

Fertility rates and labour force participation among women in Quebec and Ontario ^[1]

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Source: Statistics Canada: Insights on Canadian Society

Format: Article

Publication Date: 17 Jul 2018

AVAILABILITY

Full article PDF ^[2]

New analysis from Statistics Canada reviews twenty years of data between 1996 and 2016 in Quebec and Ontario to investigate the relationships between child care and parental leave policies, fertility rates and labour force participation among mothers between 15 and 44 years of age. Among other findings, in Quebec, the labour force participation rate of women whose youngest child was under 3 years of age increased by nearly 20 percentage points over the 20 year span, compared to just 4 percent in Ontario.

Overview of the study

Using data from the Canadian Vital Statistics Birth Database and from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), this study examines the relationship between fertility rates and labour force participation among women aged 15 to 44 in Ontario and in Quebec between 1996 and 2016, two provinces that followed different paths with respect to parental leave benefits and affordable child care over the past two decades.

- After four decades of similarity, fertility rates have been slightly higher in Quebec than in Ontario since 2005. In 2016, Quebec's total fertility rate was 1.59 children per woman, while Ontario's was 1.46.
- The difference was mostly driven by women in their twenties, who tend to have more children in Quebec than in Ontario. This is partly because the proportion of women in their twenties who are in a couple is higher in Quebec (39%, versus 28% in Ontario in 2016).
- As fertility rates increased in Quebec, the labour force participation of women aged 15 to 44 also increased, exceeding that of women in Ontario after 2003. In 2016, the participation rate of women was 81% in Quebec, compared with 75% in Ontario.
- Most of the relative increase in female labour force participation in Quebec occurred among women with young children. Between 1996 and 2016, the labour force participation rate of women whose youngest child was under the age of 3 increased by nearly 20 percentage points in Quebec, compared with a 4 percentage point increase in Ontario. The Quebec–Ontario difference was smaller among women without children under the age of 13.
- Changes in the composition of the population of women aged 15 to 44 and differences in real wage growth for this population do not explain the divergent trends observed in female labour force participation in Quebec and Ontario after 1996. At the same time, the costs associated with child care and housekeeping services grew less in Quebec than in Ontario over the period.

Related link: More women in Quebec's workforce, thanks to daycare policy: study ^[3]

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