

EARLY CHILDHOOD — WEEK —

November 18–24, 2024
grandesemaine.com

KEY INFORMATION

- Date:** Monday, November 18, to Sunday, November 24, 2024 (9th year)
- Who:** 23 partners and allies from across Quebec, representing thousands of early childhood development advocates who are determined to make this vision a reality
- Website:** grandesemaine.com
- Social media:**
- Facebook & Instagram: @Collectifpetiteenfance
 - Twitter: @CollectifPE
 - LinkedIn: @Collectif petite enfance
 - #EarlyChildhoodWeek2024 #MakeEarlyChildhoodAPriority

THEME — GEOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC DISPARITIES

Every child, no matter where in the province they were born or where they are growing up, should have an equal opportunity to thrive and succeed.

***Together, we can level the playing field for all young children.
Let's help them achieve their full potential.***

In a society as rich as ours, we cannot allow geographic and socioeconomic disparities to negatively impact the future of our youngest citizens.

KEY MESSAGES — GEOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC DISPARITIES

Geographic disparities:

- The 2022 edition of the Quebec Survey of Child Development in Kindergarten (QSCDK)¹ showed that certain regions of Quebec have significantly higher proportions of children considered “vulnerable” in at least one area of development.
 - Rates are particularly high in the Côte-Nord, Estrie, Laval and Outaouais regions.
- Research shows that children living in rural areas are much more likely to experience child protection involvement than their urban counterparts.
 - Children in rural areas are 27% more likely to have a child protection report accepted and to become the subject of an assessment.
 - Children in rural areas are 29% more likely to be found, through the assessment, to be at risk of compromised safety and/or development.
 - Children in rural areas are 52% more likely to be placed in care.²

¹ Ducharme, Amélie, Jesseca Paquette and Sonia Daly (2023). Quebec Survey of Child Development in Kindergarten, 2022. Portrait statistique pour le Québec et ses régions administratives, [Online], Quebec, Institut de la statistique du Québec, p. 153 [statistique.quebec.ca/fr/fichier/enquete-- quebecoise- developpement-enfants-maternelle-2022.pdf]

² Esposito, T., Chabot, M., Calwell, J., Webb, C., Delaye, A., Fluke, J., Trocmé, N., Bywaters, P. (2022). *Op. cit.*

Socioeconomic disparities:

- The 2022 edition of the Quebec Survey on the Preschool Path of Kindergarten Students (QSPPKS) confirms that there has been a rise in the likelihood that a child from a low-income household will be considered “vulnerable” in four of the five development areas (likelihood of vulnerability in the area of “emotional maturity” is not higher).³
 - This may undermine their school performance and impact their whole life.
- Like children in rural areas, children who grow up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are much more likely to experience child protection involvement in their lives.
 - Children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are 69% more likely to have a child protection report accepted and to become the subject of an assessment.
 - Children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are 90% more likely to be found, through the assessment, to be at risk of compromised safety and/or development.
 - Children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are 113% more likely to be placed in care.⁴

Potential solutions:

- Various measures can be taken to nurture children’s development. These include:
 - Support for expectant parents to give every baby the best possible start
 - High-quality, accessible educational childcare
 - Collective measures to create a better family-work balance
 - Accessible, family-friendly healthcare and social services
 - Safe, suitable and affordable housing to grow up in
 - Safe public spaces for play and learning
 - Support for organizations that work in a preventive capacity with families from before birth through early childhood.
- We need to apply a proportionate universalism approach, in which all services, regardless of who provides them — governments, communities or civil society organizations — are accessible to all children throughout the province.
 - Services must also be adjusted to suit the needs of young children in, and the socioeconomic characteristics of, a given area.

CALL TO ACTION

As **early childhood professionals and citizens**, we must continue to advocate for this cause.

- Our networks must strive to make services for young children and parents accessible to families throughout the province.

Additionally, **our governments and institutions** must invest in a better future by prioritizing early childhood in their decision-making. To ensure equality of opportunities for our youngest children, our leaders must develop comprehensive public policies that will lead to the implementation of a full range of services for children and their families, from pregnancy onward.

KEY MESSAGES — GENERAL

Early Childhood Week aims to give a voice to the 514,747⁵ children aged five and under in Quebec and make early childhood development a true priority for our society.

³ QSPPKS 2022, *op. cit.*

⁴ Esposito, T., Chabot, M., Calwell, J., Webb, C., Delaye, A., Fluke, J., Trocmé, N., Bywaters, P. (2022). The differential association of socioeconomic vulnerabilities and neglect-related child protection involvement across geographies: Multilevel structural equation modeling. *Children and Youth Services Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2022.106505>

⁵ Provisional figure for 2023

- It is an opportunity for everyone to stop for a moment and focus on early childhood development in Quebec in order to collectively reflect on what we can do to make sure every child gets the best possible start in life.
 - Today's toddlers are tomorrow's adults: let's give each and every one of them an equal chance at realizing their full potential and becoming well-rounded, engaged members of society.
- The event brings together 23 partners and allies, representing thousands of early childhood development advocates who have joined forces to bring more attention to the needs of our youngest citizens and to impress upon policymakers and the public at large the key role today's children will play in the future of our society.
 - Many activities are scheduled across Quebec throughout the week to shine a spotlight on these issues.
 - For more details, visit grandesemaine.com.

By taking action early, from pregnancy onward, we can give all children equal opportunities and create conditions that promote their success.

- Children's experiences up to the age of five have a decisive impact on their development.
 - Any actions taken during this stage of life will help establish solid foundations that will guide them in adulthood.
- Parents have a critical role to play at this stage, but they are not the only ones: the entire ecosystem surrounding young children, including non-immediate family members, neighbours, childcare educators and healthcare professionals, must be involved.
- The environment in which children are raised has a significant impact on their health, their development, their academic performance and, indeed, their whole life.

The following four priorities aim to make sure that efforts to improve children's well-being are invested wisely:

- **Ensure an adequate standard of living:** Provide access to affordable housing, healthy food in sufficient amounts and a balance between family, work and studies, achieved through financial support proportionate to families' needs.
- **Work together:** Break down silos by building bridges between the various stakeholders and aligning our advocacy efforts with those of policymakers.
- **Take action as early as possible:** Safeguard the health, well-being and development of all children, by ensuring that the best possible conditions and access to support are available to all parents, from pregnancy onward.
- **Focus on services at the community level:** Support locally delivered services and existing community networks so that they can work in an upstream capacity and serve as a catalyst for prevention.

EARLY CHILDHOOD STATISTICS BY REGION

We invite you to use the following information in your communications materials (e.g., press releases, speeches, op-eds):

EXACT NUMBER

The number of children aged five and under living in Quebec in 2023 was 514,747 (provisional figure).

Source: Statistics Canada, Population estimates (February 2024). Adapted by the Institut de la statistique du Québec.

ROUND NUMBER

There were more than 514,700 children aged five and under living in Quebec in 2023, based on provisional figures, accounting for 5.8% of the total provincial population.

Source: Population estimates for children aged five and under for each of the administrative regions, July 1, 2023.

Note: The percentages for each of the regions are based on total regional population, not the population of the province as a whole.

- Bas-Saint-Laurent: 4.8% of the population, 9,799
- Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean: 5.4% of the population, 15,191
- Capitale-Nationale: 5.6% of the population, 44,333
- Mauricie: 5.1% of the population, 14,530
- Estrie: 5.5% of the population, 28,219
- Montreal: 5.7% of the population, 120,350
- Outaouais: 6.1% of the population, 25,526
- Abitibi-Témiscamingue: 6.2% of the population, 9,224
- Côte-Nord: 5.7% of the population, 5,119
- Nord-du-Québec: 10.9% of the population, 5,080
- Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine: 4.6% of the population, 4,231
- Chaudière-Appalaches: 5.9% of the population, 26,418
- Laval: 5.6% of the population, 25,200
- Lanaudière: 6.3% of the population, 34,702
- Laurentides: 6.0% of the population, 39,700
- Montérégie: 6.1% of the population, 91,560
- Centre-du-Québec: 6.0% of the population, 15,565

Provisional figures for 2023

Source: Statistics Canada, Annual Demographic Estimates, Subprovincial Areas (May 2024). Adapted by the Institut de la statistique du Québec