

Study: Parenting and child support after separation or divorce, 2011

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Approximately 5 million Canadians separated or divorced within the last 20 years, according to data from the 2011 General Social Survey on Families. Of these, about one-quarter (24%) had at least one child together aged 18 or younger at the time of the survey.

The mother's home was most often (70%) the child's primary residence after a separation or divorce. An additional 15% reported that the child lived mainly with the father, while 9% reported that the child had equal living time between the two parents' homes. The remaining 6% indicated other living arrangements.

Parents whose child lived with their ex-spouse or ex-partner most often saw their child less than three months over the course of the previous year. In all, 18% had no contact with their child and 44% spent some time, but less than three months. They were, most often, fathers.

Depending on where the child lived, the responsibility for making major child-related decisions on health, religion and education varied. In 2011, 21% of parents whose child primarily resided with them said major child-related decisions were made jointly or on an alternating basis with their ex-partner. This was perceived differently by parents whose child lived with their ex-partner, as almost half (49%) reported joint or alternating decision-making.

Almost three-quarters of separated or divorced parents (74%) were satisfied with the amount of the time spent with their children. This satisfaction was often tied to the living arrangements of the child and the actual amount of time spent with the child. For example, 90% of parents whose child mainly lived with them were satisfied with the amount of time spent with their child. In comparison, 44% of parents whose child did not primarily live with them were generally satisfied. This proportion increased to 64% for those spending at least five months a year with their child.

Financial support for the care of children was in place for about half of all separated or divorced parents. Child support payments, often made monthly, ranged from under \$1,000 to over \$10,000 a year, with the most common amount totalling between \$3,000 and \$4,999 a year. Compliance with payment amounts was generally high, with three-quarters of recipients having received the full amount in the 12 months preceding the survey.

Note to readers

This release is based on the analytical paper "Parenting and Child Support After Separation or Divorce," available today through the publication Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey.

The report uses data from the 2011 General Social Survey on Families and examines parenting decisions in the wake of a marital or common-law breakup, including child residency, time-sharing, and decision-making. It also looks at financial support arrangements for the child, including payment amounts and schedules.

The paper focuses on individuals who had separated from a legal marriage, separated from a common-law relationship or divorced in the 20 years prior to the survey, and who also had children aged 18 years or younger at the time of the survey.



Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 4501.

The article "Parenting and Child Support After Separation or Divorce," part of the publication *Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey* (89-652-X) is now available from the *Browse by key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; mediahotline@statcan.gc.ca).