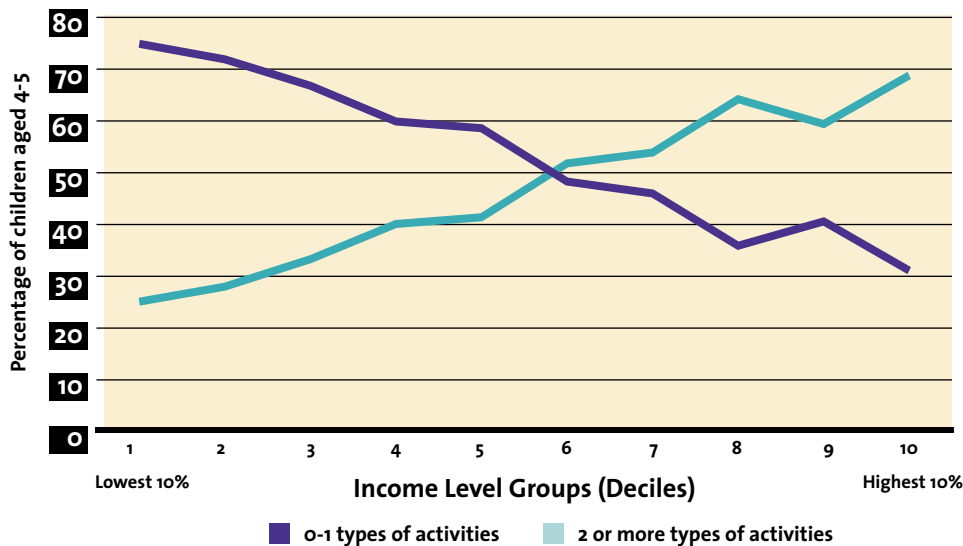


⁴⁰ The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R) is a measure of receptive vocabulary skills for children.

⁴¹ Hoddinott, J., Lethbridge, L., & Phipps, S. (in press). Is history destiny? Resources, transitions and child education attainments in Canada. Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada.

YOUNG CHILDREN FROM HIGHER-INCOME FAMILIES ARE MORE LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IN MORE RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES.

Family income and participation of children (age 4-5 years) in recreational activities,⁴² 1998/99



DATA:

Approximately 80 per cent of children aged 4-5 years participate in at least one recreational activity such as sports, music, or the arts. Children in families with higher incomes are more likely to participate in more recreational activities.

RESEARCH:

Early childhood activities build the foundation for core skills and success in school. Children learn to socialize with other children during activities, including sports and arts activities. Research shows that children’s participation in early childhood activities, particularly supervised sports, is strongly associated with the income level of their parents.⁴³

Source:
National Longitudinal
Survey of Children and
Youth, (NLSCY) Cycle 3,
1998-99

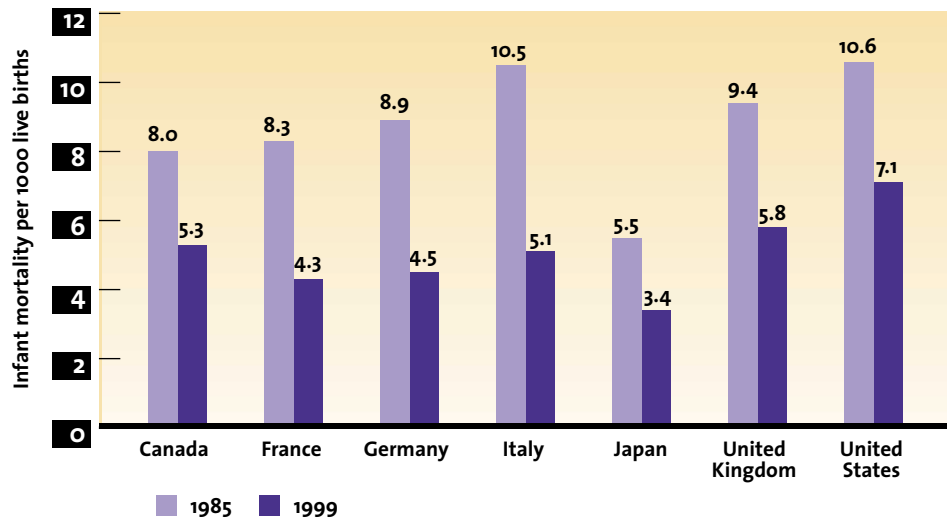


⁴² Activities include sports with a coach; unorganized sports without a coach; dance, gymnastics, martial arts with a coach; community programs with leader; music/art lessons.

⁴³ Offord, D.R., Lipman, E.L. & Duku, E.K. (1998). Sports, the arts and community programs: Rates and correlates of participation. Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada. W-98-18E.

CANADA'S RATE OF IMPROVEMENT IN REDUCING INFANT MORTALITY RATES HAS BEEN SLOWER THAN OTHER DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.

Infant mortality rates in Canada and other G7 countries⁴⁴, 1985-1999



Source:
OECD Health Data 2002

DATA:

Canada's infant mortality rate (the number of infant deaths per 1000 live births) has improved from 1985 to 1999. However, among G7 countries⁴⁴, Canada's rate of improvement has been slower than all other countries except the United States⁴⁵. In terms of infant mortality rate, Canada ranked 6th among G7 countries in 1985, but ranked 3rd highest in 1999.

RESEARCH:

Infant mortality rates are a commonly used and well-established measure of social and economic development as well as child health and well-being. Research has shown that infant mortality rates are influenced by a number of factors, including congenital anomalies, sudden infant death syndrome and advances in medical science, nutrition and prenatal care.⁴⁶



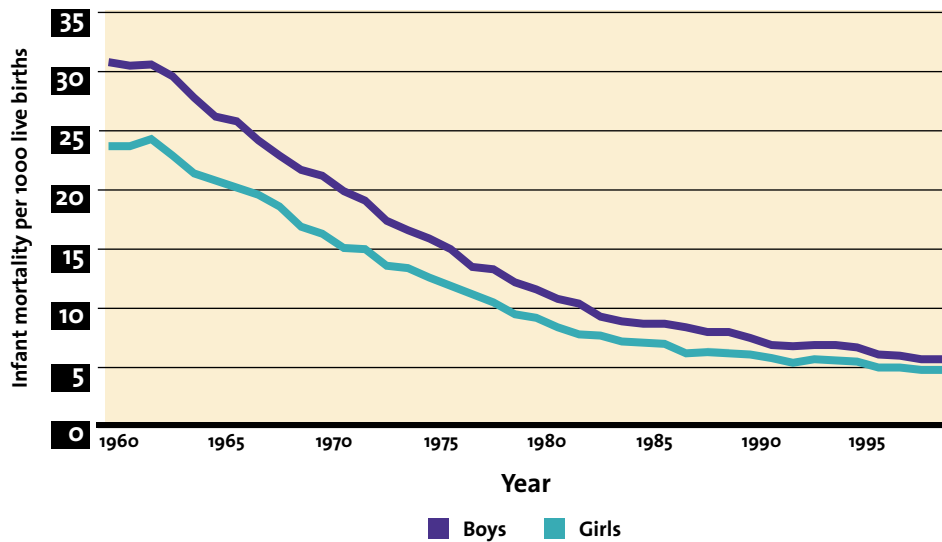
⁴⁴ Group of Seven: Major industrial countries in the world, consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

⁴⁵ International comparisons should be interpreted with caution. The World Health Organization recommends that international comparisons of infant mortality rates include only live births greater than 1000g. Canada reports births less than 500 g more often than some OECD countries, which may account for a higher infant mortality rate.

⁴⁶ Federal/Provincial/Territorial Advisory Committee on Population Health (1999). *Toward a healthy future: Second report on the health of Canadians*. Health Canada. H39-468/1999E.

SINCE 1960, THE CANADIAN INFANT MORTALITY RATE HAS DROPPED SHARPLY AND THE GAP BETWEEN BOYS AND GIRLS HAS NARROWED.

Canadian infant mortality⁴⁷ trends by gender, 1960-1999



DATA:

Since 1960, the overall infant mortality rate (the number of infant deaths per 1000 live births) for Canada has dropped sharply. During the same period, the infant mortality rate for boys has dropped more than for girls.

RESEARCH:

Male infants are at higher risk for low birth weight, respiratory problems and hospitalization, which may account for their consistently higher infant mortality rates.⁴⁸ Recently, there has been an increase in the number of low birth weight babies surviving birth, which slows the reduction of the infant mortality rate.⁴⁹ Children with low birth weight are at higher risk for early death and for physical and developmental delays.⁵⁰ It is therefore important to look at parents', in particular mothers', health practices that have proven to have a direct impact on child health.

Source:
Statistics Canada: Births and Deaths Database;
Canada Yearbook 1985

⁴⁷ Infant mortality is defined as the number of deaths of children < 1 year of age per 1000 live births.

⁴⁸ Gender: Fact Sheet. (2002). Health Canada, Strategic Policy and Research.

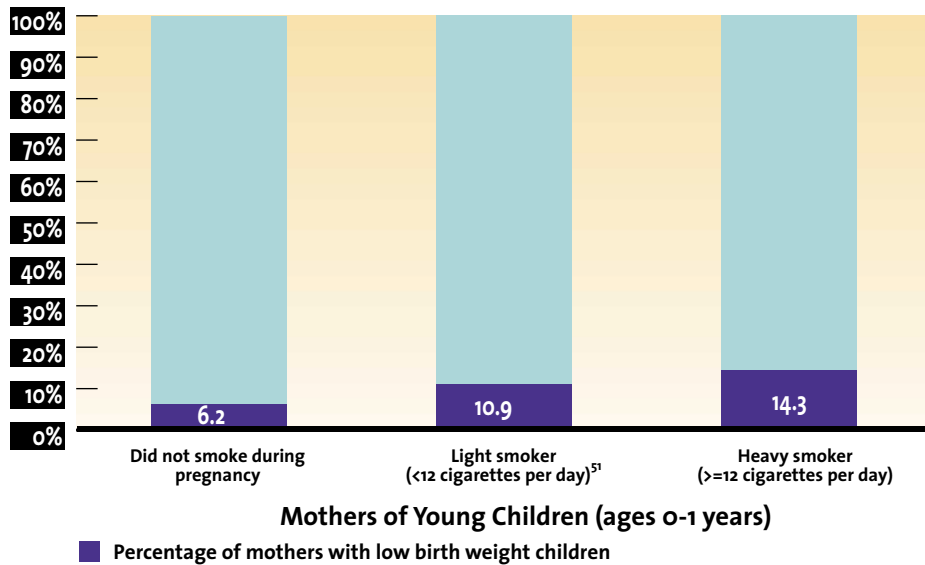
⁴⁹ Canadian perinatal health report 2000. (2000). Health Canada. H49-142/2000E.

⁵⁰ Federal/Provincial/Territorial Advisory Committee on Population Health. (1999). Toward a healthy future: Second report on the health of Canadians. Health Canada. H39-468/1999E.



MOTHERS WHO SMOKE DURING PREGNANCY ARE MORE LIKELY TO GIVE BIRTH TO A CHILD WITH LOW BIRTH WEIGHT.

Maternal smoking during pregnancy and low birth weight in children (age 0-1 years), 1998/99



Source:
National Longitudinal
Survey of Children and
Youth, (NLSCY) Cycle 3,
1998-99

DATA:

Almost 20 per cent of mothers of 0-1 year-old children smoked during pregnancy. These children are up to twice as likely to have low birth weight. Furthermore, among mothers who smoke during pregnancy, children of heavy smokers are more likely to have low birth weight than children of light smokers (less than half a dozen cigarettes a day).

RESEARCH:

Recent research has demonstrated that maternal smoking during pregnancy is a leading cause of low birth weight in developed countries.⁵² Low birth weight is associated with increased mortality, as well as with higher risk for physical and mental disabilities through childhood and adolescence.⁵³



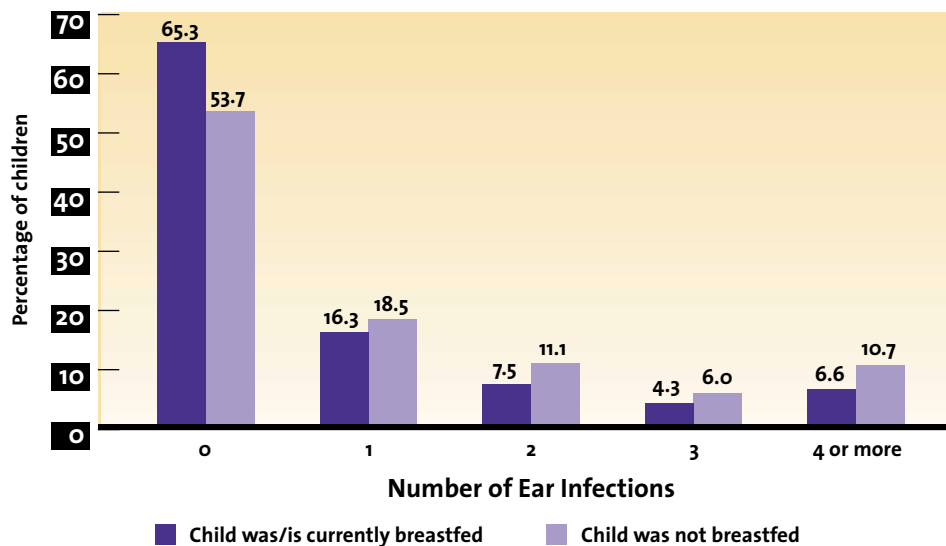
⁵¹ 12 cigarettes per day represents approximately 1/2 pack of cigarettes per day.

⁵² Moner, S.E. (1994). Smoking and pregnancy. In Canadian Task Force on the Periodic Health Examination. *The Canadian guide to clinical preventative health care*. H21-117/1994E.

⁵³ Connor, S.K. & McIntyre, L. (2002) *The effects of smoking and drinking during pregnancy*. In J.D. Willms (ed.) *Vulnerable Children*. University of Alberta Press & Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada.

BREASTFEEDING IS ASSOCIATED WITH A LOWER LIKELIHOOD OF EAR INFECTIONS IN THE FIRST 2 YEARS OF LIFE.

Breastfeeding and ear infections in children (age 0-1 years), 1998/99



DATA:

Approximately 80 per cent of mothers either currently breastfeed their children or breastfed at some point in their child's life. Of mothers who breastfed, one third did so for a period of three to six months whereas another third continued for more than six months. The majority of children do not suffer from ear infections in the first 2 years of life. The proportion of children who had ear infections before age 2 was lower in children who were breastfed. This was true for single and multiple ear infections.

RESEARCH:

Repeated ear infections are a common cause of hearing loss in children.⁵⁴ Breastfeeding is associated with fewer ear infections and is known to promote child health.⁵⁵

Source:
National Longitudinal
Survey of Children and
Youth, (NLSCY) Cycle 3,
1998-99

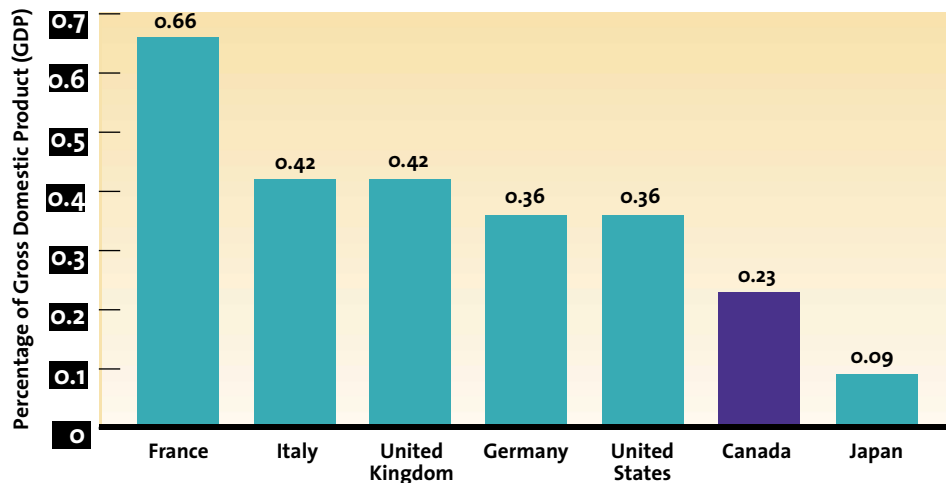


⁵⁴ Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists. (2002). *Hearing health for children.*

⁵⁵ Canadian Perinatal Surveillance System. (1998). *Breastfeeding.* Health Canada, Population and Public Health Branch.

AS A PERCENTAGE OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT,⁵⁶ CANADA SPENDS LESS ON PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION COMPARED TO OTHER DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.

Public expenditure for pre-school education⁵⁷ (age 3-6 years) in the G7 countries⁵⁸, 1998



Source:
Starting Strong
(OECD, 2001)

Members of Group Seven

Public Expenditure

DATA:

Among G7 countries, Canada has the second lowest public expenditure on education-oriented programs for children aged 3 to school-age. France spends almost 3 times, and the United States 1.5 times, as much as Canada as a percentage of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

RESEARCH:

The benefits of public investment in early childhood education programs can include social, economic and educational gains for children, parents and families. Quality early childhood education programs foster development in children and support working parents, leading to economic benefits.⁵⁹



⁵⁶ Gross Domestic Product (GDP) refers to the total market value of all the goods and services produced within the borders of a nation during a specified period.

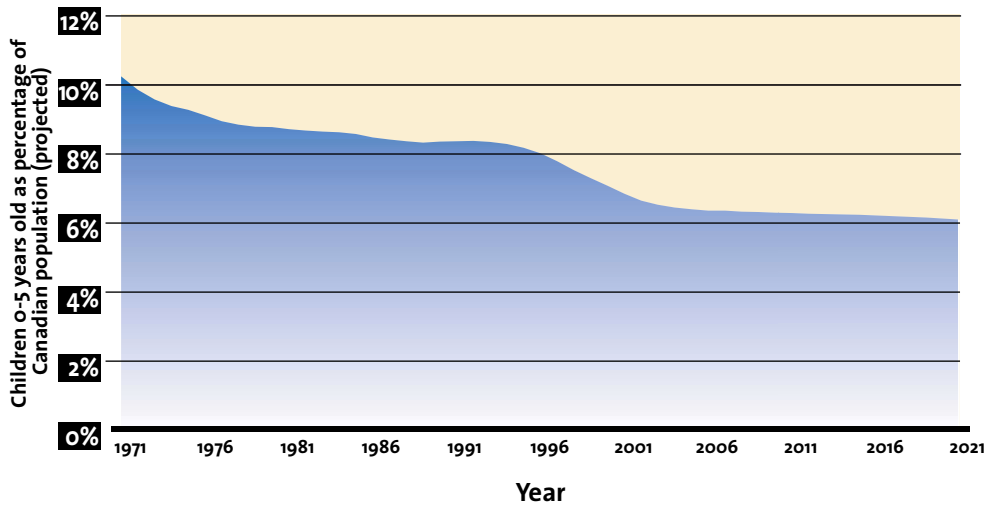
⁵⁷ "Pre-primary education refers to organised centre-based programs designed to foster learning, emotional and social development from 3 years of age to compulsory school-age. Day care, play groups and home-based structured and developmental activities may not be included." (OECD, 2001)

⁵⁸ Group of Seven: Major industrial countries in the world, consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

⁵⁹ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). (2001). Starting strong: Early childhood education and care.

EVERY CHILD COUNTS

Percentage of children (age 0-5 years), in the Canadian population, 1971-2021 (projected)



Source:
Census - Population Projection
Bureau, Statistics Canada

DATA:

In Canada, the population of children under age six is declining relative to other age groups. In the 1970s, about 10 in 100 Canadians were children aged 0-5 years. Based on population projections, by the year 2021, there will be only 6 children aged 0-5 years in 100 Canadians, a reduction of 40 per cent. It is also important to note that this trend is reversed for Aboriginal families in Canada, where the percentage of children under age 6 is growing.

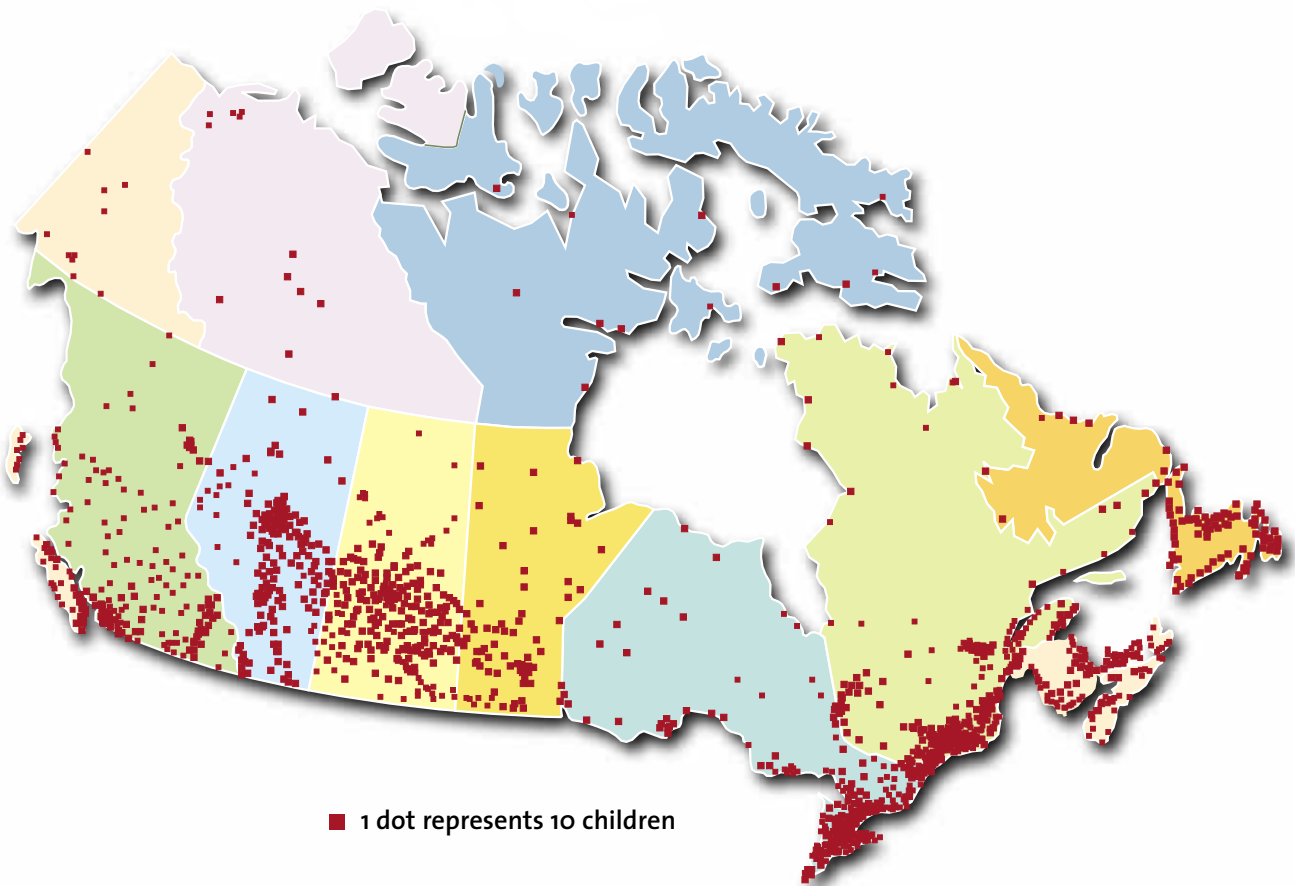
RESEARCH:

The fertility rate in Canada has declined. In the new generation of families, parents wait longer to have children as they try to prioritize education, paid employment, careers, and raising a family. As we enter the future, the numbers of the youngest generation are getting smaller. Support must be provided to each and every child to ensure that they maximize their potential.



EVERY CHILD COUNTS – WHEREVER THEY ARE

Distribution of children aged 0-5 years in Canada, 2001



DATA:

According to the 2001 census, Canada has a total of 2,074,075 children under the age of six, and the majority of them live in the southern and major urban areas of the country.

RESEARCH:

Delivering support and programs to the families with young children living in the rural and remote regions continues to present a challenge to social policies that aim at leaving no children behind.



WORKING TOGETHER: A GLIMPSE OF POLICIES THAT SUPPORT A NEW GENERATION OF FAMILIES RAISING YOUNG CHILDREN

Despite major changes in family life, research confirms that parents continue to have the largest impact on the outcomes of their children through parenting and child rearing decisions. Supporting parents with young children is therefore a pivotal part of public policies aimed at building a better society – a society where no child gets left behind.

In Canada, all governments are committed to investing in young children and their parents in order to help build a strong foundation for the future well-being of children.

Many of the programs and policies are designed to support this new generation of Canadian parents to help them meet the challenges of raising their young children.

Government initiatives include several key areas:

Healthy Pregnancy, Birth and Infancy:

- Prenatal Nutrition Programs
- Perinatal Programs
- Promotion of Breastfeeding
- Addiction Prevention
- Maternity and Parental Benefits

Parenting and Family Supports:

- Parent Education Programs
- Parent Counseling
- Family Literacy Projects
- Child Support and Custody
- English as Second Language (ESL)
- Immigrant Services

Supports for First Nations and other Aboriginal Children and Families:

- Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities
- First Nations Head Start
- First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative
- Child/Day Care Programs
- First Nations National Child Benefit Reinvestment

Early Childhood Development, Learning and Care Support:

- National Child Benefit (NCB) and the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB)
- Social Allowance
- Preschool Education
- Child Day Care



PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL PRIORITY INVESTMENTS UNDER THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) AGREEMENT 2001-2002



Source: *Early Childhood Development Activities and Expenditures: Government of Canada Report 2001-2002*, Human Resources Development Canada, Health Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002.

* While the Government of Québec supports the general principles of the ECD and ELCC agreements, it did not participate in developing these agreements because it intends to preserve its sole responsibility on social matters. However, Québec receives its share of federal funding and the government of Québec is making major investments toward programs and services for children and families. All references to viewpoints shared by the federal, provincial and territorial government in this document do not include the Government of Québec.

** Initiatives to address Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Effects

GOVERNMENTS WORKING TOGETHER: AGREEMENTS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) AND EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE (ELCC)



In September 2000, governments across Canada announced a unique federal/provincial/territorial agreement (Quebec does not participate) for the support of early childhood development (ECD).⁶⁰ Under this agreement, the Government of Canada provides \$500 million annually to provincial and territorial governments to improve and expand their investments in young children and their families. The initiatives supporting young children and their families in each of the provinces/territories are focused on specific provincial/territorial needs, within four agreed upon areas: promoting healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy; improving parenting and family supports; strengthening early childhood development, learning and care; and strengthening community supports.

The map on page 26 provides an illustration of some of the priority areas for investment of provincial and territorial governments during the first year of the agreement, 2001-2002.

In March 2003, building on the ECD agreement federal, provincial and territorial governments announced a framework for improving access to affordable, quality, provincially and territorially regulated early learning and child care (ELCC) programs and services.⁶⁰

Under this framework, the Government of Canada is providing \$900 million over five years to support provincial and territorial governments' investments in ELCC.



⁶⁰ For more information on the ECD and ELCC Agreements, visit www.socialunion.gc.ca.

REPORTING TO THE PUBLIC ON OUR PROGRESS



Under the ECD Agreement, governments report annually to the public on their activities and expenditures. In addition, governments have committed to monitor and report to Canadians on the well-being of Canada's young children using an agreed upon common set of indicators. This common set of indicators reflects the five domains of child well-being: physical health and motor development; emotional health; social knowledge and competence; cognitive learning; and language communication.

Under the ELCC Agreement, governments also committed to report annually to Canadians on

their progress in improving access to affordable, quality early learning and child care (ELCC) programs and services, beginning in November 2003.

The purpose of ECD and ELCC public reporting is to enhance accountability and allow the public to track progress in these areas of investment. Governments will strive to continue to improve the quality of reporting over time.

By working together, all Canadians can help the next generation of young children reach their potential as they grow up in the 21st century.





A New Generation of Canadian Families

RAISING

YOUNG

CHILDREN



