

CANADIAN

# SOCIAL TRENDS

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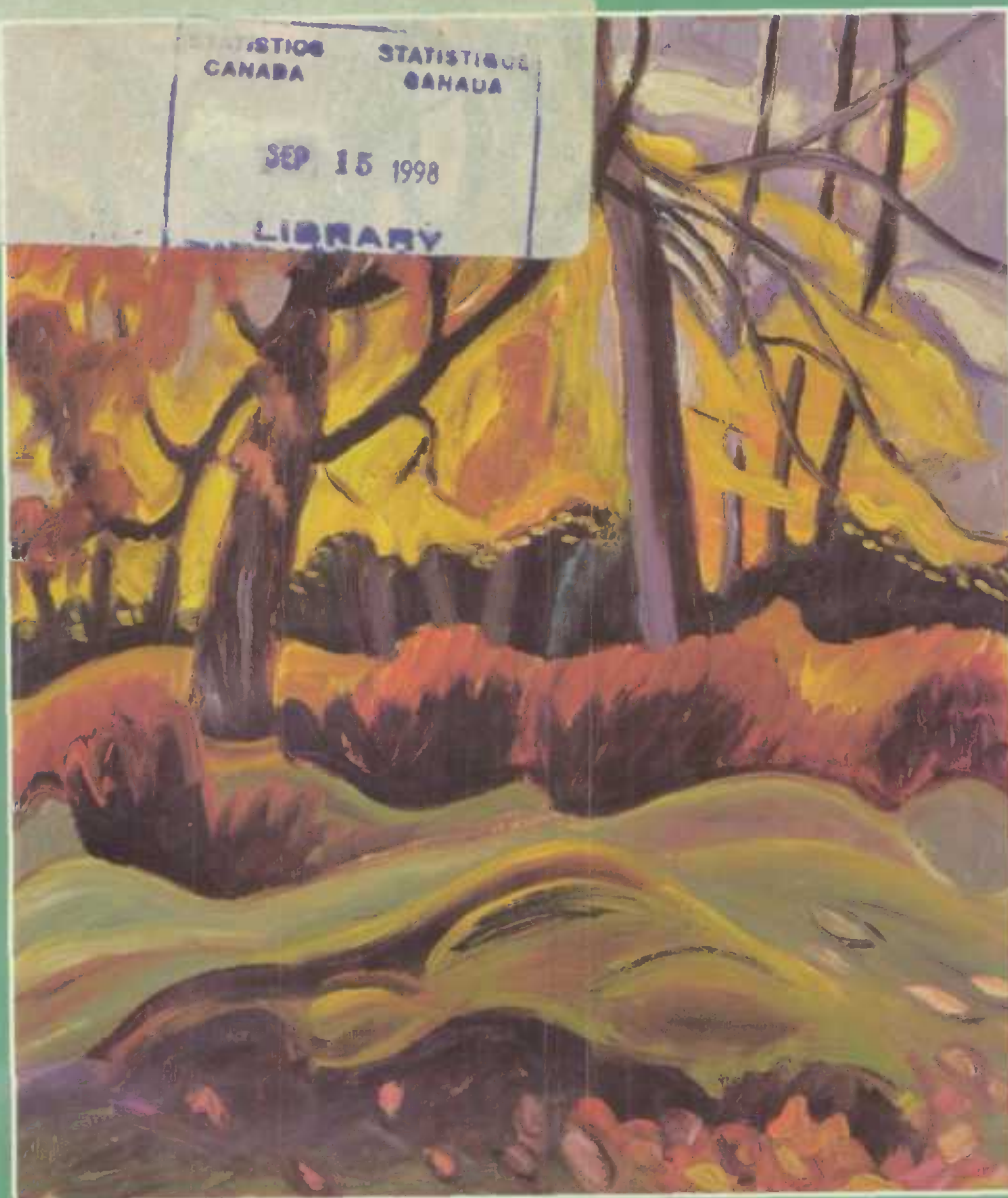


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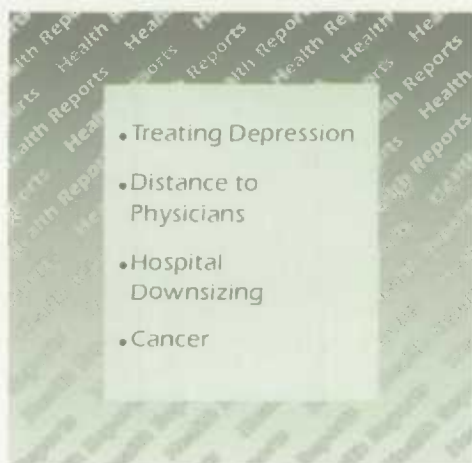
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### ON OUR COVER:

*Autumn Landscape* (1932-1946), oil on plywood, 36.2 x 30.5 cm. Collection: National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

### About the artist:

**Efa Prudence Heward** was born in Montreal, Quebec in 1896. She studied in Montreal and in Paris at the Academie Colarossi. In 1920, she returned to Montreal where she joined a

group of artists who had secured rooms on Beaver Hall Hill. Heward specialized in figure and portrait painting and won first prize for her "Girl on the Hill" at the Willingdon Arts Competitions in 1929. She became a member of the Canadian Group of Painters (1933) and the Contemporary Arts Society (1939). Heward died in Los Angeles, California in 1947.

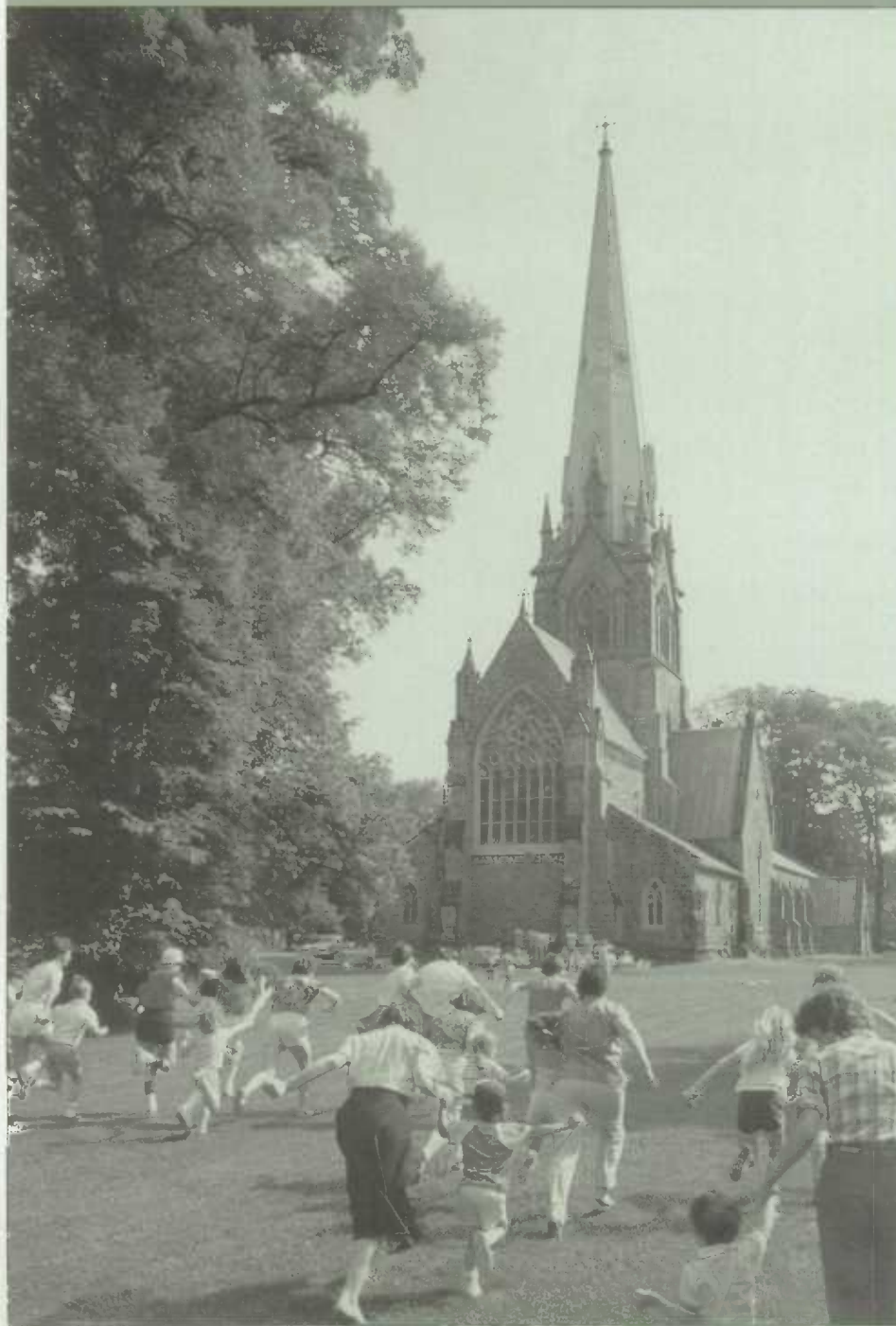
# Religious Observance

## *Marriage and Family*



A person's behaviour may be greatly influenced by his or her religious convictions. Religious convictions may be displayed in different ways, such as attendance at religious services, prayer, meditation or reading of religious scriptures, all of which may be indicators of the importance of religion in a person's life. For many, regular attendance at religious services may be a reflection of a deep religious commitment and belief. Religious devotion, or the lack of it, has been associated with marital stability, family size, and premarital sex.

**by Warren Clark**





Religion can be viewed as a system of thought, feeling, and action shared by a group that gives members an object of devotion; a code of ethics governing personal and social conduct; and a frame of reference relating individuals to their group and the universe.<sup>1</sup> Most major religions teach compassion and helpfulness, and research has shown that religious attendance is associated with positive social behaviour.<sup>2</sup> Also, those who attend religious services more frequently are more likely to state that they have spiritual needs.<sup>3</sup> This may indicate that frequent attenders at religious services attach more importance to finding purpose and meaning in life than those who do not.

Using attendance at religious services as a proxy for religious conviction, this article examines the influence of religiosity on the attitudes of Canadians toward children, marriage and family relationships, and upon overall well-being, health and marital behaviour.

Religion plays an important role in the formation of attitudes to marriage and subsequent marital behaviour. For example, acceptance of biblical teachings about the sanctity of marriage and prohibitions against adultery may act as a barrier against divorce by reducing the likelihood of infidelity.<sup>4</sup> The 1995 General Social Survey (GSS) found that the most common reasons why someone might decide to pursue a divorce were abusive behaviour, unfaithfulness, lack of love and respect, and a partner who drinks too much.<sup>5</sup> While religious people were just as unwilling as those who never attended religious services to forgive a spouse's abusive or unfaithful behaviour, they were less likely to view lack of love and respect, and a partner's drinking too much as grounds for divorce. Religious couples were also more likely to state that they would stay married for the sake of their children.

**Weekly attenders place more importance on home life** The 1995 GSS asked Canadians to rate several areas of life in terms of their importance to the



## CANADIAN SOCIAL TRENDS BACKGROUNDER

CST

### What you should know about this study

Statistics Canada's General Social Survey (GSS) collects data from a sample of approximately 10,000 Canadians aged 15 and over living in private households in the ten provinces. Since 1985, two religion questions have been asked on each survey: one concerning religious affiliation, and the other, attendance at religious services or meetings. Religiosity (religious commitment), as measured by attendance at religious services, may vary substantially from time to time. This article relates attendance at religious services at the time respondents were interviewed; religious commitment at the time of an event (e.g., marriage breakdown) may have been quite different than it was at the time the respondent was interviewed.

Throughout this article, the terms "religious people" and "weekly attenders" are used to indicate adults who attend religious services every week.

### Religious people more likely to want to keep the family together

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Valid reasons for divorce	Attends religious services weekly	Never attends religious services
	%	
Abusive behaviour	92	96
Unfaithful behaviour	86*	88*
Lack of love and respect	76	92
Partner drinks too much	68	75
Would remain married for the sake of the children	57	36

\* Difference not statistically significant.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1995 General Social Survey.

<sup>1</sup> The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Beutel 1995, pp. 438-439.

<sup>3</sup> Bibby 1995, p. 135.

<sup>4</sup> Call 1997, p. 383.

<sup>5</sup> Frederick 1998, pp. 7-8.

## Religious people tend to place greater importance on marriage, family and children

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	Average score	
	Attends religious services weekly	Never attends religious services
<b>Importance to happiness of...</b> (0=not at all important, 3=very important)		
• a lasting relationship	2.60*	2.45*
• being married	2.35	1.80
• having at least one child	2.27	1.95
• being able to have a paying job	1.89	2.10
<b>Agreement with following statement</b> (0=strongly disagree, 4=strongly agree)		
• Employed mothers can establish just as warm a relationship with their children as mothers who do not work for pay	2.26	2.54
• Keeping house is just as fulfilling as working for pay	2.60	2.28
• A job is alright but what women really want is a home and children	2.32	1.94
• A pre-school child is likely to suffer if both parents are employed	2.54	2.22
• Having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person	2.03	2.28
• If a man brings enough money home so his wife and children have a comfortable life, he has fulfilled his role as a husband and a parent	1.62	1.36
• A man should refuse a promotion at work if it means spending too little time with his family	2.24	2.01
• A woman should refuse a promotion at work if it means spending too little time with her family	2.30	2.05
• Both the man and woman should contribute to the household income	2.56*	2.73*
• Having a family is alright, but what most men really want is to be successful in their job	2.13*	2.09*
• A man does not have to be very involved in sharing the everyday tasks of raising children; this is not primarily a man's responsibility	0.91*	0.81*

\* Difference not statistically significant.

Note: Some of the differences between weekly attenders and those who never attended during 1995 is accounted for by age differences between the two groups. Young people have different values than older people; also young people are less likely to attend religious services on a weekly basis. Even after accounting for age differences between the two groups, all differences remained statistically significant except for those marked.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1995 General Social Survey.



respondent's happiness. On a scale from 0 to 3, 0 indicated the issue was not at all important, while 3 meant it was very important to their happiness.

Weekly attenders of religious services — both men and women — placed greater importance on lasting relationships, being married, and having at least one child than those who did not attend. Regardless of how often men attended religious services, they placed almost equal importance on being able to have a paying job. In contrast, women who attended weekly services believed a paying job was less important (1.59) than women who never attended (1.93). These views were common to all weekly attenders, regardless of their age.

Individuals were also asked to rate their agreement with certain statements relating to attitudes toward work and family. The scale ranged from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Weekly attenders of both sexes agreed more strongly with statements supporting family and the nurturing role of women than those who never attended. "Keeping house is just as fulfilling as working for pay" was the statement with which weekly attenders agreed most strongly.



Although they showed less agreement with the statement that "a job is alright but what women really want is a home and children", their opinion on this statement contrasted more starkly with non-attenders than on any other issue.

On other issues, weekly attenders' and non-attenders' attitudes were very similar. In fact, there was no real difference in their belief that men and women should contribute to the household income and the statement that men should share in the raising of children.

**Religious people feel better** Studies have found links between religion and mental health suggesting that people who regularly attend religious services have a more optimistic view of life than those who never attend. According to these studies, religious people are less likely than others to become delinquent, to abuse drugs and alcohol, to divorce or be unhappily married, and to commit suicide. Religiously active people may even tend to be physically healthier and to live longer, in part because of their healthier smoking, eating, and drinking habits.<sup>6</sup>

The 1996 GSS echoes some of these earlier findings. After taking account of income, family structure, education, age, sex and employment status (all of which may contribute to a person's sense of well-being), the odds of feeling very satisfied with their lives were 1.7 times higher for weekly attenders than those who had not attended religious services during the last 12 months.

People attending religious services every week also felt they had less stress in their lives. According to the 1996 GSS, weekly attenders had about half the odds (0.6) of having a very stressful life as non-attenders after accounting for other socio-demographic factors. Young weekly attenders under age 35 also were more likely to feel they had very good or excellent health than non-attenders. Young adults' feelings of better health may be related to less smoking. In 1996, only 18% of weekly young attenders were cigarette smokers compared with 38% of those age 15 to 34 who never attended. Older adults felt the same

about their health, regardless of how often they attended religious services.

### Weekly attenders have happier, longer marriages

Many things contribute to

happy marital or common-law relationships. While religion may sometimes be a source of conflict in some relationships where partners differ strongly in their religious views, it seems that regular

#### Marriages of weekly attenders last longer

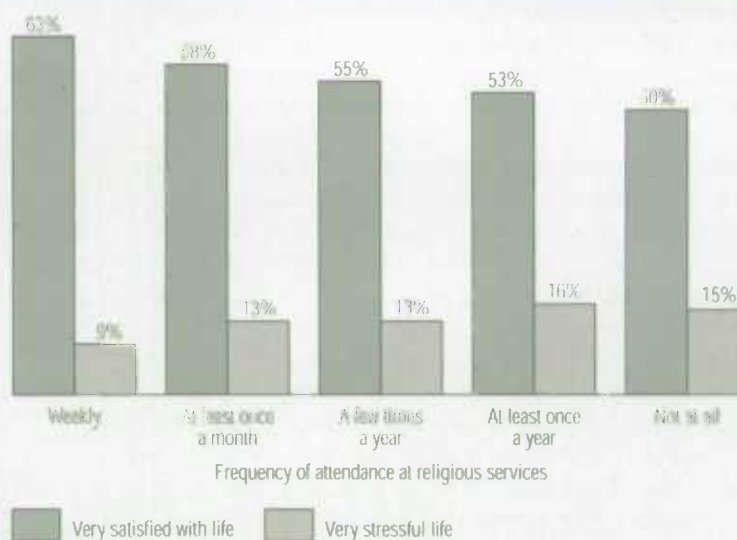
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Decade when marriage began and attendance at religious services	Duration of first marriage		
	At least 5 years	At least 10 years	At least 15 years
	%		
<b>Married in 1950s</b>			
Weekly	99	98	96
Not at all	98	94	91
<b>Married in 1960s</b>			
Weekly	97	93	89
Not at all	92	83	73
<b>Married in 1970s</b>			
Weekly	95	89	84
Not at all	88	74	66
<b>Married in 1980s</b>			
Weekly	94	89	80
Not at all	85	69	57

Source: Statistics Canada, 1995 General Social Survey.

#### Weekly attenders experienced less stress

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Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 General Social Survey.

<sup>6</sup> Myers 1995, p.16; Bradley 1995, pp. 259-267; Larson, 1994; National Institute for Healthcare Research, 1998.

attendance at religious services is related to stronger marriages. The odds of having a very happy marital relationship were 1.5 times greater for those attending religious services weekly than for those who didn't attend at all (after accounting for differences in age, education, income, religion, province, employment status and the decade when the marriage began). Interestingly, income appeared to have no influence on marital happiness, after the other factors were controlled for.

An earlier study based on the 1984 Canadian Fertility Survey found that

women who attended church weekly were less likely to want to dissolve their marriage.<sup>7</sup> The 1995 GSS supported these findings, showing that compared with those who never attended religious services, the odds that a weekly attender's marriage would break down were less than half.<sup>8</sup> Marriage longevity of weekly attenders was greater than that of non-attenders regardless of which decade they were married. For example, 89% of the marriages of weekly attenders who were married in the 1970s lasted at least 10 years, compared with 74% of non-attenders' marriages.

Those who attended religious services each week were also less likely to have lived common-law prior to marriage (6%) than non-attenders (21%).

**Summary** Canada appears to be becoming increasingly secular as organized religion plays a less important role in Canadians' lives. The number of Canadians reporting no religious affiliation is increasing and attendance at religious services is declining. The long-term effect of these trends on the fabric of society is difficult to foresee.

## CANADIAN SOCIAL TRENDS BACKGROUND

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### "No religion" continues to grow

At the time of the 1961 Census, less than 1% of Canadians claimed to have no religion. By 1991, this proportion had increased to almost 13%.<sup>1</sup> Between 1981 and 1991, the number of Canadians reporting no religious affiliation increased from 1.8 million to 3.4 million. While the 1996 Census did not have a question on religion, the 1996 General Social Survey revealed that 14% of Canadians aged 15 and over had no religious affiliation.

Historically, Canada has been predominantly Christian, with most of the population divided between Protestants and Catholics. In the last 10 years (1986 to 1996), Roman Catholics remained at about 45% of the Canadian adult population, but the share of mainline Protestant denominations (United, Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran) has dropped from 28% of the adult population to 20%. At the same time, the conservative Protestant denominations<sup>2</sup> have remained at 6% of the adult population, while Eastern non-Christian Religions (Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism and other smaller groups) have grown to represent almost 3%, reflecting the increased cultural diversity of Canada.

**Attendance at religious services declines** Since the mid-1940s, people have been attending religious services less and less. In 1946, the Gallup Poll reported that 67% of Canadian adults had attended religious services during the previous week. By 1996, the GSS reported that only 20% of adult Canadians had attended religious services every week.<sup>3</sup>

The greatest decline in weekly attendance has been among Roman Catholics, falling from 37% in 1986 to 24% in 1996. Corresponding to the decline in weekly attendance has been an increase in the number of people who did not attend religious services during the year. While in 1986 only one in seven Roman Catholics did not attend church, by 1996 nearly one in three did not. Over the same time period, weekly attendance of mainline Protestants has declined from 17% to 14% of adults,

while conservative Protestants have maintained weekly attendance figures in the 50% to 60% range.

Religious service attendance has declined across all age groups, indicating a broad disenchantment with institutionalized religion. Not surprisingly, seniors showed the most enthusiasm for religious services. In 1996, 34% of those aged 65 and over attended weekly, compared with only 12% of 15- to 24-year-olds.

In 1996, many adults (32%) who said they were affiliated with a religion did not attend religious services at all. Another significant minority (10%) said they only attended once or twice a year. This suggests either that people are less committed to their religion or that religion has become more a personal commitment than communal worship. In the United States, attendance made a comeback in the early 1970s and 1980s as the baby boomers began to form families. Weekly attendance rates remained almost constant at 30% from 1986 to 1993.

Although attendance at religious services has declined substantially in Canada over the last 20 years, in 1995, Reginald Bibby's Project Canada survey indicated that the vast majority (81%) of Canadians still believed in God. This compares with 89% in 1975, implying that although attendance has declined sharply, most people have retained their belief in God.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The 1961 Census asked "What is your religion?" but had no "no religion" category to indicate "no religion". Respondents wishing to indicate this had to write in "no religion" in the space provided. Since 1971, each decennial Census has had a mark-in response category for "no religion".

<sup>2</sup> Includes Baptist, Pentecostal, Nazarene, Evangelical Free, Mennonite, Salvation Army, Reformed, Christian and Missionary Alliance and other smaller groups. Mainline Protestant and Conservative Protestant are defined based on definitions used by Nock 1993, p. 47, 48, 54 and Bibby 1987, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> The Gallup poll asked whether respondents had attended church services in the last 7 days; the GSS asks how frequently respondents have attended religious services in the last year. Since some people who attend infrequently may have actually attended last week, the Gallup Poll results may be somewhat inflated compared with the stricter GSS definition of religious observance.

<sup>4</sup> Bibby 1995, pp. 130-131.



Attendance at religious services can influence attitudes, which in turn have an impact on behaviour. Weekly attenders tend to be more forgiving of marital problems and less likely to cite these problems as a valid reason for ending a relationship. Religious people also hold more traditional family values, placing greater importance on children and the family and on the nurturing role of women within the family. In addition, religious people tend to report having happier, less stressful lives and happier relationships with their partners.

<sup>7</sup> Balakrishnan, 1987, p. 396.

<sup>8</sup> After accounting for the effect of a variety of socio-demographic factors including decade when the marriage began, education, religion, pre-marital births, teenage pregnancy, province, age difference between spouses and whether a common-law union preceded marriage.

**Warren Clark** is an analyst with *Canadian Social Trends*.

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### Eastern non-Christian religions and those reporting no religion have grown fastest

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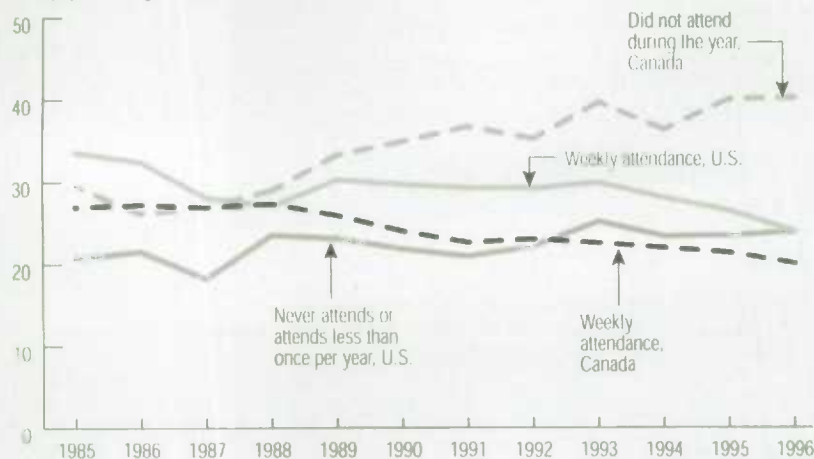
Religion	1986	1991	1996
	millions		
Roman Catholic	9.0	9.3	10.4
Mainline Protestant	5.6	5.0	4.8
Conservative Protestant	1.2	1.1	1.4
Other Protestant	0.7	0.7	1.2
Jewish	0.2	0.2	0.2
Eastern Orthodox	0.3	0.2	0.2
Eastern non-Christian religions	0.3	0.5	0.7
No religion	2.0	3.5	3.4
Not reported, don't know	0.4	0.5	1.2

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey.

### Attendance at religious services continues to decline

**CST**

% of population aged 15 and over



Sources: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey; National Opinion Research Center, U.S. General Social Survey.

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# WHEN PARENTS REPLACE TEACHERS: THE HOME SCHOOLING OPTION

by Jacqueline Luffman

At the start of every school year, a number of children do not head off to the classroom. Instead, they stay with a parent who will be teaching them at home what others learn at school. Despite the fact that registered home schoolers still only account for a small percentage of school age children, their number has increased every year since the early 1980s. These increases may be the result of more parents home schooling, or of better coverage of home schoolers by education ministries. Home schooling is especially active and growing in the Western provinces, particularly in Alberta and British Columbia. Increased public acceptance and the introduction of more flexible legislation may have contributed to this growth.



In most cases, parents home school for religious, moral or pedagogical reasons.<sup>1</sup> This arrangement is ideal for those who wish to incorporate their beliefs and values into the curriculum, who are concerned that not enough learning takes place in the classroom, and who prefer their child to learn in a non-formal, family setting. According to supporters of home schooling, the benefits for children are many: they may, for example, learn at their own pace, pursue special interests, make the most of individual strengths and weaknesses, and avoid the competition and peer pressure of the classroom. Home schooling may also be the solution for a child who, for whatever reason, does not fit in a regular classroom and is falling behind academically, socially or both.

Critics, however, are quick to point out areas of concern: the average parent's ability to cover all areas of the curriculum, the availability of appropriate program materials and the potential absence of social interaction. And although every province monitors home schoolers for compliance with the Education Act, no province has regulations regarding the qualification of parents to teach.

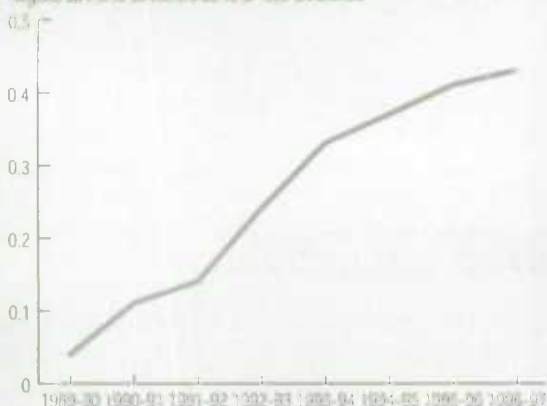
**Different regulations in different provinces** All provinces exempt children from attending public schools provided parents can prove that the child receives satisfactory instruction at home or elsewhere. Typically, parents must register their children for home schooling with a local school board or school in their area. In Alberta and the Northwest Territories — the only two jurisdictions where some funding is guaranteed to parents who home school — home educational plans must be approved. In all other provinces, guidelines are issued for the preparation of these plans but approval is not required.<sup>2</sup>

Because registration requirements and tracking of home schoolers vary across Canada, reliable estimates on the number of home-educated students are difficult to come by. In addition, for a variety of reasons (most of which have to do with fear of interference), not all parents who home school their children register with the province.<sup>3</sup>

### Home schoolers represent a growing share of school age children

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Registered home schoolers as % of total enrolment



Sources: Provincial Ministries of Education; Statistics Canada, Survey of School Enrolment and Graduates.

## CANADIAN SOCIAL TRENDS BACKGROUNDER

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### What you should know about this study

One of the most challenging aspects of home schooling research relates to the difficulty of identifying home schoolers. There are no statistical portraits or analyses, Statistics Canada does not collect information on this topic, and little is known about the characteristics of home schooling families. Because reliable data on the number of home schoolers are not available, estimates from various sources must be used when analyzing this population. The numbers relating to home schoolers presented in this article were derived mainly from ministry officials in each province, with the exception of Quebec, where these figures are not collected.

### Definitions

**Home schooling, home educating or home-based education:** occurs when a child participates in his or her education at home rather than attending a public, private or other type of school. Parents or guardians assume the responsibility of educating their child and may develop their own curriculum guidelines.

Instruction which takes place at home because of health, disability or location, and which remains under the direction of public education authorities, is considered school-based instruction and not home schooling.

**Home schooler or home-based learner:** a student who receives instruction through a home-based education program without attending a formal school.

**Registered home schooler:** a home schooler whose parent or guardian has notified a school, school board or provincial ministry of their intention to home educate their child.

**Home-based educational plan:** provincial curriculum guidelines that parents must follow when educating their children at home. In some provinces, parents are required to submit an educational plan proving that their curriculum complies with the learning objectives of provincial legislation.

<sup>1</sup> D.S. Smith. 1993. *Parent-generated home study in Canada: the national outlook, 1993*. Westfield, N.B.: Francombe Place.

<sup>2</sup> For full details of provincial requirements, see "A profile of home schooling in Canada", *Education Quarterly Review*, Winter 1997, Catalogue 81-003-XPB, Statistics Canada.

<sup>3</sup> Brian, Ray. 1994. *A nationwide study of home education in Canada: Family characteristics, student achievement and other topics*. Salem, Oregon: National Home Education Research Institute. Of the 762 families in this study, 8% did not comply with legal requirements for notification of home schooling.

This suggests that a number of home schooling families remain invisible and, as a result, official counts of registered home schoolers typically underestimate the actual numbers. For example, according to provincial ministries of education, in 1996-97, registered home schoolers totaled approximately 17,500 or about 0.4% of total enrolment.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, home schooling organizations have placed the number of students studying at home at 30,000 to 40,000, or approximately 1% of total student enrolment.<sup>5</sup>

**Majority of home schoolers at elementary level** Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Nova Scotia are the only provinces where data on the grade level of home schoolers are available. These data show that an average of over 60% of children studying at home were elementary students in 1995-96; however, this proportion varied quite substantially, ranging from 52% in Saskatchewan to 91% in Ontario.

Although data on educational level are not collected by the other provinces and territories, it seems reasonable to assume that in the rest of the country, most children educated at home are elementary school students as well. Generally, home schooling at the high school level is more difficult, as parents need to have a wide range of advanced subject matter knowledge to cover the curriculum. In addition, teenagers usually want to participate in social or extra-curricular activities, which are not as easy to provide in a home environment. Nonetheless, the number of registered secondary-level home schoolers has grown between 1993-94 and 1995-96. Perhaps fuelling this growth are school board policies that allow home schoolers use of library and other resources; provinces where these special arrangements are available tend to have higher proportions of high school-level students studying at home.

**Conclusion** With the help of regionally based support groups and national organizations, the home schooling movement has been gaining momentum over the last 12 years. But, home schooling is not for everyone. Relatively few parents are able to invest vast amounts of time, effort and energy into teaching their children at home. Fewer still have the required knowledge — particularly at the secondary level — and instructional capability necessary to carry out the job well. Those who do, however, feel that they are raising healthy, well-adjusted children in a positive, family-oriented environment.

Over the past decade, home schooling has shed its image as a social or educational aberration. As a result, or perhaps because of it, the proportion of students who, during these years, received their education at home has grown steadily. Because home schooling remains for some a viable alternative to traditional school-based learning, it is, and will continue to be, an important issue in education.

<sup>4</sup> Excludes home schoolers in Quebec, where the Ministry of Education does not collect figures on registered home schoolers.

<sup>5</sup> Priesnitz, Wendy and Heidi Priesnitz. (1990) *Home based education in Canada — An investigation*. Canadian Home Schoolers. St. George, Ontario: Alternative Press.

• This article is based on "A profile of home schooling in Canada," *Education Quarterly Review*, Winter 1997, Catalogue 81-003-XPB, Statistics Canada.

Jacqueline Luffman is an analyst at Statistics Canada.

### The popularity of home schooling varies widely by province

CST

	1995-96		
	Total <sup>1</sup> enrolment	Registered home schoolers	Home schoolers as % of total enrolment
	'000		
Newfoundland	111	54	0.1
Prince Edward Island	25	80	0.3
Nova Scotia	168	290	0.2
New Brunswick	138	241	0.2
Quebec	115	--	--
Ontario	219	2,916	0.1
Manitoba	223	926	0.4
Saskatchewan	213	1,113	0.5
Alberta	548	7,058	1.3
British Columbia	654	4,801	0.7
Yukon	6	44	0.7
North West Territories	18	--	--
<b>Canada</b>	<b>5,440</b>	<b>17,523</b>	<b>0.4</b>

-- Figures not available.

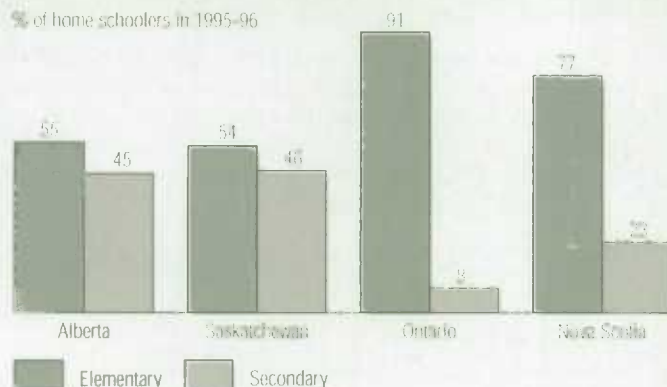
<sup>1</sup> Includes public, private, federal, as well as visually and hearing impaired students.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 81-229-XPB. Provincial Ministries of Education.

### Proportion of secondary-level home schoolers highest in Saskatchewan

CST

% of home schoolers in 1995-96



Source: Provincial Ministries of Education.



## ERRATA

Catalogue no. 11-008-XPE  
*Canadian Social Trends*, Autumn 1998

See Table entitled:  
"The popularity of home schooling varies widely by province", page 10.

The total enrolment (in thousands) for Quebec is 1,149 (not 115)  
and 2,187 for Ontario (not 219).

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Sources: Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 81-229-XPB; Provincial Ministries of Education.

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by Kelly Cranswick

# Who Needs Short-Term Help?



Caregiving often brings to mind visions of frail seniors being cared for by their families. However, people who are experiencing a temporarily difficult period in their lives — they may have lost a loved one, broken a leg or just given birth — also need help to look after the children, cook dinner or shop for groceries.

People who need assistance just for a short time often find themselves having to rely on the help of family and friends. But many people live far from their support networks, particularly parents and siblings, who are especially important sources of help. Divorce or separation, and step or blended families, can also complicate the situation since a person may feel unsure about who they can turn to when they need help.

According to the 1996 General Social Survey, 900,000 Canadians accepted help while they were going through a temporarily difficult time. Despite its importance, however, little recognition is given to short-term caregiving. Perhaps this is because it is largely unstructured and makes few, if any, demands on public sector resources. Whatever the reason, most caregiving studies focus on long-term care, especially to seniors.

This article addresses the gap in the research by providing a first glimpse of Canadians who receive help because of a temporarily difficult time. It also identifies the people whose needs are likely to be neglected during a period of short-term difficulty.

### Who receives help due to a temporarily difficult time?

Women were more likely than men to receive help during a difficult time. Five percent of women 15 years and over (about 600,000) compared with 3% of men (about 290,000) received help at some point during 1996 because of a short-term problem. Women most likely to require assistance were those aged 25 to 44 (6%), who are of prime child-bearing age, and women 65 years and over (6%<sup>1</sup>), whose health tends to be failing. Among men, seniors were most likely to receive help to get through a tough time (4%<sup>1</sup>).

Living alone or with one's family made little difference as to whether a person received help. Five percent of people living

alone were assisted during a temporarily difficult time. This compared with 4% of people living with their spouse and 4% living with their spouse and children. Three percent of people living in "other" situations, including single parents and people 15 years and over living with their parents, also accepted short-term help.

While living arrangements did not reveal much about who received help during a temporary difficulty, the presence of young children living in the household was somewhat more telling. People with children under 5 years of age were most likely to be recipients (6%); those with older children were less likely (4%). The somewhat higher demand of people with preschool children reflects the fact that people often need assistance after the birth of a child, and helps to explain why women were more likely to require short-term caregiving.

## CANADIAN SOCIAL TRENDS BACKGROUND

CST

### What you should know about this study

This article uses data from the 1996 General Social Survey (GSS) on social and community support. The survey interviewed almost 13,000 Canadians aged 15 and over living in private dwellings in the ten provinces. Data were collected on care received in the previous 12 months due to a long-term health problem or physical limitation or due to a temporarily difficult time. Care could have been provided informally by family and friends or formally by paid employees, government and non-government organizations.

**Temporarily difficult time:** A short-term condition lasting or expected to last less than six months, for example, birth of a child, short-term health problems, moving or changing jobs, financial problems, accident or the death of someone close.

**Sets of tasks:** Care-receivers were asked if any organization or anyone other than themselves had provided help with personal care; tasks around the house (meal preparation and clean-up, house cleaning, laundry and sewing, and house maintenance and outside work); running errands (shopping for groceries or other necessities, providing transportation, and banking and bill paying); and childcare.

**Unmet needs:** Care-receivers were asked if they required any additional assistance with each of the four sets of tasks. Those with unmet needs included people who were already receiving assistance but who needed additional assistance, as well as people who needed, but did not get, help with these tasks.

Some of the estimates in this study are based on small sample sizes and have high sampling variability; they should be used with caution.

**What tasks do people need help with?** To learn about the assistance Canadians received during a short-term crisis, the 1996 General Social Survey (GSS) asked people to identify the help they obtained for four specific sets of activities: personal care, tasks around the house, running errands, and childcare.

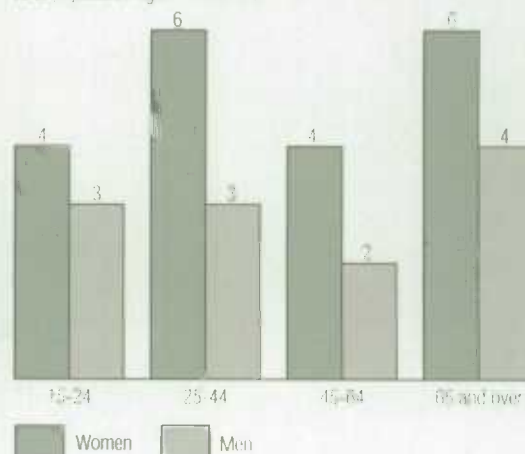
**Personal care** The greatest number of care-receivers — almost 400,000 — got help with their personal care,<sup>2</sup> with fewer men receiving assistance than women. People are not likely to seek assistance with their personal care unless absolutely necessary, therefore, it was not surprising that short-term illness<sup>3</sup> or serious injury was cited by 8 out of every 10 people as the reason they needed help with these intimate tasks.

As might be expected, a large proportion of caregivers providing personal care during a short-term crisis were spouses. Daughters, sisters and mothers also offered assistance. And, although some people received care from their friends, the numbers were somewhat small, probably because it is often

### Women most likely to receive help due to a temporarily difficult time<sup>1</sup>

CST

% of population aged 15 and over



<sup>1</sup> Some of these estimates are subject to high sampling variability.  
Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 General Social Survey.



uncomfortable to accept assistance for tasks such as bathing from someone who is not a close family member.<sup>4</sup> However, people must feel differently about formal caregivers as the largest proportion of care-receivers chose to entrust their personal care to professionals.

**Tasks around the house** Over 385,000 Canadians received help with the tasks around their house because they were in the midst of a temporarily difficult time. Most got help with house cleaning, laundry and sewing. Many other care-receivers needed someone to lend a hand with preparing meals and cleaning up afterwards, while some got help with house maintenance and outside work. For each type of task, more women than men received assistance.

In the majority of cases (58%), help with household chores was provided because the care-receiver had a short-term illness. The birth of a child (pregnancy or adoption) and/or problems with children (19%) were also relatively common reasons. Spouses and mothers most often provided support with household chores.

**Running errands** Often times, people have responsibilities that take them out of the house. In 1996, more than 219,000 Canadians with a temporary problem received assistance running their errands. A slightly larger number got help with transportation than with shopping, while a smaller proportion received help with their banking and bill-paying. Gender differences were pronounced, with more women than men receiving assistance with each task. Short-term illness (66%) was again the main reason why people were unable to leave their homes to run errands.

The caregivers who ran errands were different than those who provided help with the other tasks. Daughters and sisters were called on most frequently to take on these responsibilities. While many people still turned to spouses during a difficult time, even more turned to other family members, and some went to friends. Possibly it is easier to ask for help from someone who is already running an errand, especially if they are not a member of the household; for example, asking friends to do one's shopping when they do their own.

**Childcare** In 1996 more than 137,000 Canadians with children under age 15 received help with childcare when they were going through a difficult spell. One-third<sup>1</sup> received childcare because of the birth of a child (pregnancy or adoption) and/or problems

with their children; one-fifth<sup>1</sup> cited "other" reasons, such as school responsibilities. Not unexpectedly, Canadians receiving help with childcare were most likely to turn to their mothers.

### Most help for temporarily difficult times was given by immediate family<sup>1</sup>

CST

Relationship	% of people receiving help from a specific caregiver			
	Personal care	Tasks at home	Running errands	Childcare
Spouse	34	28	25	--
Mother (in-law)	16	29	17	37
Daughter (in-law) & sister (in-law)	18	21	34	--
Other relatives	--	25	30	--
Formal caregiver	36	21	--	31
Friends <sup>2</sup>	9	18	21	--

-- Data too small to be released.

<sup>1</sup> Many of these estimates are subject to high sampling variability.

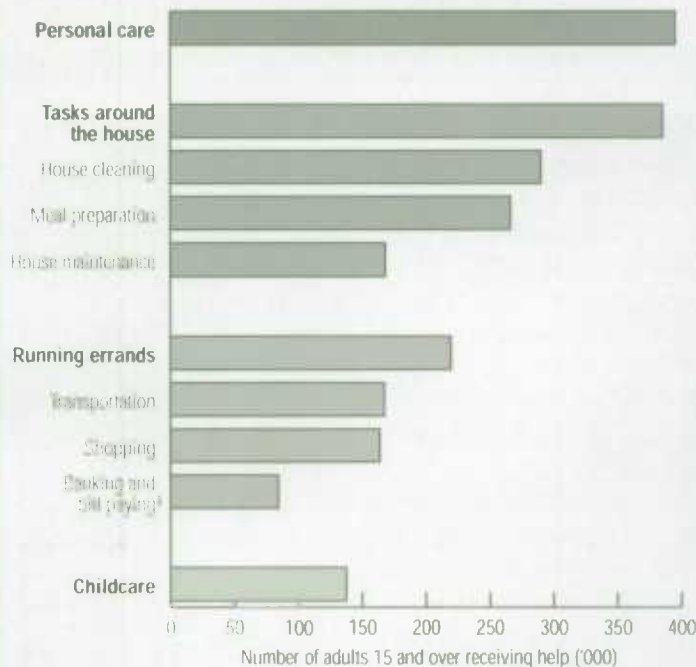
<sup>2</sup> Included friends, neighbours, co-workers and ex-partners.

Note: Columns do not add to 100 as a person could have been receiving help from more than one person.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 General Social Survey

### More care-receivers were getting help with their personal care

CST



<sup>1</sup> High sampling variability.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 General Social Survey.

<sup>1</sup> This estimate has high sampling variability.

<sup>2</sup> Help with personal care includes assistance with bathing, brushing teeth or dressing, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Short-term illness also includes minor injuries.

<sup>4</sup> Leroy O. Stone, 1993. "Social consequences of population ageing: The human support systems dimension." Proceedings of International Population Conference, Montreal: International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. Vol. 3, pp. 25-34.

## Age, employment status biggest predictors of having unmet needs

GST

		Odds ratio of needing additional assistance	
<b>Social network</b>			
Parent(s) still living	Yes	1.0	
	No	1.9	
Sibling(s) still living	Yes	1.0	
	No	0.6*	
Child(ren) still living	Yes	1.0	
	No	0.3	
Feel close to friends and relatives	Yes	1.0	
	No	1.4*	
Attend religious services weekly or monthly	Yes	1.0	
	No	1.4*	
<b>Main activity</b>			
Employment Status	Working	1.0	
	Not working	2.7	
<b>Personal characteristics</b>			
Age	65 and over	1.0	
	45-64	2.0*	
	25-44	6.0	
	15-24	3.7	
Sex	Men	1.0	
	Women	1.2*	
Marital status	Married	1.0	
	Separated/divorced	2.0	
	Widowed	2.1*	
	Single	0.8*	

\* Difference not statistically significant.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 General Social Survey.

The significant number of people getting formal help also suggests that many parents hire childcare workers to help out on a short-term basis.

**The need for additional assistance** While 900,000 people who went through a temporarily difficult time in 1996 received assistance, there were more than 200,000 people who did not get enough, if any, help. This total included approximately 120,000<sup>1</sup> people who had received help but needed more, and over 90,000<sup>1</sup> people who had wanted assistance but did not receive any. What were the odds that someone would not get sufficient help during a temporarily difficult time?

Since parents, especially mothers, often provide help during a temporarily difficult time, it seems reasonable to assume that a person without family would be more likely to lack the help they need. Data from the 1996 GSS support this belief. After controlling for other factors, the odds of having unmet needs were twice as great for people with deceased parents than for people who had at least one living parent.

On the other hand, people without children were less likely to have unmet needs, compared to people with children. This could be because children make demands that can be inconsistent with a parent's own needs, especially during a tough time, a conflict that childless people do not have to cope with.

### People not working more likely to need added help

The odds of needing additional assistance were almost three times greater for people not employed in the work force as for those who were employed. People who were "not employed" included individuals with long-term illnesses, retirees or seniors, women on maternity leave, and people looking for work, which can be a stressful time. In other words, people undergoing a temporarily difficult time may be over-represented among those outside the workforce. However, it should be noted that employed people often develop social networks at work, and may call on their colleagues to provide assistance.

The likelihood of having unmet needs generally declined with age. When all other factors were accounted for, the probability of needing additional short-term assistance was about 6 times greater for people aged 25 to 44 than for those 65 and over. This may seem surprising, but is probably explained by the fact that many seniors receiving assistance are getting long-term help, so are less likely to have unmet needs because of a temporary problem.

Divorced or separated people were twice as likely as married people to report they had unmet needs during a difficult time. One obvious reason is that married people are often able to rely on their spouse for support. Another possibility is that the temporarily difficult time may itself be the process of





separation or divorce. This is suggested by the finding that the odds of other unmarried people — widows or widowers and single people — having unmet needs were not significantly different than the odds of married couples. These unmarried people may have found sources of support outside marriage, something divorced people had not yet developed.

**Some unexpected findings** Several other characteristics, especially social network factors, that might be expected to be associated with unmet needs were not. When other factors were controlled for, women faced no higher odds than men in finding help during a difficult spell. This result is interesting, since more women than men reported having received help for a short-term difficulty in 1996, and accounted for two-thirds of people with unmet needs. Also, even though sisters were often cited as caregivers, the odds of people without siblings having unmet needs were no different than the odds of people with brothers and sisters.

Similarly, having close friends and relatives was not a significant factor in having unmet needs, probably because people most often rely on immediate family members, such as spouses and parents, for assistance. And, while one would suspect that a strong social network is developed through participation in religious activities, it would seem that fellow members are not called upon for help in a crisis. The odds of having unmet needs during a temporarily difficult time were not different for people who did not attend religious services regularly, than for those who did.

So, who typically needs additional assistance during a temporarily difficult time? People with unmet needs were likely to be divorced, 25 to 44 years of age with children, suggesting that these people may be single parents. Generally they were not

employed in the paid labour force and their parents were deceased.

**Summary** According to the General Social Survey, 900,000 Canadians who went through a temporarily difficult time in 1996 received assistance. While the findings suggest that most people who required short-term help were getting it, there still remained more than 200,000 people who needed temporary assistance, and who were not getting enough, if any, help.

Receiving help because of a temporarily difficult time can be viewed as part of a dynamic exchange: for every person who no longer needs help, there is another who is going through a short-term crisis and requires assistance. And the demand for such help is likely to increase. The growing practice among hospitals of discharging patients early, and the expansion of out-patient treatment, may increase the number of people needing help as they recover at home. Meanwhile, with the number of divorces each year remaining steady at approximately 78,000, people undergoing the trauma of marital breakdown are likely to need short-term help with childcare and other tasks.

**Kelly Cranswick** is an analyst with Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, Statistics Canada.

**CST**

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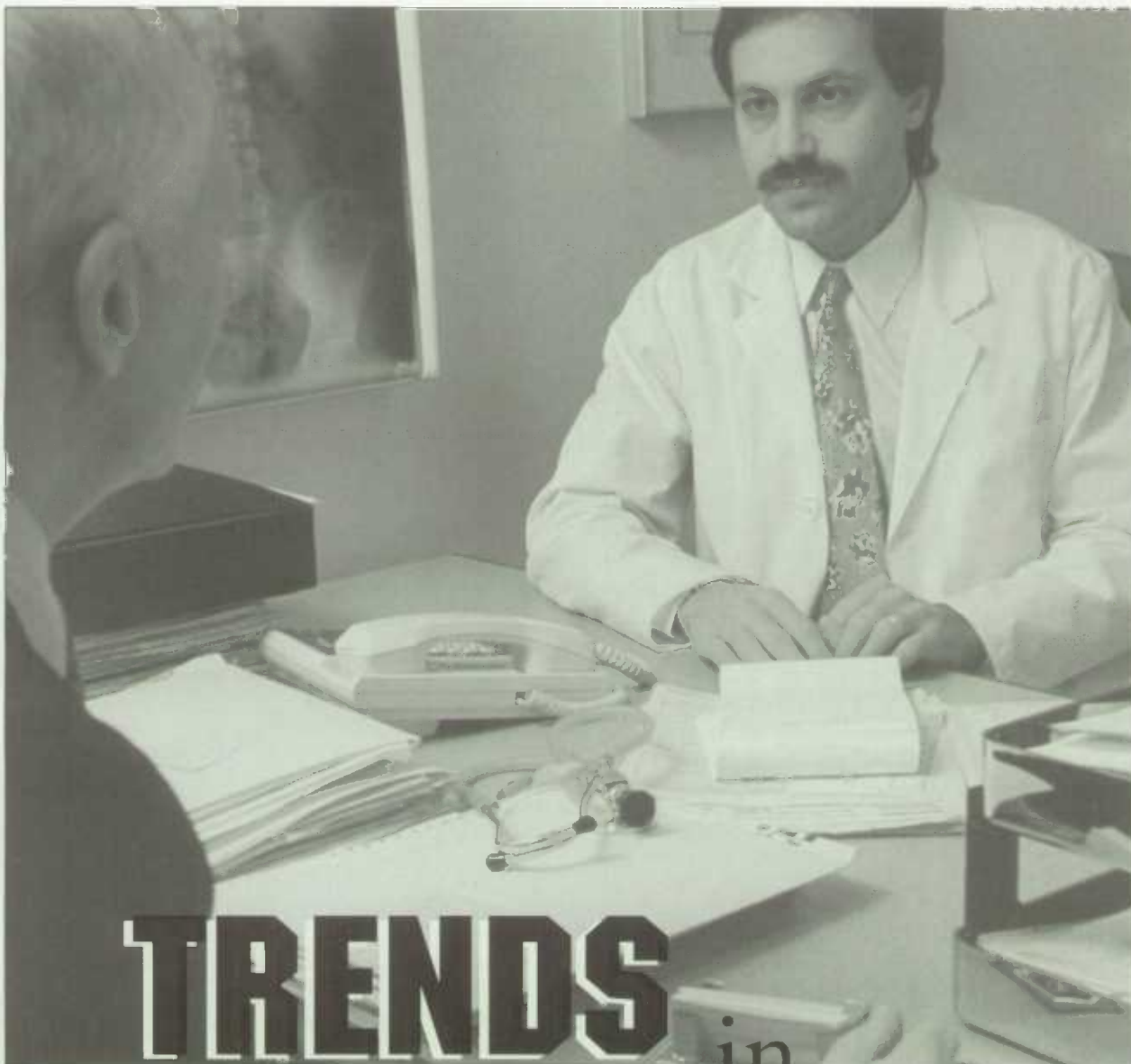
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# TRENDS in contraceptive sterilization

Compared with other industrialized nations, voluntary sterilization for contraceptive purposes is remarkably widespread in Canada. By 1995, some 3.3 million couples had undergone a vasectomy or tubal ligation in order to end their ability to have children.

The prevalence of this practice, the early age at which it is often performed, and its generally irreversible nature have had a significant effect on women's fertility rates and the size of families. This article outlines the changing patterns of male and female sterilization between 1984 and 1995, and examines some of the characteristics of couples who choose this option.

by Alain Bélanger

### Almost half of couples of childbearing age are sterile

In 1995, approximately 4.6 million Canadian couples, nearly half of all couples in which the woman was aged 15 to 49, were sterile. This total includes couples in which one or both partners were sterile from natural causes, as well as those who were sterilized for medical or contraceptive reasons. Data from the 1995 General Social Survey (GSS) show that natural and medical sterility is more widespread among women than men. In 1995, some 250,000 women were sterile from natural causes compared with 106,000 men. The difference was even more pronounced for those who underwent sterilization for medical reasons: 857,000 women compared with 58,000 men.

On the other hand, sterilization for contraceptive purposes has recently become more common for men. By 1995, approximately 1.8 million men had undergone contraceptive sterilization compared with 1.5 million women. These figures reveal significant changes in attitudes and behaviour over the last few decades. The most striking feature of the trend in contraception during the 1984 to 1995 period was, without doubt, the steady increase in the proportion of vasectomies and a corresponding decrease in tubal ligations.

### Sterilization appeals to older couples

Because sterilization procedures are virtually irreversible, very young couples, who are less likely to have completed their family, tend not to undergo them. Generally, couples where the woman is between 25 and 29 are the youngest to opt for this procedure. As of 1995, about 10% of couples in this age range had chosen this method. Once people reach their thirties, the percentage of those who opt for sterilization increases rapidly: from 26% of couples in which the woman was between 30 and 34, to nearly 45% by ages 35 to 39. By the end of a woman's reproductive cycle, between ages 45 to 49, nearly half (49%) of couples had chosen this option.

Whether the man or the woman undergoes contraceptive sterilization depends, to a large extent, on which generation the partners belong to. Among couples who underwent this procedure, 45% of men whose partner was between 45 and 49 had a vasectomy, whereas this proportion rose to 66% among couples in

which the woman was aged 25 to 29. It appears that the younger generation of men are more inclined to assume their share of responsibility for contraceptive sterilization.

**Two children the norm** It is after the birth of the second child that the use of sterilization as a contraceptive method becomes a major phenomenon. The proportion of couples in which one of the

## CANADIAN SOCIAL TRENDS BACKGROUNDER

CST

### What you should know about this study

Data in this article come from the 1995 General Social Survey (GSS), which is the first national survey since the 1984 Canadian Fertility Survey to ask questions on birth control practices. Men and women between the ages of 15 and 50, regardless of marital status, were asked to respond to the contraceptive methods part of the survey. Of the 5,300 respondents who met these criteria, almost 2,250 confirmed that they were currently using some method of contraception. Pregnant women, men whose partner was pregnant at the time of the interview, and couples in which one of the partners was sterile as a result of natural or medical conditions, were excluded from the interview.

Contraceptive sterilization includes tubal ligation and vasectomy. The GSS distinguishes between persons who have had an operation for contraceptive purposes, those who have been sterilized for medical reasons, and those who are sterile without surgery. This article focuses on those who have had the operation for contraceptive reasons.

### The use of contraceptive sterilization has almost doubled over the past 20 years

CST

% of married women aged 18 to 49 using method

Contraceptive method	1976 <sup>1</sup>	1984	1995 <sup>2</sup>
<b>Natural methods</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>1.9</b>
Periodic abstinence	6.1	3.0	0.8
Withdrawal	3.4	1.3	1.0
<b>Barrier methods</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>16.8</b>
Condom	6.0	10.8	15.7
Diaphragm	2.2	1.4	0.6
Douche, jelly	2.5	0.7	0.2
Others	4.1	0.6	0.3
<b>Pill and intra-uterine devices</b>	<b>45.2</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>25.2</b>
Pill	39.2	15.0	20.8
IUD	6.0	8.0	4.4
<b>Sterilization</b>	<b>30.5</b>	<b>59.3</b>	<b>56.1</b>
Tubal ligation	--	41.7	30.0
Vasectomy	--	17.6	26.1

-- Figures not available.

<sup>1</sup> Aged 15 and over.

<sup>2</sup> Includes women in common-law relationships.

Sources: C. Guilbert-Lantoin (1990). "The contraceptive revolution in Canada." *Population*, vol. 45 (2), pp. 361-398; Statistics Canada, 1995 General Social Survey.



partners has undergone a vasectomy or tubal ligation rises from 14% for couples with only one child to 47% for those with two; it levels off at 51% for couples with three or more children.

The widespread use of sterilization is one of the contraceptive tools which has allowed for the emergence of a smaller and relatively uniform family size across Canada. In sharp contrast with earlier generations, the two-child family is increasingly becoming the norm. The proportion of ever-married women aged 45 to 49 with only two children grew from 23% in 1981 to 40% in 1991, while the percentage with five or more decreased from 22% to 6%.<sup>1</sup>

**Married couples more likely to choose sterilization** Except in the youngest age groups, married and common-law couples practice contraception in similar proportions, implying comparable fertility patterns and family sizes. The methods they use, however, differ. In particular, common-law couples where the woman is 25 or over tend to favour birth control pills, whereas married couples in the same age group choose sterilization as a means of contraception. Among the youngest (20- to 24-year-olds), common-law couples practiced contraception more often than married couples, at 86% versus 70%.

**Vasectomy less common among foreign-born men** Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia, the three most populous and urbanized provinces, have the highest proportions of couples who do not use any type of contraception. These are also the provinces which have received the largest numbers of recent immigrants. Results of the 1995 GSS suggest that the contraceptive practices of immigrants are considerably different than the practices of those born in Canada. While 20% of Canadian-born couples used no contraceptives, the corresponding percentage was 31% for those born in Europe or the United States and 35% for those from other countries.

Sterilization practices, particularly for men, vary significantly as well between Canadian and foreign-born couples. The proportion of couples in which the man underwent a vasectomy was much lower among non-Western foreign-born persons than among those born in Canada: 7% versus 25%. It appears that cultural norms (as approximated by place of birth) are most likely responsible for these differences. According to the GSS, men from non-Western cultures are nearly four times less likely to undergo vasectomies than those born in Canada. Since the proportion of immigrants is highest in Ontario, it is not surprising to find that male sterilization rates were lowest in this province.

### By 1995, one-third of Canadian couples had opted for sterilization as a contraceptive method

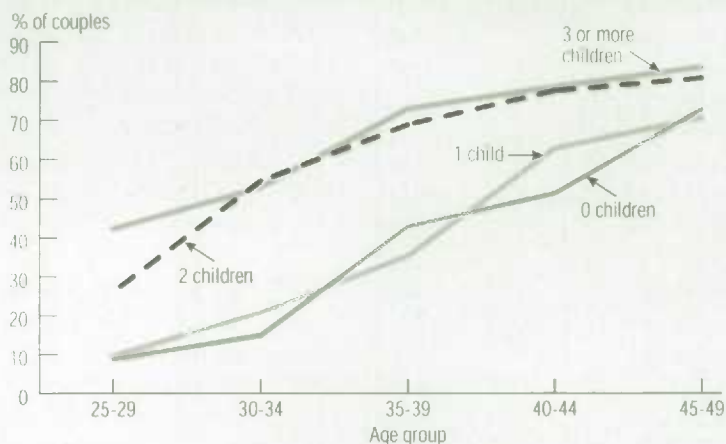
CST

Age Group	Total number of couples '000	% of couples where one partner had contraceptive sterilization	% of couples where man had vasectomy
		%	%
25-29	1,432	9.6	6.3
30-34	2,193	26.2	16.5
35-39	1,960	44.9	25.2
40-44	1,739	45.8	23.6
45-49	1,735	49.0	22.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,825</b>	<b>33.2</b>	<b>17.9</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, 1995 General Social Survey.

### Contraceptive sterilization is most common among couples with two or more children

CST



Source: Statistics Canada, 1995 General Social Survey

**Method of sterilization varies with education** Although the proportion of people using contraception does not vary markedly with educational attainment, the choice of method does. By 1995, for example, couples in which the respondent had a high school diploma only were nearly twice as likely to opt for female sterilization as those who had earned a college or university degree: 29% versus 15%. Interestingly, the difference was much less pronounced in the case of male sterilization. The proportion of couples who decided on vasectomies ranged between 23% and 24% regardless of whether the highest level of educational attainment was a high school diploma or a university degree.

<sup>1</sup> Data are provided for 1981 and 1991 because fertility questions are only asked on the decennial censuses, the most accurate source for this type of information.

## CANADIAN SOCIAL TRENDS BACKGROUNDER

CST

## Changes in contraceptive methods over time

Canadian women have come a long way in managing their fertility. Before 1969, both the sale of contraceptives and the dissemination of information regarding contraceptive methods were prohibited under the Criminal Code.<sup>1</sup> As a result, until not so long ago, "natural" methods were the primary, and often only, means of birth control available. In contrast, today's couples have a wide range of reliable contraceptives at their disposal. Which ones they use depends on factors such as age, education, health concerns, ease of use, cost, marital status and the number of children the couple already have.

Between 1976 and 1995, significant changes occurred in the choice of contraceptives. The use of barrier methods increased, that of medical ones plummeted and natural methods nearly disappeared. In 1976, for example, 10% of married women reported using periodic abstinence or withdrawal as a means of birth control.<sup>2</sup> By 1984, that proportion had fallen to 4% and by 1995, to 2%.

Among the medical methods available, the birth control pill has gained ground at the expense of the intra-uterine device (IUD). Between 1984 and 1995, the proportion of married women using the pill increased by over a third, while the share of those who used the IUD fell by nearly half.

Finally, the use of condoms also gained popularity, rising from 6% in 1976 to 16% in 1995. In contrast, the use of diaphragms and spermicides has steadily declined until it practically disappeared by 1995. The increased popularity of the condom may be partly due to its prophylactic advantages in preventing sexually transmitted diseases, particularly AIDS, and men's apparent willingness to take greater responsibility for birth control.

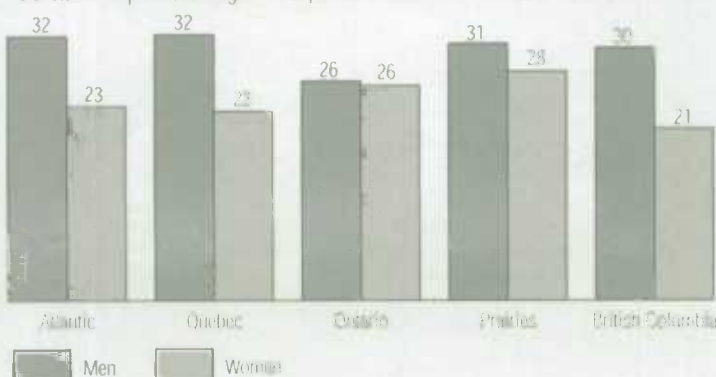
<sup>1</sup> Liberalization of contraceptive use preceded changes in the law.

<sup>2</sup> Guilbert-Lantime, C. (1990) "The contraceptive revolution in Canada", *Population*, Vol. 45 (2), pp. 361-391.

## Male contraceptive sterilization is least common in Ontario

CST

% of sterile couples according to which partner underwent sterilization



Source: Statistics Canada, 1995 General Social Survey.

**Sterilization choices differ between religious groups** Catholics and Protestants, the two largest religious groups in Canada, report virtually identical choices in the use of contraceptives. It is mainly members of "other religions" (for example, Jews, Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs) and those with no religious affiliation who diverge from both the two dominant groups and each other. For example, the proportion of couples who do not use contraception is over twice as high among followers of "other religions" (36%) than among couples with no religious affiliation (15%). Catholics and Protestants fall roughly midway between the two. Similarly, the use of sterilization is much less widespread among couples reporting "other religions"; approximately one-fourth of these couples are sterilized for contraceptive purposes, compared with nearly half of Catholics, Protestants and those with no religious affiliation.

**Conclusion** Contraception plays an important role in the lives of couples who are able to have children. Being able to decide when to start a family, how many children to have and when, enables people to better plan the birth of their children. And when the time comes, they are able to end their reproductive years through sterilization.

In Canada, more than in other industrialized countries, the contraceptive revolution coincided with the drop in the fertility rate which followed the baby boom. While the populations of many European countries began to exhibit low fertility levels as early as the 1920s and 1930s, fertility in Canada did not decline significantly until the early 1960s. While the advent of truly effective and accessible contraceptives — including sterilization — has enabled couples to better manage their fertility, these methods were not in themselves responsible for the decision to have fewer children, or indeed any children at all. Rather, social and economic changes lie at the root of both the drop in desired family size and the low birth rate of contemporary times.

**Alain Bélanger** is a senior analyst with Demography Division, Statistics Canada.

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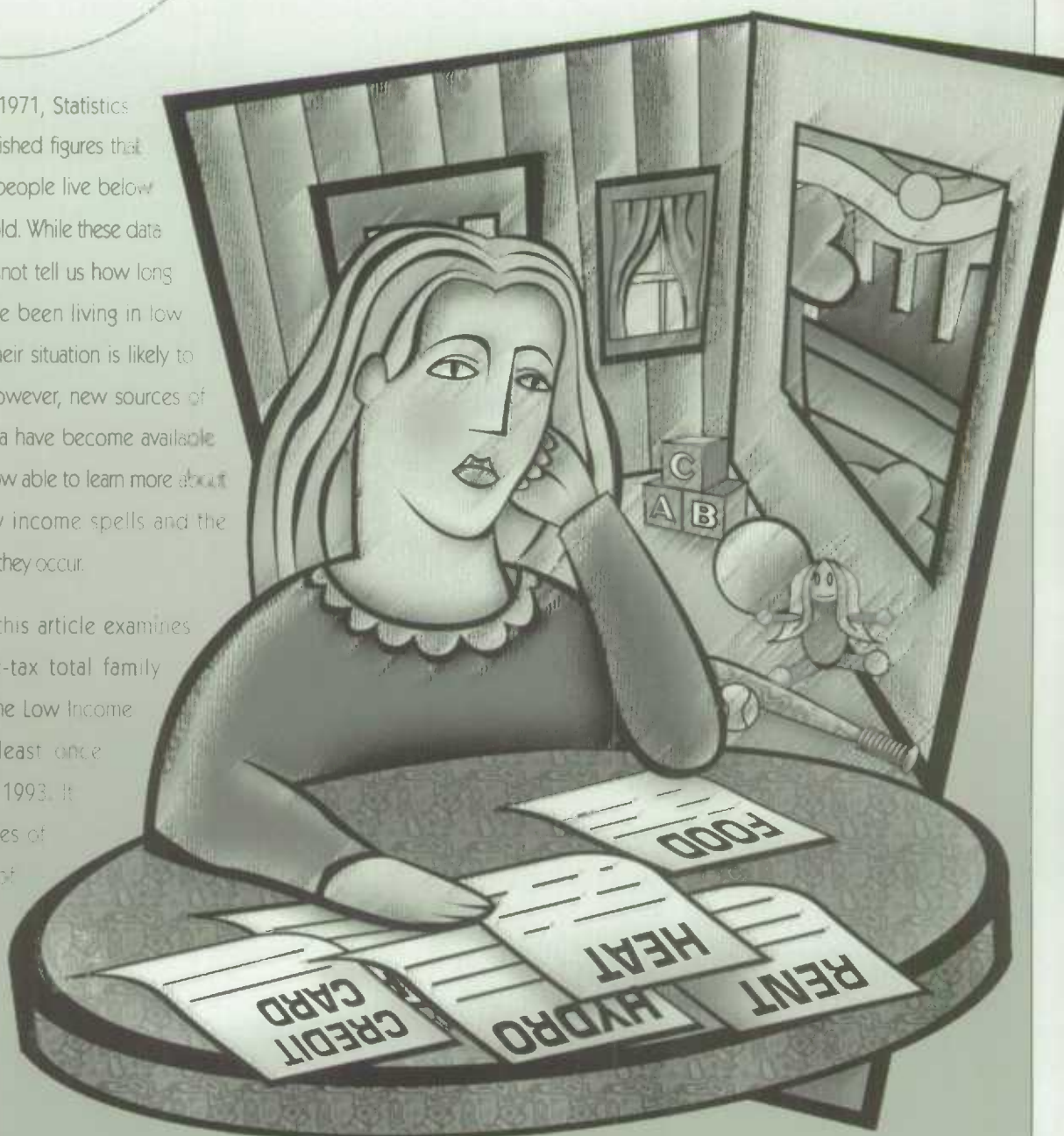


# In & Out of low income

Every year since 1971, Statistics Canada has published figures that describe how many people live below its low income threshold. While these data are valuable, they cannot tell us how long these Canadians have been living in low income or whether their situation is likely to improve. Recently, however, new sources of longitudinal microdata have become available and researchers are now able to learn more about the duration of low income spells and the frequency with which they occur.

Using tax records, this article examines people whose pre-tax total family income fell below the Low Income Measure (LIM) at least once between 1982 and 1993. It estimates the chances of ending a period of low income, and the average duration of a low income spell, for different types of families.

by Mireille Laroche





**Marital status key factor in exiting low income spells sooner** The longer people remain in a low income situation, the smaller their chances of ending it. On average, a person's probability of exiting a low income spell falls from 53% after one year living below the LIM threshold, to 33% after three years. After five or more years, the chances drop to less than 25%.

The likelihood that a low-income person will rise above the LIM is influenced by factors such as age, sex, marital status

and number of children. And while it remains true that the shorter the low income spell, the higher the exit rate, the chances of exiting are better or worse depending on these characteristics. For example, in 1993, a man in a two-income husband-wife family with two children had a 74% chance of ending a low income spell after one year; the probability was considerably lower, at 52%, for a man in the same type of family but with only one income.

There is also a statistically significant difference between men's and women's chances of ending a low income spell. While the exit rates for married women are similar to those for men with the same characteristics, unmarried women have much lower exit rates than unmarried men. For example, after living below the LIM for one year, a divorced woman with two children in 1993 had a 37% chance of exiting, but after four years of low income, the likelihood had dropped

## CANADIAN SOCIAL TRENDS BACKGROUNDER

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### What you should know about this study

This article uses Statistics Canada's Longitudinal Administrative Databank (LAD) to assess the duration of periods of low income for different family types between 1982 and 1993. The analysis focuses on people whose total family income before taxes fell below the Low Income Measure (LIM) threshold at least once during that twelve-year period. It includes individuals who filed each year from 1982 through 1993, as well as those who started out in the sample in 1982 but did not complete the entire period (for example, someone who filed 1982 through 1985 and then died). Non-residents, people living in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, and children who filed tax returns, are excluded. This selection process created a sample of 17,390 individuals.

The LAD is based on a random sample of individuals selected from the T1 Family File, which contains information from Revenue Canada's annual T1 personal income tax form. Although the T1 form is filed by individuals, each taxfiler must provide information about his or her spouse, children and other dependants in order to receive refundable tax credits. This information then allows the individual taxfilers to be merged into census families. Unless stated otherwise, this article presents results only for the reference person in the family (the taxfiler), who was aged 35 to 39 in 1993.

**Family:** A husband-wife (or common-law) couple with or without single children; or a lone-parent with single children.

**Non-family person:** A person living alone, or living with someone who is not their spouse or single child.

**Total family income:** the sum total of all sources of income (before taxes) reported by the family. This includes government transfers and tax credits, as well as market income from wages and salaries, self-employment, and investment.<sup>1</sup>

**Low income measure (LIM):** 50% of median total pre-tax family income, after it is adjusted to take account of family

size and composition. All calculations use constant 1993 dollars.

**Exit a low income spell:** to rise above the LIM threshold, thus leaving or ending a period (spell) of low income.

**Re-enter a low income spell:** to fall again below the LIM threshold, thus beginning a second or subsequent period of low income.

**Calculating multiple spells of low income...** The persistence of low income would be significantly underestimated if the existence of multiple spells of low income were ignored. Estimates for multiple spells combine the probability of both exit and re-entry in a single function. The calculation also controls for unobserved personal characteristics such as education and ability, which vary from person to person and can affect the duration and frequency of low income spells. The estimation technique for multiple spells produces four categories of individuals with separate probability profiles: high exit/high re-entry, high exit/low re-entry, low exit/low re-entry, and low exit/high re-entry.

**...and duration of low income spells** The number of years that a low income person could expect to live below the LIM threshold was estimated by selecting individuals below the LIM in the first year of the study period and then calculating the probabilities for all the different possibilities that could occur in the following nine years. This model allowed the author to estimate the average time spent below the low income threshold over a ten-year period, as well as the probability of experiencing more than five years of ten years in a low income situation.

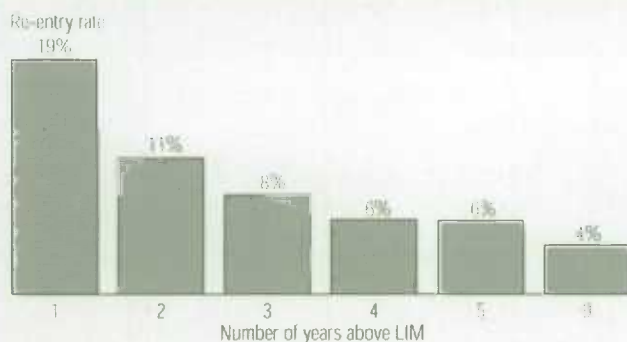
<sup>1</sup> Estimates were also calculated using private (market) income only, but results are not reported here.

### Chances of ending a low income spell decline with years spent below the threshold...

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### ...and chances of re-entering a low income spell fall with years spent above the threshold



Source: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Administrative Databank, 1982-1993.

### Having more than one income cut in half the number of years low income Canadians could expect to live below the LIM

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#### Average number of years below the LIM over next 10 years

	One child	Two children	Three or more children
<b>Women</b>			
<b>Married</b>			
two incomes	1.8	1.9	2.2
one income	3.4	3.6	4.2
<b>Divorced</b>			
Separated	5.2	5.5	6.2
Single	5.9	6.2	6.9
<b>Men</b>			
<b>Married</b>			
two incomes	1.8	2.0	2.4
one income	3.5	3.8	4.6
<b>Divorced</b>			
Separated	3.6	4.0	4.7
Single	3.4	3.8	4.5
Single	3.6	4.0	4.7

Source: Department of Finance Working Paper No. 98-02.

to 16%. For a divorced man with two children, the probabilities were 49% and 24%, respectively.

**Lone-parent families most likely to re-enter low income spell** In general, people who experienced a period of low income at some time during the period 1982 to 1993 recorded only one spell that lasted an average of two years. But the same person can flow into and out of low income more than once. This is why studies of the persistence of low income include two dimensions — the duration of a low income spell, and the frequency of such spells.

Analysis of the Longitudinal Administrative Databank (LAD) data shows that the longer a person is able to stay above the LIM threshold, the smaller their chances of experiencing a subsequent low income spell. In 1993, the likelihood of falling below the threshold again averaged 19% after one year above the LIM, and dropped to only 6% after four years. But the chances of slipping back into low income vary considerably with family status and gender. For men in husband-wife families with two incomes and two children, the probability of re-entering a low income spell was 9% after one year above the LIM, and only 3% if they managed to stay above it for four years. In contrast, for a divorced woman living with two children, the likelihood of re-entering a low income spell was 31% after one year above the threshold, and 12% after four years.

**Four in ten live in a chronic low income situation** The majority of low income persons do not experience repeated movements in and out of low income spells, that is, frequent exit from and re-entry into brief periods of low income.<sup>1</sup> There is a 60% chance that someone who falls below the LIM is experiencing a temporary setback — they will exit fairly quickly and are not likely to re-enter soon (and as the length of time living above the threshold increases, the re-entry rate diminishes even further).

<sup>1</sup> This finding is in contrast to results obtained in Canada by Barrett and Cragg's study of welfare spells (1995) and in Britain by Jarvis and Jenkins's study of low income spells (1997). Barret, Garry F. and M.I. Cragg, "Dynamics of Canadian Welfare Participation," *UBC Discussion Paper No. 95-08*. Jarvis, Sarah and Stephen P. Jenkins, "Low Income Dynamics in 1990s Britain," *Fiscal Studies*, Vol. 18 (2), pp. 123-142.



The probability of exiting or re-entering a low income spell largely depends on a person's family status

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	Exit rate after		Re-entry rate after	
	1 year	4 years	1 year	4 years
	%			
<b>Married, two incomes, no children</b>				
Male	69	42	12	4
Female	71	45	10	3
<b>Married, two incomes, 2 children</b>				
Male	74	48	9	3
Female	75	41	9	3
<b>Married, one income, no children</b>				
Male	46	22	28	10
Female	49	24	25	9
<b>Married, one income, 2 children</b>				
Male	52	26	23	8
Female	54	28	22	8
<b>Lone parent, divorced, 1 child</b>				
Male	54	27	21	8
Female	40	18	30	12
<b>Lone parent, divorced, 2 children</b>				
Male	49	24	23	9
Female	37	16	31	12
<b>Lone parent, single, 1 child</b>				
Male	55	29	21	8
Female	38	17	26	9
<b>Lone parent, single, 2 children</b>				
Male	51	25	24	9
Female	35	15	27	10
<b>Non-family person, single</b>				
Male	46	21	26	10
Female	38	17	25	9
<b>Non-family person, widowed</b>				
Male	46	22	29	11
Female	43	20	26	10

Note: Estimates calculated for persons aged 35 to 39 in 1993.

Source: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Administrative Databank, 1982-1993.



On the other hand, there is a 40% chance that a person is experiencing a more chronic and persistent phenomenon. These Canadians face periods of low income that are both longer and more frequent, finding it more difficult to exit a low income spell and easier to fall below the LIM in subsequent years.

### **Lone-parent families spend the most years below the low income threshold**

A picture of low income persistence in Canada would not be complete without estimating the average number of years that low income individuals spend below the threshold over a lengthy period of time, in this case ten years.<sup>2</sup> The results confirm the

importance of socio-demographic factors; in short, being a woman and living in a lone-parent family significantly increased the probability of falling below the threshold and remaining in a low income situation for a considerable length of time.

Depending on the number of children they had, low income women without husbands could expect to spend 5.1 to 6.9 years out of ten living below the LIM. In contrast, being married considerably improved a woman's economic prospects; low income women in a husband-wife family with children would average 3.4 to 4.2 years below the LIM if the family had only one income, or 1.8 to 2.2 years if the family had two incomes.

For men, however, an additional income was better proof than marriage against a lengthy period of low income. Low income men in a two-income husband-wife family could expect to live below the LIM for an average of 1.8 to 2.4 years, depending on the number of children in the family. But married men in one-income families, and male lone-parents, were likely to spend an average of 3.5 to 4.5 years in a low income situation.

**Summary** There is little evidence that people repeatedly move into and out of low income spells. In fact, analysis over a ten-year period shows that roughly 60% of low income Canadians under age 65 are only temporarily living in straitened economic circumstances. They quickly exited the current spell of low income and were not likely to repeat it. However, socio-demographic characteristics play a key role in determining the duration and frequency of low income spells. Analysis suggests that a significant proportion of low income families headed by women remain below the low income threshold for long periods of time.

<sup>2</sup> Estimates were calculated for individuals who experienced at least one low income spell during the study period (1982 to 1993) and who were aged 45 in 1982.

• This article is adapted from *The Persistence of Low Income in Canada, 1982-1993*, Department of Finance Working Paper No. 98-02.

**Mireille Laroche** is an economist with the Economic Studies and Policy Analysis Division, Department of Finance.

## **CANADIAN SOCIAL TRENDS BACKGROUNDER**

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### **Other longitudinal studies of low income**

#### **Chances of ending low income spell fade with time in the United States**

Researchers in the United States have been among the first to model the dynamics of low income with a duration analysis approach. A 1986 study<sup>1</sup> compared individuals just entering a low income spell with those who currently have low income; it found that the majority of people who fall below the low income threshold will be poor for a relatively short period of time, but the majority of people who are currently poor are in the midst of a long spell of low income. A 1995 update of this study<sup>2</sup> examined the frequency of multiple spells of poverty and extended the time period of the study. The results showed that, over time, the chances of ending a low income spell declined, especially for someone living in a female-headed household. Moreover, over half of the people who ended a low income spell would experience another spell within five years.

#### **Changed family circumstances change income status in Canada**

Analysis of longitudinal data from the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) indicates that only a slight majority of Canadians who experience low income remain below the low income threshold for two consecutive years. About 4.4 million individuals had incomes below the low income cut-off (LICO) in either 1993 or 1994; of these people, 2.3 million (or 52%) had low incomes in both years.<sup>3</sup>

The SLID study also showed that chances of entering or exiting a low income spell were high following a change in family structure. In 1994, 41% of all individuals who entered low income, and 28% who exited, had undergone a change in family composition. Marriage (including common-law) usually had a positive effect on a person's financial situation: two-thirds of low income Canadians who married in 1993 rose above the threshold in 1994. By contrast, separation often precipitated a period of low income, and one-quarter of people who were above the cut-off when they separated in 1993 fell below it in 1994.

<sup>1</sup> Bane, Mary Jo and Daniel T. Ellwood, "Slipping into and Out of Poverty: The Dynamics of Spells," *Journal of Human Resources*, Vol. 1 (2), pp. 1-23.

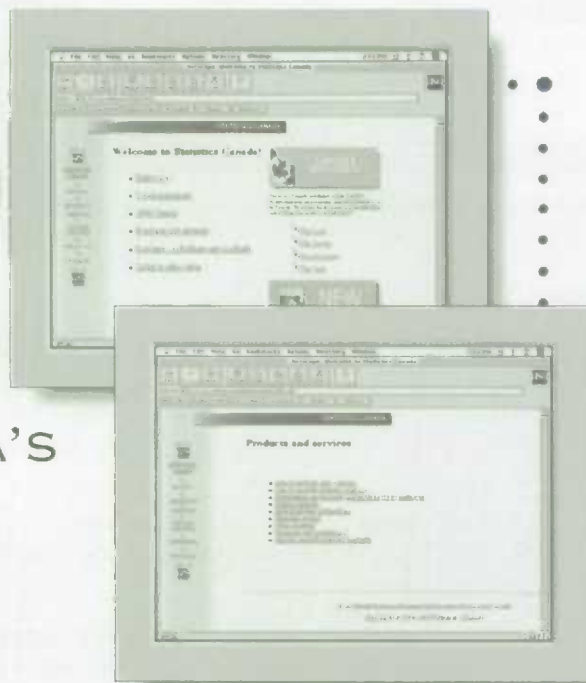
<sup>2</sup> Stevens, Ann Huff, "Climbing out of Poverty, Falling Back in: Measuring the Persistence of Poverty Over Multiple Spells," *National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper No. 5390*.

<sup>3</sup> Although the results of the SLID study support those of the LAD study, readers should note that the methodology is quite different. The SLID study used the low income cut-off (LICO) rather than the LIM; the analysis was conducted using after-tax income, not income before tax; and the families studied were economic not census families. For more information, refer to *Crossing the Low Income Line*, Statistics Canada Product No. 75F0002E, July 1997.

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## EDUCATORS' NOTEBOOK

*Suggestions for using Canadian  
Social Trends in the classroom*

Lesson plan for "Religious observance, marriage and family"

### Objectives

- To identify some of the effects of religious observance on Canadians.
- To become aware of religious traditions of various religious groups.

### Method

1. Provide each student with a copy of the article "Religious observance, marriage and family"; have them read the article, selecting and recording key facts or ideas in point form.
2. Conduct an informal survey of religious affiliations among your students. How many attend religious services regularly (weekly)? How do the results compare with those reported in the article?
3. Have the class discuss what effect religious observance has on their lives or their parents' lives.
4. Have members of the class describe a religious celebration for their religion and the significance of it.
5. Discuss why young adults don't attend religious services as often as older adults.

### Using other resources

- Use Statistics Canada's E-STAT CD-ROM to develop a profile of religions from the 1991 Census for your town or city. Select the (2B) detailed questionnaire database on the E-STAT CD-ROM. Identify the differences in the religious distribution between your town or city and another major city. The same information on religions can be obtained from the Statistics Canada website at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Estat/estat.htm>. Access **E-STAT on SchoolNet** from our website. Select **Entrance E-Stat**. From the census menu select the **1991 Census**. Select **1991 (2B) detailed questionnaire**, and **39 cities (by neighbourhood)**.
- Reginald Bibby's article, "The persistence of christian religious identification in Canada," in the Spring 1997 edition of *Canadian Social Trends* discussed what impact the religion of fathers and mothers had on the religion of children living at home.



### Share your ideas!

Do you have lessons using CST that you would like to share with other educators? Send your ideas or comments to Joel Yan, Dissemination Division, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, K1A 0T6. FAX (613) 951-4513 or Internet e-mail: [yanjoel@statcan.ca](mailto:yanjoel@statcan.ca).



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# SOCIAL INDICATORS

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
<b>POPULATION</b>								
Canada, July 1 (000s)	27,790.6 <sup>IR</sup>	28,111.0 <sup>PD</sup>	28,532.5 <sup>PD</sup>	28,895.7 <sup>PD</sup>	29,264.7 <sup>PD</sup>	29,616.5 <sup>PD</sup>	29,959.5 <sup>PR</sup>	30,285.8 <sup>PR</sup>
Annual growth (%)	1.5	1.2	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.1
Immigration <sup>1</sup>	202,979 <sup>F</sup>	219,250 <sup>F</sup>	241,810 <sup>F</sup>	265,405 <sup>F</sup>	234,457 <sup>F</sup>	200,123 <sup>R</sup>	216,764 <sup>R</sup>	223,238 <sup>R</sup>
Emigration <sup>1</sup>	39,760	43,692	45,633 <sup>PD</sup>	43,993 <sup>PD</sup>	45,280 <sup>PD</sup>	47,041 <sup>PD</sup>	47,230 <sup>PP</sup>	49,633 <sup>PR</sup>
<b>FAMILY</b>								
Birth rate (per 1,000)	15.3	14.3	14.0	13.4	13.2	12.9	12.5 <sup>E</sup>	•
Marriage rate (per 1,000)	6.8	6.1	5.8	5.5	5.5	5.4	5.2	•
Divorce rate (per 1,000)	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.4	•
Families experiencing unemployment (000s)	879	1,096	1,184	1,198	1,130	1,044	1,079	1,048
<b>LABOUR FORCE</b>								
Total employment (000s)	13,165	12,916	12,842	13,015	13,292	13,506	13,676	13,941
– goods sector (000s)	3,809	3,582	3,457	3,448	3,545	3,653	3,681	3,769
– service sector (000s)	9,356	9,334	9,385	9,567	9,746	9,852	9,995	10,172
Total unemployment (000s)	1,164	1,492	1,640	1,649	1,541	1,422	1,469	1,413
Unemployment rate (%)	8.1	10.4	11.3	11.2	10.4	9.5	9.7	9.2
Part-time employment (%)	17.0	18.1	18.5	19.1	18.8	18.6	18.9	19.0
Women's participation rate (%)	58.7	58.5	58.0	57.9	57.6	57.4	57.6	57.4
Unionization rate – % of paid workers	34.7	35.1	34.9	34.3	–	–	–	33.9
<b>INCOME</b>								
Median family income	45,618	46,389	47,199	46,717	48,091	48,079	49,411	•
% of families with low income (1992 Base)	12.3	13.0	13.5	14.6	13.5	14.5	14.5	•
Women's full-time earnings as a % of men's	67.7	69.6	71.9	72.2	69.8	73.1	•	•
<b>EDUCATION</b>								
Elementary and secondary enrolment (000s)	5,141.0	5,218.2	5,284.2	5,347.4 <sup>P</sup>	5,402.4 <sup>P</sup>	5,458.5 <sup>R</sup>	5,442.2 <sup>E</sup>	5,594.9 <sup>E</sup>
Full-time postsecondary enrolment (000s)	856.6	903.1	931.0	951.1 <sup>P</sup>	964.7 <sup>E</sup>	962.7 <sup>R</sup>	971.5 <sup>E</sup>	980.3 <sup>E</sup>
Doctoral degrees awarded	2,673	2,947	3,136	3,356	3,552	3,716 <sup>R</sup>	3,798 <sup>E</sup>	3,727 <sup>E</sup>
Government expenditure on education – as a % of GDP	5.8	6.3	6.4	6.2	5.9	5.7	7.4	•
<b>HEALTH</b>								
% of deaths due to cardiovascular disease – men	37.3	37.1	37.1	37.0	36.3	36.0	27.4	•
– women	41.2	41.0	40.7	40.2	39.7 <sup>R</sup>	39.3	27.6	•
% of deaths due to cancer – men	27.8	28.1	28.4 <sup>R</sup>	27.9	28.3	30.3	28.4	•
– women	26.8	27.0	27.3	26.9	27.0	27.3	27.8	•
Government expenditure on health – as a % of GDP	6.2	6.7	6.8	6.7	6.2	6.1	6.6 <sup>E</sup>	4.8 <sup>E</sup>
<b>JUSTICE</b>								
Crime rates (per 100,000) – violent	970	1,056	1,077 <sup>R</sup>	1,072	1,038 <sup>R</sup>	995	973	•
– property	5,593	6,141	5,868 <sup>R</sup>	5,524 <sup>R</sup>	5,212 <sup>R</sup>	5,235 <sup>R</sup>	5,192	•
– homicide	2.4	2.7	2.6	2.2	2.0	2.0	2.1	•
<b>GOVERNMENT</b>								
Expenditures on social programmes <sup>2</sup> (1995 \$000,000)	183,505.7 <sup>R</sup>	190,745.5 <sup>R</sup>	207,245.8 <sup>R</sup>	214,317.3 <sup>R</sup>	215,567.4	208,494.6	•	•
– as a % of total expenditures	56.0 <sup>R</sup>	56.8 <sup>R</sup>	58.5 <sup>R</sup>	60.0 <sup>R</sup>	60.1	58.3	•	•
– as a % of GDP	24.5 <sup>R</sup>	26.7 <sup>R</sup>	28.8 <sup>R</sup>	29.4 <sup>R</sup>	28.2	26.9	•	•
UI beneficiaries (000s)	3,261.0	3,663.0	3,658.0	3,415.5	3,086.2	2,910.0	•	•
OAS and OAS/GIS beneficiaries <sup>m</sup> (000s)	3,005.8	3,098.5	3,180.5	3,264.1	3,340.8	3,420.0	3,500.2	•
Canada Assistance Plan beneficiaries <sup>m</sup> (000s)	1,930.1	2,282.2	2,723.0	2,975.0	3,100.2	3,070.9	•	•
<b>ECONOMIC INDICATORS</b>								
GDP (1992 \$) – annual % change	–	–	+0.7	+2.5	+3.9	+1.9	+1.6	+3.9
Annual inflation rate (%)	4.8	5.6	1.5	1.8	0.2	2.1	1.6	1.6
Urban housing starts	150,620	130,094	140,126	129,988	127,346	89,526	101,804	123,221

– Not available

• Not yet available

<sup>P</sup> Preliminary data<sup>E</sup> Estimate<sup>m</sup> Figures as of March<sup>IR</sup> Revised intercensal estimates<sup>PD</sup> Final postcensal estimates<sup>PP</sup> Preliminary postcensal estimates<sup>PR</sup> Updated postcensal estimates<sup>R</sup> Revised data<sup>F</sup> Final data<sup>1</sup> For year ending June 30.<sup>2</sup> Includes Protection of Persons and Property; Health; Social Services; Education; Recreation and Culture.

### Child abductions decline after early 1990s



Between 1983 and 1992, the rate of child abduction increased from 11.8 for every 100,00 persons under 16 to 19.5. The rate steadily declined to 15.1 by 1996, this translated to 964 children who were victims of attempted or completed abductions. Parents were responsible for 62% of all abductions. However, abductions accounted for less than 1% of missing children. Of about 56,000 children under 18 years reported missing in Canada in 1996, 78% were runaways. Other reasons why children went missing included wandering off, being lost, and disappearing from institutional care or treatment centres.

**Juristat: Missing and Abducted Children, 1998**, Vol.18, no.2  
Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-XPE

### Education prices rise slower than CPI



In 1996, the prices of goods and services in education increased less than overall inflation: 0.5% compared with 1.6%. This reflects the fact that teachers' salaries — which have grown less than 2% since 1993 — are the major component of the Education Price Index (EPI), accounting for over 70% of school boards' operating expenses. Other salaries in the education sector have also increased modestly in recent years. For the third consecutive year, the non-salary component of the EPI — school facilities, supplies and services — remained unchanged.

**Data available for 1971 to 1996**  
Statistics Canada, CANSIM:T00590304

### Tourism industry records strong growth



Spending on tourism in Canada reached almost \$41 billion in 1997, an increase of over 5% since 1996 (current dollars). Growth occurred throughout most of the sector, with important advances in passenger air transport (up 10%). For the third consecutive year, the rate of job creation in the tourism industry exceeded that in the total business sector, up more than 2% from 1996 as employment rose to over 503,000.

**National Tourism Indicators, Fourth quarter 1997**  
Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 13-009-XPB

### Early start to smoking makes quitting more difficult



The earlier people begin smoking, the more cigarettes they are likely to smoke each day and the less likely they are to quit. Among daily smokers aged 21 to 39, the odds of being a heavy smoker were 2.5 times higher for people who started at age 13 or younger than for those who started after 19. In addition, people who started smoking in early adolescence were much less likely to quit. Just 18% of smokers who started when they were 13 or younger had stopped within 10 years, compared with 42% of those who started at the age of 20 or older.

**Health Reports, Spring 1998**  
Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 82-003-XPB

### Death rate from cancer falls for under 60s



Cancer is primarily a disease of older Canadians: 71% of new cases and 80% of deaths in 1998 will occur among those who are 60 years and over. In contrast, for people under 60, cancer mortality rates have generally been falling for almost three decades. In 1998, an estimated 129,200 cases of cancer will be diagnosed in Canadians of all ages and about 62,700 individuals will die from it. Breast cancer will be the most frequent diagnosis among women, and prostate cancer among men. The type of cancer that kills most frequently, however, is lung cancer. Almost one-third of cancer deaths among men and one-fifth among women are due to lung cancer.

**Canadian Cancer Statistics, 1998**  
[www.cancer.ca/stats/](http://www.cancer.ca/stats/)

### Women and older workers take more time off work



In any given week in 1997, almost half a million full-time paid workers lost some work time because of personal reasons (which includes own illness or disability and personal or family responsibilities). Over the whole year, women were absent for an average of 9 days (excluding maternity leave) while men were off work for 6 days. The number of work-days lost to personal reasons also increased with age, with full-time workers aged 55 to 64 booking about twice as much time off as those aged 15 to 24 (11 versus 5 days); the difference was mainly due to the higher incidence of illness or disability absences among older workers. Unionized workers (11 days) missed almost twice as much work as their non-unionized counterparts (6 days), probably because most collective agreements include paid sick leave entitlements.

**Work Absence Rates, 1980 to 1997**  
Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 71-535-MPB, no. 9

### Growth of women's earnings outpaces men's in 1996



The earnings of women working full-time, full-year increased by 1.9% in 1996, to \$30,700, compared with growth of 1.5% for their male counterparts, to \$41,800 (after adjusting for inflation). The female-to-male earnings ratio, with women making an average of 73 cents for each dollar earned by men, reached a new high. Marital status has a significant impact on the earnings ratio, as single women earn almost as much as single men (0.93 to 1.0), but married women earn substantially less than married men (0.69 to 1.0). For women who were widowed, divorced or separated, the ratio was 80 cents for every dollar earned by men.

**Earnings of Men and Women, 1996**  
Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 13-217-XPB



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