

Employment Insurance Coverage Survey, 2020

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New data from the 2020 Employment Insurance Coverage Survey (EICS) provide insights into Canadian parents' use of the maternity and parental benefits available under the Employment Insurance (EI) program.

Do you use labour market information **as part of your work**? Statistics Canada and the Labour Market Information Council are teaming up to gather feedback from professionals who regularly use labour statistics, including journalists, policy analysts, sector association representatives and career counsellors, to assess their labour market information needs. Tell us what your priorities are and the gaps you face when using labour market information by answering a few questions on the [Questionnaire on Labour Market Information Gaps](#) page. Your opinions will help shape action to address labour market information gaps.

Of all parents with a child aged 18 months or younger in 2020, 8 in 10 (79.7%) had employment for which EI premiums were paid before the birth or adoption of their child. Among these parents, 92.9% had received maternity or parental benefits since the birth or adoption of their child, while just under one-third (32.1%) of their spouses or partners had claimed or intended to claim parental benefits.

Consistent with historical trends, a higher proportion of parents received maternity or parental benefits in Quebec than in the rest of Canada in 2020. Among insured parents in Quebec, where maternity and parental benefits are offered through the Québec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP), 99.1% received benefits, compared with 91.0% in the rest of Canada.

Similarly, the use of paternity and parental benefits among spouses was considerably higher in Quebec than in the rest of Canada in 2020. In Quebec, nearly four-fifths (78.1%) of spouses or partners had claimed paternity or parental benefits from QPIP, compared with less than one-fifth (19.5%) in the other provinces.

Nationally, four-fifths of families chose the benefits option—which offers approximately one year of combined maternity and parental benefits—in 2020. The remaining one-fifth (20.3%) of families outside Quebec chose the EI extended parental benefits option, which offers up to 18 months of combined maternity and parental benefits, but at a lower income replacement rate. In Quebec, the remaining 17.7% of families chose the QPIP special benefits plan, which provides fewer weeks of benefits, but at a higher income replacement rate.

Changes to the labour market as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic may have contributed to uncertainty among parents on leave. More than 1 in 10 (10.7%) parents who had worked before the birth of their child reported that they had not decided whether they would return to work. Among parents who reported that they wanted to return to work, 15.6% did not know when they would return. Estimates of uncertainty are not directly comparable to previous years because of changes to the EICS questionnaire and survey population introduced in 2020; however, data suggest that uncertainty among parents on leave more than tripled in 2020.



Note to readers

The Employment Insurance Coverage Survey (EICS) provides an overview of those who do or do not have access to Employment Insurance (EI) benefits. This typically includes both regular benefits and maternity and parental benefits. Because of changes to the EI program introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 survey was limited to parents of infants aged 18 months or younger, and information on regular benefits was not collected.

Starting in 2020, the questionnaire and survey population were redesigned to reflect changes in the EI maternity and parental benefits program. The survey population of parents was expanded from mothers of infants aged 1 year or younger to parents of infants aged 18 months or younger to include fathers in families without a female parent and parents who chose to receive EI extended parental benefits.

As a result of these changes, caution should be used when making comparisons with data from previous survey years.

The survey is administered in the provinces to a sub-sample of respondents of the Labour Force Survey in April, July, November and January of each year. Because of changes to Statistics Canada's operations in response to COVID-19 public health measures, the April 2020 collection cycle was delayed to September 2020.

The total sample size for the 2020 EICS was 1,604 people.

The survey is conducted on behalf of Employment and Social Development Canada.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [4428](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).