

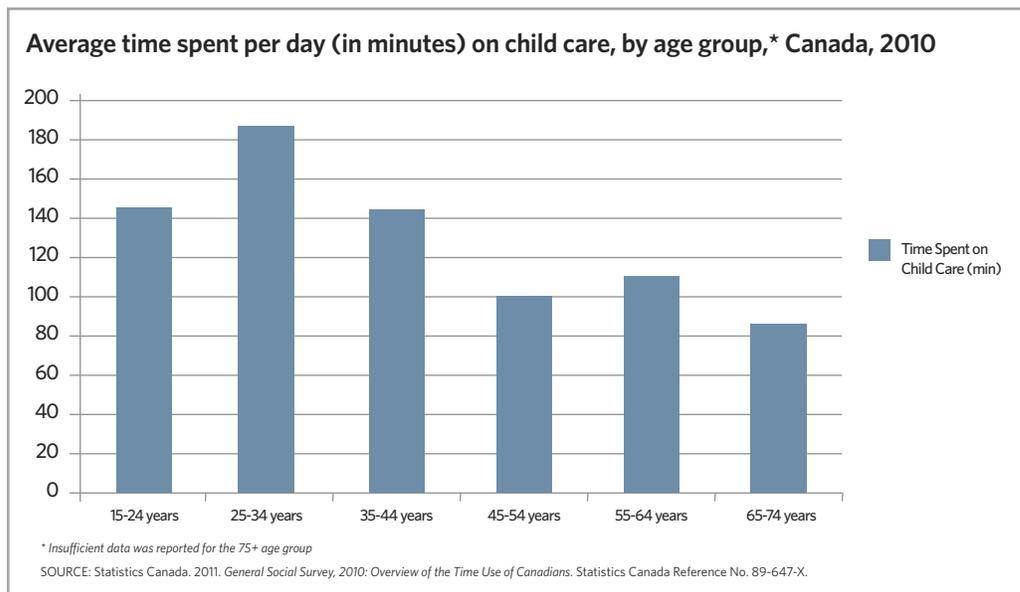
FASCINATING FAMILIES

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It Takes A Village: A Snapshot of Child Care in Canada

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Child care is at the heart of family life, a formative experience for children taking their first steps into the world. Raising children involves a great deal of time and energy; both of which can be hard to come by while juggling life's demands. Parents in and out of the labour force depend on family, friends and paid professionals for child care when they need time for other things, such as errands, school, volunteer work or providing eldercare. Regardless of why parents use child care, child care is a community resource that is of high value to children, families and society.

According to Statistics Canada's 2010 General Social Survey (GSS), Canadians aged 15 and older who cared for children spent an average 2.5 hours per day on these tasks, up from 2.2 hours in 1998.¹ The gap in child care* participation rates between women and men have narrowed slightly over time: 22% of women and 16% of men reported spending time on child care in 2010, which is a 2% decline for women since 1998 (the participation rate for men was unchanged).² However,

women still spent significantly more *time* on child care in 2010, spending an average 2.9 hours per day on these tasks in 2010, compared to 1.9 hours for men.³

As any parent will tell you, caring for a child is infinitely rewarding, but it is also extremely time consuming, and it competes with the attention given to work and community responsibilities. For mothers with children under the age of 6, work has occupied a growing amount of time over the past several decades, with employment rates having increased from 31% in 1976 to 67% in 2011.⁴ Volunteering is also a major part of many Canadians' lives, and those with children aged 17 and under in the household are significantly more likely than those without children to be volunteers (56% vs. 41%, respectively, in 2010).⁵ With employment and community activities such as volunteering playing a big role in our lives, the resulting time squeeze means many parents depend on other child care providers for help.

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Caring for our Preschoolers

An HRSDC report from 2009 found that there is only regulated full or part-time centre-based child care space for 22% of children aged 0-5 in Canada.⁶ This overall shortage poses challenges for the 50% of Canadian parents of preschool-aged children who reported in the 2011 GSS that they rely on some kind of child care arrangement on a regular basis.^{7†} Among this group, 31% used daycare services, 30% used licensed home daycares, 27% relied on care provided by relatives, nannies or similar private arrangements, and 9% sent their children to a preschool or nursery school.⁸

In Quebec, many parents enroll their preschool-aged children in a “Centre de la petite enfance” (CPE), which offers \$7-per-day care to all residents of the province. These subsidized daycare spaces are widely utilized, with 6 in 10 surveyed parents reporting in 2011 that they use either a CPE (36%) or CPE-affiliated home-based daycare (26%) on a regular basis.⁹

Caring for our School Age Children

The situation is different for parents of school-aged children in Canada (5-14 years old) due to complex schedules and the limited child care options available. Child care arrangements are used on a regular basis by 33% of these parents, with 55% of them using before/after-school child care services and 39% relying on care provided by relatives, nannies or similar private arrangements in 2011.¹⁰

The availability of child care spaces in Canada has grown over time, with the overall proportion of

children aged 0-12 for whom there is a regulated child care space growing from 7.5% in 1992 to 19.9% in 2010 – leaving 4 in 5 Canadian children of this age group without an available government regulated child care space.¹¹

Family Lens

The growing prevalence of dual-earner families since the 1970s¹² has increased demand for child care. Every family has its own unique needs and available resources, therefore child care arrangements in Canada are as diverse as the children being cared for. But whether it's ultimately provided by relatives, friends or paid professionals, child care is highly valuable activity in any society. In fact, it has been estimated that every public dollar spent on child care programs returns \$2.54 in benefits to society over the long term.¹³ By investing in the next generation, we can reap immeasurable rewards on personal, economic and societal levels, and have a greater hand in securing the future well-being of Canadians.

** In the 2010 GSS, “child care” is defined as total time spent looking after one or more of the children living in the respondents’ household without pay*

† In the 2011 GSS, responses to questions about child care arrangements were defined by participants, not the survey itself. All responses were sorted into the following categories outside of Quebec: (licensed) home daycare, daycare, preschool/nursery school, private arrangement (relative, nanny, etc.), care by older brothers or sister, or mix of different types of arrangements. Inside Quebec, responses were sorted into the following categories: non-profit daycare centre (CPE), private daycare centre, home-based daycare affiliated with a CPE, home-based daycare not affiliated with a CPE, or mix of different types of daycare. ‘Regular basis’ is defined as follows: “An arrangement is considered on a regular basis if it is done at the same place each week. It could be, for example, every Friday or every day of the week” (Statistics Canada, 2013).

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¹ Statistics Canada (2011). *General Social Survey, 2010: Overview of the Time Use of Canadians*. Statistics Canada Reference No. 89-647-X. Ottawa. Accessed April 3, 2013. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-647-x/89-647-x2011001-eng.pdf>

² Statistics Canada, 2011.

³ Statistics Canada, 2011.

⁴ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. *Indicators of Well-Being in Canada*. Accessed April 6, 2013. http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/.3ndic.lt.4r@-eng.jsp?iid=13#M_7

⁵ Vézina, Mireille and Crompton, Susan. “Volunteering in Canada,” in *Canadian Social Trends* (May 2012, No. 93). Statistics Canada Reference No. 11-008-X. Accessed June 14, 2013. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2012001/article/11638-eng.htm>

⁶ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). *Public Investments in Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, 2010* (2012). Accessed May 1, 2013. http://www.ecd-elcc.ca/eng/ecd/ececc/early_childhood_education-eng.pdf

⁷ Statistics Canada (2013). “Table 12: Distribution of Parents of Preschool-aged Children by Use of Child Care Arrangement, Canada, 2011,” from *2011 General Social Survey: Overview of Families in Canada*. Statistics Canada Reference No. 89-650-XWE. Accessed April 30, 2013. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-650-x/2012001/tbl/tbl12-eng.htm>

⁸ Statistics Canada, 2013.

⁹ Statistics Canada (2013). “Table 13: Distribution of Parents of Preschool-aged Children According to their Affiliation to a « Centre de la petite enfance », Quebec, 2011,” from *2011 General Social Survey: Overview of Families in Canada*. Statistics Canada Reference No. 89-650-XWE. Accessed April 30, 2013. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-650-x/2012001/tbl/tbl13-eng.htm>

¹⁰ Statistics Canada (2013). “Table 14: Distribution of Parents of School-aged Children by Use of Child Care Arrangement, Canada, 2011,” from *2011 General Social Survey: Overview of Families in Canada*. Statistics Canada Reference No. 89-650-XWE. Accessed April 30, 2013. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-650-x/2012001/tbl/tbl14-eng.htm>

¹¹ HRSDC, 2012.

¹² Statistics Canada. “Women in Canada: Economic Well-Being,” in *The Daily* (December 16, 2010). Accessed May 1, 2013. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/101216/dq101216c-eng.htm>

¹³ Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. *A Budget for the Rest of Us: Alternative Federal Budget 2012*. Accessed June 5, 2013. <http://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2012/03/AFB2012%20Budget%20Document.pdf>

