

*Puzzles and paradoxes in fathers' use of
parental benefits in Québec*

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Background to presentation

1. Papers published in 2016 and 2020

- McKay, L., S. Mathieu and A. Doucet. 2016. “Parental-leave rich and parental-leave poor”? Access In/Equality in Canadian Labour-market-based, Temporary Leave Care Policies”, *Journal of Industrial Relations* 58 (4), 543-562.
- Mathieu, S., A. Doucet and L. McKay. 2020. “Parental Benefits and Inter-provincial Differences: the Case of Four Canadian Provinces”, *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 45(2), 169-194.

2. Paper in progress on the take-up of parental benefits by fathers in Québec

Québec parental insurance plan (QPIP) has been praised for offering the most generous, flexible and gender-egalitarian benefits in Canada.

- But there are nonetheless important inequalities in the receipt of benefits (Mathieu and Tremblay, 2020), most notably with regards to gender.

Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP) in 2020 (before the 2021 changes with Bill 51)

	Québec basic plan (longer leave/lower replacement rate)	Québec special plan (shorter leave/higher replacement rate)
Eligibility	\$2000 earnings (approx. € 1,690)	\$2000 earnings (approx. € 1,690)
Maternity benefits	18 at 70%	15 at 75%
Paternity benefits	5 at 70%	3 at 75%
Shareable parental benefits	32 (7 at 70% + 25 at 55%)	25 at 75%
Total number of weeks	55	43
Adoption benefits	37 weeks (12 at 70% + 25 at 55%)	28 at 75%
Maximum insurable earnings (2020)	\$78,500 (approx. € 66,400)	\$78,500 (approx. € 66,400)

Research question



How has fathers' take-up of paternity and parental benefits - and duration of leaves - changed since the QPIP program was implemented in 2006?



Fathers and the take-up of benefits

We know from previous research that:

- mothers tend to claim parental benefits as an extension of maternity benefits
- a high replacement rate and individual entitlements are key determinants of father's uptake of benefits
- despite a favorable regulatory framework, workplace cultures and gendered conceptions of family roles may have negative effects on take-up of benefits by fathers

Method



1. Analysis of administrative data from Conseil de gestion de l'assurance parentale (CGAP) that manages QPIP and ensures that work income replacement benefits are paid to new parents.
2. The data thus **only includes births covered by QPIP**.
3. The CGAP does not collect data on QPIP benefit recipients according to race/ethnicity, religion, number of children, or education level.
4. The CGAP does not have information on parents who **do not** receive benefits nor the reasons regarding exclusion from the program.

Overview of findings

****Our findings show two puzzles in the take-up of benefits among fathers in Québec****

- Between 2006-2018: Despite an increase in the take-up of paternity benefits...
 - The **proportion** of couples that split shareable parental benefits has increased slowly, but not very significantly.
 - The average **duration** of shareable parental benefits for fathers has **decreased**.

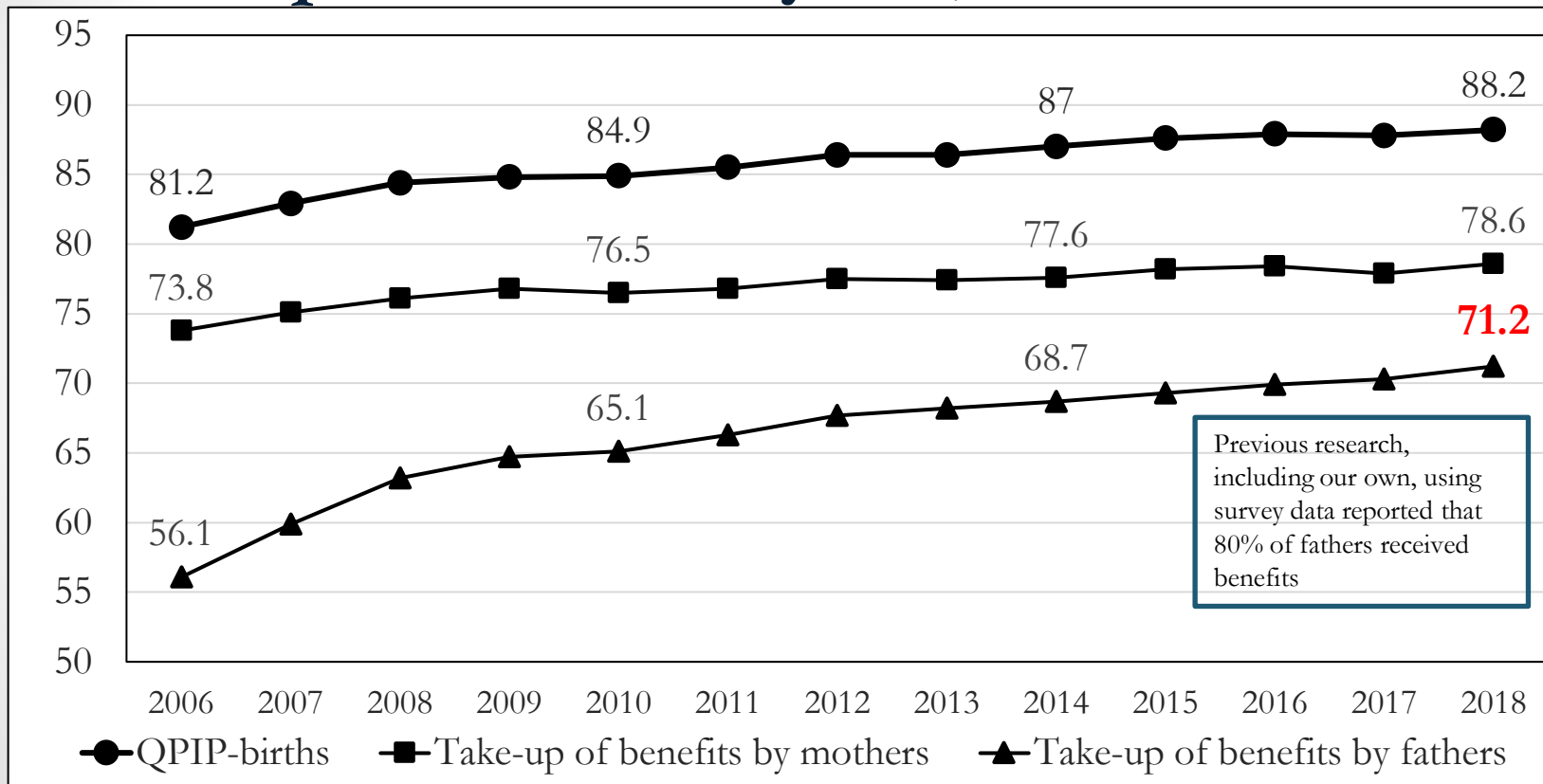
Key finding (1)

An increasing proportion of births are covered by QPIP since 2006 and an increasing proportion of Québec fathers have received benefits.

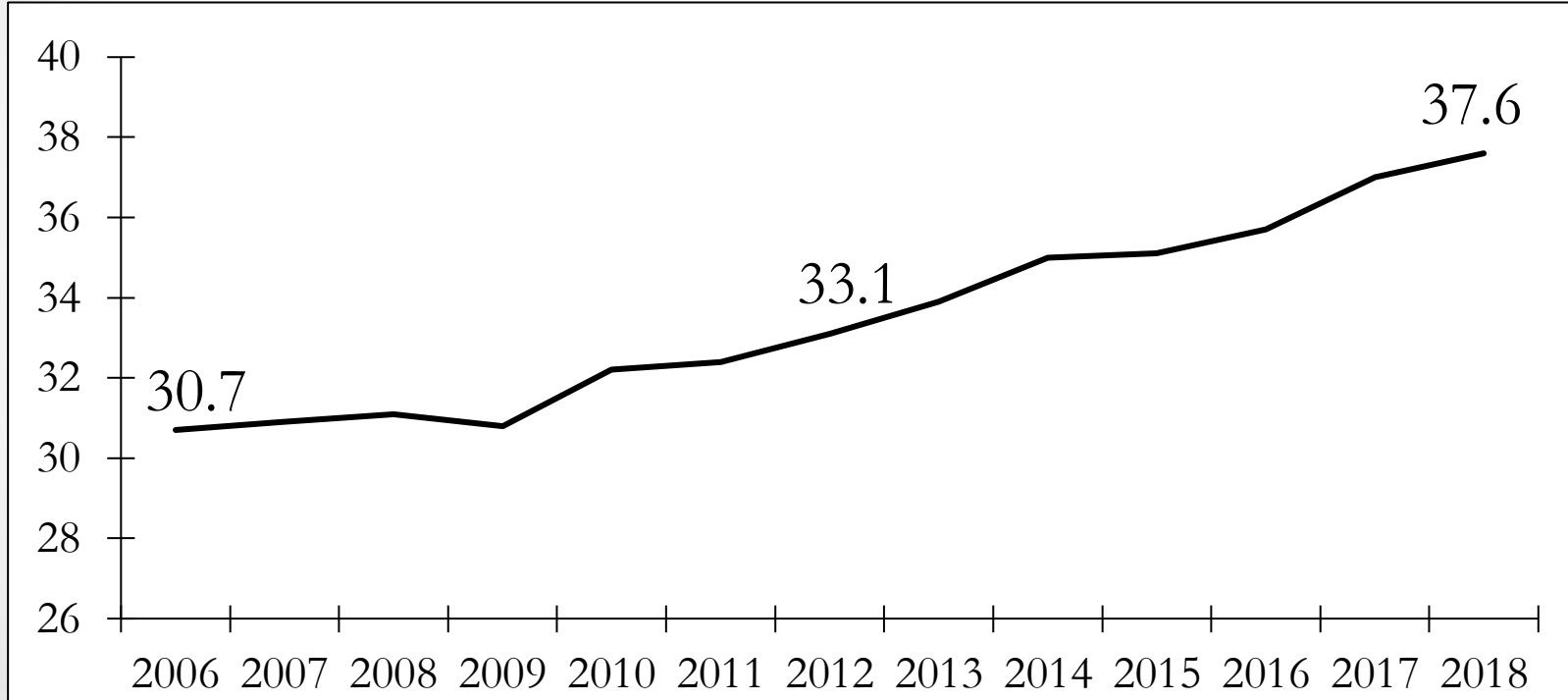
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administrative data show that less fathers receive benefits (71%) than what has previously been reported using survey data (80%).

Participation rate to QPIP (for births) and take-up of benefits by sex, 2006 to 2018



Proportion of fathers who received at least 1 week of parental benefits, 2006-2018

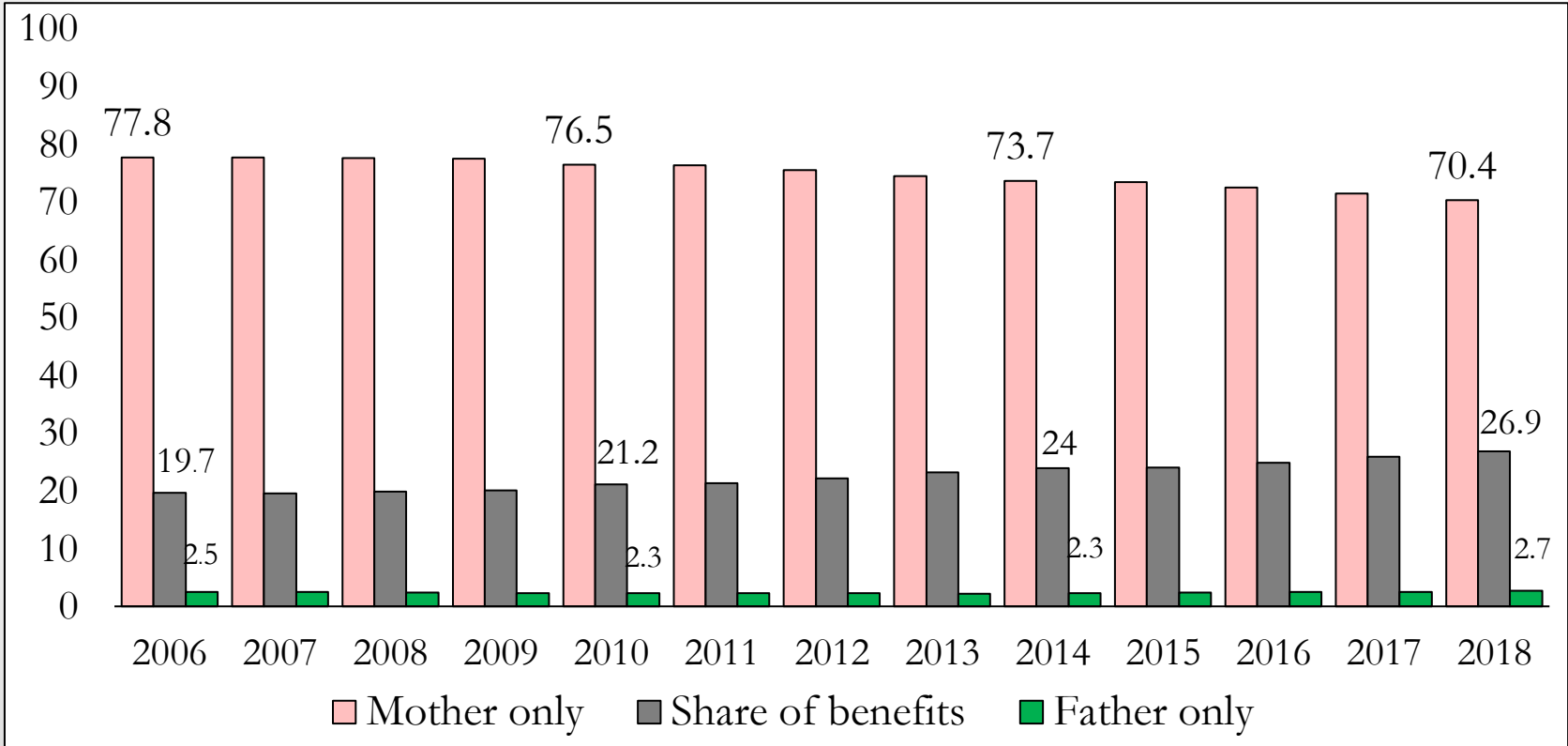


Key finding (2)

The share of parental benefits is unequal.

- Fathers take **at least one week** of parental benefits in less than 27% of couples.
 - In more than 73% of couples, fathers do not take parental benefits.
- The norm is for fathers to take paternity benefits (3-5 weeks) but parental benefits are still considered to “belong” to mothers.

Share of parental benefits when both parents receive QPIP benefits, 2006-2018



Key finding (3)

Duration: Fathers' share of parental benefits, **in terms of weeks**, decreased between 2006 and 2018.

Average duration of shareable parental benefits in 2006 and 2018 (in weeks)

	Mother			Father		
	2006	2018	Variation	2006	2018	Variation
Basic plan (longer benefits, paid at a lower replacement rate)	23.4	24.7	5.6%	7.7	6.6	-14.3%
Special plan (shorter benefits, paid at a higher replacement rate)	16.4	17.9	9.1%	7.5	6.3	-16%

Recent changes in QPIP with Bill 51

	Basic plan	Special plan
Period during which benefits can be used	78 weeks (instead of 52 weeks as prior to Bill 51)	
Additional weeks of benefits	4 weeks paid at 55% when each parent uses a minimum of 8 weeks of sharable parental benefits (out of 32)	3 weeks paid at 55% when each parent uses a minimum of 6 weeks of sharable parental benefits (out of 32)
Exclusive benefits for multiple births or solo parents (starting in Jan. 2022)	5 weeks (for each parent in case of multiple birth) at 70%	3 weeks (for each parent in case of multiple birth) at 75%

Insights on recent policy changes and new research questions

- The additional weeks of shareable benefits (at low wage replacement) will likely not convince couples to split parental benefits
- How does remote work affect the take-up of benefits among mothers and fathers?
- How does the shortage of childcare spaces affect the duration of parental leave in Québec?

Thank you/merci!

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