



RAYCAM
COOPERATIVE

SUMMARY REPORT

STRATHCONA EARLY CHILDHOOD NEEDS
ASSESSMENT 2023-24



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

RayCam Co-Operative Centre acknowledges that we come together on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

The Strathcona Early Childhood Needs Assessment project is made possible with funding from the City of Vancouver.

We would like to acknowledge our community partners for their support and collaboration in this project. We are thankful to the staff at these organizations who worked with us to develop the needs assessment, gather data, and help families in the community participate.

INTRODUCTION

What is the goal of the needs assessment?

RayCam Co-Operative identified the need to gather more comprehensive information on young families in Vancouver's inner city through consultation with our community board and partners. The goal of this survey is to understand the experiences of children and their families before kindergarten in the Strathcona, Downtown Eastside, and surrounding neighbourhoods of Vancouver. This information will be used to inform future programs and services to support children's optimal development in the community.

When and how was the data collected?

From December 2023 to March 2024, parents and caregivers of children aged 2.5 to 5 years old completed the survey in Vancouver's Strathcona and Downtown Eastside neighbourhoods. The survey was translated and available in three languages: Arabic, English and Spanish. In total, 100 surveys were completed during this time. Survey outreach strategies included distributing posters and flyers, door knocking, informational booths, and events organized with our community partners.

What are the next steps?

The findings of the survey will be used to identify the most pressing needs of families with young children in Vancouver's inner city. New family programs, services, and supports will be implemented at RayCam based on the needs identified in the survey. The data will specifically be used to inform actionable goals and objectives that support young children's healthy development before kindergarten in the community. RayCam and our community partners will also use the findings to advocate for more resources and policies driven by the data to support young children and their families.

ABOUT RAYCAM

Located on the eastern edge of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside in the Strathcona neighbourhood, RayCam Co-Operative Centre has provided essential services and supports to children, youth, and families since 1976.

The genesis of the centre goes back to 1971, when a group of parents from the Raymur Place social housing complex (now Stamp's Place) banded together to protect their children. Raymur Place was home to a significant number of children whose school catchment area was Seymour Elementary School. The only way to get to and from school each day was to traverse a set of railway tracks, dodging moving trains and often slipping between cars that were stopped and blocking the way.

A group of mostly single mothers formed a community action group and erected a blockade of the railway, demanding an overpass to ensure the safety of their children. A permanent blockade of tents garnered national media attention and dubbed the group "The Militant Mothers of Raymur Place." After two nights and three days, the City of Vancouver agreed to build an overpass, which was completed in time for the start of the next school year.

Galvanized by their civil disobedience, this community action group then successfully lobbied for a co-op food store at the housing complex. After establishing this key community support, residents began advocating to build a community centre for Raymur Place's 1,200 residents, including over 700 children. By 1973, the City of Vancouver agreed to build RayCam, a joint effort of residents, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and the City of Vancouver. RayCam officially opened in 1976 as a community-led Cooperative Association mandated to ensure "maximum participation in the planning and operation of the centre's programs".

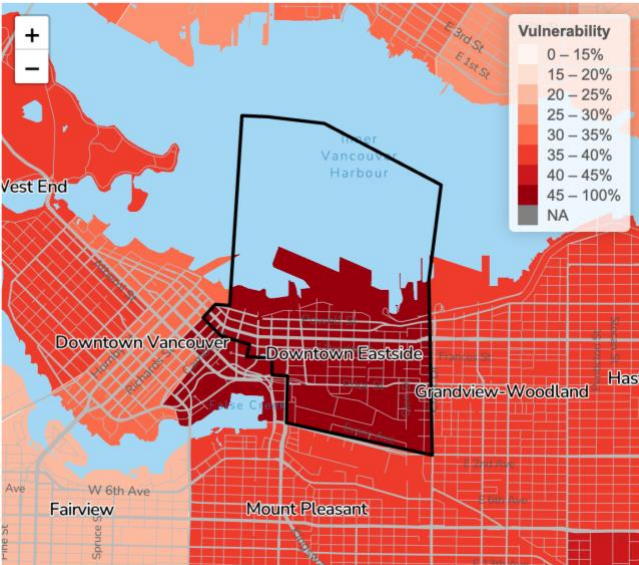
A significant renovation and expansion of RayCam took place in 2007 and the centre continues to provide vital support, recreational programs, and childcare for local residents, children, and families. Today, the spirit of the "The Militant Mothers" lives on through RayCam's proud history of supporting families and community.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

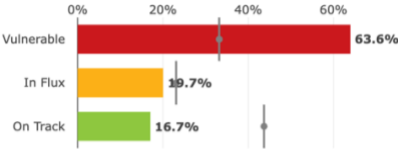
The Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) at the University of British Columbia (UBC) has collected data through the Early Development Instrument (EDI) in BC for over 20 years to understand how children are doing and promote their healthy development and well-being.

Approximately **1 in 3** kindergarten children in **British Columbia** are **vulnerable on one or more scales** of the EDI that are critical for healthy development. **In the Downtown Eastside**, 63.6% or about **2 in 3** kindergarten children were **vulnerable on one or more scales** of the EDI in Wave 7 from 2016-2019¹. The most recent Wave 8 EDI data collected from 2020-2022 is unavailable for the Downtown Eastside due to low participation rates. However, provincial EDI Wave 8 findings suggest child vulnerability has remained constant, which has significant social and economic costs for our society according to HELP.²

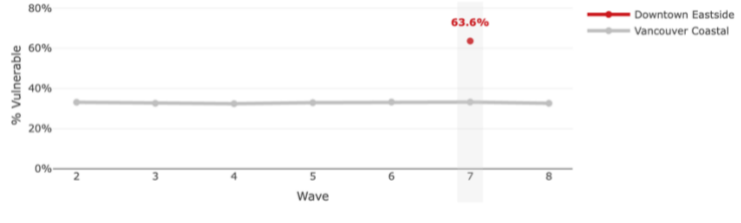
OVERALL VULNERABILITY



OVERALL OUTCOMES



OVERALL TRENDS



¹ Human Early Learning Partnership (2024). EDI Data Dashboard. Accessed on June 20, 2024. Available at: <https://dashboard.earlylearning.ubc.ca/>.

² Human Early Learning Partnership (2022). EDI Wave 8 Provincial Summary: 20 Years of EDI Data in BC. Available at: <https://earlylearning.ubc.ca/edi-wave8-provincial-synthesis/>.

KEY FINDINGS

Early environments and experiences matter for children's healthy development. In Vancouver's Strathcona and Downtown Eastside neighbourhoods, the rate of child vulnerability at kindergarten entry is double the rates estimated elsewhere in the city and province according to data from the UBC Human Early Learning Partnership.

Adversity early in life has long-term impacts on health and development. In the Downtown Eastside, intergenerational cycles of poverty, trauma, and substance use are perpetuated during the early years. Imperatively, these cycles can be broken through upstream prevention and early intervention.

Heavier investment in supports for families with young children is urgently needed in the community to address health inequities early in life. Investment requires an equitable and strategic funding model from the top levels of municipal, provincial and federal governments for disadvantaged neighbourhoods such as Strathcona and the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver. Furthermore, investment must focus on initiatives that incorporate:

- Inter-sectoral collaboration and action on early childhood development to address the social determinants of health.
- A hub funding and service delivery model for families with young children to access information, resources, and supports in one stop from trusted providers.
- Place-based family supports that are designed based on the collective needs and strengths of families living in the Strathcona and Downtown Eastside neighbourhoods.
- A whole-child approach that understands children's health and education outcomes as a result of their access to nurturing early environments and experiences.

Investing in the early years will benefit community residents across the life course from childhood to adolescence, young adulthood, and beyond. RayCam is not like many other community centres or daycares in the city—we are the centre of a community that provides all child and family services free of charge.

Based on the needs assessment findings, the following recommendations are proposed to support young children before kindergarten and their families in the Strathcona and Downtown Eastside neighbourhoods:

1. Improve the Availability of Children's Early Literacy Programs

Key Finding: Only one third (35%) of parents or other adults in the household read to their child most days or every day.

Recommendation: The Canadian Paediatric Society recommends daily book sharing and other language-related routines for young children. This can be achieved by increasing access to licensed child care spaces, family literacy programs, and speech and language therapy at RayCam.

2. **Create an Environment to Support Children’s Outdoor and Risky Play**

Key Finding: Only 21% of children play outdoors 6 to 7 days per week.

Recommendation: The Canadian Paediatric Society recommends regular unstructured outdoor play, especially “risky” play, for children’s well-being. This can be achieved by increasing outdoor space designated for young children in the community, including playgrounds and outdoor family programs. Outdoor spaces must be made safe and clean for children to play through initiatives such as park patrols and needle pick-ups.

3. **Eliminate Food Insecurity for Children and their Families**

Key Finding: Only half of children (53%) eat fruits/vegetables every day and almost two-thirds (63%) of families sometimes or often worry about food running out.

Recommendation: Canada’s Food Guide recommends eating fruits and vegetables every day. This can be achieved through a food hub model and building food supports directly into child and family programs at RayCam. These services will not replace food banks, but reduce barriers to accessing fresh food for children and their families in the community.

4. **Provide Child-Centered Counselling and Other Supports for Children and their Families**

Key Finding: 44% have a family income of less than \$20,000 per year, 15% experience housing instability, and only 27% of children did not experience any recent stressful events.

Recommendation: The Canadian Paediatric Society recommends positive emotional connections between young children and caregivers to protect against the negative impacts of trauma and adversity. This can be achieved by offering age-appropriate counselling for young children that incorporates involvement with parents and caregivers, such as play therapy, to process emotions, trauma, and challenging experiences.

Note on Interpretation

The following report presents the findings from the Strathcona Early Childhood Needs Assessment conducted during 2023-24 by RayCam Co-Operative Centre. Please interpret these data carefully, since not all families in the Strathcona and Downtown Eastside neighbourhoods participated. There is a chance that our sample is not representative of the whole population. Furthermore, parents and caregivers were asked to fill out a survey for each of their children meeting the eligibility criteria. Some parents and caregivers with multiple children may therefore be represented in the survey more than once.

ABOUT THE CHILD

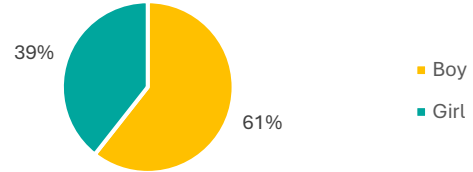
Age

Responses: 100



Gender Identity

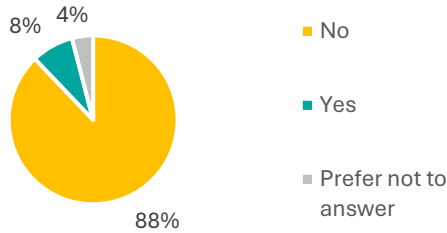
Responses: 99



No responses for child identifying in another way

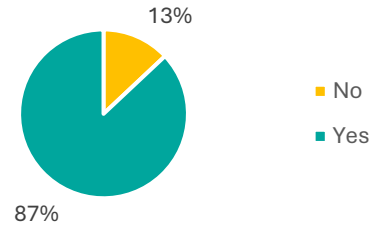
Child Lives in More than One Home

Responses: 99



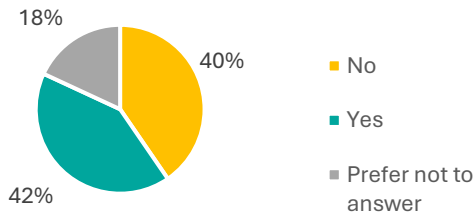
Born in Canada

Responses: 100



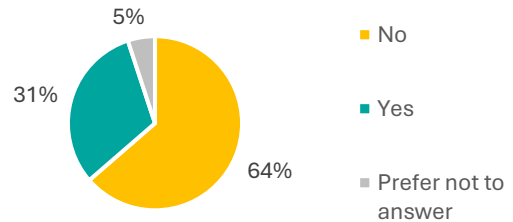
Visible Minority

Responses: 94



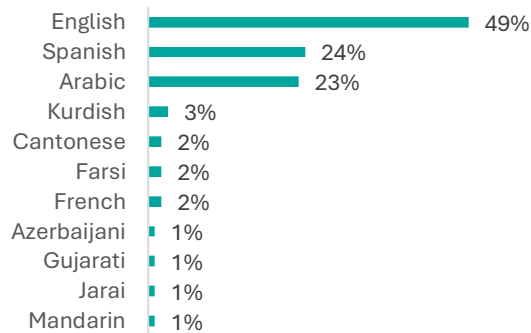
Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, or Métis)

Responses: 99



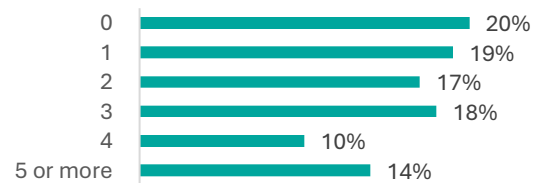
First Language(s)

Responses: 100



Number of Siblings (Including Step, Adopted, Foster or Half)

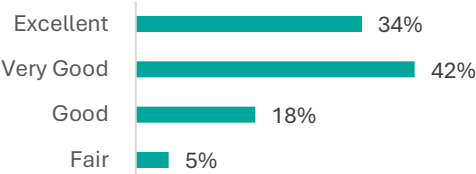
Responses: 98



HEALTH & WELL-BEING

In General, Would You Say this Child's Health is...

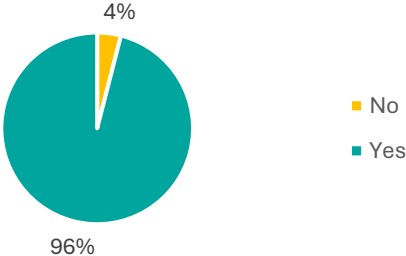
Responses: 99



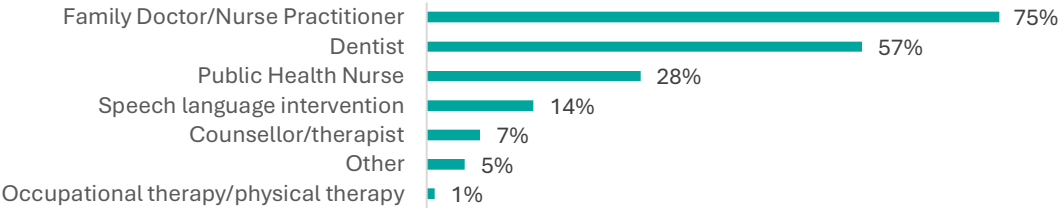
No responses for poor

Visited a Health Care Professional in the Past 12 Months

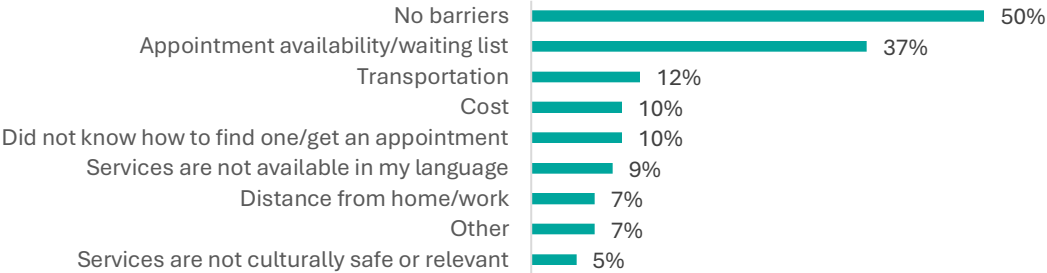
Responses: 100



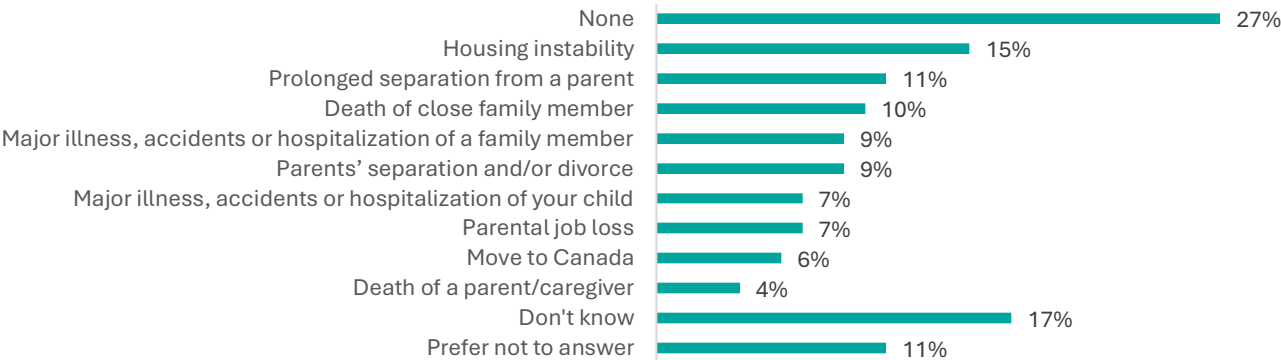
Visits to a Health Care Professional in the Past 12 Months (Responses: 100)



Barriers to Seeing a Health Care Professional in the Past 12 Months (Responses: 100)



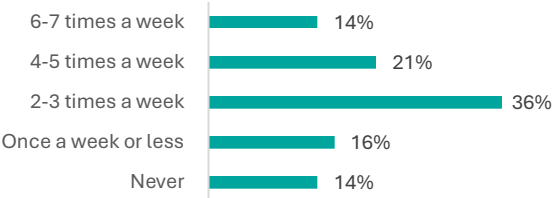
Stressful Events in the Child's Life in the Past 12 Months (Responses: 100)



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, NUTRITION & SLEEP

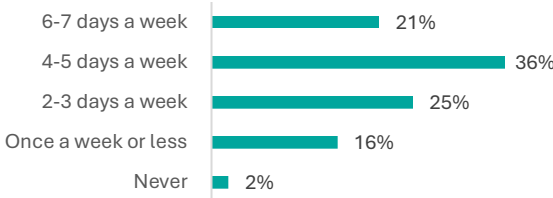
Days of Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity in the Past Six Months

Responses: 96



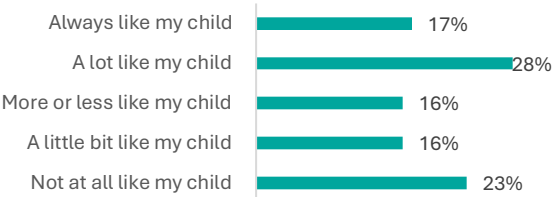
Days Child Played Outdoors in the Past Six Months

Responses: 96



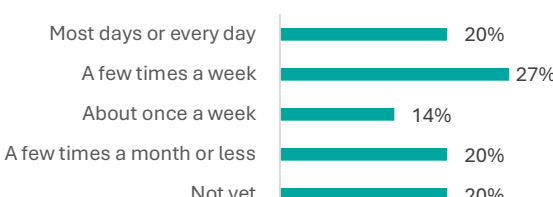
Child Likes Taking Risks Playing Outside When Given the Chance

Responses: 100



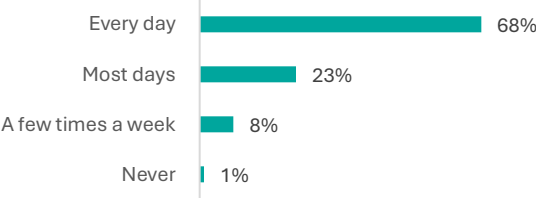
Chances to Take Risks Playing Outside in the Past Six Months

Responses: 96



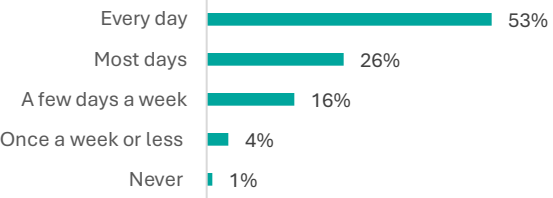
Days Child Ate Breakfast in the Last Six Months

Responses: 99



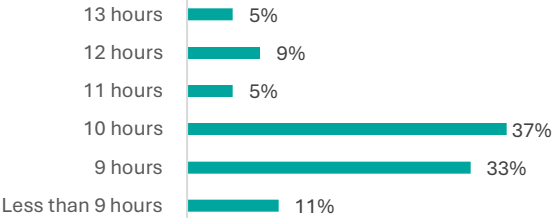
Days Child Ate Fruits and Vegetables in the Last Six Months

Responses: 98



Usual Hours of Sleep Per Night

Responses: 94

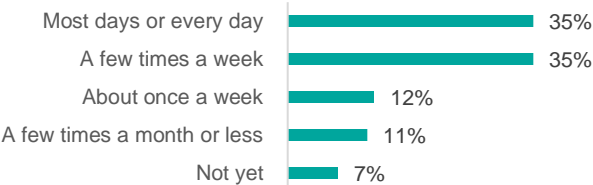


No responses for over 13 hours

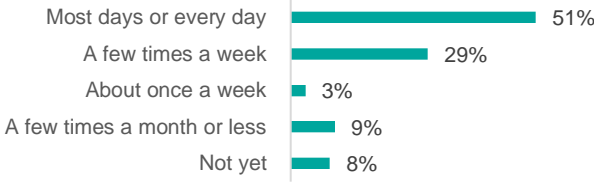
LANGUAGE & COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

In the Last Six Months, How Often Did the Parent/Caregiver or Another Adult in the Child’s Household:

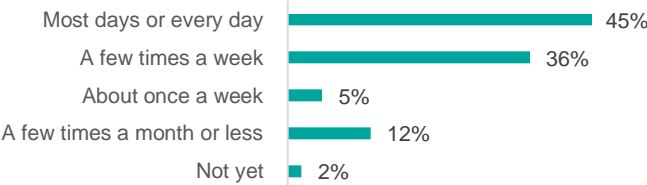
Read Books or Tell Stories with Child
Responded: 98



Talk about Pictures, Signs and Words
Responded: 98

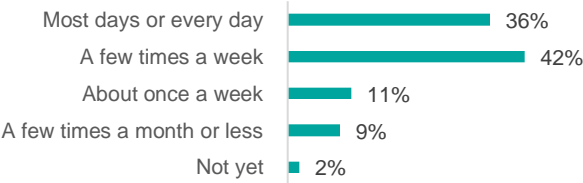


Sing Songs, Make Music, Drums, Do Rhymes or Dance with Child
Responses: 98

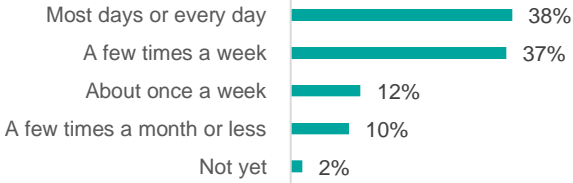


In the Last Six Months, How Often Did the Child:

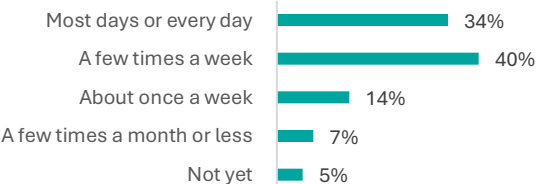
Do Arts and Craft
Responses: 98



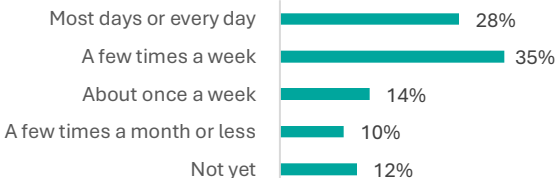
Build Things
Responses: 99



Use Pencils or Markers to Write or Draw Letters or Numbers or Pretend to Write
Responses: 98

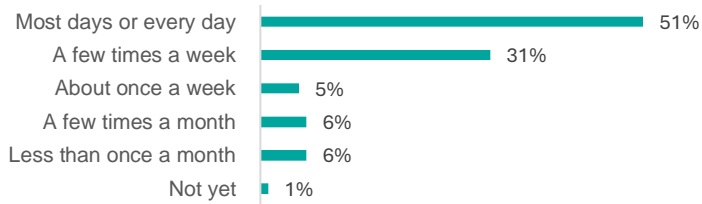


Dress Up, Pretend Play or Make Believe
Responses: 99



SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES

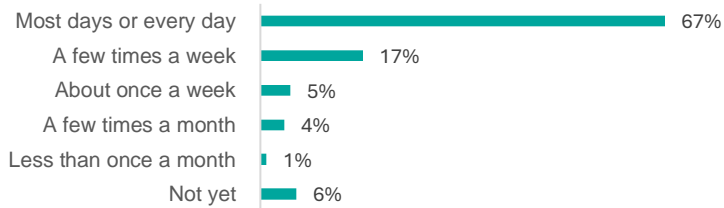
In the Last Six Months, How Often Did the Child Play with Children Other than Siblings
Responses: 98



In the Last Six Months, How Often Did the Parent/Caregiver Talk with the Child About:

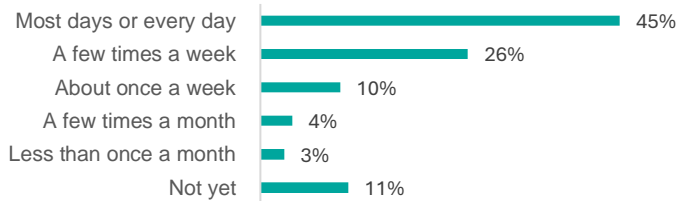
Child's Emotions or Feelings

Responses: 100



Others' Emotions or Feelings (For Example, Another Child or Adult)

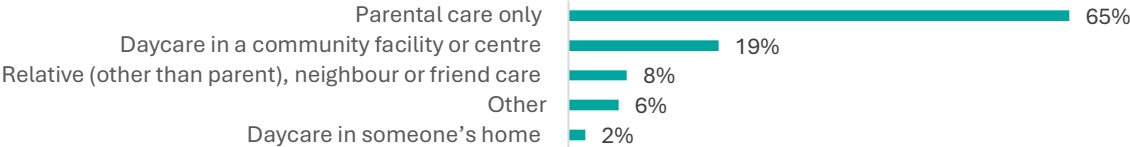
Responses: 99



CHILD CARE & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

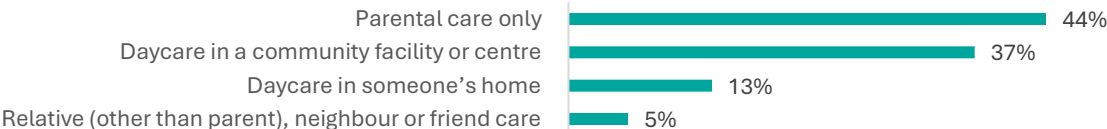
Primary Child Care Arrangement from Age 18 Months to 2.5 Years

Response: 93



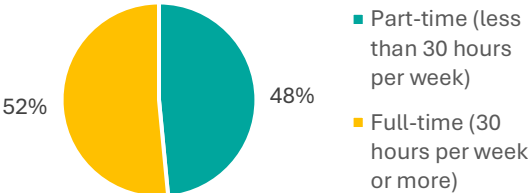
Primary Child Care Arrangement from Age 2.5 Years to Kindergarten Entry

Responses: 91



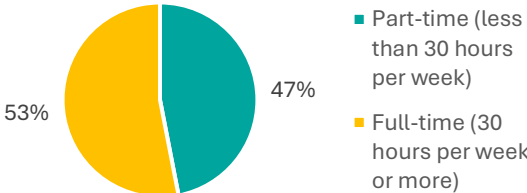
Hours Per Week in Non-Parental Child Care from Age 18 Months to 2.5 Years

Responses: 33



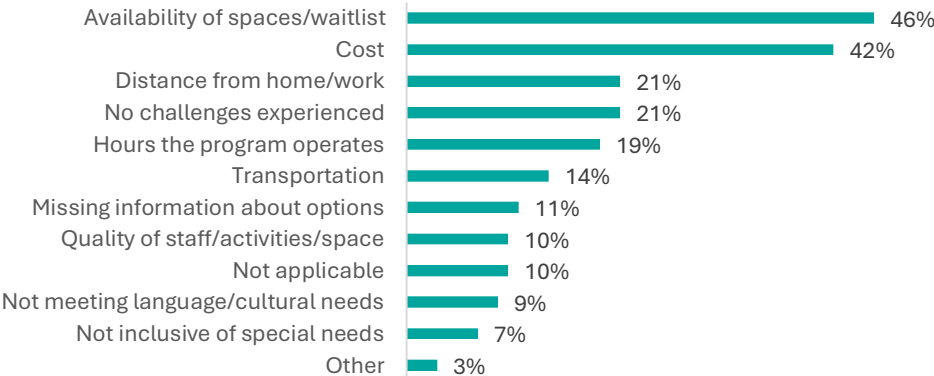
Hours Per Week in Non-Parental Child Care from Age 2.5 Years to Kindergarten

Responses: 49

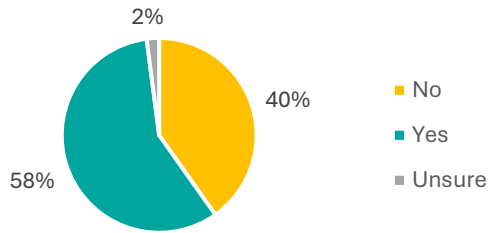


Challenges Looking for Early Learning and Child Care

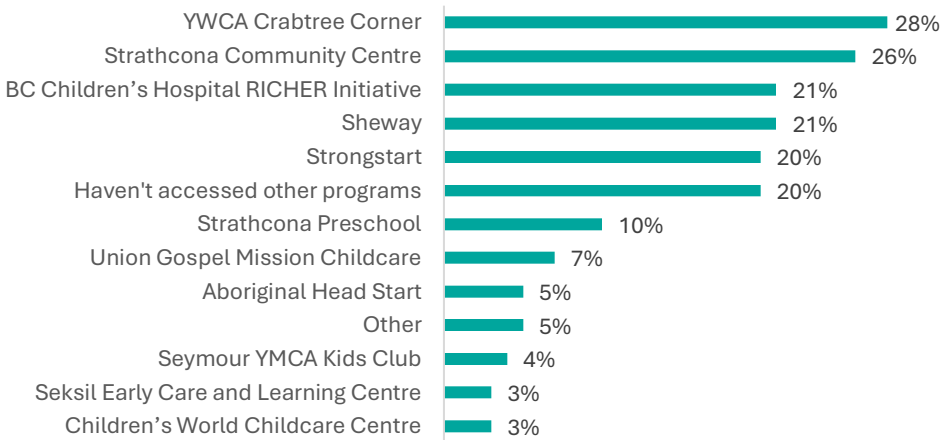
Responses: 100



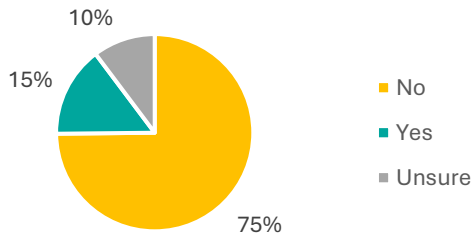
Ever Accessed Child and Family Programs at RayCam
Responses: 97



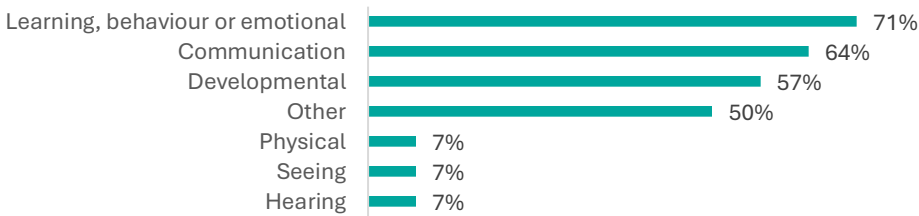
Ever Accessed Other Child and Family Programs in the Community
Responses: 100



Child Has Special Need or Disability
Responses: 97



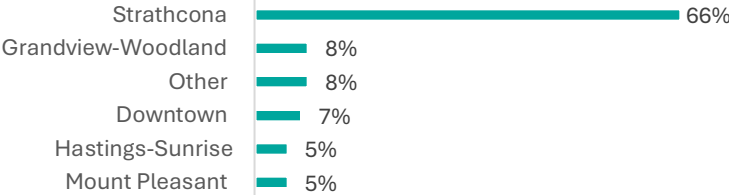
If Yes, Child's Special Need or Disability
Responses: 14



NEIGHBOURHOOD EXPERIENCES

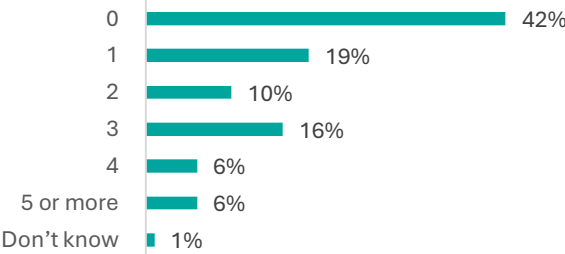
Neighbourhood Where Child Lives

Responses: 96



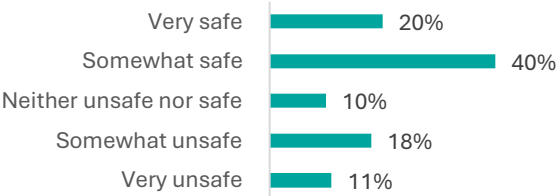
Times the Child Moved Homes in the Last Five Years

Responses: 100



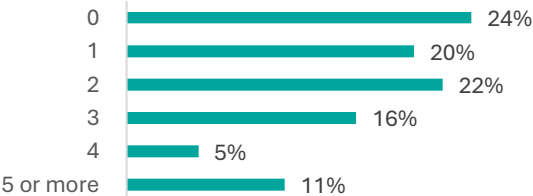
How Safe Are Parks and Places in the Child's Neighbourhood

Responses: 99



Number of People that Parent/Caregiver Can Depend on in Neighbourhood

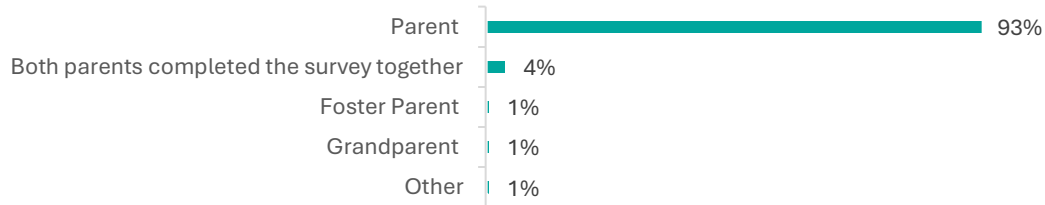
Responses: 98



ABOUT PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

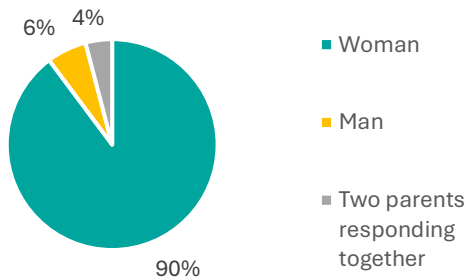
Who Filled Out the Survey

Responses: 99



Gender Identity

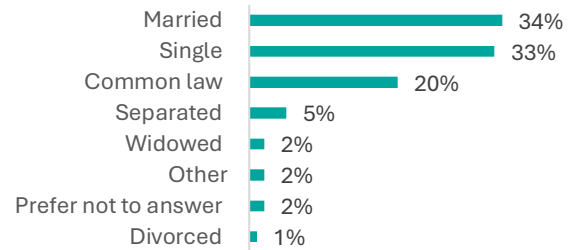
Responses: 98



No responses for identifying as non-binary or in another way

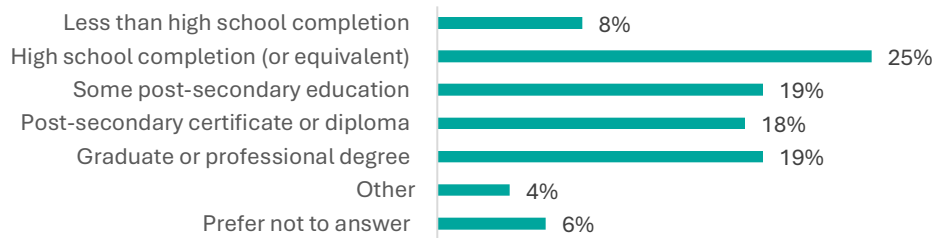
Relationship Status

Responses: 99



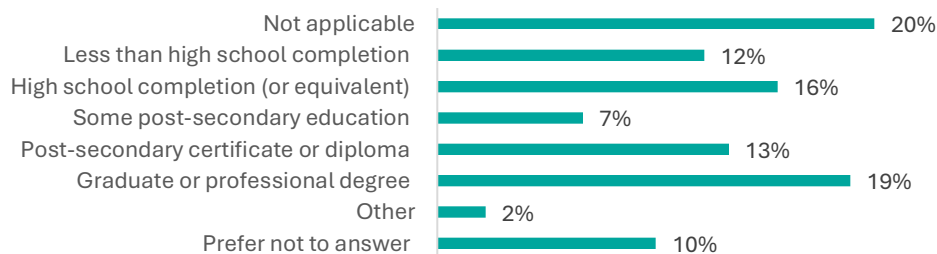
Highest Education Level of First Parent/Caregiver in the Child's Home

Responses: 95

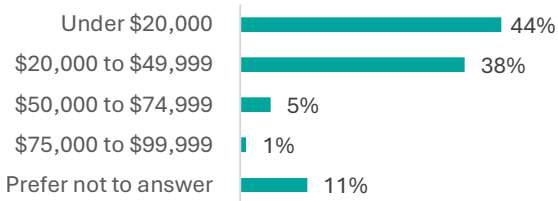


Highest Education Level of Second Parent/Caregiver in the Child's Home

Responses: 89

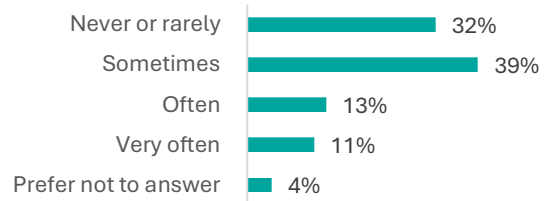


Estimated Overall Household Income Before Taxes in the Last 12 Months
Responses: 97

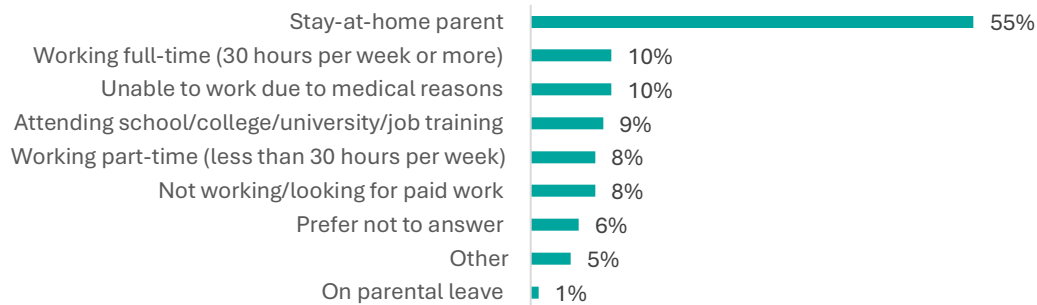


No responses for \$100,000 or more

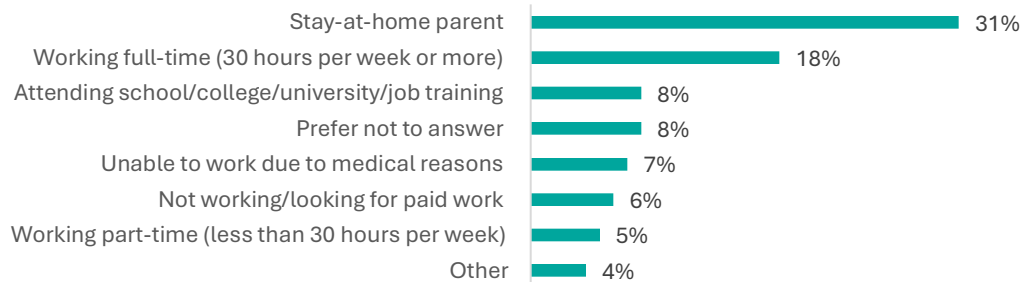
Worried About Food Running Out in the Last 12 Months
Responses: 97



Current Employment Status of First Parent/Caregiver in the Child's Home
Responses: 100

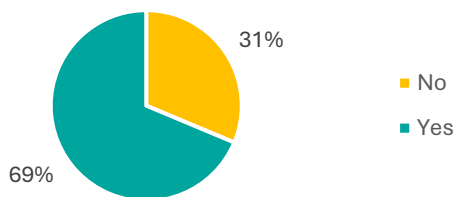


Current Employment Status of Second Parent/Caregiver in the Child's Home
Responses: 100



No responses for on parental leave

Access to a Computer at Home
Responses: 99



Access to the Internet at Home
Responses: 99

