



Early Learning and Child Care in Newfoundland and Labrador

Analysis of a poll conducted August 22-29, 2011

For
**CUPE Newfoundland and
Labrador**

1/3 of parents have problems arranging child care

One third of parents and guardians in Newfoundland and Labrador who have young children (33%) say they recently had problems finding someone to look after children who live with them.

Problems making child care arrangements are more commonplace among parents and guardians who have more than one young child in their home.

- Some 32% of parents and guardians with a child under age 6 have had difficulties in the past year or so making child care arrangements.
- 42% of parents who have children under 6 and a child aged 7 to 13 have recently had problems finding child care.¹ See pages 1-2 in the computer tables for details.

The Vector Poll™ telephone survey for CUPE interviewed parents and guardians who make the primary decisions on child care and education for a child under the age of 13 who is living with them.

The poll's sample of 304 respondents represents all parents and guardians in Newfoundland who make child-care decisions. Altogether there are about 72,000 children under age 14 in the province. So the 33% in households with problems arranging child care represents parents and guardians with nearly 24,000 young children.

¹ See pages 35-40 in the computer tables for the number of children in respondents' households.

Among the one in three parents and guardians encountering problems making child care arrangements, 24% say the problems arranging care involve the cost (73% say the problem involves other reasons). See page 3 in the computer tables for details.

Cost is more often a problem for younger parents than for those in their 30's and older. Four in 10 of the survey respondents who say (in the past year) the cost made it difficult to find child care are under 35 (page 42 in the data tables).

Whatever their annual household income, some Newfoundland and Labrador parents have trouble finding child care. In households with annual incomes under \$50,000, 25% had difficulties arranging child care due to cost. In households with annual incomes of \$50,000-\$100,000, 32% report problems making child care arrangements due to the cost.²

- Nearly all the parents with problems arranging child care due to the cost say their child care costs have been going up lately (89%).

Among all parents and guardians with young children in child care centres, according to the poll, 48% say their costs have been going up lately. Another 40% say their costs have been holding steady, while only 7% say their costs are trending down. See pages 11-12 in the computer tables for details.

² See page 43 in the computer tables for parents' pre-tax annual household incomes.

9 in 10 call public child care and early learning a good idea

At every income level, Newfoundland parents soundly support having the provincial government set up child care programs as part of the public school system. Some 89% of parents and guardians with young children in the home say a government early learning and child care system would be a good idea for a child of theirs.

Interviewers described a provincial child care system in public schools as “for example, early learning programs for children under 5, and for children 6 to 12, programs before and after the regular school day.”

Parents who have recently had trouble locating child care are even more inclined to say a provincial child care program in the public school system is a good idea (95%). Refer to page 19 in the computer tables for details.

While Newfoundland parents favour early learning and child care programs as part of the public school system, they also indicate they are at ease with higher taxes to pay for it.

- 71% of parents with young children who were surveyed in the poll think their taxes will go up if the government runs early learning and child care in the school system (25% think their taxes will stay about the same). For details see page 21 in the computer tables.

How much Newfoundland and Labrador parents pay for child care

Parents and guardians with children under 13 who have been in child care centres (or services in private homes) in the past year report paying \$683 on average in fees in an average month.

Parents who say they are having problems finding child care because of the cost are paying more: on average \$799 monthly.

Altogether two thirds (65%) of parents who use child care facilities pay \$500 or more a month – 22% pay \$1,000 and up.

In the communities along the Trans Canada Highway, typical monthly child care fees run \$651 on average, and in the West Coast and Labrador, \$535. Parents pay the most in the Avalon Peninsula (\$727 a month). For more details see page 15 in the computer tables.

Parents in households earning under \$50,000 a year say they are paying \$391 in fees on average, or about 14% of their pre-tax annual household earnings (calculated from pages 15 and 43 in the data tables).

Parents using home-based child care arrangements are paying more for child care – \$786 a month on average versus \$707 for parents using child care centres.

What parents pay for child care is closely linked with their ability to pay. In households with annual earnings under \$50,000, the mean or average monthly child care bill runs \$391. In households with annual earnings of \$100,000 or more, parents and guardians report paying \$715 on average.

The child care arrangements parents use

One in three parents has used child care centres (including services operated in private homes) for at least one child in the past year or so.

Child care arrangements Newfoundland & Labrador use (for children under 13)	
A relative	86%
A babysitter	65%
A friend or neighbour	56%
An early learning or child care service with other children not located in someone's home	30%
A kindergarten, a pre-school program or after-school program at a school	28%
An early learning or child care service with other children in someone's home	22%
A nanny	10%

Home-based child care is used more commonly in the Avalon Peninsula than in other regions. For instance, in the Avalon Peninsula 42% of the parents with children in child care centres use home-based child care services compared with 29% along the Trans Canada Highway (page 47 in the data tables). Two thirds of the province's parents recently have relied on babysitters, and nine in 10 say a relative

has looked after their children. See page 5 in the computer tables for details.

Most parents who do not have a child in child care centres or in kindergarten, pre-school or after-school programs say they don't rely on these services because they prefer to take care of their children themselves (58%).

However, 27% of parents who do not use child care facilities say the main reason is either because there are no child care spaces nearby or that available spaces are too expensive or inappropriate for their child's special needs (page 17 in the data tables).

Main reason parents do not have a child in child care programs	
Prefer to take care of children myself	58%
No space available in good quality child care nearby	14%
Convenient, good quality child care is too expensive	10%
Child care programs would not meet my child's special needs	3%
Not sure/rather not say	14%

The more children they have, the more likely parents are to say they prefer looking after their children, not having them in child care. Nonetheless, 25% of these parents and guardians who haven't used child care facilities have had difficulty recently finding someone to look after their children.

Ability to pay sways child care decisions

Money is clearly a hurdle for lower-income Newfoundlander parents seeking child care. Households with annual pre-tax incomes over \$100,000 are much more likely than lower-income households to rely on child care centres and early learning services.

- Among \$100,000+ households, for example, 35% have recently used child care centres (not in private homes), compared with 11% of households with annual earnings under \$50,000.

Looking only at parents using early learning and child care centres and who rely on schools (kindergarten, pre-school and after-school programs), shows that parents in upper-income groups are twice as likely as lower-income parents to have children in child care centres (page 47 in the data tables).

Most parents relying on child care services (in homes and centres) say the people looking after their children seem satisfied with their pay and working conditions (61%). But one in seven parents (15%) says the staff who look after their child appear dissatisfied with their pay and conditions of work (page 7 in the computer tables).

Some 23% these parents and guardians also say there is high turnover and inconsistent care in the child care centres they have used in the past year (page 9 in the data tables).

Nine in 10 parents using early learning or child care centres say the centres are convenient in terms of the days of the week or hours of the

day the services are available. Fewer than half (48%), however, say the centres' hours are "very convenient" (page 13 in the tables).

Parents in the Avalon Peninsula are more likely than parents in the rest of the province to say the centres they use are convenient.

Not surprisingly, parents who work nontraditional hours, such as weekends and nights, are more likely to say the child care centres they use are inconvenient (page 14 in the computer analysis).

The poll also shows that around a quarter of the province's parents who are in the paid work force and have children under 13 at home work evenings, nights and weekends (for details on parents' hours of work see page 29 in the data tables).³ Mothers are more likely than fathers to work nonstandard hours. Nine in 10 parents working part-time are women.

Part-time employees are less likely than full-time workers to have children in child care centres and services. Part-time workers are more likely to prefer taking care of their children themselves and are also much more inclined to say there is no space in good quality child care services nearby (page 17 in the computer analysis).

³ See page 25 in the computer tables for details on parents' employment and parents who are not in the paid work force.

Parents give up job opportunities to look after children

The lack of child care facilities and early childhood education opportunities for their offspring keeps many parents from working full-time. More than half of the parents polled who work part-time (54%) say they would prefer full-time work if they had better child care arrangements (page 27 in the tables).

Many parents who work part-time have spouses who also work part-time (26%).⁴

Single parents are as likely as married parents to say they have had trouble finding child care, but single parents and guardians are more likely to say the problem finding child care is the cost (page 3 in the computer analysis).⁵

Lack of child care has also kept parents and guardians from looking for paid work, filling a job opening and taking advantage of job training.

According to the poll, 25% of Newfoundland and Labrador parents with young children say in the past two years or so they or someone in their household put off seeking a paid job, accepting a job or taking job training because they could not make suitable child care arrangements and “had to stay home to look after a child.”

- Parents with more than one child under 13 are 10 percentage points more likely than other parents to say they put off seeking

⁴ See page 33 in the computer tables for the employment status of respondents’ spouses.

⁵ See page 31 in the computer tables for the marital status of parents and guardians.

or accepting jobs or training because they could not find child care.

Lower-income people, residents in Labrador and the West Coast, part-time employees, parents who are under 35 and single parents are the most likely to forego jobs and training to look after children. Among those with problems finding child care, 42% say they postponed work or training to look after a child. For details see page 23 in the computer analysis.

Additional Implications

Concerns over the cost of child care and early childhood learning are most prevalent among parents and guardians in the Avalon Peninsula. The region has 60% of the province's parents with young children at home but 79% of the parents who say they had problems over the past year finding child care because of the cost (page 50 in the computer tables).

The poll also reveals that men make up a third of the parents and guardians in Newfoundland and Labrador who make the primary decisions on child care and education for their children.⁶

Two thirds (60%) of the province's parents with children under age 13 have two or more children in that age at home (page 36 in the data tables). Among parents with two or more young children in the household, 35% have three or more who are under the age of 13.

Parents with two or more young children are more likely than other parents and guardians to have postponed looking for work, taking a job or entering a training program because they could not find suitable child care (page 24 in the tables).

Two thirds of the province's parents and guardians who make the primary decisions on child care for children under 13 are in the 35-to-44 cohort.⁷

⁶ See page 51 in the tables for details on child care decision-makers by gender.

⁷ See page 41 in the tables for age brackets in the poll sample.

Method

The findings in this report are based on telephone interviews conducted by the Vector Poll™ from August 22 through August 29, 2011, with 304 adults (aged 18 and over) throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Vector Poll™ is a member of the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association, Canada's standards-setting body for the polling industry.

The sample of phone numbers was drawn by recognized probability sampling methods to ensure that the sample is representative of the Newfoundland and Labrador population and by a method that gave all residential telephone numbers, both listed and unlisted, an equal chance of being included in the poll.

The data were weighted to reflect the actual shares of the provincial population in each region of the province.

In sampling theory, in 19 cases out of 20 (or 95% of all samples), the results based on a random sample of 304 in a population the size of Newfoundland's (aged 18 and over) will differ by no more than plus or minus 5.6 percentage points where opinion is evenly divided.

This means you can be 95% certain that the poll results do not vary by more than 5.6 percentage points up or down from results that would have been obtained by interviewing all parents and guardians in Newfoundland who have young children. The margin of sampling error for subgroups such as females and males is larger.

—Marc Zwelling, President, Vector Research + Development Inc.