

# Marriage ranks high on family satisfaction scale among Canadian couples, study says

Canadian married couples with children are a pretty happy lot – at least more happy than their unmarried counterparts.

That's what an American cross-cultural study of 11 countries indicates in its latest measurement of satisfaction with family life.

Canadian couples also show the biggest gap between the level of satisfaction expressed by married couples versus co-habiting couples with children.

Only 48 per cent of Canadian unmarried couples with children who are living together say they are "very satisfied" with family life as opposed to 62 per cent of married couples, according to the [Global Family and Gender Survey \(GFGS\) released in March by the Institute of Family studies.](#)

In the 11-country study group, Canada was the only one in which the unmarried couple satisfaction was below 50 per cent.

"The results certainly do stick out among the 11 countries that were in the sample," said Peter Jon Mitchell, acting director of Cardus Family, an Ottawa-based think tank.

"For many Canadians, they would see married relationships and co-habiting relations as very similar or the same thing," Mitchell said.

"This data indicates they are two different kinds of relationships. We do know from empirical research that married families tend to be more stable than common-law families," Mitchell said.

"That helps explain the results which we see in the data. Marriage requires a definite commitment that contributes to long-term planning and stability."

"We know marriage is something that is very public," said Michel MacDonald, executive director of the [Catholic Organization for Life and Family \(COLF\).](#)

"Those who are willing to make that public commitment are going to be more secure in their relationship. Marriage is a place where love can truly grow."

MacDonald noted the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar has written the moment there's an element of calculation, love has already begun to wane.

"True love doesn't calculate," MacDonald said. "True love is based on a total gift of oneself to the other. This allows a space for the other to grow, this

is an environment for the children. The family becomes a dwelling place of love. In the Catholic sense we see the family as the domestic church – as a little church.”

Colombia had the highest satisfaction rate among married couples at 75 per cent. Other countries in the survey were Mexico, Argentina, Chile, United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Peru, France and Australia. The respondents were adults aged 18 to 50 with children under the age of 18 at home.

“In countries like France, married parents and co-habiting parents are very similar in terms of their relationship commitment and satisfaction,” the study noted.

“But especially in Anglosphere countries like Canada, the U.K., the U.S. and Ireland, married parents have fewer doubts about the future of their relationship and are more committed to each other than co-habiting parents,” it says.