

*“Il vaut mieux être mère au Québec, mais...”
Social inequalities in access to parental benefits in
Québec and Canada*

Sophie Mathieu, PhD

SSHRC postdoctoral fellow, Brock University



The two masterpieces of Québec's 1997 family policy

1. The *centres de la petite enfance* (CPEs)/early childhood centres

❖ Low-cost, high quality childcare

2. Québec's Parental Insurance Program (QPIP)

❖ Announced in 1997, but introduced in 2006

❖ The QPIP is an **income replacement program**:

✓ Eligibility depends on labour market participation

✓ The amount of the benefits depend on previous income

Basic and Special plans under QPIP

	Québec Basic Plan (78.9% of recipients in 2017)	Québec Special Plan (21.2% of recipients in 2017)
Overview	Longer leave, at a smaller percentage of income	Shorter leave, at a higher percentage of income
Eligibility	\$2,000 earnings	
Self-employed workers	Covered	
Waiting Period	None	
<i>Weeks by wage-replacement rate (% of average earnings)</i>		
Maternity	18 at 70%	15 at 75%
Paternity	5 at 70%	3 at 75%
Parental (shared)	32 (7 at 70% + 25 at 55%)	25 at 75%
Adoption (shared)	(12 at 70% + 25 at 55%)	28 at 75%
Maximum insurable earnings (2018)	\$74,000/year \$996/week	\$74,000/year \$1,067/week

Comparing QPIP and EI parental benefits in Canada

Parental benefits in Québec are:

- * More accessible
 - Eligibility criteria are easier to meet
 - No waiting period

- * Until recent changes in parental benefits, QPIP was more flexible
 - Parents have the options between basic and special benefits

- * More generous
 - Higher replacement rate and maximum insurable earning

- * More egalitarian
 - Lower-income households have better access in Québec than in the other provinces
 - Fathers can take up to 5 weeks of paid benefits

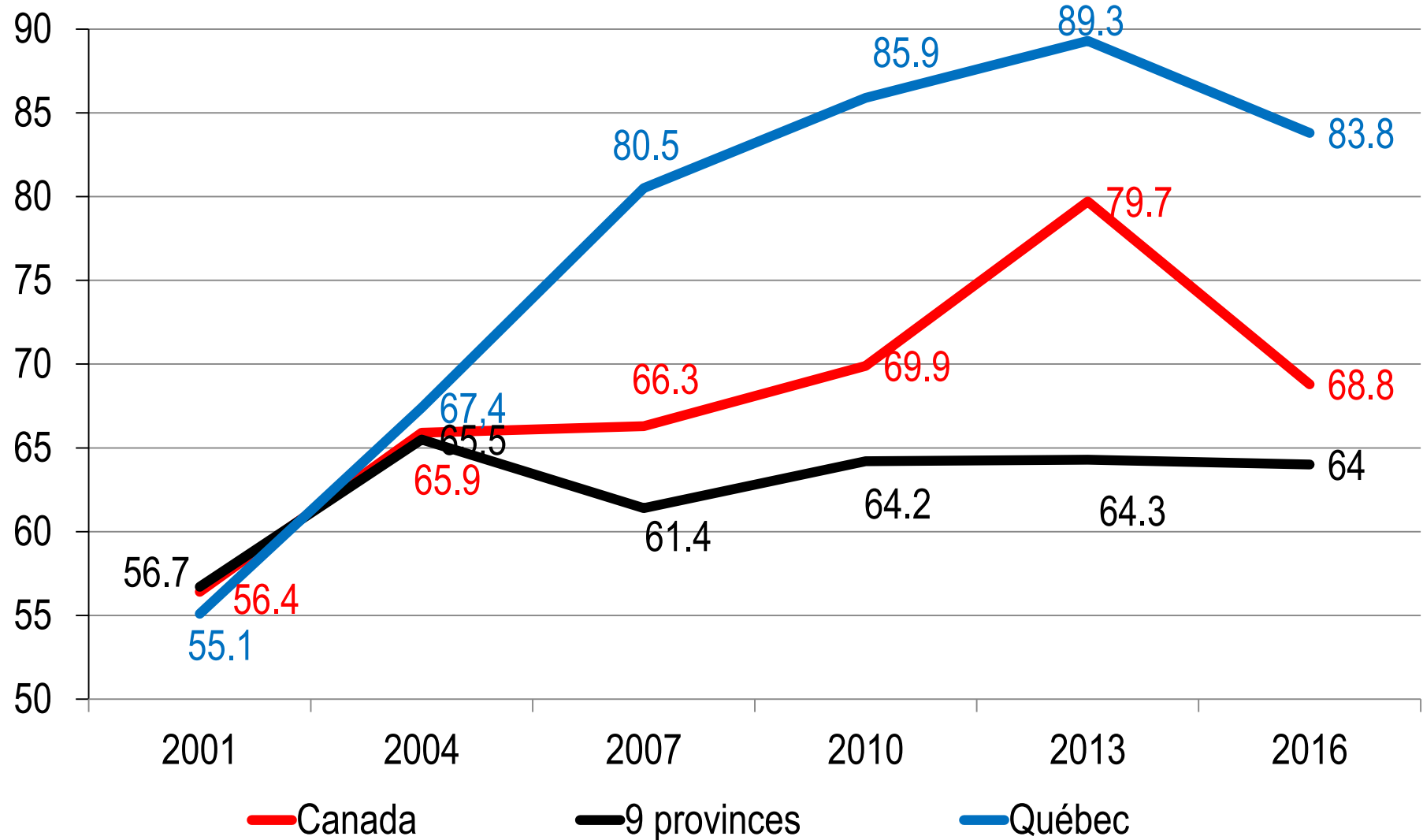
A few more observations

- * 88% of all births were covered by QPIP in 2017
- * 10% of families who received benefits had the father as the only recipient

Inequalities among recipients:

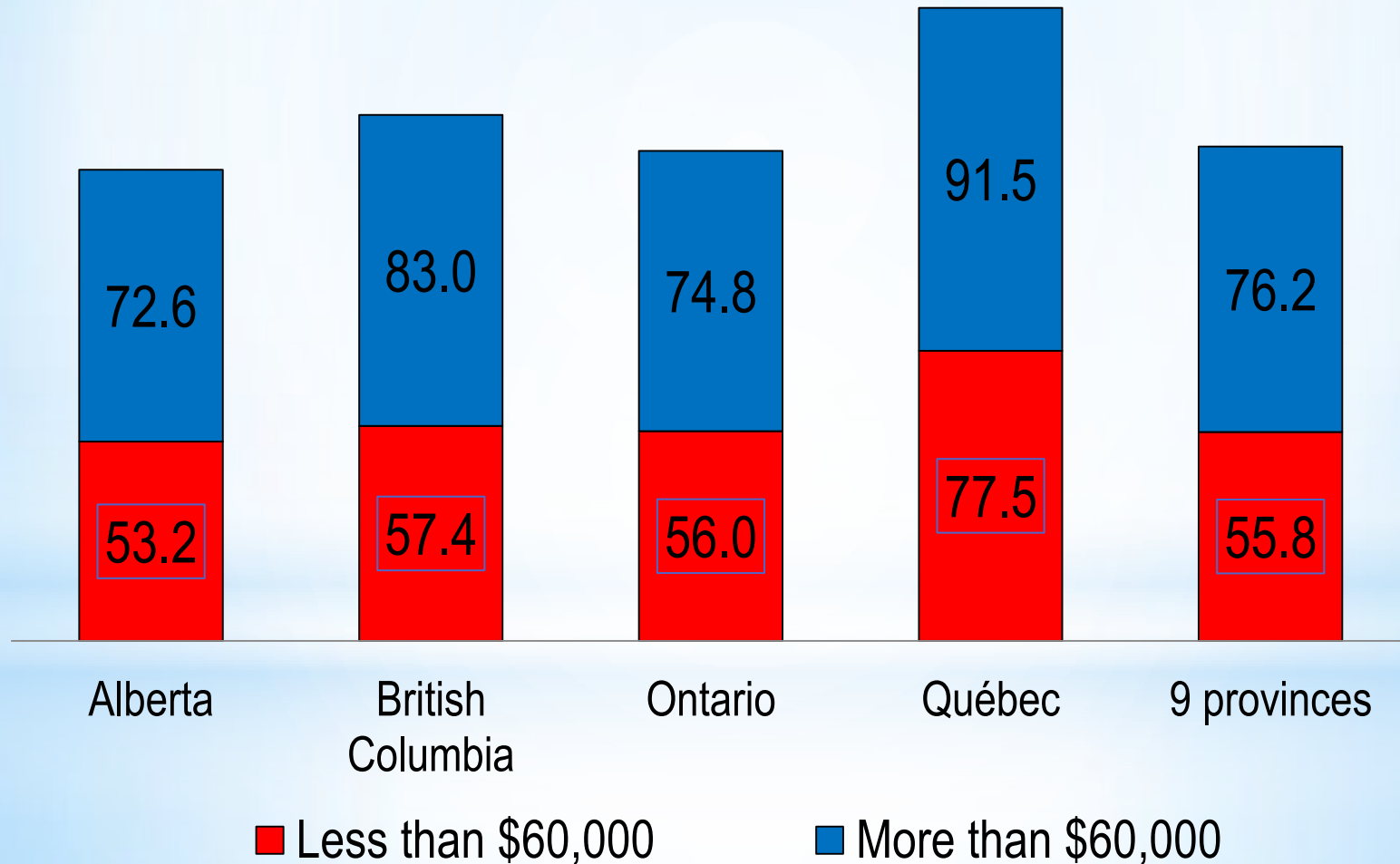
- * Adopting parents versus biological parents
- * Same-sex couples: lesbian versus gay couples

Proportion of mothers receiving maternity and/or parental benefits in Canada, Québec and 9 provinces, 2001-2016



Source: Statistics Canada EICS 2000, 2004, 2007, 2010 and 2016, custom tabulation.

Proportion of mothers receiving maternity and/or parental benefits by household income, Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, Québec, 2016.



Source: Statistics Canada, EICS, 2016

Bill 174 (introduced on March 22nd)

Main measures :

- * Extension of the **period** within which benefits may be paid
 - Maternity: from 18 to 25 weeks
 - Parental, paternity and adoption: from 52 to 104 weeks

- * Increase in the maximum number of weeks of benefits
 - in the event of a multiple pregnancy
 - for adoption benefits

- * Possibility of building a bank of leave days with the benefits that were not paid (5 or 10 days)

Issues

- * Access to benefits is still a concern
- * Decrease in the take-up of benefits in 2016
- * Bill 174: should giving more flexibility the priority?
- * Gender equality: What do fathers do when on leave?