

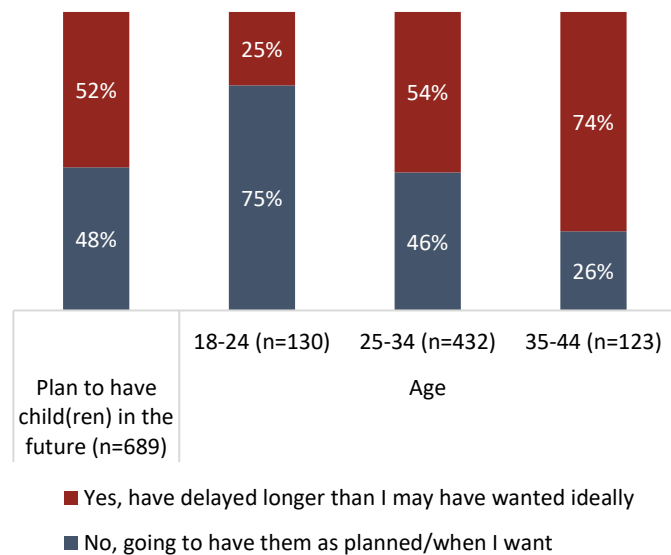
## Birth rate crisis? Half of those who want children have waited longer than they'd like, due largely to cost

*Among those seeking childcare just half say they were successful, and experience was satisfactory*

**October 8, 2024** – Canada's fertility rate hit its lowest rate in recorded history for a [second consecutive year](#) in 2023. The spinoff impacts of this are already being felt – with Canada's [aging workforce joining a swelling retirement-age population](#) and increasing economic pressure to meet this groups' needs and entitlements.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds insight into the reasons behind lagging birth rates. ARI asked 1,300 Canadian adults younger than 50 if they plan to have children, and if not, why? Among this group, one-in-five are definitely (21%) going to have at least one child, while one-in-three (32%) say they may still do so. Within these two groups of potential parents, fully half say that they have delayed having kids longer than they ideally would have wanted. This rises to three-quarters (74%) among 35- to 44-year-olds. The top reasons driving delays are both societal and personal. For many, the search for the right partner has just not borne fruit (40%). For others, however, uncertainty surrounding their finances and the job market (41%) the cost of childcare (33%) and the housing affordability crisis (31%) are all drivers of the decision to wait.

### Have you delayed having children longer than you may have wanted ideally because of other aspects of life?



#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey Sept. 12 - 18 2024 among a representative randomized sample of 4,063 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The number of parents with children aged 0 to 6 has been boosted to 474, to ensure more relevant responses regarding childcare. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

Even among those who are definitely not going to have children (37% of the 1,300 adults surveyed) these worries about childcare and cost are a factor. One-quarter among this group say they decided not to have kids because the spectre of childcare costs was too daunting (25%), while one-in-five (18%) said it was too hard to foresee having proper housing to start a family.

With immigration playing a larger role year over year in [sustaining the population](#) – and criticism of immigration policy [evidently growing](#) – the historically low birth rate trend divides Canadians. They're equally likely to feel that the birth rate is (43%) and isn't (42%) a crisis.

One of the core aspects of Canadian life that would evidently improve the situation for parents, current and prospective, is quality, available childcare. The good news is that parents who have access to it offer

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high levels of commendation. The bad news is that among more than 300 parents with recent experience just half (50%) of those who have sought childcare in Canada have attained it and had a good experience. Others have either had a poor experience including long waits and high costs but managed to get a space (30%), are still trying (13%) or say they have given up outright (7%).

### More Key Findings:

- Half of Canadians (51%) say it is “not their responsibility” to fund other people’s childcare. Notably, the most likely group to say this are those who have raised children to the age of 18 or older, where the proportion rises to three-in-five (59%)
- The population is divided over whether or not governments will truly ever be able to provide affordable childcare for all. Two-in-five agree that this will not happen (44%) while nearly the same number disagree, and say it’s possible (41%)
- One-in-three parents with children in childcare say they are paying about \$10 a day (33%). One-quarter say it costs about \$20 a day (25%) while one-in-10 (10%) are paying \$40 a day

### About ARI

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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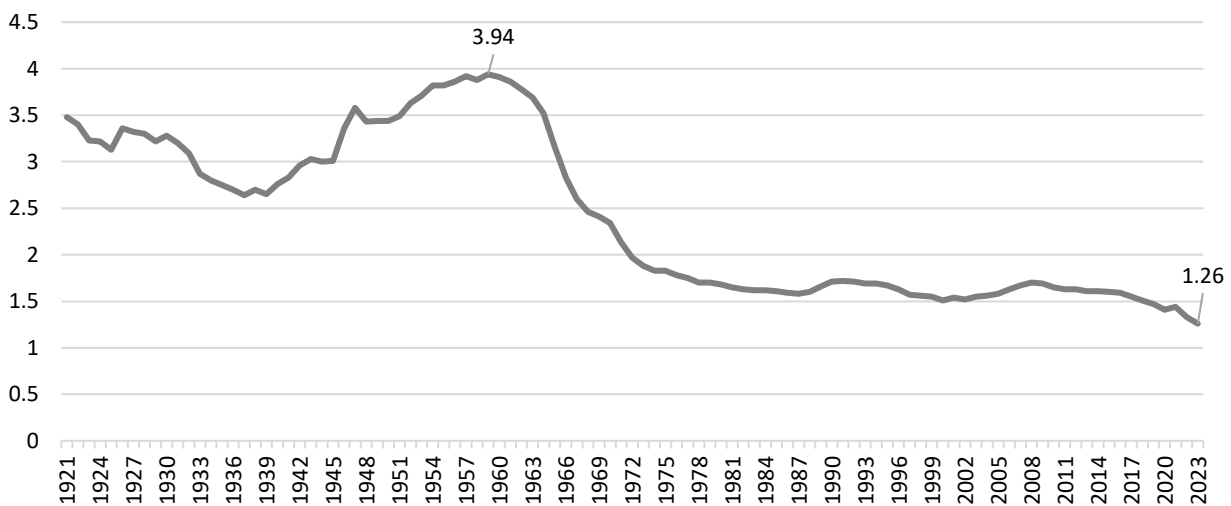
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**Part One: Factors delaying Canadians from having children**

Canada's population is aging. The number of Canadians joining the 65 club, for example, is growing at six times the rate of the zero to 14 population. This spells significant levels of economic challenges in sustaining the quality or retirement and old age benefits for seniors, and maintaining a productive economy, producing the goods and services Canadians rely on. In 2023, Canada set a record in its recorded history for lowest number of children per woman in the country, dropping to 1.26 from the previous record a year before, 1.33.

**Number of children per woman in Canada  
(Source, StatsCan)**



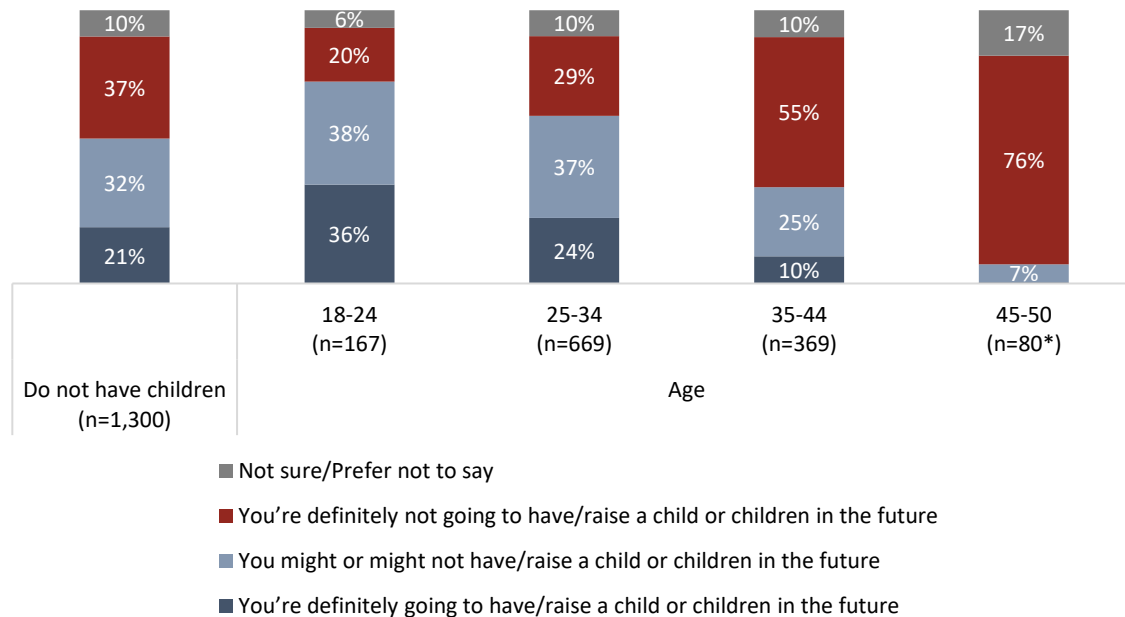
**Half of adults (18-54) who haven't had children still want them**

Beginning to understand the context of the situation is key in overcoming the evident challenges. Consider that fully half of 18- to 50-year-olds in the country say they are either definitely (21%) or maybe (32%) going to have children. These responses are expectedly higher among 18- to 34-year-olds:

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**And thinking about the future, which of the following would you say is most accurate:**



*\*Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

**Half who plan to have kids have delayed longer than they wanted**

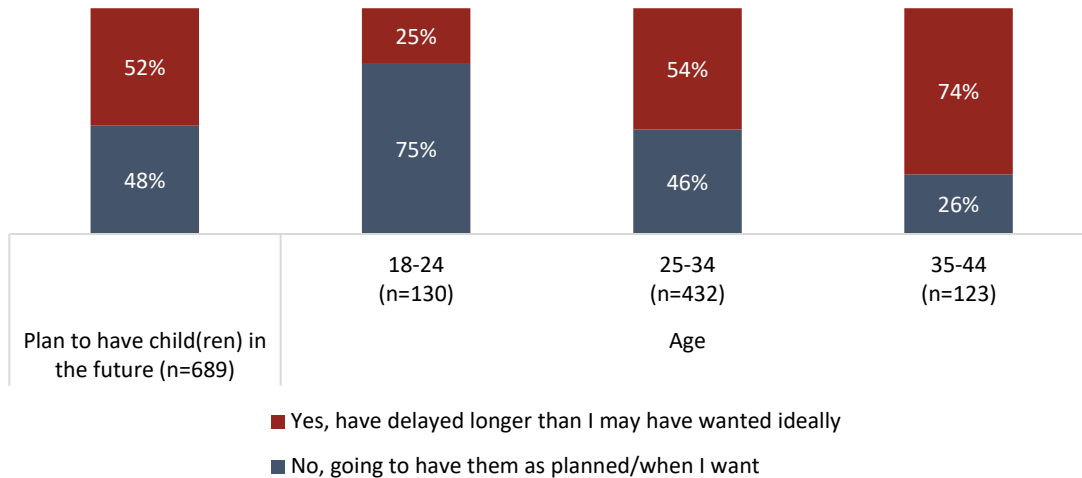
Among those who say that this is something they're considering, the number who have delayed longer than they would have wanted is considerable. Fully half (52%) say they would rather have had children already, including three-quarters in the 35 to 44 group. Another risk this delay carries has already been suggested in the data, as Canada has [noted a rise in premature births](#), which are associated with a higher number of [geriatric pregnancies](#). The number of new mothers older than 34 has [more than doubled](#) compared to 1993, from 10.7 per cent to 26.5 per cent.

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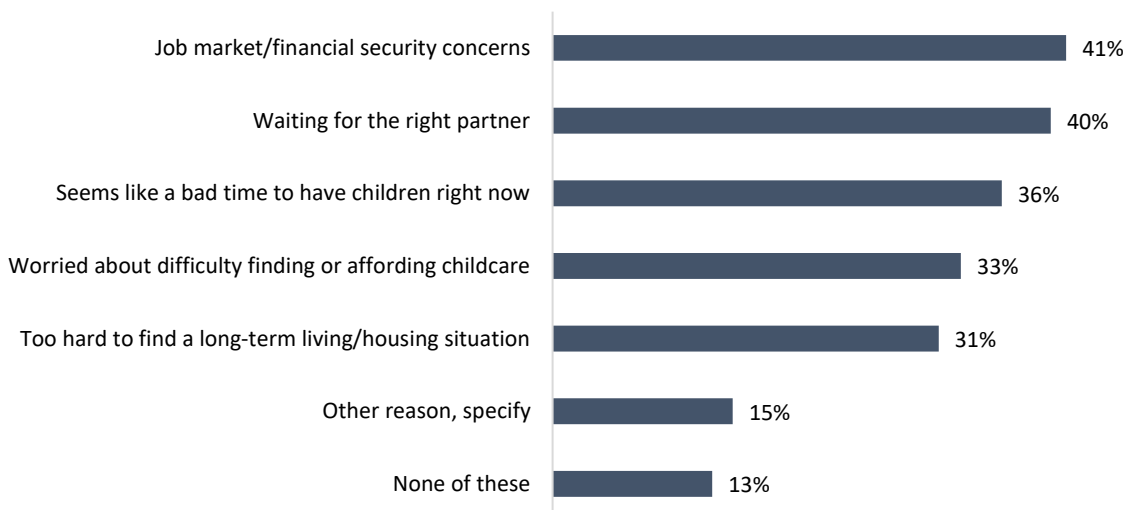
**Have you delayed having children longer than you may have wanted ideally because of other aspects of life?**



**Top reasons for delay?**

With the cost of living the top issue facing the country consistently in the post COVID-19 environment, it is important but perhaps unsurprising that the top issue, alongside the practicality of finding a partner, is job market and financial concerns. Two-in-five (41%) say their financial security is one of the reasons they're waiting. This, alongside additional worries like the cost and availability of childcare (33%) and the challenges in the housing market (31%) paint a picture of a population lacking the stability of previous generations and delaying having families as a result:

**Have any of the following played a role in delaying having children?  
(Plan to have child(ren) in the future, n=689)**

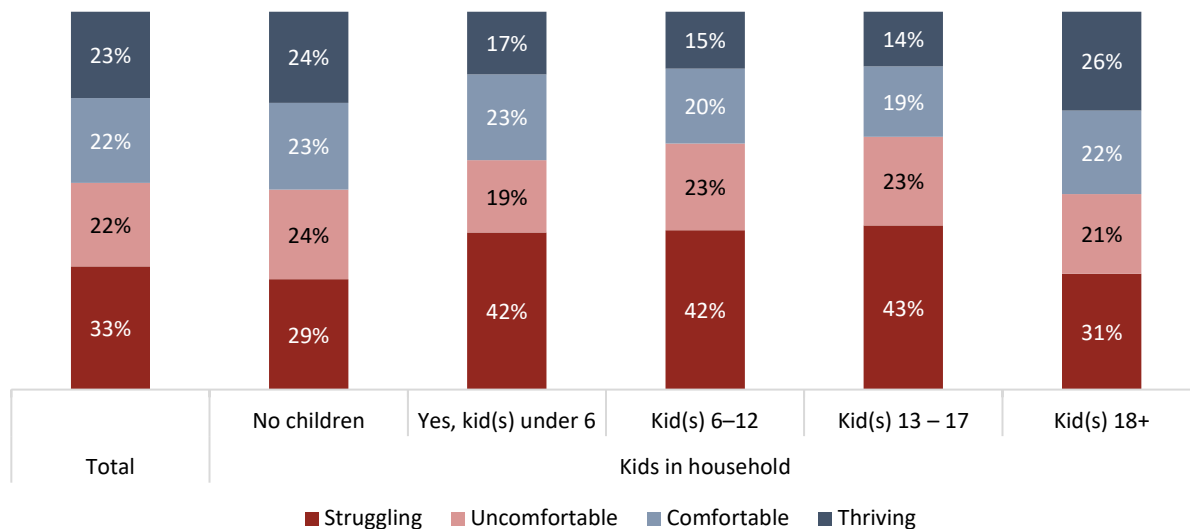


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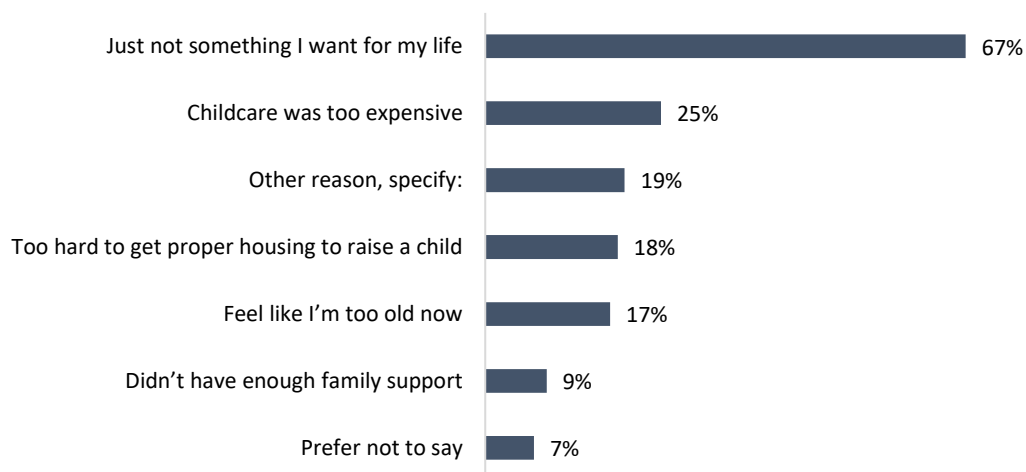
The financial challenges of having children that many of these individuals expect are borne out in the data for those who have kids. The proportion who are Struggling financially on ARI's Economic Stress Index rises significantly for those who have children younger than 18. For those who do not have kids or whose children are of legal age, economic well-being appears more achievable:

**Economic Stress Index by kids in household**



These reasons are evident among those who have decided not to have children as well, though they're dwarfed by personal choice as the top cause. Two-thirds who say they're definitely not having children say that this is just not something they're interested in.

**And what are your main reasons for not having children?  
Definitely not having children (n=487)**



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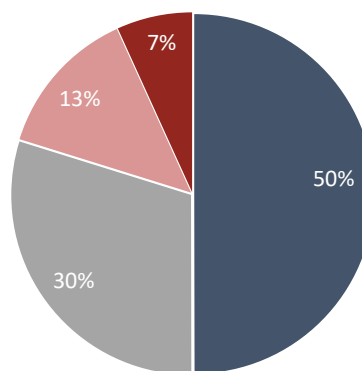
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**Part Two: Great if you can get it: Experiences with childcare in Canada**

**Half were successful and pleased with experience finding care**

Concerns about access to childcare among yet-to-be parents are seemingly well founded. Angus Reid Institute asked 307 parents who sought childcare recently for their child between the ages of zero and six, finding that half had a successful and pleasant experience. The others are divided between those who found care but had difficulty (30%), are still looking (13%), or have given up entirely (7%):

**Were you successful in securing a childcare spot and were you pleased with the experience? (Among those who sought care, n=307)**



- Yes, was successful and was pleased with the experience
- Yes, was successful but not pleased
- No, am still trying to secure a spot
- No, gave up on out of home care

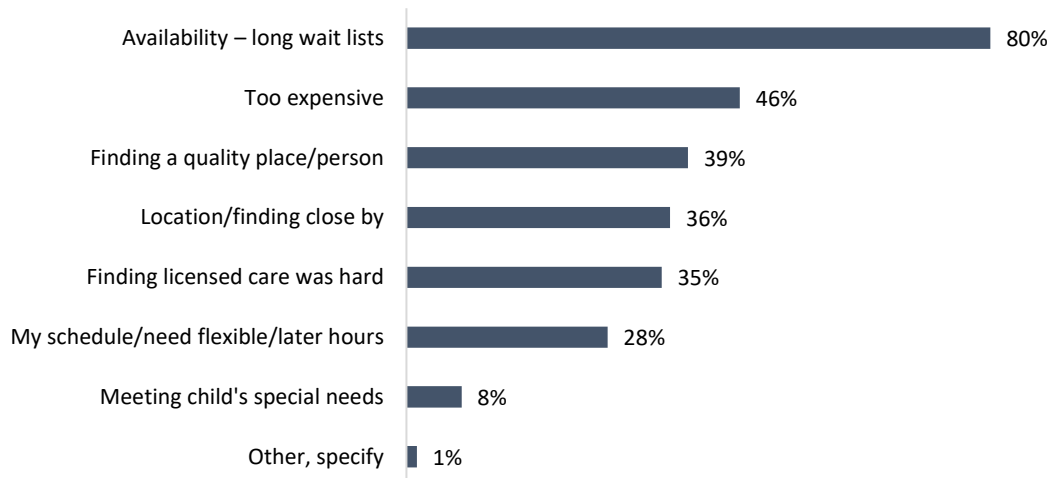
**Availability by far the biggest challenge**

Among those who were displeased by the process of accessing care availability is by far the biggest issue. Four-in-five (80%) say they faced long wait lists before they were able to find a space. Nearly half (46%) say that it was too expensive once they found care, while other challenges include quality and the location:

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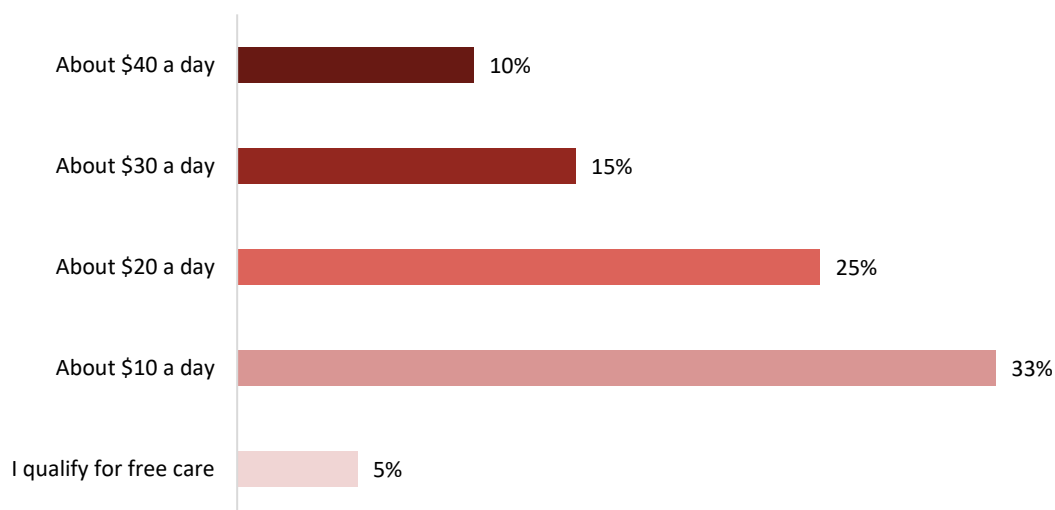
**Which aspects of this process were you not pleased with?  
(Among those who found care but had a poor experience, n=91)**



**How much are parents paying?**

While the goal of the federal government and many provincial governments has been to reduce childcare costs to \$10 a day, it would appear that only one-in-three (33%) parents who pay for care are receiving it at that price. One-quarter say it costs about double (25%) while one-in-10 (10%) are paying quadruple that amount:

**How much would you estimate your current childcare arrangement costs you per day, considering any childcare benefits you may receive, as well as the costs?**



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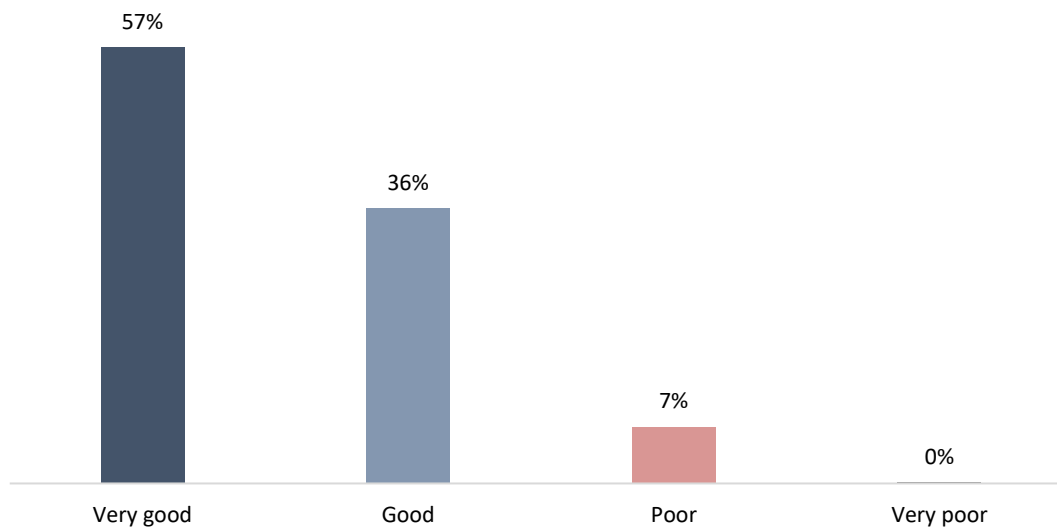
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**Those who found care are happy with quality**

The good news for Canada’s childcare system and parents is that experiences with care itself, beyond access and costs, is highly rated. Among those who have accessed child care three-in-five (57%) say it has been very good while more than one-in-three (36%) don’t go quite that far, but still say it has been good:

**All things considered, how would you rate the quality of child care you receive with your current arrangement?**



**Part Three: Canada’s birth rate and how to handle childcare**

The idea that Canada’s low birth rate is a crisis is not controversial among economists, many of whom have been signalling the [productivity challenges](#) it foretold for a number of years. For Canadians, themselves, however, the picture is less clear.

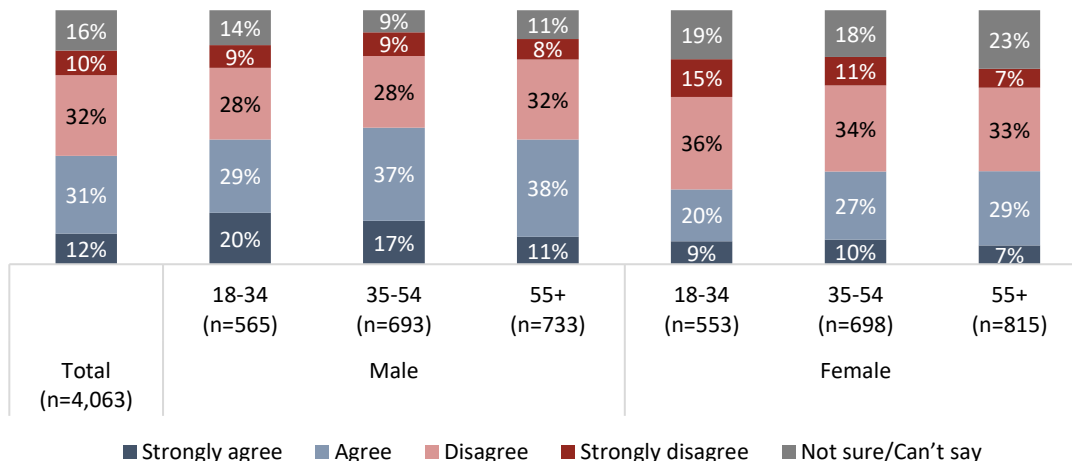
**Canada’s low birth rate crisis**

Overall, respondents are equally as likely to agree that this trend represents a crisis as they are to disagree. Alongside this are 16 per cent of the population who feel unsure what it all means. Men are notably much more likely to view this as a crisis than women. Younger women in particular are the least likely to view this as a crisis (29%) and the most likely to say it is not (51%).

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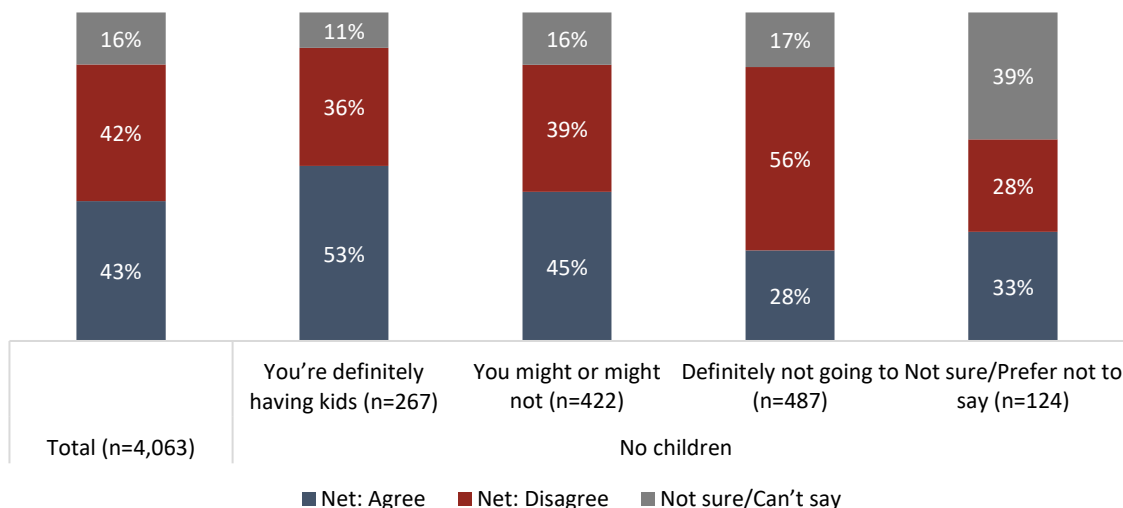
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**Agree vs. disagree -  
"Canada's low birth rate is a crisis"**



Views of this issue vary widely based on whether a person is planning to have children or not. Note that among those who say they are definitely not going to have children, individuals are twice as likely to say they disagree that Canada has a low birth rate crisis than to disagree:

**Agree vs. disagree -  
"Canada's low birth rate is a crisis"**



**Is national childcare the answer?**

In 2021 the federal Liberal government announced a plan to fund a national childcare program. Under this, investments would be made over the coming five years to create hundreds of thousands of regulated spaces that would cost an average of \$10 a day. While that program has evidently succeeded in creating

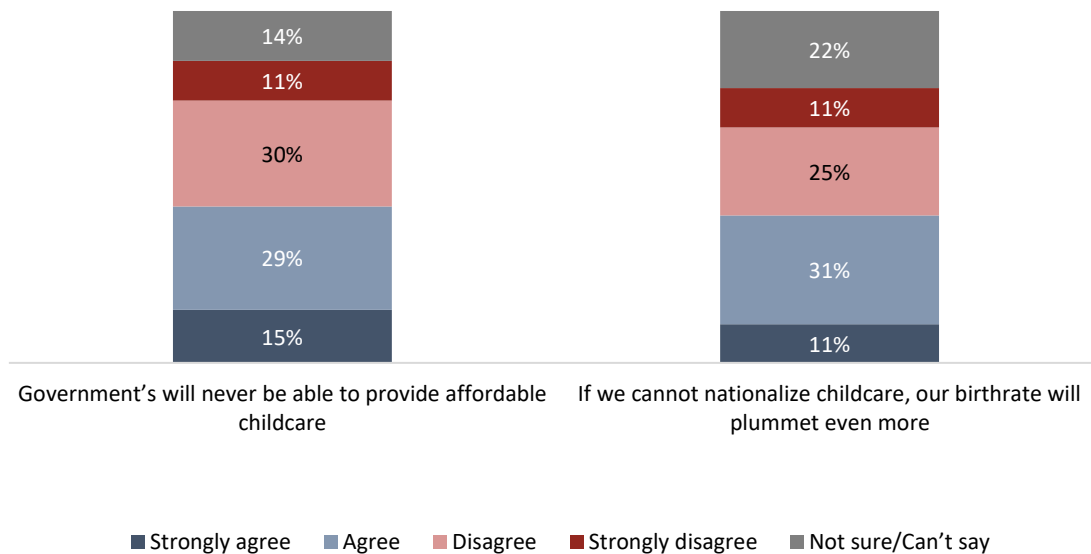
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tens of thousands of new spaces, less than one-third of children are covered by care that fits this criteria, and pushback from the for-profit care sector has created tension.

Many Canadians are dubious when considering the role of the government in this area. More than two-in-five (44%) say that government's will never be able to provide affordable childcare, while a similar number (41%) disagree. Two-in-five (42%) also feel that without a nationalized childcare program, the birthrate will continue to fall:

### Agree vs. disagree



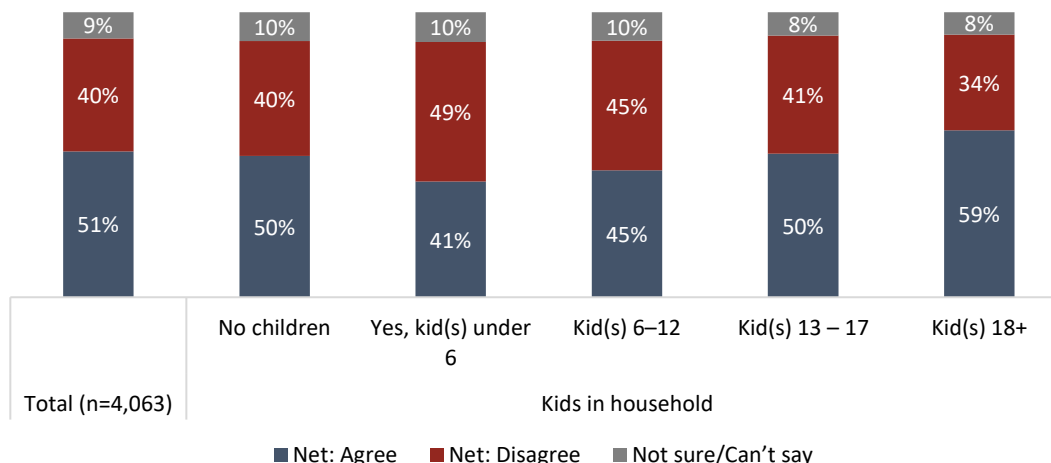
### Half say it's not their responsibility to contribute to childcare

Much like the disagreement over the potential and need for nationalized childcare, responsibility for payment also divides Canadians. Half (51%) say it's not their responsibility to pay for the childcare of other people. The proportion saying this is notably highest among those who have raised their children to become adults:

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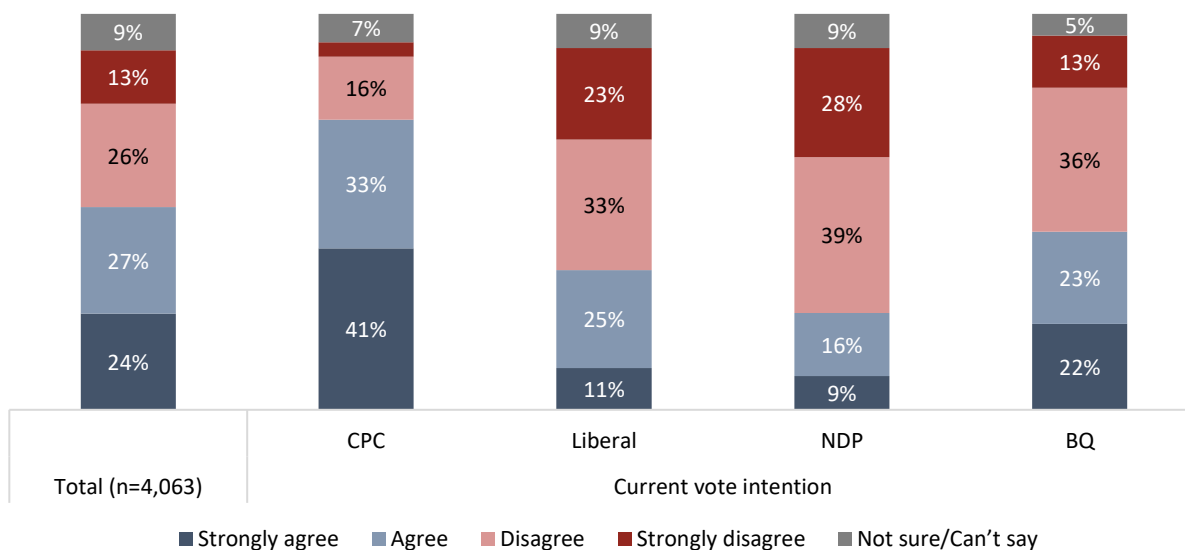
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**Agree vs disagree -  
"It's not my responsibility to pay for the childcare of other people"**



Politically, those who would support the NDP are most likely to feel comfortable contributing to childcare, while potential CPC voters are overwhelmingly against the idea:

**Agree vs disagree -  
"It's not my responsibility to pay for the childcare of other people"**



Age, too, is a source of variance in agreement. Older men and women are both in majority agreement that they should not have to contribute to childcare programs, while young men are most likely to disagree.

*For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).*

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