

## FACT SHEET

### 2019 edition of the Annual portrait of young children in Québec

In addition to presenting a rigorous status report on the living conditions of young children in Québec, the Observatory's 2019 portrait also proposes potential solutions drawn from a recent review of the scientific literature and experience on the ground. A few of these solutions are listed below.

#### FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

##### Data

The employment situation of Québec families with at least one child under the age of 5 improved between 2001 and 2016, with maternal employment rates showing the most increase during that period. Families are nonetheless required to deal with several sources of stress. One out of ten families with at least one child under 5 is experiencing food insecurity. In addition, 13.9% of all children between 0 and 5 are living in low-income families, which represents 75,000 young children. Finally, 39% of mothers of children between 6 months and 5 years present high levels of stress related to the pressure of balancing work and family responsibilities. This percentage has been rising since 2012. In comparison, the corresponding figure for fathers, which has remained stable since 2012, is 23%. Important to note, parents who are very satisfied with the way household tasks are shared with their spouse report lower stress levels with respect to work-family balance.

##### Possible solutions

Other measures could also contribute to reducing parents' stress related to work-family balance: allowing more flexible arrangements for returning to work following a parental leave, or offering adapted measures to facilitate work-family balance, especially to parents with atypical working hours. Another possibility would be to encourage parents to share parental leave or to adopt strategies to integrate fathers into all policies, services and programs aimed at improving the lives of families with young children.

#### PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

##### Data

In Québec, 92.4% of children who were attending kindergarten in 2016-2017 were living in neighbourhoods where there were safe places to play outside during the day, and 90.8% lived in neighbourhoods with parks, playgrounds and other safe places to play. However, 13.6% of families with at least one child between the ages of 0 and 5 live in unaffordable housing, and 12% live in dwellings that are unsuitable in size. The portrait also shows varying levels of material deprivation among regions across Québec (calculated based on the average personal

income, proportion of individuals without a high school diploma, and the employment/population ratio).

### **Possible solutions**

Action could be taken against the unfavourable economic conditions of some young children's families by providing financial support for financially disadvantaged families, focusing on regions or neighbourhoods with large populations of low-income families. Investment in affordable housing is another measure that has been shown to be effective in improving young children's living conditions. Both these measures also fight food insecurity.

Creating safe, accessible playgrounds in municipalities of all sizes would be an effective way to improve the quality of the physical environments in which young children are growing up.

## **EDUCATIONAL CHILDCARE SERVICES**

### **Data**

A large proportion of educational childcare services offer activities designed to facilitate children's transition to school. The proportion of educational personnel considered to be qualified in educational daycares increased between 2005 and 2015, going from 72.1% to 84.2% in CPEs and from 46.8% to 73.5% in subsidized daycares. We are getting close to the objective set by the Ministère de la Famille for all childcare facilities, requiring two out of every three educators to the necessary qualifications. Unsubsidized daycares seem to be having more difficulty reaching this objective, with only 18.7% managing to do so. It is important to specify, however, that the regulation was changed in 2012 and that establishments were given five years to comply.

### **Possible solutions**

Since having a sufficient number of qualified personnel in educational childcare facilities is a documented criterion of service quality, we need to better understand the obstacles to change and support childcare services in looking for solutions. This would help reach the goals set by the Ministère de la Famille. Recognizing and facilitating educators' access to training and providing them with the tools they need in their work environment would improve the quality of all educational childcare services.