

About publications based on the *Québec Longitudinal
Study of Child Development (QLSCD 1998-2002)*

The appearance of this series marks a shift in the way the *Direction Santé Québec* of the Institut de la statistique du Québec (ISQ) will be publishing the findings of the QLSCD. In the course of producing two voluminous reports, it became clear that adopting a new format for our publications, one that would better meet the needs both of decision-makers and practitioners and of the researchers associated with the QLSCD, was essential. This more concise presentation should also let us reach more people and elicit feedback for adapting and optimizing analyses of longitudinal data for Québec. Because longitudinal surveys generate vast reserves of information over time, this new approach should, therefore, interest proponents of such surveys, given that overviews will likely prove more and more difficult to develop.

Mireille Jetté, coordinator

Economic Conditions, Maternal Employment and Childcare



When money spells Have a nice day, Mom!

About QLSCD

This fascicle presents results based on data collected on an initial representative sample of 2,120 children followed annually within the first phase of the Québec Longitudinal Study of Child Development (QLSCD 1998-2002). For the first four rounds, children were aged approximately 5 months, 1½ years, 2½ years and 3½ years. In 2002, the timing of data collection has been modified in order to account for the evaluation that is being done when they enter the school system. The children were then visited in the spring and were around 4 years old.

The target population is made of all children (singleton births only) born to mothers residing in Québec in 1997-1998, who in 2002 had not move out of the province permanently. Children whose mothers were living in the administrative regions (as defined by the Health and Social Services Ministry) 10, (Northern Québec), 17 and 18 (Cree and Inuit territories) or in Indian reserves were excluded from the initial sample.

QLSCD can rely on many instruments of data collection to gather information on the most knowledgeable person about the child (PMK), her/his spouse/partner, the target child and the non residential biological parents if it applies. All data presented in this paper have been weighted and adjusted to reduce potential biases. Moreover, all differences presented in this paper are statistically significant to a threshold of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) unless indicated otherwise.

Let us recall that the main objective of QLSCD 1998-2002 is to identify the precursors of children's social adaptation and school adjustment when they enter the educational system. QLSCD is the first longitudinal survey to gather information on young children's health, behaviour and many other aspects of their life at the provincial level.

It is widely recognised that the circumstances into which children are born and in which they grow up take on crucial importance both in the short term and for adulthood. Among these conditions the economic situation of the family, where children begin learning about life, occupies a central place. Quite a few studies have shown, for example, that children who experience poverty early in life, especially over a long period, are more likely to present various health and developmental problems.¹ What were the economic conditions in which Québec children born at the end of the 1990s lived before starting school (that is, from birth to about 4 years of age)? What were the characteristics of families that were able to "make ends meet" during the years following the birth of a child? These are the questions this publication will attempt to answer.

Given that nowadays jobs at the beginning of one's working life are often precarious and relationship instability great, maternal employment constitutes one of the main ways for young families to bolster their financial security. Thus, we shall also look at what happens when mothers enter or re-enter the work force. Because maternal employment and childcare often constitute two elements of an equation, we will then profile how childcare services are used by families. In particular we will examine the use of the reduced-contribution educational childcare services that were gradually set up beginning in 1997 in Québec to support parents trying to balance work and family responsibilities and to foster "equal opportunity" for all by offering infant stimulation programs.

Children born in Québec at the end of the 1990s: what were economic conditions like during their early years?

Although the majority of children began life when economic circumstances were considered positive, about one in three spent at least one episode below the low-income cut-off (before taxes) before reaching approximately 3½ years of age (see Box 1 and Figure 1). For half of them, such episodes were transitory (one or two episodes), while at the other

Economic instability: the lot of approximately one family in three in the years following the birth of a child.

extreme more than one in 10 (13%) experienced them for extended periods. Whatever the actual number of episodes, the vast majority of children who experienced one or more had known them at birth (25% out of 33%). Fewer children saw their families fall below the low-income threshold later (8%) (Figure 2).

The scenario was generally the same: income was at its lowest during the year in which the child was born, then rose more or less slowly in the years that followed (Figure 1).

Box 1

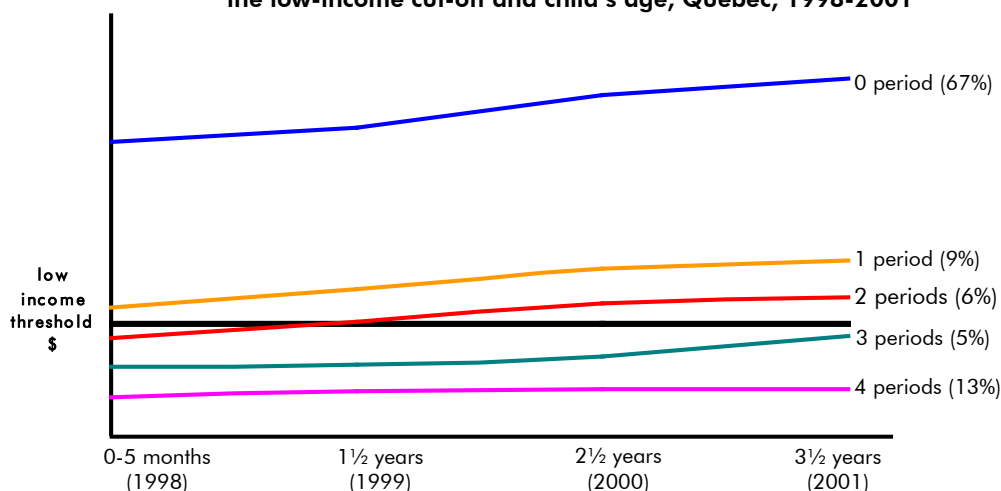
Household income and the method for evaluating the low income cut-off

QLSCD gathered information pertaining to the children's **household gross annual income** (coming from all sources) when they were approximately 5 months, 1½ years, 2½ years and 3½ years of age, respectively. This information has been used to identify those living in low income household based on the **low income cut-off before taxes** (LICO) defined by Statistics Canada. A low income cut-off is an income thresholds below which a family is likely to spend 20% more of its income on food, shelter and clothing than the average family of comparable size and living in a comparable size community (according to the base of 1992 used here, that is 54.7% or more of its income). An **episode of low income** is established on a twelve months period. For a 5 months old baby, the months that preceded the birth are thus included.²

For people under 18, the estimates derived from the LICO before taxes are in general higher of approximately five points than those obtained from measurements after taxes because of the progressive system of taxation. So, if the redistribution effects of the tax system is not taken into account, certain households, who are not considered stripped but have limited financial means, are then categorised "low income household" according to the thresholds defined by Statistics Canada. In 1998 for example, the threshold of low income before taxes for a household of three people living in an area of 100,000 to 499,999 inhabitants was set at 23,429 \$, which was more than what a parent having worked all year round at the minimum wage (approximately 15,000 \$) would have earned. In spite of the criticisms brought to the thresholds of low income before taxes when used as an indicator of poverty, they remain useful as a measure of inequality. They correspond to a frangible joint from which the children are significantly more likely to present various problems of health and development.³

Figure 1

Evolution of families' median income¹ according to the number of periods spent below the low-income cut-off and child's age, Québec, 1998-2001



1. Mean deviation between the household gross income and the low income cut-off before taxes.

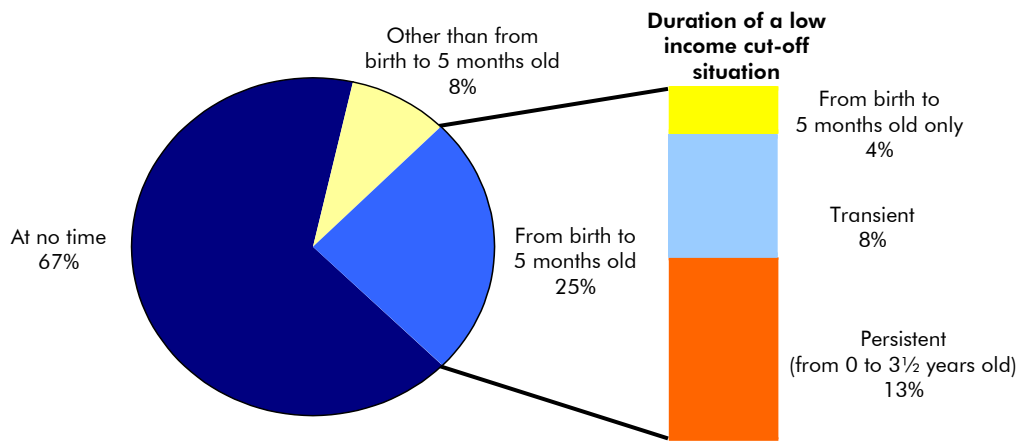
Source : Institut de la statistique du Québec, QLSCD 1998-2002.

This suggests that aside from economic-cycle-related factors, such as those that characterised the end of the 1990s, families tend to become poorer in the period before and after the birth of a child. The addition of an infant to the family, combined with the loss or reduction of income from a job (e.g., maternity leave for working mothers) can indeed prove enough to push households below the low-income cut-off — or keep those already there from rising above it. Some, however, seem to find the road out to be tougher going. In fact, only a minority of children born into low-income households have ever seen their families rise above

the low-income cut-off in the year and a half after birth without falling back below it (4% of the 25%) (Figure 2).

It can be seen in Figure 1 that families that had constantly lived below the cut-off threshold had more pronounced economic difficulties. Contrary to what one might think, families that had been on social assistance for an extended time accounted for a fraction of this group (4% of all children), the majority having been able to count on other sources of income (e.g., wages, self-employment, other) at one time or another (data not shown).

Figure 2
The timing and duration of low-income situations among children between birth and 3½ years of age, Québec, 1998-2001



Source : Institut de la statistique du Québec, QLSCD 1998-2002.

**Managing to “make ends meet”:
 families that pull through⁴**

To reduce the incidence of low income in families, it is not enough to address the factors that increase the risk of experiencing situations of deprivation (e.g., being young or having parents of low educational attainment).⁵ It is also necessary to act on those that will make it possible for some low-income families to pull through. So what are the characteristics of families that manage to rise above the low-income cut-off in the year after birth?

It should be noted that the gap that families had to close to reach the low-income cut-off was at least \$13,500 for half of those that were below the low-income cut-off (before taxes) at the time they had their child. There is thus reason to think that significant events occurred in the lives of the families that saw their situations improve. An analysis of the factors

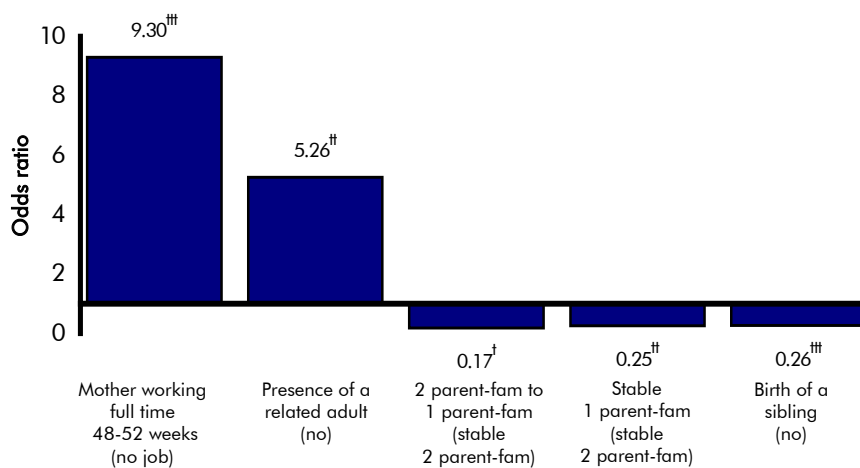
leading to an exit from low-income status reveals that it was primarily because of the continuous, full-time employment of mothers that families were able to improve their situations. Compared with children whose mothers were not employed, only those whose mothers worked full-time all year long⁶ were significantly more likely (about 9 times) to see their lot improve (Figure 3) beyond the levels of the financial aid for which their families qualified. Setting aside maternal employment, certain family changes also played a key role. Children born into a single-parent family that remained a single-parent family or those who saw their parents separate were less likely to leave a low-income situation than those who lived with both parents. Since the majority of fathers in low-income two-parent families were employed, this finding underscores the important contribution that a second income can make to improving the situation of economically disadvantaged families.

The QLSCD data emphasize that children need mothers who have continuous employment if they hope to see family economic circumstances improve in the year following birth.

Living with another related adult, more often than not a grandparent in a position to help support the household financially, also increased the likelihood that children would see the family financial situation significantly improve. Conversely, the birth of a sibling soon afterwards tended to keep the family in a situation of financial instability (Figure 3).

Another interesting fact to note here is that neither the educational background of the mother nor the age at which she bore the child came into play, any more than did being an immigrant, at least in the short term. Mothers with higher levels of educational attainment living in low-income households may have in common with other mothers the fact that they had worked very little or not at all before having their first child, and thus had less access to maternity leave and good-paying jobs (Drolet, 2003).⁷

Figure 3
Factors associated¹ with exiting from a low income situation during the year following birth, Québec, 1998-1999



† p < 0.05; ++ p < 0.01; +++ p < 0.001

1. The logistical regression model used here makes it possible to measure the net effect of different events or characteristics on the probability that children, born into a low income household, exit this situation between the age of 5 months and 17 months when compared to a reference group (between parentheses). In this model, the mean deviation between the household income and the low income threshold has been controlled for.

Source : Institut de la statistique du Québec, QLSCD 1998-2002.

What about children who were living below the low-income cut-off toward the end of their first year of life?

Given that relatively few economically disadvantaged families managed to leave low-income situations in the year after the child's birth, it was not surprising that the majority of the toddlers under study at the end of their first year had been born into such conditions (83%) (data not shown). For these children, most of the characteristics identified above continued to play a role, the key factor being mothers who had jobs, at least for half the year. By contrast, the beneficial effect of having another related adult around disappeared, suggesting that if the families having other potential sources of support did not see their lot improve in the first year, they could not count on such support to improve their circumstances in the following

The more recent the low-income situation is, the greater the chances of overcoming it.

year. On the other hand, compared to children with immigrant mothers, those with mothers born in Canada were more likely to rise above the low-income cut-off, perhaps because of the better-paid jobs to which these mothers had access after extended leaves (data not shown).

A similar dynamic becomes clear for children who were living in deprived families around the age of 2 years (73% had known these conditions since birth). In general, the data showed that regardless of age, children born into low-income households were less likely to rise above it than were those who experienced this situation later which underscores the importance of providing assistance to families from the moment children are born (data not shown).

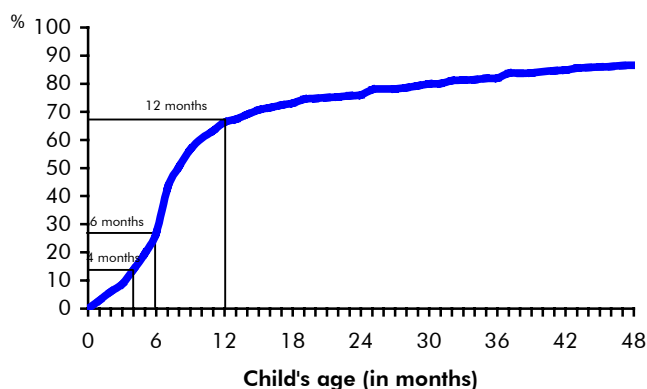
Maternal employment as a way to escape economic instability: the factors that encourage finding or returning to work

Maternal employment (and particularly having two income sources) — independent of the debate over the impact that it has on child development or the challenges it poses for balancing work and family — constitutes, as has been shown, one of the primary means that young families have for escaping financial instability. As such, it seems important to identify the factors that encourage mothers to enter or return to the work force after giving birth.

As can be seen in Figure 4, among mothers giving birth at the end of the 1990s, about a quarter of them had entered or returned to the work force for the first time when their children were barely 6 months old. Between the 6th and 8th months their rate of entry into or return to the work force peaked. This corresponded to the maternity leave for which women were eligible at that time.⁸ As children reached 1 year of age, the rate of entry or re-entry of mothers into the work force slowed. By then two-thirds of the children had seen their mothers begin or return to work full- or part-time; by the time they were 4 years old, nearly 9 children in 10 had seen their mothers worked at some point in time.

At the end of the 1990s, about one child in four had seen its mother begin, or return to, work before it reached six months of age.

Figure 4
Mother's rate of entry or re-entry into the labour market after the birth of a child, Québec, 1998-2002

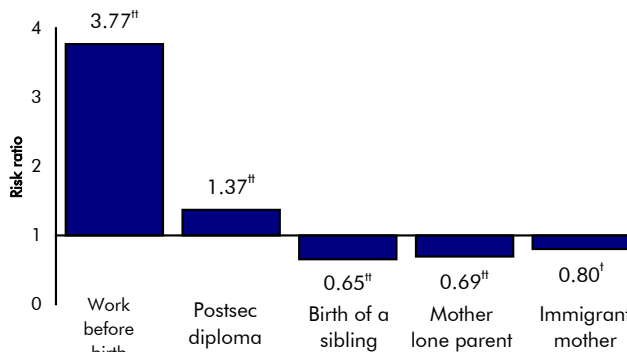


Source : Institut de la statistique du Québec, QLSCD 1998-2002.

The findings presented in Figure 5 show that mothers who had worked at one time or another before the birth of the child⁹ were decidedly more likely to work in the following four years, once a variety of other variables were factored in. Having a postsecondary diploma also affected their

chances, since mothers who had one were more likely to join or rejoin the working population in the years following birth, even when their work experience was taken into account. This is possibly the result of the more favourable working conditions they enjoyed (e.g., job security, work schedules and organisation more suited to raising a family) or their greater employability.¹⁰

Figure 5
Factors associated with¹ the mothers' entry or re-entry into the labour market during the 4 years following the birth of the child, Québec, 1998-2002



† p < 0.01; †† p < 0.001.

1. A proportional hazards model (Cox model) was used to assess the effect of factors influencing the hazard of entering or re-entering the labour market after the child's birth. Except for the variable "birth of a sibling" for which the value change over time, all other independent variables are fixed and represent the situation of children at birth. A coefficient greater than 1 indicates a faster entry or re-entry into the workplace after the birth of the child while a coefficient smaller than 1 reveals a slower entry or re-entry. Because the design effect of the survey could not be taken into account, we are only presenting the variables for which the threshold of significance is equal or inferior to 0.01.

Source : Institut de la statistique du Québec, QLSCD 1998-2002.

Aside from the skills and the experience that individuals have to offer on the labour market, the type of family played a significant role: mothers who were single parents at the birth of their children were less likely to have entered or returned to the work force than those living with partners. Being able to count on the day-to-day support of partners for helping with the care of children is probably part of the explanation. Family type, of course, has an undeniable impact on the financial situation of a household. For example, mothers without partners at birth were much more likely to have been on social assistance for an extended period, regardless of their educational attainment (data not shown).

Other factors like having newborn children or being an immigrant also hampered mothers' efforts to look for work or return to work. This second factor could be due to problems that immigrant mothers experienced having their skills recognised or to different "cultural values" concerning child education.

Holding educational attainment constant, single mothers and immigrant mothers are less inclined to join or rejoin the work force when their children are still infants.

By contrast, neither the birth rank of a child nor the age of the mother when the first child was born was associated with mothers getting jobs once their educational background and work experience were factored in.

Once mothers have joined or rejoined the paid work force, what are their work patterns like?

For working mothers, being part of the paid labour force after giving birth is far from a smooth road, given that work patterns for the majority of them are not regular. For instance, among mothers who returned to the work force in the 12 months following the birth of a child, only 3 in 10 stayed there full-time without interruption until their children were approximately 4 years old (data not shown).

It should be emphasised, moreover, that almost two mothers out of three (63%) who joined or rejoined the work force earlier than average — for example, before their children reached 5 months of age — did so part-time. Conversely, when mothers went back to work when their children were between 5 and 17 months old, they did so more often as full-time workers (63 %) (data not shown).

One cannot consider mothers returning to work without mentioning the efforts that parents must make to find either a place in a quality childcare or a reliable person to take care of their children. For some parents whose jobs are uncertain or non-standard, this can often prove to be, as everyone knows, a real conundrum.¹¹

Childcare use among children between birth and four years of age

Reliable quality childcare services are important not only because they help parents balance their professional and family responsibilities but also because they can promote child development through infant stimulation programs.¹² According to a number of studies, there is likely "no other sector where the arguments for public investment are as clear and persuasive".¹³

What are the facts concerning the use of childcare services by children born in Québec at the end of the 1990s?

Is childcare a necessity?

Around 4 years of age, nearly two children in three were living in a family in which both parents (or the single parent) were working or studying (see definition in Box 2) and were thus likely to need a form of childcare (Figure 6). The difference between this proportion and the rate for mothers who had already joined or returned to the work force (87%) can be largely explained by employment interruptions among mothers of toddlers, as previously discussed.

By comparing the proportion of parents who were working or studying at the time of each interview and the proportion of children in childcare, it can be seen that up to about 2½ years of age, there were slightly more families in which the parents were working or studying than there were children in childcare. Several factors can explain this finding: alternating parental work schedules, whether by choice or by necessity, non-reporting of childcare services that were more often than not unregulated or given by a relative (e.g., grandparents) when children were very young, etc.¹⁴ Beginning in 2001, when children were about 3½ years of age, the opposite tendency began to be seen. Having access to a place in a reduced-contribution childcare centre (see Box 2) may have led parents to use the service even if they were not part of the work force or were not in school at the time of the interview.

A necessity — and not just for the children of parents who work or go to school...

Families with parents who work or go to school are of course great childcare users (86% of those who have 4 year-old children), but other families also use childcare quite a bit (the rate for those with children approximately 4 years of age: 39%), very likely for a host of reasons (to socialise their children, to have time away from them, to manage family obligations, to job hunt, etc.) (data not shown). Aside from having access to reduced-contribution childcare as mentioned above, or even to exemptions from contribution requirements for certain more disadvantaged parents (e.g., income security program beneficiaries), the use of childcare for these other reasons can be explained by a desire to assure a certain stability for children who were already in childcare, especially when places in such programs are hard to come by.

A significant proportion of parents use childcare services for reasons other than working or going to school.

Box 2 Definitions

Parents who work or go to school:

Parents are considered to be working or going to school if both parents of a two-parent family work or go to school, or in the case of single-parent families, if the single parent is working or going to school **at the time of the survey**, regardless of the number of hours.

Child using childcare services:

Any child for whom a parent has declared using childcare services on a regular basis *at the time of the survey*, regardless of the number of hours, whether based in the child's home, in another home, or in a childcare facility.

Reduced-contribution childcare program:

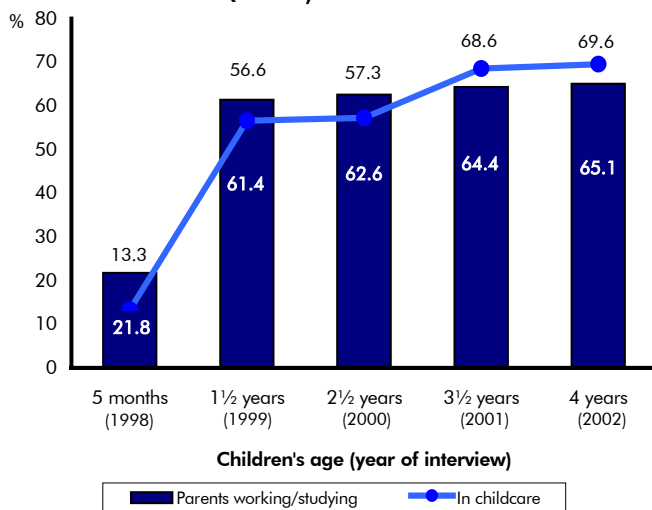
A program offering, since September 1997, educational childcare services at \$5/day (or less for certain categories of parents) in *Centres de la petite enfance* (CPE) or, to a lesser extent, in a licensed private, for-profit childcare facility pursuant to an agreement (subsidised childcare). These services are generally accessible during weekdays, full-time, in the form of facility-based or home-based childcare co-ordinated by a CPE. These subsidised spaces were developed in stages, based on children's ages. Since September 2000, all children younger than 5 years have been eligible, but the spaces required for them have not always been available.

Reduced-contribution childcare centre (Centre de la petite enfance [CPE]):

These centres are operated by a board, a majority of whose members are parents who use the service, and have as their mission to offer families reduced-contribution educational childcare services in stimulating, accessible, reliable, quality environments. Additional allocations may be made to centres in underprivileged areas so that these centres might adapt their services to children's needs.¹⁵ The network was set up in 1997 by the Québec government using existing not-for-profit childcare centres and home-based childcare agencies.

Figure 6

Proportion of children whose parents are working or studying compared to the proportion of children using childcare services according to age, Québec, 1998-2002



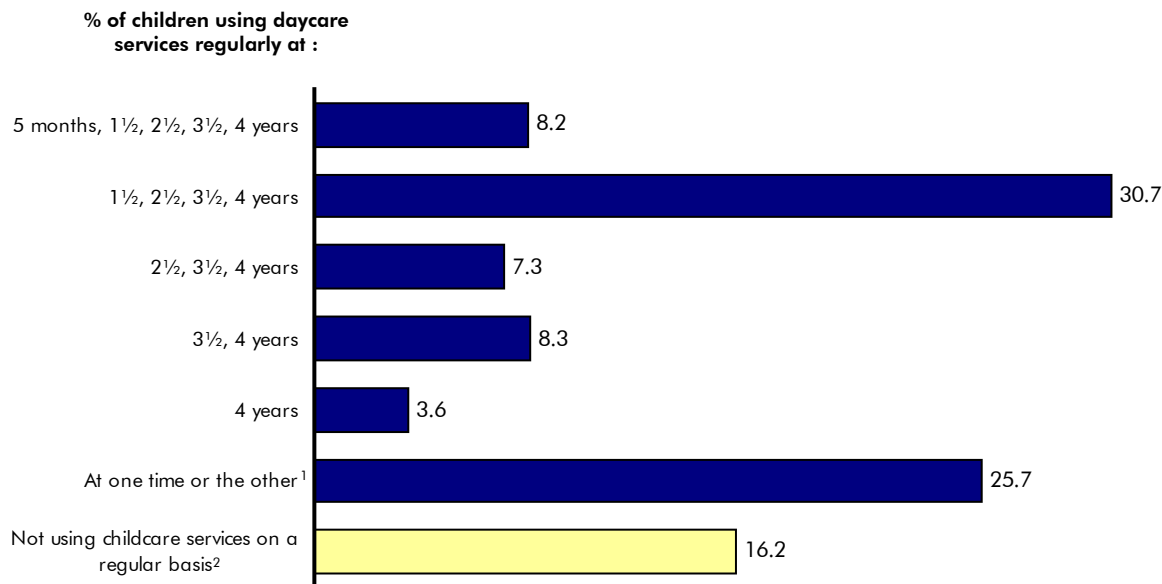
Source : Institut de la statistique du Québec, QLSCD 1998-2002.

Going to childcare from an early age

The data for the age groups conceal the diversity of childcare attendance patterns. For instance, among children about 4 years of age, more than 8 out of 10 once regularly went to childcare services at one time or another. Approximately 4 children in 10 had begun to do so when they were babies: 8% from the age of 5 months and 31% from the age of about 1 1/2 years (Figure 7).

Among children born at the end of the 1990s, about 4 out of 10 had begun to receive childcare services regularly when they were babies.

Figure 7
**Distribution of children according to their profile of
 childcare use, Québec, 1998 à 2002**



1. 6.3% for one period, 6.2% for two periods, 10.2% for three periods and 3.0% for four periods.

2. None at time of survey : 1998 (5 months), 1999 (1 1/2 years), 2000 (2 1/2 years), 2001 (3 1/2 years), 2002 (4 years).

Source : Institut de la statistique du Québec, QLSCD 1998-2002.

Use of the reduced-contribution program

As children grew older, it is clear that they made greater and greater use of the \$5 spaces¹⁶ in childcare facilities and, to a lesser extent, in home-based childcare, to the detriment of private and personal home-based care (Figure 8). This tendency reflects the impact of making reduced-contribution spaces available, for which some of the QLSCD children were eligible in 1999, and the preference of parents for the kind of childcare available in childcare facilities, among other things.

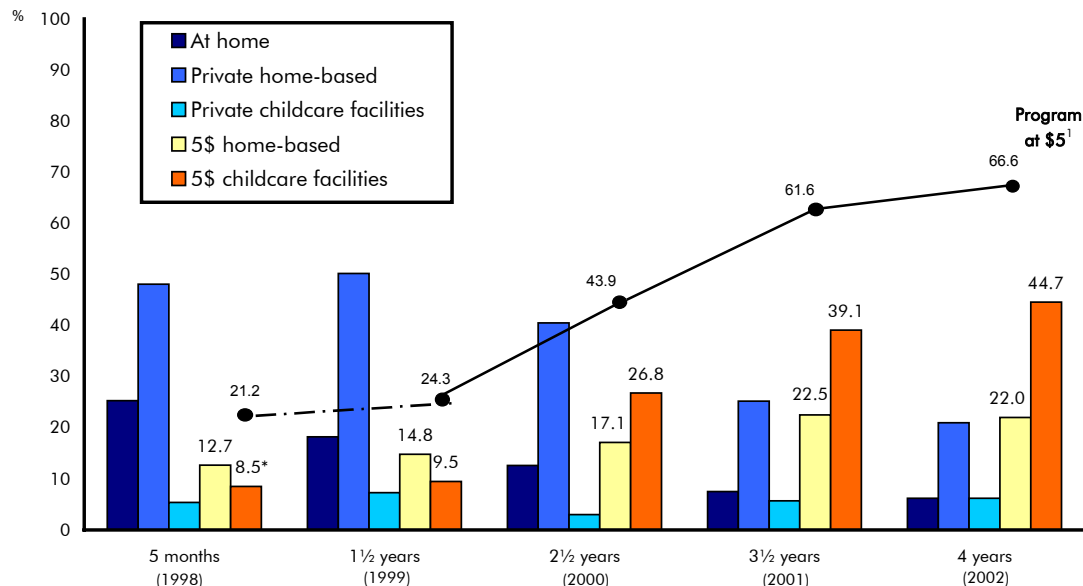
For instance, in 1999, among children of about 1 1/2 years of age, around one in four children in childcare were using reduced-contribution educational childcare services (whether home-based or facility-based), whereas three years later this proportion had reached 67%. These latter made up nearly half (46%) of all children who were then approximately 4 years old (data not shown).

More parents would nevertheless have preferred their children to attend reduced-contribution childcare services that year. This was particularly true of parents whose children received facility-based or private home-based childcare: a little more than half of them would like to have found a reduced-contribution space for their 4-year-

olds. This proportion was only about one in five, however, for parents with children receiving childcare in their own homes (data not shown). These parents did not have access to such spaces at this time in part because there were not enough of them, but also, in certain cases, because their work arrangements were less compatible with this type of service (e.g., weekend work, variable work schedules).

In 2002, around half of parents whose children received private home-based or facility-based childcare would have preferred their children to have had \$5 spaces.

Figure 8
Distribution of children according to the main type of childcare used regularly and age, Québec, 1998-2002



1. In 1998, the childcare program (\$5) was not established for infants; thus, the proportions observed at 5 months old are for non-profit childcare and home-based services.

* Coefficient of variation (CV) between 15% and 25%; to be interpreted with caution.

Source : Institut de la statistique du Québec, QLSCD 1998-2002.

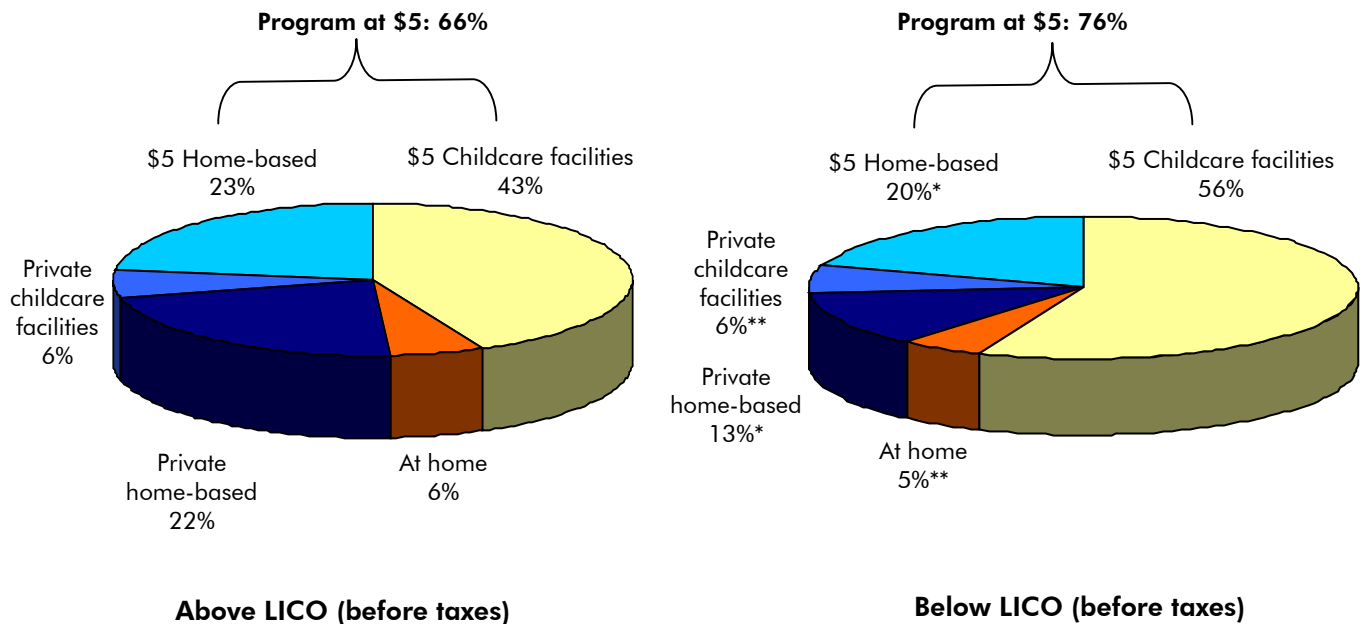
What about children from low-income families?

Do reduced-contribution childcare services reach children from disadvantaged families the way they were originally intended to do in 1997? In 2002, about half the 4-year-olds from low-income families who were born in Québec (53%) regularly received childcare, a proportion decidedly lower than for better-off children (74%). These families used childcare less often because, among other reasons, the parents had less stable jobs or less regular work patterns (data not shown).¹⁷ Among children from low income households receiving childcare, three-quarters had nevertheless used \$5 childcare services, more often facility-based than home-based, whereas among more fortunate families only two children out of three did so (66%).¹⁸ These

latter were, conversely, more inclined to use private home-based childcare services (22% as opposed to 13%) (Figure 9). These differences in childcare arrangements may be attributed to the fact that, among other things, Québec family policy allows low-income families to receive a reduction in or an exemption from reduced-contribution childcare fees, which provides a direct incentive for using these services.¹⁹

Figure 9

Type of regular childcare used by children about 4 years of age according to whether the household is below or above the low-income cut-off (before taxes)¹, Québec, 2002



1. According to the household income declared the preceding year.

* Coefficient of variation (CV) between 15% and 25%; to be interpreted with caution.

** Coefficient of variation (CV) higher than 25%; rough estimate provided only as a guide.

Source : Institut de la statistique du Québec, QLSCD 1998-2002.

Reduced-contribution childcare services: a means of fighting poverty?

As we have seen, a significant proportion of parents, even if they were not part of the work force or in school, used childcare services for their children around age 4 (see Box 2). These parents tend to turn more often to reduced-contribution childcare services than to childcare services that are generally more expensive (childcare at home, facility-based or private home-based). Indeed, among \$5 childcare service users, 40% of low-income users and 20% of the more fortunate did not have jobs and were not in school at the time, whereas this was so for only slightly more than 10% of users of other types of childcare services. It would be easy to infer that less expensive childcare services could be a useful component in a strategy for targeting groups of less fortunate children or for preventing other, somewhat more fortunate families from becoming impoverished. Indeed, to the extent that they allow certain parents, and especially low- or middle-income mothers, to put more energy into looking for work or to enrol in training programs, reduced-contribution childcare services could prove to be an important component of an anti-poverty campaign strategy directed at young families. Moreover, to

the extent that they are of good quality, these childcare services should further child development efforts, especially for disadvantaged children who may live in less stimulating environments and arrive at school less prepared than their peers. The continuation of the QLSCD will offer the opportunity to assess the extent to which using educational childcare services, as well as the socioeconomic circumstances into which toddlers are born, contribute to preparing them for school and, over the longer term, to helping them acquire social skills.

Notes

1. See J. BROOKS-GUNN and G. J. DUNCAN (1997). "The Effect of Poverty on Children", *The Future of Children*, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 55-71. The authors showed that children spending many years in a low income household are more likely to have health and developmental problems even when controlling for many other factors such as parenting practices, family structure, the mother's age and level of education, etc. For Québec, see L. SÉGUIN, Q. XU, L. POTVIN, M.-V. ZUNZUNEGI, C. DUMAS and K. L. FROHLICH (2003). "Socioeconomic Conditions and Health, Part 1 – Poverty and Health in Quebecois Children", in *Québec Longitudinal Study of Child Development (QLSCD 1998-2002) – From Birth to 29 Months*, Québec, Institut de la statistique du Québec, Vol. 2, No. 3.
2. Data collected in 2002 when the children were approximately 4 years old have not been used here because the intervals between this round and the previous was not of 12 months for all children. See the Box About QLSCD.
3. See D. ROSS and P. ROBERTS (2002). *Le bien-être de l'enfant et le revenu familial : un nouveau regard au débat sur la pauvreté*, Ottawa, Conseil canadien de développement social; and SÉGUIN and colleagues, *op. cit.*
4. The results presented in this section are partially based on a Paper presented at the Association internationale des démographes de langue française (AIDELF) Conference in Dakar (December 2002). See H. DESROSIERS, N. VACHON, L. GINGRAS and G. NEILL (2002). "Facteurs associés aux sorties d'épisodes de faible revenu dans la petite enfance : que nous révèlent les données de l'Étude longitudinale du développement des enfants du Québec (ÉLDEQ 1998-2002) ?", Dakar, December, [www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/publications/sante/index.htm].
5. A portrait of low-income household when children were 5 months of age have already been presented in Volume 1 of QLSCD 1998-2002 collection (see: H. DESROSIERS (2000). "Family, Child Care and Neighbourhood Characteristics", in *Québec Longitudinal Study of Child Development (QLSCD 1998-2002)*, 5-months-old infants, Institut de la statistique du Québec, Vol. 1, No 2). Details of the low-income cut-off and other measures of social stratification used in QLSCD are also presented in this publication.
6. Between 48 and 52 weeks from the moment the child was around 5 months old.
7. According to Drolet (2003), even when taking educational level into account, acquiring more years of work experience before having a first child, a time when interruptions can prove critical, helps assure higher income levels not only during the period following the birth of a first child, but also during the rest of one's working years. See M. DROLET (2003). "Maternité et rémunération", *Tendances sociales canadiennes*, Ottawa, Statistique Canada, Spring, Catalogue No. 11-008, p. 22-24.
8. In 1997-1998, only about one Québec mother in two was eligible for maternity leave under the federal employment insurance program. The length of this program was set at fifteen weeks, to which ten weeks of parental leave could be added for the father or mother. These two leaves were then paid at 55% of the weekly insurable pay rate, with additional compensation by the employer in certain cases. In December 2000, changes were made to the federal parental leave program (expansion of coverage and extension of leave to up to fifty weeks at the same level of remuneration). Since then, more mothers have been eligible and those who were eligible were able to remain at home longer on average, although disparities exist between the various categories of working mothers. See D. PÉRUSSE (2003). "L'avantage du congé parental prolongé", *Le Quotidien*, 21 mars, p. 7-8 (Statistique Canada, Catalogue No. 11-001-XIF).
9. It is the case for 77% of them.
10. Although mothers in secure jobs are, as one might guess, more likely to return to work *at one time or another* in the years after the birth of a child, studies nevertheless show that among working mothers, those who did not have guaranteed employment or were poorly paid tended to return to work earlier because of loss of income or the inadequate levels of income replacement that they were receiving. See K. MARSHALL (1999). "L'emploi après la naissance d'un enfant", *Perspective*, Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 20-28 (Statistique Canada, Catalogue No. 75-0010XPF); D. PÉRUSSE, *op. cit.*
11. See : M. ROCHETTE and J. DESLAURIERS (2003). "Standard and Non-Standard Parental Work Schedules and Childcare Arrangements" in *Quebec Longitudinal Study of Child Development (QLSCD 1998-2002) – From Birth to 29 months*, Québec, Institut de la statistique du Québec, Vol. 2, No. 10.
12. See: D. KOHEN and C. HERTZMAN (1998). "L'importance des services de garde d'enfants de qualité", Paper presented at the Conference *Investir dans nos enfants, Développement des ressources humaines Canada* (Direction de la recherche appliquée), Ottawa, W-98-33Fs, October 27-29, p. 7-12; D. KOHEN, T. HUNTER, A. PENCE and H. GOELMAN (2000). "The Victoria Day Care Research Project: Overview of a Longitudinal Study of Child Care and Human Development in Canada", *Revue Canadienne de l'Étude en Petite Enfance*, Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 49-54; P. LEFEBVRE and P. MERRIGAN (1998). "Les mères qui travaillent et leurs enfants", Paper presented at the Conference *Investir dans nos enfants, Développement des ressources humaines Canada* (Direction de la recherche appliquée), Ottawa, W-98-12Fs, October 27-29, p. 1-6; NICHD EARLY CHILD CARE RESEARCH NETWORK (2000). "The relation of Child Care to Cognitive and Language Development", *Child Development*, No. 71, p. 960-980; OCDE (2001). *Starting Strong. Early Childhood Education and Care*, Paris, Office de coopération et de développement économique.
13. Citation of K. BATTLE and S. TORJMAN (2002). *Architecture for National Child Care*, Ottawa, Caledon Institute of Social Policy, November [www.caledoninst.org] in A. NOËL (2002). "Une nouvelle loi contre la pauvreté: la nouvelle approche québécoise de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale", *Lien social et Politiques - RIAC*, No. 48, Fall, p. 103-114.
14. The difference observed for the 1998 round can also be explained by the way the question was asked. Let us mention that for the rounds 1998, 1999 and 2000 the question was essentially addressed to parents who were working or studying at the time of the survey.
15. To obtain more details about the Québec Childcare Services program see the Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité familiale et de la Famille website (www.messf.gouv.qc.ca) and click on "Services de garde". At the section "Aide financière, financement et subventions" the document "GOUVERNEMENT DU QUÉBEC (2002). *Centres de la petite enfance. Règles budgétaires pour l'année 2002-2003*, Québec.", can be found.

16. In reduced-contribution childcare centres or in private childcare facilities that have signed agreements to offer subsidized care (see Box 2). By contrast, in the rest of this publication, the term "private childcare facility" refers to the type of childcare in which children do not occupy reduced-contribution spaces.
17. Nor were these children enrolled in kindergarten programs for 4-year-olds intended primarily for underprivileged families, since they were not yet eligible for these when the final round of the QLSCD was conducted in the spring of 2002.
18. If the proportions for all households are considered, 40% of children living in low-income households had attended reduced-contribution childcare services by the time they were 4 years of age, whereas about half (49%) of children of the same age in better-off families had done so. The former were nevertheless well represented since they made up 17% of the 4-year-old children using this type of service in 2002, whereas this was true for about one child in five in this age group in the population as a whole.
19. See M. ROCHETTE and J. DESLAURIERS, *op. cit.*

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