



Summary of 2009 – 2011 *e-Valuation* Results

Acknowledgements

We thank the family resource centre staff, volunteers and program participants who completed the survey from **2009-2011**. We appreciate your feedback. We hope that the *e-Valuation* system has served as a valuable tool to better understand and improve family support programs.

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We welcome your questions or comments by mail, phone or email.

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Summary of e-Evaluation Results 2009-2011

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INTRODUCTION

A family resource centre is a community-based organization where children, parents, grandparents, and caregivers can learn, play, and share together in an informal and nurturing environment. Family resource centres work with parents and children to build on strengths and promote the development of healthy and happy families. These centres offer a variety of programming including parent education, family literacy, drop-in play, pre-natal support, toy lending and other activities.

Family resource centres are community spaces where openness, interaction, and self-reflection are valued principles. Centres have a long tradition of gathering feedback from program participants. This feedback, collected using a blend of formal and informal methods, is used by centres to evaluate and improve their programs. Program assessment often includes measuring participant satisfaction.

In the fall of 2006, the **Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada)** launched a national evaluation system, called *e-Valuation*, which allows local evaluations to be standardized and compiled into a single, comprehensive set of results. This report presents findings from the **fourth and fifth years of data collection (2009/10 and 2010/11)**. It reveals the experiences of families and caregivers, staff and volunteers who have participated in programs at family resource centres across the country. Their responses offer a glimpse of the impact that family resource centres are having on Canadian families and communities. Quotes from survey takers are shared throughout this document and serve to elaborate on, and give substance to, the data and resulting charts.

The summary of results for 2006-07 can be found at: <http://www.frp.ca/2006-07results>

The summary of results for 2007-08 can be found at: <http://www.frp.ca/2007-08results>.

The summary of results for 2008-09 can be found at: <http://www.frp.ca/2008-09results>.

About the *e-Valuation* system

FRP Canada has been committed to the provision of resources relating to program evaluation for many years¹. In 2000, FRP Canada, partnered with Dr. Peter Gabor from the University of Calgary to create practical evaluation tools for family support organizations. Funding for this project was provided by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. The initial focus of Dr. Gabor's work was to determine the evaluation experience and needs of centres across the country. His 2002 report, entitled *The Evaluation of Family Resource Programs: Challenges and Promising Approaches*, describes a patchwork of evaluation practices and often heavy demands placed by multiple funders upon individual centres to measure the impact of their programs and services. Dr. Gabor noted that this

¹ See, for example, Ellis, D. (1998). *Finding our way: A participatory evaluation method for family resource programs*. Ottawa: Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs.

expectation upon individual centres to *prove* their effectiveness was not appropriate, and that the purpose of centre-based evaluation should be to gather information to *improve* programs and services, leaving the matter of proof of effectiveness to large-scale, well-funded research projects.

From 2004 to 2006, Dr. Gabor worked with a group of experienced leaders in the family resource field who had extensive knowledge of evaluation. The goal was to develop an online system which would be easy to use, appropriate and meaningful to the centres themselves, their funders and other stakeholders. The *Guiding Principles of Family Support* (Appendix A) are at the heart of the *e-Valuation* system, since practices based on a strengths-based approach are believed to be key to optimal outcomes for families. With input from the working group, core process and outcome indicators² were identified, survey questions were drafted, tested and revised, and a data analysis system was designed to produce real time reports. In October 2006, the *e-Valuation* system was ready for organizations to use. A manual entitled *e-Valuation: Building Evaluation Capacity in the Family Support Sector* was released at the same time.

Key products of the *e-Valuation* system include:

- Indicators and data collection instruments
- ‘How-to’ information and other supporting resources including a PowerPoint tutorial (<http://e-valuation.frp.ca/e-Valuationsystem.ppt>)
- A database to manage, analyze, aggregate and report data
- Literature summaries to justify and support the choice of underlying survey items (<http://www.frp.ca/literaturesummaries>)

Surveys: The data for the *e-Valuation* system is collected via two surveys, one for adult program participants—parents, grandparents, caregivers and others—and one for the staff and volunteers of the centres. The surveys can be completed on paper and manually entered into the *e-Valuation* system or they can be directly administered online. Besides English and French, the Participant Survey has been translated into Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, German, Hindi, Portuguese and Tamil and has been formatted to match the English/French version. The Staff/Volunteer Survey is available in English and French, as well as in Hindi and Portuguese. All of these surveys are available to download at <http://e-valuation.frp.ca/org/e/Resources.php>.

Most of the survey questions used checkboxes with four ratings – no agreement, a little agreement, moderate agreement and strong agreement. This rating scale was developed after the national pilot test. The previous versions of the surveys used a more typical rating scale of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree. However, analysis of the pilot test showed that virtually all responses fell into the ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ columns. The decision was taken to increase the subtlety of participant responses by increasing options of agreement to three and reducing options of disagreement to one (no agreement). For each rated question, respondents had the option of choosing ‘cannot say’ or ‘does not apply.’ They were also instructed to skip any question they preferred not to answer. In

² The core indicators can be viewed at <http://e-valuation.frp.ca/org/e/Resources.php>

In addition to 23 rated questions, participants were asked to provide some demographic information and had the option of completing three open-ended questions:

- How has this program or centre made a difference for you or your family?
- What would you like this program or centre to do differently?
- Please share any other comments or suggestions.

Selected responses to these questions are included in this report.

There are two time periods throughout the year for survey data collection. System users gather survey data during a 3-week implementation period of their choosing within either the fall or spring data collection periods. In the fourth year of implementation, 7304 respondents completed the Participant Survey and 852 completed the Staff/Volunteer Survey. In the fifth year of implementation, 5104 respondents completed the Participant Survey and 412 completed the Staff/Volunteer Survey.

Data analysis and reports: Upon entering the data of a minimum of four surveys, organizations can immediately access reports showing the survey results for their own organization. They can also generate reports showing combined data by type of organization, province or territory, community size or type of funder (as long as there are data from at least four organizations in the group). Open-ended comments (which could have identifying information) are available only to the centre which collected the data. Raw data from the Participant Surveys, which allow further analysis at the site level, are available to each centre.

Research summaries: The *e-Valuation* system is strongly grounded in experience and supported by the literature from the field of family support and related areas of study. Ten short summaries link the survey themes and related concepts to findings from the academic literature, thus demonstrating the evidence base which supports the system. Each summary includes discussion, annotated references and an extensive bibliography. The ten themes (see Appendix B), identified with specific items on each survey are:

- Engaging Families with a Welcoming Atmosphere and Respectful Staff
- Enhancing Family Participation
- Diversity
- Transfer of Strategies for Increasing Family Well-being
- Parental Confidence
- Strengthening Family Social Networks
- Links to Other Services and Resources
- Worker Satisfaction
- Appropriate Policies
- Collaboration and Partnerships

See <http://www.frp.ca/evidence> for full text of summaries.

SNAPSHOT OF PARTICIPATING FAMILY Resource Centres

System participation rate

This current report is based on data from the 4th and 5th cohorts of the *e-Valuation* system, from the 2009-10 and 2010-11 programming years. In 2009-10, 235 program sites collected data using the *e-Valuation* system. These sites collected 7304 participant surveys and 852 staff surveys. In 2010-11, 125 program sites collected data using the *e-Valuation* system. These sites collected 5104³ Participant Surveys and 412 Staff Surveys. This report represents the largest *e-Valuation* data set examined to date.

For a more detailed look at the total number of surveys collected for both the participant and staff surveys in years one to five, refer to Appendix C.

Location and geographical setting

Programs from seven different provinces used *e-Valuation* over the data collection period considered in this report. As has been the case in previous years, the majority of sites using *e-Valuation* hailed from Ontario. The high participation rate from Ontario reflects the fact that Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs) are encouraged to use the system by their funders at the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and that the OEYC network endorsed the system and encouraged colleagues to participate.

British Columbia remained a significant user representing 21% of sites in 2009-2010 and 5% in 2010-2011. Newfoundland and Labrador represented 3% of program sites in 2009-2010 and 6.5% in 2010-2011. In 2010-11, Manitoba had 6 programs (7%) using *e-Valuation*. Other provinces that used the *e-Valuation* system had no more than 2 sites. The detailed breakdown is presented in the table below:

Breakdown of e-Valuation Users by Province		
Location of Participating Sites	Cohort 4 (2009-2010)	Cohort 5 (2010-2011)
Ontario	174	99
British Columbia	50	6
Newfoundland and Labrador	7	8
Alberta	2	2
Quebec	1	1
Manitoba	0	9
Prince Edward Island	1	0
Total	235	125

³ The data summarized is as of June 15, 2011

Among the organizations that registered on the *e-Valuation* system in the 2009, 48% identified themselves as rural/remote and 52% identified themselves as urban/suburban. In 2010, the percentages were 45% rural/remote and 55% urban/suburban. These numbers are similar to previous cohorts.

Type of organization

In 2009 and 2010 there was broad based participation from many types of family support organizations. The organizations using *e-Valuation* were identified as follows:

Organization Type	2009-10	2010-11
Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC)	134	72
FRP - British Columbia Capacity Grant Program	49	5
Multi-service organization	27	23
Family Resource Program/Family Place	14	12
Community Action Program for Children (CAPC)	11	13
Grand Total	235	125

Number of full time staff

Family resource centres come in all sizes. However, urban centres tend to employ more staff than rural centres. The number of full time equivalent staff for urban based programs and the overall average are significantly higher than in other years. However, this result is due to the fact that the largest organization in the sample, with 150 employees, evaluated 12 programs in 2009 and 14 programs in 2010. With this outlier removed from the analysis, the urban FTE average drops to 12.13 (2009-10) and 11.9 (2010-11) and the overall average drops to 8.4 (2009-10) and 7.5 (2010-11). These numbers are much more in line with previous years.

The organizations with the most staff are OEYCs and BC FRP Capacity Grant Recipients. The average number of full time equivalent (FTE) staff members per participating program was as follows:

FTE by Location	2009-10		2010-11	
	Unadjusted	Adjusted	Unadjusted	Adjusted
Rural	5.8	5.8	3.1	3.1
Urban	28.2	12.3	35.9	11.9
Overall	17.4	8.4	21.2	7.5

Funding

Programs registered in *e-Valuation* are asked to indicate their main funding source. Provincial governments are identified as the largest funders of family resource programs followed by the federal government, charities, and other funding sources (often municipal

governments). The breakdown for the 5th and 6th e-Valuation cohort is as follows:

Funding Source	2009-10		2010-11	
	#	%	#	%
Provincial Government	186	79	105	84
Federal Government	24	10	14	11
United Way or Local Charity	5	2	1	1
Other	20	9	5	4
Total	235	100	125	100

Service volume

Each registered organization was asked to count the number of unique participants (adults and children) they served during the previous three weeks. Sites reported a very broad range of program participation. Programs reported participant numbers from as low as 10 to as high as 8000. A summary breakdown is presented below:

Centre Service Volume Level	2009-10		2010-11	
	#	%	#	%
Less than 100 ⁴	40	17	4	3
From 100 to 499	47	20	26	21
From 500 to 999	74	31.5	50	40
Over 1000	74	31.5	45	36
Total	235	100	125	100

The median service level in the population was 150 in 2009-2010 and 241 in 2010-11.

⁴ There were a few centres that were considered "non-reporting" (i.e. that reported 0 or 1 participant). For the purposes of this analysis these sites were assumed to be in the lowest service volume category.

PARTICIPANT SURVEY RESULTS

Overview of responses

“The program connected me to the community as a whole.....I found supports in other moms going through the same thing and now my family has a support system and social network..”

– 2009-10 Program Participant

The vast majority of participants in family resource programs strongly endorse the programs that they attend. Participants frequently cite the usefulness of what they learn at program centres as well as the value of the support that they receive. Parents and caregivers often cite how resource programs help them expand their social network and make them feel a part of a broader community of caring. Many parents and caregivers also acknowledge that family resource programs are able to connect

them with other valuable services in the community.

Many program users report that their participation in family programs has been very empowering and has greatly improved their confidence in parenting. Further, they report that the activities and programs offered by family resource programs enhance their child’s development, school readiness, and socialization.

While feedback from the *e-Valuation* system is very positive, parents and caregivers do provide interesting suggestions for improvement. Some participants would like centres to offer more flexibility in the scheduling of their programs. They feel that programs should be offered to support users with non-traditional work schedules. Participants also suggest the need to upgrade facilities and provided newer toys and materials. Others suggested improvements include: better parking, better/healthier food, and better marketing/communication of centre activities and programs.

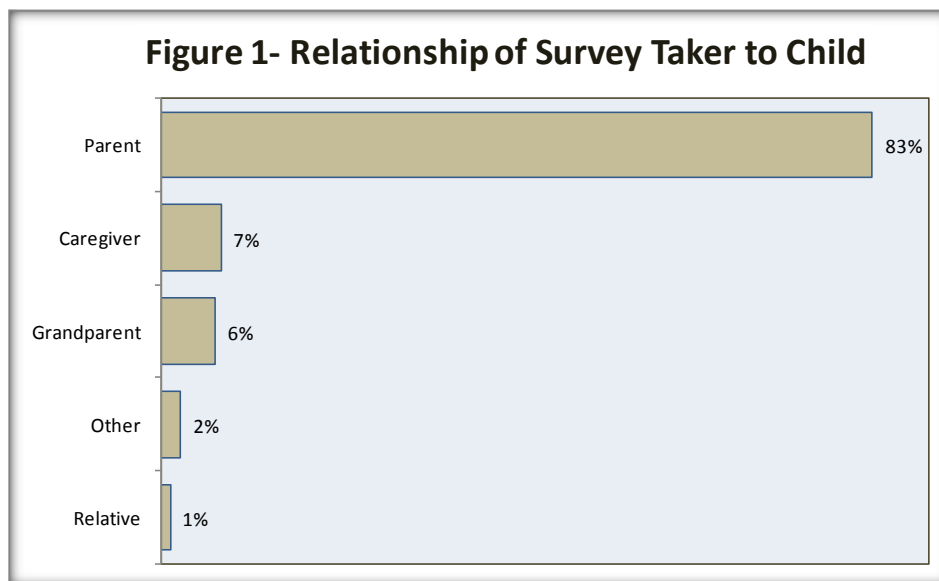
Who are family resource centre participants?

Family resource centre participants come from a wide variety of backgrounds. The majority of respondents are women. The gender breakdown of survey takers from 2006-2011 is as follows:

Gender of e-Valuation Survey Takers	Women	Men
2006-07	87%	13%
2007-08	93%	7%
2008-09	94%	6%
2009-10	92%	8%
2010-11	94%	6%

Connections between children and adults at family resource centres

The majority of family resource program participants are parents and their children. The survey taker's relationship to the child attending the program, for the fourth and fifth cohorts combined, was as follows: 'parent' (83%), 'caregiver' (7%), 'grandparent' (6%), 'other' (2%), and 'relative' (1%) (see below).



The 'caregiver' category is underrepresented due to the fact that the question gathering relationship information asks respondents to check 'parent' if they attended with one or more of their own children. Given that only one choice was possible, the survey does not capture the instances where a parent is also a caregiver of one or more children. In the 2009-10 survey, 25% of parents brought at least one child who was not their own. In 2010-2011, the number of parents who brought someone else's child was 24%. If we consider these 'parents' as caregivers, then 29% of participants are providing care to somebody else's child.

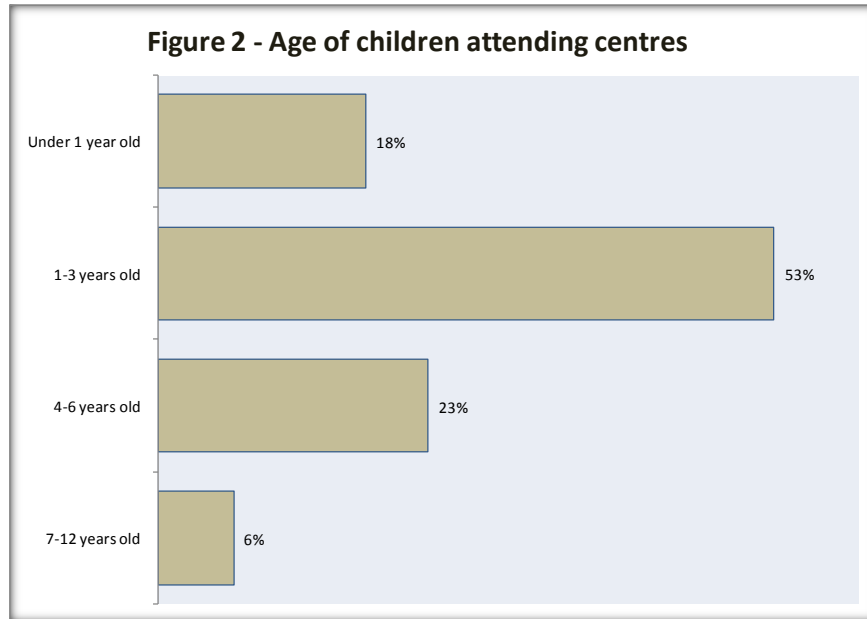
Gender

As mentioned above, the majority of survey takers for the years 2009-2011 were women (93%). Of the children attending programs, more boys (56%) attended than girls (44%). Overall, including both adults and children, males accounted for 41% and females accounted for 59% of program participation.

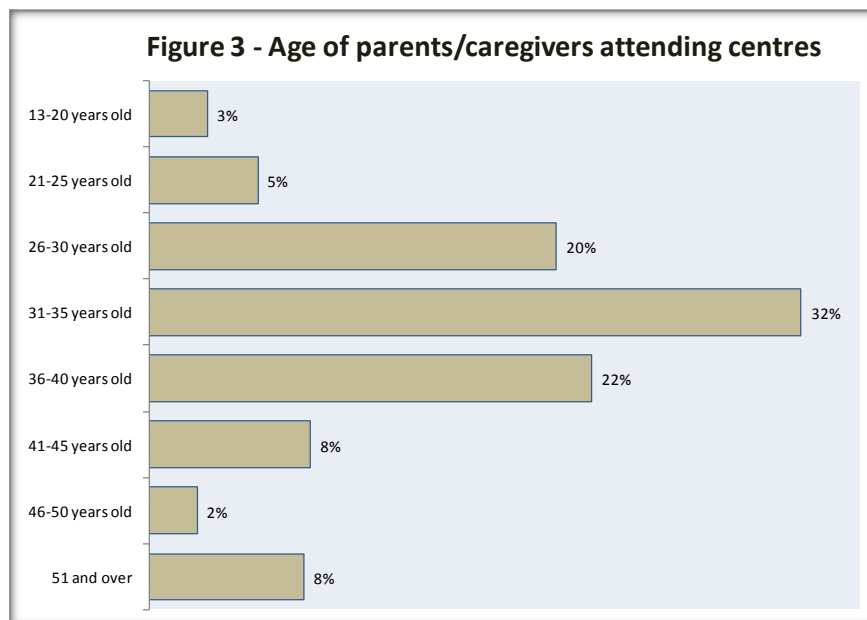
Age

Survey takers provided information about their own age as well as information about the

age of the children attending family resource programs (see Figures 2 and 3). The majority (53%) of the children attending family resource programs are between the ages of 1-3 years old, 23% are between 4-6 years old, 18% are infants, and 6% are between 7-12 years old.



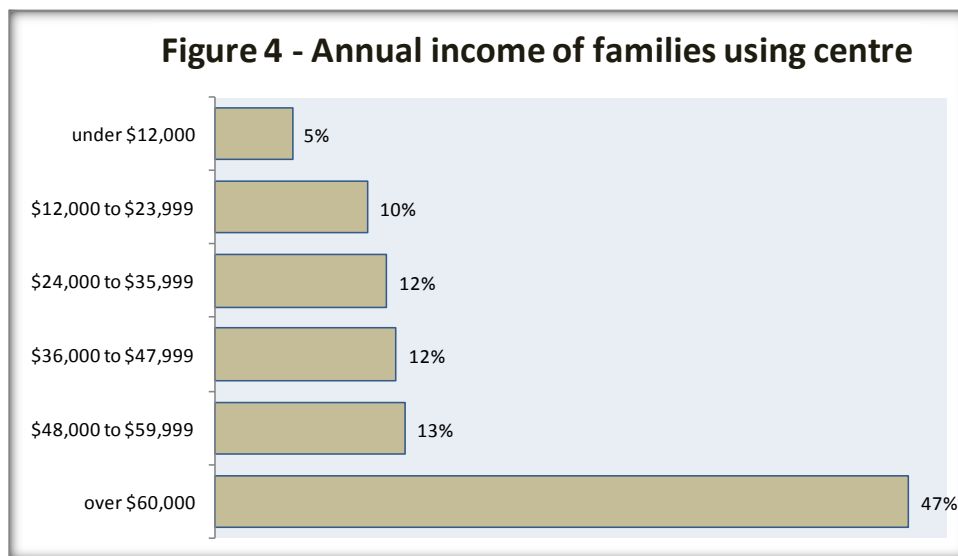
Most caregiving adults attending the centres are aged 26-40 years (76%). Eighteen percent (18%) of adults attending programs were over 40 years old. The age category that would constitute young parents as defined by most family support programs (25 years and younger) represents 8% of all adult participants.



Family income

Sixty-nine percent (69%) of respondents provided annual family income information. Of these respondents, 47% reported earnings of over \$60,000. Twenty-five percent (25%) reported earnings between \$36,000 and \$59,999, and 27% reported earnings of less than \$36,000 (see Figure 4).

According to Statistics Canada, in 2007, the average total income before taxes of two parent families with two earners and with children under 18 years of age was \$99,500⁵. For lone parent families, male led, the national average was \$63,000 and, for female led families, the national average was \$42,900. While survey data is not directly comparable, it is clear that family resource program participants report a lower than average family income.

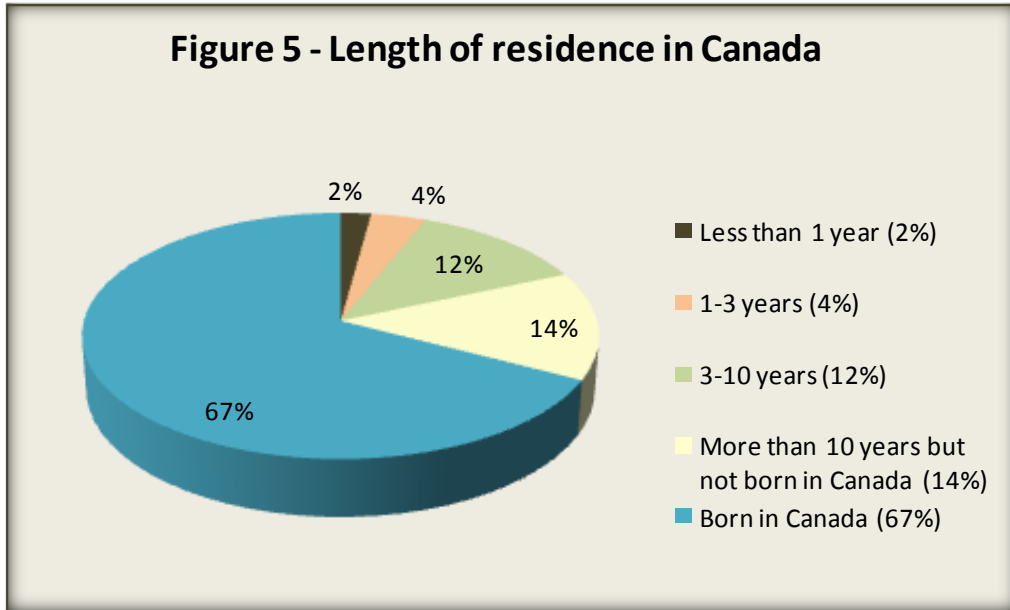


Immigrant participation

e-Valuation participants were much more likely to be born in a foreign country when compared to the general Canadian population. In the 2009-11 time period, 33% of survey takers were foreign-born compared to 19.8% in the general population⁶. This result marks a significant increase in the number of foreign born participants from previous years. For example, in the 2008-2009 *e-Valuation* cohort, 22% of participants were foreign born. Figure 5 provides a breakdown of immigrant participation in *e-Valuation*.

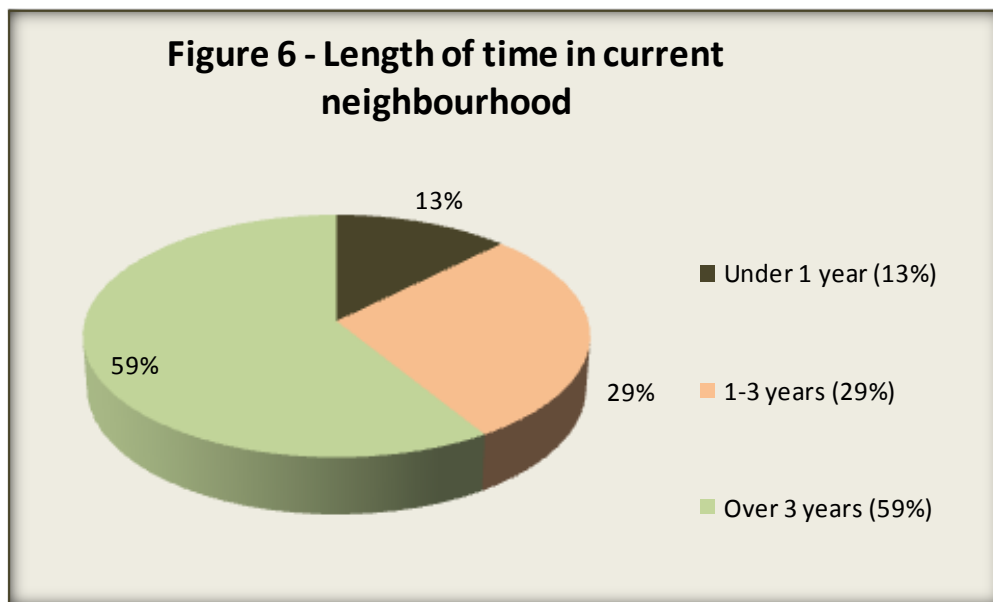
⁵ Statistics Canada, Census 2006, Average total income by economic family types before taxes, <http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/famil05a-eng.htm>

⁶ Statistics Canada 2006, Census foreign born population, <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/rt-td/immcit-eng.cfm>



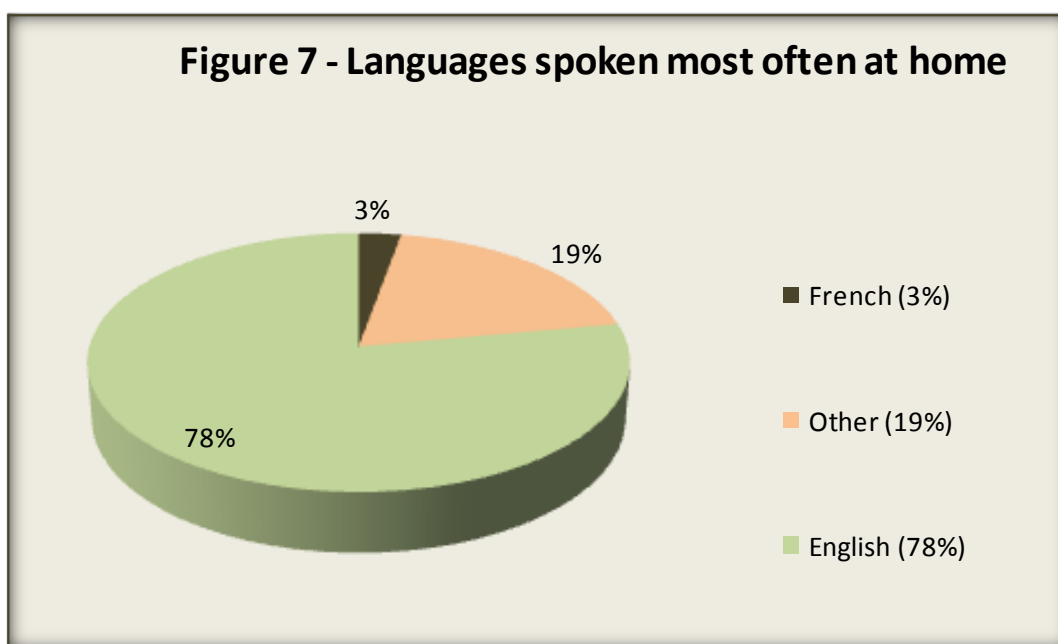
Length of time living in neighbourhood

The majority (59%) of survey respondents were established in their neighbourhoods, having lived there for three or more years (see Figure 6). A large minority (42%) are relatively new to their neighbourhood. Overall, 13% of residents have lived in the neighbourhood for less than one year and 29% have lived in the neighbourhood for one to three years.



Languages spoken at home

For most respondents, the primary language spoken at home was English (78%). However, the 2009/10 and 2010/11 cohorts suggest that the percentage of participants speaking a language other than English or French is growing quickly. In the most recent cohorts 19% of participants speak a language other than English or French at home (see Figure 7). This number is significantly larger than the 10% result found in the 2008/09 cohort. The percentage in the “other” category in the most recent cohorts is significantly larger than the numbers found in the general population (11%)⁷. French is spoken at home by 3% of participants. This is reflective of the fact that *e-Valuation* does not get as much use in Quebec when compared to other provinces.

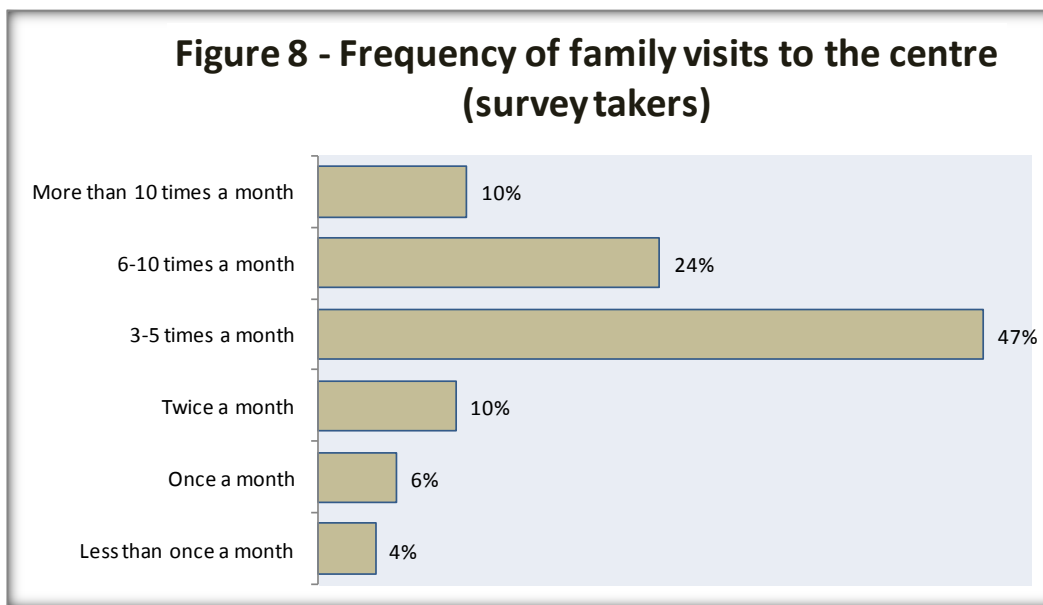


In the *e-Valuation* survey, the “other” category included a very large variety of languages, such as: Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Arabic, Tamil, German, Portuguese and Sign Language. Several family resource centres have translated the Participant Survey into additional languages. These surveys are posted online for others to use at: <http://e-valuation.frp.ca/org/e/Resources.php>.

Frequency of family visits and total monthly visits to centres

A large majority (81%) of participants visit centres three or more times a month and 34% visit centres six or more times a month. Only 10% attend one or fewer times a month. This high frequency of use speaks to the fact that most participants attend family resource centres on a fairly regular basis. It also suggests that family resource centres play an important role in the lives of many participants.

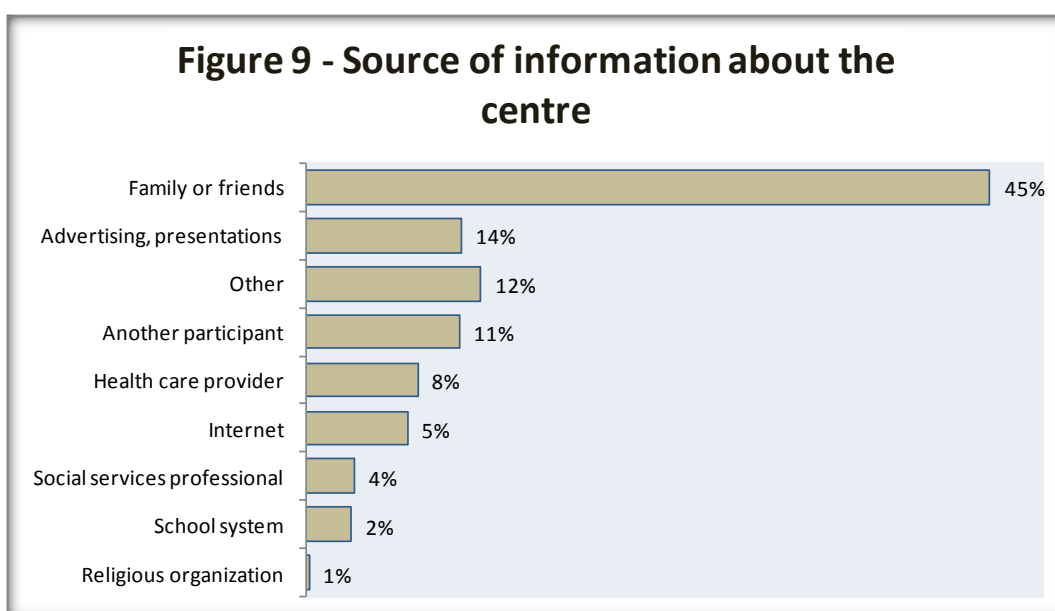
⁷ Statistics Canada 2006, Census languages spoken in the home, <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/rt-td/immcit-eng.cfm>



Information and referral sources

The main information source about family resource centres is family and friends (45%). Other program participants accounted for 11% of referral sources. This suggests that over half of referrals come from family, friends and acquaintances. Health care providers (8%) and social services professionals (4%) were also significant “personal” sources of information and referral.

Outside of personal references, advertising and presentations accounted for 14% of responses and the Internet represented 5% of referrals. In the ‘Other’ category, respondents cited sources like the library and organizations such as the YMCA.



Questions about participants' experiences at family resource centres

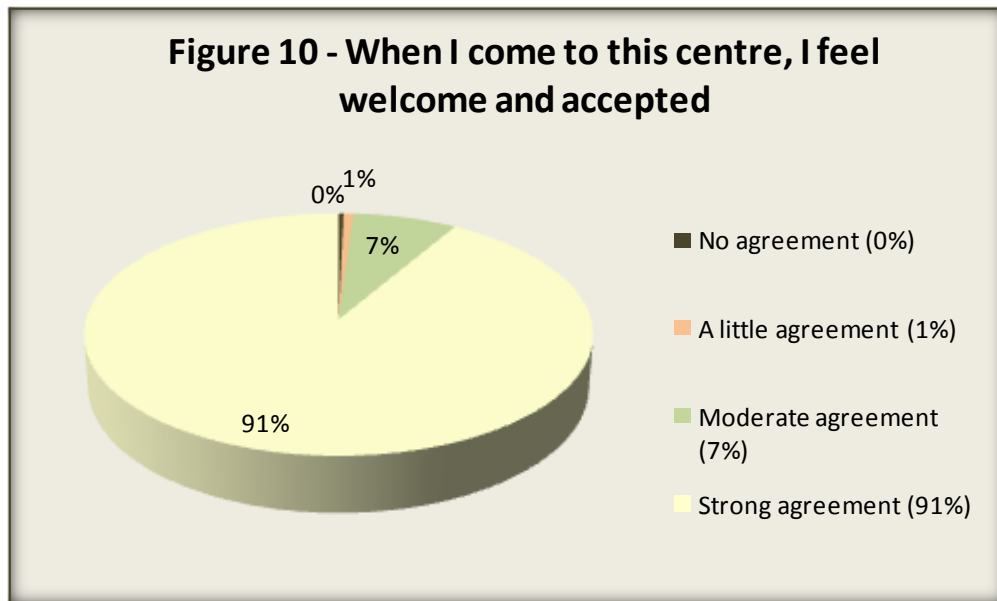
Theme 1: Engaging families with a welcoming atmosphere

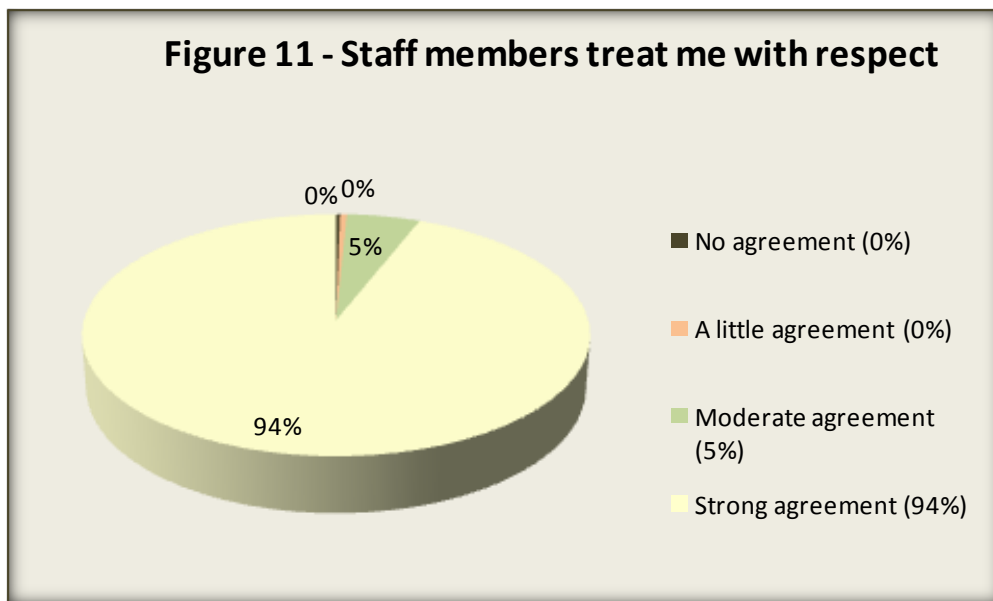
“Wonderful place to come with my child. I always feel welcome. My child benefits from the toys, programs, other children and a change of atmosphere.”

– 2009-10 Program Participant

Ideally, family resource centres should offer a warm, welcoming environment for participants. Family resource centres provide many voluntary programs, so it is vital that they are places participants want to go to. A welcoming atmosphere encourages parents and caregivers to fully participate in programs. Obviously, a big part of creating a welcoming environment involves treating all participants with dignity and respect.

Canadian family resource centres do a very good job in creating a welcoming atmosphere for participants. Overall, 91% of respondents strongly agree that centres make participants feel welcome and accepted. Only 1% of respondents believed that their centre was unwelcoming. An even stronger result was that 94% of respondents strongly endorsed the treatment that they received from staff. Again, only 1% did not endorse the treatment they received from staff. Considering the large number of different programs and the broad diversity in clientele, these results speak to the strong effort made by family resource programs to welcome participants from all walks of life.





Participant comments on centre atmosphere and staff treatment are for the most part quite positive. However, there are occasional suggestions for improvement.

“It has provided a social environment for both the adults and children. It is welcoming and friendly, super clean and lots of toy choices.”

“The centre is great and I love coming here and meeting new moms, who maybe are having the same issues that I have been having with raising kids. I really like to see a more uplifting atmosphere where you don't pick up any tensions.”

“Excellent programmes, instructors and atmosphere. Thank you!”

“I have known many families and friends that use these services over my 16 years here. This centre has a very professional and friendly atmosphere.”

“I find that this is an excellent program and the staff are respectful of both adults and children.”

“...the staff and volunteers call me by name and offer to help me settle down. They call my kids by name and ask how we are doing. They remember our names from our first visit a few weeks ago! They make me feel important.”

“...rarely does anyone make any effort to be helpful. When I am holding a baby in one arm and attending to a toddler, it would be nice if a staff member or volunteer would offer to help me get a feeding chair for example.”

Theme 2: Enhancing family participation

Family resource programs try to reach out to all community members. Centres strive to remove as many barriers to participation as possible. The goal is to reduce or eliminate user fees, waiting lists, the need for referrals, and unnecessary bureaucracy. Programs are often informal and their success can hinge on whether or not clients participate in program activities. Family resource centres offer a wide variety of structured and unstructured activities on as flexible a schedule as is practical. The goal of programs is to fully engage participants.

A significant majority (81%) of survey takers believe that family resource programs are doing a very good job designing programs that encourage participation. Another 16% were in moderate agreement that family resource programs make it easy for them to take part. These results are a strong indication that participants feel they are able to take part in program activities.

Eighty-one percent (81%) of respondents were in strong agreement and 16% percent were in moderate agreement that staff and services were available when needed (see Figure 13). While a large majority feel the services are scheduled appropriately, those few who disagree (1%), do so with some enthusiasm. As in other years, the two main concerns were: 1) inadequate programming during evening and weekend hours, and 2) the need for concurrent programs or childcare for additional children that do not meet the age criteria of existing programming.

The level of agreement was not as high when participants were asked if they had opportunities to participate in program decision making. While 80% agree that they can become involved in decision making, 20% express little or no agreement. Moreover, this survey item registered a sizeable non-response rate (26%). These findings suggest that some survey takers may not be clear about what the question is asking, that they may not be aware that opportunities to get involved exist or that they do not choose to be involved in programming decisions. The informal atmosphere that exists in most family resource centres may also be a complicating factor in that it may be difficult for some participants to identify feedback requests as such.

Figure 12 - Programs are designed in a way that makes it possible for me to participate

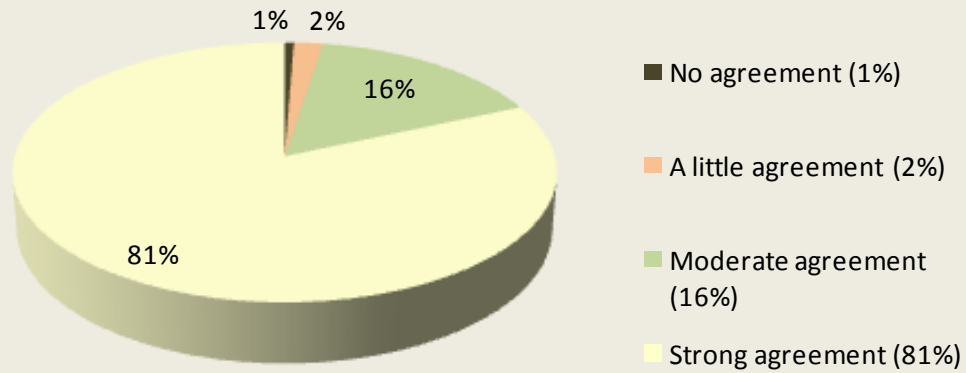
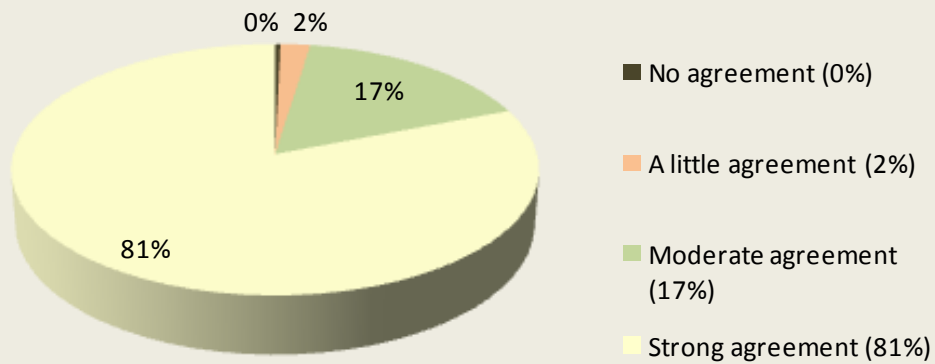
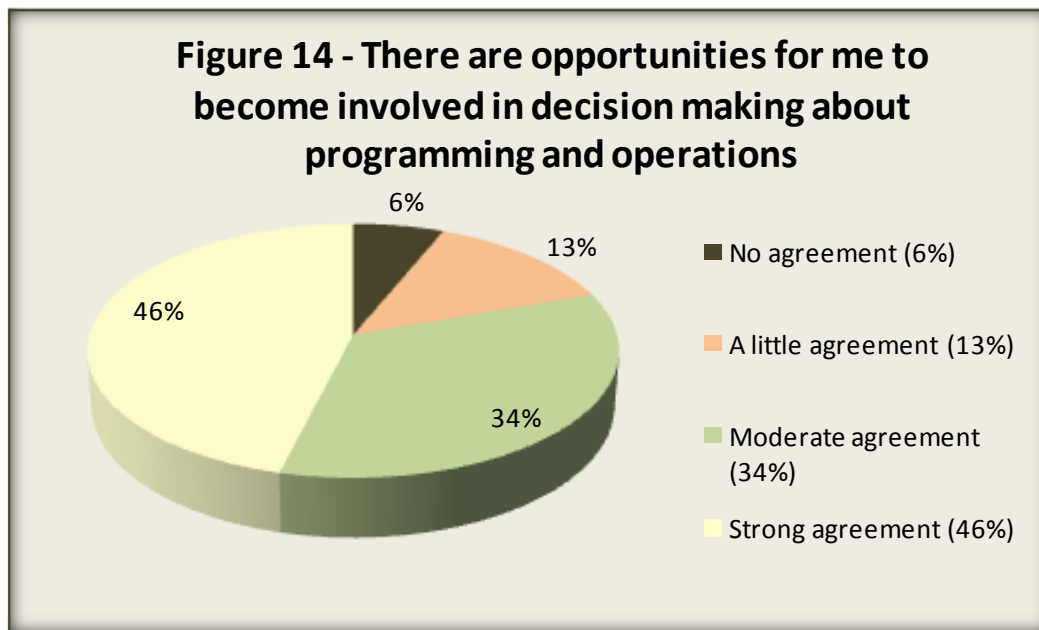


Figure 13 - Staff and services are available when I need them





Comments regarding participation issues were very positive.

"I feel like I can voice my opinion."

"I love having a place to take the kids that is stimulating and nurturing (outside of the home). I enjoy having other adults (especially the staff) to bounce parenting ideas off of."

"I feel that the centre is great for the community - more knowledge and awareness [of the service] would increase participation of families as well as more hours that are geared towards when families would be available."

"A great place. All the workers are great and are always available to offer advice when you seek it. Very helpful. I'd definitely recommend this program to friends."

"It gives us an opportunity to participate in children's programs that are age relevant for both our children, as well as free."

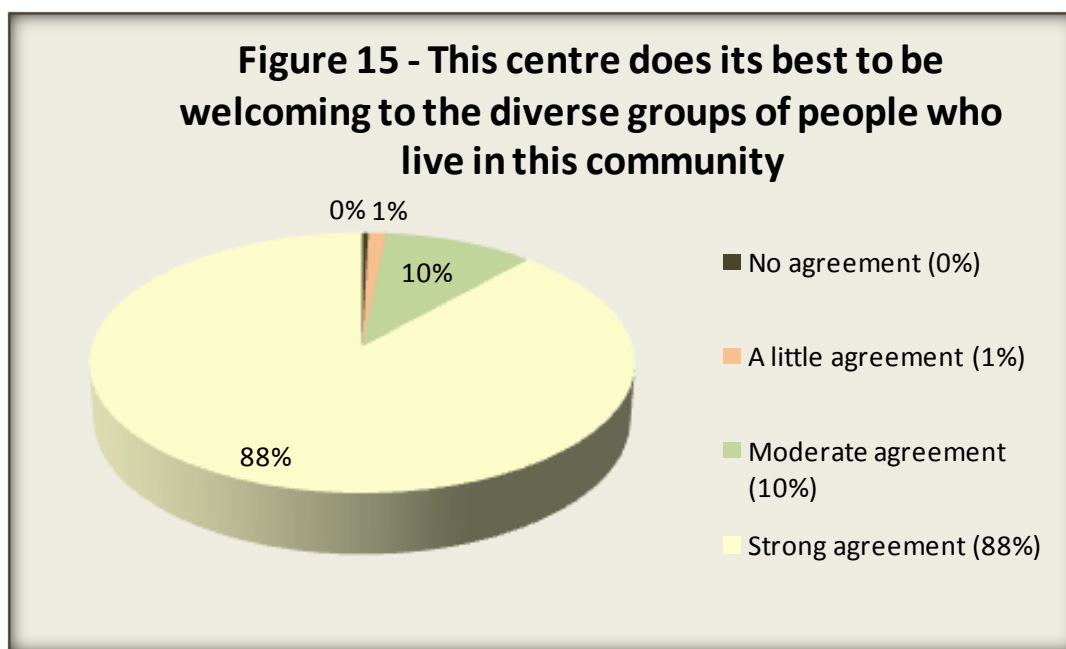
"This survey makes me more aware of opportunities to get involved in decision-making about programming at the centre. I'd like to speak up and also give back to the centre, but I'm not sure how to do that."

"The centre serves as both an entertaining diversion from the regular routine and an opportunity to participate in structured educational programs that enrich my child's development."

Theme 3: Diversity

Social inclusion is a notion basic to family resource centres. One of the *Guiding Principles of Family Support* (Appendix A) is the promotion of relationships based on equality and respect for diversity. The concept of diversity includes, among other things, ethnicity, language, socio-economic status, age, sexual orientation and physical ability.

Family resources are overwhelmingly considered to be places that welcome and appreciate diversity. This openness is reflected in the agreement amongst survey takers (98%) that their centre is welcoming to diverse groups.



There are a large number of comments that speak to how family resource centres are welcoming to people from all walks of life. There are also some helpful suggestions on how to possibly improve in this area.

“The centre is an excellent place to accommodate all children of all ages (to 6 yrs) and ethnic background. We all feel welcome and respected. Thank you.”

“It helps a lot for the child to develop and grow well. There are good opportunities for children to know about different cultures and the diversity of the society.”

“I really enjoy the ethnic diversity”

“My child is a special needs child and the centre has been wonderful at accommodating her. It has been an excellent experience.”

“It has provided us the opportunity to meet other parents with children of special needs, who have been a great source of friendship, suggestions and support. The speakers have provided us with great ideas to take home & try with our child.”

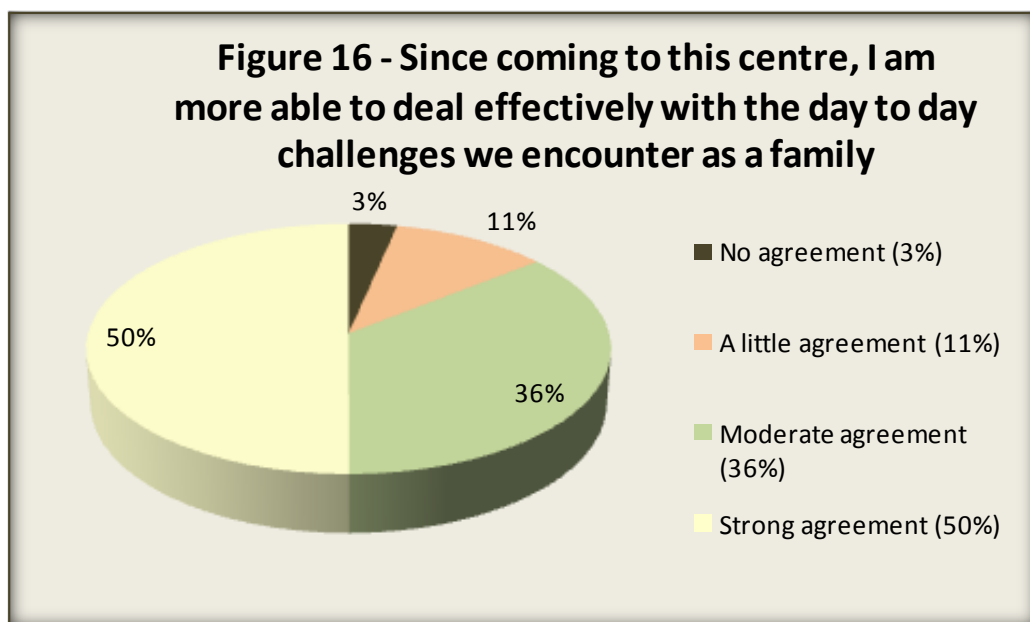
“Increase staff education about cultural diversity, child development, fostering and adoption issues.”

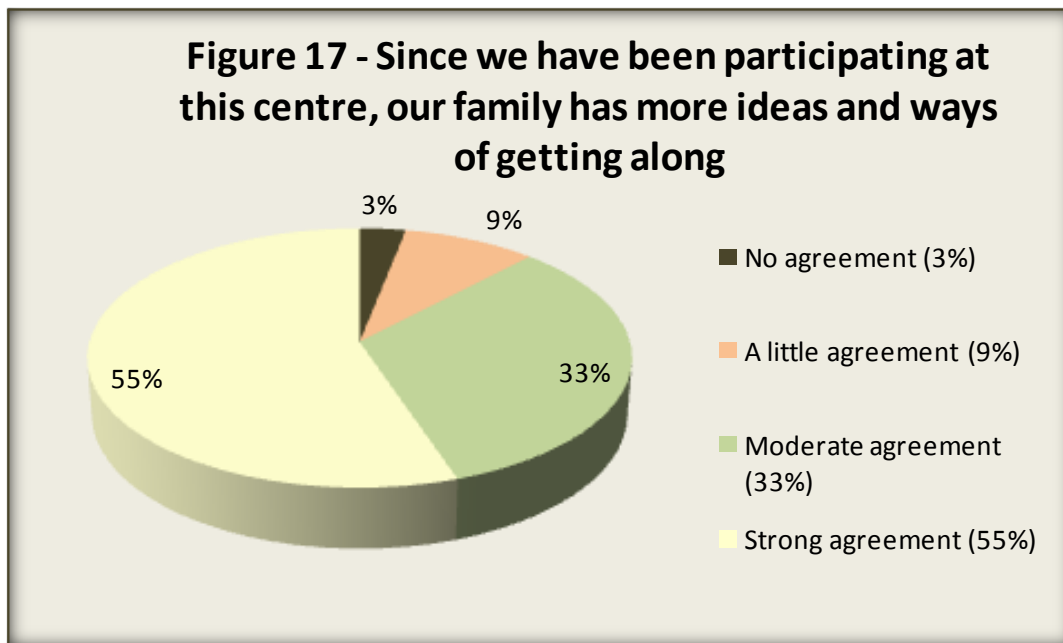
“Hope you will have programs for children with special needs like Autism Spectrum Disorder”

“I think we could have a little more diversity at the center but it may be due to just simply the demographics particular to our community. Perhaps making other languages and activities more prevalent would be helpful.”

Theme 4: Transfer of strategies for increasing family well-being

Family resource programming is often aimed at providing participants with valuable parenting and life skills. An important goal is that participants can take what they learn at the centre and apply it in their everyday life. An impressive 86% percent of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that family resource programs have helped them to manage day-to-day family challenges (see Figure 16). Eighty-eight (88%) percent say that participating at the centre has helped them to find ways to get along as a family (see Figure 17). These results suggest that what participants learn and experience at family resource programs has a positive impact on their everyday life.





Respondent comments on this theme are often very heartfelt. Many participants feel that family resource programs helped them develop crucial coping skills.

“Especially through the winter this program was vital for me to get through the early years with my sanity. It helped me really love and appreciate my children so much.”

“The OEYC allowed me to connect to other mothers having just moved into the community. It has provided me with a lot of useful information that has aided me in being a better parent and has allowed for my children to partake in activities that have increased their confidence in themselves.”

“Since I started going to the Resource Center 3 years ago, I have learned a lot about raising my children. They have taught me ways to deal with temper tantrums, how to effectively and positively discipline my children, and they have taught me games and songs that I can play with my children. Going to these programs has made me a more patient mother... “

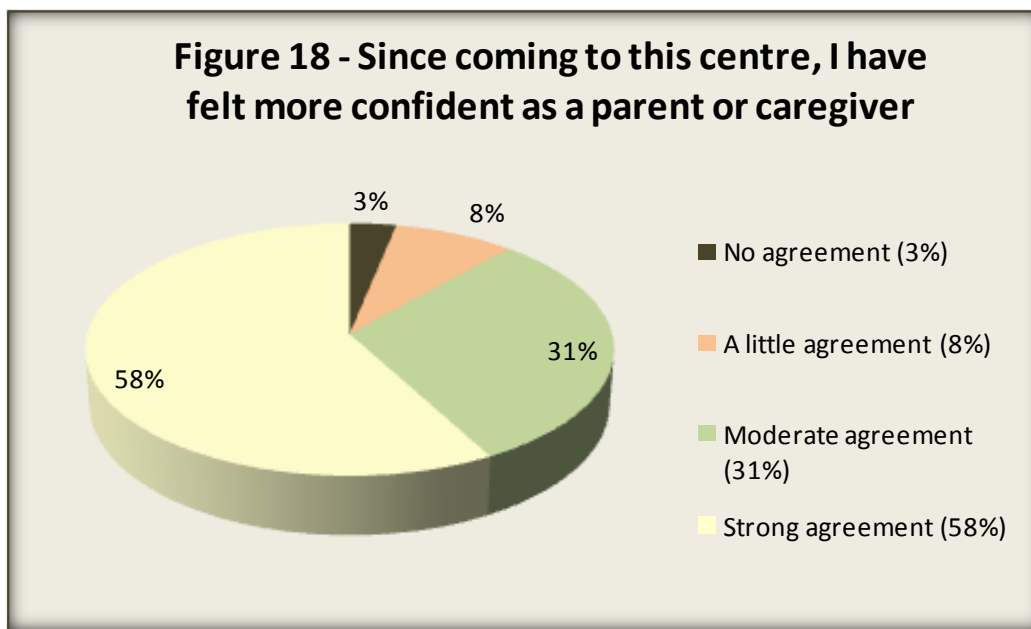
“It has taught me and my child coping strategies and the centre has given us a place to practise coping strategies”

“It has taught us different things we can do as a family, and I find it is very good in teaching my girls how to get along in social situations with others and not be shy or stand back and let things pass them by, they want to be involved in everything that is happening around them. They really love their time spent at the center.”

Theme 5: Parental and caregiver confidence

Family support programs provide social support and parenting strategies that aim at building parental and caregiver confidence. Centres and programs are a place to share ideas and learn from one another in a non-judgmental atmosphere. Staff work with parents/caregivers from a strengths-based perspective. Rather than focusing on individual and family weaknesses or deficits, strength-based practitioners collaborate with families and children to discover individual and family strengths. At the foundation of the strength-based approach is the belief that children and families have unique talents, skills, and life events, in addition to specific unmet needs.

A strong majority of survey takers (89%) agreed that their family resource program helped them increase their confidence as a parent (see Figure 18).



Increased caregiver confidence was perceived to be a very valuable outcome of participation in programs. Below are just a few comments that reinforce this view:

“The program provides a positive social environment for me and my baby [and] helps to boost confidence as a first time mother. [It] provides a lot of information on social events as well as developmental milestones.”

“I have created friends, got great advice and made a support network from the classes at this center. It has increased my confidence as a mom!”

“[The program] has taught us age-appropriate activities for baby and has given us more confidence as parents at home”

“I really gained a lot of confidence by bringing my only child here. I have good opportunities to become involved with my child. I have spent a lot of good time with my child, received some good information on how to prepare my child for kindergarten”

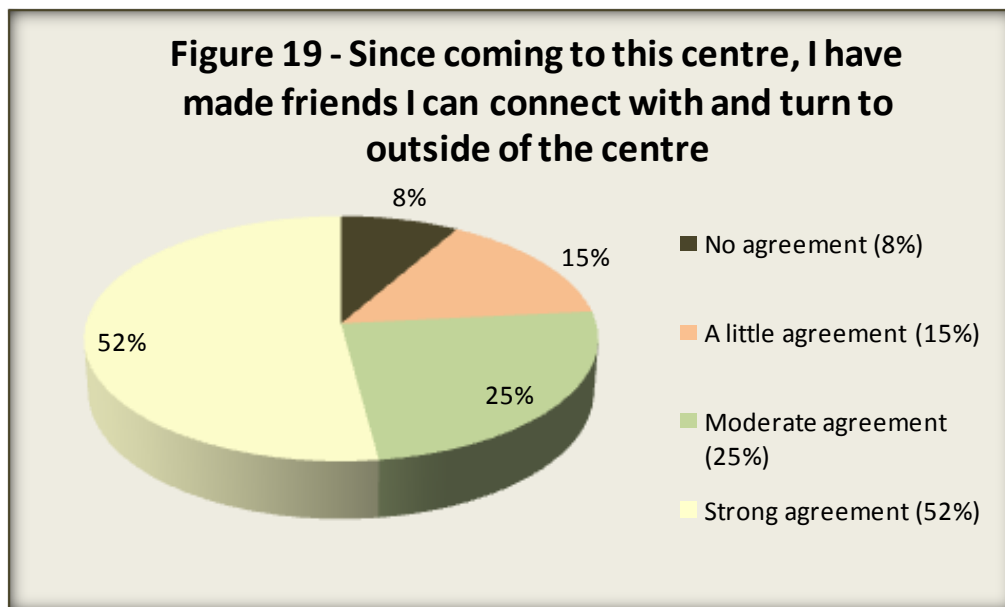
The centre is a HUGE positive. It provided:

- *social experiences for myself and my children*
- *exposure to developmentally appropriate stimulation/experiences.*
- * opportunities to learn from other's experiences/knowledge about current issues in my parenting/child's development*
- *an opportunity to get out of the house!! (making life happier for all of us!)*
- *taught us many songs/rhymes, etc. that we use daily in our home.*
- *a fathering program that gave my husband confidence to take our children out on his own and be able to provide safe, stimulating, bonding experiences.*

Theme 6: Strengthening family social networks

Family resource centres help build and strengthen communities and social networks. They help many overcome social isolation and let program participants know that they are not alone. Strong family social networks can provide support by helping with caregiving duties in times of stress, by providing knowledge in times of uncertainty, and by reducing feelings of loneliness.

The results of data from the 2009-2011 timeframe suggest that most survey participants (77%) moderately or strongly agree that family resource programming has helped them to establish supportive relationships.



Once again, the comments from survey participants suggest that family support programs help build peer support networks.

“The Centre really is amazing. I've made friends with the other moms and caregivers and facilitators. I feel safe and welcome. It really does take a community to raise a family and this is my community!”

“I almost cried when staff showed me around this center! This is such an important place to network and find support for moms and caregivers!”

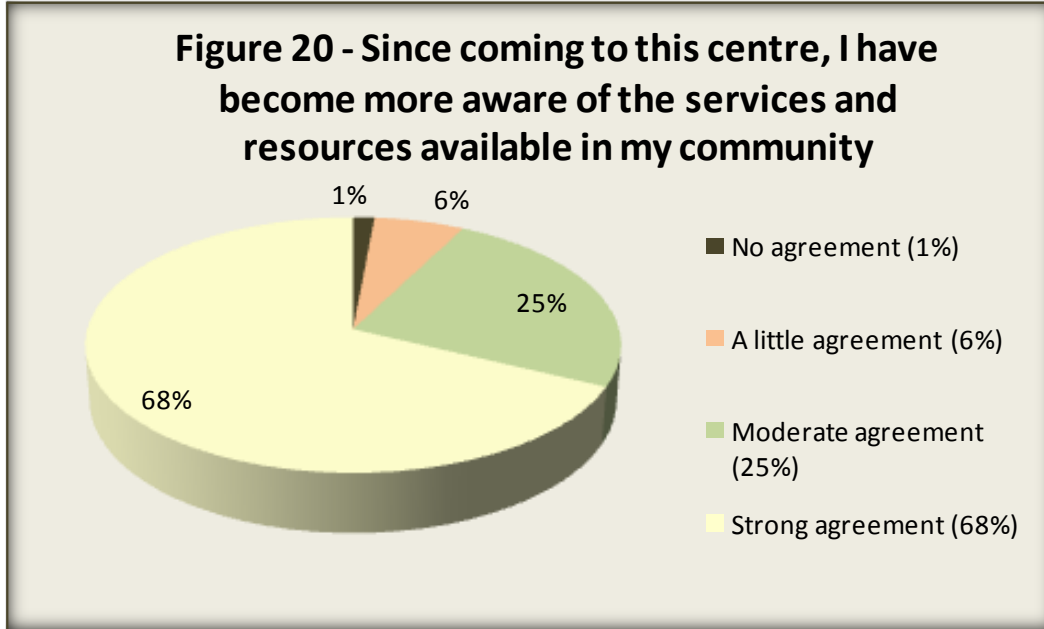
“It is great to have a place to go. We met other families and made friends and share babysitting.”

“I live out in a rural area; because of the program I don't feel so isolated.”

“This centre has become my family. I'm not from this area so they were a big help to me for support and finding friends for myself and my children.”

Theme 7: Links to other services and resources

Family support programs not only help build social networks, they connect participants to important community services and resources. Centres take a holistic approach to family support work by encouraging participants to connect with other useful programs in their community. Ninety-three percent (93%) of respondents moderately or strongly agree that centres are doing a good job connecting participants to community services and resources.



Many participants commented on the family resource centres' role in referring them to useful resources.

"I received a lot of information and direction to other resources in the community. I was provided expertise from the lactation consultant, and they lent me books too."

"They offered a lot of support and encouragement during rough times [and] connected us to other services. [They] provided access to a Health Nurse to help monitor our baby's development."

"They are very supportive and I am learning about other resources and services. Any problems I have I get help with."

"I received a referral for another program, an Autism Centre. It was nice to get more information about other services. "

Questions about parenting and child development

Family resource centres support the healthy development of parents, children, and families. To this end, centres offer a wide variety of community programs. These programs include: facilitated playgroups, child care courses, parent-child interaction activities, community kitchens, parent-child attachment programs, etc. Programs are designed to provide modeling, education and experiential learning to help adults better care for children.

Typical centre programming can include unstructured drop-in play as well as more structured craft, music and literacy activities and specific school readiness programs. These types of programs give children opportunities to develop their fine motor and language skills, use their imaginations and socialize with other children.

For 2009-2011, the survey results for questions pertaining to parenting and child development were slightly higher than they were for previous *e-Valuation* cohorts. The results once again suggest that program participants do acquire valuable knowledge at family resource centres:

- 93% reported that they have an increased awareness of activities that are appropriate for their children
- 90% were in agreement that they are more aware of what to expect from their child(ren) at different ages
- 89% of respondents said that the centre helped them to learn things that they now use at home, including strategies for guiding child behavior (82%) and new play activities
- 89% of participants reported feeling more supported in their roles as parents or caregivers
- 84% stated that they understand their children better since they started going to their centre

Participants also reported increased knowledge of their child's play and socialization behaviours:

- 92% reported that their children are more comfortable in social situations since going to the local family resource centre
- 88% agreed that their children have more opportunities to interact with people from other cultures
- 95% noted that their children have increased opportunities to play with age appropriate toys and equipment
- 96% stated that children have more chances to explore new environments

“The centre has provided valuable parenting information that has contributed to my positive parenting style.”

“The centre taught me many parenting skills that resulted in better care of my children. As well, the centre increased my awareness, in terms of early childhood development and preparing my children for school.”

“The centre should expand parent chats to include more parenting issues that are relevant to day to day events and challenges.”

“Great information on child development [and] new strategies for parenting.”

“Made me more sure of my parenting skills by allowing me to speak to other parents as well as participate in discussions regarding coping skills, developmental stages, and various parenting situations”

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER SURVEY RESULTS

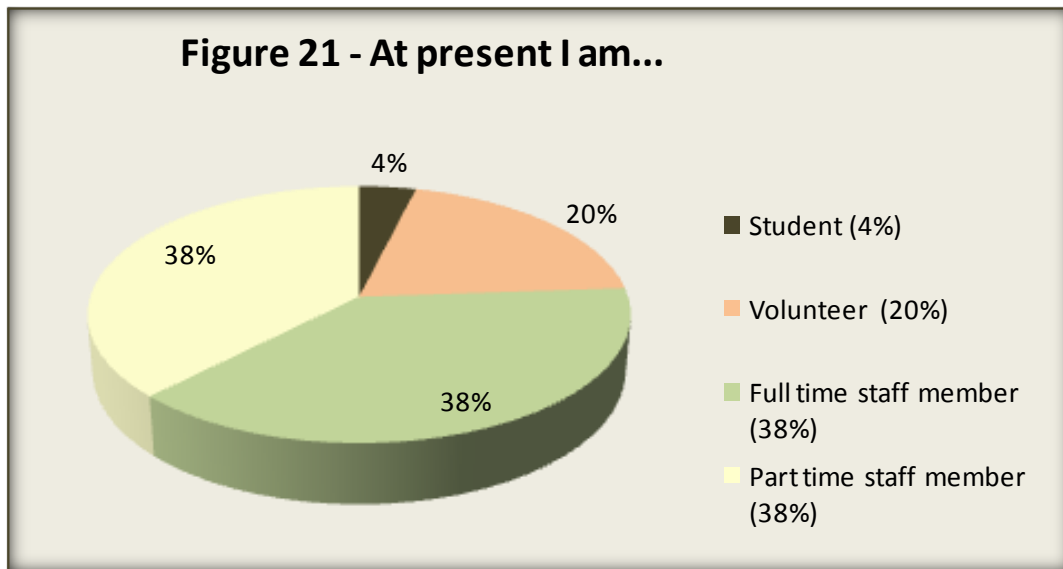
Who are family resource centre staff, students and volunteers?

“This is a wonderful organization to work with. I have not only grown professionally here, but also made lots of friends amongst co-workers. It's a very inclusive program, everybody is supported and respected.”

– 2010-11 Staff Survey Participant

Family resource centre workers have a wide diversity of backgrounds. However, they share a commitment to help families to learn, cope and thrive. Most people who are in the field are there because they truly want to help families. Certainly they are not in the field because it is an easy way to get rich.

For the 2009-2011 survey years, an impressive 1264 staff and volunteers responded to the survey. Of these respondents, 95% were female. Respondents included paid full time staff, paid part time staff, volunteers and students. The distribution by employment status is presented below in Figure 21.



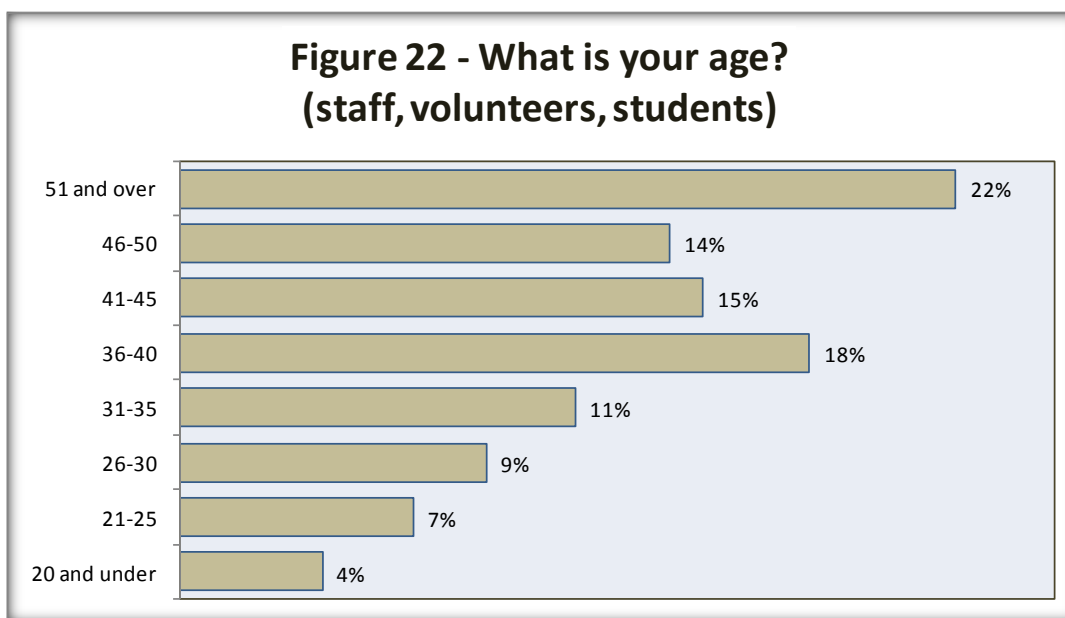
Levels of education (staff only)

Family support workers increasingly have post-secondary educations. In the two years considered in this study, 6% of respondents had a postgraduate degree, 28% of respondents had a university degree and 53% had a college degree or diploma. The number of workers with a secondary school degree was 12%. One percent did not have a high school degree. These numbers may overstate the education level of workers given that a large percentage of staff did not respond.

The number of workers with post-secondary education has increased in each survey year since 2006. Once out of school, many family support staff continue their education through professional training. Respondent comments provide ample evidence of staff commitment to continued learning and development.

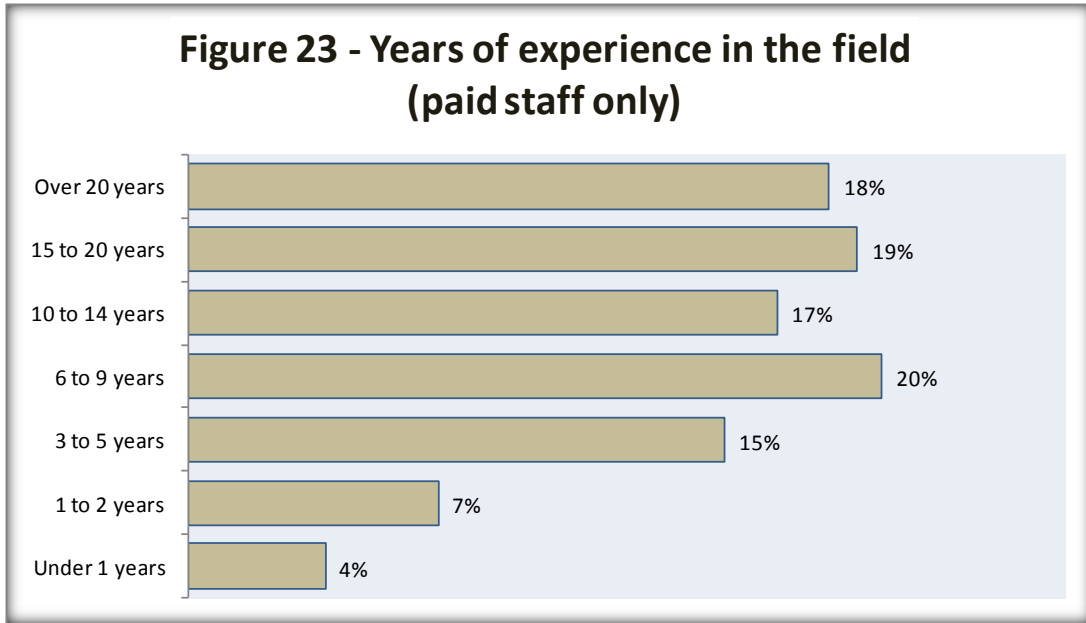
Age

Survey responses demonstrate that family support workers are well represented across the age spectrum. Responses indicate that 20% of staff, volunteers and students were 30 years old or less, 29% were between 30 and 40, 29% were between 40 and 50, and 22% were over 50 years of age.



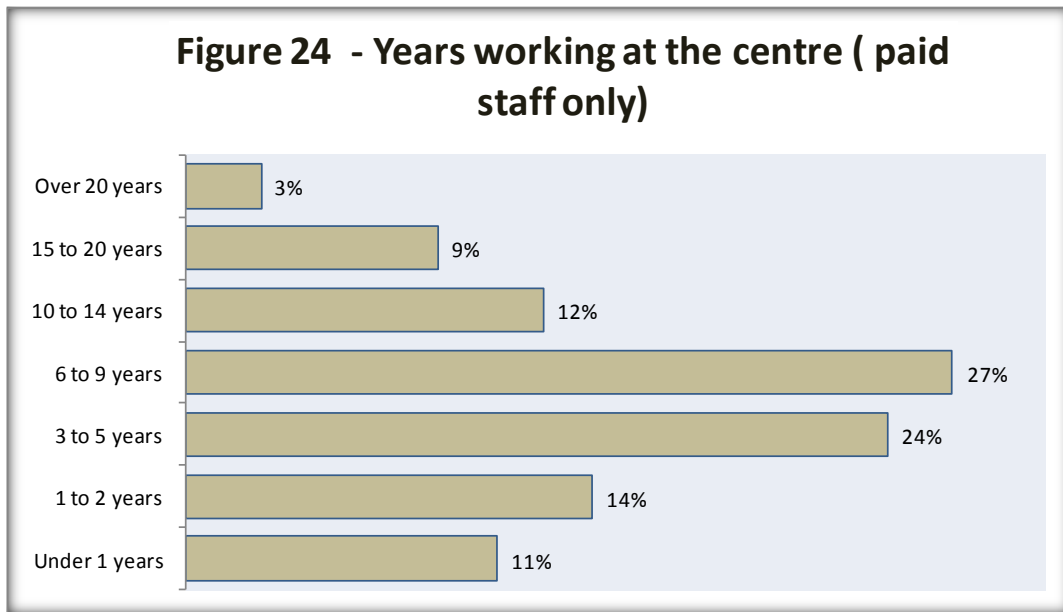
Years of experience in the field

Given the broad age distribution it is not surprising to see a range of professional experience within the field. Paid staff (full and part-time) had considerably more years of experience than did non-paid staff (volunteers and students). Figure 23 indicates 89% of paid staff have at least three years of experience, and 37% have over 15 years of experience.



Years working or volunteering at the centre

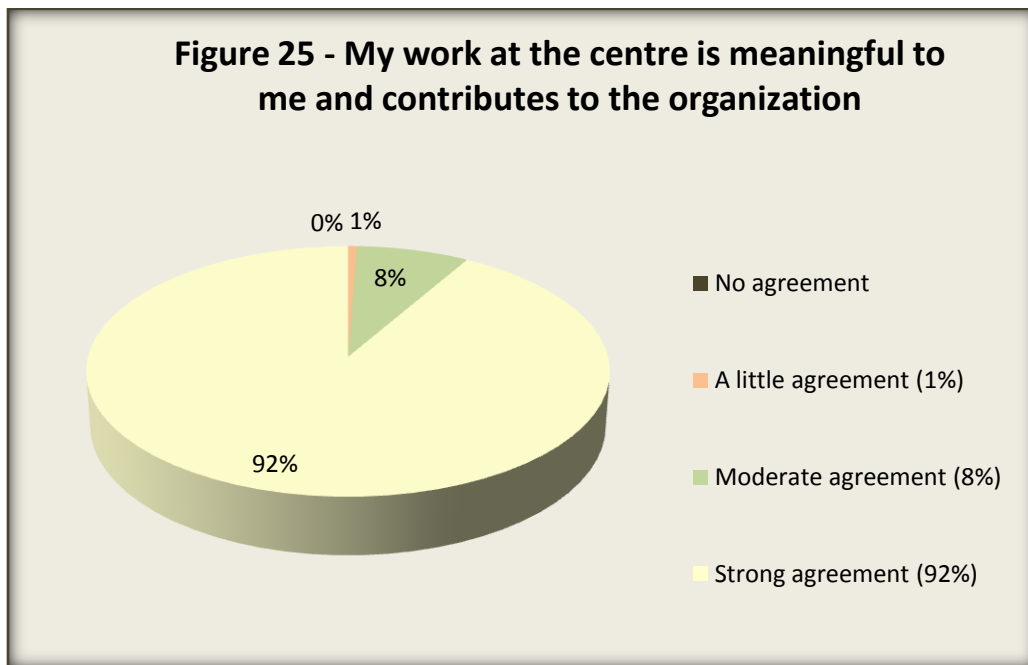
For paid staff, most workers have been at their current centre for between three and fourteen years (63%). Twenty-five percent (25%) have been with their current centre for less than two years and 12% have been with their centre for more than 14 years.



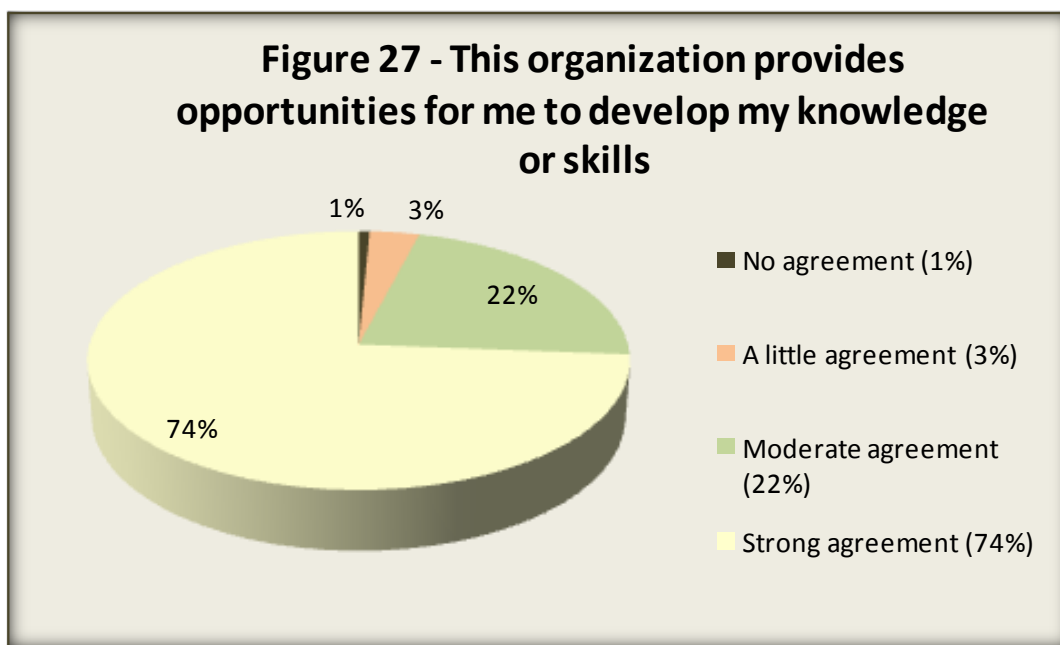
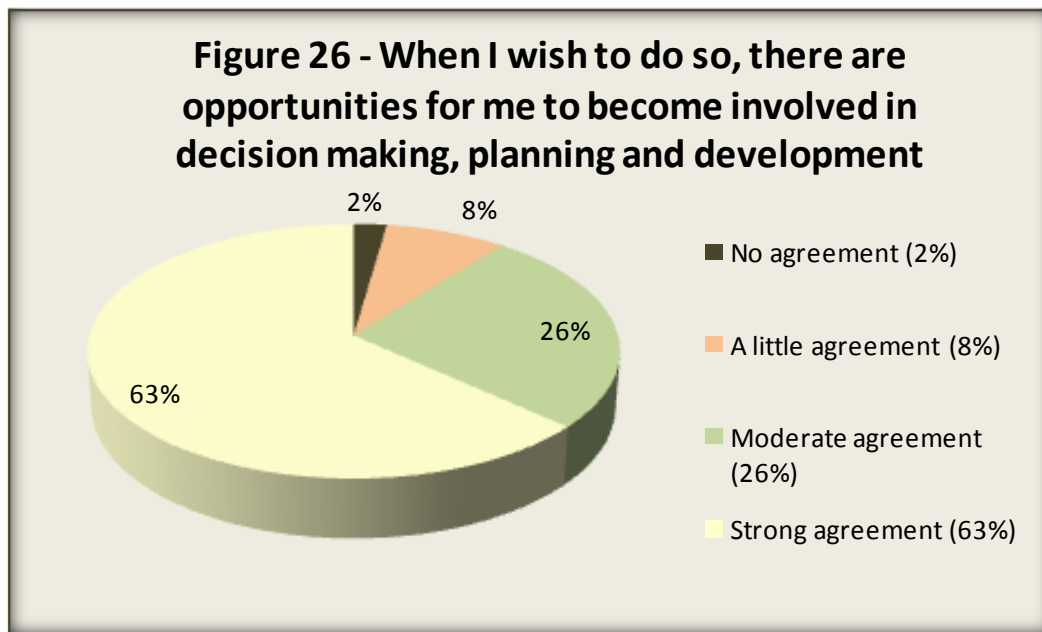
Questions about staff and volunteer experiences at family resource centres

Theme 8: Worker Satisfaction

Studies have demonstrated that the most reliable indicators of worker satisfaction include: respectful co-workers, interesting work, workplace influence, time for skill development, job security, freedom to do the job, and work-family balance⁸. Family resource workers responded positively on these indicators. For example, 99% are in agreement that their work is meaningful, 89% say that they have an opportunity to become involved in decision making, and 96% claim that they have opportunities to develop their skills. These numbers are slightly higher than the 2008-2009 e-Valuation cohort.



⁸ Please see: <http://www.jobquality.ca>



While staff were generally positive, their comments highlighted many areas for potential improvement. Problem areas that were frequently cited included: low wages, poor communication, and the need for more team building.

“Fulfilling meaningful work for me. I enjoy my work and am passionate about supporting families with a big variety of programs.”

“The programs with which I work are very meaningful for both staff and families. We are all rewarded intrinsically for our participation. Staff are well supported and encouraged to participate in collaborative planning and decision making.”

“The wages are very poor while the responsibilities only increase. We are limited in how we as staff can become involved in planning, although WE are the ones implementing the plans and running the programs. I just want to feel respected and appreciated for all we do for the children that are our future.”

“The centre gives me the opportunities to develop my knowledge or skills. All the staff work together very well, we always help and respect each other.”

“I feel that the staff has not received adequate training to support diversity and welcome diverse populations to the centre.”

Theme 9: Appropriate policies

In 2002, FRP Canada published the *Guiding Principles of Family Support*, a document based on cross-country consultations with family resource programs. This document reflects the philosophical underpinnings of the field and proposes a set of core values that centres and family resource programs can use to guide the development of their organizational policies (see Appendix A). Appropriate policies provide a crucial framework for the encouragement of quality practice.

Most respondents believe that their centre has an appropriate policy framework in place. An impressive 99% of survey takers agree that their centre’s policies accurately reflect best practice. Clearly, staff believe that they are providing quality programming to participants.

Ninety-six percent of respondents agree that their centres’ policies provide clear direction to staff. These results suggest that family resource centres provide appropriate guidelines and policy direction to staff. However, qualitative remarks suggest that there is still room for considerable improvement in this area.

Despite the fact that many family resource centres operate with limited and uncertain resources, the results of this survey show that the large majority of centre staff and volunteers (97%) feel that stakeholders and community partners support their organizations.

Figure 28 - The policies of this centre reflect family support principles

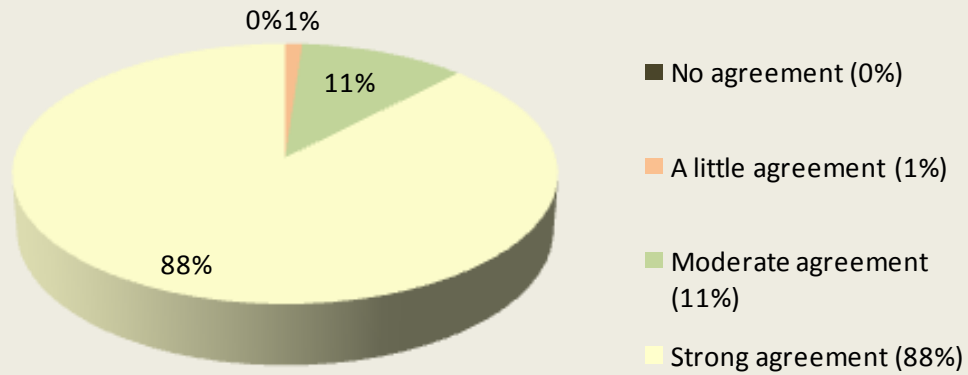
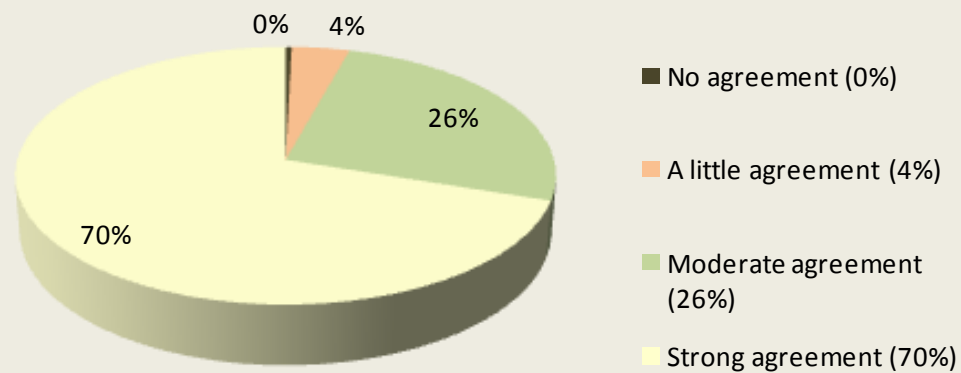
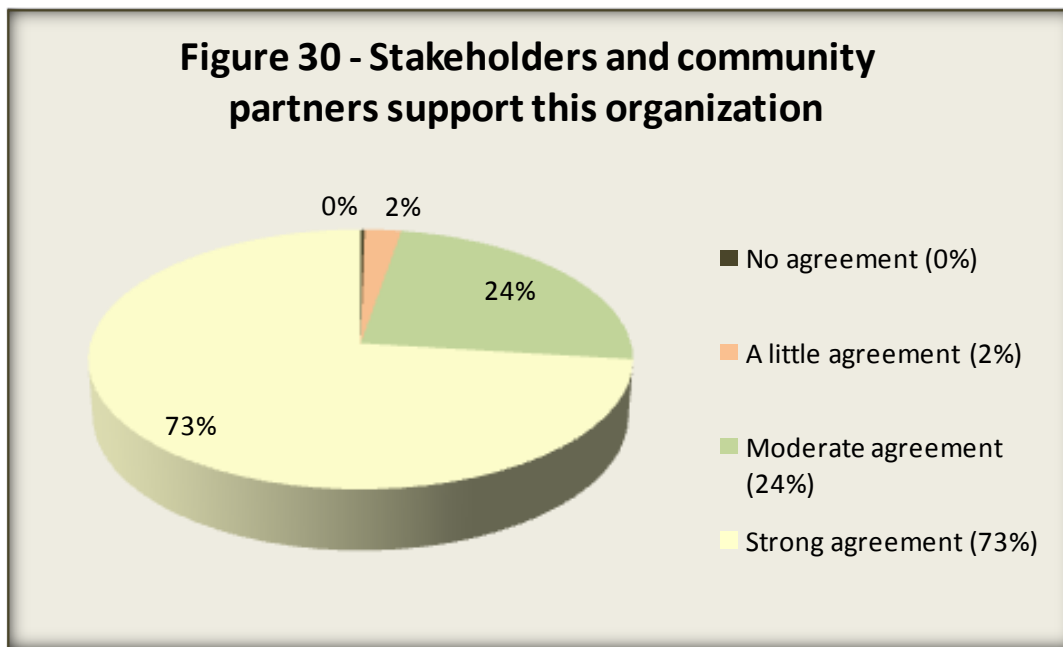


Figure 29 - The policies provide clear guidelines and direction to staff





Staff comments endorsed the programming practices of the centre but were more mixed when it came to how guidelines affected staff.

“Some of our policies need better clarification. Overall I believe strongly in the organization and continue to hope for greater things to come.”

“The only thing that staff are involved with planning is programs. Our input is not asked for policies, procedures or strategic planning. In those areas we are told what they will be.”

“We need sustained funding to expand programs & support staff. [We] need policy and procedure manual and/or guidelines developed. We do well with what we have but could do so much more with resources. It is only staff dedication & resourcefulness that keeps us hanging on.”

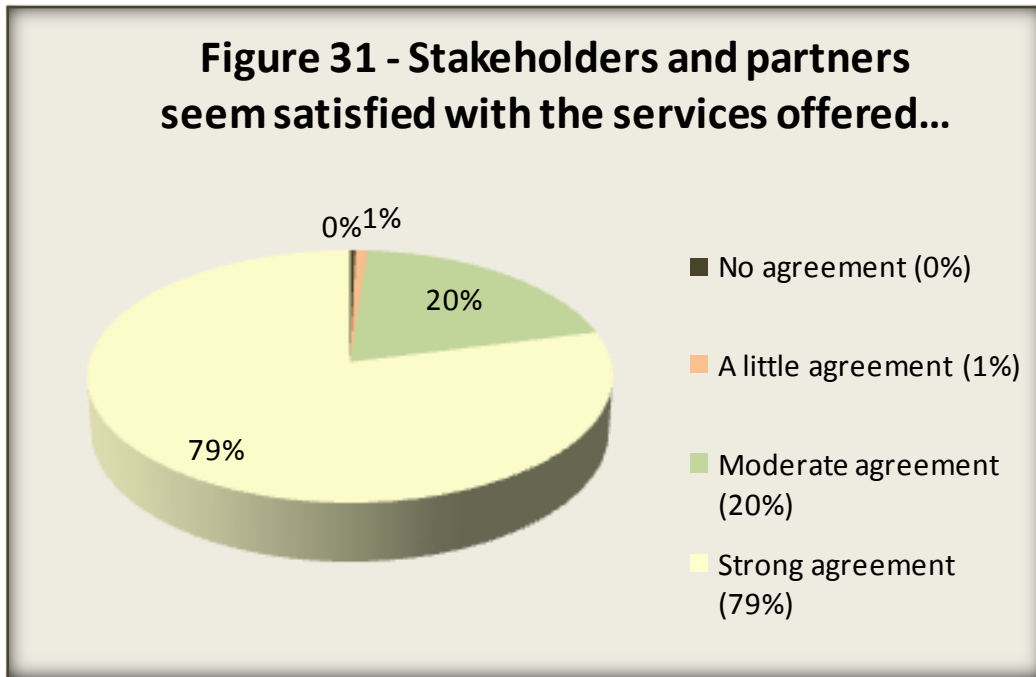
“I believe we need more support from other sources or community such as other professionals (e.g., health nurse, nutritionist, therapists, librarian).... to expand the variety of services.”

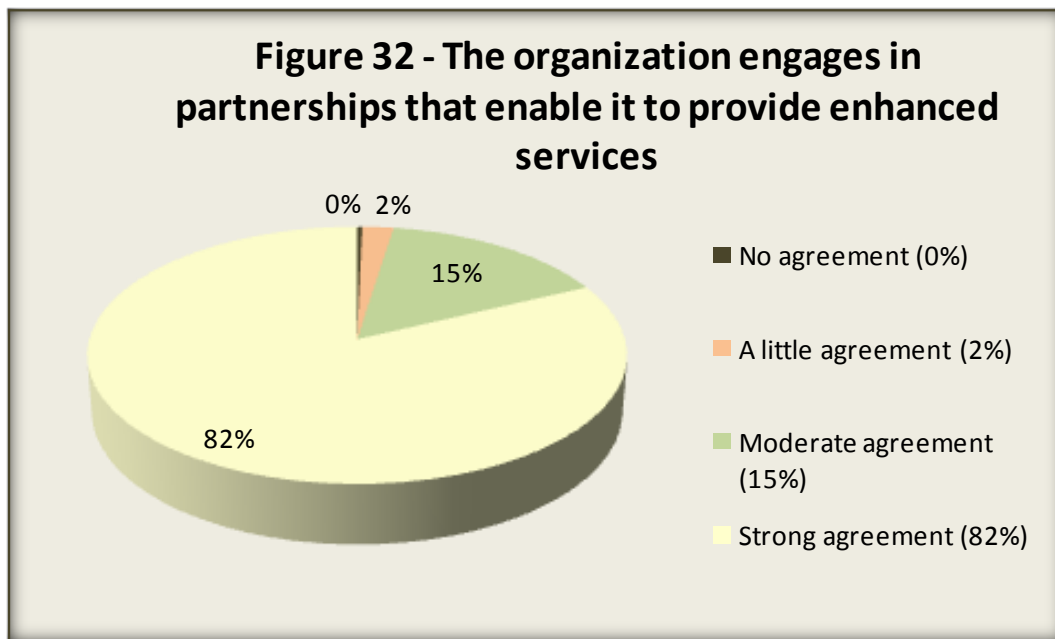
Theme 10: Collaboration and partnerships

Family resource centres complement other existing services and work to build networks of support for families. Centres recognize that family life encompasses many areas including education, health, child development, community development and other factors. Centres

reach out to other support organizations and attempt to create synergies and reduce barriers to access for families.

According to survey takers, family resource centres are doing an excellent job engaging and working with partners. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of staff believe that their partners are satisfied with the services they offer. Ninety-seven percent (97%) believe that the partnerships they have help enhance their level of service. These results suggest that family resource centres are effectively integrated with the broader support community.





Comments suggest that community outreach is an area where family resource centres are effective.

“This organization thrives on its partnerships. With these, we are able to offer more services than would otherwise be available...I believe that all stakeholders are extremely pleased with the services we offer. They support this organization with praise, but financial support is not always forthcoming.”

“Partnerships with some agencies are very good, but could be better with others, specifically referrals and joint programs/planning. A network is in place but not all agencies will commit the staff time to participate.”

CONCLUSION

The *e-Valuation* survey is an important tool whereby family resource programs demonstrate their commitment to self-reflection and improved practice. As a method of program evaluation, the *e-Valuation* system offers a practical, structured and theory-based approach to assessing family support programs.

The results from the fourth and fifth cohorts of the *e-Valuation* survey demonstrate that family resource centres are successfully supporting parents, caregivers, and children. Centres received an overwhelming endorsement from participants who praised their role in social support, caregiver empowerment, child development, and community building. Participants offer consistently positive comments concerning program staff and centre

atmosphere.

The responses from staff and volunteers demonstrate the commitment practitioners have for their work. Virtually all practitioners see their work as being very meaningful. This is a remarkable result that speaks to the fact that, for many practitioners, working with families is a calling. Family resource workers continue to voice concern about inadequate compensation within the sector. Funding limitations continue to put pressure on staffing, programming and services. These challenges are at least partially offset by effective partnering with other support services.

FRP Canada will continue to encourage family resource centres to use the *e-Valuation* system. The *e-Valuation* system provides a practical and meaningful method to undertake evaluation. Results from the system can be used to help improve programs and for accountability purposes. We encourage family resource centres to continue to use the *e-Valuation* system and to share their results with participants, funders and other stakeholders.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

The guiding principles of family support

1. Family support programs are open to all families, recognizing that all families deserve support.
2. Family support programs complement existing services, build networks and linkages, and advocate for policies, services and systems that support families' abilities to raise healthy children.
3. Family support programs work in partnership with families and communities to meet expressed needs.
4. Family support programs focus on the promotion of wellness and use a prevention approach in their work.
5. Family support programs work to increase opportunities and to strengthen individuals, families and communities.
6. Family support programs operate from an ecological perspective that recognizes the interdependent nature of families' lives.
7. Family support programs value and encourage mutual assistance and peer support.
8. Family support programs affirm parenting to be a life-long learning process.
9. Family support programs value the voluntary nature of participation in their services.
10. Family support programs promote relationships based on equality and respect for diversity.
11. Family support programs advocate non-violence to ensure safety and security for all family members.
12. Family support programs continually seek to improve their practice by reflecting on what they do and how they do it.

Appendix B

Survey themes

Participant survey themes		Survey question(s)
1	Engaging families with a welcoming atmosphere & respectful staff	1, 2
2	Enhancing family participation	3, 4, 5
3	Diversity	6
4	Transfer of strategies for increasing family well-being	7, 8
5	Parental confidence	9
6	Strengthening family social networks	10
7	Links to other services and resources	11

Staff/Volunteer survey themes		
8	Worker satisfaction	1, 2, 3
9	Appropriate policies	4, 5, 6
10	Collaboration and partnerships	7, 8, 9

For literature summaries relating to the ten themes, see www.frp.ca/evidence.

Appendix C

Aggregate Participant Survey Results From 2006-2011

Experiences at the Centre (Questions 1 to 11)

	Yr 1 2006-2007	Yr 2 2007-2008	Yr 3 2008-2009	Yr 4 2009-2010	Yr 5 2010-2011
Number of surveys	3031	3360	2899	7304	5104
*Mean value	3.56	3.53	3.59	3.6	3.59
Standard deviation	.73	.76	.72	.7	.72

Parenting (Questions 12 to 17)

	Yr 1 2006-2007	Yr 2 2007-2008	Yr 3 2008-2009	Yr 4 2009-2010	Yr 5 2010-2011
Number of surveys	3031	3360	2899	7304	5104
*Mean value	3.31	3.37	3.37	3.43	3.41
Standard deviation	.82	.79	.81	.77	.79

Child Development (Questions 18 to 23)

	Yr 1 2006-2007	Yr 2 2007-2008	Yr 3 2008-2009	Yr 4 2009-2010	Yr 5 2010-2011
Number of surveys	3031	3360	2899	7304	5104
*Mean value	3.56	3.56	3.59	3.62	3.61
Standard deviation	.70	.70	.69	.66	.67

* Mean value represents the average response where:

- 1 = no agreement
- 2 = a little agreement
- 3 = moderate agreement
- 4 = strong agreement

Aggregate Staff/Volunteer Survey Results From 2006-2011

Experiences (Questions 1 to 4)

	Yr 1 2006-2007	Yr 2 2007-2008	Yr 3 2008-2009	Yr 4 2009-2010	Yr 5 2010-2011
Number of surveys	387	280	290	852	412
*Mean value	3.65	3.63	3.72	3.69	3.71
Standard deviation	.63	.63	.58	.56	.54

View of the Centre's Operations (Questions 5 to 9)

	Yr 1 2006-2007	Yr 2 2007-2008	Yr 3 2008-2009	Yr 4 2009-2010	Yr 5 2010-2011
Number of surveys	387	280	290	852	412
*Mean value	3.71	3.72	3.74	3.75	3.78
Standard deviation	.52	.50	.54	.49	.46

* Mean value represents the average response where:

- 1 = no agreement
- 2 = a little agreement
- 3 = moderate agreement
- 4 = strong agreement