

# Who counts and how are they counted?

Issues in Measuring Parental Leave *Take-Up* in Canada

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# Outline

1. Theoretical Tools
2. The Case of Canada
3. Measuring Take-Up Two Ways
4. Analysis & Implications
5. Conclusion

# Theoretical Tools

- **Epistemology**

- Sociology and Anthropology of Quantification and Metrics

- Espeland, Adams (2017), Sally Merry's (2016) *The Seduction of Quantification*

- **Agnotology**

- Ignorance & Absences (McGoey, Crossiant)

- **Governance**

- To assess and judge
- Merry, 2016: "A form of power"

# Complex, 2 Tiered, Tri-partite

## 1. **Separate & Uneven: 14 Government-sponsored unpaid, legal, job protected leave entitlement laws**

(13 Provincial/Territorial + Federal; Co-ordinated in Québec)

- 0-52 week continuous employment with employer
- Complaints of discrimination (job loss) to Human Rights Commissions
- No systematic data collected; Limited data; No public reports to date

## 2. **2-Tiered: For 11 years, two Government-sponsored, Employee-Employer Contributory wage-replacement, leave benefit programs**

- Federal: 'Special Benefits' WITHIN (Un)Employment Insurance (EI) Program
- 2006: Québec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP) 'Two solitudes'; Federal: Annual press release

## 3. **Employer-sponsored leave benefits (top-ups)**

- Limited data

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

# 2017 Addition to Federal Benefits

- Extend parental leave; with maternity leave the duration = 18 months (from 12)
- No additional money; 33% for 18m (or, current plan: 55% for 12m)
- ~~Add flexibility (non-contiguous periods)~~
- ~~Add paternity leave~~

## For Whom?

# 'Leaves' Equity Paradox

*“...benefits replicate economic inequality in terms of women’s differential access to employment and income.”*

*Pulkingham and van der Gaag, 2004*

# Who Counts? How are they Counted?

Québec: leaves for 87.4% of all births (2014)

Federal Government: Employment Insurance Coverage Survey

**PRESS RELEASE** “[Nationally,] 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.”

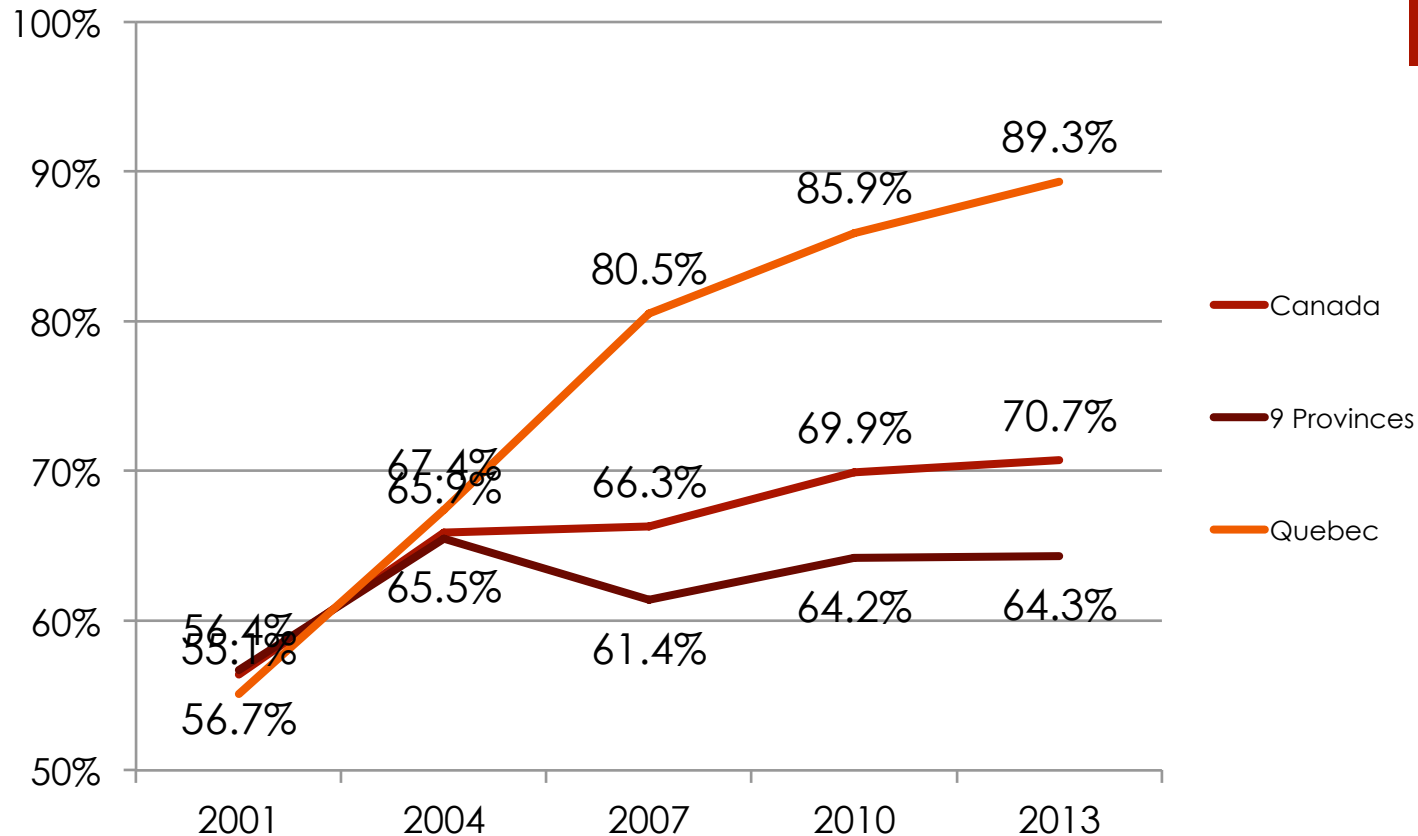
**“No Access Problem”**

**REPORT** “Overall, **66.5%** of mothers with a child up to 12 months received maternity and/or parental benefits in 2014, which represents two-thirds of **all new mothers**.”



# Alternative: By Program & Different Denominator

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

# Analysis

## 1. Current take-up measures are limited

- Tendency to measure paid leave (benefit programs), not all leaves (legal entitlement to unpaid leave) (but progress)
- Differences between benefit programs is obscured
- Survey excludes 3 territories and Indigenous living on reserves

## 2. Progress on reporting gender take-up of benefits

- But survey asks mothers about fathers
- Lack of data on social class conceals differences among genders & families

## 3. Commensurability Issues

- Denominators Differ & Reflect Different Program Aims
  - “recently insured” (definition debatable) vs. all
  - Québec: aims to be universal; reports take-up by “all”
  - Federal: aims to cover most, not all; reports take-up by “insured”

# Implications & Suggestions

- **In/Visibility**
  - Gender: Raise the (independent) visibility of fathers
  - Class: Raise the visibility of socioeconomic class differences in take-up (plus replacement rate and duration)
- **Carefully Consider Commensurability Issues**

# The Ethics of Quantification

*“...the real easily becomes coextensive with what is measurable.*

*An ethics of quantification should view this ontology as productive but partial...*

*Measurement can help us see complicated things in ways that make it possible to intervene in them productively...but measurement also can narrow our appraisal of value and relevance to what can be measured easily, at the expense of other ways of knowing...”*

*Espeland and Stevens, 2008*

*Sally Merry’s answer:*

*Tie quantitative to qualitative research*

Thank you

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