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# FAMILY MATTERS

– A Look at Issues Concerning Families and Raising Children in  
Canada Today –

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This National Angus Reid Group/Globe and Mail poll was conducted by telephone between July 26<sup>th</sup> and August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1999 among a cross-section of 2,499 Canadians, aged 18 and older.

These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional, age/sex composition and incidence of having children reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 1996 Census data.

With a national sample of 2,499 one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results are within  $\pm 1.9$  percentage points of what they would have been had the entire Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be much larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population.

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## – A Look at Issues Concerning Families and Raising Children in Canada Today –

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*These are the findings from an Angus Reid Group survey of 2,499 adult Canadians (aged 18 and older) conducted between July 26<sup>th</sup> and August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1999. With a national sample of this size, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the overall results are within  $\pm 1.9$  percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population.*

### General Attitudes

#### **56% Agree State of Today's Family is a National Crisis and that the Government Must Take Steps**

The majority (56%) of Canadians agree (22% strongly, 34% somewhat) that “the state of the family is a national crisis and the government must take steps to alleviate that crisis”. Four-in-ten (42%) disagree (10% strongly, 32% somewhat).

- ❖ Regionally, Quebec (71%) and the Atlantic Provinces (64%) are more likely to agree that the state of the family is a national crisis that is in need of government intervention than residents in British Columbia (47%) or Ontario (49%). Alberta (53%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (56%) were on par with the national average (56%).
- ❖ Divorced/separated respondents (61%) are slightly more likely than the national average (56%) to agree the state of the family is a national crisis.
- ❖ As the level of education increases, agreement decreases. Respondents with less than high school (71%) education are significantly more likely than respondents with high school (62%), post-secondary (56%), or university (44%) education to agree that the state of the family is a national crisis.
- ❖ A similar trend is evident across income groups. Low income households (those earning less than \$30,000 per year - 68%) are more likely than higher income households (those earning \$30K to \$60K - 60% and \$60K or more - 45%) to agree that the government must take steps to alleviate the crisis.

### ***72% of Canadians Agree Both The Man and Woman Should Contribute To The Household Income***

Seven-in-ten (72%) Canadians agree “both the man and the woman should contribute to the household income”.

- ❖ On a regional basis, agreement is higher in Quebec (81%) than any of the other provinces (national average, 72%).
- ❖ Both men (72%) and women (73%) agree that both partners should contribute to the household income. However, more females strongly agree than males (33% females, 29% males).

### ***56% Agree a Pre-School Child is Likely to Suffer if Both Parents are Employed***

The majority (56%) of Canadians agree (21% strongly, 35% somewhat) “a pre-school child is likely to suffer if both parents are employed”.

- ❖ More men (63%) than women (48%) agree that a pre-school child is likely to suffer if both parents are employed.
- ❖ As age increases so does the likelihood that respondents will agree with the statement. Respondents aged 55+ (64%) are significantly more likely than 35-54 (54%) and 18-34 year olds (50%) to agree.
- ❖ Residents in Quebec (62%) are more likely to agree than the national average (56%).
- ❖ As education level increases, agreement decreases. That is, 45% of university graduates agree compared to 71% of respondents without high school, 62% with high school, and 53% with some post-secondary education.

### ***78% of Canadians Agree Parents Today Are Not Strict Enough***

More than three quarters (78%) of Canadians agree (32% strongly, 46% somewhat) that “parents today are not strict enough with their children”. Two-in-ten Canadians disagree (17% somewhat, 3% strongly) with that statement.

- ❖ Respondents who do not have a high school diploma (84%) are significantly more likely than respondents with University education (73%) to agree that parents are not strict enough with their children.
- ❖ Regionally, residents of Quebec (41%) are more likely than the national average (32%) to ‘strongly agree’ that today’s parents are not strict enough with their children.
- ❖ Agreement does not vary by the age or gender of respondents.

## Attitudes Towards Women and Families

### ***68% of Canadians Agree Working Moms Can Establish a Warm and Secure Relationship With Children***

Two-thirds (68%) of Canadians agree (26% strongly, 42% somewhat) that “an employed mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work for pay”. Three-in-ten (31%) disagree either strongly (9%) or somewhat (22%).

- ❖ Agreement is higher among women (74%) than men (62%).
- ❖ As education level increases, so does agreement. Three quarters (75%) of university graduates agree compared to respondents with less than high school (58%), high school (64%) or post-secondary (70%) education.

### ***56% Agree the Best Way for a Women to be Independent is to have a job outside of the Home.***

A majority (56%) of Canadians agree (20% strongly, 36% somewhat) that “having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person”. Four in ten (43%) disagree (11% strongly, 32% somewhat).

- ❖ Residents in Quebec (69%) are more likely than any other province (national average - 56%) to agree that a job is the best way for a woman to be independent.
- ❖ Responses do not vary according to gender.

### ***39% Agree that What Most Women Want is a Home and Children***

The majority (57%) of Canadians do not agree (17% strongly, 40% somewhat) with the statement “a job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children”. Four-in-ten (39%) agree (11% strongly, 28% somewhat).

- ❖ As education and income increase, agreement decreases. Respondents with less than high school education (67%) are significantly more likely than respondents with high school (48%), post-secondary (32%), or university (28%) education to agree that what most women really want is a home and children. This is consistent across income groups, as low income households earning less than \$30,000 (51%) per year are more likely to agree than households earning \$30,000 to \$59,999 (41%) and \$60,000 or more (29%) that a home and children is what most women want.
- ❖ Regionally, residents in Quebec (48%) report higher agreement than any of the other provinces (national average, 39%)

- ❖ As age increases, agreement increases. Respondents aged 55+ (58%) are more likely than 35-54 (35%) or 18-34 (29%) year olds to agree that a job is all right, but what women really want is a home and children.
- ❖ There is no variation along gender lines.

### ***42% Agree: Families Would Be In Much Better Shape if Mothers Would Stay Home With Kids***

The majority (56%) of Canadians disagree (19% strongly, 38% somewhat) that “families would be in much better shape these days if mothers would only stay home with their children”. Four in ten agree with the statement (16% strongly, 26% somewhat).

- ❖ University graduates (69%) are more likely to disagree that ‘mothers should stay at home’ than respondents without high school (33%), high school (49%) or post-secondary education (60%).
- ❖ Disagreement is highest among high-income households (66% in 60K+ compared to 47% in households with less than \$30K per year).
- ❖ As the age of respondents increase, so does agreement (18-34, 32%; 35-54, 40%; 55+, 57%).
- ❖ Regionally, Quebec has the highest level of agreement, with 47% agreeing that mothers should stay at home with their children, followed by British Columbia (44%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (44%).
- ❖ The majority of males (55%) and females (58%) disagree that mothers are better off at home with their children.

## **Attitudes Towards Raising Children**

### ***Do Parents Today Know What They are Doing When it Comes to Raising Children? 63% are Worried***

Almost two-thirds (63%) of Canadians “worry about whether parents today really know what they are doing when it comes to raising children” – 35% are not worried.

- ❖ Disagreement is highest among respondents with household incomes of 60K+ per year (39%), and university graduates (40%).
- ❖ The level of agreement does not vary significantly across age groups.

### ***62% of Canadians With Children Living at Home Are Worried They Are Not Raising Their Children Properly***

Six-in-ten (62%) respondents with children living at home agree (23% strongly, 39% somewhat) with the statement “one of my biggest worries in my life is whether I am raising my children properly”. Four in ten (37%) either disagree (28%) or *strongly* disagree (9%) with the statement.

- ❖ Low income households earning less than \$30,000 per year (68%) are more likely than higher income households (\$30K to \$59K, 62%; \$60K or more, 61%) to worry about whether they are raising their children properly.
- ❖ Agreement is higher among respondents aged 18-34 (70%) with children living at home than respondents aged 35-54 (59%) with children living at home.

### ***Two-thirds Agree (68%) Day Care is Good for Children***

Two-thirds (68%) of Canadians agree (18% strongly, 50% somewhat) that day care is good for children.

- ❖ More women (71%) than men (65%) agree that day care is good for children.
- ❖ Regionally, agreement is highest in Quebec (78%), followed by the Atlantic provinces (72%).

## **Attitudes Toward Potential Government Initiatives**

### ***32% Support Financial Assistance for Everyone with Children***

Two-thirds (67%) of Canadians oppose the federal government “financially supporting every family with children, regardless of that family’s income”. One-third (32%) support the initiative.

- ❖ Support for the federal government initiative is highest among residents of Quebec (43% compared to the national average, 32%).
- ❖ Regionally, residents of Alberta (74%) and British Columbia (73%) are more likely than other provinces to oppose the initiative.

### ***Three-quarters of Canadians Support Inexpensive Day Care Systems***

Eight in ten (78%) Canadians support (48% strongly, 30% somewhat) the federal government “setting up an inexpensive day care system to all families who want it”. Two-in-ten (21%) oppose either strongly (11%) or somewhat (10%).

- ❖ Support is highest among women (82%), residents in Atlantic provinces (87%) and respondents aged 18-34 (87%).

### ***Three-quarters of Canadians Support Extended Parental Leave for One Year***

Three quarters (74%) of Canadians support (42% strongly, 32% somewhat) the federal government “extending paid parental leave for new parents to ONE year”.

- ❖ Regionally, the strongest support for this initiative is in Quebec (81%), followed by Atlantic (76%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (75%).

### ***Public Split on Extended Parental Leave for Two Years***

Half (49%) of Canadians support and the other half (50%) do not support the federal government “extending paid parental leave for new parents to TWO years”.

- ❖ Regionally, the strongest support is in Quebec (57%), significantly higher than the national average (49%).

### ***Six-in-ten Support Encouraging One Parent to Stay Home***

Six in ten (60%) Canadians support the federal government “doing everything possible to encourage one parent to stay home”. Four-in-ten (40%) are not supportive.

- ❖ Support is highest in the Atlantic Provinces (69%), among women (62%), and respondents aged 55+ (67%).

### ***58% Do Not Support Encouraging Both Parents to Work for Pay***

The majority (58%) of Canadians do not support the federal government “doing everything possible to encourage both parents to work for pay”. 41% support the initiative.

## **Stress**

### ***Up to 60% of Canadians Report Signs of Stress***

The majority of Canadians have reported experiencing at least one sign of stress in the past six months (60% report experiencing irritability, 49% sleep disturbances, and 43% inability to concentrate).

- ❖ Women report experiencing more stress-related symptoms than men. Irritability (63% women, 57% men), sleep disturbances (53% women, 44% men) and inability to concentrate (45% women, 40% men) were the top three signs of stress reported by both men and women.
- ❖ Respondents with children living at home report experiencing more signs of stress than respondents with no children living at home.

### ***One-in-Ten Using Medication to Control Depression***

One in ten (10%) Canadians report they have taken medication to control depression over the past two years.

- ❖ Women (13%) were more likely than men (7%) to report taking antidepressants in the past two years.
- ❖ As household income increases, respondents reporting usage of medication for depression decreases. Seventeen of respondents in lower income households (<\$30K) report taking antidepressants, compared to 7% of respondents in higher income households (\$60K or more).

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