

What You Should Know About the 1997 Manitoba Birth Cohort Study (Tots Study — Etude Parlons Petite Enfance):

- In 2001, 635 parents and their children (aged three to four years old) from two distinct groups participated in this study.
 - The primarily rural group of children were recruited from Manitoba's southeast region, defined by the boundaries of a regional health authority.
 - The francophone group of children were drawn from the francophone school division across the province, including Winnipeg,
- This study has a longitudinal design meaning these parents and children are contacted every two years in order to collect data on their children's progress and outcomes (physical, social, cognitive and behaviour) for further research.

Who is the Parent?

- This study collected data from the person most knowledgeable (PMK) about the child who was usually the biological or adoptive mother (95% of the sample). Information on the second parent was not collected. This is why we specifically refer to mothers at other points in this brochure.
- In the first interview, the PMK was asked about child and family characteristics, family activities and child care arrangements.

What is Child Care?

- Child care was defined as non-parental care of a child for half a day or more per week on a regular or scheduled basis. Care was categorized as occurring in the child's own home by a non-parent, care in someone else's home or centre-based care in either nursery or preschool or child care centres. Information on whether or not the centres and homes were licensed was not available.

Limitations of the Study

- The 1997 Manitoba Birth Cohort Study is unique:
 - Most of the children live in rural areas or small urban centres (10,000 or less).
 - Home-based child care is the most common type of child care.
 - About 1/3 of the children are francophone and living in a linguistic minority environment.
 - The families are predominantly middle class.
- What we learn may not apply to children living in areas with different characteristics in Manitoba or Canada. Therefore, the results should be interpreted with caution.

Child Care Matters

November 2004

The Importance of Child Care to Early Child Development

Canadian families have changed over time. Most children now have two parents with jobs in the paid work force and many preschoolers are in child care. The Government of Manitoba through Healthy Child Manitoba and the Government of Canada through Social Development Canada are working in partnership to find out more about child care — what types families use and how it affects child development. This research study is called the 1997 Manitoba Birth Cohort Study and includes two groups of children, one from the South Eastman region and the other from the francophone community across Manitoba.

The study is following these children from preschool to school entry and beyond, measuring how child care affects their behaviour and development in the areas of social skills, problem solving, motor skills and school readiness. Over time, this knowledge will help us understand how early child care and other experiences influence children's development. This study will provide information about children living in rural areas and about francophone children living in communities where limited French is spoken. Knowing more about early influences on these two groups of children will help us to better understand other children living in similar environments.



Canada



Putting children and families first



The Development and Behaviour of Children in Child Care and Those Who are Not in Child Care Were Virtually Identical.

Overall, children in the survey were doing well developmentally. Any differences were very small and within the ranges of normal development and behaviour.

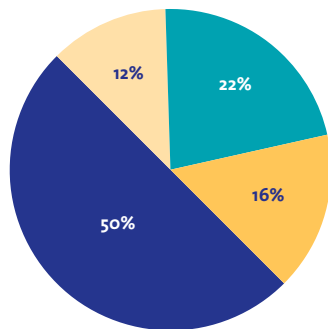
- 93% of children who were not in any child care arrangements had high pro-social behaviour, compared to 94% of children in child care
- 94% of children in both groups had high communication scores
- 99% of children in both groups had high gross motor scores
- 97% of children in both groups had high problem solving scores



Home-based Care Was the Most Common Type of Child Care Arrangement.

- 50% of families used care in someone else's home
- 12% of families used care in the child's own home
- 38% of families used child care centres (including nursery and preschool)

Types of Child Care Families are Choosing



- Child care centre
- Preschool program
- Someone else's home
- Child's home

Parents Regard Child Care as a Necessary Service and Continue to Use The Service Despite Increases in Child Care Costs or Decreases in Their Family Income.

The cost of child care and family incomes did not greatly affect demand for child care. Just like people will continue to buy food and clothing, parents tend to use child care services even if fees go up or family income goes down. This finding suggests families may experience financial strain due to their need for child care.





The Number of Parents in a Family is Related to Whether or Not Child Care is Used and What Type.

- 73% of single parents used child care, compared to 44% of two-parent families
- Single parents more often chose child care centres
- Two-parent families more often chose care in someone else's home

The More Children in a Family, the Less Likely the Family Used Any Outside Child Care.

- 82% of families with one child used child care
- 28% of families with four or more children used child care



The Level of a Mother's Education was Related to Whether or Not Child Care is Used and What Type.

- In this study, mothers with more education were more likely to use child care
- 34% of those with a high school diploma or less education used child care, compared to 64% of those with a bachelor's degree or higher
- Those with more education were the most likely to choose care in someone else's home and the least likely to choose day care, nursery or preschool programs

Family Income was Related to Use and Type of Child Care.

- Families with incomes of less than \$30,000 and families with incomes between \$30,000 and \$59,999 used child care at very similar rates (38% and 39% respectively)
- 61% of families with incomes above \$60,000 used child care
- Those with incomes of less than \$30,000 most often chose child care centres
- Those with incomes higher than \$30,000 most often chose care in someone else's home

Work Force Activity was Related to Use and Type of Child Care.

Mothers were asked about employment.

- 77% of those working full-time used child care and most often chose care in someone else's home
- 52% of those working part-time used child care and most often chose care in someone else's home
- 18% of those not in the work force used child care and most often chose nursery and preschool programs

How We Measure Child Development

- Child development was measured by the *Ages and Stages Questionnaire* which assessed gross motor (running and jumping), fine motor (drawing, threading beads), communication (speaking and understanding), problem solving and personal social (feeding self, getting along with others).
- School readiness was measured by the *Who Am I? Development Assessment* which assessed how children understand symbols such as shapes, letters and numbers.
- Children were described as **high pro-social behaviour** if parents observed co-operative play with others, child trying to help someone who had been hurt or comforting another child who is crying or upset.
- Children were described as **high aggressive behaviour** if parents observed bullying or being mean to others, getting into physical fights, kicking, biting or hitting other children.



A Wide Variety of Activities Were Related to Healthy Child Development.

Overall, activities that families, child care providers, community programs and resources provided for children were linked to better development. Some activities had stronger effects on some aspects of development than others. The more activities provided for children, the higher their development scores.

- Children were more likely to be pro-social when they did activities with parents.
- Using parks, playgrounds and recreational trails helped children's gross motor skills.

- Children who were read to or were involved in musical activities showed less aggression.
- Reading activities were associated with increased pro-social behaviours, communication and personal social skills.
- TV watching was associated with lower gross motor, fine motor and communication skills.

Want to Know More?

The research analysis of the first phase of the *1997 Birth Cohort Study* is currently underway and a report is expected in Spring 2005. It will be available online at <http://www.manitoba.ca/healthychild/>

What to Look For in a Child Care Centre or Home:

It is important to see a variety of child care centres and homes to understand the differences that exist between the two types of care and from one facility to another. Visit a child care centre or home, and consider the following questions.

- Is the child care centre or home clean and safe?
- Do the children appear to be happy and enthusiastic in what they are doing?
- Do the adults appear to be warm and friendly and responsive to the needs of the children in their care?
- Is a child day care licence clearly posted?
- Do they have a plan of activities for the children?
- What do they do when children misbehave?
- What experience do the staff or family child care provider have?
- What educational training have the providers completed?
- For how many children is one person responsible at any time during the day?

For more information, see *Parent's Guide to Quality Child Care* in the Publications and Information section at www.manitoba.ca/childcare or call 945-2197 (Winnipeg), toll-free: 1-888-213-4754