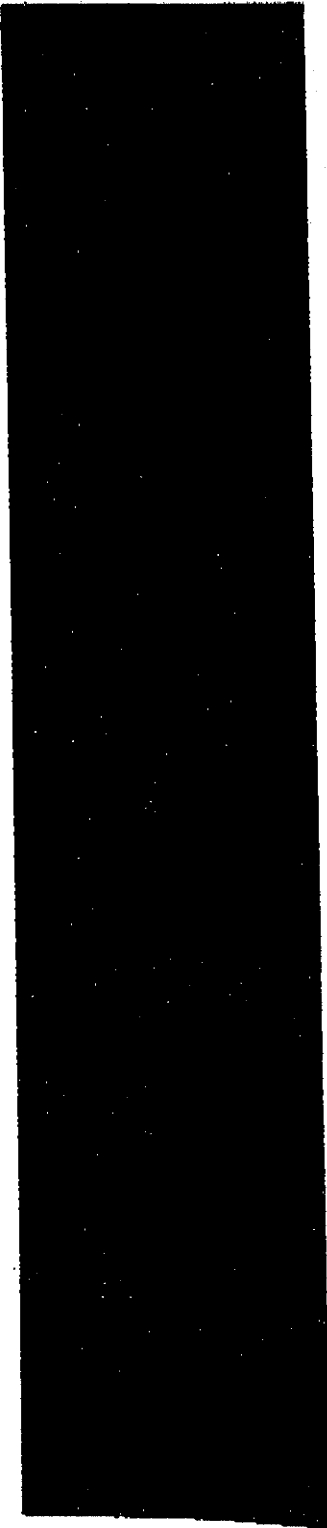




***Department of Justice
Child Support Ad Testing***

Final Survey Report

October 2000



The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice Canada.

Introduction

We are pleased to present to the Department of Justice this report based on the results of a national survey testing responses to child support advertising and attitudes about child support issues.

Among other things, the report evaluates reaction and recall to the Department of Justice ad and attitudes about child support issues in general.

The final advertisement was designed, as outlined by the Department of Justice, with the following objectives in mind. Firstly, to promote positive parenting and secondly to raise public awareness about the importance of paying child support.

Aimed at non-custodial parents, the advertisement was set in a girl's bedroom. While a voice-over spoke to parents about the importance of providing emotional and financial support for their children, the camera panned around the room depicting the girl in various stages of her life. Basically, this concept was selected because it made an emotional plea to non-custodial parents about the importance of meeting their obligations. Its subtle approach was non-threatening yet clear and direct.

It is our understanding that the ad was played nationally, over a two-week period beginning October 1, 2000 through October 15, 2000 on national networks during peak viewing times for non-custodial parents. A second buy airing over the specialty networks is to commence late January 2001.

Survey Methodology

A survey of 1,357 Canadians was conducted nationwide between October 16 and October 23, 2000. This sample included an overrepresentation of the prairies and Atlantic Canada in order to ensure adequate cell sizes of each region in the country.

The weighted sample size is 1,200. The margin of error for a sample of this size can be considered to be within +/-2.9 nineteen times out of twenty.

Further details of the sample and interviewing can be found in the appendix.

Of the 818 respondents who have children, our sample included 313 people who are no longer living with the mother/father of their children. Of those respondents, 46 are payers of child support and 52 are receivers of child support. The remaining 215 were either non-responsive (29) or do not currently have an agreement for the payment or receipt of child support (186).

Not surprisingly, people who are no longer living with the mother/father of their children tend to be in the range of 30-49 years of age. There is also evidence that these people are less educated and make less per household on an annual basis (likely given the fact that number is based on one income).

The table below outlines the demographic profile of respondents not currently living with the mother/father of their children in our sample.

Category	Total (1,200) %	Total (313) %	Payers (46) %	Receivers (52) %	No Agreement (186) %
Age:					
<30	16	5	6	16	3
30-39	20	15	22	24	10
40-49	24	27	46	51	17
50-64	25	30	25	9	40
65+	15	23	-	-	30
Gender:					
Male	49	38	83	12	33
Female	51	62	17	88	67
Education:					
High school	41	47	46	34	50
College	23	24	29	35	21
University	36	29	25	31	29
Income:					
<\$20k	12	25	13	24	27
\$20k-\$29k	13	15	22	20	11
\$30k-\$39k	14	17	24	14	16
\$40k-\$59k	23	24	18	27	25
\$60k-\$99k	19	15	20	13	14
\$100k+	9	5	2	2	5
Employment Status:					
Self-employed	11	10	18	8	9
Full-time	44	37	60	53	31
Part-time	9	9	6	17	7
Unemployed	5	7	4	13	6
Student	4	2	2	5	1
Retired	19	27	4	2	35
Homemaker	6	5	2	2	6
Other	2	3	2	-	4

Executive Summary

This report details the findings of a survey of Canadians, the purpose of which was to assess the reaction to Government of Canada television advertising on the subject of child support and to gain more understanding of Canadians' attitudes on the issue of child support.

The purpose of the advertising was two-fold:

- Encourage the payment of child support
- Promote positive attitudes about parenting

This research would indicate that the advertising program was successful and that the advertisement has the capacity to convey the key messages effectively. For the length and intensity of the media buy, the recall numbers (30%) are good and demonstrate the advertisement cuts through the clutter of commercials on television.

The research also indicates that the advertising was well received by those who saw it. Even among those Canadians who pay child support – a very sensitive audience to talk to about this issue – only a small number felt negatively about the advertisement. Not only did people feel positively about the advertisement but they absorbed the key messages. "Children come first", "the need for parents to provide for their children both emotionally and financially", and "our children, our future" were the most commonly cited messages from the advertising.

The survey demonstrates that most Canadians support the idea of the Government of Canada advertising on this subject. Not only do most people support government involvement in this issue, there is a tendency to assume that the Government would advertise in this area to help maintain the standard of living of children or to encourage the payment of child support.

Most Canadians support the principles underlying the Government's policy on child support, especially the core concept that the purpose of child support is to maintain the child's standard of living, not to merely ensure that the child has the basic necessities.

There is an absolute sense that child support must be paid and that there are few, if any, acceptable reasons for not paying. Three quarters of Canadians think that child support is either the first or second financial priority a person can have and ninety percent think that government should do everything it can to make sure payments are



made. The most supported enforcement mechanism tested is garnishment of wages.

The next section of the report outlines the findings in detail, as well as reporting on any significant demographic or regional differences.

Survey Results

In order to assess any predisposition, whether positive or negative, toward the Government of Canada, a series of questions were asked about the performance of the government.

In this case, in addition to asking respondents how they rate the performance of the federal government overall, we also asked them to rate its performance managing four key areas of the Department of Justice.

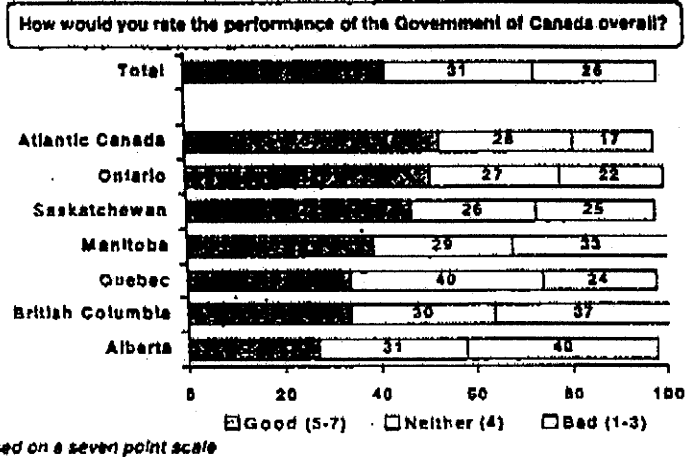
These questions provide both an easy entry into the survey for respondents and also provide an analytic framework for the questions that deal with the Government's role and policies on this issue.

Performance of the Federal Government

The federal government continues to inspire moderate reactions on the part of Canadians. By historic standards, the percentage of Canadians who are negative about the government's overall performance is very low – in this poll 26%, a level that has been stable for seven years. However, it is not the case that people are strongly positive. Rather, people cluster around a position of neutrality. In this survey 75% of respondents offer a rating of 3, 4, or 5 on a seven-point scale.

Negative ratings are considerably higher in western Canada, as has been the case for some time. On the other hand, one of this government's accomplishments has been to achieve a level of acceptance in Quebec that is meaningful.

Government of Canada Performance



As is usually the case, when one gets past the overall assessment and asks people about specific issues one finds more negative attitudes. The overall positive positioning is likely related to the economic performance of the country.

We asked people to rate the government's performance on a number of issues relevant to the work of Justice Canada.

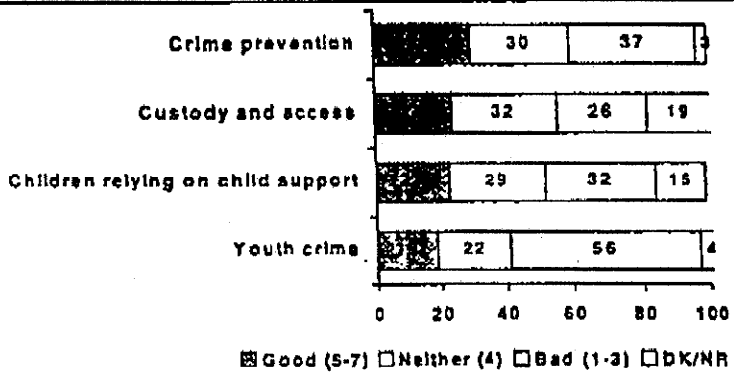
Youth crime remains an area where people are unhappy with the government's performance. Fifty-six percent (56%) say the government is doing a poor job in that area, compared to only 19% who say performance is good. Men are more likely to be critical than are women, but opposition is strong among both men and women. Negative levels range from around 45% in Quebec and the Atlantic to highs of around 70% in western Canada. Ontario is on the national average.



Both custody and access and child support found relatively few Canadians rendering a negative verdict on the government – 26% and 32% respectively. Interestingly, there was no gender gap on those issues – men and women tended to see government performance the same way. As we will see later in the report, there are huge differences in attitude between men and women on both child support and custody and access issues.

 **Government of Canada Performance**

Thinking just of the Government of Canada's role in issues relating to our legal system, how would you rate its performance on ...?



Please use a 1-7 scale where 7 means you totally agree with the statement and 1 means you totally disagree with it, with 4 being neither agree nor disagree.

Advertising Recall

One of the primary purposes for this research was to assess the effectiveness of the advertising campaign Justice Canada has launched relating to child support.

Recall was tested in two fashions – unaided and aided. Of the two, aided recall (where respondents are read a brief description of the ad and then asked if they saw such an advertisement) is the more reliable measure. Unaided tests top of mind recall, while aided tests whether the ad was seen and stored in memory.

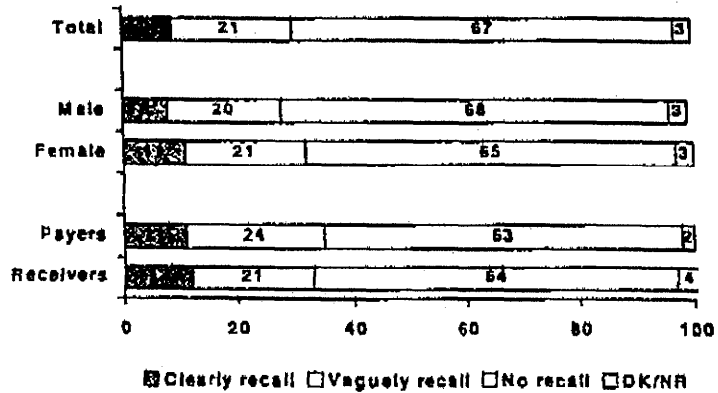
Unaided recall of the advertisement was 21% nationally. Recall was higher among people over the age of 40. Otherwise, there were no significant demographic differences.

Aided recall was 30% nationally, consisting of 9% who clearly recall the ad and 21% who have a more vague recollection. In our experience, this is an acceptable to good response given the size of the buy and the length of the campaign.

Women were more likely to recall the ad than were men but payers of child support were significantly more likely (35%) to recall the ad. Recall levels were lower in Alberta and British Columbia and highest in Quebec.

 **Aided Recall**

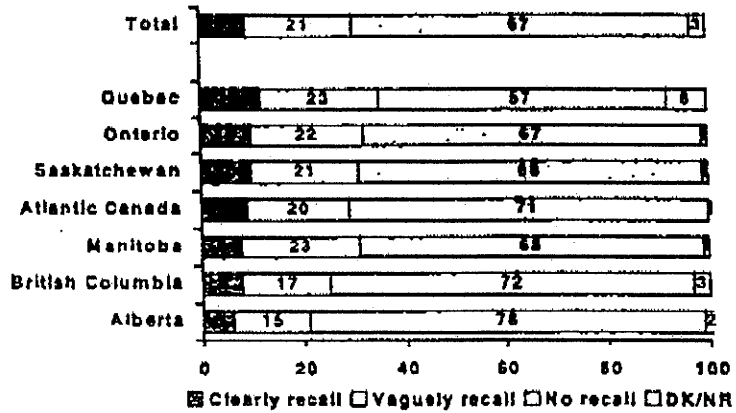
Would you say you clearly recall, vaguely recall or do not recall this ad at all?



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Aided Recall

Would you say you clearly recall, vaguely recall or do not recall this ad at all?

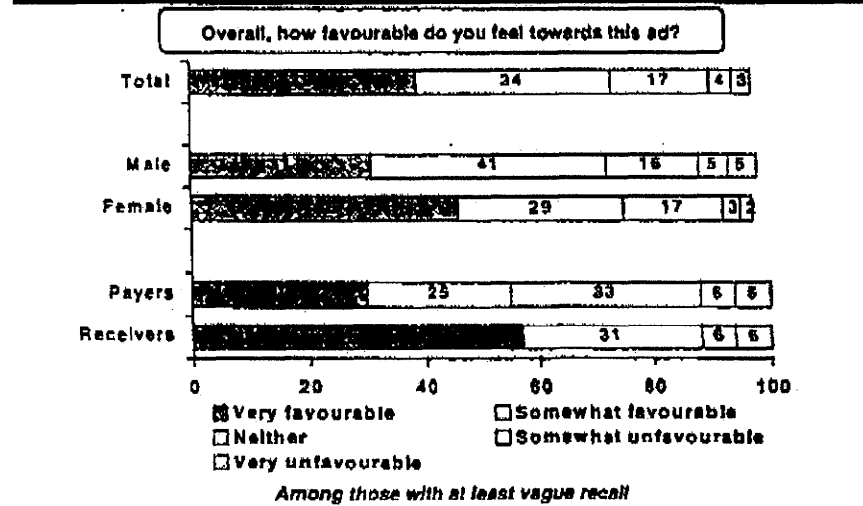


Of those who recall the ad, seventy three percent feel favourably about the ad and only seven percent feel unfavourable. In other words, people who saw it, liked it. Women were more likely to feel strongly favourable than men were (46% - 31%). Recipients of child support were very likely to feel favourably toward the ad. Payers also approved, by a margin of 55% favourable to 12% unfavourable.

It was understood at the outset of this project that it was easy to offend the target audience. Ads that employ guilt-trip tactics, threats, or directives are offensive to non-custodial parents and put up a barrier between them and the message. In order to keep them engaged and listening the objective was to make an emotional plea that came in under the radar. Meaning an ad that delivered the appropriate message but that was subtle and non-confrontational that it kept non-custodial parents' attention rather than upsetting them.

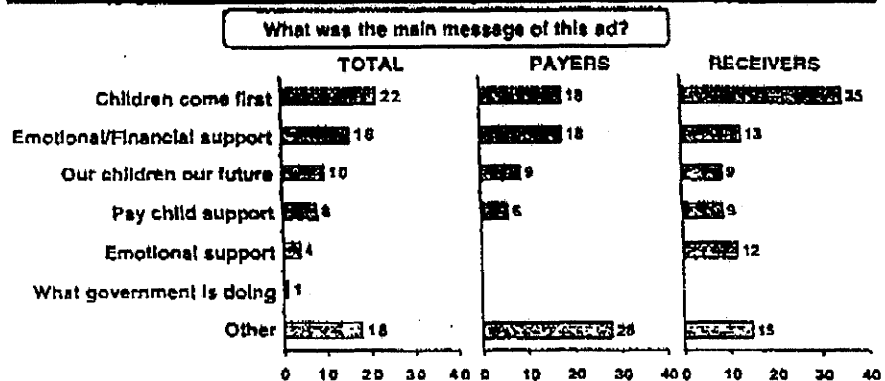
Given the sensitivity of the subject matter, it is a real accomplishment for the advertising agency and the Government to have produced an ad on this subject that only 12% of the non-custodial payer target market reacted unfavourably toward.

Ad Favourability



The most commonly cited main message was "Children come first", illustrating that the ad successfully conveyed the desired message. The second most commonly cited message was that parents need to provide their children with emotional and financial support. Third was "our children our future", proving yet again how important visuals are in delivering messages on television given this message was only displayed visually and not spoken.

Aided Recall



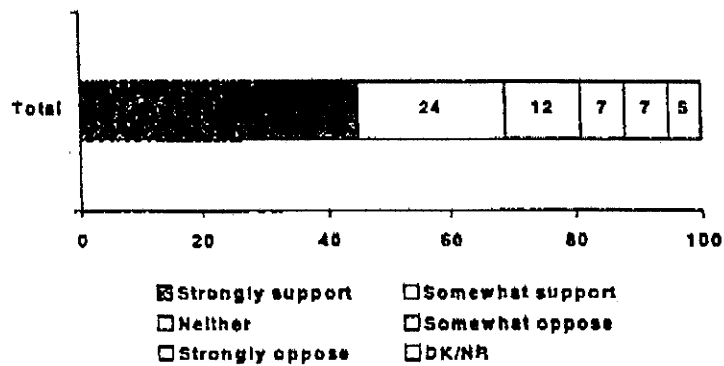
- "OTHER": PRIMARY CATEGORIES**
- Support for children
 - Parents being more responsible to children
 - Children are important
 - Take care of your children

Canadians support the idea of government advertising on this subject. 69% support the Government of Canada advertising on this issue, compared with 14% who oppose (of which only 7% strongly oppose). This is a very high level of support for a government initiative and especially high for government advertising, something many people often take a jaundiced view of. This may be related to the fact that people tended not to attribute political motives to this kind of advertising. Only 12% said they thought the government would do this advertising to improve its political position, compared with 40% who felt it was to help maintain the standard of living for children or to encourage the payment of child support.

Support was evenly distributed across the country, with no discernable regional variation.

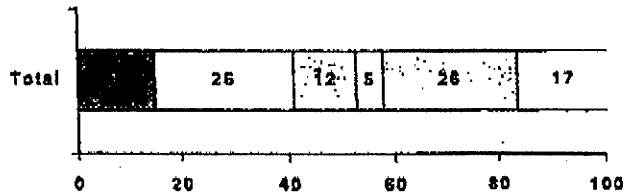
Support for Government Advertising

How strongly would you say you support or oppose the Government of Canada advertising on this issue?



Government's Objective?

What do you think the government is trying to achieve by advertising on the issue of child support?



- Maintain the standard of living for children
 - Encourage/remind people to pay child support
 - Make political gains/improve the government's reputation
 - Save money on social programs
 - Other
 - DK/NR
- "OTHER": PRIMARY CATEGORIES**
- Raise awareness, educate people 5%
 - Encourage parental responsibility 4%
 - Strengthen family values 2%
 - Protect children's future 1%



Attitudes About Child Support

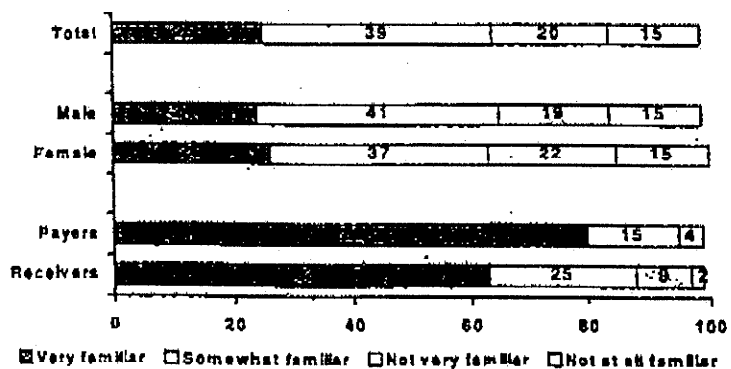
The purpose of this survey was twofold. Its main purpose was to test response and recall to a national television advertising campaign to increase public awareness about the importance of paying child support. Its secondary purpose was to explore respondents' attitudes toward child support in general.

The following section explores Canadians' attitudes toward child support by examining their reaction to various questions about the issue. Not only is this important for the Department in terms of gleaning new findings on the issue of child support, but more importantly, to understand their opinions toward the advertisement. More specifically, with these questions we can learn about the respondents and their predispositions toward child support.

Two thirds of Canadians describe themselves as either very (25%) or somewhat (39%) familiar with the concept of child support. Fifteen percent say they are not familiar at all with the concept.

Familiarity with Child Support

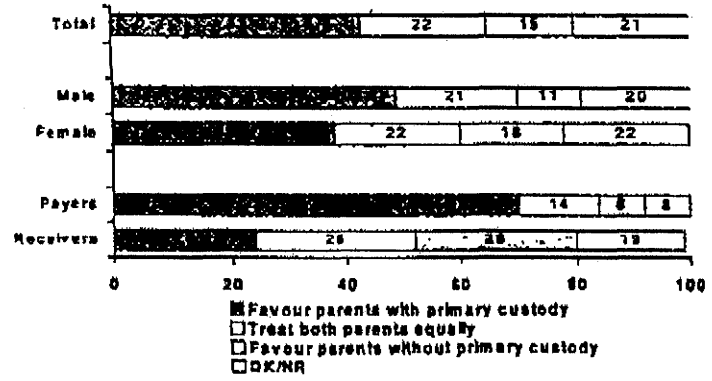
How familiar would you say you are with the concept of child support?



There is a tendency on the part of Canadians to think that child support arrangements generally favour the parent with primary custody. Forty three percent believe that versus 15% who think arrangements tend to favour the parent without primary custody and 22% who think both parents are treated fairly. Perhaps not surprisingly, men have a strong inclination to think that child support favours the custodial parent. It is interesting that women are also more likely to think that child support favours the custodial parent than they are to think that child support treats both parents fairly. Recipients of child support are evenly divided as to whether child support tends to favour one of the parents or to treat them fairly, but payers of child support overwhelmingly think that the parent with primary custody is favoured. In other words, few payers of child support feel that their child support payments favour them.

Favours Whom?

In general, would you say that child support arrangements favour parents with primary custody, favour parents without primary custody or treat both parents equally?



Some of the basic underpinnings of the Government's approach to child support are endorsed by Canadians, these findings indicate.

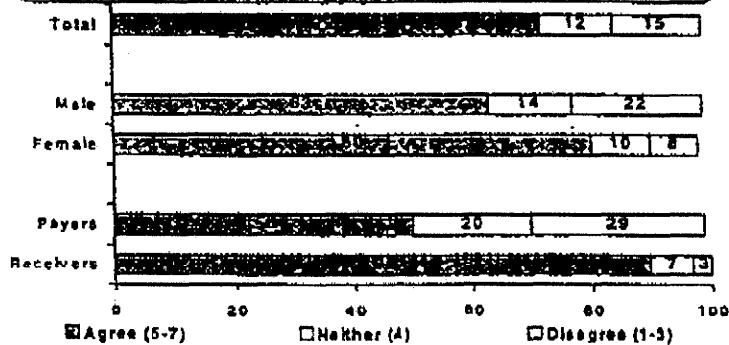
- Three quarters of Canadians (including two thirds of payers) agree that child support is about maintaining the child's standard of living, not about merely providing basic necessities.
- Nine out of ten Canadians agree that "regardless of the parent's situation, the interests of the children should always come first".

- Roughly half of Canadians agree that the custodial parent can be trusted to put child support payments to their proper use, while one quarter are not certain.
- Most Canadians support child support payments continuing after the age of eighteen to cover educational costs. There is a very large gender divide on this point. Over half of the women sampled agreed **strongly** with this idea, while the same was true of less than one in three men. One out of every two payers of child support does not agree with this idea.



Payments for Educational Costs

It's important to have a higher education and that's why child support payments should continue beyond the age of 18 if the child goes on to post-secondary education.



Please use a 1-7 scale where 7 means you totally agree with the statement and 1 means you totally disagree with it, with 4 being neither agree nor disagree.

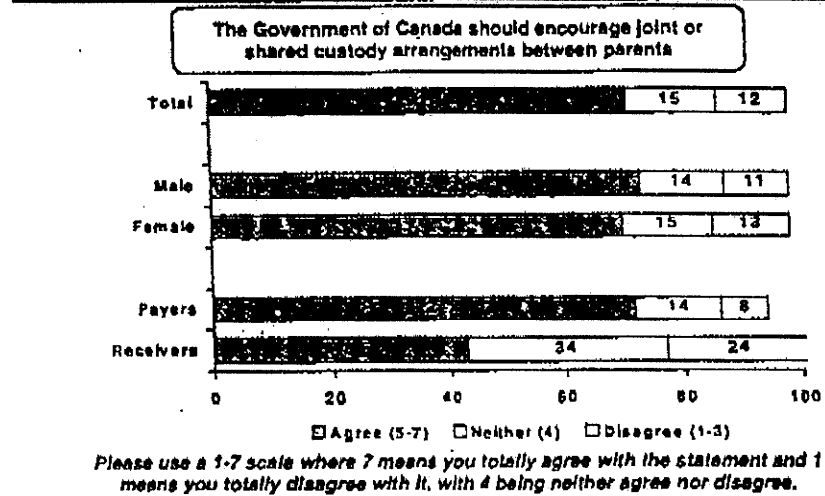
The survey generates some interesting findings with respect to the intersection of child support with custody and access.

- There is overwhelming agreement with the idea that the Government should encourage joint or shared custody arrangements. Overall, 71% of Canadians agree with that. Interestingly, there is no gender divide on this point – women and men agree in equal numbers. There is a weak relationship with age, however, and the older one is the more likely one is to feel strongly that joint or shared custody arrangements should be encouraged. People who currently have children at home also agree strongly with this proposition.

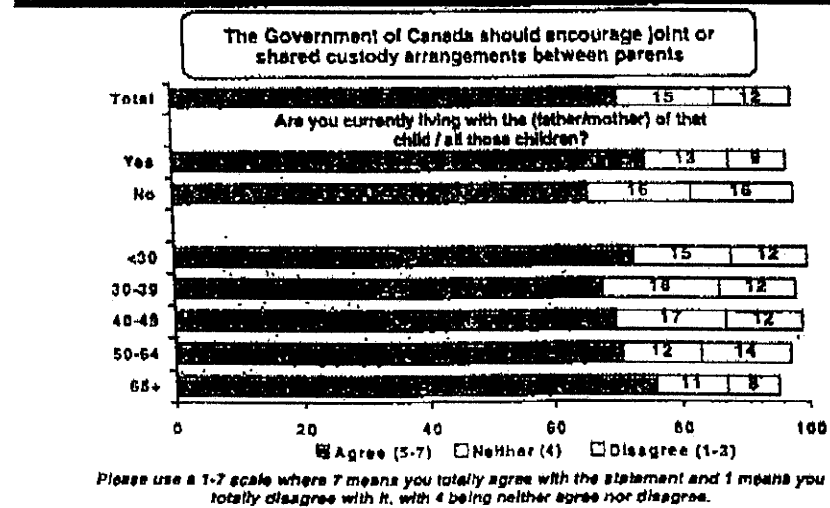


The only group of people who are not enthusiastic proponents are custodial parents receiving child support. Even there, only 24 disagree but many are neutral or lukewarm.

Government Encourage Joint/Shared Custody Arrangements



Government Encourage Joint/Shared Custody Arrangements



- The relationship between access and paying child support was tested a number of different ways. There are significant differences in the way men and women think about this issue. However, any way you slice it most Canadians think child support should be paid regardless of the access issues. However, there is sympathy for people who are paying support without receiving access and many say that doesn't seem right. However, they still think the support needs to be paid. That is true of a majority of men as well.

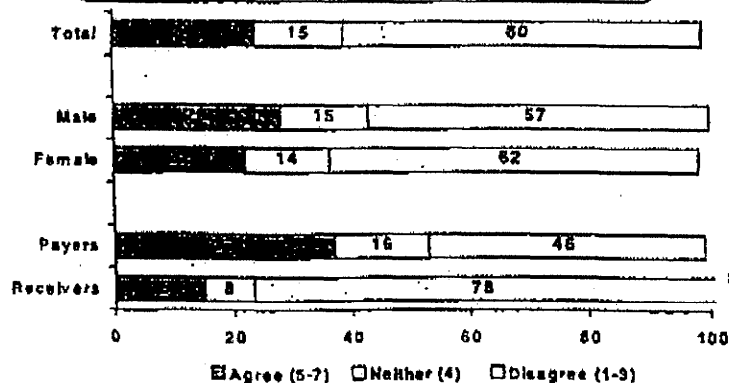
The survey also reveals strong support for a government role in the child support issue. A majority disagreed with a statement that said child support is a matter internal to families and there was no role for government. A majority of both men and women disagreed with that idea.

While nearly half of the payers disagree with that statement, a large percentage (37%) agrees that government involvement should be limited. This is congruent with our initial assumptions about non-custodial parents; that for the most part, they tend to feel targeted by the government and are wary of stereotypes like "deadbeat Dads".



Matter for Families not Government

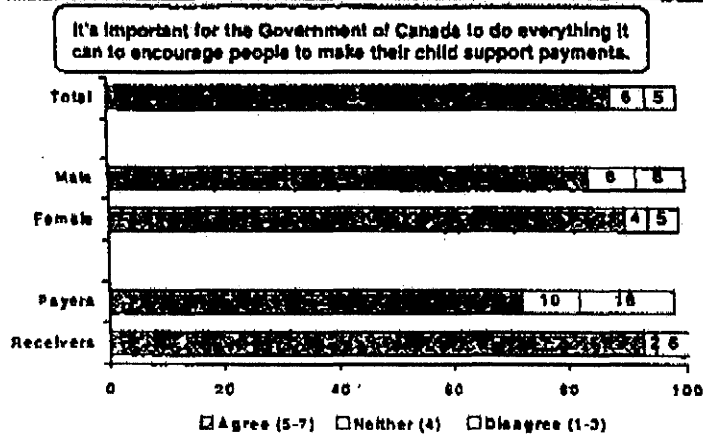
Payment of child support is a matter internal to families and there is no role for government.



Please use a 1-7 scale where 7 means you totally agree with the statement and 1 means you totally disagree with it, with 4 being neither agree nor disagree.

- Nine out of ten Canadians agree that the Government should do everything it can to encourage people to make their child support payments. Women feel more strongly than men about this but men agreed overwhelmingly as well:

Government Do Everything to Encourage Payment



Please use a 1-7 scale where 7 means you totally agree with the statement and 1 means you totally disagree with it, with 4 being neither agree nor disagree.

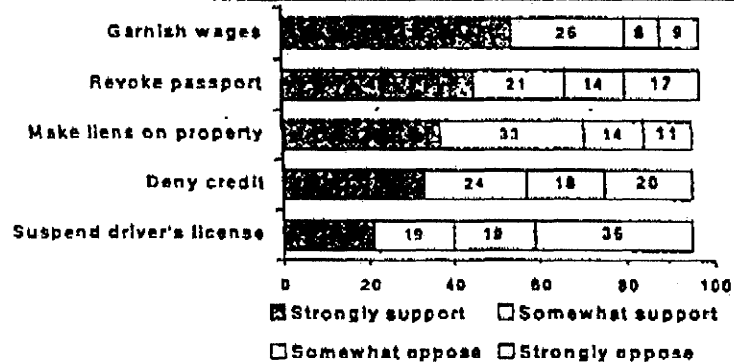
- Over 80% also think that the Government should crack down hard on people who do not pay child support owing. There is little sympathy or understanding and as we have seen, few see lack of access as an acceptable reason.

This raises the question – what does crack down hard mean to Canadians? Among the five possible sanctions we tested, there is broad support for three – garnishing wages, liens on property, and revoking or denying a passport. There is a little less support for denying credit, although men are as likely to oppose that idea as support it; and there is majority opposition to the idea of suspending drivers' licenses. Only forty percent support that measure (women no different than men) and fifty five percent oppose it. Previous research has indicated that people think there is something illogical about an action that will make it more difficult for a defaulter to get or keep a job.



Dealing with Defaulters

When a non-custodial parent, who has been ordered to pay child support to the parent who has custody of the children, does not do so, they are known as "defaulters". Do you support or oppose the following federal and provincial government initiatives to enforce the payment of child support orders from defaulters?



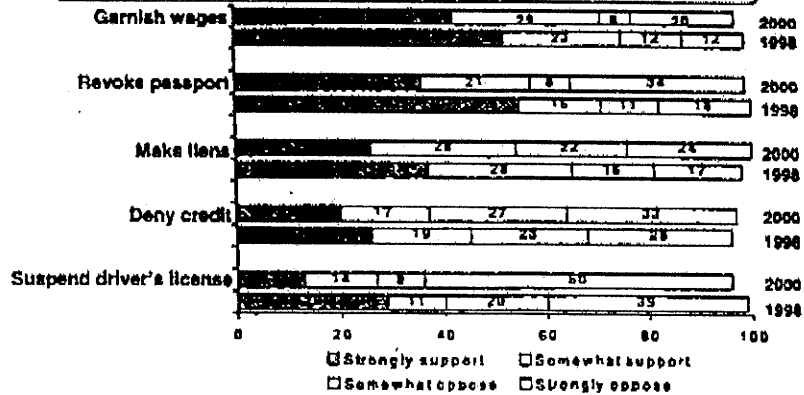
Looking at these questions just among payers of child support, the data seems to indicate that they have become less likely to be supportive of these measures over the past couple of years. We think it is unlikely that there has been such a large movement of opinion in such a short period of time. There are two other possible explanations, both of which are likely in play. First, when looking at the payers we are only looking at very small sample sizes in both surveys. This means there are very high margins of error and that the differences between the two surveys might not actually be as large as it appears. Second, in this survey, respondents had just finished dealing with a number of questions relating to the fairness of child support and with the relationship between custody/access issues and child support. In that "frame", given payer sensitivity, it is not surprising that support for tough crack down measures would have found less support. Payers know what the politically correct answers to the questions are and tend to



give them first off. It is only after some probing that one gets closer to what they are really thinking. This survey might be closer to the mark than the previous one.

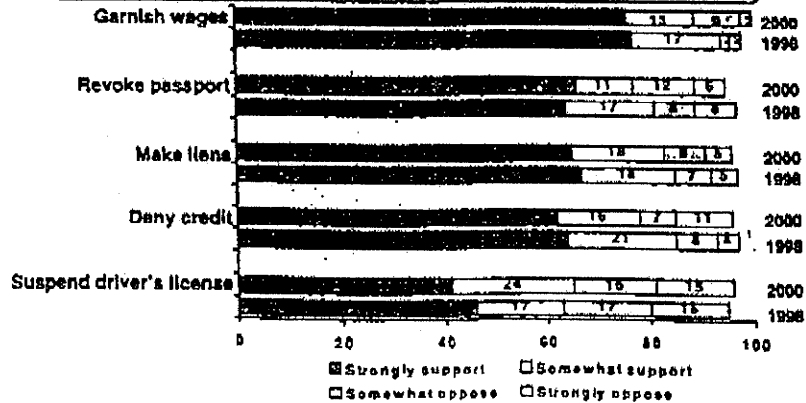
Dealing with Defaulters (Among Payers)

When a non-custodial parent, who has been ordered to pay child support to the parent who has custody of the children, does not do so, they are known as "defaulters". Do you support or oppose the following federal and provincial government initiatives to enforce the payment of child support orders from defaulters?



Dealing with Defaulters (Among Receivers)

When a non-custodial parent, who has been ordered to pay child support to the parent who has custody of the children, does not do so, they are known as "defaulters". Do you support or oppose the following federal and provincial government initiatives to enforce the payment of child support orders from defaulters?





Respondents were asked to rank a series of possible financial obligations in terms of importance. It is clear that two kinds of obligations stand out as being more important than the others – mortgage payments and child support payments. Almost half rank child support payments as the most important priority, while about thirty percent say it is mortgage payments. Men are about evenly split between the two obligations. Given that they have just answered many questions about child support payments and know that the survey is sponsored by the government, the priority attached to child support may be overstated somewhat. Fifty four percent of women say child support is number one and one in four women say the mortgage payment is number one.

There is a big difference in attitude on this issue between payers and recipients. Payers are more inclined to rank the mortgage payment number one, while recipients overwhelmingly rank child support payments at the top.



Financial Obligations

	Total	Payers	Recelvers	Male	Female
Child support payments	48	32	61	42	54
Mortgage payments	29	47	23	33	26
Income taxes	8	9	2	9	7
Retirement savings	3	4	0	4	3
Spousal support payments	1	0	2	2	2
Credit card payments	2	2	2	2	1
Car payments	0	2	1	1	0
Leisure activities	0	0	2	1	0



Child Support Obligations

I'm going to show you a list of financial obligations many people have to meet. In planning a personal financial budget, how important do you think each of the following financial obligations should be to a person?

	CHILD SUPPORT MENTIONS							
	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth
Total	48	24	11	8	3	2	1	0
Payers	32	36	18	11	2	0	0	0
Receivers	61	21	7	4	0	2	0	0
Male	42	25	14	7	3	2	1	1
Female	54	24	9	5	2	1	1	0

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Appendix

1. Survey methodology
2. Interview Schedule

Survey Methodology

Immediately following the last day of advertising, in total, 1,357 telephone interviews were conducted with a randomly selected sample of Canadians, 18 years of age or older between October 16 and October 23, 2000. Table 1 illustrates the sample quota distribution for the 1,315 interviews, across the 7 regions. The overall margin of error for the base national sample of 1,200 is $\pm 2.9\%$, 19 times out of 20.

Table 1
Sample Breakdown

<u>POLLARA Region</u>	<u>1996 Census Population</u>	<u>Base Regional Quota</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Oversample</u>	<u>Sample Needed</u>
		1,184			
Atlantic	2,333,764	98	150	52	150
Quebec	7,138,795	297	-	-	297
Ontario	10,753,573	445	-	-	445
Prairies	2,104,135	87	150	63	150
Alberta	2,696,826	112	-	-	112
British Columbia	3,724,500	156	-	-	156
Territories	95,168	5	-	-	5
CANADA	28,846,761	1,200		115	1,315

The Questionnaire (sh)

The questions were designed and approved by Earncliffe Research and Communications and the Department of Justice.

POLLARA and Earncliffe take full responsibility for the professionalism and fairness of the research instruments we use, and meet or exceed the professional ethical requirements of the Canadian Association of Market Research Organizations (CAMRO) and the Professional Marketing Research Society (PMRS).

Interviewing

Interviewing was conducted at POLLARA's state-of-the-art tele-research centres in Bathurst, New Brunswick (bilingual English and French), Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver using Computer-Assisted-Telephone-Interviewing (CATI).

Approximately 30% of all interviews were monitored by senior POLLARA supervisors, while 100% were supervised to ensure data quality and the swift resolution of any problems. Interviewers are careful at all times to respect the privacy and schedule of respondents. Refusals are graciously accepted and interviews are rescheduled with willing participants as many times as necessary.

Again, POLLARA maintains strict quality control procedures in accordance with guidelines established by CAMRO and the PMRS. As a CAMRO member, POLLARA participates in regular audits of its research methodology. Senior POLLARA personnel, including those involved in this study, are also members in good standing of PMRS, which sets guidelines for ethical and professional conduct, as well as providing members with the opportunity to keep abreast of emerging developments in market research.
