



CURRENT STATS ON PATERNITY LEAVE AND FATHERS' USE OF PARENTAL LEAVE AND INCOME SUPPORT IN CANADA AND QUÉBEC

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A. The Policy Context – Access to Leave and Benefits

1. Parental Leave (Unpaid, job protected leave) is provided in Provincial Employment Standards Legislation for most employees (and under the Canada Labour Code for those employed in federally regulated industries). In most provinces and territories, 35 to 37 weeks of leave is provided for each parent or shared between parents in jurisdictions such as Alberta where leave is an entitlement per family.

2. Outside of Québec, income replacement while on leave is available to new parents (biological and adopting parents) as a Special Benefit under Employment Insurance. Currently, fathers can take all or a portion of 35 weeks of parental leave benefits. The 35 weeks of benefits is available to either or both parents (shared), to a maximum of 35 weeks. To be eligible for EI parental benefits, fathers must:

- have had 600 hours of continuous (insurable) employment in the last 52 weeks and
- have their normal weekly earnings reduced by more than 40% when on leave and caring for a newborn or newly adopted child.

* Self-employed mothers/fathers outside of Québec can voluntarily opt in to the EI Special Benefits system. To be eligible for parental benefits, they must have registered one year previously and qualify if they have reduced the amount of time devoted to their business by more than 40 per cent because of childbirth/caring, paid contributions to the regime, and earned at least \$2,000 from self-employment in the reference period of the previous 52 weeks.

3. Collective agreements and employers' willingness to provide longer periods of leave and/or additional financial support (top-ups) may also influence fathers' access to parental leave. (Fathers may use paid sick days, vacation days, personal leave, or time in lieu for parental leave purposes – This is a form of "invisible" parental leave and is not counted in official statistics.) Fathers may use these strategies to avoid a reduction in family income and/or to mitigate perceptions that they are not as committed to their work as other male employees in workplaces that don't support fathers taking parental leave.

4. EI Benefit amounts:

Employment insurance parental leave benefits are calculated as 55% of an individual's average insurable earnings up to a maximum amount. As of January 1, 2015, that maximum amount is based on \$49,500 of insurable earnings per year. Recipients of parental leave benefits can receive a maximum of \$ 524 per week. This amount is taxable. If the mother (or same-sex partner) did not claim EI maternity leave benefits, there is a 2-week waiting period, during which benefits are waived.

5. Québec is the only province in Canada that specifically provides paternity leave as part of the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP), administered under the responsibility of the Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et Solidarité sociale. The QPIP was introduced in 2006. It provides more generous and more flexible options. Paternity leave may be taken for 3 weeks at 75 per cent of average weekly earnings or for 5 weeks at 70 per cent up to an earnings ceiling of \$70,000 per year. Paternity leave is exclusively for fathers and may be taken in addition to all or part of the parental leave that may be shared between parents.

B. The Uptake of Parental Leave and Benefits among Fathers in Canada

Statistics on the uptake of parental leave and benefits derive from several sources, with each providing a slightly different picture. Statistics Canada provides national survey data on the number of fathers who take (or intend to take) parental leave and benefits; Employment and Social Development Canada and the Employment Insurance Commission provide information about the number and types of parental benefit claims under the EI system, which excludes parents in Québec. Additional data regarding use of the QPIP helps to round out the picture of fathers' use of parental and paternity leave.

1. Intentions:

According to Statistics Canada, for all provinces combined (i.e., including Québec) in 2013, **30.8% of recent fathers claimed or intended to take Parental leave**, an increase from 25.4% in 2012, and a more similar figure to the 29.3 percentage estimate obtained in 2011. These data obscure major differences in the take-up of Parental leave by fathers in and outside of Québec. Specifically, outside of Québec only 12.2 per cent of recent fathers took or intended to claim parental leave in 2013, either on their own or by sharing some of the leave and benefits with their spouse/partner.

2. EI Parental Benefit Claims:

Annual Employment Insurance Monitoring and Assessment reports have shown a steady increase in the take-up rate of parental benefits among eligible fathers in Canada (excluding Québec), from 9 per cent in 2004 to 11 per cent in 2011, suggesting that more couples (albeit still a minority) are sharing benefits. The most recent report indicates that in 2013/2014 **fathers (excluding those in Québec) accounted for 13.3 per cent of those who claimed biological Parental leave benefits and approximately 20 per cent of those who claimed Parental leave benefits following an adoption.**

3. The Duration of Fathers' Leave Benefits

On average, fathers who receive benefits following a birth take significantly fewer weeks than women who receive benefits. According to the 2013/2014 EI Monitoring and Assessment report, among fathers outside of Quebec, those who received a biological parental benefit had an average of 16.1 weeks of benefits (compared to mothers who received, on average 31.7 weeks of benefits). Adopting fathers who received benefits did so for an average of 19 weeks, compared to adopting mothers who received, on average, 29.5 weeks of benefits).

4. And in Quebec...

In **Québec**, take-up of leave by fathers was already higher in 2004, with 22 per cent of fathers using some leave compared with nine per cent elsewhere in Canada. The Paternity and Parental leave scheme introduced in 2006 has had a substantial impact on fathers' participation: in 2006, 56 per cent of eligible fathers in **Québec** took a period of Paternity and/or Parental leave, rising in 2012 to 78 per cent. Some 60,000 fathers use the regime each year and of this number, two thirds of fathers take the whole of the Paternity leave (three or five weeks, depending on the option chosen), while a third also take some Parental leave weeks. On average, in 2013 fathers receiving QPIP benefits took 13 weeks of combined benefits (Paternity and Parental); though this is less than the weeks taken by the smaller proportion of fathers taking Parental leave elsewhere in Canada. The overall participation rate for fathers in the QPIP is 86.6 per cent according to QPIP data.

Meanwhile, the introduction of the QPIP (Québec Parental Insurance Plan), which includes leave that is exclusively for fathers, has had a huge impact on the number of fathers claiming or intending to claim leave in **Québec**, almost tripling in number since the introduction of the plan: from 27.8 per cent in 2005 to 83.0 per cent in 2013.

Further Thoughts

Many factors influence fathers' behaviour when it comes to parental leave. Individual values, gender roles and personal values frame both partners' desires and expectations. Financial resources and family needs can constrain options, and workplace policies, practices and culture further influence what is possible or perhaps risky. Clearly, however, public policies play a strong role in making alternatives feasible and in shifting normative expectations. It is clear that the policies and funding mechanisms introduced in Québec have resulted in a different pattern of leave taking among fathers; one that European research studies suggests has the potential to profoundly influence long-term patterns of parental involvement and engagement. Outside Québec, the other factors mentioned above may have greater sway – suggesting that how couples negotiate their roles and how supportive workplaces are strongly influence whether and how new parents share earning and caring at a critical point in their lives.

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Sources:

Data obtained directly from the statistical services of the QPIP on February 20, 2014. See also Régime québécois d'assurance parentale (2011) *Sondage auprès des pères ayant eu recours au Régime québécois d'assurance parentale* (RQAP). Québec : RQAP

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