

# What have been the effects of Quebec's universal childcare system on women's economic security? <sup>[1]</sup>

Standing Committee on the Status of Women Study on the Economic Security of Women in Canada

**Author:** Fortin, Pierre

**Source:** Parliament of Canada

**Format:**

**Publication Date:** 20 Mar 2017

## AVAILABILITY

Full brief PDF <sup>[2]</sup>

## Summary

Childcare fees impact strongly on mothers' decision to work, and therefore on their employment income and economic security. A unanimous finding of the research literature is that the low-fee universal childcare system that Quebec started 20 years ago has had a spectacular impact on childcare utilization and the labour force participation of mothers of young children. With more continuity in their careers, Quebec mothers see their employment income increase more and faster not only when their children are very young, but also later when they have entered school. The low-fee universal system operates as an effective insurance policy against the financial and developmental risks that come with separation from husbands or partners, whose probability of occurrence has increased sharply in recent decades. Advances of the kind and magnitude found in Quebec mothers' labour market performance and economic security have not been observed in other provinces, where the traditional full-fee childcare system with targeted subsidies has remained predominant.

The family is and should remain the bedrock on which child education is built. However, in a world where more than 70 per cent of mothers of very young children work, high-quality educational childcare is needed in practice to complement parental care. A low-fee universal childcare system is more effective and less costly than the traditional, purely targeted system in providing high-quality childcare. Only a universal system can catch all vulnerable children, two-thirds of whom come from middle- to high-income families. Furthermore, only the low-fee universal system can attract so many more mothers into the labour force that the additional taxes of all kinds collected by the federal and provincial governments come to exceed the additional subsidies the province has to pay over what a targeted system would otherwise cost. There is no net cost for taxpayers since the system more than pays for itself.

This being said, the Quebec childcare system is still far from being perfect. Far too few children receive education and care of good to excellent quality, and far too few disadvantaged children access the good part of the system and have their special needs attended. Improving quality in general and better responding to the needs of disadvantaged children in particular should be the foremost priorities for the future development of the Quebec system.

## Related link:

**Region:** Canada <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** universal <sup>[4]</sup>

women <sup>[5]</sup>

economics <sup>[6]</sup>

accessibility <sup>[7]</sup>

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/17/05/what-have-been-effects-quebec%E2%80%99s-universal-childcare-system>

## Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/17/05/what-have-been-effects-quebec%E2%80%99s-universal-childcare-system> <sup>[2]</sup>

<http://www.ourcommons.ca/content/Committee/421/FEWO/Brief/BR8806290/br-external/FortinPierre-e.pdf> <sup>[3]</sup>

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> <sup>[4]</sup> <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/universal> <sup>[5]</sup>

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/women> <sup>[6]</sup> <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/economics> <sup>[7]</sup>

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/accessibility>