

## *Juristat* article

# Cases of child and spousal support by age group of the child beneficiaries

By Louise Desjardins and Mary Bess Kelly

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics

Release date: June 23, 2014



Statistics  
Canada

Statistique  
Canada

Canada

## How to obtain more information

For information about this product or the wide range of services and data available from Statistics Canada, visit our website, [www.statcan.gc.ca](http://www.statcan.gc.ca).

You can also contact us by

**email** at [infostats@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca),

**telephone**, from Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the following toll-free numbers:

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| • Statistical Information Service                             | 1-800-263-1136 |
| • National telecommunications device for the hearing impaired | 1-800-363-7629 |
| • Fax line  | 1-877-287-4369 |

## Depository Services Program

- |                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| • Inquiries line | 1-800-635-7943 |
| • Fax line       | 1-800-565-7757 |

## To access this product

This product, Catalogue no. 85-002-X, is available free in electronic format. To obtain a single issue, visit our website, [www.statcan.gc.ca](http://www.statcan.gc.ca), and browse by “Key resource” > “Publications.”

## Standards of service to the public

Statistics Canada is committed to serving its clients in a prompt, reliable and courteous manner. To this end, Statistics Canada has developed standards of service that its employees observe. To obtain a copy of these service standards, please contact Statistics Canada toll-free at 1-800-263-1136. The service standards are also published on [www.statcan.gc.ca](http://www.statcan.gc.ca) under “About us” > “The agency” > “Providing services to Canadians.”

Published by authority of the Minister responsible for  
Statistics Canada

© Minister of Industry, 2014

All rights reserved. Use of this publication is governed by the  
Statistics Canada Open Licence Agreement ([http://www.  
statcan.gc.ca/reference/copyright-droit-auteur-eng.htm](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/reference/copyright-droit-auteur-eng.htm)).

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français.

## Note of appreciation

Canada owes the success of its statistical system to a long-standing partnership between Statistics Canada, the citizens of Canada, its businesses, governments and other institutions. Accurate and timely statistical information could not be produced without their continued co-operation and goodwill.

## Standard symbols

The following symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| .              | not available for any reference period   |
| ..             | not available for a specific reference period  |
| ...            | not applicable   |
| 0              | true zero or a value rounded to zero   |
| 0 <sup>s</sup> | value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded |
| p              | preliminary  |
| r              | revised  |
| x              | suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the <i>Statistics Act</i>                                   |
| E              | use with caution   |
| F              | too unreliable to be published   |
| *              | significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )   |

## Cases of child and spousal support by age group of the child beneficiaries: highlights

- As of March 31, 2013, just under 86,000 child and spousal support cases were enrolled in a maintenance enforcement program in the eight provinces and territories reporting to the Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs (SMEP) (excludes Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, British Columbia and Nunavut).
- Just over 112,000 children and young adults were beneficiaries of support in cases enrolled in a maintenance enforcement program (MEP) in eight jurisdictions. The children and young adults had a median age of 14 and the vast majority of them (80%) were aged 18 years or under.
- In 2012/2013, MEPs collected just over \$382 million directly from payors or other sources such as wage garnishments and federal interceptions (money collected includes amounts for regular support payments due, other payments due and arrears). This figure represented about 87% of total payments due.
- For families on social assistance, support payments received may be assigned to the provincial government to offset social assistance costs. As of March 31, 2013, slightly more than 1 in 10 (13%) of all enrolled cases in eight jurisdictions had their support payments assigned to the provincial government. The proportion of assigned cases was higher for cases involving younger children. About one-quarter (24%) of cases with children under six years of age were assigned to the government compared to 8% for cases involving young adults aged 18 to 25.
- In more than two-thirds (69%) of MEP cases enrolled with children, the order for child support was made pursuant to provincial or territorial legislation, while in 28% of the cases the child support order was made under the federal *Divorce Act*. The proportion of child support cases for which the support order was made under a provincial or territorial law or agreement was highest among children aged between 0 and 5 years (91%) while the lowest was among young adults aged 18 to 25 years (45%).
- Support payments do not necessarily end when a child beneficiary reaches the age of majority. More than half (56%) of youth beneficiaries aged 17 and 18 in 2008/2009 in six reporting jurisdictions were still receiving support payments five years later, in 2012/2013.

## Cases of child and spousal support by age group of the child beneficiaries

by Louise Desjardins and Mary Bess Kelly

While married couples are still the largest family type in Canada, their proportion continues to decline. According to 2011 Census data, this family structure accounted for 67% of families in 2011, compared with 70% in 2001. During the same period, the number of couples in common-law unions grew by 35%, while the number of lone-parent families increased 16.5%.

The results of the 2011 General Social Survey reveal that approximately 5 million Canadians reported having separated or divorced in the 20 years preceding the survey. Approximately one-quarter of these persons (24%) had children aged 18 or under at the time of the divorce or separation (Kelly 2013).

When parents separate or divorce, whether they were married or in a common-law union, they must make provisions for their children, such as: where the children will live, the school they will attend, their medical care, their extracurricular activities, the time each parent will spend with the children and the arrangements for continued financial support.

The arrangements for financial support may be voluntarily agreed to by the parents or judge-ordered through the civil court system. Some support arrangements, if the arrangements are court-ordered or the agreement is registered with the court, may be enrolled in a maintenance enforcement program (MEP).

This *Juristat* article uses information from the Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs (SMEP), to examine cases registered in a MEP in eight reporting provinces and territories, namely Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Yukon and the Northwest Territories<sup>1</sup>. These provinces and territories collectively represent 22% of Canada's total population.

The article first profiles the number of cases enrolled and examines the demographic characteristics of program participants, the support amounts due and received, and the proportion of payments collected by the MEPS. A second part examines the characteristics of cases enrolled in MEPS with regard to the age group of the child beneficiaries. A third part analyzes a cohort of enrolled cases involving children aged 17 and 18 over a five-year period.

### Text box 1

#### Differences among maintenance enforcement programs

Maintenance Enforcement Programs (MEPs) register cases, process payments, and monitor and enforce cases in order to ensure that recipients receive their payments of child and spousal support. The tasks and objectives are essentially the same for all MEPS across Canada, although these programs vary in a number of important respects because of differences in the needs and policies of each jurisdiction. These differences may relate to client profiles, enforcement legislation and practices, enrolment processes, handling and registration of payments, client responsibilities and case closure. Because of these differences, caution must be used when making comparisons across provinces and territories.

Among the provinces and territories that report to the Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs (SMEP), three have an automatic or 'opt-out' registration system: Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. In these provinces, maintenance orders are automatically enrolled or filed with a MEP at the time of the order. To be removed from the caseload of a MEP, a recipient must request to be withdrawn from the program.

**Text box 1 continued****Differences among maintenance enforcement programs**

The six other jurisdictions that participate in the SMEP—Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut—have an ‘opt-in’ system, whereby registration is at the discretion of either the recipient or the payor. The only exceptions are cases where the recipient is entitled to social assistance or the payor owes money to the Crown, in which case enrolment in a MEP is mandatory.

Jurisdictions with ‘opt-out’ registration systems tend to have a relatively large number of cases to administer and enforce, since all new court orders are automatically enrolled. ‘Opt-in’ jurisdictions, on the other hand, tend to have a higher proportion of cases already in arrears when they are first enrolled, or where there has been some difficulty in obtaining payments.

**Snapshot of cases enrolled in maintenance enforcement programs<sup>2</sup> as of March 31, 2013****Almost all beneficiaries of support are children**

As of March 31, 2013, there were just under 86,000 cases enrolled in eight provinces and territories reporting to the SMEP in which the recipient resided in one of these jurisdictions (Table 1).<sup>3</sup> The payors were nearly all men, while the recipients were almost exclusively women, with proportions of 97% in both cases.<sup>4</sup> The median age of the payors and recipients was similar, at 42 and 40 years respectively.

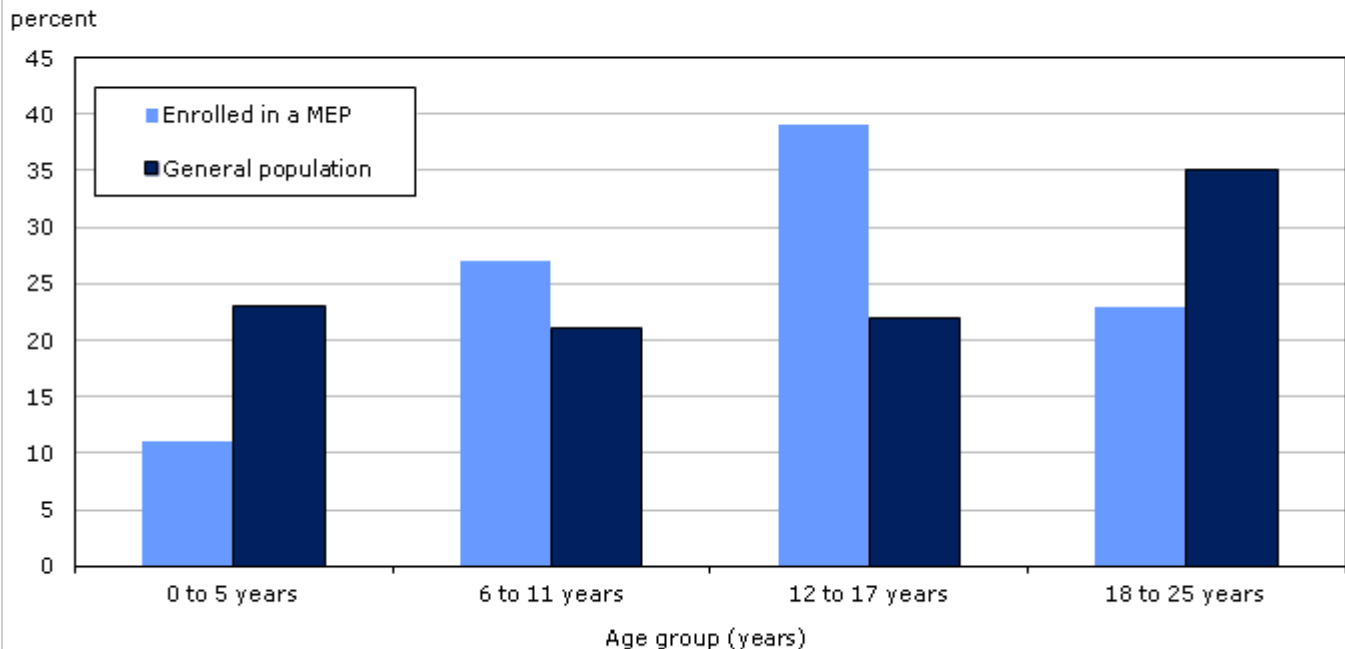
As in previous years, children were the only beneficiaries of support in 93% of cases. In another 3% of cases, both the ex-partner and children were the beneficiaries, while an ex-partner or ex-spouse was the only beneficiary in the remaining 4% of cases.

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of cases with child beneficiaries involved only one child, more than one-quarter (27%) involved two children, while the remaining 8% involved three or more children (Table 2). These proportions are almost identical to those observed in the previous two years.

In total, just over 112,000 children and young adults were beneficiaries of support in MEP cases in the eight jurisdictions. The children and young adults had a median age of 14 years; the vast majority of them (96% or 108,000) were aged 25 or under, and 80% were aged 18 or under, representing 89,600 children.<sup>5</sup>

Child and young adult beneficiaries in MEP cases constituted 5% of the overall population aged 25 and under in the eight jurisdictions. However, the age distribution differed considerably between these two groups. Children aged 12 to 17 represented 22% of children and young adults in the general population, while they represented 39% of children and young adults covered by a MEP. Similarly, children aged 6 to 11 represented 27% of young people enrolled in a MEP, but 21% of the overall population aged 25 and under (Chart 1).

**Chart 1**  
**Distribution of child and youth beneficiaries enrolled in a MEP and in the general population, in the eight reporting provinces and territories by age group, 2012/2013**



ISO = Interjurisdictional Support Orders

**Note:** Includes non-ISO and ISO-out cases.

**Sources:** Sources: Statistics Canada, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs, 2012/2013 and Cansim table 051-0001.

### Text box 2

#### Calculation of support payments

Federal Child Support Guidelines, as well as provincial/territorial guidelines, are used in calculating the amount of child support due for orders under the federal *Divorce Act* or provincial/territorial legislation.

The guidelines first consider the living arrangements of the child or children. For most separated or divorced parents (85%), the children live primarily with one parent (Statistics Canada 2012a). Also considered are the income of the payor, the number of child beneficiaries and the province or territory where the payor resides (to account for differing tax rates across jurisdictions).

Spousal support is awarded on a different basis than child support. Where children are involved, child support takes precedence. Beyond that, the question of entitlement to spousal support has to be determined before any amounts are contemplated.

#### The median monthly support payment owing is \$345

In March 2013, the median regular monthly support payment owing was \$345 in the eight reporting jurisdictions (Table 3). This amount includes child and spousal beneficiaries.

Generally, the amount increased with the number of child beneficiaries and according to whether or not it included a support payment for the former spouse. Thus, the median monthly amount owing for cases that involved only one child beneficiary was \$272, while for cases involving a former spouse and three or more children it was \$1,800.

Moreover, since the payor's province or territory of residence is taken into consideration because of different tax rates (see text box 2), the amount for a given group of beneficiaries may vary from one jurisdiction to

another. As in the previous two years, median monthly amounts due for cases with a single child beneficiary were lowest in New Brunswick (\$200) and highest in the Northwest Territories (\$429).

### MEPs collect most of the total amount due

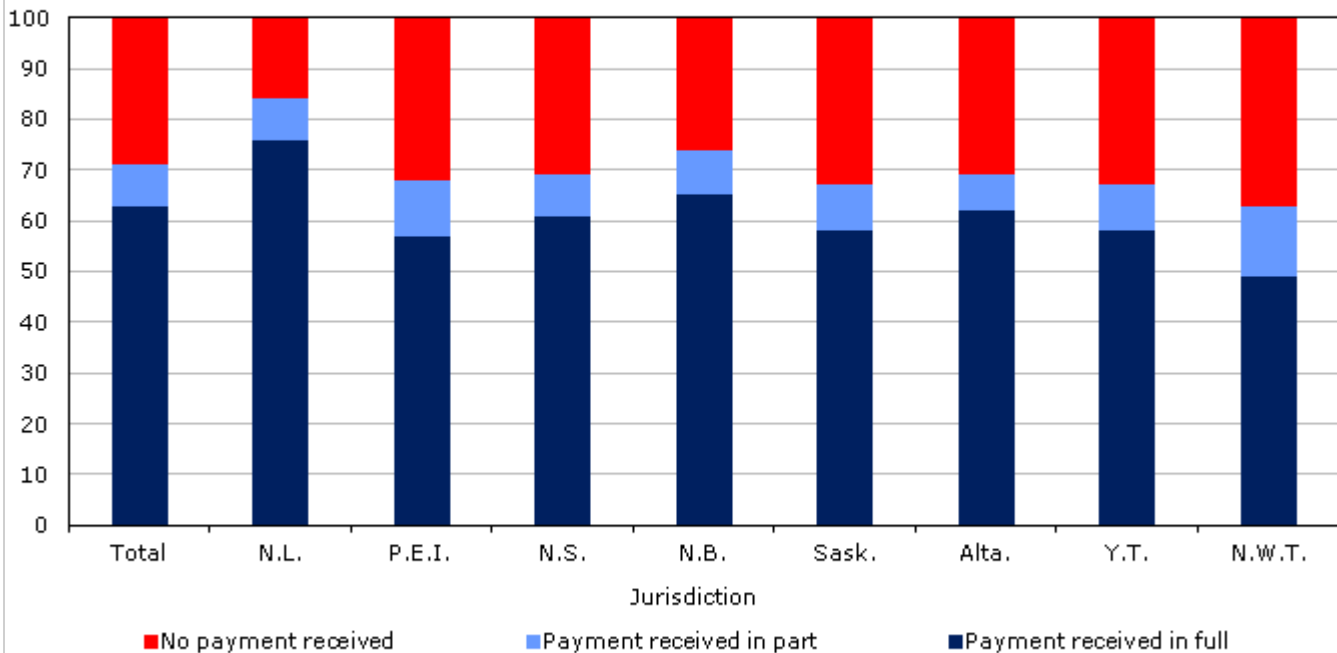
Over the course of a given year, MEPs collect money for payments due and arrears, either directly from the payor or from other sources, including wage garnishments or interceptions of federal payments such as income tax refunds. Payments due are primarily for regular monthly child or spousal support, but may also include special payments, such as those for tuition or extra-curricular activities, scheduled arrears payments, and penalties. In 2012/2013, more than \$382 million was collected from payors and other sources in the eight reporting jurisdictions, representing 87% of all payments due.

### In an average month, full support payment is collected from nearly two-thirds of payors

When examining monthly payments of support in 2012/2013, the findings show that in an average month, full payment was collected from almost two thirds of payors (63%), partial payment was collected from another 8% while more than one-quarter of payors (29%) did not make any support payment (Chart 2). These proportions have remained stable over the years.<sup>6</sup>

**Chart 2**  
**Cases enrolled with regular support due, by proportion receiving payment in an average month, 2012/2013**

percent



ISO = Interjurisdictional Support Orders

**Note:** Includes non-ISO and ISO-out cases.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs, 2012/2013.

## Close to one-half of payors with regular support obligation owe arrears

In cases where payors do not make their payment each month, arrears begin to accumulate. In the eight reporting provinces and territories on March 31, 2013, 45% of payors with a regular support obligation had arrears, meaning they had an outstanding balance of more than double the regular monthly payment.<sup>7</sup> The median amount of arrears owing per payor was \$4,308.<sup>8</sup>

Support obligations may begin before enrolment in a MEP. If defaults on payments have already occurred, payors may already owe arrears upon enrolment. As of March 31, 2013, slightly less than half (46%) of payors with outstanding payments already had some arrears when they enrolled.<sup>9</sup>

## Enforcement or tracing activities taken against nearly half of payors

If support payments are not forthcoming, MEPs can undertake a variety of actions to enforce current payments or arrears. There are two main categories of enforcement actions: administrative enforcement (for example, wage garnishments and restrictions imposed on motor vehicle licence holders) and court enforcement (primarily default hearings). In addition, when the payor cannot be located, MEPs undertake tracing activities such as searching jurisdictional databanks to locate the payor. In 2012/2013, enforcement or tracing activities were taken against just under one-half (47%) of payors in all cases administered by the eight provinces and territories.

### Text box 3

#### Highlights for maintenance enforcement programs in 11 jurisdictions

Using supplementary aggregate information from the Maintenance Enforcement Survey (MES), basic survey results are available for all provinces and territories in Canada, excluding Manitoba and Nunavut.<sup>10</sup> The survey findings indicate the following:

- There were about 396,000 cases enrolled in MEPs across Canada (excluding Manitoba and Nunavut) as of March 31, 2013, representing a small increase (1%) from the previous year.
- About 59% of cases with a regular payment owing in March 2013 had an amount due between \$1 and \$400. About 8% of all cases had regular payments owing of more than \$1,000.
- For each month in 2012/2013, an average of just over two-thirds of payors (67%) registered with a MEP had fully paid their regular monthly support payment.
- Over a ten-year period, the proportion of payors fully paying their regular monthly support payments remained stable, with an average of 66% making full payment each month in 2002/2003, compared with 67% in 2012/2013, for the six jurisdictions that reported over this time period: Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia.

## Analysis of child support cases by the age group of the child beneficiary as of March 31, 2013

This part of the article looks at the characteristics of cases enrolled in a MEP in eight provinces and territories as of March 31, 2013 according to the child's age group. It will examine the main differences between child support cases involving younger children and those involving older children. Since a case may involve multiple children belonging to different age groups, cases retained for this analysis include those with a single child and those with more than one child when the children are all in the same age group, in order to avoid having a case classified in two different categories. With this strategy, it was possible to retain 85% of support cases in the eight reporting jurisdictions. Moreover, the distribution of cases by the child's age group corresponds to the distribution presented in the first part of the article.

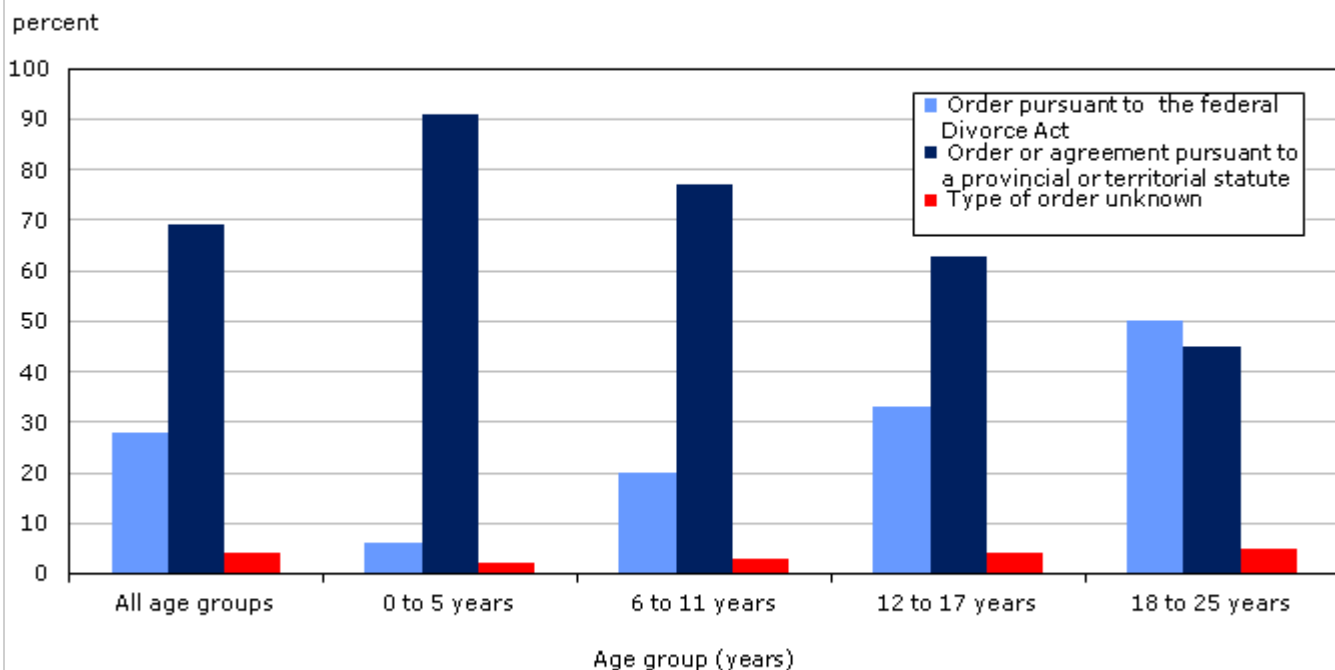


## The type of order or arrangement varies according to the child's age group

In more than two-thirds (69%) of MEP cases enrolled with children, the order for child support was made pursuant to provincial or territorial legislation, while in 28% of the cases the child support order was made under the federal *Divorce Act*. The type of order was unknown in 4% of cases.

The proportion of child support cases for which the support order was made under a provincial or territorial law or agreement was highest for the 0 to 5 age group at 91%, while it was lowest for young adults aged 18 to 25 (45%) (Chart 3). Conversely, in one-half of cases dealing with young adults, the order for support was based on the *Divorce Act*.

**Chart 3**  
Order or agreement for regular child support payment by the type of order and age group of the child, March 31, 2013



ISO = Interjurisdictional Support Orders

**Note:** Includes non-ISO and ISO-out cases. Excludes cases with no regular payments for the children and cases where multiple children were in different age categories.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs, 2012/2013.

This situation is possibly due, in part, to changes in the family structure of Canadians over the past decade. Between 2001 and 2011, the number of common-law couples rose 35%, more than five times the 6.7% increase for married couples (Statistics Canada 2012b). Provincial and territorial laws apply to child support arrangements when common-law couples separate, while the federal *Divorce Act* sets out rules about child support when married couples divorce.

## The median regular payment for March 2013 decreases with time enrolled in each age group

As seen in the previous part, the median regular payment amount increases with the number of child beneficiaries. However, when length of enrolment for the case was taken into account and regardless of the age of the children, the median regular payment amount due was typically lower for cases enrolled longer (Text table 1). For example, for each age group of children, the median amount of regular payment due for March 2013 was higher for cases enrolled between 0 and 5 years than for cases enrolled 11 years or more.

Text table 1

Median amount of regular payment for March 2013, by age group, number of child beneficiaries and length of enrolment

		Length of enrolment			
		All cases	More than 1 year to 5 years	More than 5 years to 10 years	11 years or more
<b>Age group of children</b>		median amount of regular payment (in dollars)			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>259</b>
	<b>1 child</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>225</b>
	<b>2 children</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>354</b>
<b>All age groups</b>	<b>3 children or more</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>390</b>
	Total	306	300	x	...
	1 child	280	275	x	...
	2 children	466	452	x	...
0 to 5	3 children or more	660	610	x	...
	Total	345	394	299	233
	1 child	280	300	254	223
	2 children	515	547	450	x
6 to 11	3 children or more	668	659	700	x
	Total	327	426	350	251
	1 child	265	317	279	225
	2 children	500	573	485	394
12 to 17	3 children or more	648	800	600	521
	Total	305	386	359	277
	1 child	265	328	300	230
	2 children	376	482	421	321
18 to 25	3 children or more	389	675	431	323

... not applicable

x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*

**Note:** Includes non-ISO and ISO-out cases. Excludes cases for which the amount of payment is unknown, cases for which the age of the child is unknown as well as cases where multiple children were in different age categories.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs, 2012/2013.

### The proportion of support payments assigned to the government is higher in cases involving children less than 6 years of age

Sometimes part or all of the support payment is collected on behalf of the recipient by the government. This happens when the government provides, or has provided, social assistance benefits to the recipient. The support payment is used to reimburse those costs; these cases are referred to as assigned cases.

On March 31, 2013, slightly more than 1 in 10 cases (13%) in eight reporting jurisdictions had their support payments assigned to the government. Of the cases involving children under age 6, the proportion of cases assigned (24%) was almost twice the proportion of assigned cases overall, and three times the proportion for cases involving young adults aged 18 to 25 (8%). Lone mothers with young children may have a more precarious financial situation. According to the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), among female-headed lone-parent families with children under age 6, employment income accounted for somewhat more than half of total income (54.9%), while it accounted for almost three-quarters (73.8%) for those with children between 6 and 17 (Statistics Canada 2013).

Furthermore, the median age of recipients in assigned cases with children under age 6 was 27 years, compared with 46 years for recipients in assigned cases who had responsibility for young adults aged 18 to 25 (Table 4).

### The median amount of special payments is higher for cases involving children aged 0 to 5<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the regular monthly payment, the support case may include supplementary amounts to cover special expenses provided for in the order or agreement. These special expenses may include the child's health care expenses not covered by insurance (such as orthodontics or counseling), daycare expenses, expenses related to extracurricular activities, or costs related to the child's postsecondary education.

Overall, approximately 14% of child support cases in six jurisdictions provided for these types of payments.<sup>12</sup> The proportion was highest for cases involving children aged 6 to 11 where in almost one out of five cases (18%) such payments were due, while it was the lowest for cases involving young adults aged 18 to 25, at 6%. During the year 2012/2013, the median amount payable for all cases was \$1,273. However, the median amount was largest for cases involving young children (aged 0 to 5) at \$1,920. Overall, more than three-quarters of these special payments (78%) had been paid to recipients (Table 5).

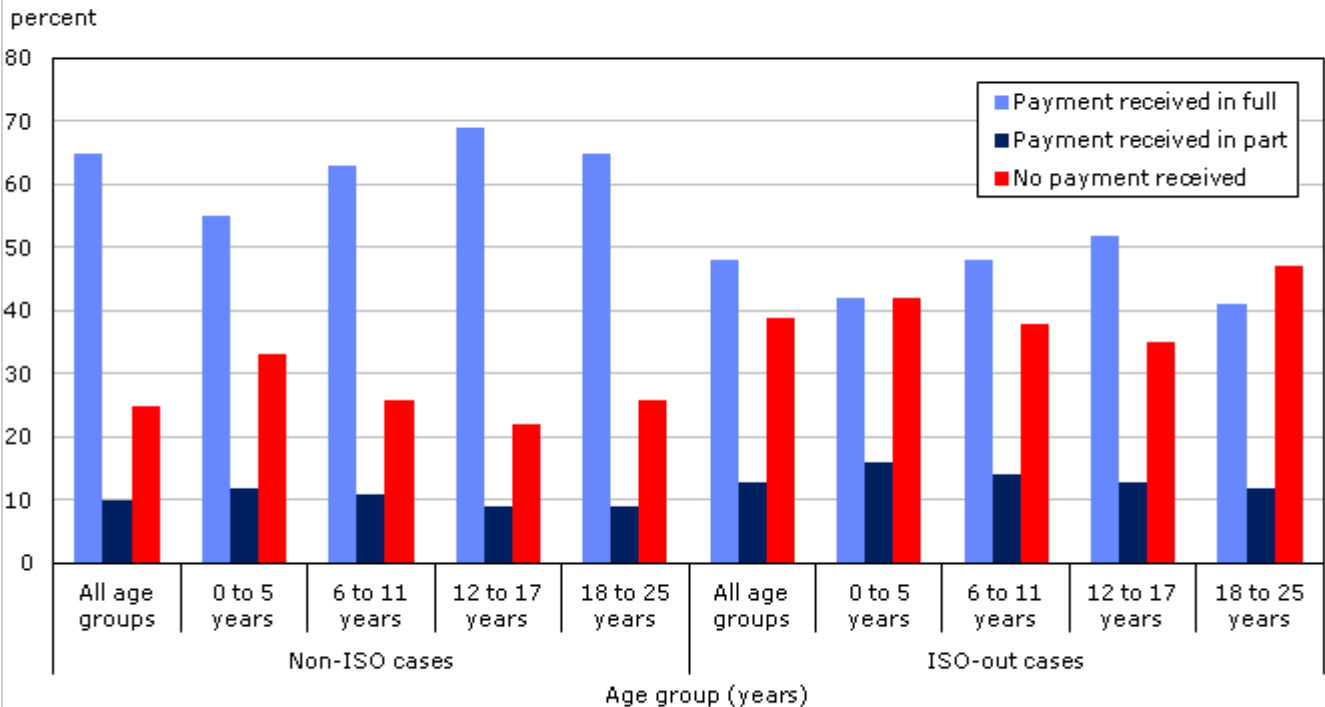
### For slightly more than 1 in 10 children, the case is sent to an out-of-province MEP

The enforcement of a support order can involve parties living in different jurisdictions, such as another province or territory, or another country. These cases are known as interjurisdictional support order cases (ISO).

As of March 31, 2013, approximately 9,000 children were involved in a case sent by a MEP to another province or territory (ISO-out cases), representing 12% of child beneficiaries.<sup>13</sup> These are cases sent to the jurisdiction where the payor resides, on behalf of the MEP where the child resides. The proportion of children involved in these cases was the highest in Yukon (35%) and the lowest in New Brunswick and Alberta (9%).

By their nature, interjurisdictional enforcement cases can pose challenges when it comes to collecting support amounts. In cases where a regular support payment was due in March 2013, 65% of non-ISO cases received the full amount whereas this proportion was 48% for ISO-out enforcement cases, a difference of 17 percentage points.<sup>14</sup> ISO-out cases involving children aged 0 to 5 and those involving young adults aged 18 to 25 represented the lowest proportions of full payment received, at 42% and 41%, respectively. The highest proportion of full payment was for cases with children aged 12 to 17, at 52% (Chart 4).

**Chart 4**  
**Cases enrolled with regular support due, by proportion receiving payment in March 2013 by interjurisdictional support order status**



ISO = Interjurisdictional Support Orders

**Note:** Includes non-ISO and ISO-out cases. Excludes cases for which no payment was due in March 2013 and cases where multiple children were in different age categories.

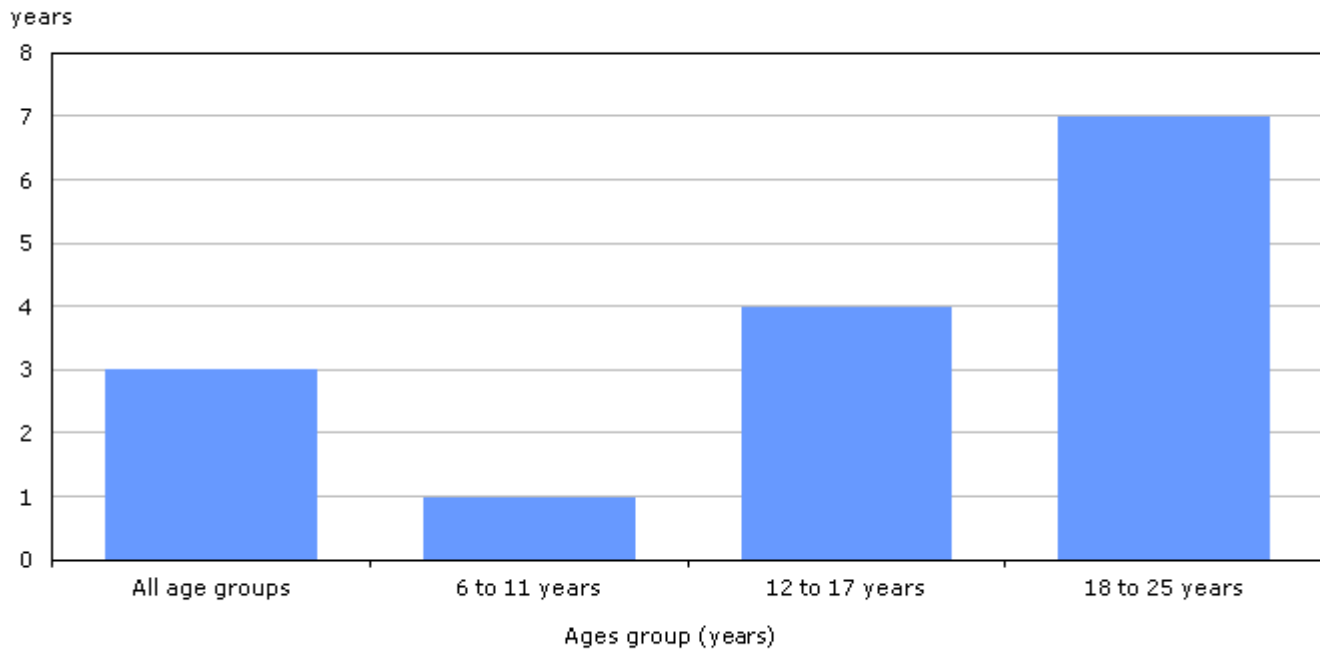
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs, 2012/2013.

### Most re-enrolled cases involve children aged 12 to 17

As of March 31, 2013, slightly more than 1 in 10 cases (12%) had been re-enrolled in a MEP. These cases, which involved the same parties, had already been enrolled in previous years, but for some reason, had been closed and subsequently reactivated.

Close to one-half (43%) of child beneficiaries in these cases were aged 12 to 17. These were followed by children aged 6 to 11 (30%), while young adults aged 18 to 25 accounted for nearly one-fifth of re-enrolled children and youths (18%). Children under age 6 accounted for 9% of re-enrolled children.

A median of seven years elapsed between the closure of the case and its re-enrolment when it involved a young adult aged 18 to 25, which is more than double the median interval for all re-enrolments, namely three years (Chart 5).

**Chart 5****Elapsed median time between the case's initial enrolment and re-enrolment by age group as of March 31, 2013**

ISO = Interjurisdictional Support Orders

**Note:** Includes non-ISO and ISO-out cases. Excludes cases for which the elapsed time between the initial enrolment and the re-enrolment can not be calculated as well as cases where multiple children were in different age categories.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs, 2012/2013.

### Analysis of a cohort of cases involving youths aged 17 and 18, from 2008/2009 to 2012/2013

When a child beneficiary reaches the age of majority (either 18 or 19 years of age, depending on the jurisdiction) the support payments intended for him or her do not necessarily end. Depending on the terms of the court order or support agreement, these payments may continue past the age of majority, to provide the child with access to postsecondary education for instance.

Generally, young people obtain their high school diploma at age 17 or 18.<sup>15</sup> Since these students would probably have applied for admission to a postsecondary institution during their last year of high school, they were included in the cohort analysis.

#### Text box 4

##### Creation of the cohort of youth beneficiaries aged 17 and 18

For this part of the article, a longitudinal data file was created by linking annual data from the SMEP over a five-year period, from 2008/2009 to 2012/2013.

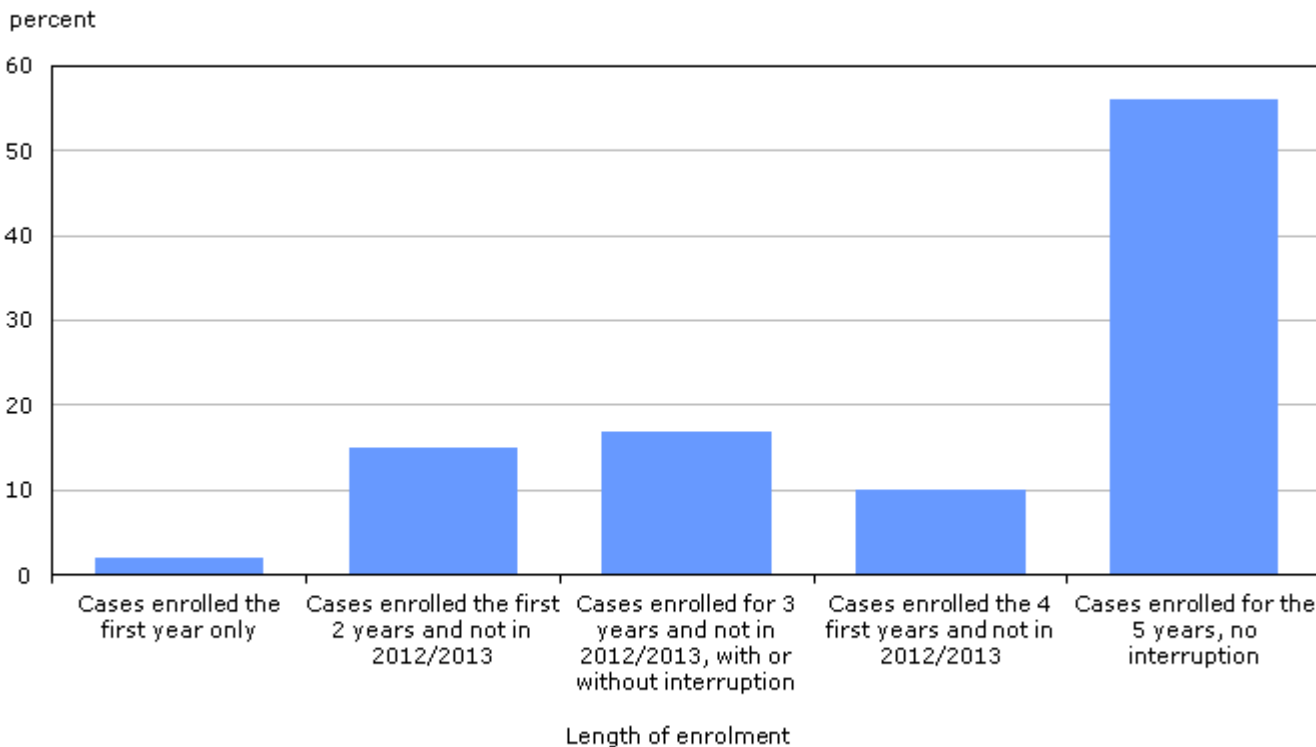
Six jurisdictions are represented in the longitudinal file: Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Alberta, Yukon and the Northwest Territories. The other jurisdictions were excluded because they do not report data to the SMEP, or because they began to report data after 2008.

The cohort includes non-interjurisdictional (non-ISO) and interjurisdictional-out (ISO-out) cases and involves 12,780 youths who were aged 17 or 18 during 2008/2009.

The majority of youths aged 17 and 18 in 2008/2009 are still receiving support five years later

More than half (56%) of young people receiving support in 2008/2009 in six reporting jurisdictions were still receiving payments five years later in 2012/2013 (Chart 6).<sup>16</sup>

**Chart 6**  
**Distribution of youth aged 17 and 18 by length of enrolment, 2008/2009 to 2012/2013**



ISO = Interjurisdictional Support Orders

**Note:** Includes non-ISO and ISO-out cases in 2008/2009.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs, from 2008/2009 to 2012/2013.

In most closed cases, the case is withdrawn because the support obligation ends or the order expires

The cases that were closed or withdrawn (44%) before 2012/2013, were done so mainly because the order expired or the support obligation ended; these reasons were cited in 47% of closed cases. Another 29% of cases had been withdrawn by the MEP for a variety of reasons: the payor's or recipient's place of residence was unknown, the beneficiary was receiving the payments directly, the case had been transferred to another jurisdiction or for an unknown reason. Just over one case in five (21%) had been withdrawn by the beneficiary or the payor. The remaining cases had been closed because of the death of the payor or the beneficiary (2%) or had been closed by a social services agency (1%) (Table 6). The distribution of the reasons reported in the survey bore little relation to the case's length of enrolment.

At the end of the five-year period, the regular monthly payment due in March had somewhat diminished. The median amount due went from \$450 in March 2009 to \$382 in March 2013; a decrease of 15%. The greater the number of children involved in a case in 2012/2013, the lesser the decrease in the median payment due. Furthermore, the reduction in payments due when the case involved a spouse as well as children was twice as large as when the case involved only children (Text Table 2).

Text table 2

Change in the median regular monthly payment due at the end of the 5-year period, cases still enrolled in 2012/2013

	Median amount due in 2008/2009	Median amount due in 2012/2013	Change in amount due
	dollars		percent
<b>All beneficiaries</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>-15</b>
Children only	423	365	-14
Spouse and children	1,337	896	-33
<b>Number of child beneficiaries</b>			
1 child	400	307	-23
2 children	454	403	-11
3 children or more	562	514	-9

**Note:** Includes non-ISO and ISO-out cases in 2008-2009. Only includes cases with a regular payment due in March 2009 and in March 2013 as well as cases for which the type of beneficiary or the number of children were known.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs, from 2008/2009 to 2012/2013

## Summary

In the eight reporting jurisdictions, close to 86,000 child and spousal support cases were enrolled in a maintenance enforcement program (MEP) as of March 31, 2013. Slightly more than 112,000 children and young adults were beneficiaries of support in these cases and 80% of them were aged 18 or under. Children aged 12 to 17 represented the highest proportion of children enrolled in a MEP, at 39%.

In 2012/2013, MEPs collected just over \$382 million from payors or from other sources, representing about 87% of total payments due.

In more than two-thirds (69%) of MEP cases enrolled with children, the order for child support was made pursuant to provincial or territorial legislation, while in 28% of the cases the child support order was made under the federal *Divorce Act*.

For families on social assistance, support payments received may be assigned to the provincial government to offset social assistance costs. The proportion of cases where support payments were assigned to the government was the highest for cases involving children under age 6 (24%) and the lowest for cases involving young adults aged 18 to 25 (8%).

The majority of MEP cases (56%) involving youths aged 17 and 18 in 2008/2009 were still enrolled five years later.

## Description of the Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs

The Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs (SMEP) is conducted by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics at Statistics Canada, with funding from Justice Canada. The SMEP gathers microdata on maintenance enforcement cases, including the date of enrolment of the case, the age and sex of recipients and payors of support, payments due and in arrears, processing of payments, and tracing and enforcement actions taken by maintenance enforcement programs (MEPs).

Currently, nine provinces and territories report data to the SMEP (Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut). Four of these jurisdictions have reported to the SMEP since 2005/2006: Nova Scotia, Alberta, Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

## References

Kelly, Mary Bess. 2013. "Payment patterns of child and spousal support," *Juristat*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

Statistics Canada, 2012a. "Selected tables on families in Canada." General Social Survey: Overview of Families in Canada. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-650-X. No. 1, Table 18.

Statistics Canada, 2012b. "Portrait of Families and Living Arrangements in Canada," *Census: Families, Households and Marital Status*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-312-X.

Statistics Canada, 2013. "Income Composition in Canada," *National Household Survey: Income and Housing*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-014-X201100.

Statistics Canada. CANSIM table 051-0001.

Statistics Canada. CANSIM table 477-0026.

## Notes

1. Data for Nunavut were not available for 2012/2013.
2. Survey results indicate that most of the characteristics of MEP cases have remained very stable from one year to the next. Therefore, this section concentrates on the most recent year for which information is available, 2012/2013.
3. Includes non-interjurisdictional support order cases (non-ISO cases), where the payor and the recipient typically reside in the same jurisdiction, as well as interjurisdictional support order out cases (ISO-out) which are cases that have been sent to another Canadian jurisdiction and are registered there for enforcement because the payor resides and/or has assets there.
4. Excludes cases where the type of beneficiary was unknown.
5. When a child reaches the age of majority, he or she does not necessarily stop benefitting from support payments. Typically the age of majority is when a child is considered an adult and varies between 18 or 19 years, depending upon the province or territory. Support payments can stop at that age or once the child has completed postsecondary studies, depending on the terms of the court order or support agreement. The results presented here exclude a small proportion of cases for which the age of the children was unknown.
6. For more details on support payment patterns and payor characteristics, see Kelly, Mary Bess, 2013.
7. Nearly 23% of cases enrolled on March 31, 2013 did not have a regular payment due in March 2013. About three-quarters (73%) of these cases carry arrears. Most of these cases in arrears (63%) have been enrolled in MEPs for more than 10 years. For many of these cases, the support payment obligations have likely expired, but the case remains open to collect on arrears.
8. The unit of analysis is MEP cases (a case is comprised of 1 payor and 1 recipient and the financial obligations that are being monitored and enforced by the maintenance enforcement program). In most instances, payors are involved in a single case, however a very small proportion of payors (5%) are involved in two or more cases.
9. The proportion excludes cases where arrears on enrolment were unknown. Data for Prince Edward Island are also excluded.
10. Manitoba does not report to the Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs (SMEP) or the Maintenance Enforcement Survey (MES), and data for Nunavut were not available for 2012/2013.
11. Through the years, amounts that were considered special payments when the case was first registered in a MEP may have been integrated into the regular payment due. This may impact the proportion of cases with special payments or the amount for cases with older children.
12. Proportion excludes Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan.
13. This proportion excludes ISO cases where the payor resides outside Canada.



14. Unlike the proportions provided in the first part of the article, the proportions presented here apply only to the March 2013 payment.
15. See CANSIM, table 477-0026.
16. There was no substantial difference between the results for youths aged 17 and those aged 18. Therefore, the results in this part of the article cover youths of both ages.

## Detailed data tables

Table 1  
Cases enrolled as of March 31, 2013

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>number</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>85,792</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	6,387
Prince Edward Island	2,402
Nova Scotia	14,995
New Brunswick	12,762
Saskatchewan	7,348
Alberta	40,837
Yukon	352
Northwest Territories	709

ISO = Interjurisdictional Support Orders

**Note:** Includes non-ISO and ISO-out cases.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs, 2012/2013.

Table 2  
Proportion of support cases enrolled as of March 31, 2013 by number of child beneficiaries

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>One child</b>	<b>Two children</b>	<b>Three children or more</b>
	percent		
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>8</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	73	23	4
Prince Edward Island	60	28	12
Nova Scotia	65	28	8
New Brunswick	65	28	7
Saskatchewan	56	29	15
Alberta	66	27	8
Yukon	75	20	5
Northwest Territories	60	23	17

ISO = Interjurisdictional Support Orders

**Note:** Includes non-ISO and ISO-out cases. Excludes cases where the spouse was the only beneficiary and cases where the number of children was unknown. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs, 2012/2013.

Table 3  
Median regular monthly payment due, by type of beneficiary and payor, as of March 31, 2013

Jurisdiction	Total	One child	Two children	Three children or more	Spouse only	Spouse and one child	Spouse and two children	Spouse and three children or more
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>1,400</b>	<b>1,800</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	<b>307</b>	250	455	605	713	1,730	1,700	2,012
Prince Edward Island	<b>292</b>	222	379	463	600	938	1,323	..
Nova Scotia	<b>300</b>	238	425	525	600	643	969	1,000
New Brunswick	<b>263</b>	200	369	499	630	561	1,041	1,629
Saskatchewan	<b>355</b>	285	449	516	600	600	915	1,285
Alberta	<b>400</b>	310	583	800	850	1,311	2,099	2,439
Yukon	<b>366</b>	313	537	1,200	x	x	x	..
Northwest Territories	<b>511</b>	429	626	955	609	..	..	..

.. not available for a specific reference period

x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*

ISO = Interjurisdictional Support Orders

**Note:** Includes non-ISO and ISO-out cases and excludes cases with no payments due in March 2013 or for which the payment was unknown.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs, 2012/2013.

Table 4  
Assigned cases by age group of the child and median age of recipient and payor, cases enrolled as of March 31, 2013

Age group	Total cases	Assigned cases	Median age of recipient	Median age of payor
	number	percent	years	
<b>All age groups</b>	<b>76,151</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>38</b>
0 to 5 years	9,125	24	27	29
6 to 11 years	19,816	15	32	35
12 to 17 years	29,132	10	38	41
18 to 25 years	18,078	8	46	48

ISO = Interjurisdictional Support Orders

**Note:** Includes non-ISO and ISO-out cases. Excludes cases for which the assignment status was unknown as well as cases where multiple children were in different age categories.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs, 2012/2013.

Table 5

Proportion of cases with special payments, proportion of payments received and median amount due, 2012/2013

Age group	Proportion of overall cases	Proportion of payments received	Median amount due for the year
	percent		dollars
<b>All age groups</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>1,273</b>
0 to 5 years	15	74	1,920
6 to 11 years	18	78	1,500
12 to 17 years	14	80	1,104
18 to 25 years	6	75	900

ISO = Interjurisdictional Support Orders

**Note:** Includes non-ISO and ISO-out cases. Excludes cases from Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan as well as cases where multiple children were in different age categories.**Source:** Statistics Canada, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs, 2012/2013.

Table 6

Reason for the termination/withdrawal of cases by length of enrolment, 2008/2009 to 2012/2013

	Order expired/ termination of support obligation	Withdrawn by program	Withdrawn by the recipient or the payor	Death of payor or recipient	Withdrawn by a social assistance agency
	percent				
<b>All withdrawn cases</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
Cases enrolled the first year only	46	30	21	2	1
Cases enrolled the first 2 years and not in 2012/2013	50	28	19	2	1
Cases enrolled for 3 years and not in 2012/2013	48	26	24	2	1
Cases enrolled the first 4 years and not in 2012/2013	42	36	20	1	0

ISO = Interjurisdictional Support Orders

**Note:** Includes non-ISO and ISO-out cases in 2008/2009 and involves youths who were aged 17 or 18 in 2008/2009. Excludes cases for which the reason is unknown. Total of percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.**Source:** Statistics Canada, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs, from 2008/2009 to 2012/2013