

ADOPTION IN CANADA

Benchmark Survey Explores Canadian's Perceptions



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Toronto, ON – According to a study conducted by Ipsos-Reid on behalf of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption Canada there is a widespread favourable impression of adoption among Canadians: 45% are very favourable while 46% are somewhat favourable. A strong majority of Canadian respondents (74%) believe that parents would feel the same satisfaction and reward from adoption as from raising a child from birth. In fact, when it comes down to the fundamentals of parent/child love, there is virtually no perceived difference between adopted and biological families: more than 73% of Canadians surveyed strongly believe that parents who adopt will love their adopted child as much as a biological child (only 3% do not believe this is likely); and 58% also strongly believe that adopted children will be as loving to adopted parents as they would to birth parents (again, only 3% believe that this transference of love is not likely).

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos-Reid poll conducted from on behalf of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption Canada from July 26 to August 3, 2004. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1,556 Canadian adults was interviewed online. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 2001 Census data.

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General Attitudes Toward Adoption

Overall, the Canadian public's perception of the relationship between adoptive parents and children is very positive.

- There is a widespread favourable impression of adoption among Canadians: 45% are very favourable while 46% are somewhat favourable.
- 74% believe that the parents will feel the same satisfaction and reward from adoption as from raising a child from birth.
- 73% strongly believe that parents will love adopted children as much as a biological child. Only 3% do not believe this would be the case.
- The majority of respondents (58%) strongly believe adopted children will be as loving to adopted parents as they would to birth parents. Again, only 3% do not believe this transference of love is likely.

Adoption is not a completely foreign concept to Canadians, many of whom have some passing acquaintance with the notion of adoption.

- 3-in-5 know someone who was adopted.
- 1-in-9 have had a personal adoption experience.
- 1-in-7 know someone who has placed a child for adoption.



Canadian Adoptions

What Canadians might not know, however, is that the number of “international” adoptions by Canadians has risen over the past four years, even while there are an increasing number of children available for adoption here at home.

According to the Adoption Council of Canada:

- There are currently more than 22,000 children available for adoption in Canada.
- Most recent statistics show that Canadian’s adopted over 2,000 children internationally, compared to fewer than 1,700 children who were adopted in Canada.

The Ipsos-Reid survey indicates that on an unaided basis, Canadians perceive “speed” and “ease” to be the main reasons why some Canadians choose international adoption over adopting within Canada. When asked outright, half (49%) perceive international adoptions to be easier than adoptions in Canada.

Additionally, 62% of Canadians believe that most (20%) or some (42%) children in foster care are available for adoption but less than half (48%) believe that most (3%) or some (35%) are actually adopted.

But, with 5% of respondents indicating they have very seriously considered adopting a child (equivalent to more than 500,000+ Canadians), clearly “demand” outweighs “availability” for these children.

So why then are many children still waiting to be adopted? One major concern, identified by 78% of Canadian’s surveyed, was “being sure the birth parents could not take the child back”.



Can We Learn From Our Neighbours To The South?

In comparison to a similar survey conducted in the United States, Ipsos-Reid findings show that fewer Canadians consider adopting and have a less favourable view of the process and outcome of adoption than Americans.

- Canadian's general impression of adoption is not as strongly favourable as Americans. 45% of Canadians say "very favourable" compared to 63% of Americans.
- Only 14% of Canadians surveyed have seriously considered adopting (including 5% "very seriously") compared to 39% of Americans.
- Canadians are more likely to be negative than positive in their views of adoption versus Americans. Americans are twice as likely to have a positive view of foster care than a negative view.
- Canadians are less likely to say government leaders should pay "more attention" to the issue of "Adoption of Canadian/American children in general". 61% of Canadians versus 78% of Americans, although a majority from each country believe this issue requires more attention.

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