

Child care in Quebec ^[1]

Access to a universal program

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Abstract: **BACKGROUND:** Five cycles of data from the Canadian National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (1994/5-2002/3) were used to examine patterns of child care use in Quebec and the rest of Canada to explore the impact of Quebec's implementation of universal child care. **METHODS:** Rates of overall use as well as use of regulated (child care centre, family child care) and non-regulated care (sitter, nanny, relative, family child care) were examined for preschoolers aged 0-5 years in Quebec as compared to the other provinces and by family household income. Chi-square tests were used to examine significance of differences. **RESULTS:** Since the implementation of Quebec's child care program, Quebec demonstrated substantial increases in child care use, particularly in the use of regulated care (from 10% prior to program compared to 30% by 2002) whereas the use of unregulated care did not demonstrate a significant increase in Quebec as compared to the other provinces (1994 to 2002). Furthermore, the use of regulated care by low-income families was greater in Quebec than elsewhere in Canada, although the greatest increase in use of regulated care was for children from high-income families. **CONCLUSION:** Findings suggest that since the introduction of Quebec's universal child care program, there was an increase in the use of regulated child care for families of preschool-aged children in the province, although by 2002 Quebec had not achieved the coverage of universal child care programs attained by many European countries.

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