
PARENTING IN UNDERPRIVILEGED FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN AGED 0 TO 5

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AVENIR D'ENFANTS
DES COMMUNAUTÉS ENGAGÉES

KEY FINDINGS CONTAINED IN:

Mieux connaître la parentalité au Québec (Towards a better understanding of parenting in Québec). Un portrait à partir de l'Enquête québécoise sur l'expérience des parents d'enfants de 0 à 5 ans (An overview based on EQEPE, the Québec survey of the experiences of parents with children aged 0 to 5)



TO READ THE FULL REPORT:

LAVOIE, Amélie, and Catherine FONTAINE (2016). Mieux connaître la parentalité au Québec (Towards a better understanding of parenting in Québec). Un portrait à partir de l'Enquête québécoise sur l'expérience des parents d'enfants de 0 à 5 ans (An overview based on EQEPE, the Québec survey of the experiences of parents with children aged 0 to 5), 2015, Québec, Institut de la statistique du Québec, 258 p.

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INTRODUCTION

This document summarizes the key findings that emerged from the Enquête québécoise sur l'expérience des parents d'enfants de 0 à 5 ans (Québec survey of the experiences of parents with children aged 0 to 5, or EQEPE) with a specific focus on parents living in underprivileged circumstances.

Conducted by the Institut de la statistique du Québec (ISQ) in 2015, EQEPE surveyed 14 900 parents with children aged 0 to 5 throughout Québec in an effort to document the experiences of parents with children aged 0 to 5. The information collected focused, in particular, on the following subjects:

- Parenting practices
- Parental efficacy and satisfaction
- Parents' stress and pressure
- Parents' information needs and information sources used
- Social support provided by spouses, family and friends
- Use and impediments to the use of available family services

EQEPE surveyed 14 900 parents with children aged 0 to 5 throughout Québec in an effort to document the experiences of parents with children aged 0 to 5.

The EQEPE survey relied on two different indicators to determine whether underprivileged circumstances were in evidence:

- The Low Income Measure (LIM), which serves to identify low-income households based on **household income** with due consideration to the number of individuals in a household
- Parents' **perceptions** of their own economic situation, based on how parents with children aged 0 to 5 judge their ability to pay for their family's basic needs, such as housing, food and clothing

The EQEPE report, *Mieux connaître la parentalité au Québec, (Towards a better understanding of parenting in Québec)*, released in May 2016, is intended to provide a general overview of the survey's findings. In August 2016, the ISQ published a statistical compilation containing additional overlapping information about Québec as a whole and each of its 16 administrative regions in which the survey was conducted.

The EQEPE survey was funded by Avenir d'enfants, an organization that offers support and guidance to local communities that mobilize on behalf of the overall development of children aged 0 to 5, in particular those living in poverty. The survey is part of the quantitative component of the Perspectives parents initiative¹. The qualitative component (conceptual framework, focus groups), involving the participation of one hundred parents, was conducted by the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières.

1. For more information, please visit avenirdenfants.org/parents

PARENTS LIVING IN UNDERPRIVILEGED CIRCUMSTANCES

The EQEPE survey defines parents as living in underprivileged circumstances if they live in low-income households or consider their incomes to be inadequate for meeting the basic needs of their families.

Based on the information collected:

- approximately one quarter of all parents (24%) with children aged 0 to 5 years live in households that are classified as “low income”.
- an equivalent rate of parents, also 24%, consider their incomes inadequate for meeting the basic needs of their families.

The rates of parents living in low-income households and those that consider their incomes to be inadequate are the same, at 24%.

However, a closer analysis reveals that these figures don't necessarily apply to the same parents.

However, a closer analysis reveals that these same figures don't necessarily apply to the same parents.

Roughly half of parents (49%) that are deemed to be in **low-income** households consider their incomes to be inadequate or grossly inadequate, while the other half (51%) consider their incomes adequate or very adequate for meeting the basic needs of their families.

The rate of parents living in underprivileged circumstances is higher among:

- women (the respective rates are 27% for those living in low-income households and 26% for those that consider their incomes inadequate)
- individuals born outside Canada (48% and 37%, respectively)
- individuals without educational qualifications (75% and 44%, respectively)
- individuals that judge their health situation to be average or poor (36% and 44%, respectively)
- individuals heading a single-parent family (58% and 42%, respectively)
- families with three or more children (32% and 29%, respectively)

When taking into consideration the highest educational qualifications obtained by one or the other parent, the lower the educational qualification, the higher the rate of parents living in underprivileged circumstances.

In the case of two-parent families, the rate of parents living in underprivileged circumstances is higher when both parents are unemployed (72% and 49%, respectively).

When the parents' age is taken into consideration, it appears parents between the ages of 30 and 39 account for the lowest rate of parents living in underprivileged circumstances.

UNDERPRIVILEGED CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE REGIONS

An analysis of the same two indicators of economic circumstances in the 16 regions of Québec covered by the EQEPE survey show that:

- relative to the rest of Québec, Montréal is the only region with a higher rate of parents living in low-income households (39%) as well as of parents that judge their incomes to be inadequate for meeting the basic needs of their families (31%)

By way of contrast:

- 9 of the 16 Québec regions have a lower rate of parents living in low-income households
- 7 of the 16 regions have a lower rate of parents that consider their economic circumstances to be inadequate
- The five regions where both rates are lower than in the rest of Québec are:
 - Capitale-Nationale (14% of parents living in low-income households and 19% of parents that consider their incomes to be inadequate)
 - Outaouais (20% and 18%, respectively)
 - Abitibi-Témiscamingue (19% and 21%, respectively)
 - Côte-Nord (16% and 19%, respectively)
 - Chaudière-Appalaches (11% and 20%, respectively)
- Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean (19%), Lanaudière (18%), Laurentides (19%) and Montérégie (19%) have lower rates of parents living in low-income households than Québec's other regions. However, they show no significant difference in terms of parents' perceptions of their economic circumstances.
- Bas-Saint-Laurent (18%) and Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (21%), for their part, differ in that they have lower rates of parents that consider their incomes inadequate, when compared to the rest of Québec; however, they show no significant difference in the numbers of low-income households.

PARENTING AND UNDERPRIVILEGED CIRCUMSTANCES – PARENTING PRACTICES AND PARENTING EXPERIENCE

The EQEPE survey documented certain factors affecting two aspects of parenting: parenting practices and parenting experience. The key findings of these factors' impact on parents living in underprivileged circumstances follow below.

PARENTING PRACTICES

The results show that:

- parents living in low-income households as well as those that consider their incomes inadequate are proportionately less likely to read or tell stories to their children aged 0 to 5 *at least once a day*
- the rate of parents that play with their children aged 0 to 5 on a daily basis is higher among parents that consider their incomes to be adequate than among those that consider their incomes inadequate (82% vs. 76%)
- the rate of parents who reported losing their patience when their children aged 0 to 5 require attention is slightly higher among parents that consider their incomes inadequate than those that judge their incomes to be adequate (7% vs. 5%)

PARENTING EXPERIENCE

Concerning **parental efficacy**, which is parents' sense of their ability to live up to their role towards their children, the EQEPE survey found that the rate of parents with the *lowest sense of efficacy* is

- slightly lower among parents living in low-income households (19% vs. 22%)
- higher among parents that consider their incomes inadequate when compared to parents that judge their income situations to be adequate (24% vs. 20%)

Furthermore, there is a proportionately higher rate of parents living in low-income households that have a stronger sense of their parental efficacy (20% vs. 14%).

When **parental satisfaction** is assessed in terms of income, frustration, appreciation, etc. that parents feel in connection with their role towards their children, the rate of parents with the *lowest* levels of parental satisfaction is highest among:

- those living in low-income households (25% vs. 18%)
- those that consider their incomes inadequate for meeting the basic needs of their families (26% vs. 17%)

As concerns the issue of **stress**, the five questions in the survey dealt primarily with stress connected to the overall accumulation of daily responsibilities, to time spent with the children and to children's difficult behaviours.

The rate of parents that reported experiencing stress *often or always* in at least four out of five of the situations examined was highest among:

- parents not living in low-income households (17% vs. 12%)
- parents that consider their incomes inadequate (22% vs. 14%)

A greater number of parents living in low-income households as well as those that consider their incomes inadequate have a lower sense of parental satisfaction.



Finally, the rate of parents **under a lot of self-imposed** pressure in connection with their children's care during the previous 12 months was higher among:

- parents not living in low-income households (22% vs. 16%)
- parents that consider their incomes inadequate (22.5% vs. 19%)

What can be observed is that perceptions of one's economic situation and low-income indicators shed a different light on the links between parenting experience and underprivileged circumstances:

- The fact of living in low-income households appears to be more closely linked to a more positive parenting experience (greater parental efficacy, lower levels of stress and self-imposed pressure)
- Parents' perception that their income is inadequate is more closely linked to a less positive parenting experience (lower parental efficacy, higher levels of stress and self-imposed pressure)

Compared to other parents, both of these parent categories tend to feel less satisfaction as parents.

SOCIAL AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS CONNECTED TO PARENTING AND UNDERPRIVILEGED CIRCUMSTANCES

Various social and contextual factors may affect parenting practices, parents' sense of satisfaction and the stress levels they experience.

SUPPORT OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The findings concerning the support provided by family and friends were as follows:

- Parents living in underprivileged circumstances appear to benefit less from their social network.
 - In terms of being able to rely on the support of family and friends often or always, these parents reported lower rates than other parents.
 - A higher rate of these parents reported:
 - having no source of support at all that they can rely on *frequently*
 - only *rarely* or *never* getting support from family and friends when they can no longer cope

Fewer parents living in underprivileged circumstances can often or always rely on sources of support among family and friends.

- The rate of parents reporting that they are unable to *frequently* rely on the support of family and friends is higher among:
 - parents living in low-income households (28% vs. 16%)
 - parents that consider their incomes inadequate (28% vs. 15%)
- As well, a higher rate of these parents reported only *rarely* or *never* getting support from family and friends when they can no longer cope (29% and 31%, respectively)



INFORMATION NEEDS

It was found that the rate of parents with a general need for information² is higher among:

- parents living in low-income households (30% vs. 23.5%)
- parents that consider their incomes inadequate (30% vs. 23.5%)

No significant difference was detected in the rates of parents with a substantial need for information on child health and health care matters.

Regarding social-emotional matters, parents with a substantial need for information are those:

- living in low-income households (26% vs. 14%)
- that consider their incomes inadequate (23% vs. 15%)

A higher rate of parents living in underprivileged circumstances reported consulting professionals for help when they needed information about the development of children aged 0 to 5 or about parenting roles.



Knowing how to find information

Seeing how parents living in underprivileged circumstances generally have greater information needs concerning the development of children aged 0 to 5 and parenting roles, do they know where to find this information?

The rate of parents that reported *never* or *rarely* knowing where to find the information they need is higher among:

- parents living in low-income households (11% vs. 4.7%)
- parents that consider their incomes inadequate for meeting the basic needs of their families (10% vs. 5%)

Furthermore, fewer parents in underprivileged circumstances than other parents reported *often* or *always* knowing where to find needed information (66% and 65%, respectively).

Information sources consulted

Concerning the information sources consulted by parents with children aged 0 to 5 when they needed information about the development of children aged 0 to 5 or about parenting roles during the 12 months preceding the survey, it was found that:

- a higher rate of parents living in underprivileged circumstances than other parents *often* consulted professionals or child care experts (31% and 30%, respectively) as well as telephone help lines (12% and 11%, respectively)
- a lower rate of parents living in low-income households accessed specialized websites compared to parents not living in low-income households (36% vs. 40%)
- a lower rate of parents that consider their incomes inadequate consulted books, pamphlets or magazines compared to parents that judge their incomes to be adequate (27.5% vs. 31%)

USE OF AVAILABLE FAMILY SERVICES

This section discusses the experiences of parents living in underprivileged circumstances in connection with available family services.

Health and perinatal services

It was found that parents living in underprivileged circumstances:

- are less likely than other parents to have a family physician for their children aged 0 to 5
- participate in prenatal classes at a lesser rate and use breastfeeding support services (breastfeeding godmother, breastfeeding drop-in centres, breastfeeding clinics, etc.) less often

2. Includes all subjects dealing with child development and the parenting roles discussed above, with the exception of separated parents.

Use of public facilities

The EQEPE survey asked parents with children aged 0 to 5 about their use, together with their children aged 0 to 5, of public parks equipped with a playground, sports facilities, arenas, swimming pools, wading pools, water play areas and libraries during the 12 months preceding the survey.

A lower rate of parents that consider their incomes inadequate make regular as well as varied use of the public facilities under study.

An average-score-based indicator derived from the answers to these four questions makes it possible to determine the rate of use of public facilities by parents and their children aged 0 to 5 during the 12 previous months. It was noted that a lower rate of parents that consider their incomes inadequate for meeting the basic needs of their families made *regular* as well as *varied* use of the public facilities under study (33% vs. 39%).

Knowledge of available services

The findings of the EQEPE survey reveal that approximately one in four parents (25%) do not know about the services available in their area. This rate is higher among:

- parents living in low-income households (32% vs. 22%)
- parents that consider their incomes inadequate for meeting the basic needs of their families (34% vs. 22%)

Use of available family services by type of service

- A higher rate of parents living in underprivileged circumstances than other parents reported using the following services:
 - drop-in daycare or respite centres (26% and 22%, respectively)
 - community kitchens (8% and 6%, respectively)
 - toy lending libraries or family thrift stores (27% and 23%, respectively)
 - individual, marriage or family counselling (12%, respectively)
- However, a lower rate of these parents reported:
 - participating in parent-child activities (21% and 21.5%, respectively)
 - enrolling their children aged 0 to 5 in sports activities (47% and 53%, respectively)
- No significant difference was observed in the participation rate in community celebrations and organized family outings.
- A slightly higher rate of parents living in low-income households reported participating in:
 - workshops, classes or lectures for parents (16% vs. 14%)
 - other activities for children aged 0 to 5 (socialization, creativity, etc.) (28% vs. 23%).

There are two indicators derived from the nine questions concerning the use of available family services:

- the first indicator concerns **activities directly connected to child development**
- the second indicator concerns **parenting support activities and services**

The findings indicate that parents living in low-income households and those that consider their incomes inadequate:

- participate at a lesser rate in at least two types of activities connected to child development (53% for both categories of parents)
- outnumber other parents in the use of at least two types of parenting support activities and services (24% and 18%, respectively).

Location of available services

As concerns the types of establishments or organizations visited by parents that used at least one type of available family service, it was found that parents living in underprivileged circumstances:

- most often seek out the services available at a CLSC (21% and 18%, respectively) or a community-based family organization (or a Maison des familles) (32% and 27.5%, respectively)
- make proportionately less use of the services available at recreation centres (56% and 54%, respectively), sports clubs and sports associations (46% and 44%, respectively)

No significant difference was observed in the use of the services available at libraries.

Impediments to using available family services

All in all, the parents were asked about 15 impediments that limit or prevent the use of available family services.

A higher rate of parents living in underprivileged circumstances than other parents pointed out the following impediments:

- cost (55% and 68%, respectively)
- lack of information about available services (55% and 56%, respectively)
- distance (too far or too complicated to get to) (29% and 25%, respectively)
- difficulty arranging for child care (42% and 47%, respectively)
- not many activities for small children (44% and 44.5%, respectively)

It is interesting to note that the following impediments were mentioned at a higher rate by parents not living in low-income households:

- inconvenient activity schedules (67% vs. 62%)
- too little time (73% vs. 58%)
- lack of interest or motivation (28% vs. 20%)

And finally, in contrast to parents that consider their incomes adequate, a higher rate of parents that consider their incomes inadequate reported the following impediments:

- activities that aren't adapted to their realities (30% vs. 25%)
- difficulties coordinating all their children's schedules (52% vs. 44%)

In this instance, the rates didn't significantly differ from those reported by parents living in low-income households.

It is interesting to note that the two indicators of underprivileged circumstances shed a somewhat different light on the impediments mentioned by the parents: while some impediments were raised at a higher rate by parents living in low-income households, others were mentioned more frequently by parents that consider their incomes inadequate.

Total number of impediments limiting or preventing use of services

The survey's findings show that higher rates of parents living in low-income households as well as those that consider their incomes inadequate reported

- at least seven impediments that limit or prevent the use of services (31% and 38.5%, respectively)
- four or more impediments connected to services (34% and 38%, respectively)

Among parents reporting at least four personal or family impediments, only those parents that consider their incomes inadequate constituted a higher rate as compared to other parents (30% vs. 22%).

CONCLUSION

This report summarizes the experiences of parents with children aged 0 to 5 living in underprivileged circumstances. For the purpose of the EQEPE survey, these parents are defined as individuals living in low-income households as well as those that consider their incomes inadequate for meeting the basic needs of their families.

It is important to keep in mind that while these two parent groups constitute similar numbers (24%), it is not necessarily the same parents we find in both categories. Furthermore, concerning the indicators of parenting experience, it is interesting to observe that these two parent categories do not necessarily differ in the same way from other parents.

As such, compared to parents living in better-off households, proportionately fewer parents living in low-income households reported having a low sense of parental efficacy, suffering more stress or being under *a lot* of self-imposed pressure. The opposite is observed among parents that consider their incomes inadequate: compared to parents that judge their incomes adequate, they show a greater tendency to have a sense of low parental efficacy and low parental satisfaction while suffering higher levels of stress and being under *a lot* of self-imposed pressure.

As concerns aspects of parenting, these two categories of parents, as contrasted against parents not living in underprivileged circumstances, account for a higher rate of parents with a general need for information as well as with substantial information needs in relation to social-emotional matters. Proportionately higher numbers of them also report *never, rarely or sometimes* knowing where to look for the information they need.

According to the survey's findings, parents in underprivileged circumstances are less familiar with available family services. However, greater numbers of them have participated in at least two types of parenting support activities and services.

The findings show that proportionately fewer parents in underprivileged circumstances know about available family services, even though higher numbers of them have participated in at least two types of parenting support activities and services. On the other hand, smaller numbers of them have participated in two activities connected to child development.

A proportionately greater number of these parents reported at least four impediments connected to service use (cost, lack of information, etc.). As for parents that consider their incomes inadequate, a higher rate reported at least four personal or family impediments, whereas a lower rate reported regular and varied use of the public facilities under study (public parks, arenas or playing fields, swimming pools, wading pools, water play areas, libraries).

As concerns social support networks, parents living in low-income households as well as those that consider their incomes inadequate report proportionately higher rates of frequently not being able to rely on any of their family and friends for support and never or only rarely getting support from family and friends when they can no longer cope.

For more information, please visit:
avenirdenfant.org/parents



APPENDIX

TABLE 1

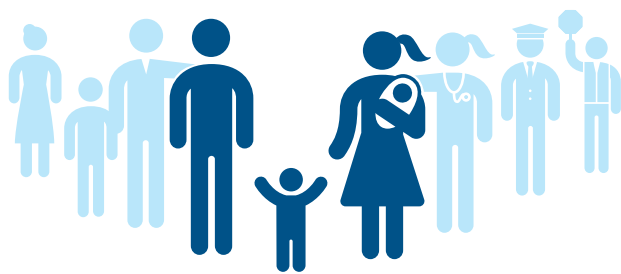
Summary of significant differences in the rates of parents according to the low-income measure and to self-perceptions of economic situation – parents with children aged 0 to 5, Québec, 2015

Rate of parents that...	live in low-income households	consider their incomes inadequate
PARENTING PRACTICES		
... never or approximately once every week read or tell stories to their children aged 0 to 5	+	+
... yell, raise their voice or become angry at their children aged 0 to 5 at least once every day	*	*
PARENTING EXPERIENCE		
... have a low sense of parental efficacy	-	+
... have a low sense of parental satisfaction	+	+
... experience high stress levels	-	+
... are under a lot of self-imposed pressure	-	+
INFORMATION NEEDS		
... have substantial general information needs	+	+
... have substantial information needs relating to child health and health care matters	*	*
... have substantial information needs relating to social-emotional matters	+	+
... have certain information needs that aren't met (<i>never, rarely or sometimes</i> know where to find answers)	+	+
SOCIAL NETWORK		
... frequently cannot rely on any source of support among family and friends	+	+
... never or rarely are supported by family and friends when they can no longer cope	+	+
AVAILABLE FAMILY SERVICES		
... make regular and varied use of public facilities under study	*	-
... do not know about family services available in their area	+	+
... participated in at least two types of activities connected to child development	-	-
... made use of at least two types of parenting support activities and services	+	+
... reported four or more impediments in connection with service use	+	+
... reported four or more personal or family impediments	*	+

(+)/(-) Significantly higher (+) or lower (-) rate of parents living in low-income households (or that consider their incomes inadequate) than in the rest of the population targeted in the survey (p < 0.05).

* No significant differences

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête québécoise sur l'expérience des parents d'enfants de 0 à 5 ans 2015*.



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