

# Beyond Gender: Initial Findings from a Canadian Comparative Research Program on Equality in Labour Market Based Family Care Policies

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# Outline

Part 1: Introduction

Part 2: Our Recent Research Findings

Part 3: Implications and Ways Forward

Part 4: Your Advice, Please

# 1 Introduction

# The Norm and the Scene

- Since 2001, the majority of mothers take a year of leave at > 55% wage replacement
- Our focus is the Rest of Canada (“ROC”) compared to Québec
- Canada is an “asymmetrical federation” and “patchwork quilt” of jurisdictional complexity
- Outside Québec there is a longstanding child care crisis

# Leaves: a tri-partite system

1. Government-sponsored leave **entitlement**
  - 14 Employment Standards Acts (13 Provincial/Territorial + Federal)
  
2. Government-sponsored leave **benefits**
  - 2 Employee-Employer Contributory Programs
    - 'Special Benefits' **WITHIN** (Un)Employment Insurance (EI) Program
    - 2006: Québec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP) (supplemented by investment income)
  
3. Employer-sponsored leave **benefits** (top-ups)

Background 2

# Government-sponsored leave entitlement

Requires a Period of Continuous Employment with the Same Employer

600hrs = 17wks for EI **Benefits** outside Québec

At least 52 weeks	At least 31 weeks	At least 20 weeks	At least 13 weeks	No minimum
Alberta	Manitoba	Newfoundland	Ontario	British Columbia
Nova Scotia		Prince Edward Island		New Brunswick
Yukon		Saskatchewan		Québec
Nunavut		Canada (24 weeks)		
Northwest Territory				

- Jurisdictional complexity
- Complaints to Provincial Human Rights Commissions of post-leave job loss

# History of Benefits

1. Mid-1990s EI: from 300 hours to 600 hours; from 67% wage compensation to 55%
2. 2001 EI: added 25 weeks PL for 35 total (2 more types of leave added more recently)
  - expansion “within a retracted envelope...” (p. 550)
  - Poised to do this again in 2016
3. 2006 – Québec Parental Insurance Plan created

(In press) Doucet, A. and McKay, L. “Parental Leave, Class Inequalities, and ‘Caring With’: An Ethics of Care Approach to Canadian Parental Leave Policy,” in *Caring for Children: Social Movements and Public Policy in Canada* edited by R.Langford, S. Prentice, and P. Albanese, Vancouver: UBC Press



## Background 4

# Comparing Benefit Programs

	<b>Canada EI</b>	<b>Québec Basic Plan</b>	<b>Québec Special Plan</b>
<b>Eligibility</b>	<b>600 hours</b>	\$2000 earnings (= 170 hours, minimum wage)	
<b>Self-employed workers</b>	<b>As of 2011<sup>1</sup></b>	Covered	
<b>Waiting Period</b>	<b>2 weeks per couple</b>	None	
<b><i>Weeks by wage-replacement rate (% of average earnings)</i></b>			
<b>Maternity</b>	<b>15 at 55%</b>	18 at 70%	15 at 75%
<b>Paternity</b>	<b>None</b>	5 at 70%	3 at 75%
<b>Parental (shared)</b>	<b>35 at 55%</b>	32 (7 at 70% + 25 at 55%)	25 at 75%
<b>Total weeks per couple</b>	<b>50</b>	55	43
<b>Adoption (shared)</b>	<b>35 at 55%</b>	(12 at 70% + 25 at 55%)	28 at 75%
<b>Low income (net annual income &lt;\$25,921)</b>	<b>Up to 80%</b>	Up to 80%	
<b>Maximum insurable earnings (2015)</b>	<b>\$524/week \$49,500/year</b>	\$894.22/week \$70,000/year	

1. Under EI the self-employed must register a year in advance of the claim, reduced the amount of time devoted to their business by more than 40% because of childbirth/caring, paid contributions, and earned at least \$6646 in the previous 52 weeks.

# 2 Our Study

# Federal Govt: “No Access Problem”

*“A total of 74.7% of mothers had insured income before giving birth to, or adopting their child...Among these insured mothers, 89.0% received maternity or parental benefits.” (ESDC, 2013/14)*

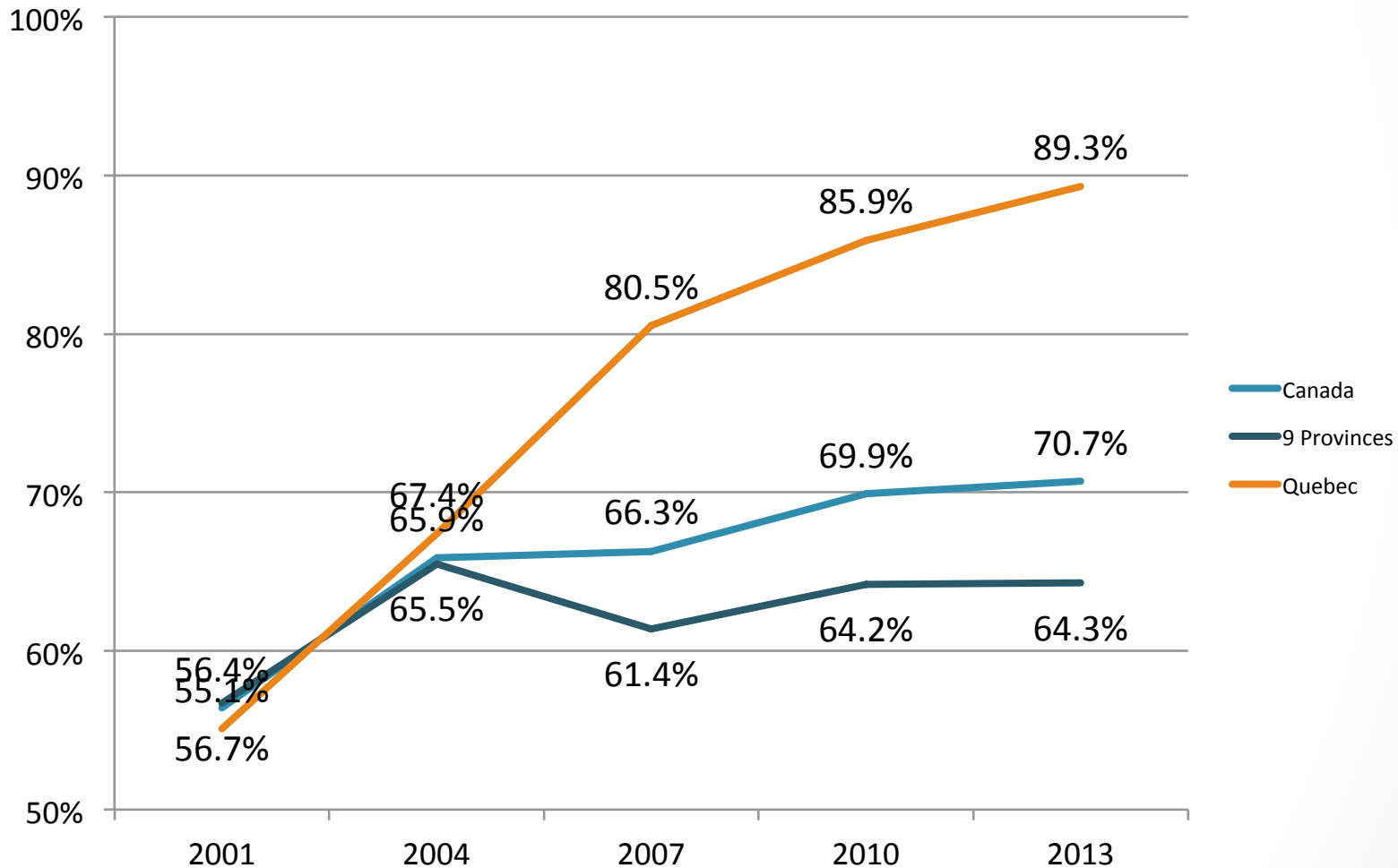
This measure of program success reflects:

- 1) The dominance and logic of EI benefits for unemployment designed for current, standard-employment workers.
- 2) A truism: Programs are found to be successful when success is measured by program criteria (current, insured employment).
- 3) The adequacy of program criteria are not scrutinized.

# Our Research: Access & Class

- Focuses on the labour market basis of leave policies
- Examining coverage for all mothers
- Employment Insurance Coverage Survey (only includes the provinces, off-reserve; only mothers asked directly)
- Research Questions:
  1. Is there a Parental-leave rich and Parental-leave poor divide in Canada?
  2. What difference has Québec's exit from the federal program made for families in this province?

Figure 1: Proportion of Mothers Receiving Maternity and/or Parental Benefits, Canada, Québec, and the Rest of Canada, 2001-2013



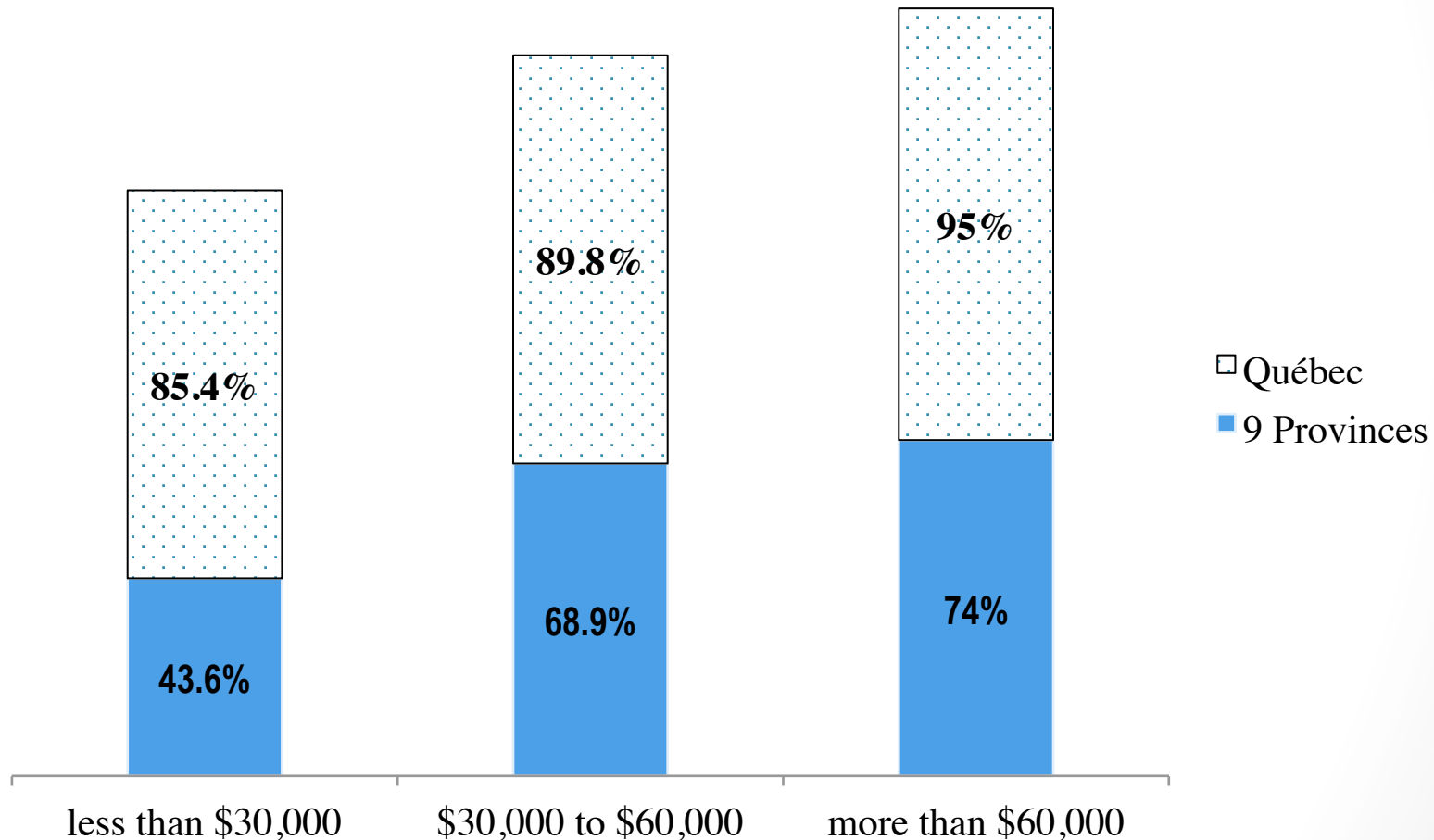
Source: EICS, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010 and 2013, custom tabulation, Statistics Canada

# Which Mothers? Which Families?

## Mothers Not Receiving Benefits could be:

- Eligible and not applying
- Ineligible, why?
  - Not entitled to leave under F/P/T law
  - Not contributing to EI (stay-at-home parent/uninsured work)
  - Self-employed (major program difference)
  - Contributed but insufficient hours (25% did not work enough hours to qualify)
  - Have or will contribute to EI, but not in the past 12m because a student, a postdoc, out of the country, etc.
- Two examples:
  - My cousin Joanne: student, part-time work, bed rest = no mat leave
  - Me: contributed for 10 years but student at birth = no mat leave
- We looked at household income

Figure 2: Proportion of Mothers who received Maternity and/or Parental Benefits by Household Income and Program, 2013



Source: EICS, 2013, custom tabulation, Statistics Canada

# 3 Implications and Ways Forward



# Implications

“In Canada, parental leaves...are unevenly supporting the social reproduction of higher earners.” (p. 543)

To what extent can inequality be reduced through policy design, given the labour market basis of leave programs?

# Current Changes to EI Benefits

The federal government proposes to:

- Extend duration to 18 months
- Add flexibility (non-contiguous periods)
- Add paternity leave

Our analysis:

- With 36% of mothers excluded, and 61% of mothers in low-income households excluded (2013), inequality of access is the #1 problem

**We estimate that the federal government proposals will have NO impact on more than 1/3 of children.**

# Progressive Models & Ideological Framings

- Universal Maternity/Parental Leave Benefits
  - Flat rate minimum allowances in Finland, Sweden, Norway, Spain & Austria (and in other countries...)
- A Life course approach? Belgium's Time Credit system
- Guaranteed Annual Income
  - Why through leaves instead of the Canada Child Tax Benefit?
- Ideological Shift? To centre the care recipient

# Relevant Recent Recommendations to the Labour Movement

Québec's entitlement and QPIP for all of Canada, with modifications for greater socioeconomic equality of access:

1. Eligibility based on any period of contributions
2. Add a flat rate minimum allowance for ineligible parents
3. Monitor and equalize socioeconomic duration and wage replacement rate differences

# 4 Your Advice, Please

# Thank you, The End

Great ideas are always welcome:

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