



# QUÉBEC PARENTS WITH CHILDREN AGED 0 TO 5: THEIR EXPERIENCES AND NEEDS — AN OVERVIEW

November 2017



**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.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Methodological aspects of the EQEPE survey</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SAMPLE SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>RESPONSE RATES AND NUMBER OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>TABULATING THE FINDINGS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>EQEPE SURVEY'S SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Sociodemographic characteristics of parents and families with children aged 0 to 5</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PARENTS' GENDER AND AGE</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PLACE OF BIRTH AND LANGUAGE MOST FREQUENTLY SPOKEN IN THE HOME</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR HEALTH</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>FAMILY STRUCTURE AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>CHILDREN WITH PROBLEMS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Parenting practices and parenting experience</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>PARENTING PRACTICES</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>PARENTING EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>9</b>
Parents' sense of living up to their role	<b>9</b>
Parents' stress and self-imposed pressure	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Occupation, employment characteristics and socioeconomic factors</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>PARENTS' PRIMARY OCCUPATION</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS, SCHEDULED WORKING HOURS AND NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED PER WEEK</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>AVAILABLE MEASURES FOR BALANCING PARENTS' WORK AND FAMILY LIFE</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>EFFECT OF WORK ON FAMILY LIFE</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>ECONOMIC SITUATION AND UNDERPRIVILEGED CIRCUMSTANCES</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>PARENTING AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<b>11</b>
Parenting practices/experience and parents' primary occupation	<b>11</b>
Parenting practices/experience and family-work balance	<b>11</b>
Parenting practices/experience and effect of work on family life	<b>12</b>
Parenting practices/experience and underprivileged circumstances	<b>12</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Information needs of parents with children aged 0 to 5</b>	<b>13</b>

<b>Chapter 6: Relationship with the other parent</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Chapter 7: Parents' personal social network</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Chapter 8: Available family services</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter 9: Experiences of parents with children aged 0 to 5 living in the regions</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Chapter 10: Parenting experiences in relation to specific parent and family characteristics</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>PARENTING EXPERIENCES AND GENDER</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>PARENTING EXPERIENCES IN UNDERPRIVILEGED CIRCUMSTANCES</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>PARENTING EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS BORN OUTSIDE CANADA</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>PARENTING EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS WITHOUT EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>PARENTING EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS THAT JUDGE THEIR HEALTH SITUATION TO BE AVERAGE OR POOR</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>PARENTING EXPERIENCES IN SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>27</b>

# INTRODUCTION

This document presents 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). 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 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 initiative. The qualitative component, involving the participation of one hundred parents, was conducted by the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières. Its chief purpose was to develop a theoretical framework as a basis for the initiative and to collect data about parents' experiences from focus groups. The theoretical framework helped to guide the choice of subjects covered in the survey as well as the analysis and interpretation of the data collected.

The EQEPE report *Mieux connaître la parentalité au Québec*, (*Towards a better understanding of parenting in Québec*), was released in May 2016. 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 sought to document the following aspects:

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

The report is organized into nine subject-specific chapters that list the indicators and document the experiences of parents with young children:

- Chapter 1 covers the main **methodological aspects** of the EQEPE survey.
- Chapter 2 presents a **statistical summary of the sociodemographic characteristics** of the parents and families with young children targeted in the survey.
- Chapter 3 **documents certain factors that affect the two main aspects of parenting**: parenting experience and parenting practices.
- Chapter 4 summarizes the **main socioeconomic characteristics** of parents and families with children under the age of 6.
- Chapter 5 deals with **parents' information needs** on the subjects of the development of children aged 0 to 5 and parenting roles.
- Chapters 6 and 7 look into the **social support networks** available to parents of young children.
- Chapter 8 explores the survey's findings concerning the **services** available to parents and young children.
- Chapter 9 deals with the **findings connected to some of the indicators addressed in the previous chapters**, and their relevance in the contexts of each of the **16 administrative regions** of Québec.
- Chapter 10 contains a brief overview of **parenting in relation to specific characteristics** of parents and families (gender, underprivileged circumstances, immigration, education, health situation, and single-parent families).

A unique aspect of the EQEPE survey's design was the emphasis on collecting data that would represent the experiences of mothers *as well as* fathers. As such, it helped to meet some of the information requirements of researchers and child care specialists interested in fathers' levels of involvement with their children. Furthermore, since Avenir d'enfants and its local partners have a particular interest in the development of children aged 0 to 5 living in poverty, both components of the Perspectives parents initiative served to highlight the experiences of parents living in underprivileged circumstances.

## Chapter 1:

# METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE EQEPE SURVEY

## SAMPLE SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION

In order to ensure accurate evaluations with regard to parents living in underprivileged circumstances in all administrative regions of Quebec, the sample used was based on 23 693 parents. A sample size of this magnitude was required to assess a minimum rate of 10% with a co-efficient of variation of 15% or less by region and by level of deprivation.

## DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY

The EQEPE survey conducted the data collection exercise between January 16 and May 10, 2015. Survey participants could either complete the questionnaire online or answer the questions by telephone.

## RESPONSE RATES AND NUMBER OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Province-wide, the weighted response rate was 65.8% (compared to a target rate of 60%), the weighted response rate by level of deprivation was 62.4% among parents deemed underprivileged (compared to a target rate of 58%), and 67.0% among parents not deemed underprivileged (compared to a target rate of 62%).

## TABULATING THE FINDINGS

For the most part, only those findings deemed significant (showing deviations of more than 5%), were tabulated.

**No effort has been spared to ensure that this first EQEPE survey would produce quality and representative results, both province-wide and in the 16 administrative regions of Québec.**

Nevertheless, despite the precautions taken during the survey's planning and execution stages, the analysis of the data remains subject to certain limitations, as is the case with all population surveys.



## EQEPE SURVEY'S SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

No effort has been spared to ensure that this first EQEPE survey would produce quality and representative results, both province-wide and in the 16 administrative regions of Québec. It should be emphasized that the sample size of 23 368 parents was surveyed in two waves of data collection in order to minimize the under-representation of parents with just one child under the age of 1. The overall data collection strategy helped to limit the number of incomplete survey questionnaires and attain a response rate of 65.8% of the sample size. The required number of completed questionnaires—by level of deprivation—was attained in all 16 regions.

Nevertheless, despite the precautions taken during the survey's planning and execution stages, the analysis of the data remains subject to certain limitations, as is the case with all population surveys. Above all else, it is impossible to guarantee the accuracy of the answers provided by the respondents. The parents surveyed may have been influenced, among other things, by a social desirability bias or may have found it difficult to accurately recall past events.

Furthermore, the survey only partially covers the population of parents with children under the age of 1. Specifically, the experiences of parents with just one child under the age of 1 are not adequately represented in the data. This limitation will have to be taken into account when the EQEPE survey findings are compared against the results of other surveys, in Québec and elsewhere, that assess parent populations with children under the age of 1.

Additionally, in situations involving step-families, the parent chosen to answer the questionnaire may not be the biological or adoptive parent of the majority of the children in the household, perhaps not even of a single one of them (a step-parent without any children of his or her own).

Finally, it is important to realize that cross-sectional surveys, such as EQEPE, in addition to uncovering differences between population groups, make it possible to reveal relationships between two variables; however, these surveys cannot establish a causal link between the characteristics studied. It is therefore advisable to exercise caution when interpreting certain results.

## Chapter 2:

# SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARENTS AND FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN AGED 0 TO 5

In order to contextualize and facilitate the understanding of the main indicators discussed in the following chapters, it is necessary to first describe certain sociodemographic characteristics of the targeted population, which is composed of parents with at least one child aged 0 to 5 living with them at least 40% of the time.

The parent population consists of 47% men and 53% women.

### PARENTS' GENDER AND AGE

- Nearly two thirds of parents are between 30 and 39 years old. Parents younger than 25 or 45 and older account for 3.8% and 6%, respectively.
- The parent population consists of 47% men and 53% women. There are higher numbers of women under 35 (59% vs. 41%).

### PLACE OF BIRTH AND LANGUAGE MOST FREQUENTLY SPOKEN IN THE HOME

- The majority of Québec parents were born in Canada (75%). Of those parents born outside Canada, approximately 28.5% have been in the country for less than five years.
- The majority of parents speak only French in the home (73%), whereas one in ten parents (10%) speak French in the home alongside another language or English. Roughly 17% do not speak French in the home.

### PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

- The highest educational qualifications attained among approximately three quarters of parents are: secondary school diploma (26%), diploma of college studies (25%), an undergraduate university degree (28%), or a graduate or doctoral degree (12%). About 9% have no educational qualifications whatsoever.
- The rate of parents with a university degree as their highest qualification is higher among mothers than fathers (43.5% vs. 38%) and among parents born outside Canada as opposed to Canadian-born parents (58% vs. 35%).

### PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR HEALTH

- One in five parents stated being in excellent health (21%), while approximately 12% of parents consider their health to be average or poor.

### FAMILY STRUCTURE AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY

- Approximately four in five parents (81%) live in intact families, 8% in single-parent families and 10% in reconstituted families. Roughly 81% of single-parent families are headed by a woman.
- Approximately 30% of parents with children aged 0 to 5 have just one child; 45% have two, and 25% have three or more (including children of all ages).

### CHILDREN WITH PROBLEMS

- Roughly one in five parents (20.5%) have at least one child with one of the five problems examined in the survey. The rate is higher among parents without any educational qualifications (32%), Canadian-born parents (23%) and parents that consider their health to be average or poor (32%).

## Chapter 3

# PARENTING PRACTICES AND PARENTING EXPERIENCE

Chapter 3 describes the main indicators that allow for the documentation of the two main aspects of the conceptual parenting model: parenting practices and parenting experience.

## PARENTING PRACTICES

- Approximately 80% of parents reported playing on a daily basis with their children aged 0 to 5; 50% recited nursery rhymes or sang songs to them; and 41% read or told them stories every day during the two-week period preceding the survey.
- About 41% of parents read or told stories to their children aged 0 to 5 every day during the previous two-week period. Nearly one parent in four (24%) read or told stories approximately once a week or never during the previous two weeks.
- Approximately 14% of parents reported yelling, raising their voice or becoming angry at their children aged 0 to 5 at least once a day, whereas 22% never display any of these behaviours.

**Approximately 14% of parents reported yelling, raising their voice or becoming angry at their children aged 0 to 5 at least once a day, whereas 22% never display any of these behaviours.**

The survey results also found that:

- A higher rate of women than men read or tell stories every day to their children aged 0 to 5.
- Women also show a greater tendency to yell, raise their voice or become angry, and also more frequently lose patience when their children aged 0 to 5 demand attention.
- The higher the educational qualifications of parents, the more likely they are to read or tell stories to their children aged 0 to 5 every day.
- Parents without any educational qualification reported the highest rates of parents that never yelled, raised their voice or became angry at their children aged 0 to 5 during the two-week period preceding the survey.







## PARENTING EXPERIENCE

### Parents' sense of living up to their role

- Generally speaking, parents reported fairly high rates of parental efficacy and parental satisfaction. However, the parental satisfaction rates are not as high as those concerning parental efficacy.
- More men than women reported having a stronger sense of parental satisfaction.

### Parents' stress and self-imposed pressure

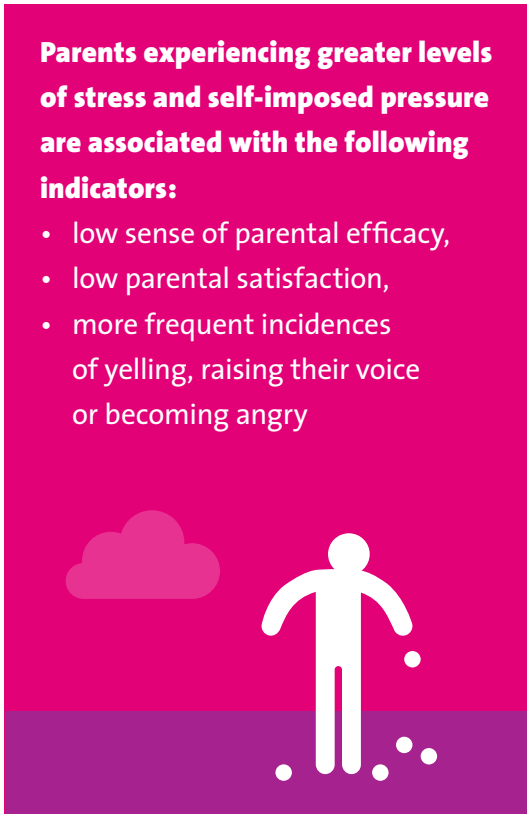
- Approximately one quarter of parents (26%) experience little parenting stress (no frequent-stress situations), whereas about 16% parents reported experiencing more stress (four or five frequent-stress situations).
- About one fifth of parents (20%) were under a lot of self-imposed pressure in connection with their children's care during the 12-month period preceding the survey. Nearly 44% experienced some self-imposed pressure, while 36% didn't suffer any such pressure at all.
- Higher rates of women than men experienced higher levels of stress and were under greater self-imposed pressure in connection with their parenting role.

**Parents experiencing greater levels of stress and self-imposed pressure are associated with the following indicators:**

- low sense of parental efficacy,
- low parental satisfaction,
- more frequent incidences of yelling, raising their voice or becoming angry

The survey results also found that:

- The greater parents' sense of parental satisfaction, the more likely they are to feel effective as parents as well. The inverse relationship was observed as well.
- Parents with a low sense of parental efficacy as well as parents with low parental satisfaction reported higher rates of frequent yelling, raising their voice or becoming angry; they also reported higher rates of infrequent reading or telling stories (*never or roughly once a week*).
- In the EQEPE survey, parents experiencing greater levels of stress and self-imposed pressure are associated with the following indicators:
  - low sense of parental efficacy,
  - low parental satisfaction,
  - more frequent incidences of yelling, raising their voice or becoming angry.



## Chapter 4

# OCCUPATION, EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS AND SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS

Chapter 4 looks into primary occupation, employment characteristics and the economic circumstances of parents with children aged 0 to 5.

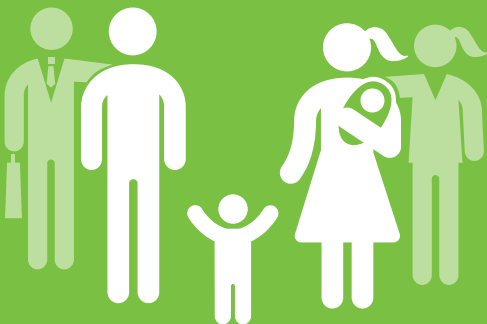
### PARENTS' PRIMARY OCCUPATION

- Approximately three in four parents (78%) were working (whether primary occupation or not) when the survey was conducted. The rate was higher among men than women (89% vs. 67%). The vast majority of parents were in paid employment (86%).

### EMPLOYMENT STATUS, SCHEDULED WORKING HOURS AND NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED PER WEEK

- Roughly 31% of working parents are in jobs with non-standard working hours, meaning they work irregular hours, in the evenings, at night or on weekends.
- The majority of parents in employment work between 35 and 40 weekly hours (59%); 18% work fewer than 35 hours, and 23% work more than 40 hours.
- Men spend more time at work than women. In proportional terms, higher rates of men work more than 40 weekly hours (33% vs. 11%).

Approximately half of parents in paid employment (54%) have access to one or two of the four family-work balance measures examined in the survey. Close to one quarter (24%) can access three or four measures, while 22% reported not having any of the four measures available to them.



### AVAILABLE MEASURES FOR BALANCING PARENTS' WORK AND FAMILY LIFE

- 56% of parents in paid employment have access to flexible working hours; 54% are entitled to paid leaves for family reasons; 20% can opt to work from home; and 27% can obtain a reorganization or reduction of working hours.
- Approximately half of parents in paid employment (54%) have access to one or two of the four family-work balance measures examined in the survey. Close to one quarter (24%) can access three or four measures, while 22% reported not having any of the four measures available to them.

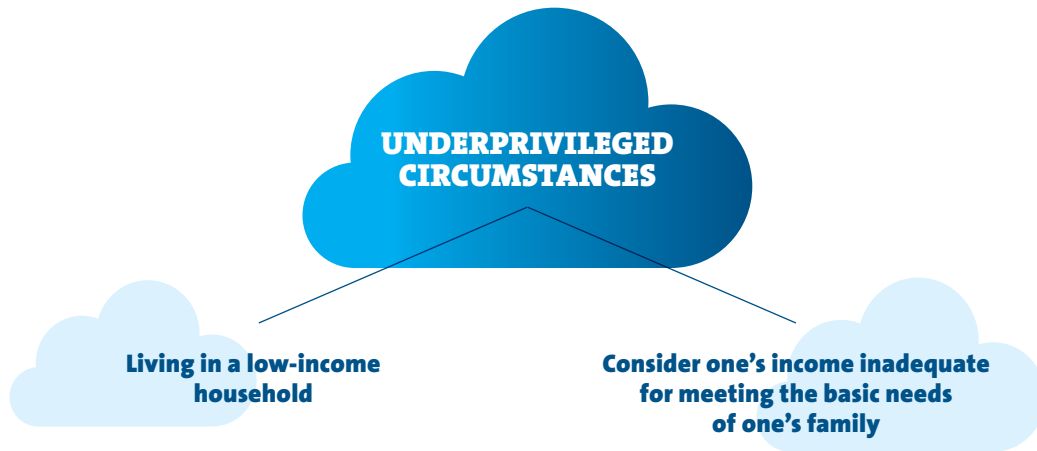
### EFFECT OF WORK ON FAMILY LIFE

- For roughly 22% of parents in employment, the requirements of the job often or always affect their family life, whereas for 14% of parents, work never impacts their family life.



## PARENTING AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

- Almost one quarter of parents (24%) of children aged 0 to 5 live in low-income households. A similar rate (24%) consider their incomes inadequate for meeting the basic needs of their families.



---

## PARENTING AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

When analyzing the data and drawing connections between certain indicators discussed in this chapter and the main parenting indicators addressed in the previous chapter, several significant relationships come to light.

### Parenting practices/experience and parents' primary occupation

Parents not in employment (pursuing studies; on maternity, paternity or parental leaves; stay-at-home by choice; looking for employment, recipients of social assistance) reported in larger numbers that they:

- read or tell stories to their children aged 0 to 5 on a daily basis,
- never yelled, raised their voice or became angry at their children aged 0 to 5 in the previous two weeks,
- have a strong sense of parental efficacy,
- experience lower levels of parenting stress,
- are not under any self-imposed pressure in connection with their children's care.

### Parenting practices/experience and family-work balance

Parents without any family-work balance measures available to them reported in larger numbers that they:

- read or tell stories to their children aged 0 to 5 approximately once a week or never,
- have a low sense of parental efficacy,
- experience low parental satisfaction,
- experience higher levels of parenting stress.

When job requirements often or always affect family life, it was found that higher rates of parents reported that they are under a lot more self-imposed pressure in connection with their children's care.

### Parenting practices/experience and effect of work on family life

When job requirements *often* or *always* affect family life, it was found that higher rates of parents reported that they:

- yelled, raised their voice or became angry at their children aged 0 to 5 at least once a day in the previous two weeks,
- have a lower sense of parental efficacy,
- experience lower parental satisfaction,
- experience higher levels of parenting stress,
- are under a *lot* more self-imposed pressure in connection with their children's care.

### Parenting practices/experience and underprivileged circumstances



The low income measure, a poverty standard based on reported income, seems more closely associated with a more positive parenting experience. The subjective measure of poverty, on the other hand, appears to be more closely connected to lower incidences of positive parenting practices and less positive parenting experiences.

#### Low-income measure

Higher numbers of parents living in low-income households reported that they:

- read or tell stories to their children aged 0 to 5 approximately once a week or never,
- never yelled, raised their voice or became angry at their children aged 0 to 5 in the previous two weeks,
- have a greater sense of parental efficacy,
- experience lower parental satisfaction,
- experience lower levels of parenting stress,
- are not under any self-imposed pressure in connection with their children's care.

#### Parents' perceptions of their economic situation

Parents that consider their incomes inadequate for meeting the basic needs of their families reported in higher numbers that they

- read or tell stories to their children aged 0 to 5 approximately *once a week or never*
- have a lower sense of parental efficacy
- experience lower parental satisfaction
- experience higher levels of parenting stress
- are under a lot of self-imposed pressure in connection with their children's care

It was found that parents' perceptions of their economic situation and the low income measure offered a different perspective on the relationships between parenting and underprivileged circumstances. The low income measure, a poverty standard based on reported income, seems more closely associated with a more positive parenting experience (stronger sense of parental efficacy, lower stress levels, less self-imposed pressure). The subjective measure of poverty, on the other hand, appears to be more closely connected to lower incidences of positive parenting practices and less positive parenting experiences (lower sense of parental efficacy, lower parental satisfaction, higher rates of frequent stress and self-imposed high-pressure situations).

## Chapter 5

# INFORMATION NEEDS OF PARENTS WITH CHILDREN AGED 0 TO 5

Chapter 5 deals with the information needs and the information sources consulted by parents with children aged 0 to 5. The survey results indicate:

- Larger numbers of parents with substantial information needs reported consulting information on the following five subjects: pregnancy and child birth (34%), breastfeeding (33%), food and nutrition (31%), disease and health care (36%), and physical development and growth (28%).
- Nearly 25% of parents have elevated general information needs, whereas roughly 58% have moderate and 17% have low general information needs.
- The rate of parents with elevated information needs on subjects concerning children's health and health care is approximately 39%. The rate is 17% concerning social-emotional matters. The rates of parents with low information needs in these two subject areas is roughly 14% and 34%, respectively.

These findings indicate that parents with children aged 0 to 5 have proportionately greater information needs concerning subjects connected to health and health care than for social-emotional matters.

**The data indicate that proportionately higher numbers of women than men have substantial information needs concerning the vast majority of subjects examined in the survey.**

Furthermore, the EQEPE survey data indicate that:

- As soon as they become mothers, proportionately higher numbers of women than men have substantial information needs concerning the vast majority of subjects examined in the survey.
- Approximately three in four parents (75%) reported *often* (46%) or *always* (29%) knowing where to find the information they need. Just 6% of parents reported *never* or *rarely* knowing where to find the information they need.
- Nearly one in four parents (25%) contend with various degrees of information needs that aren't met.

The rates of parents with specific information needs that can't be met, meaning those that *never*, *rarely* or *sometimes* know where to find the information, is higher among parents born outside Canada who only speak a language other than French or English in the home and who live in low-income households and consider their incomes inadequate for meeting the basic needs of their families.



**The two sources of information most often consulted by parents are their families (38%) and specialized websites (39%), followed by books, pamphlets and magazines (30%).**

Concerning the different information sources accessed by parents when they required information sources about children's development and parenting roles during the previous 12 months, the survey found that:

- The two sources of information most *often* consulted by parents are their families (38%) and specialized websites (39%), followed by books, pamphlets and magazines (30%).
- The two information sources least often consulted (*never*: 49% and 37%, respectively) are social media/online discussion forums and telephone help lines, such as Info-Santé or Ligne Parents.
- Women are more likely than men to *often* make use of the information sources examined in the survey—the only exception being telephone help lines and health care professionals or child care experts, where no significant discrepancy along gender lines was observed.
- The most highly educated parents and those not living in low-income households are more likely to consult online information sources about children's development and parenting roles.

The analysis of the survey data also revealed significant relationships between certain indicators of the information needs of parents with young children and the parenting indicators discussed in Chapter 3. The analysis found that:

- Parents with elevated information needs since becoming parents reported in larger numbers than other parents having a low sense of parental efficacy and lower parental satisfaction.
- Parents claiming to have low information needs reported at a higher rate that they never yelled, raised their voice or became angry with their children aged 0 to 5 in the two weeks preceding the survey. They are also more likely to report higher parental efficacy and satisfaction rates than other parents.

**The less pronounced parents' information needs are regarding children's development and parenting roles, the less likely these parents are to experience frequent stress situations; the inverse is also true.**

As concerns parenting stress and self-imposed pressure levels, the data collected indicates that:

- The less pronounced parents' information needs are regarding children's development and parenting roles, the less likely these parents are to experience frequent stress situations; the inverse is also true.
- The more pronounced information needs are, the higher the number of parents reporting having experienced a lot of self-imposed pressure in connection with their children's education during the previous 12 months.

To summarize, one observes greater rates of parents experiencing higher levels of stress and self-imposed pressure and relatively lower rates of parental efficacy and satisfaction among those who, since becoming parents, reported more elevated information needs regarding children's development and parenting roles.

A further analysis of the survey data would, among other things, make it possible to verify whether the results are connected to levels of educational attainment. It is important to keep in mind that parents with a university degree generally experience more stress and lower parental efficacy, are under greater self-imposed pressure and read or tell stories more often than other parents. They also reported having more pronounced information needs concerning children's development and parenting roles since becoming parents.



## Chapter 6

# RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OTHER PARENT

Chapter 6 deals with the spousal relationships of parents with children aged 0 to 5 living in two-parent families. The main findings show that:

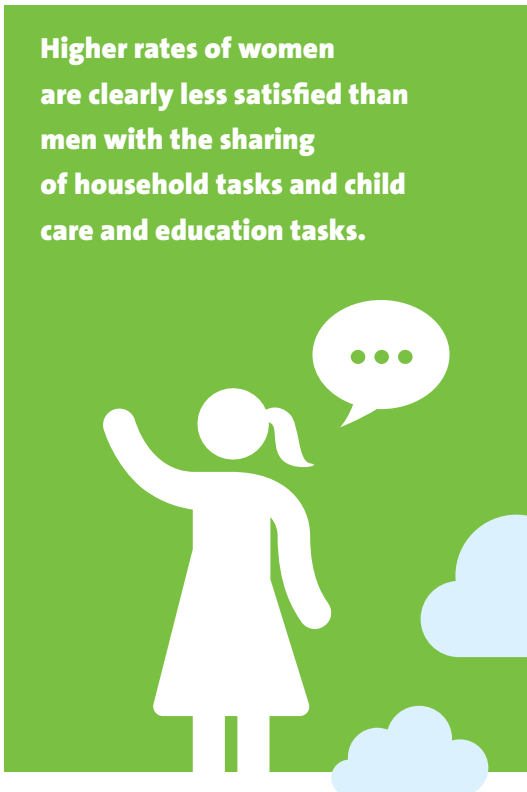
- Two thirds of parents (66%) reported *often* or *always* getting encouragement and reassurance from their spouse concerning their parenting role.
- Approximately 57% reported that their spouse *often* or *always* provides sound advice or good information that is helpful in their parenting role.
- The overwhelming majority of parents (85%) stated that they *often* or *always* agree with their spouse on how to deal with their children.
- According to the spousal support indicator, close to half of all parents (47%) consider themselves well-supported by their spouse, while 8% stated they are less well supported. Men reported proportionately higher rates of receiving support from their spouse than women did.
- The vast majority of parents with children aged 0 to 5 (81%) reported *often* or *always* being able to count on their spouse's support when they can no longer cope. Roughly 6% of parents reported that their spouse *never* or *rarely* provides support in these situations.
- Approximately 40% of parents reported being very satisfied with the sharing of household tasks with their spouse, and 43% stated being *fairly* satisfied. However, roughly 16% are *not very* or *not at all* satisfied in this regard.
- About 9% of parents reported being *not very* or *not at all* satisfied with sharing child care and education tasks, whereas close to half of all parents stated being very satisfied (48%) in this regard.
- Nearly 6% of parents reported that their spouse *often* or *always* criticizes them in connection with their parenting role, whereas approximately seven out of ten parents stated that their spouse *rarely* (36%) or *never* (36%) criticizes them on this point.
- About 9% of parents reported feeling *a lot of* pressure from their spouse in connection with their children's care; 41% reported feeling *a little* pressure and half of all parents (50%) stated feeling *no* such pressure at all.

**Higher rates of women are clearly less satisfied than men with the sharing of household tasks and child care and education tasks.**

Further observations:

- Higher rates of women are clearly less satisfied than men with the sharing of household tasks and child care and education tasks.
- Women reported higher rates of receiving less support from their spouse, but they are also more likely to criticize and put pressure on their spouse.
- Men reported higher rates of being criticized and put under pressure by their spouse.

It appears that higher rates of women than men are less satisfied with the sharing of tasks.



But what if we analyze the data with an eye on the connections between parenting indicators and spousal relationship indicators?

It appears that parents receiving the most support from their spouse, those that are the most satisfied with the sharing of child care and education tasks and those that are not put under pressure by their spouse reported higher rates of:

- reading or telling stories to their children aged 0 to 5 on a daily basis during the previous two weeks,
- never yelling, raising their voice or becoming angry at their children aged 0 to 5,
- having a strong sense of parental efficacy,
- having a strong sense of parental satisfaction,
- experiencing less parenting stress,
- experiencing no self-imposed pressure in connection with their children's care.

Conversely, it would seem that parents with a less positive spousal relationship—meaning they receive less support, are less satisfied with the sharing of tasks and feel greater pressure—reported proportionately higher rates of less positive parenting practices, low sense of parental efficacy, low sense of parental satisfaction, as well as higher stress levels.

Concerning parents that are separated and share the responsibility for at least one child with an ex-spouse, the survey data indicate that:

- One third of parents (34%) can *never* count on the other parent or his/her family, whereas 36% can often or always count on such support when they need it.
- 14% feel a lot of pressure from their ex-spouse, 27% feel a little pressure, and 59% feel no pressure at all.

As was observed among parents living in two-parent families, it appears that a more positive relationship with the other parent (higher levels of support or put under less pressure) is conducive to lower parenting stress levels, greater parental satisfaction and less self-imposed parenting pressure.





## Chapter 7

# PARENTS' PERSONAL SOCIAL NETWORK

**One quarter of parents reported rarely or never receiving support from family or friends when they can no longer cope.**



Chapter 7 discusses parents' support network among family and friends as well as the social pressure they feel.

First of all, below are the key findings that emerged from an analysis of the support provided by family and friends to parents with children aged 0 to 5:

- Parents' own parents (63%) as well as their spouse's parents (among parents living in two-parent families) (55%) represent the two most *frequently* available sources of support; these sources of support can *often* or *always* be relied on when their family needs help.
- Approximately one in five parents (19%) reported *frequently* not being able to rely on any sources of support, while 17% stated they could *often* or *always* count on four or five sources of support among family or friends.
- Roughly one quarter of parents (25%) *reported* always getting support from family or friends when they can no longer cope. A similar rate of parents reported *rarely* or *never* receiving support in these situations (24%).
- Nearly 6% of parents reported experiencing *a lot of* pressure from their family or their spouse's family (among parents living in two-parent families) in connection with their children's care. The rate is lower with regard to friends or colleagues (0.7%), daycare staff and teachers (2.0%), child care and social workers (1.6%) and the media (2.8%).
- Roughly one in ten parents (10%) reported experiencing *a lot of* pressure from at least one of the five sources examined, whereas nearly half of all parents (48%) didn't experience any pressure at all during the previous 12 months.

Certain parent and family characteristics were revealed to be connected to some personal support network indicators:


- Higher rates of women than men reported *often* or *always* receiving the support of family or friends when they can no longer cope (56% vs. 47%).
- Women also reported higher rates of experiencing *a lot of* pressure from each of the sources of support examined as well as feeling more social pressure (13% vs. 7%).

Concerning family structure, the results indicate that:

- No significant difference was observed regarding family structure among those parents that could not frequently rely on support from family and friends when needed.
- Compared against intact families, there are proportionately greater numbers of parents in single-parent families that reported receiving support from family and friends when they can no longer cope (31% vs. 25%); smaller numbers of them reported rarely or never receiving support in these situations (20% vs. 24%).
- Parents with larger families seem to have the least available social network.

As far as underprivileged circumstances are concerned, the results indicate that:

- Parents living in low-income households as well as those that consider their incomes inadequate for meeting the basic needs of their families reported proportionately higher rates of not having an available source of support on which they can rely frequently and *never* or *rarely* getting support from their family and friends when they can no longer cope.



**Parents often or always able to rely on four or five sources of support have a stronger sense of parental satisfaction.**

Regarding the connection between underprivileged circumstances and felt social pressure, it is interesting to note that:

- Parents that consider their incomes inadequate reported proportionately higher rates of experiencing more pressure, whereas no significant difference was observed in terms of the low income measure.

The analysis of the data also shows that those parents *often* or *always* able to rely on four or five sources of support stand out from other parents by reporting at a higher rate that they:

- have a stronger sense of parental efficacy,
- have a stronger sense of parental satisfaction,
- experience lower stress levels,
- are under no self-imposed pressure in connection with their children's care.

On the other hand, parents without a source of support among family and friends they can frequently rely on when needed and parents who can only count on one such source are represented at greater rates among those that:

- have a lower sense of parental efficacy,
- have lower parental satisfaction,
- experience higher stress levels.

It must also be pointed out that parents who stated that they *always* get support from family and friends when they can no longer cope reported at greater rates that they:

- never yelled, raised their voice or became angry at their children aged 0 to 5 during the previous two weeks,
- have a stronger sense of parental efficacy,
- feel greater parental satisfaction,
- experience less parenting stress,
- aren't under any self-imposed pressure in connection with their children's care.

Finally, concerning felt social pressure, the data show that the more such pressure parents feel, the more likely they are to:

- yell, raise their voice or become angry at their children aged 0 to 5 at least once a day,
- have a lower sense of parental efficacy,
- feel less parental satisfaction,
- experience more parenting stress,
- be under *a lot of* self-imposed pressure in connection with their children's care.

## Chapter 8

# AVAILABLE FAMILY SERVICES

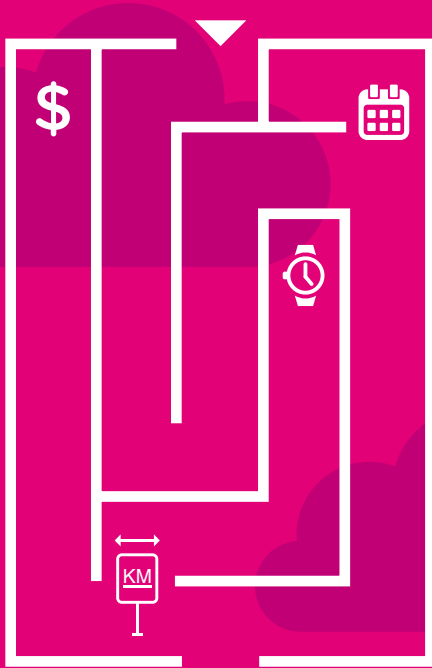
Chapter 8 deals with semi-formal and formal support networks, meaning the services available to families, in particular those intended to support parents in their role and thereby help young children to develop to their full potential. Below follow some key findings taken from the survey report.

**One quarter of parents don't know any of the available family services in their area.**



- The overwhelming majority of parents (89%) reported having a family physician or pediatrician for all their children aged 0 to 5, whereas 9% stated not having a physician for any of their children.
- Less than half of all parents (44%) consult a family physician or pediatrician when their children aged 0 to 5 are ill; 29% go to a walk-in clinic and 16% to a hospital emergency room.
- Approximately 60% of parents, in equal proportions between men and women, reported having taken prenatal classes.
- About half of all mothers (52%), excepting those that reported they hadn't engaged in breastfeeding, reported having used breastfeeding support services, such as a breastfeeding godmother, breastfeeding drop-in centre or lactation consultant.
- Slightly less than two thirds of all parents (62%) *often* made use of a public park equipped with a playground during the 12-month period preceding the survey. Roughly 39% of parents *often* made use of a public swimming pool, wading pool or water play area, 27% an arena or sports field (soccer, tennis, baseball, etc.) and 20% a library.
- Approximately one in five parents (19%) reported rarely making use of the public facilities examined or not using a great variety of them, whereas 37% reported making both regular and varied use of public facilities during the previous 12 months.
- Roughly 14% of parents reported very good knowledge of the available family services in their area, 61% reported some knowledge about available services, and one quarter (25%) didn't know any of the available family services.
- Among the types of services available to families, those that saw the highest user rates during the 12-month period preceding the survey were sports activities for children (63%) and community celebrations or organized family outings (48%).
- Nearly 19% of parents did not participate in any of the child development activities, whereas roughly half (50%) took part in at least two different types of activities.
- Around 57% of parents did not make use of any of the five types of parenting support activities or services, whereas 15% availed themselves of at least two types of these activities and services.
- Of those parents that made use of at least one type of these activities and services, approximately one quarter did so in a community-based family organization or in a Maison des Familles (23%), and one half (52%) did so in a recreation centre. Approximately four in ten parents used the services available in a sports club or sports association (42%), 36% used services in a library and 15% in a CSLC.
- Among the impediments limiting or preventing the use of services reported by large numbers of parents are: not enough time (69%), inconvenient scheduling of activities (65%), insufficient information about available services (48%), and, for those parents with at least two children, difficulty coordinating the schedules of all their children (46%).
- Just 2.6% of parents with children aged 0 to 5 didn't report any of the 14 impediments examined in the survey, whereas 14% reported experiencing one or two impediments. For slightly more than a quarter of parents (27%), at least seven impediments limited or prevented their use of available family services.

**Impediments limiting or preventing the use of services reported by large numbers of parents are: not enough time, inconvenient scheduling of activities, and insufficient information about available services.**



- Concerning the impediments associated with services (cost, scheduled activity times, insufficient information, lack of space, etc.), whereas 8% of parents reported not experiencing any impediments, slightly more than a quarter (27%) had to contend with four or more impediments.
- As regards personal or family impediments (not enough time or motivation, difficulty arranging for child care, etc.), approximately one in ten parents (11%) didn't report any such impediments, and one in five (20%) reported a single one. Nearly one quarter of parents (24%) reported contending with at least four personal or family impediments.

Concerning the characteristics of parents and families in connection with the use of available services, the results indicate the following:

- No significant difference between men and women was observed regarding their degree of knowledge about available services, the number of different services used by parents and the fact of not needing the services on offer.
- Proportionately more parents with a university degree reported regular and varied use of the public services examined in the survey as well as having participated in at least two different types of activities connected to child development.
- Parents without any qualifications are less likely to know about available family services.
- The more educated parents are, the more likely they are to participate in workshops, classes or lectures for parents, in parent-child activities and sports activities for children aged 0 to 5.

The results indicate that parents living in low-income households:

- reported proportionately higher rates of not knowing about available family services in their area,
- reported proportionately higher rates of using at least two types of parenting support activities or services,
- reported lower rates of participation in at least two types of child development activities,
- are less likely to enrol their children aged 0 to 5 in sports activities, but they reported proportionately higher rates of using the services of drop-in daycare centres, toy lending libraries and family thrift stores.

Concerning the connections between parenting and use of services, the EQEPE survey results found the following:

- The numbers of parents that reported reading or telling stories to their children aged 0 to 5 on a daily basis are higher among those that:
  - make regular and varied use of the public facilities examined; take part in workshops, classes or lectures for parents; participate in parent-child activities; make use of at least two types of child development activities,
  - make use of at least two types of parenting support activities or services.
- The numbers of parents that reported never yelling, raising their voice or becoming angry at their children aged 0 to 5 are higher among those that:
  - take part in workshops, classes or lectures for parents,
  - make rare or unvaried use of public facilities and don't participate in any types of child development activities.

## Chapter 9

# EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS WITH CHILDREN AGED 0 TO 5 LIVING IN THE REGIONS

Chapter 9 deals with the experiences of parents with children aged 0 to 5 living in Québec's regions.

Regarding the parenting indicators explored in the EQEPE survey, on the whole, very few significant differences were observed between the results obtained in the regions and the findings recorded in the rest of Québec. The same is true for social and circumstantial factors associated with parenting. Compared to the rest of Québec, some regions nevertheless indicated a few significant differences in connection with certain indicator categories examined.

As concerns parenting practices and parenting experience, parents in the Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine region reported at lower rates that they:

- yell, raise their voice or become angry at their children aged 0 to 5 at least once a day,
- have a lower sense of parental satisfaction,
- are under a lot of self-imposed pressure in connection with their children's care.

Parents in the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean region stand out for reporting at higher rates that they never or roughly once a week read or told stories to their children aged 0 to 5 in the previous two weeks. They reported at lower rates that they:

- feel less satisfied than others in their parenting role,
- experience higher stress levels (four or five frequent-stress situations).

Parents living in the Montréal region, compared to those living in the rest of Québec, reported at lower rates that they:

- read or told stories to their children aged 0 to 5 roughly once a week or never during the previous two weeks,
- experienced higher stress levels (four or five frequent-stress situations).

However, they reported at higher rates that they feel less parental satisfaction.

Regarding certain parenting factors, it was observed that parents in the Montréal and Laval regions stand out for reporting at higher rates that they:

- have substantial general information needs,
- frequently cannot rely on any sources of support from family and friends.

As concerns the use of available family services and the impediments that prevent or limit their use, the Montréal region differs from the rest of Québec for having higher rates of parents that reported:

- using at least two types of parenting support activities or services,
- seven or more impediments that limit or prevent the use of available services,
- four or more impediments connected to the services.

Parents in the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean region appear less likely to make use of available services. Compared to the rest of Québec, higher rates of parents in this region reported either rarely using the public facilities examined or not making much varied use of them. Lower rates of these parents reported using at least two types of services or activities focused on child development or parenting support. They were also proportionately less numerous to report four or more impediments connected to the services.

Finally, parents in the Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine region reported high rates of making use of at least two types of child development activities and at least two types of parenting support activities or services. Compared to the rest of Québec, these parents reported lower rates of contending with at least seven impediments and at least four personal or family impediments.

## Chapter 10

# PARENTING EXPERIENCES IN RELATION TO SPECIFIC PARENT AND FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

The EQEPE report contains observations of overlapping variables among several structural characteristics that may be associated with the experiences of parents with young children, such as various individual characteristics (gender, age, place of birth, highest educational qualifications, perception of health) as well as other ones that highlight the family situation in which they evolve (family structure, number of children in the family).

Other characteristics relating to economic situation make it possible to identify parents living in underprivileged circumstances.

In order to contextualize the findings, it would appear relevant to revisit the differences observed with regard to some of the characteristics.

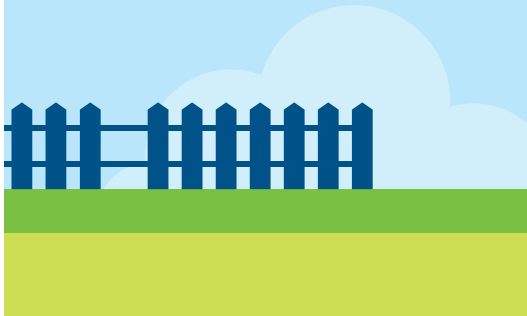
### PARENTING EXPERIENCES AND GENDER

The collection of data about the experiences of parents by gender has enabled the EQEPE report to include information about several parenting aspects specific to fathers. This under-documented reality merits special attention. Are the experiences of men any different to those of women? The survey made the following observations:

**Men reported higher rates of being well supported by their spouse but also being criticized often and being put under a lot of pressure by them.**

**Women reported higher rates of feeling a lot of social pressure from family, friends and professionals but also from themselves.**

- Men reported at higher rates than women that they *never or once a week* read or told stories to their children aged 0 to 5 in the two weeks preceding the survey. Women, on the other hand, reported at higher rates that they yelled, raised their voice or became angry at their children aged 0 to 5 at least once a day during the same period.
- Women are more likely than men to have a lower sense of parental satisfaction. However, men reported higher rates of having a lower sense of parental efficacy.
- Women generally reported higher rates of experiencing higher stress levels and being under *a lot of* self-imposed pressure in connection with their children's care.
- Women, since becoming mothers, also reported higher rates of elevated information needs concerning most of the subject areas examined in the survey, especially those connected to health and health care matters.
- Men reported higher rates of being well supported by their spouse but also being criticized often and being put under *a lot of* pressure by them. Women, for their part, reported being less well supported by their spouse and being less satisfied with the sharing of tasks connected to their children's care and education.
- Women reported higher rates of feeling a lot of social pressure from their family, friends and colleagues; early childhood educators and teachers; health care professionals and social workers; the media and even from themselves.
- Overall, men and women reported similar rates connected to their use of services. Among other things, no significant gender-specific difference was observed concerning the degree of knowledge about available family services in their area, the number of different services used, and the fact of not needing the available services.





**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.**

## **PARENTING EXPERIENCES IN UNDERPRIVILEGED CIRCUMSTANCES**

According to the definition used in the EQEPE survey, parents living in underprivileged circumstances are those living in low-income households as well as those that consider their incomes inadequate for meeting the basic needs of their families.

First, it should be pointed out that despite comparable rates (24%), the same parents are not necessarily found in both categories. In fact, roughly 17% of parents not living in low-income households judge their incomes to be inadequate. However, approximately half (51%) of those living in low-income households consider their incomes adequate for meeting the basic needs of their families.

The survey results indicate that the perception-of-economic-situation measure and the low income measure do not show the same interaction patterns when they are connected to parenting indicators.

- Parents living in low-income households as well as those that consider their incomes inadequate both reported higher rates of *never or approximately once a week* reading or telling stories to their children aged 0 to 5.
- Compared to parents living in better-off households, those living in low-income households reported lower rates of having a weak sense of parental efficacy, experiencing heightened stress levels or being under *a lot of* self-imposed pressure.
- Parents that consider their incomes inadequate are more likely than those that consider their incomes adequate to have a lower sense of parental efficacy and lower parental satisfaction and to experience *higher* stress levels and be under *a lot of* self-imposed pressure.
- Parents living in underprivileged circumstances reported at a higher rate that they:
  - have elevated general information needs,
  - *never or rarely or sometimes* know where to find the information they need.
- Compared to parents that judge their incomes adequate, parents that consider their incomes inadequate reported higher rates of receiving *less* support from their spouse and being *not very or not at all satisfied* with the sharing of tasks and feeling a lot of pressure from their spouse.
- Parents living in underprivileged circumstances reported at a higher rate that they *frequently* could not rely on any sources of support among their family and friends.

**Parents that consider their incomes inadequate are more likely than those that consider their incomes adequate to experience higher stress levels and be under a lot of self-imposed pressure.**



- Parents that consider their incomes inadequate stand out from others by reporting higher rates of experiencing greater levels of social pressure during the previous 12 months.
- Parents living in underprivileged circumstances reported:
  - lower rates of being well acquainted with available family services,
  - higher rates of not participating in any of the four types of child development activities,
  - lower rates of not making use of any of the parenting support activities or services,
  - higher rates of contending with at least four impediments associated with the use of services (cost, activity scheduling, insufficient information, etc.)
- Parents that consider their incomes inadequate reported higher rates of contending with at least four personal or family impediments and of rarely visiting or not making varied use of the public facilities examined (public parks, arenas and sports fields, swimming pools, wading pools and water play areas, libraries).

**Parents born outside Canada reported higher rates of frequently not being able to rely on any sources of support among their family and friends.**



## **PARENTING EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS BORN OUTSIDE CANADA**

The cultural contexts that have shaped parents born outside Canada may impact the education values and parenting models they adopt. Since they often live far away from their families and may face integration difficulties (employment, services, social network, etc.), it is plausible to assume that their experiences as parents are somewhat different from Canadian-born parents. For this reason, it was decided to include information about place of birth in the EQEPE survey.

It should be noted that a quarter (25%) of the survey participants are foreign-born parents with children aged 0 to 5. For the most part, they live in the Montréal (58%) and Laval (44%) regions. The results indicate that parents born outside Canada reported:

- higher rates than Canadian-born parents of having a lower sense of parental satisfaction,
- lower rates of experiencing elevated stress levels and being under *a lot of* self-imposed pressure during the previous 12 months,
- generally greater levels of information needs regarding subjects connected to health and health care, social-emotional issues affecting child development and parenting roles,
- higher rates of *never or rarely or sometimes* knowing where to find the information they need,
- higher rates of *frequently* not being able to rely on any sources of support among their family and friends as well as *not feeling any* social pressure in connection with their children's care,

- higher rates of not knowing about available family services in their area and having to contend with at least four impediments connected to services (cost, scheduled activity times, insufficient information, etc.),
- higher rates of not participating in any types of child development activities,
- lower rates of not using any parenting support activities or services.

## **PARENTING EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS WITHOUT EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

What about the experiences of parents with children aged 0 to 5 who don't have any educational qualifications? The first thing to keep in mind is that they account for roughly 9% of the survey population, that higher rates of men than women fall into this category, as do parents below the age of 30.

The results show that these parents:

- reported reading or telling stories to their children aged 0 to 5 less frequently during the previous two weeks,
- reported higher rates of experiencing lower stress levels, not being under any self-imposed pressure and having a more solid sense of their parenting efficacy,
- reported higher rates of low information needs since becoming parents; this applies to subjects connected to health and health care, social-emotional issues affecting child development and parenting roles,
- reported lower rates of being not very or not at all satisfied with the sharing of tasks in connection with their children's care and education,
- reported higher rates of not knowing about available services in their area and not participating in any types of child development activities,
- differ from those holding a college diploma or university degree by reporting that they rarely visit or don't make varied use of the public facilities examined; they also reported lower rates of contending with at least four personal or family impediments (not enough time, too tired, lack of motivation, difficulty arranging for child care, etc.).



## **PARENTING EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS THAT JUDGE THEIR HEALTH SITUATION TO BE AVERAGE OR POOR**

It is generally recognized that health issues can affect various aspects of people's lives. Since poorer health can impact energy stores and stress levels, or may even restrict certain activities, it doubtlessly can be an impeding factor in the exercise of the parenting role.

As such, it would appear relevant to take a second look at the findings specifically relating to those parents with children aged 0 to 5 that judge their health situation to be average or poor. They account for 12% of the survey population. The results indicate that parents that judge their health situation to be average or poor:

**Parents that judge their health situation to be average or poor generally reported less positive parenting experiences and receiving lower levels of support from their spouse.**




- generally reported less positive parenting experiences:
  - higher rates of them read or tell stories to their children aged 0 to 5 *less frequently*,
  - they are more likely to have a weaker sense of their parenting efficacy and lower parental satisfaction. They also reported higher rates of experiencing higher stress levels and being under a lot of self-imposed pressure,
- reported higher rates of elevated information needs,
- reported higher rates of receiving lower levels of support from their spouse, being not very or not at all satisfied with the sharing of tasks connected to their children's education and feeling *a lot of* pressure from their spouse,
- reported higher rates of *frequently* not having any available sources of support among their family and friends and feeling greater social pressure,
- reported higher rates of not knowing about available services and contending with a greater number of impediments that limit or prevent their use of services,
- reported higher rates of not participating in any types of child development activities,
- reported lower rates of not making use of any types of parenting support activities or services,
- reported higher rates of not visiting or not making varied use of the public facilities examined.

It is interesting to note that parents' perception of their health situation is connected to all indicators covered in this report. Among other things, it appears that the two variables connected to parents' perceptions—concerning their state of health and their economic situation—registered the greatest number of significant links.

## **PARENTING EXPERIENCES IN SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES**

Parents living in a single-parent family situation can face certain difficulties and challenges not necessarily experienced in (intact or reconstituted) two-parent families. It should be pointed out first that approximately 8% of the parents surveyed live in single-parent families, and the majority of these households (81%) are headed by a woman. The survey results indicate that these parents:

- reported higher rates of living in a low-income household and judging their incomes inadequate for meeting the basic needs of their families,
- do not stand out in relation to the two others types of families concerning most of the indicators examined in the survey, in particular regarding parenting experiences (sense of parental efficacy, sense of parental satisfaction, stress experiences and self-imposed pressure),
- along with reconstituted families, reported higher rates of not participating in any types of child development activities and contending with at least four personal or family impediments,



**Parents living in a single-parent family situation reported higher rates of using parenting support activities or services.**

- reported lower rates of not making use of any types of parenting support activities or services,
- appear to benefit from relatively available social networks to help support them in their role:
  - no significant difference based on family structure was observed in the rates of parents that reported having no sources of support among family and friends that they could rely on *frequently*,
  - single parents reported higher rates than those in intact families of always getting help from family and friends when they can no longer cope.

In spite of certain differences observed, it is possible to conclude that concerning most of the aspects of parents' lives examined in the survey, the experiences of single parents with children aged 0 to 5 are similar to those of parents living in intact or reconstituted families.



# CONCLUSION

Thanks to the participation of nearly 15 000 parents living in Québec's 16 administrative regions, the EQEPE survey allows us to enhance our understanding of the various aspects of the experiences of parents with children aged 0 to 5. The survey is unique not only in terms of its magnitude, but also because 47% of the survey participants are fathers. This expansive study constitutes an opportunity for early childhood education actors to focus on parents' well-being and thereby make a more significant impact where the development of children and communities is at stake.

Funded by Avenir d'enfants, the EQEPE survey is part of the quantitative component of the Perspectives parents initiative. The qualitative component was conducted by the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières with input from 100 parents and early child education experts. Among other things, the qualitative component saw the development of a theoretical framework to help guide the choice of subject areas to cover in the survey as well as set up a plan for analyzing and interpreting the data collected.

The results pertaining to parents' experiences indicate that on the whole parents enjoy relatively high levels of satisfaction and an even more positive sense of parental efficacy. However, roughly 16% of parents often or always experienced elevated stress levels during the previous 12 months, while one in five parents (20%) reported being under *a lot of* self-imposed pressure in connection with their children's care.

The findings in relation to the challenges mothers and fathers with young children face in terms of their working conditions show that approximately one in five parents in paid employment do not have access to any of the family-work balance measures examined in the survey or their work requirements often or always take a toll on family life.

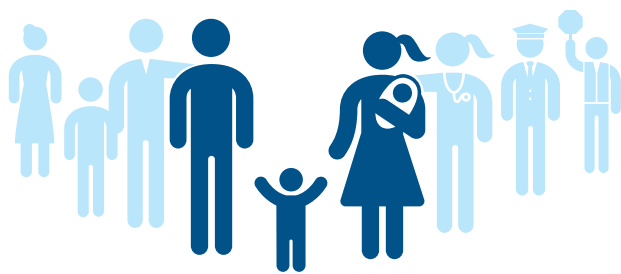
Concerning information needs in relation to their children's development and their parenting role, parents reported greater information needs about subjects connected to their children's health and health care than about social-emotional matters.

The survey revealed that about one quarter of parents (25%) reported *always* receiving support from family and friends when they can no longer cope. Nevertheless, nearly one in four parents (24%) stated that they are *never or rarely* supported when this situation arises.

Furthermore, one in four parents (25%) reported not knowing about available family services, and close to one in five parents (19%) stated that they don't participate in any of the four types of child development activities. A large share of parents reported time-related impediments that limit or prevent their use of services: scheduled activity times (65%) and lack of available time (69%).

To find out more about the Perspectives parents initiative, we encourage you to consult [www.avenirdenfants.org/parents](http://www.avenirdenfants.org/parents), where you can find all relevant publications, regional data, infographics, videos, as well as a data appropriation kit.





[avenirdenfants.org/parents](http://avenirdenfants.org/parents)



**AVENIR D'ENFANTS**  
DES COMMUNAUTÉS ENGAGÉES

**agirtôt.org**

Espace de partage pour l'action  
concertée en petite enfance