

## Article

# Leave practices of parents after the birth or adoption of young children

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# Leave practices of parents after the birth or adoption of young children

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## Introduction

Many parents take time off work to care for a child after birth or adoption. International research has shown that socioeconomic circumstances, including parental employment characteristics, may influence whether one or both parents take leave and how much leave they take.<sup>1</sup> For example, the fact that a parent works part time or full time,<sup>2</sup> or is self-employed,<sup>3</sup> may impact leave decisions. Parent's leave from work may also be influenced by policies that govern their eligibility for time off work with or without income replacement for the birth or adoption of a child.<sup>4</sup> In Canada, such policies vary by province of residence, with differences existing between Quebec and other provinces and territories.

However, only limited research has examined whether the use of leave by either mothers or fathers is associated with child and maternal health factors such as premature birth, the child's health at birth, and maternal post-partum depression. Parents who perceive that their child has greater health care needs or is at risk for developmental delays may postpone their return to work.<sup>5</sup> It is also possible that maternal depression or childbirth complications may be associated with increased leave by either parent.<sup>6</sup>

While previous research has examined leave patterns using administrative data such as Employment Insurance benefits,<sup>7</sup> few studies have used survey data. Survey data has the advantage of including additional characteristics that may be associated with leave after birth or adoption, such as child or maternal health.

This article provides a snapshot of leave patterns using data from the 2010 Survey of Young Canadians (SYC), conducted in 2010-2011. The article focuses on children aged 1 to 3 whose mother, father or both were working prior to the birth or adoption. Two aspects of the mothers' and fathers' patterns of self-reported leave are considered: whether leave was taken and its duration. The article also examines certain employment characteristics of the children's parents at the time of the survey, as well as health factors that might be associated with leave.

It is important to note that the unit of analysis of the Survey of Young Canadians is the *child*. Therefore, throughout this article, the reader should interpret any information presented about the mother or father as a characteristic of the *child*. For more information on the concepts and definitions used, see "What you should know about this study".

## Most Canadian children have mothers who take paid leave

Among 1- to 3-year-old children living outside Quebec, about three-quarters (73%) had mothers who worked at a job or business in the 12 months before their birth or adoption; about two-thirds (67%) had mothers who worked after their birth. Among children whose mothers were working before their birth, 90% of mothers reported having taken leave, and their average leave was approximately 44 weeks (Table 1). Children whose mothers did not report taking any leave (10% of the total) were more likely to be from a lone-parent family, and/or to have a mother with less education, and/or to have a mother with a lower income compared with children whose mother did take leave (analysis not shown).

More mothers took paid than unpaid leave, although it is possible for them to have taken both types of leave. Among children outside Quebec whose mothers were working prior to their birth, more than 4 in 5 (83%) had mothers who took paid leave. One-fifth (21%) of children outside Quebec had mothers who took unpaid leave (Chart 1). The average length of paid leave was 40 weeks, while it was 4.5 weeks for unpaid leave.

## What you should know about this study

The 2010 Survey of Young Canadians (SYC) provides information on children and on their parents' employment at the time of the survey, as well as retrospective reports on leave taken during the birth and postpartum periods. It includes a sample of 10,810 Canadian children 1 to 9 years old residing in the ten Canadian provinces. Children living in Yukon, the Northwest Territories or Nunavut are excluded, as are those residing on Indian reserves.<sup>1</sup>

Information on leave was only collected for children aged 1 to 3 whose mother, father or both were working prior to their birth or adoption. The person in the household who was most knowledgeable about the child (known as the "PMK") provided information on the child's characteristics, the parents' employment at the time of the survey, their leave at the time of the child's birth or adoption, and child and maternal health characteristics.

The Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP) differs from the Canada Employment Insurance Program (CEIP) available in other provinces and territories; therefore, Quebec is examined separately throughout this article (see "Government leave programs in Canada and Quebec").

### Data limitations

The SYC did not ask about the source or the amount of income (including employer top-ups) that parents received while on leave; therefore, this article does not address income replacement, CEIP/QPIP leave claims or benefits, or the specific type of leave (e.g., maternity versus parental leave). The distinction between paid and unpaid leave is only based on what parents reported. Employment and income information were collected at the time of the survey and may differ from what it was before the child's birth or adoption. However, many parents return to the same employment after taking leave.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the results are based on information from parents who were working before the child's birth and who retrospectively self-reported their leave. This may be a more inclusive definition of leave (as opposed to only including parents who qualify for CEIP/QPIP leave benefits); however, some parents may not self-report as being "on leave", which may have an impact on the number of parents who are identified as taking leave. For example, many fathers take annual vacation leave when their child is born<sup>3</sup> and this may not be captured as leave taken specifically for the child's birth or adoption.

### Definitions

**Child and parent characteristics:** The PMK reported the child's sex, age, and birth order (first, second, etc. among children living in the household).<sup>4</sup> The PMK or their spouse also reported a variety of parental characteristics including sex, age, education, and income at the time of the survey (not at the time of the child's birth). The parents' employment at the time of the survey was also collected: whether the parent had been employed in the previous 12 months, part time or full time (i.e., 30 or more hours per week), self-employed, doing shift work (i.e., not working regular daytime hours), and their occupation. Similarly to previous research,<sup>5</sup> occupations were considered as being either in the public sector or in the private sector. Examples of public sector occupations include those in hospitals, education, and public administration.

**Leave:** If the parent reported that they or their spouse had worked in the 12 months before the birth or adoption of the child, they were asked questions about leave. These included whether they or their spouse had taken paid and/or unpaid leave during the pregnancy or after the birth, and the number of weeks or months of paid and/or unpaid leave. Paid leave may or may not include CEIP/QPIP benefits (the specific source of income replacement was not asked). Parents were also asked whether they or their spouse had worked since the birth or adoption of the child. Parents who were still on leave at the time of the survey (less than 2% of the sample) were not included in analyses of length of leave, since the length of their leave was undetermined.

**Child and maternal health:** The PMK was asked about certain aspects of child and maternal health before and at the time of the birth and post-partum. These questions included whether the child was born prematurely (i.e., 258 days gestation or less), whether the child received any special medical attention at birth, including intensive care, ventilation/oxygen, transfer to another hospital, or another type of care, and whether the child was part of a multiple birth (i.e., twin, triplet). The PMK was also asked to rate the child's health at birth as "excellent", "very good", "good", "fair", or "poor". Characteristics of maternal health included whether the mother had experienced post-partum depression or had been hospitalized for any medical care after the birth/adoption.

### Statistical models

Regression models were conducted to examine how mothers' and fathers' leave might be associated with their reported

## What you should know about this study (continued)

socioeconomic characteristics, and with child and maternal health. This article presents regression analyses only for children living outside Quebec due to sample size limitations for Quebec.

First, logistic regression models were performed to estimate the odds that a mother or father reported taking any leave based on employment and health characteristics, while removing the effect of other factors (child's sex, whether the child was first-born, maternal age, education and income, and paternal education and income).

The results of the logistic regression models were analyzed using odds ratios. These allow the researcher to measure the degree to which taking any leave is linked to the child's or mother's health or to the mother's or father's employment characteristics, when other factors are held constant (that is, controlling for the effects of variables, such as income or education, that may be associated with the likelihood of taking leave).

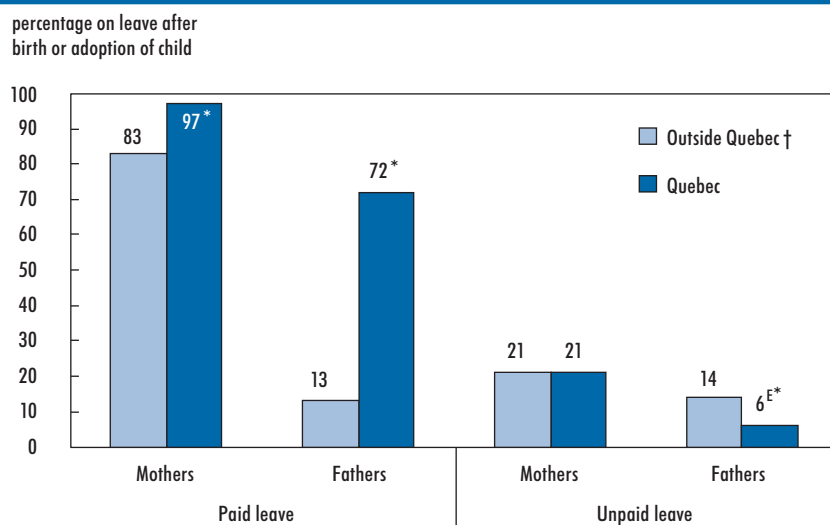
Next, linear regression models were used to explore the effects of employment and health characteristics on the total length of mothers' and fathers' leave. These models included parents who reported taking no leave (i.e., 0 weeks). These

models controlled for the child's sex, whether the child was first-born, maternal age, education and income, and paternal education and income.

The results of the linear regression models were analyzed using beta coefficients. The sign of the coefficients (positive or negative) indicates the direction of the relationship between leave and mother's or child's health or mother's or father's employment characteristics, when other factors are held constant (that is, controlling for the effects of other variables, such as income or education, that may be associated with the length of leave).

1. For detailed information, see Survey of Young Canadians (SYC), <http://www23.statcan.gc.ca:81/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5179&lang=en&db=imdb&adm=8&dis=2> (accessed on June 25 2012).
2. Baker, M., and K. Milligan. 2008. "Evidence from maternity leave expansions of the impact of maternal care on early child development." *The Journal of Human Resources*. Vol. 45, no. 1.
3. Fox, E., G. Pascall and T. Warren. 2009. "Work-family policies, participation, and practices: fathers and childcare in Europe." *Community, Work and Family*. Vol. 12, no. 3.
4. It is possible that the mother gave birth to another child who was not living in the household at the time of the survey.
5. Marshall, K. 2010. "Employer top-ups." *Perspectives on Labour and Income*. Vol. 11, no. 2. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-001-X.

**Chart 1 Paid leave is more common among parents of children living in Quebec**



† reference group

\* statistically significant difference from reference group at  $p \leq 0.05$

Note: Paid and unpaid leave are not mutually exclusive categories and thus percentages do not total 100.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Young Canadians, 2010.

Among children living in Quebec, 69% had mothers who worked prior to their birth or adoption. Almost all children in Quebec had mothers who reported taking leave (99%) and this leave was longer on average (48 weeks) than in the rest of Canada (44 weeks). Most mothers (97%) took paid leave and it too was significantly longer than that taken by mothers living elsewhere in Canada. As was the case outside Quebec, 1 in 5 children living in Quebec (21%) had mothers who took unpaid leave (Chart 1). A slightly larger proportion of mothers in Quebec (72%) worked after their child's birth or adoption compared with mothers in the rest of Canada (67%) (Table 1).

**Table 1 Type and length of leave taken by working mothers and fathers of children aged 1 to 3**

	Outside Quebec †	Quebec
	<b>percentage</b>	
<b>Mothers</b>		
Worked in the 12 months prior to birth or adoption	72.9	69.4
Took any leave <sup>1</sup>	90.0	99.2*
Paid leave <sup>1</sup>	83.1	97.3*
Unpaid leave <sup>1</sup>	21.4	21.3*
	<b>average number of weeks</b>	
Total length of leave <sup>2</sup>	43.6	48.4*
Paid leave <sup>2</sup>	39.6	45.4*
Unpaid leave <sup>2</sup>	4.5	3.3
	<b>percentage</b>	
Worked after child's birth or adoption	67.4	72.4*
<b>Fathers</b>		
Worked in the 12 months prior to birth or adoption	95.2	90.4*
Took any leave <sup>1</sup>	26.0	76.1*
Paid leave <sup>1</sup>	12.9	72.5*
Unpaid leave <sup>1</sup>	14.2	6.0E*
	<b>average number of weeks</b>	
Total length of leave <sup>2</sup>	2.4	5.6*
Paid leave <sup>2</sup>	1.7	5.5*
Unpaid leave <sup>2</sup>	0.7	0.2*
	<b>percentage</b>	
Worked after child's birth or adoption	95.0	91.7*

† reference group

\* statistically significant difference from the reference group at  $p \leq 0.05$

1. Among those who worked before the birth or adoption.

2. Among those who had returned to work at the time of the survey.

Note: Paid and unpaid leave are not mutually exclusive categories and thus percentages do not total 100.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Young Canadians, 2010.

The relative distribution of mother's leave was similar for children living in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. About one-third of children had mothers who took 2 weeks of leave or less (32% in Quebec and 36% elsewhere in Canada) (data not shown). Almost one-half of children had mothers who took between 25 and 52 weeks of leave (48% for both regions). However, 15% of children in Quebec had mothers who took more than 52 weeks of leave, a higher proportion than the 9% elsewhere in Canada.

Overall, the findings suggest that there is a wide range in the length of leave taken in Quebec and in other Canadian jurisdictions.

**Relative to children in the rest of Canada, those living in Quebec are more likely to have a father who takes leave**

Most Canadian children had fathers who were working prior to their birth or adoption (95% outside Quebec, 90% in Quebec), and most fathers were working after (95% and 92%, respectively) (Table 1). However, more

than three-quarters of children in Quebec (76%) had a father who took some type of leave, a much higher proportion than the one-quarter of children living elsewhere in Canada (26%). This pattern has been shown in other Canadian studies.<sup>8</sup>

For the majority of children, differences in fathers' ability to obtain paid leave appear to influence leave patterns. For example, the average length of paid leave for Quebec fathers was 5.5 weeks, while for non-Quebec resident fathers it was 1.7 weeks. Unpaid leave was taken

## Government leave programs for parents in Canada and Quebec

While the ability to take time off from employment for reasons of childbirth and adoption is provincially mandated, income replacement options generally fall into two categories: 1) the Canada Employment Insurance Program (CEIP) or the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP); and 2) employer-based supplement programs (or top-ups).

CEIP allows for up to 15 weeks of maternity benefits for the biological mother and 35 weeks of parental benefits. Parental benefits can be shared between the biological or adoptive mother and father.<sup>1</sup> To qualify for income replacement, a parent must have worked at least 600 hours in the 52 weeks prior to the birth and have contributed employment insurance premiums during that time.<sup>2</sup> Prior to 2011, self-employed individuals could not contribute premiums and thus were not eligible for income replacement.<sup>3</sup>

Quebec has its own parental benefits program—the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP)—which started in January 2006. Two options are available – a basic plan and a special plan, the key difference being that the latter is of shorter duration (for both the mother and the father) but at a higher rate of income replacement. The basic plan includes 18 weeks of maternity benefits, 5 weeks of paternity benefits, and 32 weeks of parental benefits which can be taken by either parent; 37 weeks are allowed for adoptive parents. Compared with the CEIP, both Quebec plans have a shorter qualifying period, generally higher rates of income replacement, and include a paternity benefit exclusive to fathers. Thus, QPIP provides fathers with the possibility of longer paid leave periods. The plan covers self-employed individuals as well and the shorter qualifying period may also increase the number of people who are eligible for the program.

Previous Canadian research using employment insurance information suggested that in 2008, 80% of mothers who were employed prior to the birth or adoption of their child claimed CEIP/QPIP benefits; 20% of these claimants also received some form of employer supplement, or top-up, which lasted an average of 19 weeks.<sup>4</sup> In comparison, in 2006, 1 in 5 fathers claimed CEIP/QPIP benefits.<sup>5</sup> A higher proportion of fathers claimed benefits in Quebec (56%) compared with elsewhere in Canada (11%), although outside Quebec, fathers claimed benefits for a longer period of time (17 weeks versus 7 weeks in Quebec).

Parents may also choose to take annual vacation leave or unpaid leave. For instance, in 2006, more than one-third of fathers reported that they had taken annual vacation leave upon the birth of a child.<sup>6</sup> Finally, some parents may choose to take unpaid leave and others may use unpaid leave after exhausting income replacement benefits or during the 2-week CEIP waiting period (especially if that time is not compensated by their employer's benefit plan).

1. Phipps, S. 2006. "Working for working parents: the evolution of maternity and parental benefits in Canada." *IRPP Choices*. Vol. 12, no. 2.
2. In accordance with eligibility conditions, it is possible to be on leave without receiving benefits. In contrast, it is also possible to receive some benefits without being on leave from an employer. The SYC does not ask about CEIP/QPIP eligibility or receipt of specific financial benefits.
3. As of January 2011, eligible self-employed individuals are permitted to opt-in to the Employment Insurance Program, including maternity and parental leave benefits.
4. Marshall, K. 2010. "Employer top-ups." *Perspectives on Labour and Income*. Vol. 11, no. 2. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-001-X.
5. Marshall, K. 2008. "Father's use of paid parental leave." *Perspectives on Labour and Income*. Vol. 9, no. 6. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-001-X.
6. Beaupré, P., and E. Cloutier. 2007. "Navigating family transitions: evidence from the General Social Survey." No. 2. *General Social Survey Cycle 20: Family Transitions Survey*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-625-X.

by a smaller proportion of fathers in Quebec compared with fathers elsewhere in Canada. The average lengths of unpaid leave for the two groups of fathers were 0.2 weeks and 0.7 weeks, respectively (Table 1).<sup>9</sup> These differences may reflect the 5 weeks of non-transferable paternity leave available to fathers living in Quebec. Although the Survey of Young Canadians did not collect information on the specific source of paid leave, administrative data suggests that 1 in 5 fathers claim CEIP/QPIP benefits.<sup>10</sup>

Most children outside Quebec had fathers who took 2 weeks of leave or less (89% compared with 40% of those in Quebec). In contrast, a larger share of children living in Quebec had fathers who took between 3 and 5 weeks of leave (43%) compared with slightly under 3% in the rest of Canada (data not shown).

Overall, there are differences in parental leave patterns between children living in Quebec and those living elsewhere in Canada. For children living in Quebec, their mothers and fathers were more likely to take leave, and this leave was longer than that taken by parents elsewhere in Canada. This was particularly true for fathers. These variations may reflect differences in legislated leave provisions between Quebec and the rest of Canada, especially the non-transferable paternity leave which is not available to fathers outside Quebec.

Although differences in leave patterns were observed between children in Quebec and those elsewhere in Canada, the associations between parents' socioeconomic conditions, child and maternal health, and length of leave follow similar trends in the two regions. However, due to sample size restrictions, the next part of the analysis investigating the impact of these factors—first on whether parents take any leave, and secondly on the length of leave—is limited to children living outside Quebec.

### **Mothers who work full time are more likely to take leave**

In a model predicting whether non-Quebec resident mothers take any leave, several employment characteristics were found to be important when controlling for the child's sex, whether the child was first born, maternal age, and parental education and income. These employment characteristics reflect the parent's status at the time of the survey and not necessarily before the birth or adoption of their child.

Mothers were less likely to take leave if they were self-employed, but more likely to do so if they were full-time workers (Table 2).<sup>11</sup> More specifically, self-employed mothers had lower odds of taking paid leave and higher odds of taking unpaid leave compared with those who were not self-employed (data not shown). Mothers who were working full time were more than twice as likely to take paid leave as mothers who were working part time, but equally likely to take unpaid leave. Mothers who worked shifts had lower odds of taking any unpaid leave than those who worked regular hours.

Mothers who reported post-partum depression had higher odds of taking any leave, in particular any paid leave, compared with mothers who did not (Table 3). Mothers who gave birth to multiple children (twins, triplets, etc.) were more likely to take paid leave than mothers who gave birth to one child (data not shown).

### **Fathers working full time are less likely to take leave**

Among fathers living outside Quebec, those working in the public sector at the time of the survey had greater odds of taking any leave than those working in the private sector. Fathers working full time were less likely to take any leave, compared with their part-time counterparts (Table 2). Fathers in Nordic countries have also been shown to be less likely to take leave, for example when they are self-employed,<sup>12</sup> and more likely to do so if they are in certain professions

such as teaching, health, or social services,<sup>13</sup> or when they work in the public sector.<sup>14</sup>

In terms of the type of leave they took, both self-employed fathers and fathers working full time were less likely to take paid leave (data not shown). Fathers working in the public sector were more likely to take paid leave but less likely to take unpaid leave than fathers working in the private sector.

The odds of fathers taking any leave were more than two times higher when the child was part of a multiple birth compared with a singleton birth. However, the odds of fathers taking leave were lower when their child was in good, fair, or poor health at birth than when their child was in excellent or very good health at birth (Table 3). Children who received some type of special care at birth had higher odds of having fathers who took paid leave, and those whose mother reported post-partum depression had fathers with higher odds of taking unpaid leave (data not shown).

### **Self-employment associated with shorter leave for mothers**

Overall, mothers of 1- to 3-year-olds living outside Quebec who were self-employed at the time of the survey took less total leave time (29 weeks) for the birth or adoption of their child than those who were not self-employed (48 weeks) (Chart 2). Although they took less time overall, self-employed mothers took shorter paid leave but longer unpaid leave (data not shown). The effect of self-employment on total leave time remained significant even after considering the child's sex and whether they were first born, the mother's age, income,<sup>15</sup> education, and other employment characteristics (Table A.1).

There were no significant differences in total length of leave for mothers who worked shift work (versus regular hours) or in the public (versus private) sector. In addition, no differences in total length of leave



**Table 2 Logistic regression predicting any leave, by employment characteristics,<sup>1</sup> children aged 1 to 3 years living outside Quebec**

	Mothers	Fathers
	odds ratio	
<b>Work schedule</b>		
Regular hours †	1.00	1.00
Shift work	0.77	0.87
<b>Self-employed</b>		
No †	1.00	1.00
Yes	0.16*	0.78
<b>Work status</b>		
Part time †	1.00	1.00
Full time	2.01**	0.34**
<b>Sector of employment</b>		
Private †	1.00	1.00
Public	1.00	1.66*

† reference group

\* statistically significant difference from the reference group at  $p \leq 0.01$

\*\* statistically significant difference from the reference group at  $p \leq 0.05$

1. These employment characteristics reflect the parent's situation at the time of the survey and not prior to the child's birth or adoption.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Young Canadians, 2010.

**Table 3 Logistic regression predicting any leave, by child and maternal health, children aged 1 to 3 years living outside Quebec**

	Mothers	Fathers
	odds ratio	
<b>Premature birth</b>		
No †	1.00	1.00
Yes	0.96	1.26
<b>Multiple birth</b>		
No †	1.00	1.00
Yes	2.14	2.36*
<b>Child's special medical care after birth</b>		
No special care †	1.00	1.00
Special care after birth	1.24	1.30
<b>Child's health at birth</b>		
Excellent/very good health †	1.00	1.00
Good/fair/poor health	0.80	0.64*
<b>Mother's special medical care after birth</b>		
Mother not hospitalized †	1.00	1.00
Mother hospitalized	0.87	1.38
<b>Mother's post-partum depression</b>		
No †	1.00	1.00
Yes	2.69*	1.13

† reference group

\* statistically significant difference from the reference group at  $p \leq 0.05$

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Young Canadians, 2010.

were observed between mothers who worked full time and those who worked part time. When the father was self-employed, the mother took shorter leave than when he was not self-employed (40 weeks compared with 46 weeks) (data not shown).

### Mothers' leave affected by post-partum depression

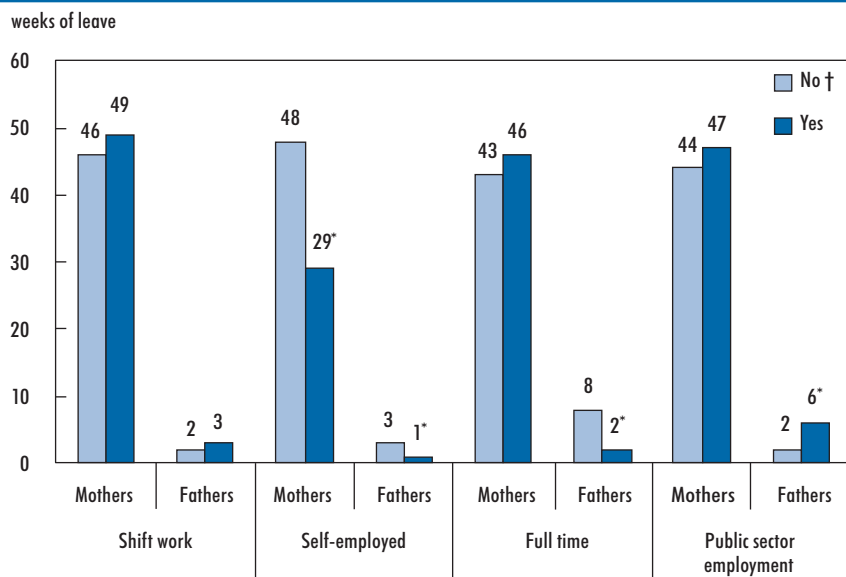
Mothers who reported post-partum depression (12% of the sample) had longer leaves (50 weeks), on average, than other mothers (43 weeks) (Chart 3). The effect on total leave time remained the same, however, even after considering the child's sex, whether the child was first born, health characteristics, and the mother's age, income and education (Table A.2). Maternal depression had a significant effect on increasing the length of paid but not unpaid leave (data not shown).

Among children living outside Quebec, those born prematurely (11% of the sample) had mothers who reported taking longer total leave—mothers of children born prematurely took an average of 49 weeks, compared with 43 weeks for other mothers (Chart 3). However, the association between premature birth and length of leave was not significant once mothers' income and education, and other child health factors, were considered. If the child was part of a multiple birth (2% of the sample), received special medical care (15%), or was reported to be in good, fair, or poor health at birth (13%), no significant differences were found in mothers' total length of leave (Table A.2).

### Self-employed fathers take shorter leave

For children living outside Quebec, certain aspects of fathers' employment at the time of the survey were related to the total length of their leave. Fathers who worked full time took a shorter total leave than those who worked part time (Chart 2) and specifically took shorter paid leave, compared with fathers who worked part time.

**Chart 2 Among children with self-employed parents and children with fathers who work full time, parents take fewer weeks of leave**



† reference group

\* statistically significant difference from reference group at  $p \leq 0.05$

Note: Includes only children living outside Quebec.

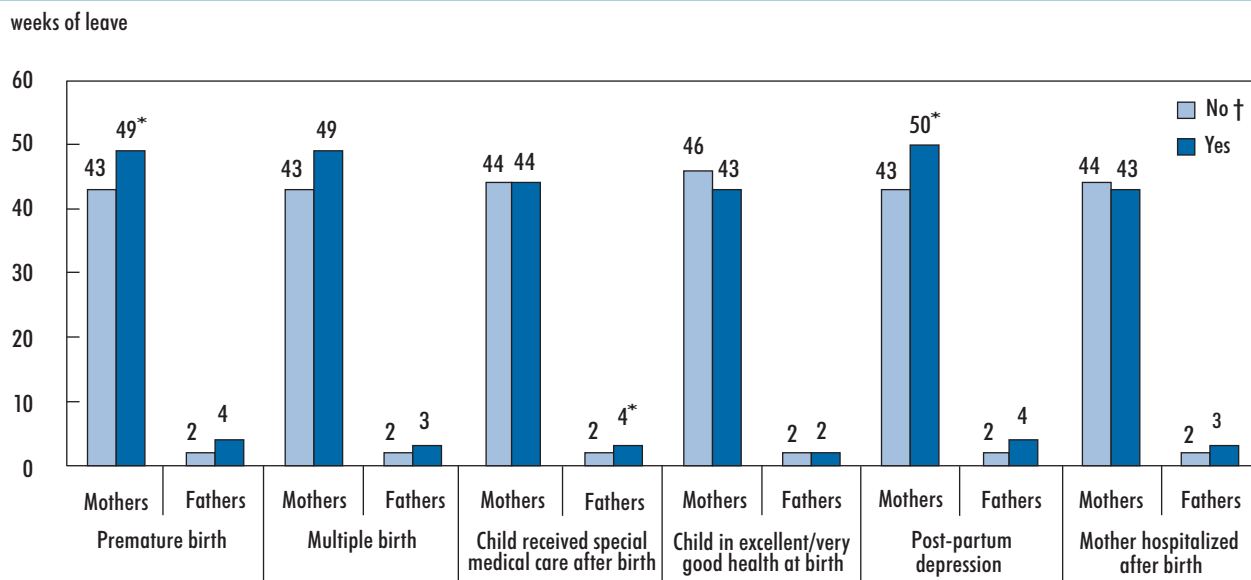
Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Young Canadians, 2010.

Fathers who were self-employed took shorter total leave compared with those who were not self-employed. This remained the case regardless of the child's sex, whether the child was first born, the mother's age, and the father's income, education and employment (Table A.1). In addition, the total length of leave was longer among fathers in the public sector (Chart 2).

**Children with special medical needs at birth have fathers who take longer leave**

Children with special medical needs at birth had fathers who took longer leave (3.7 weeks) compared with other children (2.2 weeks) (Chart 3). This difference was significant for paid leave but not for unpaid leave. However, the effect of the child's special medical needs on the total length of the father's leave disappeared once child and maternal health factors were considered

**Chart 3 Among children born prematurely and children with mothers reporting post-partum depression, mothers take longer leave**



† reference group

\* statistically significant difference from reference group at  $p \leq 0.05$

Note: Includes only children living outside Quebec.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Young Canadians, 2010.

(Table A.2), which suggests that this association may be accounted for by other child or parent characteristics (e.g., the father's income).

However, fathers took shorter total leave when the child was reported to be in good, fair, or poor health at birth, compared to being in excellent or very good health, when controlling for the child's sex, whether the child was first-born, maternal age, and paternal education and income. Children who were in good, fair or poor health at birth were more likely to live in a home with a single income earner than were children in excellent or very good health. Also, children who were reported to be in good, fair or poor health at birth were not necessarily the same children as those who were reported to require special medical needs at birth.

## Summary

According to the 2010 Survey of Young Canadians, the vast majority (90%) of Canadian children aged 1 to 3 years living outside Quebec had mothers who took some type of leave from work at the time of the child's birth or adoption. One-quarter (26%) of these children had fathers who reported taking leave. The average length of time on leave was 44 weeks for mothers and 2.4 weeks for fathers. This leave time is often a combination of paid and unpaid leave. Although the current study cannot address income replacement or eligibility for government programs (CEIP/QPIP), the length of a parent's leave can be affected by their entitlements to leave, particularly paid leave.<sup>16</sup>

Among children living in Quebec whose mothers were working prior to their birth or adoption, almost all had mothers who took leave (99%), with most (97%) taking paid leave. About three-quarters (76%) of children in Quebec had fathers who took leave. In terms of the total length of leave taken by parents in Quebec, mothers took about 5 weeks more leave and fathers about 3 weeks more leave than their counterparts elsewhere in Canada.

Leave differed according to mothers' and fathers' employment characteristics at the time of the survey, and child and maternal health at the time of the birth or adoption. Self-employment was particularly relevant: both mothers and fathers who were self-employed took shorter leaves, even after considering the child's sex, whether the child was first-born, the mother's age, and parental education and income. Among children whose mothers reported post-partum depression, mothers took longer leave. The findings suggest that parental employment characteristics and child and maternal health affect the amount of leave time parents take from work to spend with their child at the time of the birth or adoption.



**Leanne C. Findlay** is a senior social researcher and **Dafna E. Kohen** is a principal research analyst in the Health Analysis Division of Statistics Canada.

1. Brooks-Gunn, J., W.-J. Han and J. Waldfogel. 2002. "Maternal employment and child cognitive outcomes in the first three years of life: the NICHD study of early child care." *Child Development*. Vol. 73, no. 4; Almqvist, A.-L. 2008. "Why most Swedish fathers and few French fathers use paid parental leave: an exploratory qualitative study of parents." *Fathering*. Vol. 6, no. 2.
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9. Differences with previous Canadian findings comparing the length of fathers' leave may be due to differences in the analysis strategy. This study considers the average length of time taken by all fathers, including those who do not take leave at all, whereas Marshall (2008) considered the length of CEIP/QPIP benefits only among those who claimed such benefits.
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11. At the time of the survey, self-employed parents would not have been eligible for CEIP. However, given changes in eligibility that allow self-employed individuals to contribute, future research might examine the impact of self-employment on leave.
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**Table A.1 Linear regression predicting length of leave, by employment characteristics, children aged 1 to 3 years living outside Quebec**

	Total number of weeks on leave	
	Mothers	Fathers
	<b>beta</b>	
Shift work	3.77	-0.29
Self-employed	-19.61**	-1.08*
Full-time work	2.24	-2.79
Public sector employment	-1.17	3.86**

\* statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$

\*\* statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.001$

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Young Canadians, 2010.

**Table A.2 Linear regression predicting length of leave, by child and maternal health, children aged 1 to 3 years living outside Quebec**

	Total number of weeks on leave	
	Mothers	Fathers
	<b>beta</b>	
Premature birth	3.42	1.53
Multiple birth	5.11	-1.18
Child received special care after birth	-2.80	2.15
Good/fair/poor health of child at birth (versus excellent/very good)	0.41	-2.59**
Mother hospitalized after birth	-0.61	0.69
Post-partum depression	7.02*	2.09

\* statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$

\*\* statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Young Canadians, 2010.