



DAVE THOMAS
FOUNDATION
FOR ADOPTION®
CANADA

Finding Forever Families for Children in Foster Care

CANADIAN FOSTER CARE ADOPTION ATTITUDES SURVEY



**2013 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
& DETAILED FINDINGS**

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CANADIAN FOSTER CARE **ADOPTION ATTITUDES SURVEY**

2013 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & DETAILED FINDINGS

Commissioned by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption Canada

Conducted by Harris Interactive



Finding Forever Families for Children in Foster Care

July 2013

Dear Friend,

It has been more than 20 years since Dave Thomas first charged us with finding forever families for children waiting in foster care. In those two decades, we've seen significant growth – of our programs, our footprint, our awareness initiatives, and most importantly, the number of finalized adoptions.

Though we have worked to raise awareness of the children who leave Canada's foster care system each year without families to call their own, we have done so absent insights into what Canadians actually believe about adoption and the barriers we face to ensure every child has a forever home. Until now.

We partnered with Harris Interactive to conduct a first-of-its-kind survey of Canadians' attitudes about adoption – not only adoption from foster care, but also international adoption and private infant adoption – and we learned something amazing. **If just 0.4 per cent of Canadians who have considered adopting from foster care would follow through, then every child currently in Canada's foster care system would have a safe, loving and permanent home.**

Imagine the impact that would make on Canada's future.

So, what else did the findings show? They showed that much more needs to be done to dispel myths and misperceptions that surround foster care adoption and the children in the system. These children, through no fault of their own, have been the victims of abuse, neglect and abandonment. We owe them a safe, loving home to begin to find peace, hope and happiness.

As Dave Thomas once said, "These children are not someone else's responsibility. They are our responsibility." And it's time to take action.

The Foundation needs to continue to raise awareness, to disseminate a steady stream of positive communication about adoption from foster care, and to share the amazing success stories of families formed through foster care adoption. We need to talk more about the advocates who work on behalf of the longest-waiting children in care, and how their actions have proven that no child is unadoptable.

Thank you for taking the time to review the survey. If you need more information, please contact us at 1-800-ASK-DTFA, or visit our website at davethomasfoundation.ca. We look forward to hearing from you.

All good wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rita L. Soronen".

Rita L. Soronen
President and CEO

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Executive summary	6
Survey objectives	7
Methodology	7
Types of adoption discussed	7
Key findings	8
Percentage of Canadians considering adoption and perception of foster care adoption	8
Race, age, gender and marital status with propensity to adopt	8
Adoptability misperceptions exist	8
Contact information	9
2. Detailed findings	10
Canadians and adoption: Perceptions, experience and consideration	10
Familiarity with adoption and responders' experience	10
Estimations of children available for adoption	12
Support of adoption in Canada	14
Opinions of adoption, types of adoption, and foster care system	14
Adopting children: Considerations and concerns	18
How children's characteristics affect consideration of adoption	19
Perceived reasons for children being in foster care	21
Willingness to adopt a child with various characteristics	21
Concerns about outcomes for adopted children	23



TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTINUED

Understanding potential concerns about the adoption process	24
Expense, difficulty and consideration of foster care adoption.....	25
Adoptive parents: Motivations and perceptions	27
Reasons adults consider foster care adoption.....	28
Financial support and foster care adoption	30
Employer assistance and consumer awareness	30
How Canadians learn about adoption.....	31
3. Conclusions and recommendations	36



1. Executive summary

Every year, too many children who have been placed as permanent or crown wards in Canada emancipate from the system at age 18 without families to call their own.

Instead of making changes to the system, too often we make excuses for not finding them families – this child is too old; that child is better off not moving again; our budget has been slashed and we just cannot do any more. Even when enhanced or extended resources are made available to children who age out of care, we sidestep the notion that *every* child deserves a home, that *every* child is adoptable. But when it comes to a child's life, there is no room — or time — for excuses.

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption Canada views the urgency of this issue through the eyes of a child in foster care. We believe unadoptable is unacceptable.

We all have a responsibility to be the voice of foster care adoption so that every child finds a family. The Foundation's goal is to find homes for children in North America who are waiting to be adopted from foster care.

In the process, we work to inform adults who may have misperceptions about foster care adoption that keep them from getting involved. Through the money we raise, the Foundation is able to provide free educational resources, promote awareness, assist policymakers and employers, and support adoption professionals and agencies throughout the United States and Canada to ensure that every child has a forever home.

The Foundation is dedicated to these critical core beliefs:

- Every child deserves to live in a safe, loving and permanent family.
- No child should linger in foster care or leave the system at age 18 without a permanent family of his or her own.
- Every child is adoptable.

In order to continue to develop the most effective awareness and service programs, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption Canada commissioned Harris Interactive to produce a first-of-its-kind benchmarking study to track the attitudes, behaviours and beliefs that Canadians have about adoption.

For the first time, the 2013 *Canadian Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey* will provide a better understanding of Canadians' attitudes about foster care adoption, their beliefs about the children waiting to be adopted, and their perceptions of the system that is responsible for these children.

By highlighting perceptions and misperceptions in these areas, we can work to more effectively move children from the temporary — yet too often long-term — care of the province, into the permanent and nurturing care of families.

The Foundation will continue to:

- Work for enhanced adoption policies and embedded evidence-based practices that move children out of foster care, and support the families who step forward to adopt them.
- Create awareness campaigns and messaging to dispel myths and misperceptions about children in foster care.
- Remind everyone of what Dave Thomas once said: “These children are not someone else's responsibility. They are our responsibility.”
- Continue to advocate for centralized national data, not just provincial data, about children in foster care, which helps guide understanding of national trends, policy discussions and changing practices moving forward.



SURVEY OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this research is to uncover the current level of understanding of adoption in Canada. Among the specific objectives of the survey were the following:

- Understand why Canadians do or do not adopt from foster care.
- Learn about the perceptions, attitudes and behaviours that create barriers to foster care adoption.
- Understand what beliefs Canadians have about foster care adoption, the children waiting to be adopted and the foster care system.
- Highlight Canadian perceptions about who can, or should be, an adoptive parent.
- Provide research-based information about Canadian perceptions to those charged with action on behalf of children – child advocates, adoption professionals and practitioners, potential adoptive parents, policymakers and the media.

METHODOLOGY

The 2013 *Canadian Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey* was conducted online within Canadian provinces and territories by Harris Interactive on behalf of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption Canada. The survey was conducted between July 12, 2012 and July 18, 2012, among 1,049 adults (ages 18 or older). Results were weighted as needed for demographic targets: age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error, which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100 per cent response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of Canada's adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to be invited to participate in the Harris Interactive online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

In some cases, the data in the charts may not total 100 per cent. This is due to rounding issues. An online methodology was used rather than a phone methodology. This was done to connect with a broader sample of Canadian consumers via the Harris Poll online consumer panel. This allows us to reach not only a broader sample, but also the most representative sample. Our panel members selected us by deciding to go online, join our panel, respond to our invitations and complete our surveys.

It is also important to understand that online surveys typically elicit information with greater depth and validity on sensitive topics than what could be achieved by any other methodology. In telephone interviewing, for example, it is not uncommon to see more positive scores on sensitive topics, due to difficulty in expressing unpopular opinions to a live interviewer. This difference in scoring between online and telephone methodology is called a “mode effect.” Mode effect is less obvious in straightforward and factual questions; however, on questions that are more impacted by social desirability, we find more mode effect.

TYPES OF ADOPTION DISCUSSED

The survey discusses three types of adoption:

- Private adoption – the adoption of a Canadian child through a licensed adoption agency or adoption attorney.
- Foster care adoption – the adoption of a child in foster care who has been freed for adoption when the birth parents' rights were terminated.
- International adoption – the adoption of a child who is a citizen of one country by adoptive parents who are citizens of a different country.



KEY FINDINGS

In Canada, there are nearly 30,000 children in the foster care system available for adoption. The Harris Interactive survey that was conducted on behalf of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption Canada found that 21 per cent of Canadians are considering or have considered adopting a child. *If a mere 0.4 per cent of those individuals adopted from Canadian foster care, then every child currently waiting for a family would have a safe, loving and permanent home.*

Also significant is that among those who state an initial preference for a non-teen, one in four say they would consider a teen for adoption.

PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS CONSIDERING ADOPTION AND PERCEPTION OF FOSTER CARE ADOPTION

Canadians generally have positive opinions of adoption, with 88 per cent expressing a favourable, very favourable, or extremely favourable opinion of adoption. Foster care adoption is viewed more favourably (79 per cent) than private adoption (74 per cent) or international adoption (68 per cent). In fact, of the 21 per cent of Canadians who have considered adoption, one in four would consider adopting a teenager.

Twenty-one per cent of Canadians have considered or are considering adopting a child. Of the 21 per cent who have considered foster care adoption:

- 48 per cent have considered or are considering international adoption.
- 50 per cent have considered or are considering private adoption.
- 57 per cent have considered or are considering foster care adoption.

Just under half (49 per cent) agree with the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption Canada's belief that every child is adoptable. Those who are not sure or do not believe every child is adoptable point to an ambivalence about whether each child can be adopted.

While the overall level of adoption is in the low single digits, a substantial portion of Canadians reported a personal connection and level of comfort with adoption. This is promising news because data consistently show an individual is more likely to consider adoption if they know someone who has adopted.

RACE, AGE, GENDER AND MARITAL STATUS WITH PROPENSITY TO ADOPT

Certain groups of Canadians are particularly disposed to adoption and foster care, including:

- Women
- Those under 55 years of age
- Highly educated individuals

ADOPTABILITY MISPERCEPTIONS EXIST

Unfortunately, there exists a negative perception of the Canadian foster care system as a whole, even among those who are considering adoption; this influences the perception of children in foster care. Even among those who have considered adopting a child, 82 per cent identified that coping with the paperwork and bureaucracy involved is one of their biggest concerns about adoption.



Additionally, there is a pervasive belief, shared both by individuals considering foster care adoption and those who are not, that children in foster care are more likely to suffer from a variety of issues, such as behavioural issues and difficulty bonding, than children adopted internationally or privately. Specifically:

- 51 per cent of Canadians believe children in foster care were juvenile delinquents. In reality, children enter the foster care system through no fault of their own, as victims of neglect, abandonment or abuse.
- 45 per cent of Canadians think children adopted through foster care are more likely than other children to face challenges with trust and bonding.
- 40 per cent of Canadians think children adopted through foster care are more likely than other children to have behaviour or self-control issues.
- 51 per cent of people who have considered foster care adoption think the children will have problems with trust and bonding.
- 49 per cent of people who have considered foster care adoption think the children are more likely to have behavioural problems.
- 76 per cent of individuals who have considered foster care adoption are concerned about the cost of raising a child to adulthood, which is higher than those who have not considered foster care adoption (54 per cent).
- 81 per cent of those who have considered adoption fear that birth parents would take the child back after the adoption. This myth is completely false – once an adoption is final, a birth parent’s rights are permanently terminated.

Any time a child is removed from his or her biological parents, trauma is to be expected. Children enter foster care through no fault of their own, but because of abuse, neglect and abandonment. Continued support of pre-adoptive and adoptive families will create healthy families.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Thank you for taking the time to review the 2013 *Canadian Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey*. If you need any further information, please contact the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption Canada at 1-800-ASK-DTFA or davethomasfoundation.ca.



2. Detailed findings

CANADIANS AND ADOPTION: PERCEPTIONS, EXPERIENCE AND CONSIDERATION

The results of the 2013 *Canadian Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey* uncover opinions of Canadians who have considered adoption and those who have not.

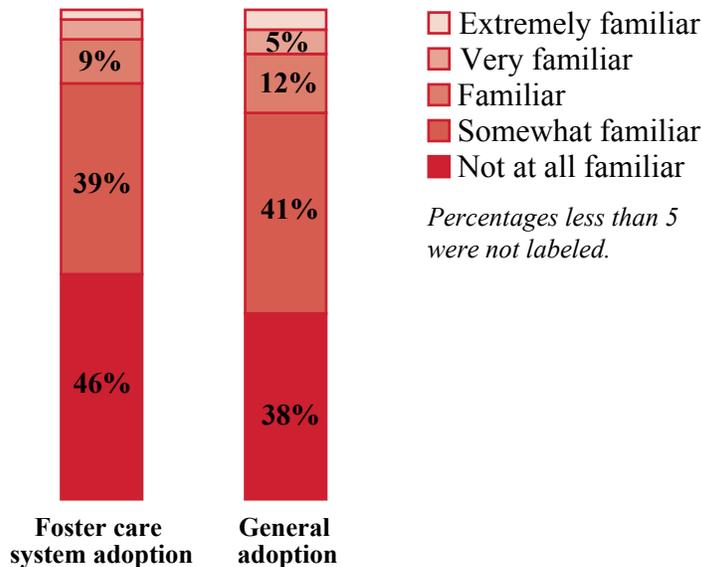
The following sections reveal Canadians' familiarity with adoption and their experience, from those who have and have not considered adoption.

FAMILIARITY WITH ADOPTION AND RESPONDERS' EXPERIENCE

The 2013 *Canadian Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey* found that Canadians generally have positive opinions of adoption, but nearly half of the population (46 per cent) say they are not familiar with the foster care adoption system. Even though familiarity with the general topic of adoption is higher (62 per cent), it is still notable that:

- Nearly two in five Canadians admit to not being familiar with adoption at all.
- 45 per cent of Canadians who have not considered adopting a child report being totally unfamiliar with the topic of adoption.
- 16 per cent of Canadians who have considered adopting a child report being totally unfamiliar with the topic of adoption.

FAMILIARITY WITH TOPIC OF ADOPTION - ALL RESPONDENTS



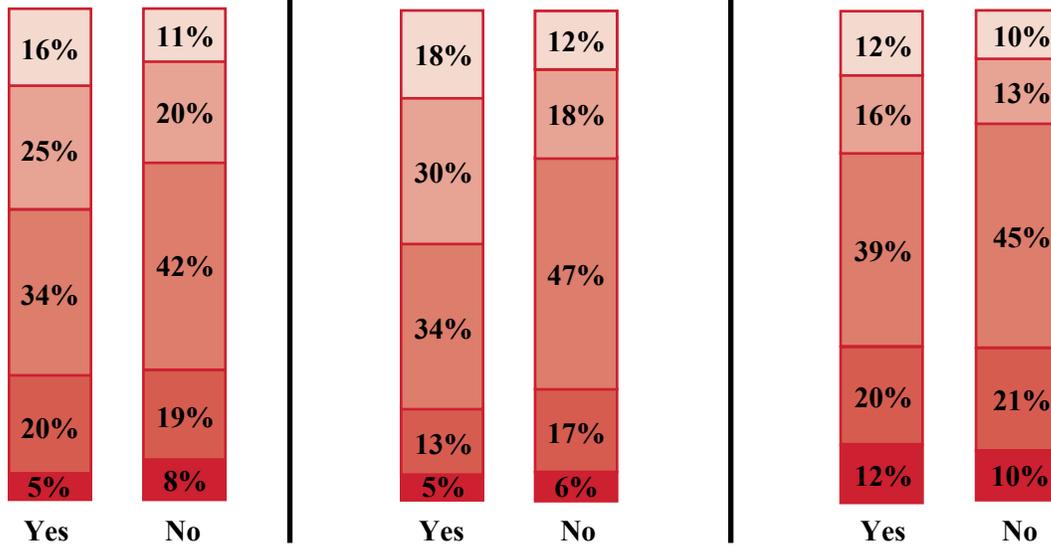
More than two in five Canadians (42 per cent) report that someone close to them was adopted, including nearly half of women and half of those with children. Knowing a close friend or family member who was adopted has a beneficial effect on Canadians' opinions toward private adoption and foster care adoption, whereas there is no effect on opinions regarding international adoption.

Among those who said they knew an adoptee from foster care, Canadians under 45 (55 per cent) were significantly more likely to know someone adopted from foster care than those 45 and older (37 per cent).

Of Canadians who have friends or family who have been adopted, private and foster care adoption is most favourable (95 per cent), compared to international adoption (88 per cent).

OPINIONS OF EACH TYPE OF ADOPTION BY THOSE WHO HAVE FRIENDS OR FAMILY WHO HAVE BEEN ADOPTED

OPINION OF PRIVATE ADOPTION OPINION OF CANADIAN FOSTER CARE SYSTEM ADOPTION OPINION OF INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION



- Extremely favourable
- Very favourable
- Favorable
- Somewhat favourable
- Not at all favourable

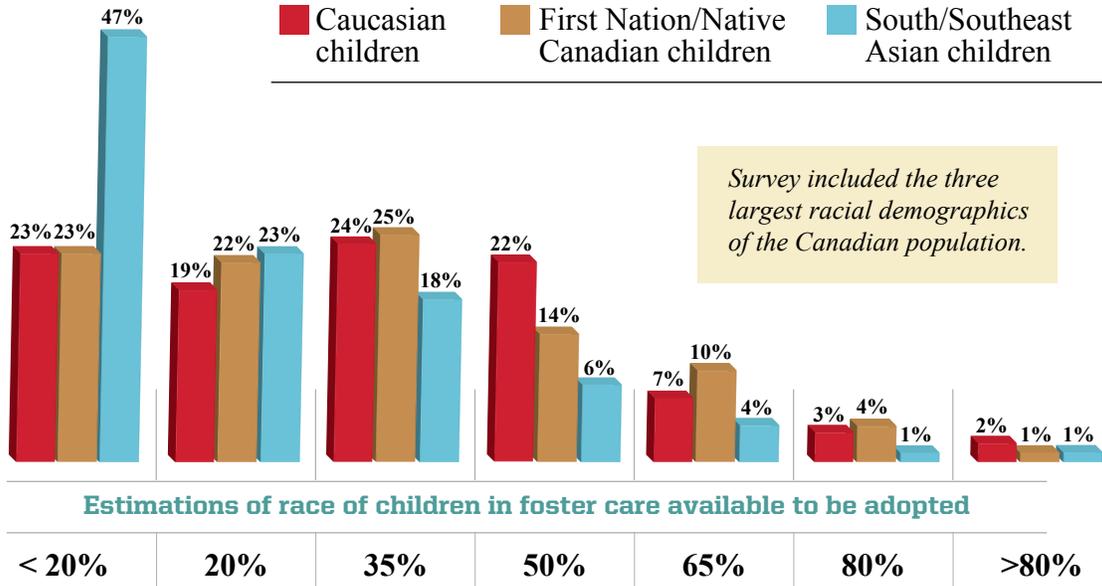
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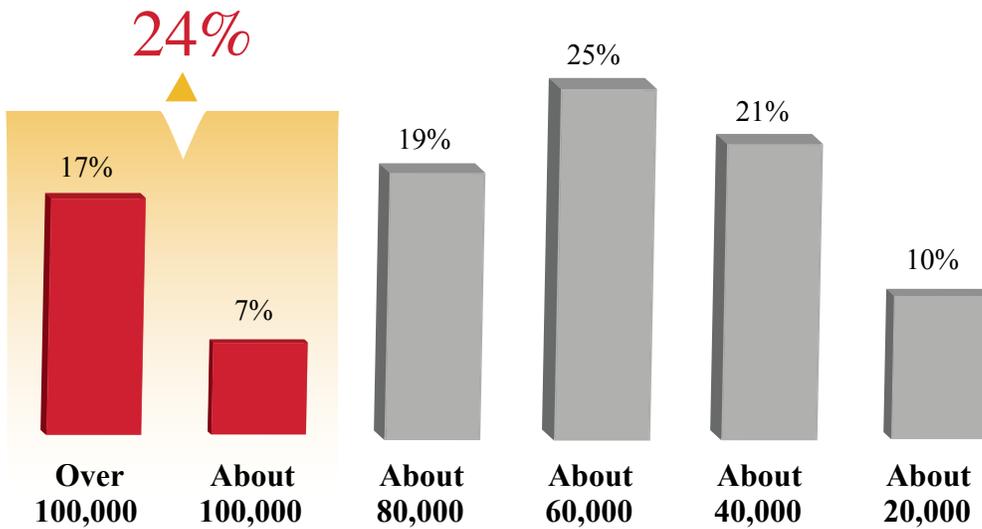
ESTIMATIONS OF CHILDREN AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION

Nearly three in 10 Canadians (29 per cent) say that First Nation/Native Canadians make up half or more of all children in foster care who are available for adoption; 34 per cent of Canadians say Caucasians are predominant; and 12 per cent say South/Southeast Asian make up half or more of all children in foster care who are available for adoption.

ESTIMATIONS OF RACE OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE AVAILABLE TO BE ADOPTED

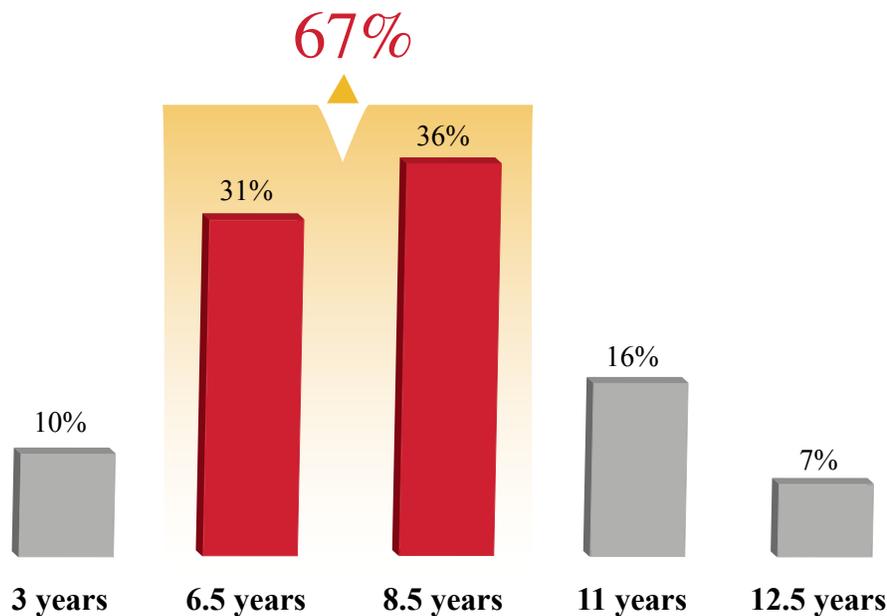


ESTIMATIONS OF NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE AVAILABLE TO BE ADOPTED



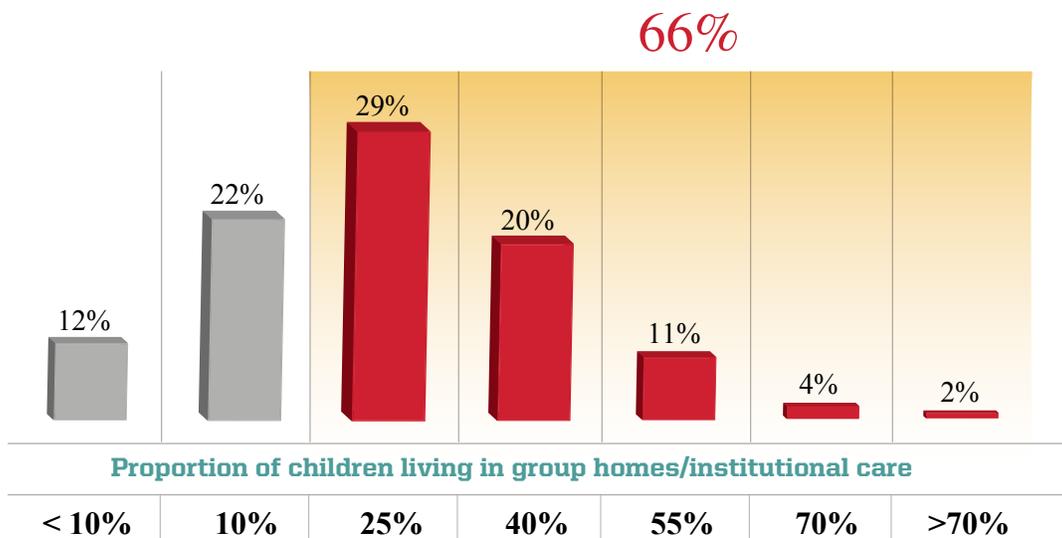
Despite nearly half of Canadians saying they are not familiar with the foster care adoption system, two-thirds of Canadians (67 per cent) see children in foster care who are available for adoption as being somewhere in the range of 6.5 to 8.5 years old. The actual average age is 9 to 10 years old.

ESTIMATIONS OF AVERAGE AGE OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

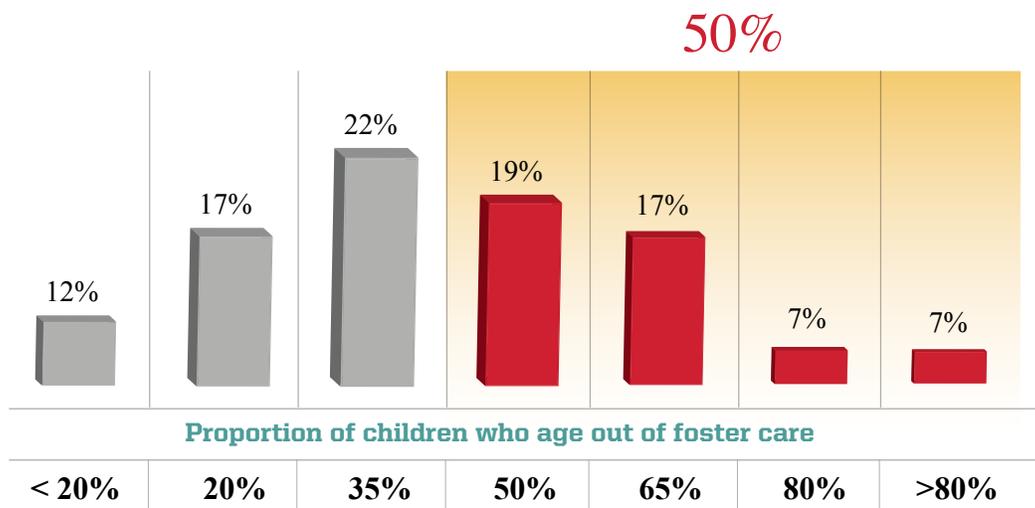


About two-thirds of Canadians say that at least 25 per cent of children in foster care are currently living in a group home or some kind of institutional care. And half of Canadians say that 50 per cent or more of children in the foster care system age out without being adopted. In reality, various provincial sources report 17-20 per cent of children in foster care turn 18 and leave the system without a family each year.

ESTIMATIONS OF PER CENT OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE LIVING IN GROUP HOMES OR INSTITUTIONAL CARE



ESTIMATIONS OF PER CENT OF CHILDREN LEAVING FOSTER CARE AT 18 WITHOUT HAVING BEEN ADOPTED



SUPPORT OF ADOPTION IN CANADA

Canadians who know a close friend or family member who has adopted are more likely to have favourable opinions toward foster care and private adoption; there is no effect on their opinions of international adoption. The following sections delve further into Canadians' opinions of types of adoption and the foster care system.

OPINIONS OF ADOPTION, TYPES OF ADOPTION, AND FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

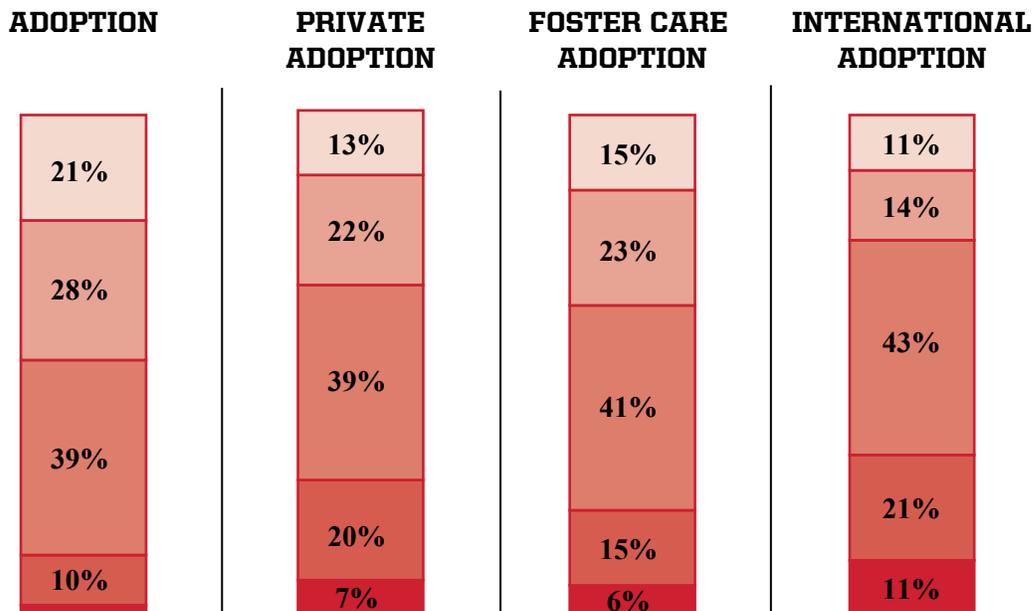
While the survey found that Canadians show an intense favourability to adoption in general (98 per cent), more insight is revealed when respondents are asked about each type of adoption.

- 89 per cent of Canadians express a favourable opinion of international adoption.
- 93 per cent of Canadians express a favourable opinion of private adoption.
- 94 per cent of Canadians express a favourable opinion of foster care adoption.

With the exception of international adoption, Canadian women show a much stronger favourability to adoption than men. The charts that follow (page 15) take a closer look at the opinions of those who have or have not considered adopting a child.

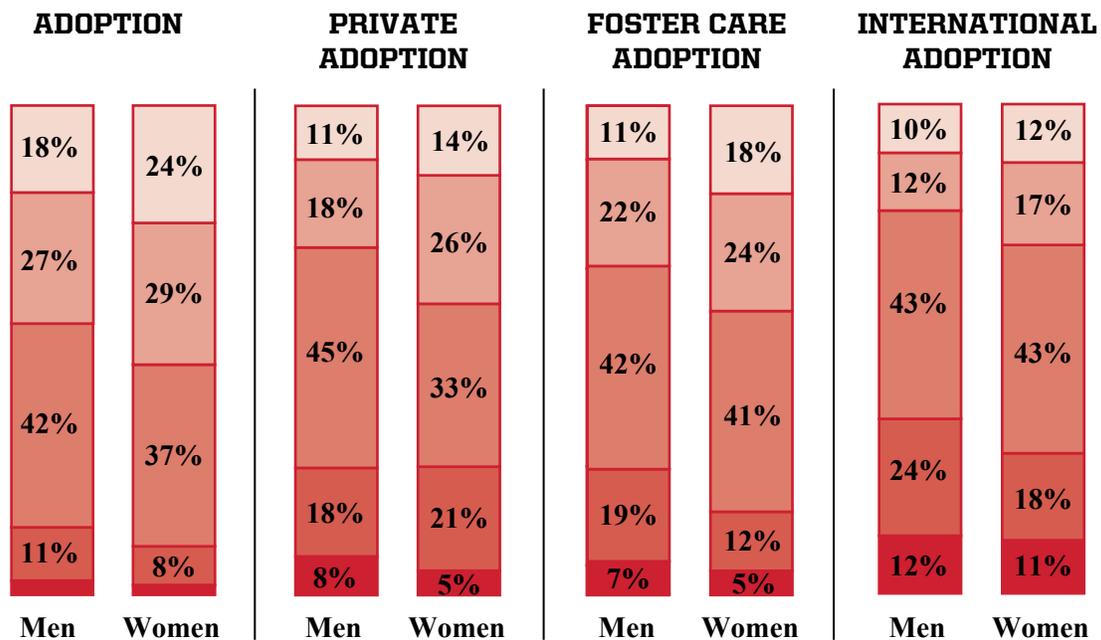


OPINIONS OF ADOPTION



■ Extremely favourable
 ■ Very favourable
 ■ Favourable
 ■ Somewhat favourable
 ■ Not at all favourable

OPINIONS OF ADOPTION AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ADOPTION BY GENDER



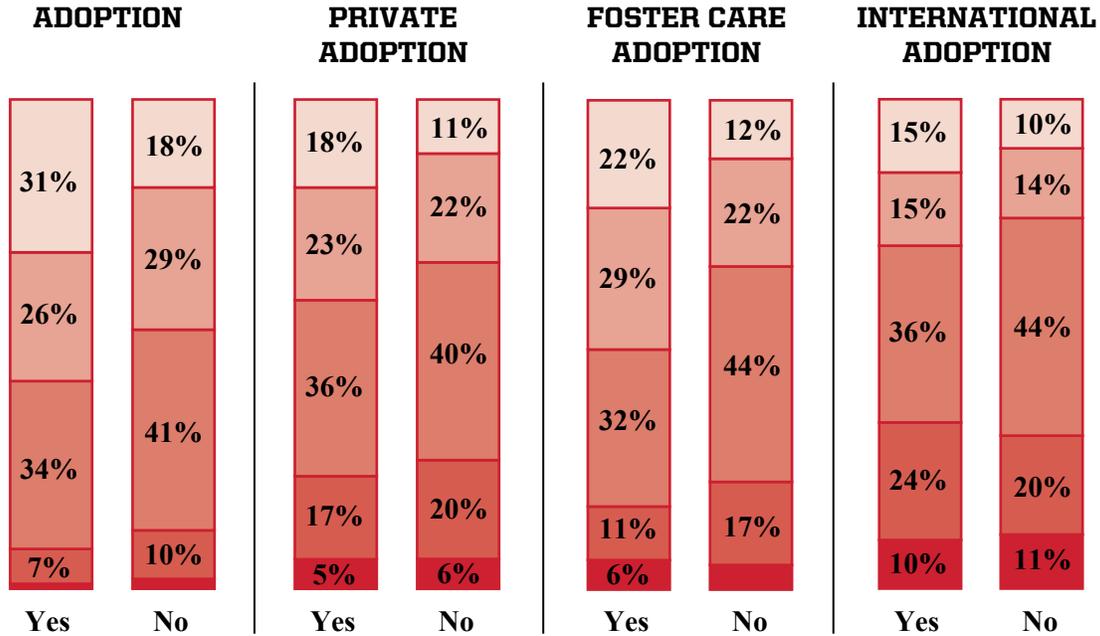
Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.

■ Extremely favourable
 ■ Very favourable
 ■ Favourable
 ■ Somewhat favourable
 ■ Not at all favourable



Canadians who are more favourable toward all types of adoption are more likely to consider adopting a child. However, the effect is not seen at a statistically significant level when it comes to private adoption.

OPINIONS OF EACH TYPE OF ADOPTION BY THOSE WHO HAVE (YES) VS. HAVE NOT (NO) CONSIDERED ADOPTING A CHILD

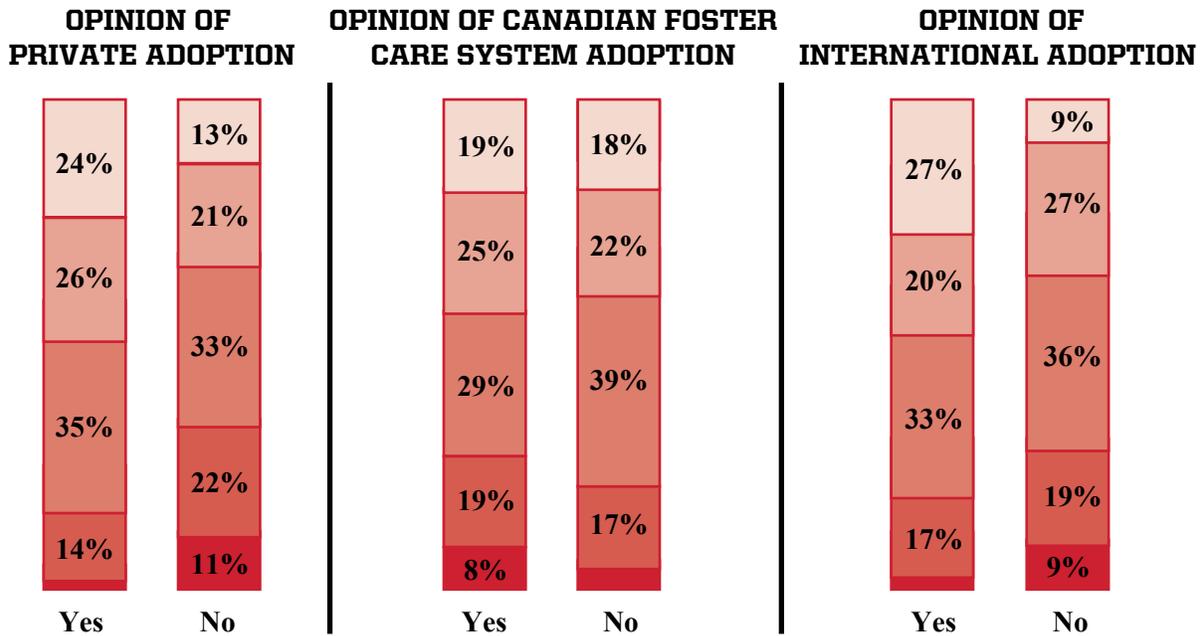


Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.

Extremely favourable Very favourable Favourable Somewhat favourable Not at all favourable

Of Canadians who have considered private adoption, there is a greater favourability to private adoption (99 per cent) and international adoption (98 per cent), than of those who have not considered private adoption (89 per cent).

OPINIONS OF EACH TYPE OF ADOPTION BY THOSE WHO HAVE VS. HAVE NOT CONSIDERED ADOPTING PRIVATELY



Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.

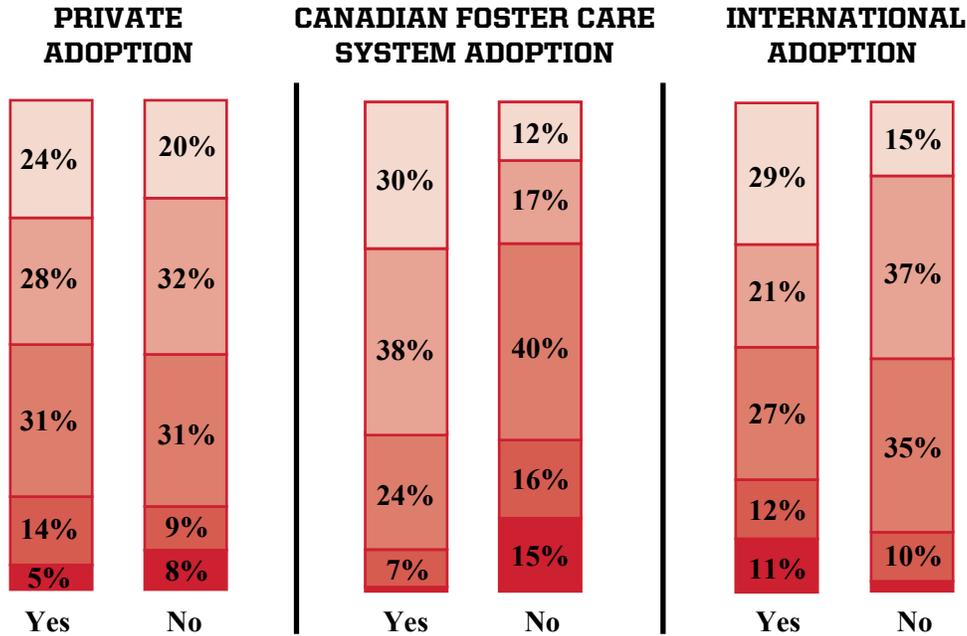
Extremely favourable Very favourable Favourable Somewhat favourable Not at all favourable



The survey revealed that 30 per cent of those considering foster care adoption are extremely favourable to foster care adoption, while not as favourable to private adoption (24 per cent) and international adoption (29 per cent).

Canadians with a higher opinion of the foster care system are more likely to consider foster care adoption. As with foster care adoption, those considering international adoption show a higher favourability to international adoption.

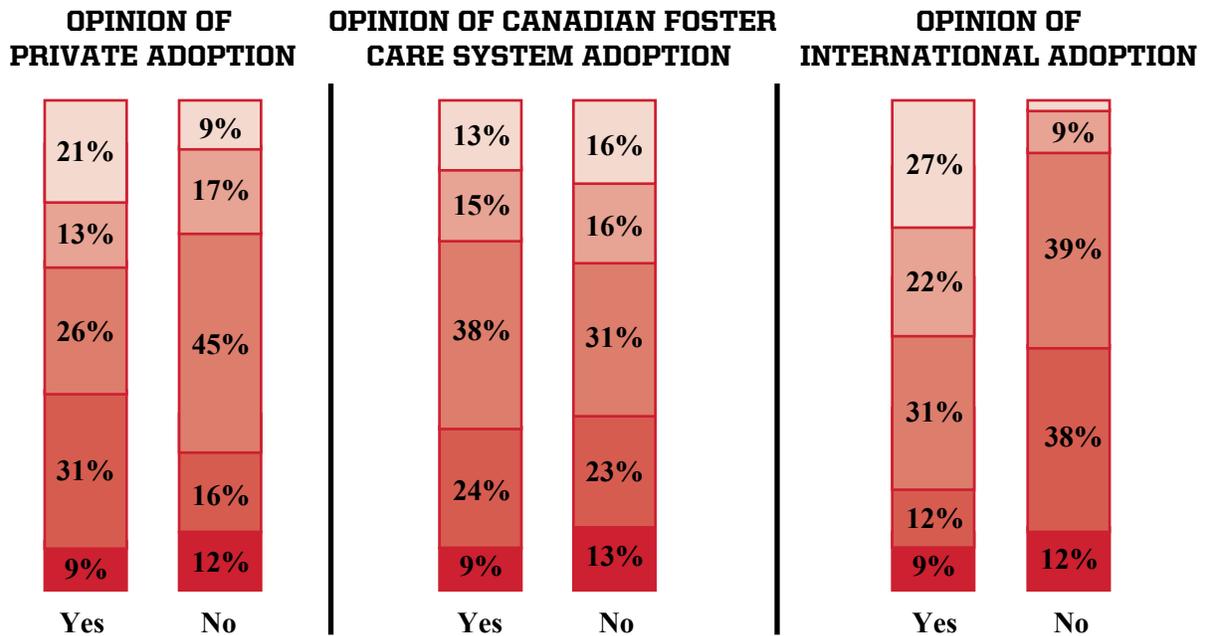
OPINIONS OF EACH TYPE OF ADOPTION BY THOSE WHO HAVE VS. HAVE NOT CONSIDERED ADOPTING THROUGH THE CANADIAN FOSTER CARE SYSTEM



Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.

Extremely favourable Very favourable Favourable Somewhat favourable Not at all favourable

OPINIONS OF EACH TYPE OF ADOPTION BY THOSE WHO HAVE VS. HAVE NOT CONSIDERED ADOPTING INTERNATIONALLY



Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.

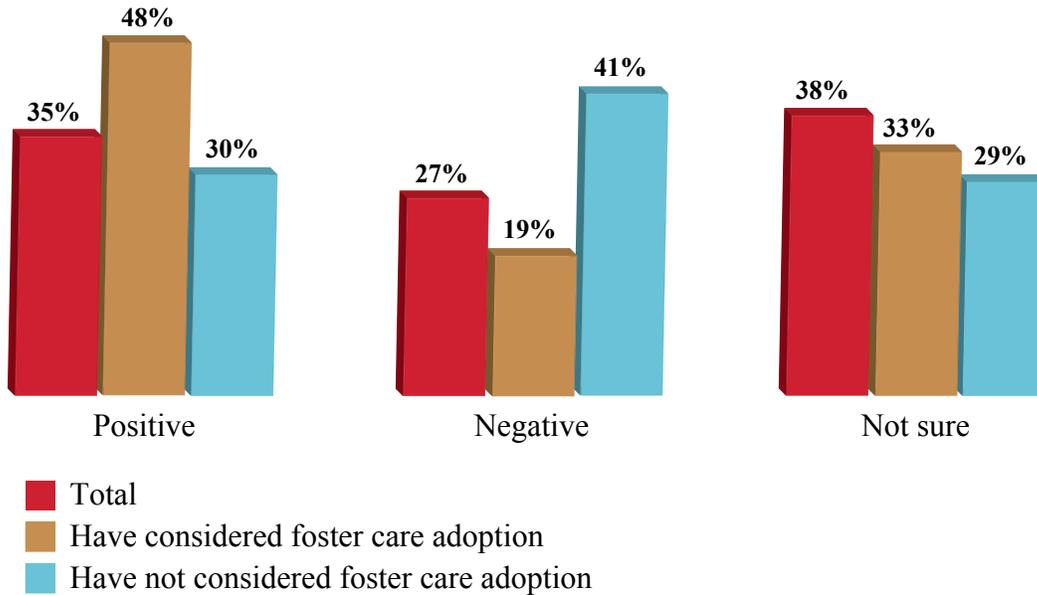
Extremely favourable Very favourable Favourable Somewhat favourable Not at all favourable



A correlation exists between a high opinion of the foster care system and consideration of foster care adoption. Those who have not considered foster care adoption are more likely to have a negative opinion of the foster care system than those who have considered foster care adoption.

However, of those who say they would consider adoption but not foster care adoption, 41 per cent state a negative opinion of the foster care system when compared to those who have considered foster care (19 per cent). And many Canadians are confused or unsure about the process and what it entails.

POSITIVE/NEGATIVE OPINION OF FOSTER CARE SYSTEM AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE CONSIDERED FOSTER CARE ADOPTION VS. THOSE WHO HAVE NOT



ADOPTING CHILDREN: CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCERNS

The results of the survey highlight what Canadians do and do not understand about the waiting children and the foster care adoption process.

While many Canadians do understand the age of waiting children (67 per cent of respondents came close to estimating the actual average age of 9-10), they are clearly unaware of other important facts.

Less than half of Canadians feel that every child is adoptable, pointing to an ambivalence about whether each child can be adopted. The sections below highlight where major misperceptions exist about the children in foster care.



HOW CHILDREN'S CHARACTERISTICS AFFECT CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTION

The survey explored whether a variety of characteristics — age, race, time in foster care, health status and other factors — affect people's consideration of adoption. Through a range of questions, the survey probed the willingness of Canadians to adopt children with different characteristics in order to gain insight into what influences adoption.

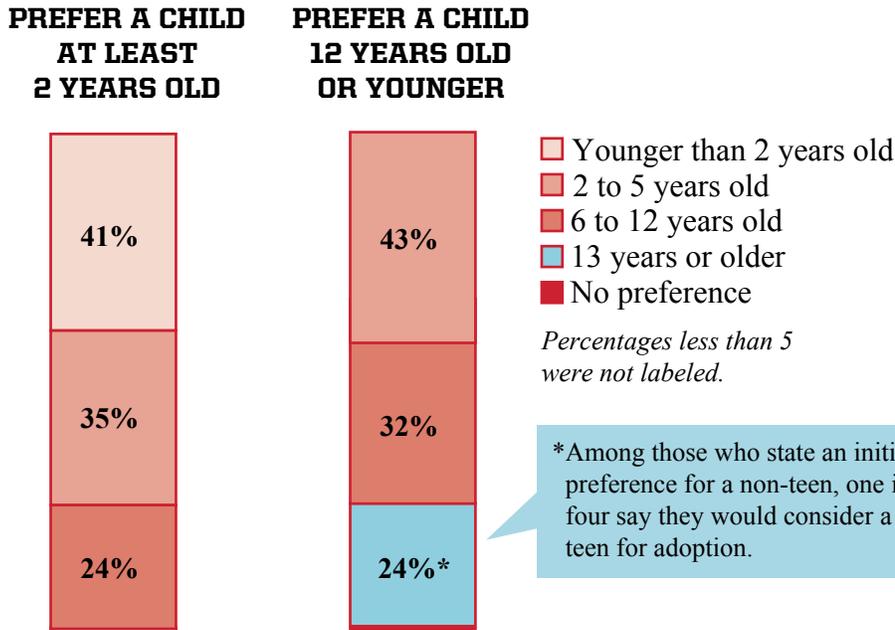
Canadians who are considering adoption, including those considering foster care adoption, believe children in foster care are impacted by a variety of issues, such as a difficulty with bonding, and behavioural issues, to a much greater extent than children who are adopted privately or internationally.

As expected, Canadians are most likely to consider adopting a child younger than 2 (41 per cent). And, among those who state an initial preference for a non-teen, one in four say they would consider adopting a teen.

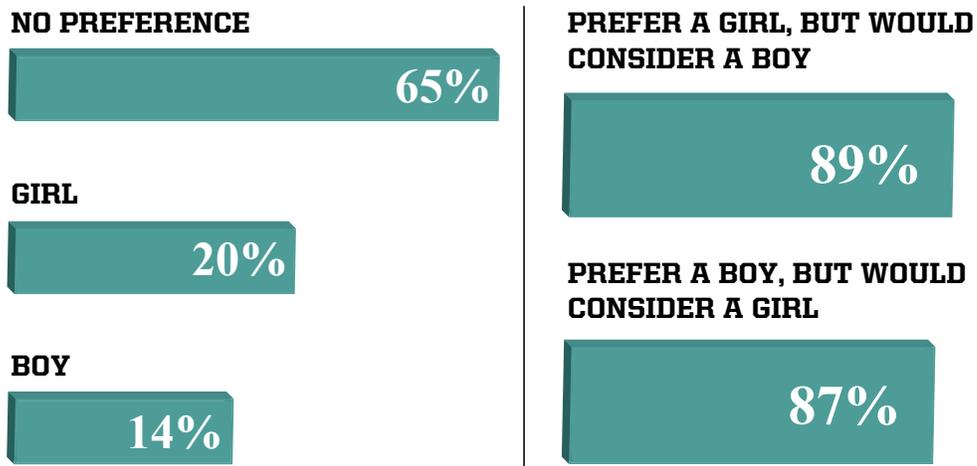
Very few Canadians express a gender preference, and among the respondents who do, nearly all would consider adopting the opposite gender (see page 20).

Canadian men who have considered adoption in general are much more likely to demonstrate a racial preference than their female counterparts, with nearly three out of five females having no preference.

AGE PREFERENCE AMONG THOSE CONSIDERING ADOPTION WHO STATED AN INITIAL PREFERENCE FOR A CHILD AGES 2 YEARS AND UP

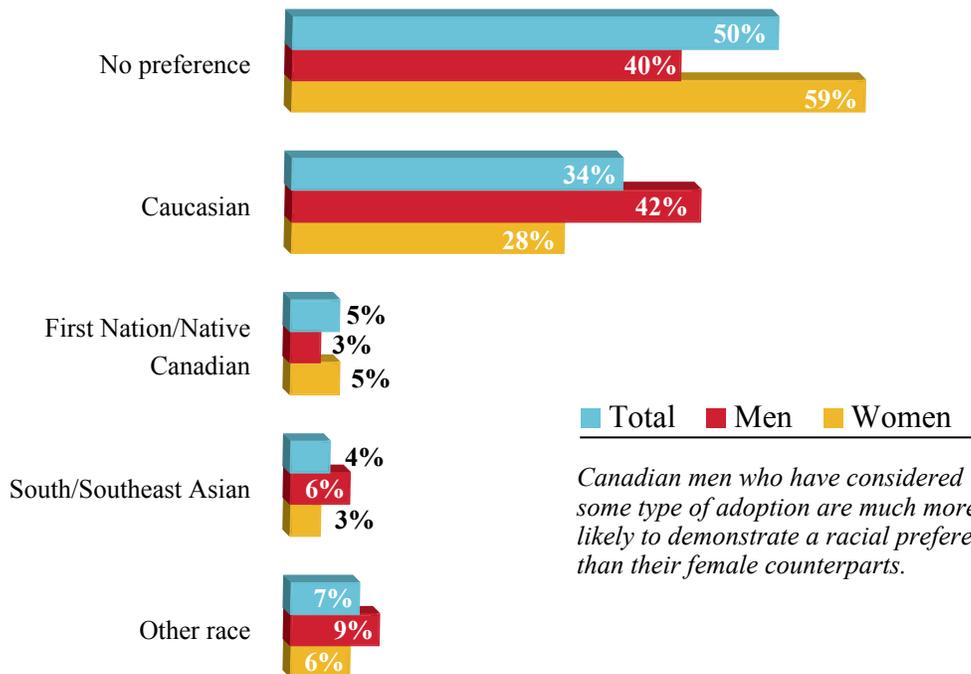


GENDER PREFERENCE AMONG THOSE CONSIDERING ADOPTION



RACE PREFERENCES AMONG THOSE CONSIDERING ADOPTION

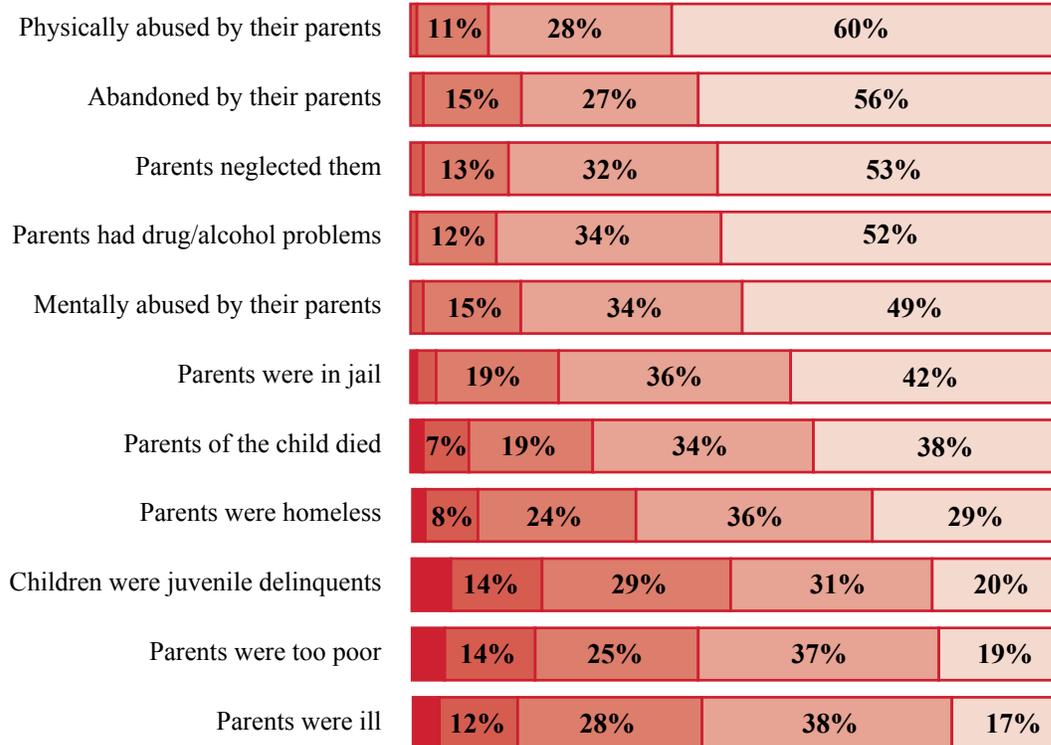
Survey question: If you were to consider adopting a child (or another child) and you could choose exactly the child you wanted, would you prefer to adopt a First Nation/Native Canadian child or a child of some other race?



PERCEIVED REASONS FOR CHILDREN BEING IN FOSTER CARE

Canadians see children in foster care as having endured pain and abuse. There is also a perception of children in foster care as potentially being more difficult to raise.

REASONS FOR BEING IN FOSTER CARE



Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.

Strongly agree
 Somewhat agree
 Neither agree or disagree
 Somewhat disagree
 Strongly disagree

WILLINGNESS TO ADOPT A CHILD WITH VARIOUS CHARACTERISTICS

Just under half of Canadians feel that every child is adoptable (49 per cent), pointing to ambivalence about whether each child can be adopted. The survey found a variety of characteristics impact perceived adoptability, including:

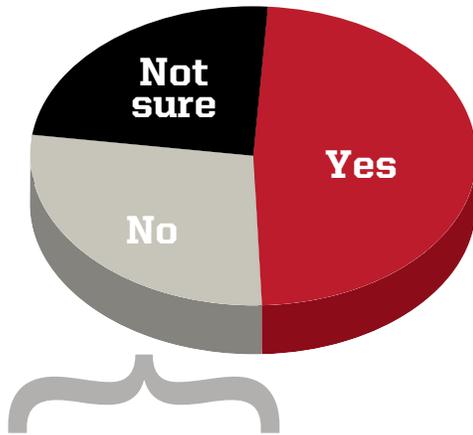
- Being 12 years of age or older has a perceived negative impact on a child's adoptability.
- More than half of Canadians (53 per cent) indicate Caucasian children are more likely to get adopted than South/Southeast Asian (35 per cent) or First Nation/Native Canadian children (27 per cent).
 - More than a quarter of Canadians (27 per cent) still consider a child adoptable even if he or she has been in foster care for more than a year.
 - Nearly one-third of Canadians consider a child who needs to be adopted as part of a sibling group (32 per cent) as a very or somewhat positive adoptability factor.

The concerns that are most likely to deter people from considering adopting a child have to do with the child's possible exposure to illegal drugs during pregnancy, mental disability or behavioural issues (see charts on page 22).



ADOPTABILITY FACTORS

ADOPTABILITY



Demographic groups most likely to say yes:

54% Female

57% Under 55

56% HH income <\$50K

63% Using Internet/social media as a top information source

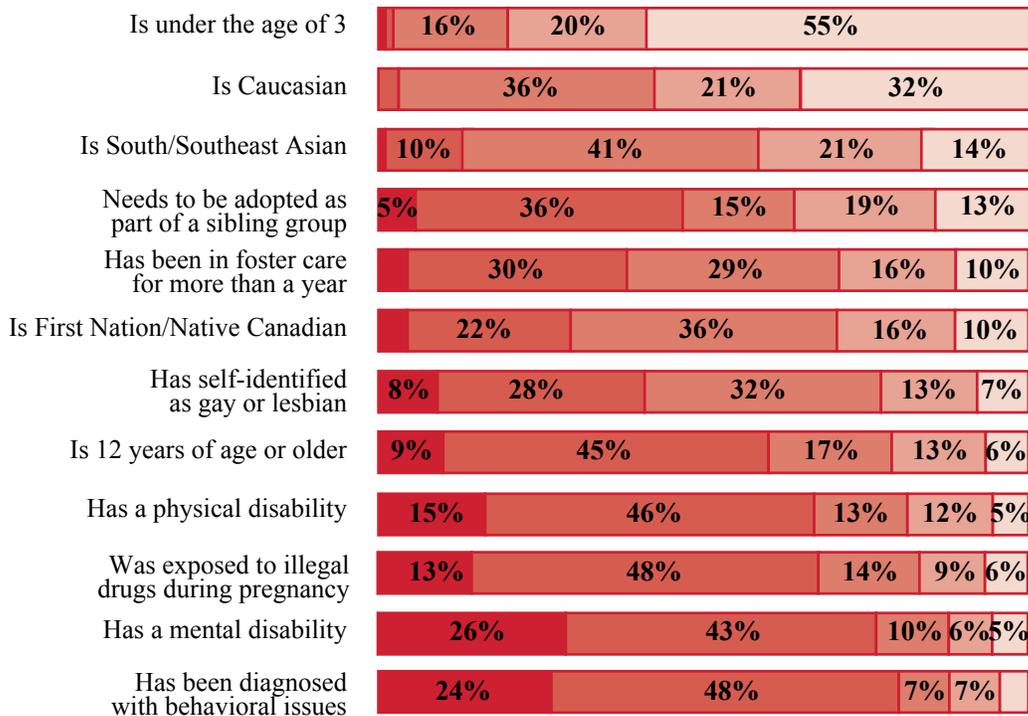
Demographic groups most likely to say no:

32% Men

37% Over 55

30% Not using Internet/social media as a top information source

ADOPTABILITY FACTORS



Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.

- Very positive impact
- Somewhat positive impact
- Neither negative or positive impact
- Somewhat negative impact
- Very negative impact



CONCERNS ABOUT OUTCOMES FOR ADOPTED CHILDREN

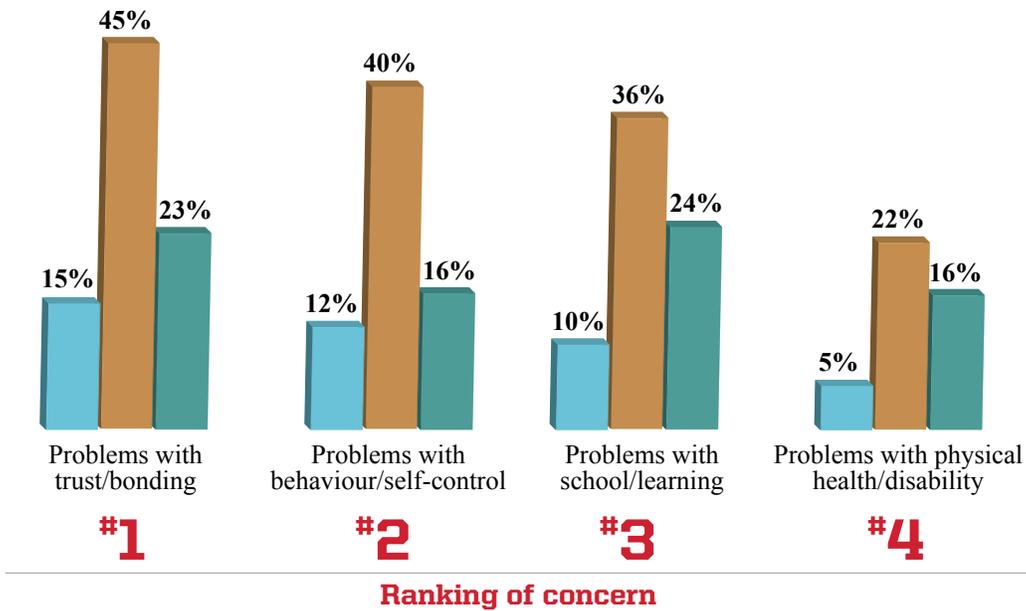
The study analyzed what Canadians think about the likelihood that adopted children in general, and children adopted from foster care in particular, will encounter a variety of medical and behavioural problems. This analysis explores whether Canadians think it is likely that they will encounter the kinds of issues that most concern them when considering adoption.

Responses indicate that Canadians think trust and bonding issues — the characteristics that are of most concern when considering a child for adoption — are more likely to occur among children adopted from foster care (51 per cent) than among other children. And, Canadians who have (49 per cent) and have not (51 per cent) considered foster care adoption view problems with behaviour/self-control as more likely with children adopted out of foster care.

These concerns may be due in part to the view that their biological parents mistreated them. The reasons that respondents give for why a child in foster care may be available for adoption support this view. When Canadians think about adoptable children in general, they tend to select explanations for a child's availability that emphasize decisions by the birth parents. When Canadians think about children in foster care available for adoption, they overwhelmingly assume that children were taken away because of maltreatment.

Canadians who are considering adoption, but not foster care adoption, report far higher levels of negative sentiment toward the foster care system as a whole, than those who are considering foster care adoption. Encouragingly, perception of problems with children in foster care is not holding people back from considering foster care adoption. Those who say they have considered foster care adoption are just as likely as those who have not to view children in foster care as more likely to have an array of issues.

PERCEPTIONS OF PROBLEMS IN ADOPTED CHILDREN

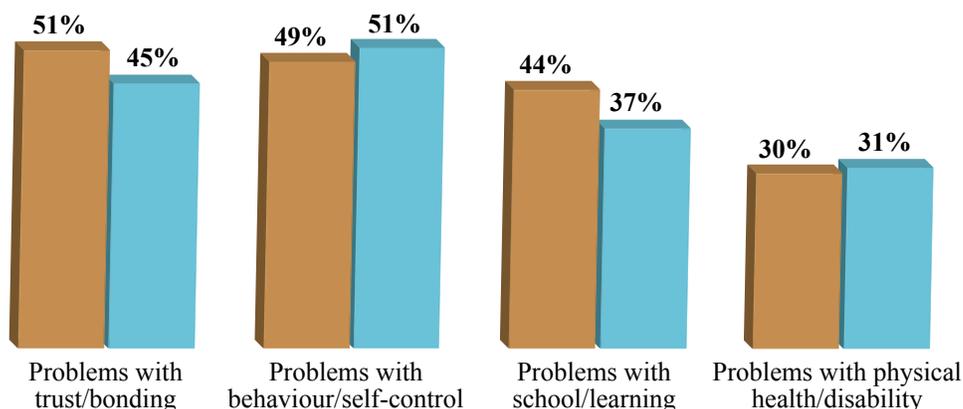


- Private adoption in Canada
- Adoption from Canadian foster care
- International adoption



PERCEPTIONS OF PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN ADOPTED FROM FOSTER CARE

■ Have considered foster care adoption ■ Have not considered foster care adoption



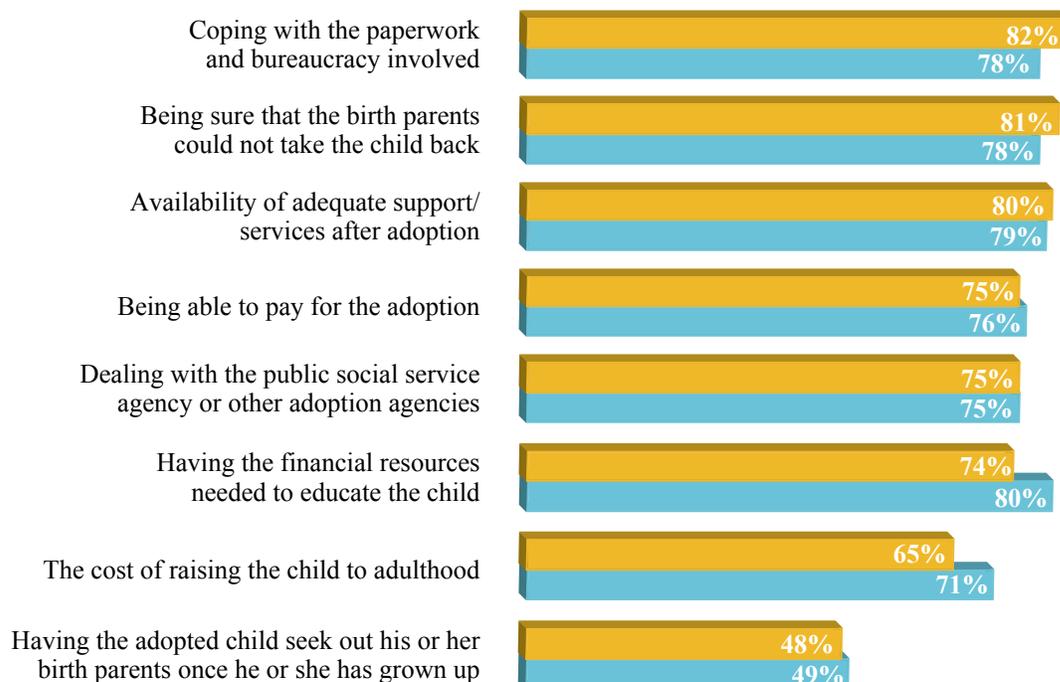
UNDERSTANDING POTENTIAL CONCERNS ABOUT THE ADOPTION PROCESS

These results give a feel for what Canadians want to know about adoption and a sense of their overall concerns. Survey respondents were asked to indicate how much of a concern — major, minor, or no concern at all — each of eight potential concerns would be if they were thinking about whether or not to adopt a child. These options were chosen to expose respondents to a wide range of possible concerns that often arise in discussions of adoption.

Those who have considered adoption show nearly identical levels of concern to those who have not considered adoption, with the exception of the cost of raising the child to adulthood. More than three-fourths of Canadians who have considered foster care adoption (76 per cent) express concern about the cost of raising the child to adulthood, compared to just over half of those who have not considered foster care adoption (54 per cent). The results are shown in the charts below.

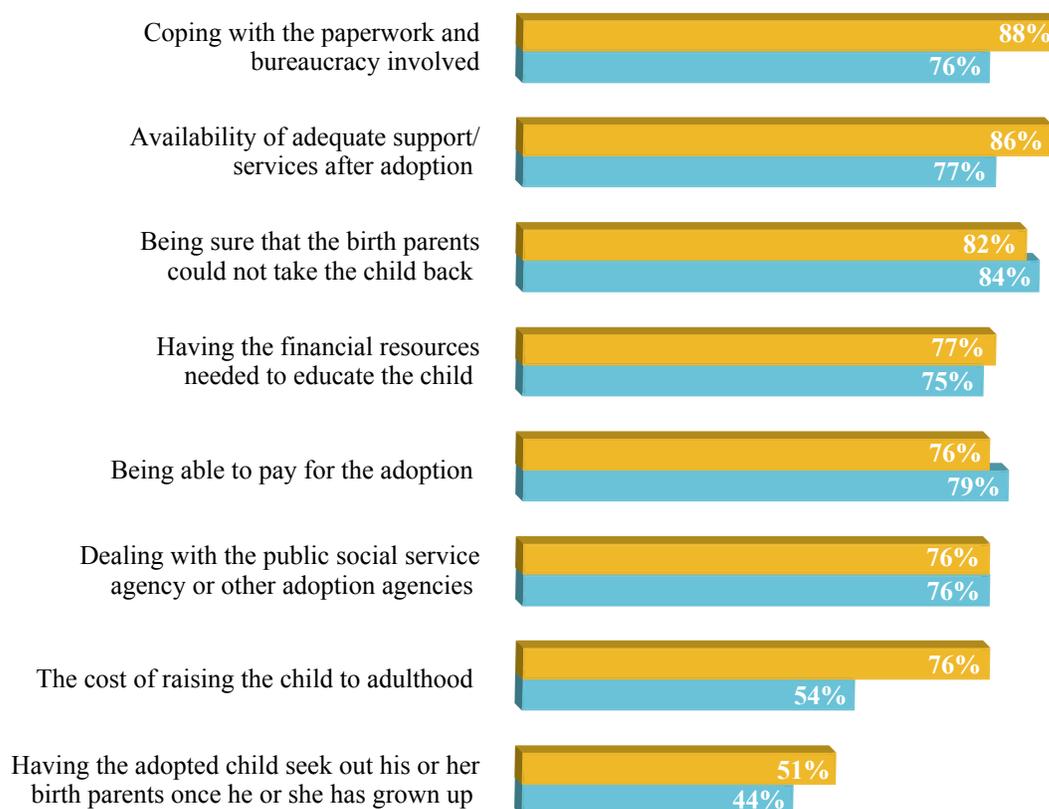
CONCERNS ABOUT ADOPTION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE VS. HAVE NOT CONSIDERED ADOPTION

■ Have considered adopting a child ■ Have not considered adopting a child



CONCERNS ABOUT ADOPTION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE VS. HAVE NOT CONSIDERED ADOPTION FROM FOSTER CARE

■ Have considered foster care adoption
 ■ Have not considered foster care adoption



EXPENSE, DIFFICULTY AND CONSIDERATION OF FOSTER CARE ADOPTION

Though Canadians do not cite cost and difficulty as issues of high concern, these are still issues that need to be addressed. Less than one in 10 Canadians see foster care adoption as “very expensive,” compared to nearly three in five who say the same for international adoption.

Those who have considered adoption show nearly identical levels of concern about possible issues to those who have not considered adoption.

Those considering foster care adoption may not view the process as expensive, but they are deeply concerned about the future costs they may incur to raise a child to adulthood, such as college and medical care (76 per cent of respondents who have considered foster care adoption rated the cost of raising a child to adulthood as a top concern). See charts on pages 26 and 27 for additional information.

As with cost, foster care adoption is seen as the lowest level of difficulty in the adoption process. Those who are not considering foster care adoption believe the foster care adoption process is difficult, even if they view the process as less arduous than private or international adoption.



PERCEPTIONS OF EXPENSE OF ADOPTION

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION



ADOPTION FROM CANADIAN FOSTER CARE



PRIVATE ADOPTION IN CANADA



- Very expensive
- Somewhat expensive
- Neither expensive or inexpensive
- Somewhat inexpensive
- Very inexpensive

PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFICULTY OF ADOPTION

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION



ADOPTION FROM CANADIAN FOSTER CARE



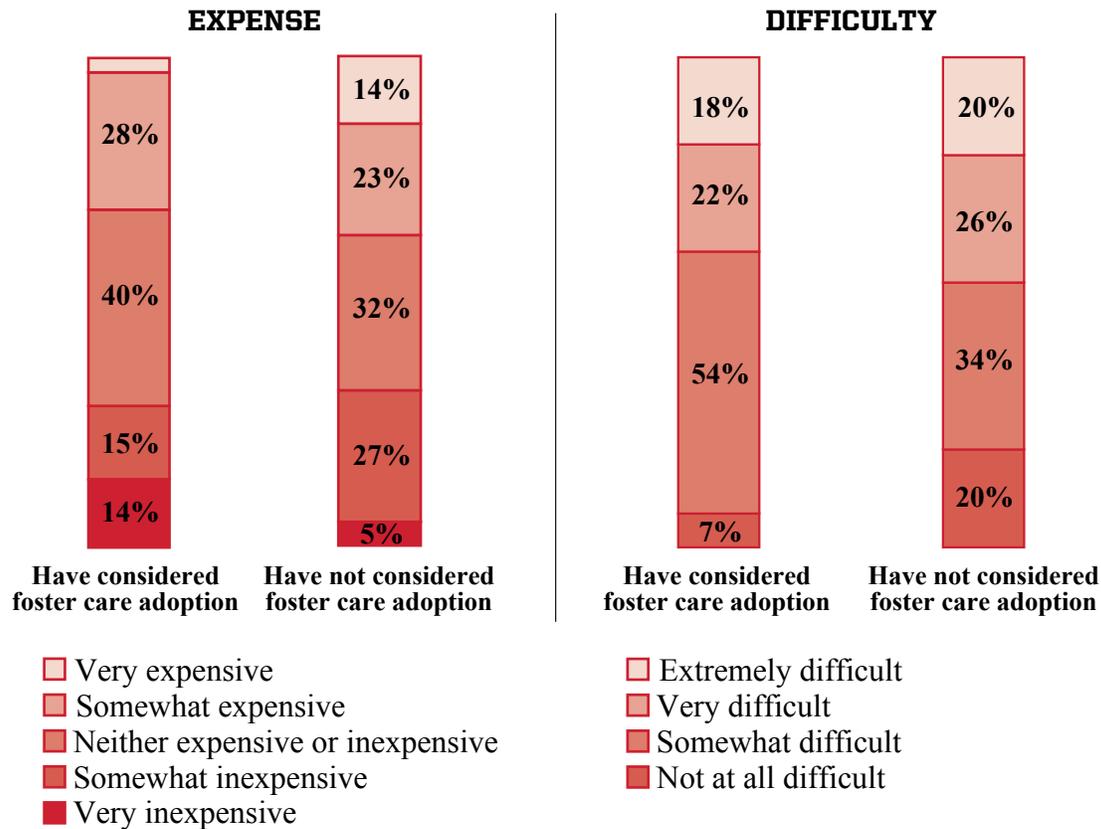
PRIVATE ADOPTION IN CANADA



- Extremely difficult
- Very difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- Not at all difficult



PERCEPTION OF COST AND DIFFICULTY OF FOSTER CARE ADOPTION AMONG THOSE WHO ARE CONSIDERING FOSTER CARE ADOPTION VS. THOSE WHO ARE NOT



ADOPTIVE PARENTS: MOTIVATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS

Of those who have considered adoption, Canadians who are somewhat or very seriously considering foster care adoption make up 57 per cent of the population, which is statistically similar to the percentage considering private adoption (53 per cent). The lowest consideration is seen for international adoption (40 per cent). Respondents cited many motivations and perceptions for considering adoption, as seen in the following sections.

Comparatively, in the United States:

- 69 per cent are somewhat or very seriously considering foster care adoption.
- 64 per cent are somewhat or very seriously considering private adoption.
- 53 per cent are somewhat or very seriously considering international adoption.

With an estimated 30,000 children in Canadian foster care waiting to be adopted, if just 0.4 per cent of Canadians who have considered adopting a child in foster care follow through, all children in foster care would be adopted.

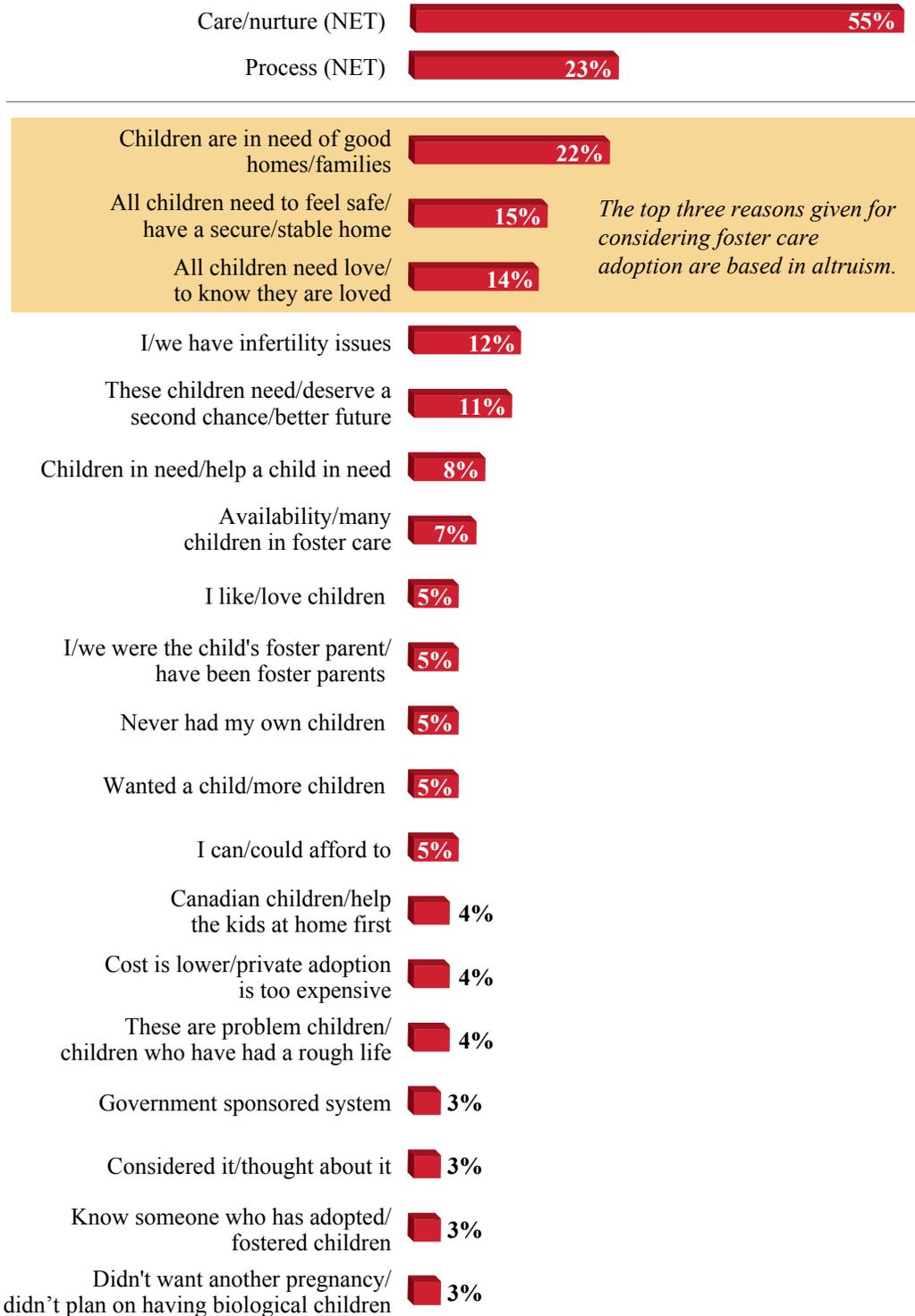


REASONS ADULTS CONSIDER FOSTER CARE ADOPTION

The desire to care for a child and altruistic reasons are among the top three reasons given for why Canadians are considering adopting through foster care, specifically:

- 55 per cent express a desire to care and nurture a child.
- 22 per cent express a need to give children good homes and families.
- 15 per cent express the belief that all children need to feel safe and secure in stable homes.

REASONS FOR CONSIDERING/HAVING CONSIDERED FOSTER CARE ADOPTION



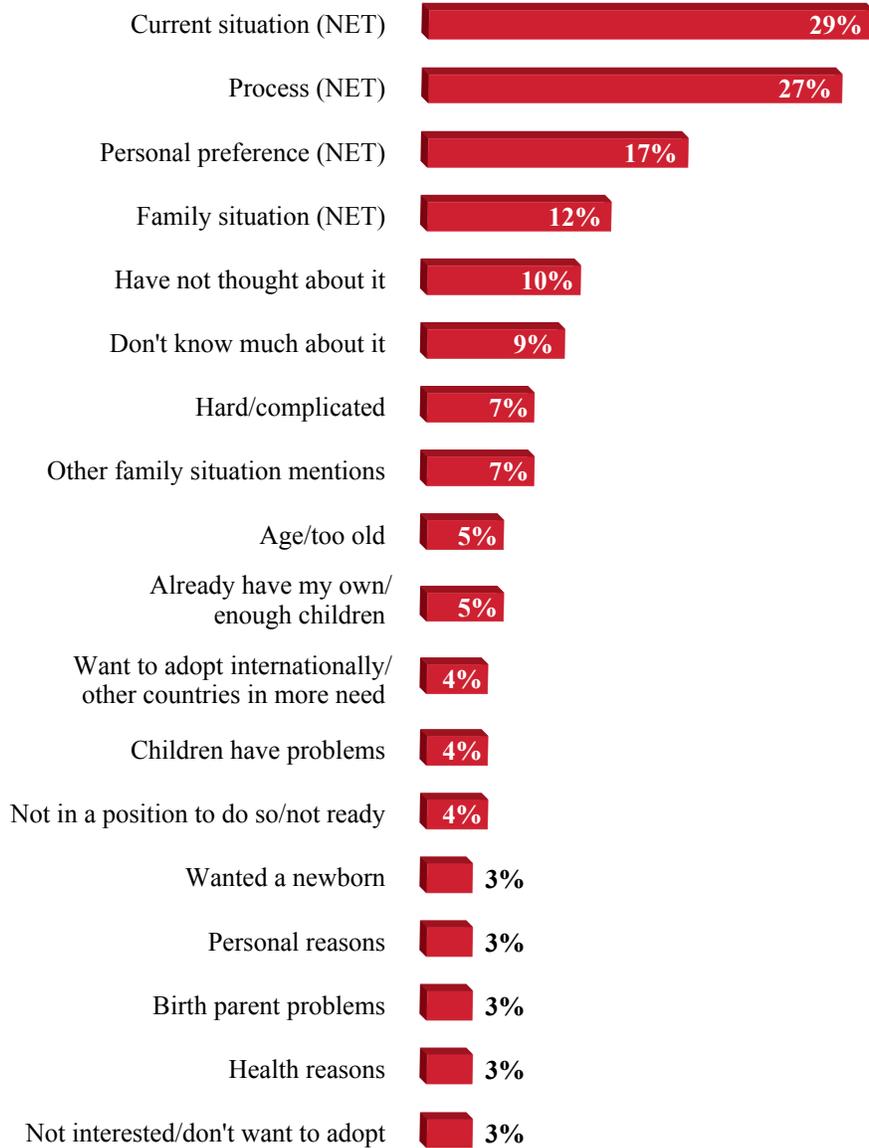
Only responses of at least 3% shown.



A quarter of those considering adoption, but not foster care adoption, cite some aspect of the process as a reason why they are not considering foster care adoption.

Nearly 20 per cent say they haven't thought about it or don't know enough about foster care adoption.

REASONS FOR NOT CONSIDERING/HAVING CONSIDERED FOSTER CARE ADOPTION



**Only responses of at least 3% shown.*

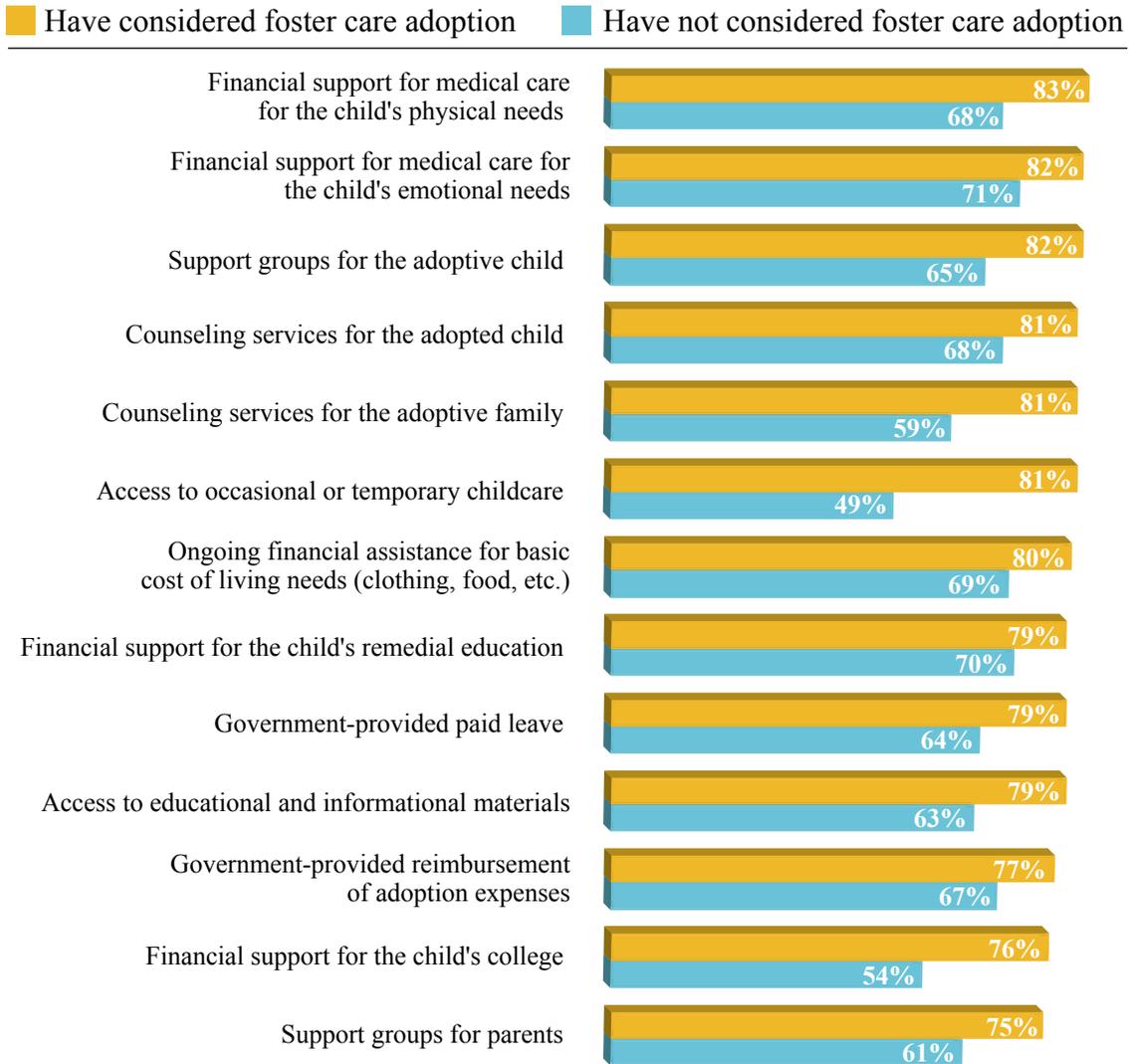


FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND FOSTER CARE ADOPTION

Despite foster care adoption's being seen as inexpensive, those considering adoption in general see financial-support-related steps as making the biggest difference. However, those considering foster care adoption put considerable value on counseling services and access to childcare (81 per cent).

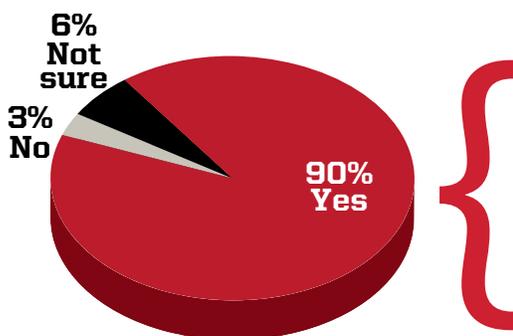
Financial support for medical care for the child's physical and emotional needs, as well as support groups for adopted children, are top factors for those considering foster care adoption.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION AND CONCERNS AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE VS. HAVE NOT CONSIDERED ADOPTION



EMPLOYER ASSISTANCE AND CONSUMER AWARENESS

EMPLOYER ASSISTANCE TO EMPLOYEES WHO ADOPT



There is little to no difference between population groups among those who answered "yes," pointing to the huge popularity of this measure. There is virtually no segment of the Canadian population that shows any real negativity to this proposal whatsoever.



HOW CANADIANS LEARN ABOUT ADOPTION

Knowing people who have adopted or have been adopted, whether friends or family, is one way people learn about adoption. But there are other potential sources of information. Government agencies, social welfare organizations, churches, the media, and the Internet were also cited.

When respondents were asked where they could find information about foster care adoption, most Canadians:

- Ask their personal network of family/friends/neighbours for information (48 per cent).
- Learn about foster care adoption on television (32 per cent).
- Learn about foster care adoption on the Internet (32 per cent).

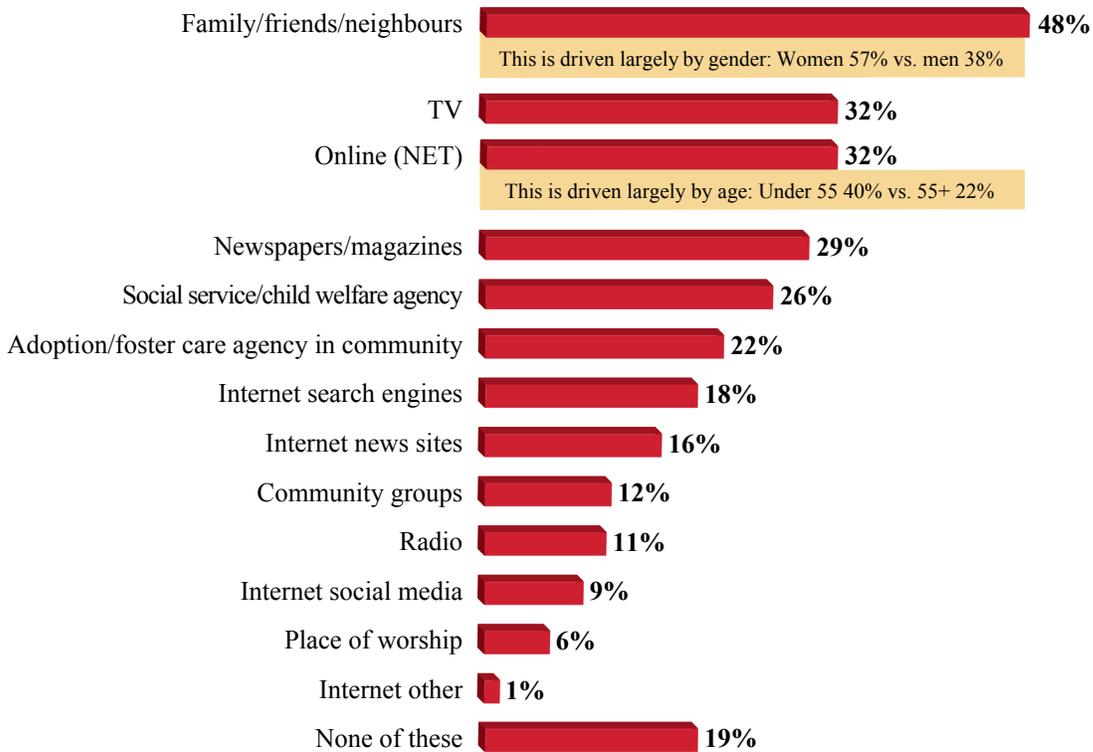
When those considering foster care adoption were asked where they could obtain information about it, their responses showed that these individuals are making heavy use of their personal network (63 per cent) and the Internet (56 per cent).

In addition, about half of Canadians (48 per cent) who have considered foster care adoption are likely to contact their local social service or child welfare agency, and 47 per cent are likely to contact their local adoption or foster care agency.

The high use of TV and newspapers/magazines for those not currently considering adoption is an important factor to consider for determining the best vehicles to communicate information about foster care adoption.

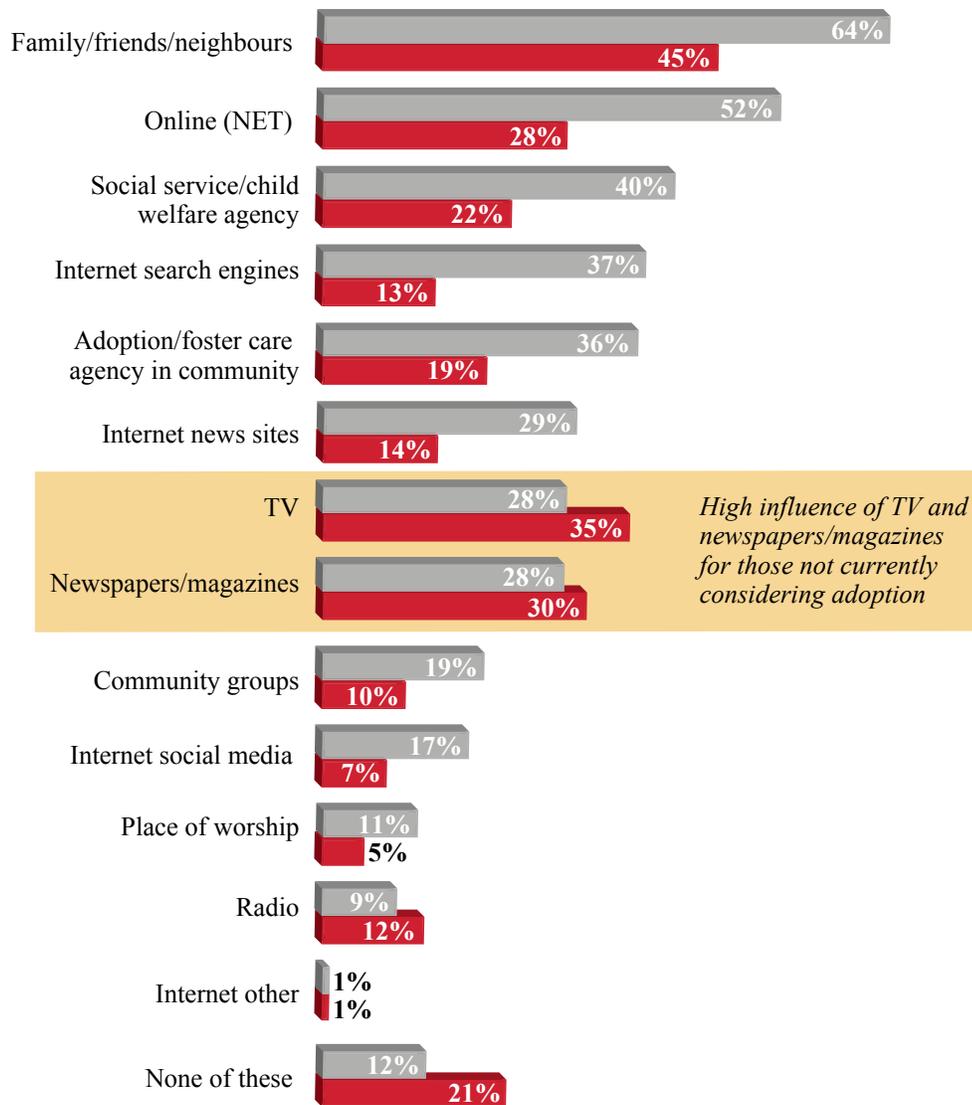
The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption Canada has already launched initiatives that share real-life stories of successful foster care adoptions, and its child-focused recruitment method are essential to moving more children from foster care to forever homes.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT ADOPTION



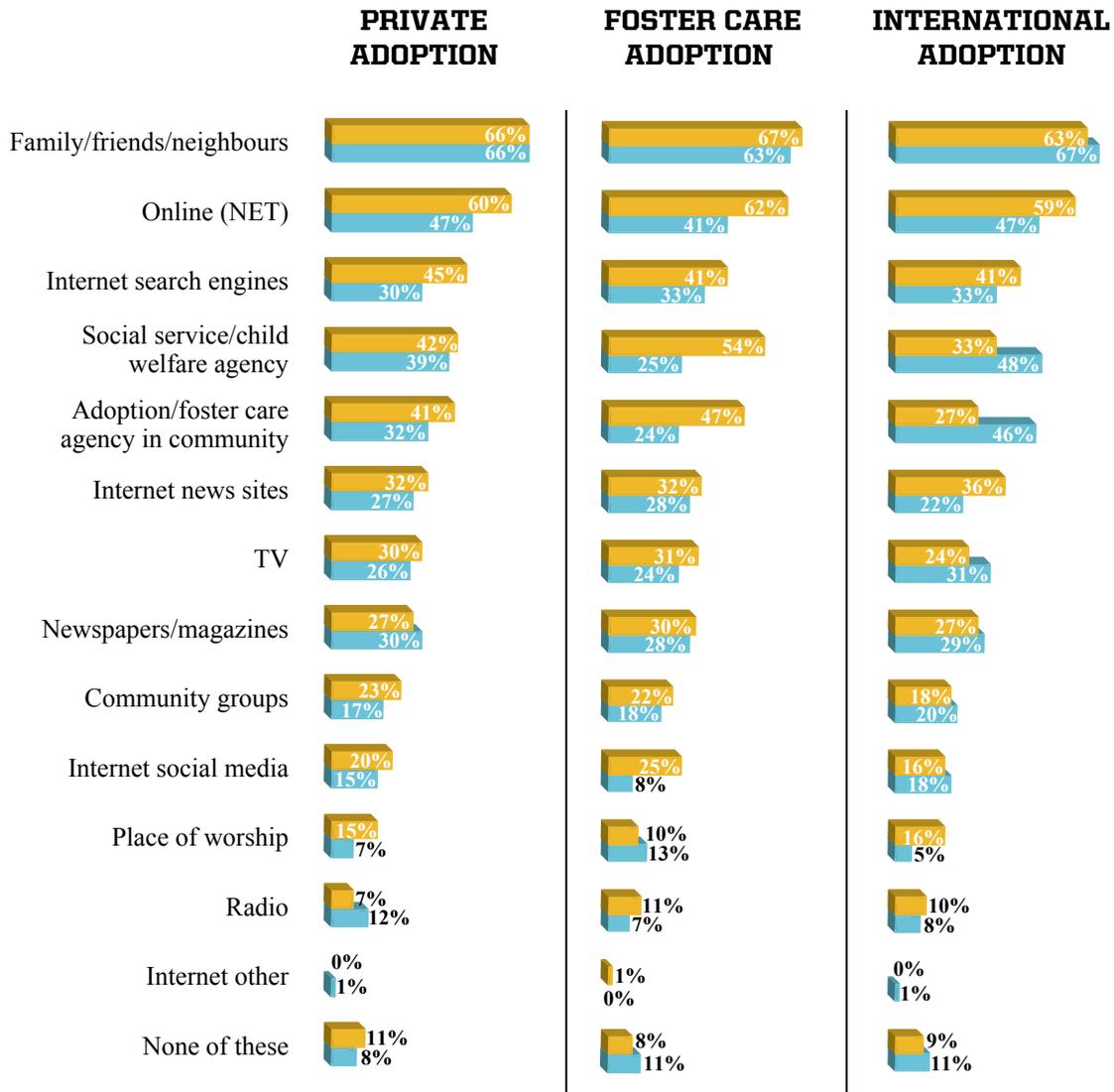
MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT ADOPTION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE VS. HAVE NOT CONSIDERED ADOPTION

■ Have considered adopting a child ■ Have not considered adopting a child

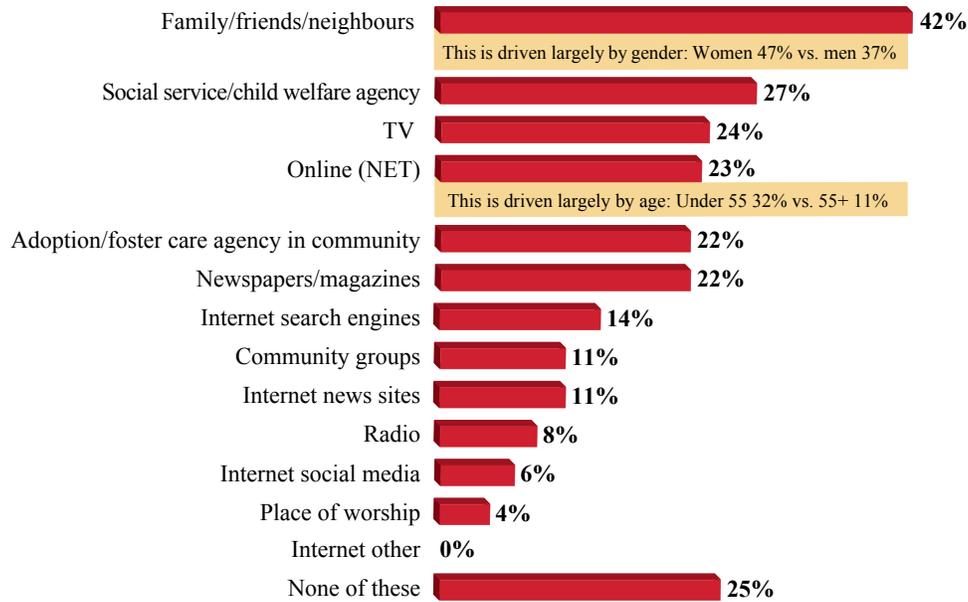


MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT ADOPTION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE VS. HAVE NOT CONSIDERED EACH TYPE OF ADOPTION

■ Have considered adopting a child
 ■ Have not considered adopting a child

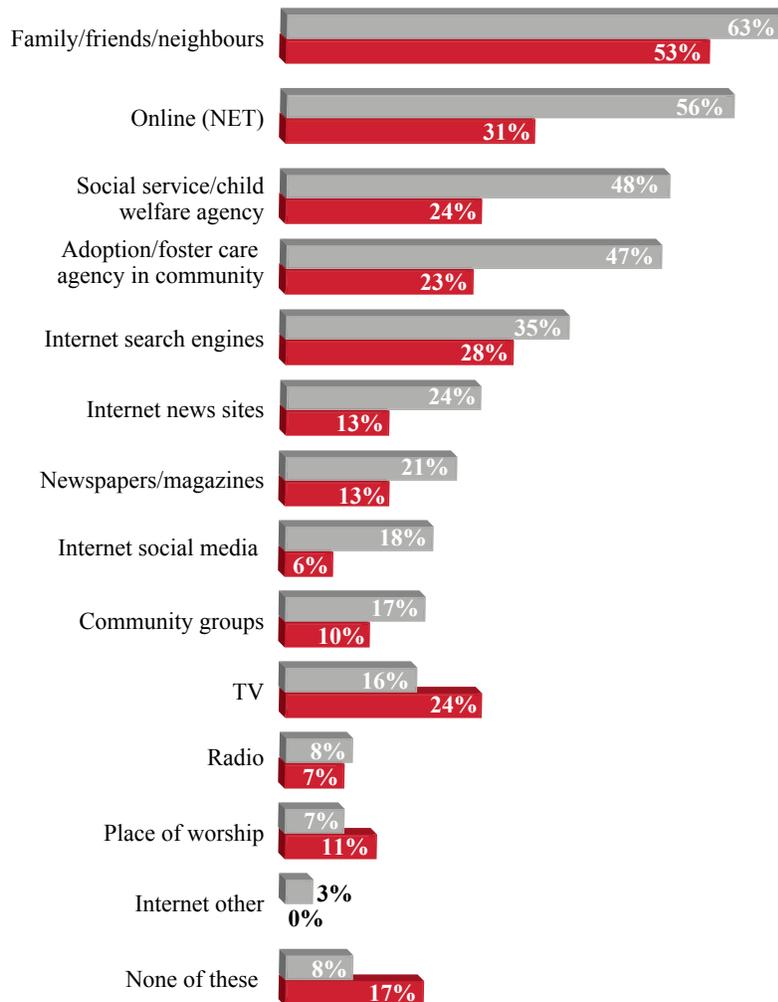


MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT FOSTER CARE ADOPTION



MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT FOSTER CARE ADOPTION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE VS. HAVE NOT CONSIDERED FOSTER CARE ADOPTION

■ Have considered foster care adoption ■ Have not considered foster care adoption



Canadians are more likely to see media coverage of foster care adoption as negative, compared to media coverage of the general topic of adoption.

PERCEPTIONS OF FAVOURABILITY OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF ADOPTION

GENERAL ADOPTION



FOSTER CARE SYSTEM ADOPTION



Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.

- Very unfavourable
- Somewhat unfavourable
- Neither favorable nor unfavourable
- Somewhat favourable
- Very favourable



3. Conclusions and recommendations

There is hope for children waiting in foster care for adoptive families. The data indicates very clearly that foster care adoption in Canada would most likely improve if the following actions are taken:

- **Improve knowledge about foster care.** Currently, Canadians' lack of familiarity with foster care hinders the consideration of foster care adoption. A substantial number of Canadians considering adoption, but not foster care adoption, do not have knowledge about foster care adoption or simply have never thought about it.
- **Emphasize resources available to help those who adopt from foster care.** Those considering foster care adoption need reassurance that there will be help available throughout the process and afterward, including help with costs and counseling. The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption Canada produces a comprehensive guide to foster care adoption called *Finding Forever Families: A Step-by-Step Guide to Adoption*, which provides Canadian-specific resources, including the names of local social service or child welfare agencies and expectations for each stage of the adoption process.
- **Reduce the notion that it is an act of charity to adopt through foster care.** As long as people are primarily interested in foster care adoption because of altruistic reasons, there will be a finite number of people willing to upend the stability of their families for a child adopted from foster care.
- **Improve views on the system itself.** Negativity toward the system somewhat carries over to the children who are in foster care. Making it clear that Canada's foster care system is a successful endeavor will help reduce people's reticence about the children themselves.
- **Improve the country-wide foster care data collection system.** As of this publication, there is no Canada-wide system that tracks the number of children who are waiting to be adopted from foster care. Data is available province by province, but is not systematically collected or ranked for the country as a whole. Countrywide data would allow for more accurate statistics about the children waiting in foster care, those who have been adopted, and the general trends around foster care adoption.





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