



Factum

One in Three (32%) Families Going into Debt to Fund their Children's Extra-Curricular Activities, Up 5 Points from Last Year

The average family anticipates spending \$1,160 on activities for their children during the upcoming school year, up 3.5%

Toronto, Ontario, September 4, 2018 — A new Ipsos poll for Global News finds that a majority (55%) of Canadian parents would agree (19% strongly / 36% somewhat) that the cost of their kids' activities puts a strain on the family's finances. The strain appears worse this year when compared to a similar poll last year, however, as it has been enough to put more families in the red. As many as one in three (32%) Canadians are now using debt to fund the extracurricular activities of their children, up five points (+5 pts) compared to a year ago.

The poll reveals that, on average, parents spent about \$1,160 on extracurricular activities for their children during the 2017-2018 school year, up slightly from the \$1,120 that was spent, on average, during the 2016-2017 school year, representing an increase in spending of about 3.5%.

Despite coughing up serious dough to keep their children active and engaged, the vast majority think the expense is worth it as nine in ten agree that it is important to give children as diverse experiences as possible (91%), and that the options available for children today are better than ever before (89%).

Regionally, Quebecers are the most likely to invest at least some money in extracurricular activities for their children. More specifically, just twelve percent (12%) of Quebecers spent nothing on extracurricular activities over the past year, compared to three in ten Albertans (31%) and Atlantic Canadians (31%), one in four Saskatchewan/ Manitoba residents (27%), and about two in ten Ontarians (21%) and British Columbians (23%). In terms of indebtedness, Millennial parents (18-34) are under the most stress, as two in five (39%) report having gone into debt to fund their kids' activities compared to around one in four (28%) Gen Xers (35-54) and two in ten (22%) Baby Boomers (55+) with children in the household.

Canadian parents think that it is appropriate to start enrolling children in organized activities at 4.7 years old, although mothers believe children should get an earlier start (4.1 years old) than fathers (5.3 years old) do. Moreover, younger parents are advocates of earlier starts: parents aged 18-34 say children should get started in organized activities at the age of 4.3 on average, while Gen X parents (4.8 years old) and Boomer parents (6.3 years old) believe a later start is more appropriate.

Seven in ten (70%) parents agree that it is important to keep children as busy as possible with organized activities, with fathers (80%) being significantly more likely than mothers (63%) to say so. Quebecers (80%) are also ten points more likely than the national average to agree with this sentiment. On the other hand, a majority (57%) of Canadian parents also believes that children these days spend too much time in organized activities, and not enough time just playing. Given these contradictory feelings, finding the right balance of both could be a struggle.

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Swimming Still Most Popular & Affordable Extracurricular Activity

Swimming continues to be the most popular extracurricular activity, as over two in five (43%; +3 pts) plan on signing their kids up for swimming lessons. While swimming is an essential skill, part of the appeal could be its affordability. On average, parents expect to spend about \$205 for their kids to participate in swimming, making it the least expensive of all extracurricular activities for the second year in a row.

Unsurprisingly, given the amount of equipment required and premium for ice time, hockey once again tops the list as the most expensive extracurricular activity, with parents expecting to spend \$744, on average. Perhaps not surprisingly given the cost, parents are statistically less likely to enroll their kids in hockey than they were last year (10% likely to enroll, down 5 points).

Despite being considerably less expensive than hockey, soccer too has experienced a significant dip in popularity, compared to 2017 (21%; -4 pts).

In the last year, the focus appears to be shifting away from sports and towards other extracurricular activities, such as the arts. In fact, parents are more likely to express an interest in enrolling their children in music lessons (19%; +4 pts), dance lessons (18%; +3 pts), gymnastics (16%; +6 pts), art lessons (12%; +3 pts), language classes (8%; +3 pts), and drama classes (7%; +3 pts), compared to last year. The table below shows all activities that parents plan to enroll their kids in this year, ordered by perceptions of being most to least expensive.

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Activity	Plan to Enroll %		Average Anticipated Spend	
	2018	2017	2018	2017
Hockey	10%	15%	\$744.10	\$755.10
Dance Lessons	18%	15%	\$527.60	\$584.80
Music Lessons	19%	15%	\$500.50	\$381.80
Language Classes	8%	5%	\$473.60	\$601.60
Gymnastics	16%	10%	\$464.00	\$440.20
Martial Arts	16%	15%	\$443.20	\$438.80
Volleyball	6%	5%	\$383.70	\$269.80
Skiing	7%	5%	\$381.60	\$430.50
Art Lessons	12%	9%	\$379.20	\$363.40
Basketball	9%	9%	\$371.30	\$247.70
Drama Classes	7%	4%	\$362.40	\$211.20
Lacrosse	3%	2%	\$316.70	\$520.10
Football	5%	6%	\$300.00	\$306.00
Baseball/ Softball	11%	10%	\$271.10	\$292.00
Scouts	7%	5%	\$226.20	\$258.90
Skating	11%	11%	\$213.00	\$304.90
Soccer	21%	25%	\$212.10	\$247.90
Swimming	43%	40%	\$204.70	\$193.20

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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos survey conducted between August 10th and 15th 2018, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a random sample of 1,001 Canadian parents with children under the age of 18 living in their household were interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online surveys is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the survey is accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians 18+ with children been surveyed. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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