

5-10-2010

# Child Care: Preferences and Opportunity Costs

Beaujot Roderic

*The University of Western Ontario, rbeaujot@uwo.ca*

Zenaida R. Ravanera

*The University of Western Ontario, ravanera@uwo.ca*

Ching Du

*The University of Western Ontario, jdu28@uwo.ca*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/pscpapers>

---

### Recommended Citation

Roderic, Beaujot; Ravanera, Zenaida R.; and Du, Ching (2010) "Child Care: Preferences and Opportunity Costs," *PSC Discussion Papers Series*: Vol. 24: Iss. 3, Article 1.

Available at: <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/pscpapers/vol24/iss3/1>

## **Child care: Preferences and opportunity costs**

Discussion Paper No. 10-03

**Roderic Beaujot**

Professor of Sociology  
Department of Sociology  
University of Western Ontario  
London, ON N6A 5C2  
519-661-3689  
519-661-3200 (FAX)  
[rbeaujot@uwo.ca](mailto:rbeaujot@uwo.ca)

**Zenaida Ravanera**

Adjunct Research Professor  
Department of Sociology  
University of Western Ontario  
[ravanera@uwo.ca](mailto:ravanera@uwo.ca)

**Ching Du**

Ph.D Student  
Department of Sociology  
University of Western Ontario  
[jdu28@uwo.ca](mailto:jdu28@uwo.ca)

Paper presented at Statistics Canada Socio-Economic Conference, 26-27 April 2010,  
Contributed Session organized by Janet Fast on “The Costs of Caregiving.”

10 May 2010

On the web in PDF format: <http://sociology.uwo.ca/popstudies/dp/dp10-03.pdf>

The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official policy of the Department of Canadian Heritage. Financial contribution from the Multiculturalism and Human Rights Program is gratefully acknowledged.

Populations Studies Centre  
University of Western Ontario  
London Ontario CANADA N6A 5C2

## Child care: Preferences and opportunity costs

### *Abstract*

*Family and work questions over the life course can be analyzed as constrained choices within structural and normative contexts. We focus here on the preferences and opportunity costs associated with child care, using data from the 2006 General Social Survey on Family.*

*We start with the extent of usage of various forms of child care, for respondents with children aged 0-4, along with the reasons for the choice and the preferences for alternate forms of care. Among respondents with children under five years of age, 48% are currently using regular child care of some kind, and 79% of persons using child care are using their preferred form of care.*

*We then consider the paid work status of parents with children aged 0-4, in comparison to other respondents, including their preference to work more or fewer hours. When there are young children present, women on average have lower employment rates, and lower average hours of work, along with a higher proportion who would prefer to work fewer hours. The opposite applies to men, who have their highest employment rates when there are young children at home.*

*These patterns can be interpreted as opportunity costs of child care for women, but they may also represent preferences for given forms of care and for the amount of paid work to be done by women and men when they are parenting young children. The differences between Quebec and the rest of Canada suggest that a greater availability of publicly funded child care prompts a higher usage of child care, and reduces the opportunity costs of child care to women's work.*

Family and work questions over the life course can be analyzed as constrained choices within structural and normative contexts (Burch 1980; Galotti 2002; Gilovich et al., 2002; Seltzer et al., 2005). These structural and normative contexts would determine the preferences and opportunity costs associated with given behaviours. That is, strategies of individuals and couples can be analyzed in terms of both structural constraints (including opportunity costs) and orientations on appropriate behaviour (Brines 1994; Crompton 2006: 13).

The preferences and constraints lead to alternative models of earning and caring, including the division of work in couples (Ravanera et al. 2009). For instance, Hakim (2003) categorizes women into *family-centered*, *work-centered*, and *adaptive*. These life course orientations, along with constraints associated with child care availability and work-life balance provisions, would determine the extent of childbearing and the mix of earning and caring in the lives of individuals and couples.

We use the 2006 General Social Survey on Families (described in Box 1) to provide an overview of the preferences and constraints with regard to child care and work. This survey permits a description of the extent of usage of various forms of child care, for respondents with children aged 0-4, along with the reasons for the choice and the preferences for alternate forms of care.

The survey also includes the paid work status of respondents, hours worked, and preferences to work more or fewer hours.

Our objective is to have a better understanding of the choices and the constraints that parents face in caring for their children through a better knowledge of their use and preferences for various types of child care. By describing the labour participation and preferences with regards to hours of work, we aim to get a glimpse of the opportunity costs of caring for children. Given the differential availability of publicly supported child care in Quebec, our analysis separately considers Quebec and the rest of Canada. This helps assess the extent to which availability affects usage and preferences for child care, and how these differentials further influence the opportunity costs of child care through the work patterns of parents.

In each of the next two sections, we first briefly summarize some of the relevant information from data collected in the past in order to put in context the description of child care and work based on the more current data collected through the 2006 General Social Survey.

### **Child care: usage and preferences**

Based on previously collected data, it is difficult to properly assess the importance of child care questions to the preferences and opportunity costs associated with children. The two surveys that collected data on child care usage were the 1988 National Child Care Survey, and the National Survey of Children and Youth (Kohen et al., 2006; Beaujot and Ravanera, 2009). In *Child Care in Canada*, Bushnik (2006) makes comparisons of care of children aged six months to five years over the period 1994-95 to 2002-03 based on data from the NLSCY. Child care is defined here as non-parental care, received from other than their mother, father or guardian. The profile tabulates rates of usage according to six types of main child care arrangement. For all children six months to five years, 41.9% were receiving non-parental child care in 1994-95, and 53.6% in 2002-03. The proportions receiving care in 2002-03 are 56% to 58% at children's ages of one year to four years. The rates are highest in Quebec at 66.9% in 2002-03 for all children six months to five years. At the national level, the rate is 64.4% in single-parent and 52.1% in two-parent families. The rates reach 82.9% for lone parents who worked for pay or studied, 70.9% for two parents where both worked for pay or studied, but 19.5% with two parents and one worked for pay or studied.

In "New evidence about child care in Canada: Use patterns, affordability and quality," Cleveland and his colleagues (2008) propose that the NLSCY should only be used to study child care for those working or studying, since the question asked: "While you (and your spouse/partner) are at work/studying, do you currently use child care such as daycare, babysitting, care by a relative or other caregiver or nursery school?" However, there is not a skip pattern in the questionnaire to determine in advance whether the respondent or their spouse/partner are working or studying. Thus, it would seem that most persons who are using child care would declare this care, since the main part of the question asks "do you currently use child care." As Bushnik (2006) indicates, there is usage, amounting to 19.5% in the case of two parents where only one worked for pay or studied. Cleveland et al. (2008: 7) tabulate the NLSCY data for children six months to five years,

but mostly for mothers who are employed or studying, for 1994-95 and 2004-05. These data show 48.8% regulated care in 2004-05, 29.5% unregulated care by a relative or non-relative, and the remaining 21.7% classified as care by parent or guardian.

Child care preferences were measured by the 1988 National Child Care Survey, but only for persons who were using child care. The question was: "Given your current work schedule and your present income, which type of arrangement would you most prefer to use for your child while you are working?" Tabulating actual by preferred child care for children 0-5, some 60% of respondents had actual care that corresponded with preferred care (Beaujot, 1997: 283). Among those using day care, 24% preferred an other form of care, and among those using care by a non-relative in another's home, 51% preferred an other form of care. When the preference was for day care or care by a non-relative in the child's home, more than half were using other forms of care. Altogether, there were 83% more preferring day care than the numbers using day care, and there were 87% more preferring non-relative in child's home than the numbers using this kind of care. In contrast, the actual use of care by a non-relative in another person's home represented 40% more than the preference for this kind of care.

In a survey asking the general population what they consider to be ideal, Bibby (2005) finds much preference for care by the parents themselves. This "study of Canadian hopes and dreams," asked: "Ideally, do you think it is preferable for one parent to stay home and take primary responsibility for raising children when they are pre-schoolers?" There were 70% who answered "yes, definitely," 20% who said "yes, probably" and 10% who said "not necessarily or no". The responses can clearly be influenced by question wording and the conditions faced by the populations of respondents, including whether they currently have pre-school children (Cleveland et al., 2008: 9).

It would appear that the 2006 General Social Survey captures the information in a fairly neutral manner since the questions are asked of all respondents who have children under 12 years of age, and the initial question asks: "Do you currently use regular child care such as daycare, family daycare provider, nursery school, care by a relative or other caregiver, a before and after school program or some other arrangement? Please include arrangements you have for when you are working, studying, volunteering or other reasons for at least half a day at a time."

We have here tabulated the child care data for all respondents who are living with children under five years of age, a sub-sample of 2314 persons. In this sample, 48.2% indicated that they currently use regular child care of some kind, and 51.8% responded that they did not use child care on a regular basis (Table 1). This is best seen with reference to the proportion of working parents. As shown later in Table 4 below, 47.3% of women with a child under five at home were either working or looking for work as their main activity, and another 2.7% indicate studying as their main activity. It is noteworthy that in Quebec, 72.6% indicate that they are currently using regular child care, and 62.0% of married/cohabiting women with a child under five years of age have a main activity of working, looking for work or studying. By marital status, where married includes cohabitation throughout this paper, total usage is 72.2% for the married and 77.5% for others in Quebec, compared to 40.1% and 55.2% respectively in the rest of Canada.

After identifying the main form of child care, for the respondents who had more than one type of regular care, Table 1 also shows the proportions using various forms of child care for these respondents with children under five years. Day care is used more in Quebec, at 42.3% for the married and 45.0% for others. In the rest of Canada, 14.1% of married respondents with children 0-4, and 28.7% of other respondents indicated day care as their main form of child care used on a regular basis. After day care, the second most common form of care is in someone else's home by a non-relative, which represents 24% (that is 10.2/42.5) as much as day care in Quebec and 64% (9.7/15.1) in the rest of Canada.

Respondents who used child care were asked the main reason for their choice of this type of care. Some 42.5% responded in terms of convenience questions (close to home, work, school or family, affordable, hours fit my schedule), another 48.3% responded more in terms of the child's interest (recommended by friend/relative, cared for by a family member, relative, friend or other trustworthy person, best for the child, or other), and 9.1% indicated that it was the "only option available" (Table 2). The convenience factors of closeness or hours fitting the schedule tended to be more important in justifying the use of day care. The justification of "cared for by a trustworthy person" tended to be given more often for those children receiving care in their own home by a relative or non-relative. The justification of "best for the child" was given most often for "other child care arrangements" including nursery school, preschool and "other," but day care was also more likely to be justified on the grounds of being best for the child.

There are some noteworthy differences in the reason for their choice when comparing Quebec and the rest of Canada. For those using day care, 15.5% justified this option in terms of it being affordable in Quebec, compared to 6.3% in the rest of Canada. In contrast, 33.6% of respondents from Quebec justified day care in terms of convenience in time or distance, and 26.3% in terms of it being best for the child. In the rest of Canada, the justification of day care was more likely to be in terms of convenience (41.3%), and 24.0% justified the option in terms of it being best for the child.

For respondents using child care, there was a question on whether they would prefer to use another type of care, and if so, which type would they prefer. Table 3 shows the child care preference by main form of child care used. For all persons using child care on a regular basis, 21.3% would prefer to be using an alternate form of care. The highest proportions preferring an alternate form of care occur for those receiving care in someone else's home by a non-relative (34.3%), followed by own home care by a relative (27.4%), and before and after school programs (24.0%). For other forms of care, some 13 to 19 percent would prefer an alternate form of care. There are lower proportions preferring a different form of care in Quebec than in the rest of Canada: 15.1% of Quebec respondents with children 0-4 who are using child care would prefer a different type of care, compared to 24.4% for the rest of Canada. For those using day care, 12.4% in Quebec but 18.7% in the rest of Canada would prefer to be using a different form of care.

Table 3 also shows the preferred care of all respondents receiving care, including the 78.7% whose preferred care corresponds with the actual care received. Except in the case of "other child care arrangement," the diagonal, where actual and preferred are the same, represent the

largest category at 60 to 99 percent of a given type of actual care. Compared to the 1988 Child Care Survey, there is now less difference between actual and preferred care. This is especially the case in Quebec. For instance, among Quebec parents who prefer day care, 92.7% are using day care, compared to 76.0% in the rest of Canada.

Unfortunately, the questionnaire did not ask for the preferences of respondents who did not have their children in regular care. However, among those who are receiving care, the justifications for this choice are largely in positive terms for the parents and/or children, and there is only some 20 percent who would prefer a different type of care.

### **Extent of paid work, including preferences for working more or fewer hours**

Having considered the main forms of child care, along with the justifications for these choices, and the preferences of parents for alternate forms of care, our purpose now is to determine how child care represents an opportunity cost to parents. These opportunity costs are assessed by comparing the work patterns of persons with young children in relation to other population groups of women and men, by marital and family status.

Other studies have documented the increased hours of paid work in families, for both couples and lone-parent families (Turcotte, 2007; Myles et al., 2007). The main factor affecting the change in family work hours of couples has been the increase in the proportion of couples who are dual-earners, since the average work hours of dual-earners themselves are relatively stable (Marshall, 2009). Another change is that there has been an increase in women's work hours and a decline in that of men, making the work week more standard. Over time, there has been a converging trend between men and women in the average hours of paid work, and also in the average hours of unpaid work (Marshall, 2006, 2009). This trend in a converging direction is also occurring in the population of couples with children. Nonetheless, the differences in average hours of paid work remain important, at 34.7 hours for wives and 42.0 for husbands in 2008, for dual-earner couples (Marshall, 2009: 23)

Considering work patterns measured over a six year period, on the basis of the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics panels of 1996-2001, 1999-2004 and 2002-2007, LaRochelle-Côté and Dionne (2009) document considerable variability across both individuals and families. For two-adult families, the average patterns are also different when comparing those with or without children under 18. After adjusting for age, 13.9% of families with children are working "long hours," compared to 20.5% of those without children. Similarly, the proportion classified as "consistently standard couples" is 13.8% for those with children and 21.1% for those without children. That is, the couples with children were less likely to be in the two most work intensive categories. In contrast, the proportion classified as "one low, other at least standard" are 51.2% of those with children and 41.4% of those without children. The fourth category of lower labour market engagement amounts to 21.1% of those with children and 17.0% of those without children. Of the families with long hours, 9.3% had pre-school children, compared to 15.4% of families with "one low, other at least standard" family work hours. These authors further found that families with long hours had higher likelihood of stress, regardless of the presence of

children (LaRoche-Cote and Dionne, 2009). However, in families with consistently standard hours, the likelihood of stress was considerably higher among those with children under 18 than in couples without children.

For lone mothers, the improved labour market situation over the period 1980-2000, which applies mostly to mothers over the age of 40, derives from increases in the employment rate and in the hours worked, rather than from average hourly earnings (Myles et al., 2007). The stronger gains of married mothers relative to lone mothers was mostly a function of stronger increases in weeks worked.

Turning to work preferences, there are not good measures in part because persons who are not working are typically not asked about their preferences. The 1988 National Child Care Survey asked the responding parents who had child care arrangements while working: "When considering your own needs and those of your family, would you most prefer to work full-time, to work part-time, or not work at a job or business?" For respondents with children 0-5 in two-parent families working full-time, 45.5% indicated a preference to work part-time, 29.5% to work full-time and 13.6% not to work (Beaujot, 2000: 280). For respondents in lone parent families working full-time, the proportions were 48.8% wanting to work full-time, 30.4% part-time and 12.0% not to work. While the question wording may have biased the respondents toward considering the "needs of your family," it does indicate a considerable preference to work less, among responding parents with children 0-5.

In a small sample of 30 students, mostly women, in Beaujot's course on Family and Work, a survey taken at the outset of the course asked "When there are children under three years of age, it is best: (a) for both parents to work full-time, (b) for one parent to work part-time, (c) for both parents to reduce their paid work, or (d) for one parent not to work." About 70% choose options associated with one parent working part-time or not working. Similarly, the question on "It is much better for everyone if the man takes the major responsibility for earning a living and the woman takes the major responsibility for the home and family, finds that *only* half disagree with this statement, while others agree or have "mixed feelings". While this is a small and unrepresentative sample, it does indicate a variety of life course preferences, including a substantial number who would prefer to do less paid work when children are young.

In looking further at work patterns and preferences, on the basis of the 2006 General Social Survey on Families, Table 4 presents various indicators of the extent of paid work, by gender, family status (married/cohabiting treated together, or other) and age of youngest child. The first indicator is the proportions whose "main activity" is either "working at a paid job or business" or "looking for paid work." This measure of the labour force participation rate shows an overall average of 83.3% for men and 64.8% for women, at ages 20-64. For men, the highest rates, at 94 to 96 percent, occur when they are married and there are children under 12 present in the household. For men who are not married, the highest rate, at 96%, occurs when there are children aged 5-12 present in their household. For women, the highest rates, at 72% occur when they are married and there are children above 12 years of age in the household, and at 77% when they are not married and there are children above 12 in the household. The lowest rates of labour



force participation for women are when there is at least one child under five years of age, 46% for married women and 55% for not married women.

The second indicator is a measure of employment. This employment rate treats as employed those persons who usually worked at least one hour at all jobs in a week, plus persons who had a job or were self-employed at any time in the past year but did not state or did not know the number of hours usually worked. For the population aged 20-64, this employment rate is 86.8% for men and 73.7% for women. For men, the highest employment rates occur when they are married with youngest child between 5 and 12, with slightly lower rates when there is at least one child under five years of age, at 95.1% and 93.9% respectively. In comparison, the men who are not living with a partner have employment rates of 89.8% if children are aged 5 to 12, and 72.0% when there are children under five. Among women who are living with a partner, the employment rate is lowest if there are children under five and highest when children are between 5 and 12 years. For women without a partner, the rate is again lower when there are children under five, and highest when children are above 12 years of age.

Table 4 also shows the averages of the number of hours respondents usually worked at all jobs in a week. When they are with a partner, men work the most, 46.4 average hours, when all children are aged 5 to 12, and the second most hours, 45.9 when there is at least one child under five. There is not a large variability in the average work hours of men across these categories of family status and presence of children. The average hours are systematically lower when men are not married, and they are lowest, at 41.5 hours for men who are neither living with a partner nor with children. For women, the lowest averages occur when there are children under five years of age, at 33.9 hours for the married and also 33.9 hours for those without a partner. The highest averages occur for women who are not married and have children 5-12 years or older, at 38.5 hours, or married with no child at 37.6 hours. The main difference is across gender, with the average hours of men being 20% higher than that of women (44.2 compared to 36.6). When there are no children at home, the gender difference is higher for those with partners.

Table 5 shows the preference to work “fewer hours with less pay, more hours with more pay or the same hours for the same pay.” The respondents here represent 67.4% of the population aged 20-64, since this question was only asked of those who had worked at least some hours at their main job, and excludes respondents who indicated “none of the above” or who did not respond to this question. The strongest preference is to stay at the same hours. The next largest category, especially for men, is the desire to work more hours for more pay, and the smallest is the preference to work fewer hours for less pay with only 10.3% of men and 11.9% of women. The proportions opting for fewer hours are highest for women who are married with child under five, at 19.5%, or children aged 5-12 at 17.5%, along with men who are not married with child 5-12 at 20.6%. The lowest proportions wanting to work fewer hours occur for women and men without partners, at 6.5% overall, and for married men with at least one child under five, at 9.8%.

These averages on labour force participation, employment rate and hours worked, as well as preferred work hours by family status and presence of children, indicate that the differences continue to follow a traditional pattern, with highest employment, hours and preferred hours for married men with children under five or aged 5-12, while women with children 0-4 have the

lowest employment rate and average hours worked. It is married women with children under five who have the highest preference to work fewer hours, at 19.5%. For men, across the categories of presence of children, those without a partner have lower employment rate, fewer average hours, but a greater preference for more hours than those with a partner. When there are no children, men's employment rates are similar regardless of the presence of a partner, but women with no children have higher employment rates when they are without partners.

There are also important differences between Quebec and the rest of Canada. Within categories of marital status, men's rates and hours are mostly higher in the rest of Canada. For women with children under five, the opposite occurs. For instance, women with a partner in Quebec have an employment rate of 65.9% and those without a partner have a rate of 65.8%, while these are 61.7% and 61.5% respectively in the rest of Canada. Similarly, married women with children under five work an average of 35.9 hours in Quebec compared to 33.4 hours in the rest of Canada. However, in this same category of married women with children under five, 31.9% would like to work fewer hours in Quebec, compared to 16.2% in the rest of Canada. For women without a partner, but with child(ren) under five, 16.0% would like to work fewer hours in Quebec but 6.3% in the rest of Canada.

## **Discussion**

The availability of day care facilities is clearly an important consideration that parents take into account. For parents with children under five years of age, 48.2% were using regular child care in 2006, with day care representing the highest single category of care. The use of child care is higher in Quebec, representing 72.6% of respondents with children 0-4, compared to 41.2% in the rest of Canada. Day care represents 58.5% of total usage of child care in Quebec, compared to 36.6% in the rest of Canada. In both Quebec and the rest of Canada, day care is used more by respondents who are not married, but this is especially the case in the rest of Canada where the rate for those who are not married is twice that of the respondents living with a partner.

The higher availability and funding of day care in Quebec has prompted higher usage, as has the subsidization of day care for disadvantaged families, including lone parents, in the rest of Canada (Cleveland et al., 2008: 4; see also Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2009). Besides being a question of availability, the higher usage of day care for lone parents may also reflect the lack of viable alternatives for working parents who do not have a partner.

For those using day care, 15.5% justified this option in terms of it being affordable in Quebec, compared to 6.3% in the rest of Canada, where the justification of convenience was more often used. Similar proportions in Quebec and the rest of Canada, about a quarter, justified the choice of day care in terms of it being best for the child.

It is noteworthy that, compared to 1988 (when the National Child Care Survey was conducted), in 2006 a higher proportion of parents are using the form of child care that they prefer. In 1988, some 40% of respondents had actual care that did not correspond with their preferred care. Among those using child care in 2006, only 15.1% of respondents in Quebec and 24.4% in the

rest of Canada would prefer to be using a different form of care. Among those who prefer day care, 92.7% are using day care in Quebec and 76.0% in the rest of Canada.

The presence of children under five years of age can be analyzed as an opportunity cost by further considering the rates of labour force participation and of employment, as well as the average hours worked. These labour market measures indicate considerable differences between women and men, with high opportunity costs for women who have children aged 0-4. These opportunity costs are lower in Quebec where 65.9% of married/cohabiting women with children under five are employed compared to 61.7% in the rest of Canada. The differences are in the same direction for women with children 0-4 but without a partner, at 65.8% employed in Quebec compared to 61.5% in the rest of Canada. The higher rates in Quebec are particularly noteworthy in the context that total employment rates are lower in Quebec, for both women and men.

The average hours worked, for women with a partner and children 0-4 is also higher in Quebec, representing an average of 2.5 hours more per week. However, for women without a partner but with children 0-4, the average is 1.6 hours more of work in the rest of Canada. Noteworthy also is that women in Quebec with a partner and children under 12 have the strongest preference to work fewer hours.

In her study of the family work week of dual earning couples, Marshall (2009: 27) also finds that the desire to work fewer hours for less pay is more common not only for women who have children 0-5 or 6-15, but also for women and men who have high time stress or who are dissatisfied with their work-life balance situation. At the same time, the present analysis confirms that, over all population categories, the highest proportion prefer to either have no change in their work hours, or to work more hours for more pay.

While there is a converging trend in the labour market patterns by gender, the average hours worked remains significantly different between women and men (Marshall, 2006, 2009). The differences and the preferences are most noteworthy when there are young children present, where the typical pattern is for men to have the strongest labour market attachment and highest hours, while women have lower participation and work hours, and a stronger preference to work fewer hours.

Another consideration of costs of caring for children is parental leave. As with day care, the patterns of parental leave also suggest that parents take the opportunities that are available. When the parental leave was extended from 15 weeks of maternity leave and 10 weeks of parental leave, to 15 weeks of maternity and 35 weeks of parental leave, the average length of leave was increased and a higher proportion of men participated in parental leaves (Zhang, 2008; Marshall, 2008; Pacaut et al., 2007). The Quebec parental leave plan, with more options, fewer restrictions and a higher replacement rate, has also prompted an increase in the take up rate, especially for men. In a further study of the 20% of mothers who received top-up payments from their employers, Marshall (2010) found that the average length of maternal leave was 48 weeks, compared to 46 weeks for mothers without top-up provisions, and 34 weeks for those with no benefits.

The differences between Quebec and the rest of Canada can be further interpreted through broader cultural questions and orientations to social policy in the family area. In their study of family trends, Roy and Bernier (2006) propose that Quebec trends have more closely followed a Nordic model (see also Beaujot and Wang, 2010). In explaining the higher prevalence of cohabitation in Quebec, Le Bourdais and Lapierre-Adamcyk (2004) propose that this is partly due to the greater advances of feminism. Through the Quebec Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, the state came to replace religious institutions in the organization of health, education and welfare. This expansion of the state included a greater role for women in the civil service than had previously been the case through religious institutions.

Possibly working on the basis of a higher consensus in the population, Quebec has had a stronger orientation to facilitate a two-income model of families, and it has achieved a greater reduction in the opportunity costs that child care represents for women. Quebec has moved further toward what Jenson (2004) calls the “investing in children” paradigm. In the rest of Canada there may be more diversity in life course preferences, with a higher proportion oriented toward a parental model of child care. From a labour market perspective, the rest of Canada is more prone to seeing immigration as the solution to shortages.

## References

- Beaujot, Roderic. 2000. *Earning and Caring in Canadian Families*. Peterborough: Broadview.
- Beaujot, Roderic. 1997. Parental preferences for work and child care. *Canadian Public Policy* 23(3): 275-288.
- Beaujot, Roderic and Zenaida Ravanera. 2009. Family models for earning and caring: Implications for child care and for family policy. *Canadian Studies in Population* 36(1-2): 145-166.
- Beaujot, Roderic and Juyan Wang. 2010. Low fertility 'lite' in Canada: The Nordic model in Quebec and the U.S. model in Alberta. *Canadian Studies in Population* (forthcoming).
- Bibby, Reginald W. 2005. Child Care Aspirations. Vanier Institute of the Family: Press release dated 10 February 2005, available at [www.vifamily.ca](http://www.vifamily.ca)
- Brines, Julie, 1994. Economic dependence, gender and the division of labour in the home, *American Journal of Sociology* 100 (3): 652-688.
- Burch, Thomas K. 1980. *Demographic Behavior: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Decision-Making*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Bushnik, Tracey. 2006. *Child Care in Canada*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada Cat. No. 89-599-MIE – No. 003.
- Childcare Resource and Research Unit. 2009. *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2008*. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit.
- Cleveland, Gordon, Barry Forer, Douglas Hyatt, Christa Japel and Michael Krashinsky. 2008. New Evidence about Child Care in Canada: Use Patterns, Affordability and Quality. Institute for Research on Public Policy: *Choices* 14(12).
- Crompton, Rosemary. 2006. *Employment and the Family: The Reconfiguration of Work and Family Life in Contemporary Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Galotiti, Kathleen. M. 2002. *Making Decisions that Matter: How People Face Important Life Choices*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Gilovich, Thomas, Dale Griffin and Daniel Kahneman. 2002. *Heuristics and Biases: The Psychology of Intuitive Judgment*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hakim, Catherine. 2003. A New Approach to Explaining Fertility Patterns: Preference Theory. *Population and Development Review* 29(3) : 349-374.
- Jenson, Jane. 2004. Changing the paradigm: Family responsibility or investing in children. *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 29(2): 169-192.
- Kohen, Dafna E, Barry Forer and Clyde Hertzman. 2006. *National Data Sets: Sources of Information for Canadian Child Care Data*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada Cat. No. 11F0019-MIE – No. 284.
- LaRochelle-Côté, Sébastien and Claude Dionne. 2009. Family work patterns. *Perspectives on Labour and Income* 21(3): 33-44.
- Le Bourdais, Céline and Évelyne Lapierre-Adamcyk. 2004. Changes in conjugal life in Canada: Is cohabitation progressively replacing marriage? *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66: 929-942.
- Myles, John, Feng Hou, Garnett Picot and Karen Myers. 2007. Why did employment and earnings rise among lone mothers in Canada during the 1980s and 1990s. *Canadian Public Policy* 33(2): 147-172.

- Marshall, Katherine. 2006. Converging gender roles. *Perspectives on Labour and Income* 18(3): 7-19.
- Marshall, Katherine. 2008. Father's use of paid parental leave. *Perspectives on Labour and Income* 20(3): 5-14.
- Marshall, Katherine. 2009. The family work week. *Perspectives on Labour and Income* 21(2): 21-29.
- Marshall, Katherine. 2010. Employer top-ups. *Perspectives on Labour and Income* 11(2) on-line edition.
- Pacaut, Philippe, Céline Le Bourdais and Benoît Laplante. 2007. Dynamiques et déterminants de la participation des femmes au marché du travail après la naissance d'un enfant au Canada. *Cahiers québécois de démographie* 36(2) : 249-279.
- Ravanera, Zenaida, Roderic Beaujot and Jianye Liu. 2009. Models of earning and caring: Determinants of the division of work. *Canadian Review of Sociology* 46(4): 319-337.
- Roy, Laurent and Jean Bernier. 2006. *La politique familiale, les tendances sociales et la fécondité au Québec : une expérimentation du modèle nordique ?* Quebec : Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine.
- Seltzer, Judith A, Christine A. Bachrach, Suzanne M. Bianchi, Caroline H. Bledsoe, Lynne M. Casper, P. Lindsay Chase-Landale, Thomas A. DiPrete, V. Joseph Hotz, S. Philip Morgan, Seth G. Sanders and Duncan Thomas. 2005. Explaining Family Change and Variation: Challenges for Family Demographers. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67: 905-925.
- Turcotte, Martin. 2007. Time spent with family during a typical workday, 1986 to 2005. *Canadian Social Trends* 83: 2-11.
- Zhang, Xuelin. 2008. Returning to the job after childbirth. *Perspectives on Labour and Income* 20(1): 20-26.

### **Box 1. Data and measurement**

The 2006 General Social Survey, Cycle 20: family transitions, is the data base for this paper. The sample included 23,608 respondents, representing a response rate of 67.4%. All results are weighted but sample sizes are shown unweighted. Tables 1-3 are based on 2 314 respondents who had child(ren) under five years in the household. Tables 4-5 are based on 17 730 respondents aged 20-64.

Current use of regular child care (CCA\_Q130): “Do you currently use regular child care such as daycare, family daycare provider, nursery school, care by a relative or other caregiver, a before and after school program or some other arrangement? Please include arrangements you have for when you are working, studying, volunteering or other reasons for at least half a day at a time”. Domain: respondents with children under 12 years of age in the household.

Reasons for given type of child care (CCA\_Q240): What is the main reason why you chose this type of child care for your child/children.

Preferred child care (CCA\_Q500, CCA\_Q510): If you could choose, would you prefer to use another type of child care for the child/children? Type of child care you would prefer to use.

Labour force participation (ACMCRC): Persons who were classified as either working at a paid job or business, or looking for paid work as their main activity, based on the following question: During the past 12 months, was your main activity working at a paid job or business, looking for paid work, going to school, caring for children, household work, retired or something else?

Studying as main activity (ACMCRC): Persons whose main activity was going to school, based on the following question: During the past 12 months, was your main activity working at a paid job or business, looking for paid work, going to school, caring for children, household work, retired or something else?

Employment: persons who provided a numeric response to the question on number of hours usually worked at all jobs last week for those who had a job or were self-employed at any time last week (WKWEHR\_C) plus respondents who did not state or did not know these hours. Those who are not employed are those who were not asked the question on number of hours usually worked at all jobs in a week.

Hours worked at all jobs in a week (WKWEHR\_C): Number of hours usually worked at all jobs in a week

Work hours preference (MAR\_Q416): Considering your main job, given the choice, would you, at your current wage rate, prefer to work: fewer hours for less pay, more hours for more pay, the same hours for the same pay, or none of the above.

Marital status: married includes persons who are married or living common-law, others include widowed, separated, divorced and single (never married).

Presence and age of children living in the household (CHRTIME6): (1) no child (taken from Childstatus2 or is it CHRINHHD), (2) at least one child under 5, (3) all children between 5 and 12 years, (4) other combinations of ages of child(ren)

Table 1. Type of regular child care currently used, by marital status, respondents with children aged 0-4, Quebec and rest of Canada, 2006.

Types of regular child care currently used										
	Someone else's home, nonrelative	Someone else's home, relative	Own home, relative	Own home, nonrelative	Daycare centre	Nursery school/ preschool	Before, after school	Other child care arrangement	No use of child care	Total
<b>Quebec</b>										
Married	10.6	5.5	1.0	2.7	42.3	5.5	3.3	1.4	27.8	100.0
Other	5.0	10.0	2.5	2.5	45.0	7.5	0.0	5.0	22.5	100.0
Total	10.2	5.8	1.1	2.7	42.5	5.6	3.1	1.6	27.4	100.0
<b>Rest of Canada</b>										
Married	9.5	5.9	4.7	2.7	14.1	1.7	0.7	0.7	59.9	100.0
Other	11.9	3.5	4.9	2.8	28.7	1.4	0.7	1.4	44.8	100.0
Total	9.7	5.8	4.7	2.7	15.1	1.7	0.7	0.8	58.8	100.0
<b>Canada</b>										
Married	9.7	5.9	3.9	2.7	20.3	2.5	1.3	0.9	52.7	100.0
Other	10.4	4.9	3.8	2.7	32.4	2.7	0.5	2.2	40.1	100.0
Total	9.8	5.8	3.9	2.7	21.2	2.5	1.2	1.0	51.8	100.0

Note: See definitions in Box 1. Of the 2314 respondents with children 0-4, 17 were excluded because they had missing values on current use of regular child care. The sample size was 2 297 (406 in Quebec and 1891 in the rest of Canada).

Source: GSS 2006



Table 2. Reason for choice of given type of child care, respondents with children aged 0-4 who were currently using regular child care, Canada, 2006.

	Reasons for given type of child care used						Total	N
	Convenience: Time or distance	Cared for by a trustworthy person	Affordable	Best for the child	Only option available	Others		
<b>Quebec</b>								
Someone else's home:relative or nonrelative	28.4	12.5	10.2	18.2	20.5	10.2	100.0	68
Own home: relative or nonrelative	40.0	5.0	0.0	20.0	15.0	20.0	100.0	15
Daycare centre	33.6	1.3	15.5	26.3	11.6	11.6	100.0	172
Other child care arrangement	42.1	1.8	8.8	28.1	8.8	10.5	100.0	41
Total	34.0	4.0	12.6	24.4	13.4	11.6	100.0	296
<b>Rest of Canada</b>								
Someone else's home:relative or nonrelative	24.5	23.8	12.4	17.8	6.4	15.1	100.0	329
Own home: relative or nonrelative	23.2	37.3	10.6	6.3	5.6	16.9	100.0	133
Daycare centre	41.3	6.6	6.3	24.0	8.3	13.5	100.0	303
Other child care arrangement	29.8	5.3	7.0	36.8	7.0	14.0	100.0	65
Total	30.8	18.6	9.4	19.4	7.0	14.8	100.0	830
<b>Canada</b>								
Someone else's home:relative or nonrelative	25.6	21.0	11.9	17.9	9.6	14.0	100.0	397
Own home: relative or nonrelative	25.6	32.9	9.1	7.9	6.7	17.7	100.0	148
Daycare centre	37.9	4.2	10.4	25.0	9.8	12.7	100.0	475
Other child care arrangement	36.3	2.7	8.0	32.7	8.0	12.4	100.0	106
Total	32.0	13.5	10.5	21.0	9.1	13.8	100.0	1126

Note: See definitions in Box 1. Of the 1134 respondents currently using regular child care, 8 had non response on the reasons for use of a given type of child care. The sample size was 1126 (296 in Quebec and 830 in rest of Canada).

Source: GSS 2006

Table 3. Preferred care by actual care, respondents with children aged 0-4 who were currently using regular child care, Canada, 2006.

Actual care type used	Preference for an alternate type of child care								N	Yes*
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
<b>Quebec</b>										
1 Someone else's home, nonrelative	100.0	6.1		4.5	4.1	3.7		4.0	60	25.0
2 Someone else's home, relative		87.9		4.5	1.4				41	15.6
3 Own home, relative			60.0						21	0.0
4 Own home, nonrelative				63.6	0.9				29	12.5
5 Daycare centre		6.1	30.0	27.3	92.7			48.0	204	12.4
6 Nursery school/preschool					0.5	96.3		12.0	25	22.6
7 Before, after school			10.0		0.5		100.0		120	20.0
8 Other child care arrangement								36.0	19	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	519	15.1
<b>Rest of Canada</b>										
1 Someone else's home, nonrelative	98.3	4.0	4.3	5.7	12.7	10.3	29.2	15.5	334	36.9
2 Someone else's home, relative		92.0		3.8	4.2			3.4	233	18.8
3 Own home, relative			91.3	1.9	5.2	5.1	12.5	5.2	151	29.2
4 Own home, nonrelative				77.4	1.9	2.6		3.4	98	21.6
5 Daycare centre	1.7	4.0	4.3	9.4	76.0	10.3	20.8	39.7	404	18.7
6 Nursery school/preschool						71.8		3.4	43	10.0
7 Before, after school				1.9			37.5	5.2	129	30.8
8 Other child care arrangement								24.1	31	20.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	1423	24.4
<b>Canada</b>										
1 Someone else's home, nonrelative	98.8	3.8	3.8	6.6	9.1	7.6	18.9	12.0	394	34.3
2 Someone else's home, relative		92.3		3.9	3.0			2.4	274	18.8
3 Own home, relative			87.3	1.3	3.0	3.0	8.1	3.6	172	27.4
4 Own home, nonrelative				72.4	1.5	1.5		2.4	127	19.4
5 Daycare centre	1.2	3.8	7.6	14.5	82.9	6.1	13.5	42.2	608	15.9
6 Nursery school/preschool					0.2	81.8		6.0	68	15.0
7 Before, after school			1.3	1.3	0.2		59.5	3.6	249	24.1
8 Other child care arrangement								27.7	50	12.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	1942	21.3

Note: See definitions in Box 1. Of the 1134 respondents currently using regular child care, 19 had missing values on "would prefer to use another type of care" and a further 6 had missing values on preferred care. The sample size was 1109 (292 in Quebec and 817 in the rest of Canada).

\*Yes: percent who indicate that they would prefer to use a different type of child care than the type they are currently using.

Source: GSS 2006

Table 4. Labour force participation, studying as main activity, employment, and hours worked at all jobs in a week, by gender, marital status and presence of children, ages 20-64, Canada, 2006.

		Male				Female			
		Labour force participation		Employment	Work Hours	Labour force participation		Employment	Work Hours
		In Labour force	Studying as main activity	Employed	Mean work hours	In Labour force	Studying as main activity	Employed	Mean work hours
<b>Quebec</b>									
Married	No Child	78.3	2.5	79.4	41.6	64.6	4.0	67.6	36.2
	Child(ren) under 5	92.2	3.2	90.9	43.5	57.6	4.4	65.9	35.9
	All children 5-12	94.4	0.6	94.4	44.9	76.8	2.8	79.6	35.2
	Other	92.5	0.2	93.4	43.8	74.9	1.9	78.1	35.9
	Total	87.2	1.7	87.6	43.1	67.7	3.3	71.6	35.9
Other	No Child	71.3	18.4	78.8	39.4	59.8	22.6	75.0	34.7
	Child(ren) under 5	...	...	...	...	55.3	13.2	65.8	32.7
	All children 5-12	100.0	0.0	93.8	44.2	69.4	13.9	66.7	36.8
	Other	74.5	0.0	72.3	39.6	82.5	0.8	82.8	37.9
	Total	72.2	16.6	78.8	39.6	64.0	17.9	75.4	35.3
<b>Rest of Canada</b>									
Married	No Child	81.5	2.8	83.4	44.9	67.9	3.5	71.6	38.1
	Child(ren) under 5	95.1	2.4	94.9	46.6	43.3	1.2	61.7	33.4
	All children 5-12	96.3	0.4	95.4	46.9	67.5	3.1	79.6	34.8
	Other	91.1	0.3	91.3	46.0	71.6	1.1	78.0	36.2
	Total	89.0	1.6	89.6	45.9	64.3	2.2	72.5	36.3
Other	No Child	71.0	20.7	82.8	42.1	61.6	25.3	78.1	38.0
	Child(ren) under 5	69.6	17.4	69.6	45.3	54.9	8.0	61.5	34.3
	All children 5-12	93.3	3.3	87.9	42.7	68.1	6.2	72.3	39.0
	Other	87.6	0.0	84.7	45.7	75.6	1.5	77.6	38.6
	Total	72.2	19.3	82.9	42.3	64.1	19.2	76.8	38.0
<b>Canada</b>									
Married	No Child	80.7	2.8	82.4	44.1	67.0	3.6	70.6	37.6
	Child(ren) under 5	94.4	2.6	93.9	45.9	46.2	1.9	62.6	33.9
	All children 5-12	95.9	0.4	95.1	46.4	69.8	3.1	79.6	34.9
	Other	91.3	0.3	91.8	45.5	72.3	1.2	78.1	36.1
	Total	88.5	1.7	89.1	45.2	65.1	2.5	72.3	36.2
Other	No Child	71.1	20.1	81.9	41.5	61.2	24.6	77.3	37.3
	Child(ren) under 5	72.0	16.0	72.0	45.3	55.3	9.2	62.6	33.9
	All children 5-12	95.6	2.2	89.8	43.2	67.5	8.6	71.0	38.5
	Other	84.3	0.0	81.2	44.1	77.2	1.4	78.8	38.4
	Total	72.2	18.7	81.9	41.7	64.0	18.9	76.5	37.4
Total	No Child	75.5	12.2	82.1	42.7	64.3	13.3	73.7	37.5
	Child(ren) under 5	93.9	2.9	93.4	45.9	47.3	2.7	62.6	33.9
	All children 5-12	95.9	0.6	94.7	46.2	69.4	4.2	77.7	35.6
	Other	90.8	0.3	91.0	45.4	73.3	1.3	78.2	36.6
	Total	83.3	7.1	86.8	44.2	64.8	7.8	73.7	36.6

Note: See definitions in Box 1. For main activity in the past 12 months, the sample size was 17 543(3 458 in Quebec and 14 085 in rest of Canada). For employment, the sample size was 17 730 (3 502 in Quebec and 14 228 in the rest of Canada).

...: less than 10 persons.

Source: GSS 2006

Table 5. Preference to work fewer hours for less pay, more hours for more pay, or the same hours for the same pay, by gender, marital status and presence of children, ages 20-64, Canada, 2006.

		Male			Female		
		Fewer Hours	More Hours	Same Hours	Fewer Hours	More Hours	Same Hours
<b>Quebec</b>							
Married	No Child	16.4	9.9	73.6	19.7	9.5	70.8
	Child(ren) under 5	17.0	9.4	73.5	31.9	5.9	62.2
	All children 5- 12	12.5	11.8	75.7	30.8	7.7	61.5
	Other	18.0	7.2	74.9	15.9	11.5	72.5
	Total	16.6	9.1	74.3	21.6	9.4	69.0
Other	No Child	7.8	21.0	71.2	8.4	18.3	73.4
	Child(ren) under 5	...	...	...	16.0	12.0	72.0
	All children 5- 12	30.0	20.0	50.0	9.5	9.5	81.0
	Other	6.9	17.2	75.9	12.3	18.5	69.1
	Total	8.4	20.7	70.8	9.5	17.6	72.9
<b>Rest of Canada</b>							
Married	No Child	11.0	17.6	71.4	11.1	15.4	73.5
	Child(ren) under 5	7.5	20.4	72.1	16.2	16.4	67.4
	All children 5- 12	10.8	15.1	74.1	13.2	15.7	71.2
	Other	11.9	15.4	72.7	11.6	17.9	70.5
	Total	10.6	17.1	72.3	12.3	16.5	71.2
Other	No Child	5.5	37.5	57.0	4.5	31.8	63.7
	Child(ren) under 5	0.0	18.2	81.8	6.3	39.1	54.7
	All children 5- 12	16.7	12.5	70.8	13.5	23.0	63.5
	Other	9.2	17.2	73.6	8.2	25.3	66.5
	Total	5.9	35.9	58.3	5.6	30.5	63.8
<b>Canada</b>							
Married	No Child	12.3	15.7	71.9	13.3	13.9	72.9
	Child(ren) under 5	9.8	17.8	72.3	19.5	14.3	66.2
	All children 5- 12	11.2	14.3	74.5	17.5	13.7	68.8
	Other	13.3	13.6	73.2	12.5	16.5	71.0
	Total	12.0	15.3	72.7	14.5	14.8	70.7
Other	No Child	6.1	33.8	60.1	5.4	28.6	66.0
	Child(ren) under 5	8.3	16.7	75.0	9.0	31.5	59.6
	All children 5- 12	20.6	14.7	64.7	12.6	20.0	67.4
	Other	8.6	17.2	74.1	9.2	23.4	67.4
	Total	6.5	32.5	61.0	6.6	27.4	66.0
Total	No Child	8.9	25.6	65.4	9.5	21.0	69.5
	Child(ren) under 5	9.8	17.8	72.4	18.2	16.3	65.5
	All children 5- 12	11.7	14.4	73.8	16.6	14.9	68.5
	Other	13.0	13.8	73.3	11.9	17.9	70.2
	Total	10.3	20.5	69.2	11.9	19.0	69.1

Note: See definitions in Box 1. The preferred hours response “none of the above (1623)” has been treated as a missing value. The sample size was 11 954 (2 299 in Quebec and 9 655 in the rest of Canada).

...: less than 10 persons.

Source: GSS 2006