

BALANCING FAMILY LIFE AND WORK IN QUEBEC

Results of a population survey



OBSERVATOIRE
des tout-petits



Regroupement
POUR LA Valorisation
DE LA Paternité



CARREFOUR
ACTION MUNICIPALE
ET FAMILLE

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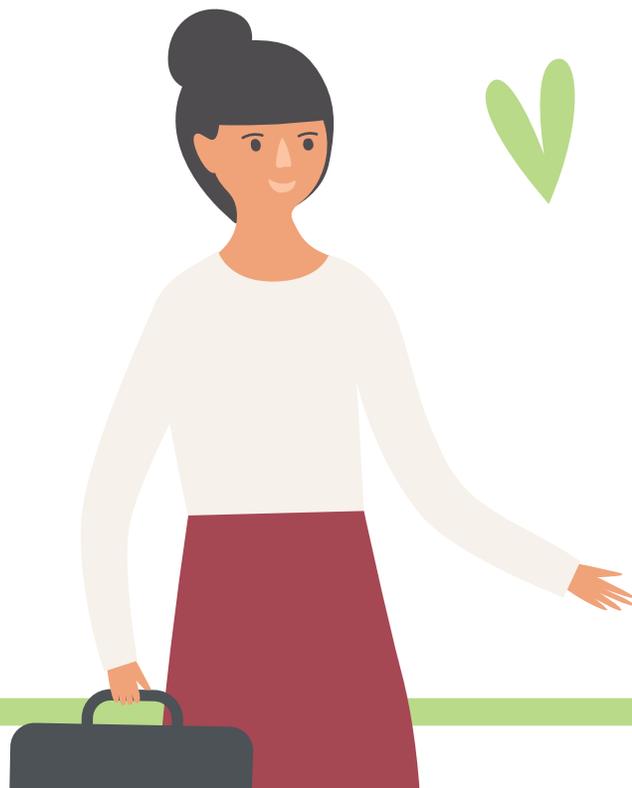
HIGHLIGHTS

The scientific literature shows that parents who are caught up in family-work conflict are less available, less affectionate and more irritable, all of which have a negative effect on their children's optimal development. Family-work balance measures are invaluable to families' well-being.

Although the majority of Quebec parents say they have access to family-work balance measures, 62% of parents find family-work balance to be a major source of stress. The situation is particularly difficult for certain groups of parents: those with children between 0 and 5, women, parents between 18 and 34, those born outside of Canada, and those whose annual income is under \$40,000.

The survey also shows that parents rarely take advantage of family-work balance measures more than a few times a year, and that 49% do not use them at all as they are able to manage otherwise. This leads us to suppose that Quebec parents still do not feel comfortable taking advantage of the measures available to them.

In fact, 57% of parents surveyed find that society is not very accommodating of parents' efforts to reconcile their professional and personal lives. It would appear that just setting up family-work balance measures is not enough to improve Quebec parents' situations. The next step may be to officially recognize the value of successfully harmonizing work and family responsibilities.



WHY DO WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT FAMILY-WORK BALANCE?

Over the past few decades, Quebec society has undergone a profound transformation. More and more women are active on the labour market. The traditional two-parent family is no longer the only accepted family model. And, finally, the working world is changing rapidly as developments in new technology enable more people to work at home, but also make it more difficult to draw a clear line between work and family life.

In this context, the challenges involved in reconciling work and family responsibilities are becoming increasingly demanding for Quebec families. When parental and professional responsibilities are at odds, tension for parents results, creating what we call family-work conflict.

To find out more about how Quebec parents manage to balance their work and family lives, the Léger firm was mandated to conduct a survey of Quebecers who were over 18, employed and the parents of at least one minor child living with them. A total of 3,006 Quebecers responded to questions about their experiences in attempting to achieve family-work balance.





HOW DOES FAMILY-WORK BALANCE AFFECT CHILDREN?

Early childhood is a critical period in children's development. It is during these years that very young children develop their emotional and social competence, learning how to master their emotions and control their behaviour.

The scientific literature has shown the importance of parents' role in helping their children acquire these skills. When parents participate in positive activities with their children, they foster their emotional and social development.

Sometimes, though, parents' professional responsibilities come into competition with their role as a parent, resulting in what is referred to as family-work conflict. According to certain studies, a high level of family-work conflict reduces parents' psychological availability, lowering the probability that they will participate in activities with their children that will stimulate their development (such as playing a game, reading out loud, going to the park, etc.).

Family-work conflict directly affects parental practices, making parents more likely to be irritable, less affectionate and less consistent with their children.

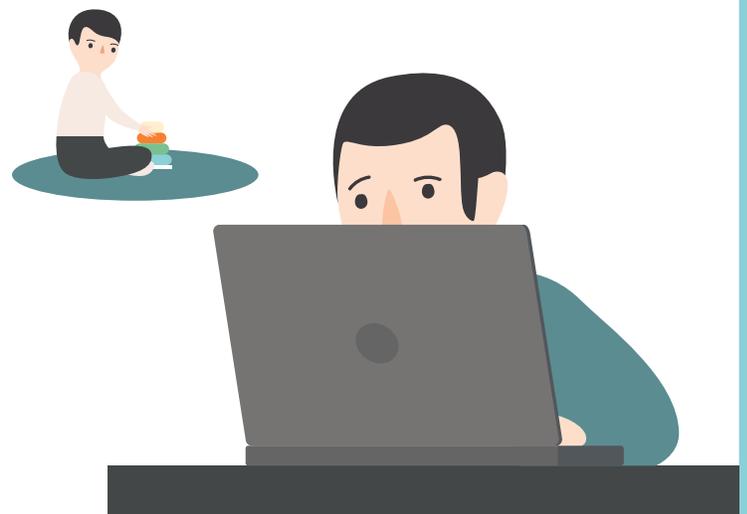
Fewer parents who report a high level of family-work conflict play with their children at least once a day.

2015 Québec survey on the experience of parents of children aged 0 to 5
(Enquête québécoise sur l'expérience de parents d'enfants de 0 à 5 ans)

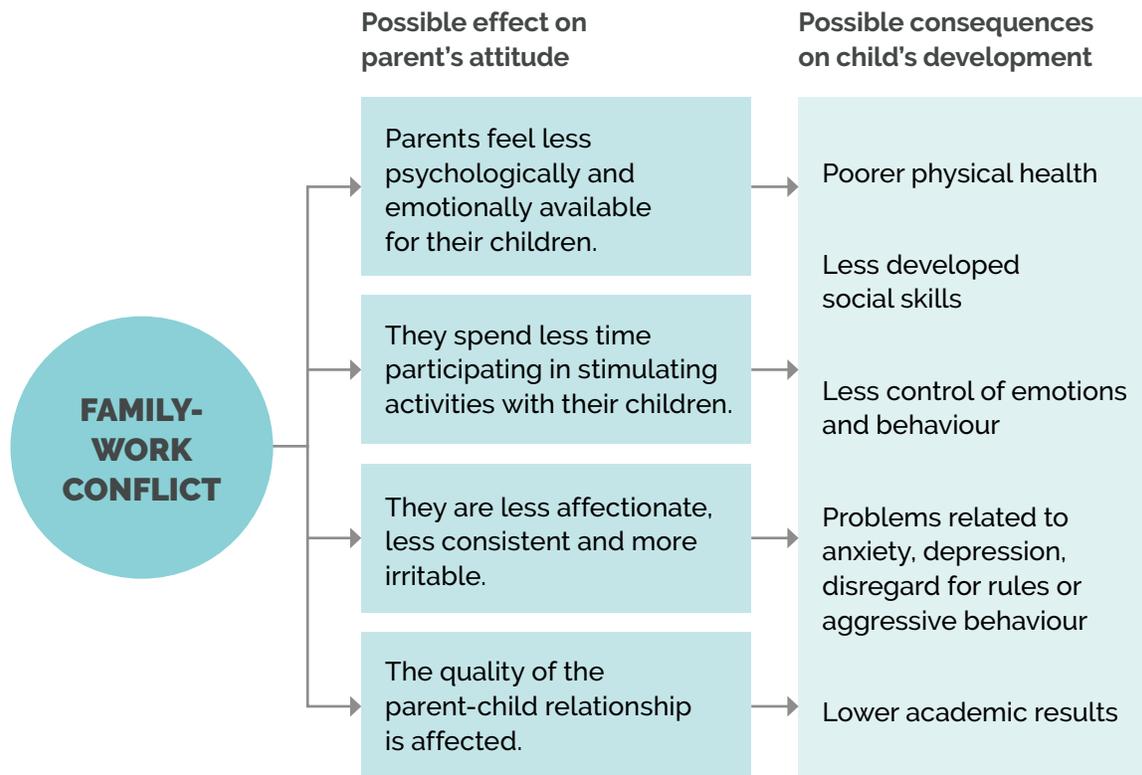
Parents who report high levels of family-work conflict are at greater risk of:

- shouting, raising their voice or getting angry at least once a day
- losing patience at least a few times a week when their children ask for attention
- having less of a sense of parental efficacy and satisfaction.

2015 Québec survey on the experience of parents of children aged 0 to 5



Other studies have shown that the negative effects that family-work conflict can have on parenting practices can affect children's development.



Family-work conflict can hinder children's optimal development in the areas of social and behavioural development, physical development and education. If both parents are experiencing difficulty reconciling their work and family life, the repercussions are even greater.

It is important to point out, however, that parents who find their work stimulating can have a positive influence on family life. Parents who report that their work helps them feel fulfilled and competent are more openly affectionate and most consistent in their parenting practices.

Parents who report that their work helps them feel fulfilled and competent are more openly affectionate and most consistent in their parenting practices.



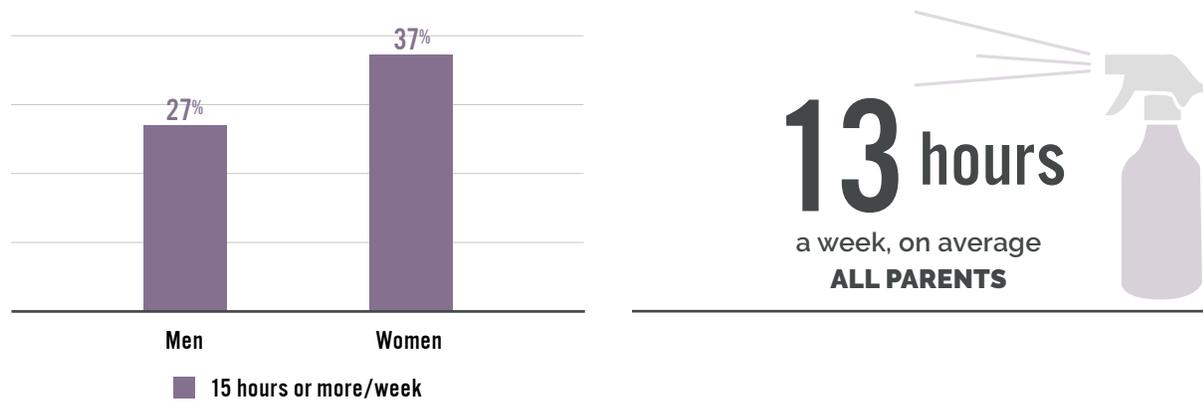


WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE WORK AND FAMILY LIVES OF QUEBEC PARENTS?

Parenthood today entails many responsibilities: doing the grocery shopping, housework and laundry, mowing the lawn, preparing meals, looking after children, playing with them and helping them with their homework. It also involves a considerable amount of travelling: going to work, picking up children from daycare or school, and ferrying them to their various activities. Then, on top of all that, there are professional responsibilities. How do Quebec parents organize their time in order to manage all their different priorities?

HOUSEHOLD TASKS

(grocery, laundry, yard work, snow clearing, housework, meals, washing windows, etc.)



As a general rule, more women than men spend more than 15 hours a week on household tasks.

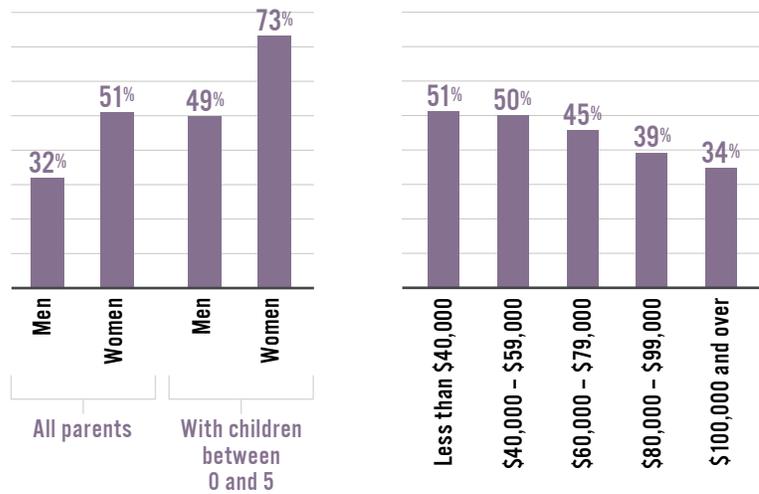
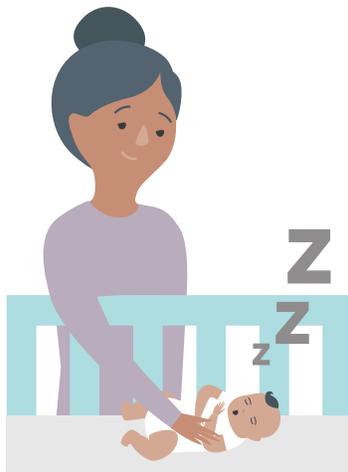
TIME SPENT CARING FOR CHILDREN

(feeding them, washing them, playing with them, taking them to their after-school and weekend activities, helping with homework, etc.)

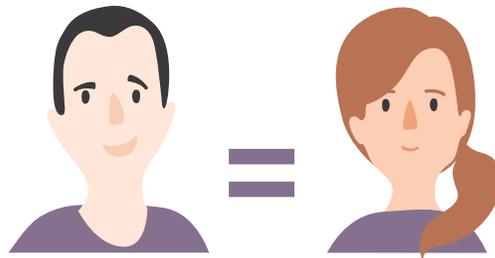


As in the case of household tasks, there is a discrepancy between the proportion of men and women who devote more than 15 hours a week to child care, particularly among parents of children between 0 and 5. The proportion of parents who spend more than 15 hours a week on child care decreases as income rises.

PARENTS WHO SPEND MORE THAN 15 HOURS/WEEK ON CHILDCARE



The proportion of parents who devote more than 15 hours a week to child care is also higher among single parents of children between 0 and 5.



SHARING OF PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

61% of survey respondents reported that **household tasks** were shared equally between spouses.

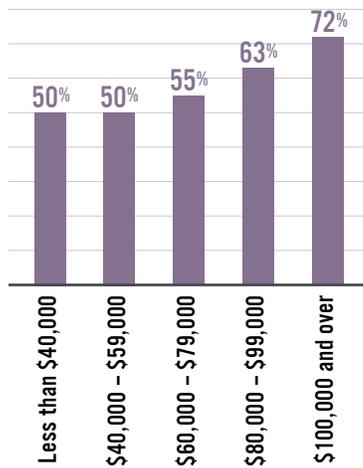
56% of survey respondents said that **child care** was shared equally by both members of their couple.

The perception of shared responsibilities, however, is somewhat different depending on the sex of the respondent.

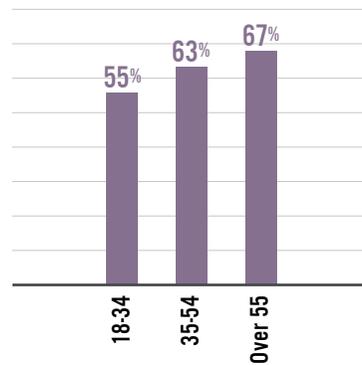
Household tasks are shared equally between me and my spouse.	Men: 69% Women: 52%
Child care is shared equally between me and my spouse.	Men: 64% Women: 47%

The proportion of respondents who reported that they and their spouse had an equal share in household tasks and child care, however, varied depending on income and age.

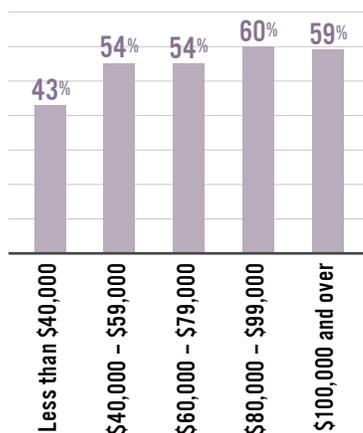
**EQUAL SHARE OF TASKS
BASED ON INCOME**



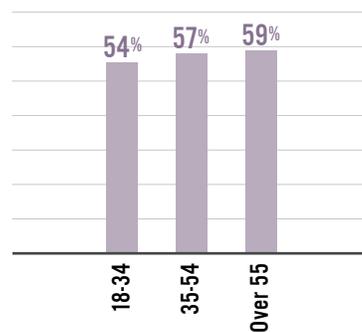
**EQUAL SHARE OF TASKS
BASED ON AGE**



**EQUAL SHARE OF CHILD CARE
BASED ON INCOME**



**EQUAL SHARE OF CHILD CARE
BASED ON AGE**



WHAT PARENTS WANT FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES

According to the survey, Quebec parents have many concerns about their family life.

- They want more time to spend with their family.
- They want to have enough time to do everything they need to do to look after their children or aging family members and still have a life.

Generally speaking, certain groups of parents have specific concerns:

- Men want to be able to disconnect from their work when at home in order to spend quality time with their family.
- Women would like to be able to take time off work for family reasons without penalizing their colleagues.
- Parents of children between 0 and 5 would like to be able to coordinate their schedule with that of their child's daycare or school.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

Many parents are dissatisfied with the business hours of certain public services.

- 71% of parents say that times available for appointments with **doctors in clinics and health services** don't reflect their reality.
- 65% of respondents think that the hours of **clinics without appointments** don't reflect their reality.
- 32% of parents say that the hours of **public services and community services** are poorly adapted to the needs of families striving for work-life balance.

On the other hand:

- 60% of parents find that **daycare schedules** reflect families' needs.
- 55% find that **school hours** are also convenient, but only 47% feel similarly about the **school year calendar** (i.e., number of school days and professional development days).

TIME DEVOTED TO WORK

37 hours

a week, on average

ALL PARENTS

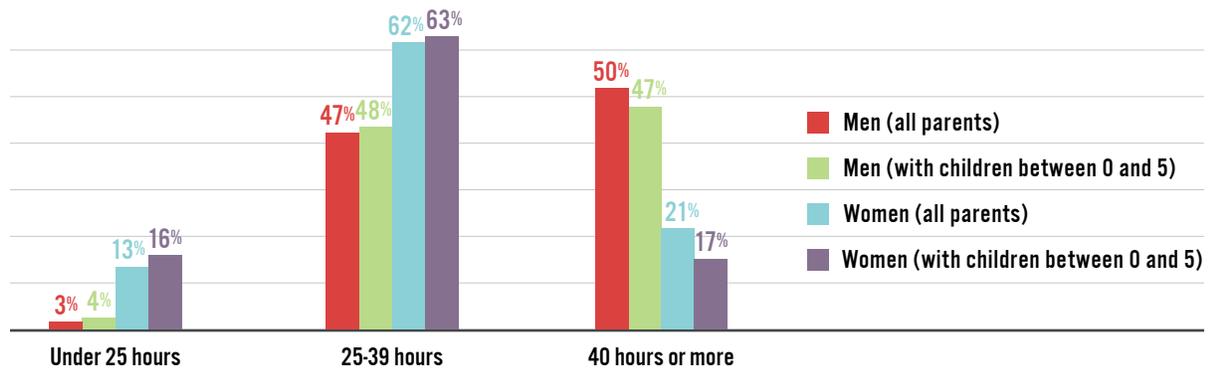


35 hours

a week, on average

PARENTS OF CHILDREN BETWEEN 0 AND 5

The majority of women surveyed work between 25 and 39 hours/week, while 50% of the men work more than 40 hours/week. Fewer parents of children between 0 and 5 work more than 40 hours/week. This also holds true for women, regardless of the age of their children.



PROFESSIONAL TASKS OUTSIDE OF WORKING HOURS

The survey revealed that 48% of parents worked on job-related tasks outside of their regular working hours every week (answering call, writing emails, doing overtime, etc.). The figure is higher for men (52%) and parents earning over \$100,000 annually (55%). It is slightly lower for parents of children between 0 and 5 (45%).

TRANSPORTATION

Quebec parents spend an average of **63 minutes/day** in transport.

44% of parents spend over an hour a day in transport.





DO QUEBEC PARENTS HAVE ACCESS TO FAMILY-WORK BALANCE MEASURES?

Family-work balance measures are indispensable for parents as they attempt to juggle their many responsibilities. How much can Quebec parents rely on such measures?

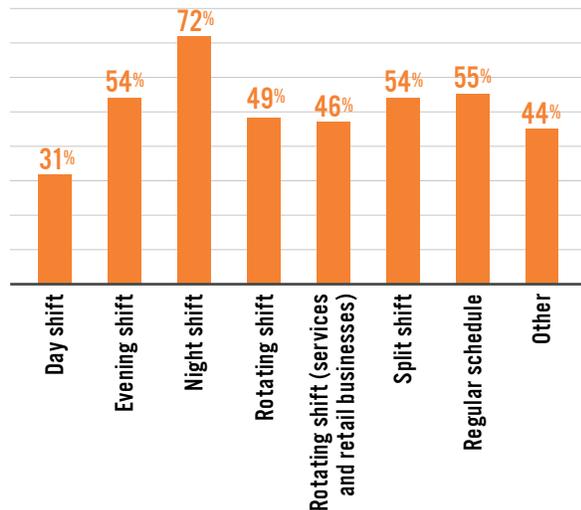
FAMILY-WORK BALANCE MEASURES (WFB)

Although the majority of Quebec parents report that there are family-work measures in their professional milieu,

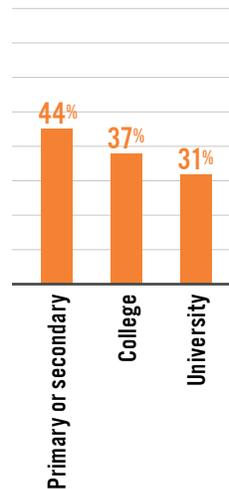
36% say that, to their knowledge, there are no such measures offered in their actual workplace.

This figure is much higher for parents with atypical working hours and parents with less formal education, as shown below:

BASED ON WORK SCHEDULE



BASED ON LEVEL OF EDUCATION



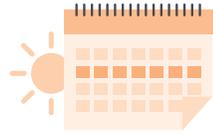
■ No WFB measures



When parents were asked which family-work balance measures were available to them, they identified the following:



Flexible working hours
(available to 49% of parents)



Flexible vacation times
(available to 44% of parents)



Bank of hours or accumulated time
(available to 35% of parents)



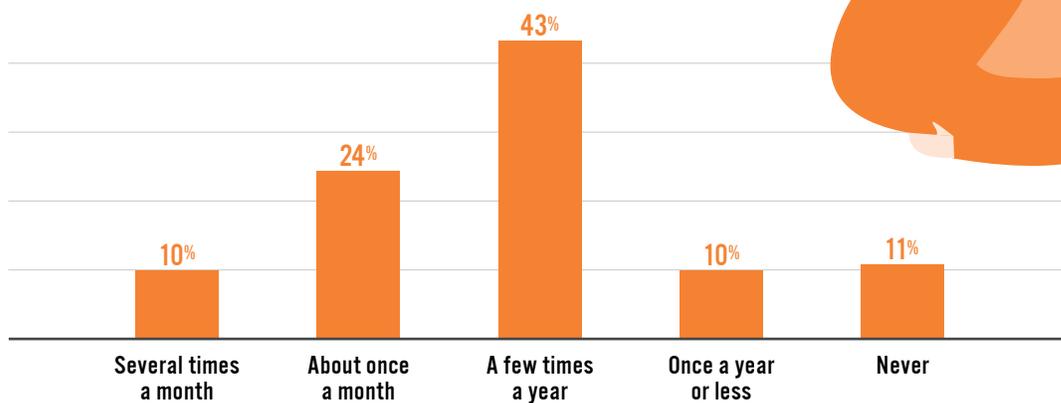
Paid leave for family responsibilities
(available to 35% of parents)

USE OF FAMILY-WORK BALANCE MEASURES

The measures most used by parents over the past year were:

- flexible working hours (52% of parents)
- flexible vacation time (42% of parents)
- paid leave for family responsibilities (34% of parents).

Most Quebec parents take advantage of family-work balance measures no more than a few times a year.





49% of parents don't make more use of family-work balance measures because they are able to manage otherwise.

REASONS FOR NOT MAKING MORE USE OF FAMILY-WORK BALANCE MEASURES

Parents give the following reasons when asked why they don't make more use of these measures:

- They manage otherwise—by asking family for help, for example (49% of parents).
- The nature of their work doesn't permit it (26% of parents).
- It's usually the other parent who makes the request (15% of parents).
- They worry about their boss's judgement (15% of parents).
- Company policy doesn't allow it (14% of parents).

10%



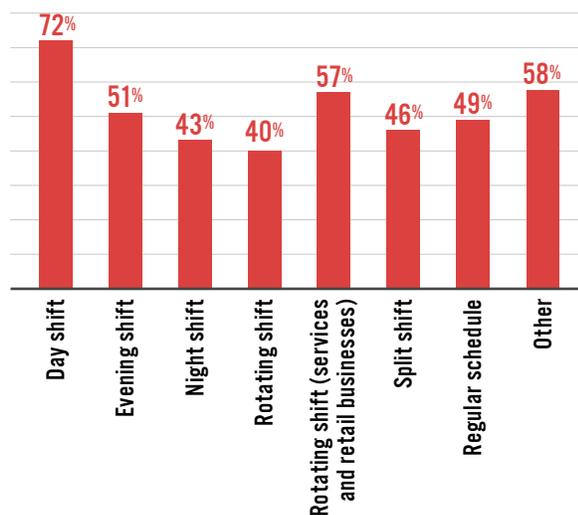
When the *Ministère de la Famille* surveyed 7,958 employers in 2015, **only 10% said they didn't offer any family-work balance measures**. According to the survey, measures most frequently offered by employers are flexible working hours, flexible vacation time and a bank of accumulated hours.



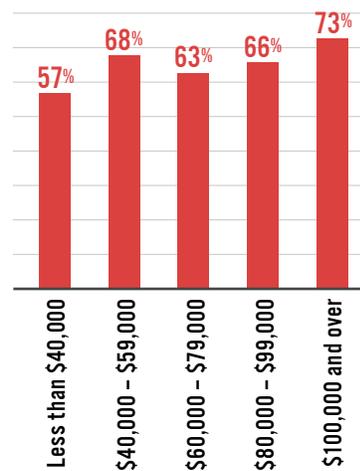
HOW DO QUEBEC PARENTS RECONCILE THEIR WORK AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES?

According to the survey, 67% of Quebec parents consider that their company is flexible in terms of family-work balance. This figure varies based on parents' work schedule and income.

BASED ON WORK SCHEDULE



BASED ON INCOME



Overall, **43% of parents find it difficult to juggle their work and family life.**

This proportion rises to 51% among parents of children between 0 and 5. Certain parents find it harder than others to achieve a family-work balance:

- those who work more than 15 hours/week
- those who spend between 150 and 180 minutes/day in transport
- those between 18 and 34
- those born outside of Canada
- those whose annual income is under \$40,000.

SOCIETY NOT VERY ACCOMMODATING

57% of parents surveyed find that society is not very accommodating of measures promoting family-work balance. This figure increases to **61%** for women.



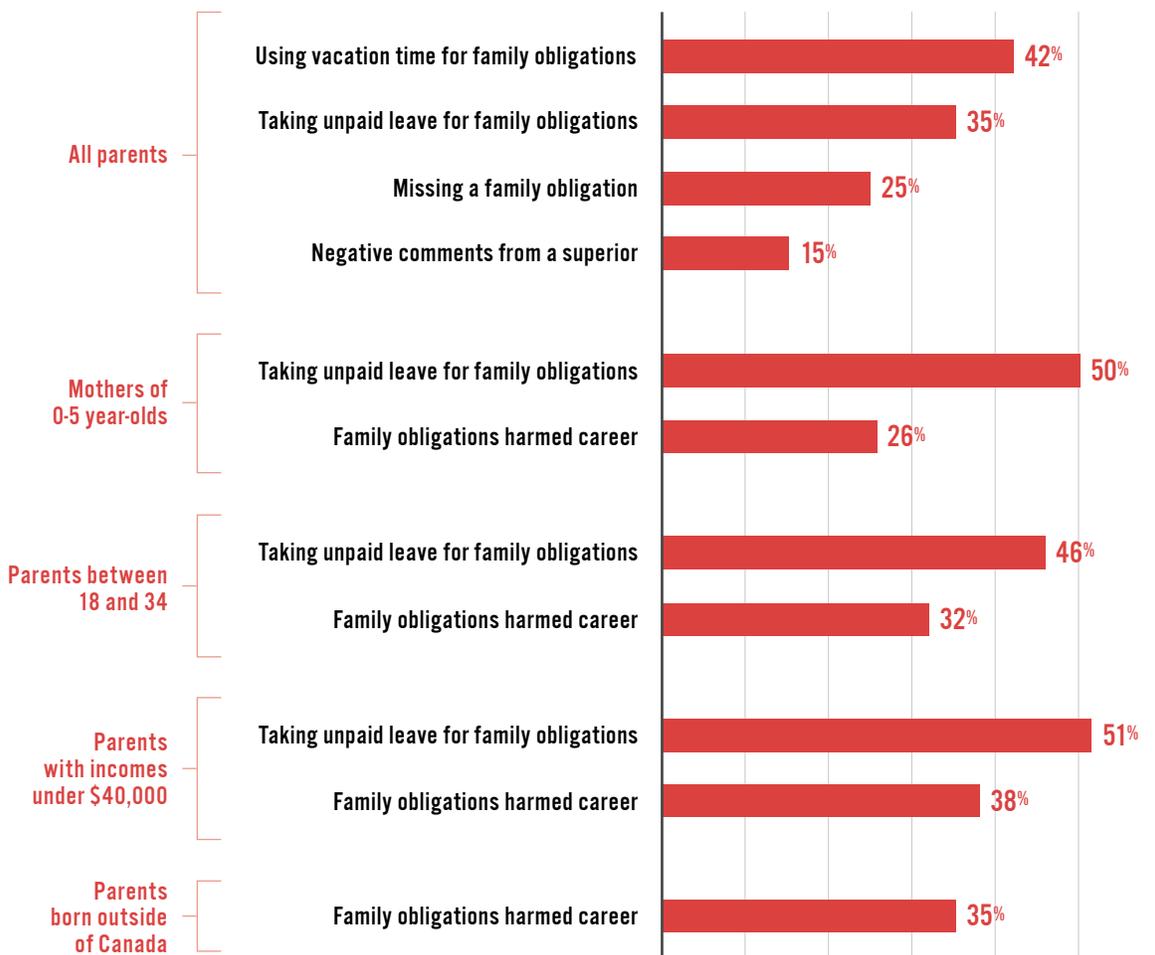
Results show that balancing work and family responsibilities is a **major source of stress for 62% of Quebec parents**. This figure increases to 66% among parents of children between 0 and 5. Trying to find a family-work balance is especially stressful for parents in the following categories:

- women
- parents who spend between 60 and 180 minutes/day in transport
- those whose work seeps into family time every week
- those with a university diploma
- those with an annual income of under \$40,000.



NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF DEALING WITH FAMILY-WORK BALANCE

A significant proportion of parents have had negative experiences related to their attempts to achieve family-work balance.





REDUCTION IN PAY OR CHANGE JOBS?

The survey showed that

37% of parents would accept a cut in pay in exchange for better family-work balance measures. This figure becomes:

- **41%** among university graduates
- **42%** among mothers
- **43%** among parents of children between 0 and 5
- **43%** among parents between 18 and 34
- **45%** among parents who work more than 35 hours/week
- **46%** among parents born outside of Canada

Moreover,

55% of parents would be prepared to change jobs if they were offered better family-work balance measures. This figure becomes:

- **60%** among mothers
- **65%** among parents of children between 0 and 5
- **68%** among parents between 18 and 34
- **70%** among parents born outside of Canada
- **73%** among parents earning under \$40,000/year.

FAMILY-WORK BALANCE FOR QUEBEC PARENTS – AT A GLANCE

QUEBEC PARENTS SPEND ...



THEY HAVE ACCESS TO THE FOLLOWING MEASURES:



Flexible working hours



Flexible vacation time



Bank of accumulated hours or time



Paid leave for family responsibilities



67% of Quebec parents consider **the company they work for to be flexible** in terms of family-work balance.

64% of Quebec parents take advantage of family-work balance measures **no more than a few times a year**.



57% of parents find that society is **not very accommodating** of family-work balance.





According to
36% of Quebec parents, their work environment offers no family-work balance measures.

43% of parents find family-work balance difficult.



Family-work balance is a major source of stress for **62%** of parents.

49% of parents don't make use of family balance measures because they **manage otherwise**.



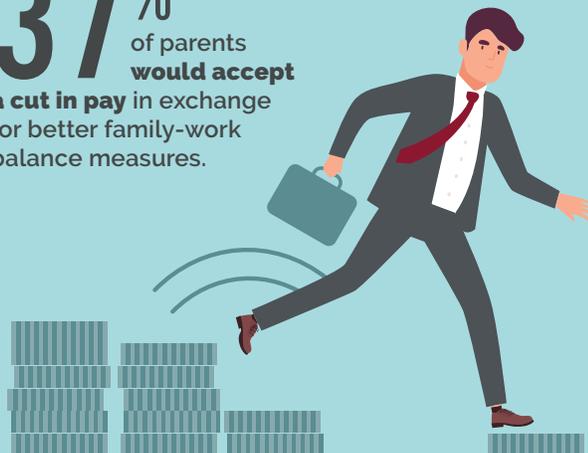
48% of parents carry out work-related tasks outside of their usual working hours every week.



26% of parents say that family obligations have **harmed their career**.

37% of parents would accept a **cut in pay** in exchange for better family-work balance measures.

55% of parents would be **prepared to change jobs** if they were offered better family-work balance measures.



FAMILY-WORK BALANCE FOR QUEBEC PARENTS OF CHILDREN BETWEEN 0 AND 5 – AT A GLANCE

QUEBEC PARENTS OF VERY YOUNG CHILDREN SPEND ...



THEY HAVE ACCESS TO THE FOLLOWING MEASURES:



Flexible working hours



Flexible vacation time



Bank of accumulated hours or time



Paid leave for family responsibilities



64% of Quebec parents of very young children consider the company they work for to be flexible in terms of family-work balance.

60% of Quebec parents of very young children take advantage of family-work balance measures no more than a few times a year.



59% of parents of very young children find that society is not very accommodating of family-work balance.





According to
37% of Quebec parents of very young children, their work environment offers no family-work balance measures.

51% of parents of very young children find family-work balance difficult.

Family-work balance is a major source of stress for **66%** of parents of very young children.



53% of parents of very young children don't make use of family balance measures because they manage otherwise.



45% of parents of very young children carry out work-related tasks outside of their usual working hours every week.



30% of parents of very young children say that family obligations have harmed their career.

43% of parents of very young children would accept a cut in pay in exchange for better family-work balance measures.

65% of parents of very young children would be prepared to change jobs if they were offered better family-work balance measures.





A DIFFICULT BALANCE: WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS?

According to the *Enquête québécoise sur l'expérience de parents d'enfants de 0 à 5 ans 2015* (2015 Quebec survey on the experience of parents of children aged 0 to 5), the following factors are associated with parents who report a high level of family-work conflict:

PARENTS' CHARACTERISTICS

- **Sex of parent**
Mothers are more likely than fathers to experience family-work conflict.
- **Education**
Parents who graduated from university report more incidences of family-work conflict.
- **Parents who put pressure on themselves with respect to their children's education**
Parents who put a lot of pressure on themselves with respect to their children's upbringing and education are at much greater risk of experiencing problems related to family-work balance

FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

- **Number of children in the family**
Having more children is associated with a higher level of family-work conflict.
- **Both parents employed**
Maintaining family-work balance is more difficult when both parents are working.
- **Sharing tasks related to children's care and education**
Parents who are very satisfied with the way tasks are shared with their spouse generally have lower levels of family-work conflict.
- **Social support**
Parents with fewer than three frequently available sources of support are more likely to experience difficulties with family-work balance.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EMPLOYMENT

- **Number of working hours/week**
The level of family-work conflict increases among parents who work 35 hours or more per week.
- **Access to family-work balance measures**
Parents who can take advantage of flexible working hours or paid leave for family responsibilities enjoy better family-work balance.



WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE FAMILY-WORK BALANCE IN QUEBEC?

Survey results reveal possible solutions that would promote better family-work balance for Quebec parents.

- Make sure all Quebec parents have the opportunity to benefit from family-work balance measures, regardless of their working schedule or level of education.
- Publicly recognize the value of family-work balance measures in order to encourage parents to take advantage of them.
- Take the amount of time spent on transportation into consideration in the family-work balance equation.
- Review the business hours of certain services—especially health care—to ensure they reflect families' schedules and needs.

THE WORK-FAMILY BALANCE STANDARD

In 2010, the *Bureau de normalisation du Québec* (Quebec standards office) published the first edition of Standard BNQ 9700-820, setting out requirements for good work-family balance practices. This standard, an initiative of the *Ministère de la Famille*, was developed to promote the integration of family-work balance into human resource management in the workplace.

In order to be eligible for certification, companies must:

- have an internal management policy
- be committed to fostering work-family balance
- promote accessibility for both women and men to work-family balance measures
- inform employees of management commitments
- designate a person responsible for work-family balance issues
- ensure the application of employment legislation and regulations
- set up a work-family balance committee.

There are four possible levels of certification based on the number of specific additional requirements with which an organization complies. Here are a few examples of possible measures:

- training in work-family balance
- adapting work organization (examples: job rotation, work schedule exchanges, competence sharing, multidisciplinary groups, floating teams)
- work time arrangements (examples: reduced hours, adapted work schedules, compressed work week)
- maternity, paternity or parental leave that respect or exceed the legal minimum
- flexibility in place of work (working at home, for example)
- services or goods offered in the workplace (examples: financial assistance or support for children, reimbursement of childcare expenses).

**Family-work balance
isn't a luxury,
it's a necessity.
The well-being of
our children depends
on it.**

CONCLUSION

Family-work balance is important—not just for parents' happiness and well-being, but for their children's development as well.

Survey results have shown that struggling to achieve family-work balance is a major source of stress for 62% of Quebec parents. Although most parents' employers offer family-work balance measures, many seem to be reluctant to take advantage of them. Moreover, certain groups in the labour force still do not have access to such measures.

Family-work balance measures are not a luxury; they are a necessity. The well-being of our children depends on them. We need to ensure that more and more parents have access to such measures and are encouraged to use them.



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THERE ARE TOOLS AND RESOURCES THAT CAN SUPPORT YOU IN YOUR EFFORTS TO TAKE CONCRETE ACTION:

This report was produced by the Early Childhood Observatory (*Observatoire des tout-petits*) with the collaboration of the *Réseau pour un Québec Famille, Avenir d'enfants, Regroupement pour la valorisation de la paternité* and *Carrefour Action Municipale et Famille*.

OBSERVATOIRE des tout-petits

The Observatory's website provides the most recent, reliable data available on the well-being and development of children between 0 and 5 years of age.

tout-petits.org



An awareness video is available at

tout-petits.org/conciliation



The *Perspectives parents* initiative offers an overview of the lives of parents with young children: their parenting experience, relations with family-work balance services and measures.

avenirdenfants.org/parent



The *Réseau pour un Québec Famille* is an association of major Quebec organizations from the community, municipal, education, health and social services, union and social economic sectors that are concerned with the situation

of families in the province. Its members represent over 4,000 organizations from all regions of Quebec. The *Réseau pour un Québec Famille* is the voice of all Quebec families in favour of public policies that reflect their new realities.

quebecfamille.org



The *Regroupement pour la Valorisation de la Paternité* encourages fathers to be more engaged in family life to improve the well-being of their children and foster more equal parenting.

rvpaternite.org



Municipalities as family partners: over 800 municipalities have adopted municipal family policies that provide support for parents in their various roles.

[carrefourmunicipal.qc.ca/
politique-familiale-municipale/](http://carrefourmunicipal.qc.ca/politique-familiale-municipale/)

OBSERVATOIRE des tout-petits

The mission of the Early Childhood Observatory is to help ensure that the development and well-being of Quebec's very youngest children has a place on the province's list of social priorities. In order to do so, the Observatory compiles the most rigorous data on 0-5 year-olds which it then disseminates to incite dialogue on collective actions in this area.

Tout-petits.org