

Article

Forty-year-old mothers of pre-school children: A profile



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Forty-year-old mothers of pre-school children: A profile

by Mireille Vézina and Martin Turcotte

Twenty years ago, very few women aged 35 and over gave birth to their first child. However, it happens more frequently these days. In 2006, 11% of all first births were to women aged 35 and over, almost triple the proportion observed in 1987.¹ Moreover, the average age of women at their first child's birth rose from just under 24 in the 1960s to 28 in 2005.²

The increase in the average age at first birth means that more women are having children in their thirties and early forties. According to demographic estimates, nearly half of all births in 2006 were to women aged 30 and over, double the 1981 proportion (23.6%).

In addition, the total fertility rate for women in their forties has been rising. There were 7.4 births per 1,000 women aged 40 to 44 in 2006, compared with 3.2 per 1,000 in 1981.

The fact that increasing numbers of women in their late thirties or early forties are mothers of young children is a well-documented demographic trend. The increase in delayed childbearing is largely related to changes in society. Women are staying in school longer, participating in the labour force in greater numbers, and are more likely to have jobs that

require advanced skills. As a result, they enter the labour force later and delay having their first child.

The various social, economic and demographic consequences of delayed childbearing have also been the subject of many studies and debates. In particular, later pregnancies are associated with certain risks to the health of the mother or the child. Delayed childbearing also has an impact on the natural increase of the population (see the box entitled "The consequences of delayed childbearing for women, children and society").

Nevertheless, apart from a few generalities, little is known about other recent socio-economic characteristics of women in their forties who have young children. Who are they? Are they more likely to be immigrants? Are they more likely to live in metropolitan communities than in lower-density regions? What are their occupations? Do they have a higher income than other women their age? In addition to having young children, are they caring for elderly persons? The aim of this article, which is based on 2006 Census data, is to answer these questions (for more details concerning the methodology, see "What you should know about this study").

Education — an important factor: Women who have a university degree are more likely to be mothers in their forties

The number of older mothers with a pre-school child or children has more than doubled in the last 20 years. The 2006 Census enumerated 1.3 million women aged 40 to 44 in Canada, and 117,100 of them, or 8.9%, were mothers of at least one pre-school child (aged 0 to 4). That was double the proportion observed in 1986 (4.3%) (see the box entitled "The evolution of fertility among women aged 35 and older").

According to studies by demographers and sociologists, the increase in the proportion of older mothers with young children is primarily due to higher educational attainment among women and greater labour market participation by women.³ University graduates complete their studies later, are more likely to participate in the labour market and have different expectations regarding their family roles and life in general.⁴ For example, according to economist Gary Becker, the more highly educated a woman is, the greater her labour market earnings and the higher the opportunity cost or financial losses associated with having a child.⁵

Data source

The analyses in this article were based on data from the 1986 and 2006 Censuses of Canada. Persons living in institutions or collective dwellings are excluded from this study.

Population studied

The population studied consists of women aged 40 to 44 (both mothers and non-mothers). The expressions "pre-school children," "young children" and "small children" refer to children aged 0 to 4 living at home. Women aged 45 to 49 were not studied because the small number of women in that age group with young children form too small a sample size.

Data limitations

The Census collects information about people who "usually" live together in the same household and about their relationship to one another (father, mother, son, daughter, grandfather and so on). That information makes it possible to identify women who have young children. According to the instructions provided to respondents completing their census questionnaire, "*children in joint custody* who live here most of the time" should be included as household members. "Children who spend equal time with each parent should be included in the home of the parent where they are staying on May 16, 2006."

Since the Census is based on a household's usual residents, it is impossible to associate absolutely every child with his or her mother. For example, a 41-year-old woman who has one child, age 12, and is separated will be deemed a "non-mother" if the child does not usually live with her. For the purposes of this study, the main concern is to determine the extent to which the Census underestimates the proportion of women aged 40 to 44 who have a pre-school child.

The answer to this question comes from the 2006 General Social Survey (GSS), which provides information about all the children a woman has had in her lifetime. According to the survey, the proportion of women aged 40 to 44 who have a pre-school child is virtually unaffected by the fact that we have no information about children living in other households (in joint custody, for example). The GSS tells us that 9.75% of women aged 40 to 44 had at least one pre-school child, no matter who the child or children were living with. If we include only those women who usually live with their child (i.e., if we use the census method with GSS data), the result is practically the same: 9.72% had a pre-school child.

The difference is slightly larger for women who have older children (since those children are more likely to have left the parental home). According to the 2006 GSS data, 8.1% of women aged 40 to 44 had children but were not living with them. As a result, the proportion of women aged 40 to 44 who have a child aged 5 or over is slightly underestimated by the Census. This could present a problem if the socio-economic characteristics of women who were not living with their children were different from the characteristics of women who were living with their children. However, GSS data show no appreciable difference in that regard between women who have children aged 5 or over based on whether they live with them or not.

Mothers who have only pre-school children and mothers who have both pre-school and school-age children

Being the first-time mother of a pre-school child at age 40 is not the same as being the mother of a young child and of older children. In the former case, family life is just beginning, marking a new stage in one's life cycle, parenthood. That's not the case when one already has children; it's more of a continuation.

To reflect this reality, we distinguish, in some parts of the article, between women aged 40 to 44 who only have young children (age 0 to 4) and women who have both young children and school-age children (age 5 and older). All women aged 40 to 44 who only have young children must necessarily have given birth to their first child after age 35. In 2006, they made up about a third (31.9%) of the 117,000 women aged 40 to 44 who had small children (the remainder being women who had both young children and older children). In instances where there was no substantial difference between the two groups, they were combined to simplify the discussion. In some cases, the sample size was not large enough to differentiate between women who had only pre-school children and women who had both pre-school children and older children.

First births

The use of census data places some limitations on the available information about the exact number and rank of the children that women have had in their lives. However, GSS data tell us that virtually all women aged 40 to 44 who live with children between the ages of 0 and 4 (but not with older children) became mothers for the first time at age 35

CST What you should know about this study (continued)

or older. According to GSS data, less than 0.5% of women aged 40 to 44 who were living with their child aged 0 to 4 (but no older children) had other children who did not live with

them. In other words, more than 99.5% of women aged 40 to 44 who live with one or more children aged 0 to 4 only gave birth to their first child when they were 35 or older.

Data from the 2006 Census show that more highly educated women, particularly women with university degrees, were much more likely to have their children in their thirties or forties.⁶ In 2006, 13.8% of women aged 40 to 44 who had a bachelor's degree were mothers of a young child, compared with just 6.4% of women who had a high school diploma or less. The proportion was 19.8% for women who had a doctorate (Chart 1).

Women's higher education levels help to explain the increased proportion of older mothers with young kids

Highly-educated women make up a growing proportion of the population. In Canada, the proportion of women aged 40 to 44 who have a university degree more than doubled in 20 years, climbing from 11.0% in 1986 to 22.5% in 2006. Statistics suggest that the higher that proportion is, the more common childbearing will become for women in their thirties and forties.

A decomposition analysis shows that just over a quarter (28%) of the increase in the proportion of 40-year-old women with young children is due to the increase in women's average educational attainment (in the same period). The remainder of the increase can be attributed to differences in the behaviours of younger generations relative to their predecessors, particularly the various transitions to adulthood that are taking place at a more advanced age, regardless of educational attainment.

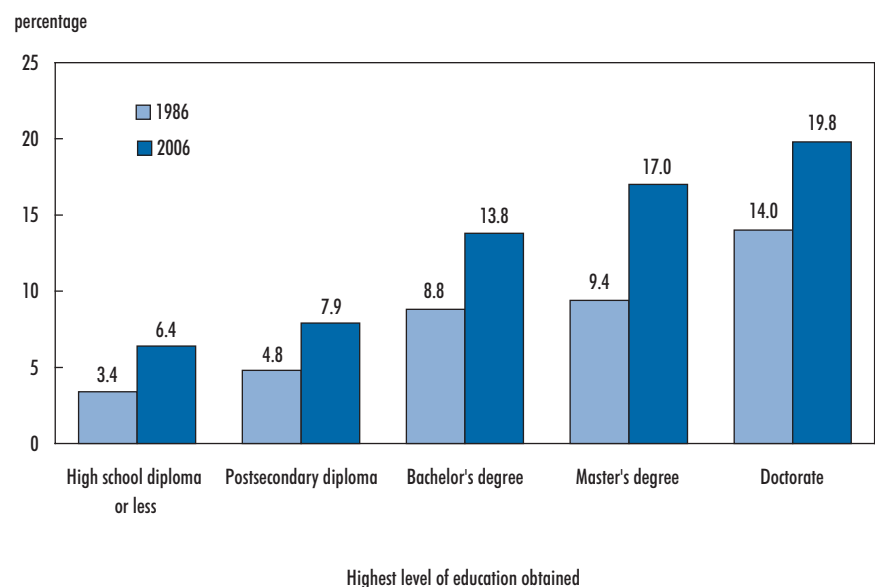
Women aged 40 to 44 who had a high school diploma or less were also more likely to have young children in 2006 than in 1986

Despite the importance of education, the impact of other factors and the considerable changes in values, particularly regarding women's role in society and the labour market, should not be underestimated.⁷ The fact that young people's transitions to

adulthood are occurring later and in a less linear manner than in the past has also affected the timing of the first birth for many women. Leaving the parental home, landing a full-time job, forming a stable union and buying a home are all taking place, on average, at a more advanced age.⁸ Of course, the later young adults make these transitions, the greater the likelihood that there will be a delay in having children.



Chart 1 The proportion of women 40 to 44 years old who were mothers of young children was higher among the highly educated, 1986 and 2006



Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population 1986 and 2006.

CST The evolution of fertility among women aged 35 and older

During the first half of the twentieth century, women who gave birth in their thirties was more common than today. However, the underlying situation differed substantially from today. For example, during the first quarter of the twentieth century, most Canadian families lived on the farm and large families were the norm. Indeed, in 1901 women gave birth to an average of 4.6 children falling to about 3.5 children per woman by 1921. Thus during this time, when a woman in her 30s gave birth to a child it was unlikely to be her first birth.

During the depression years, the difficult economic conditions contributed to lower marriage rates, and a higher average age at marriage. By 1937, the total fertility rate¹ had declined to 2.6 children per woman. As well, the average age at first birth was on the rise compared to the beginning of the 20th century.²

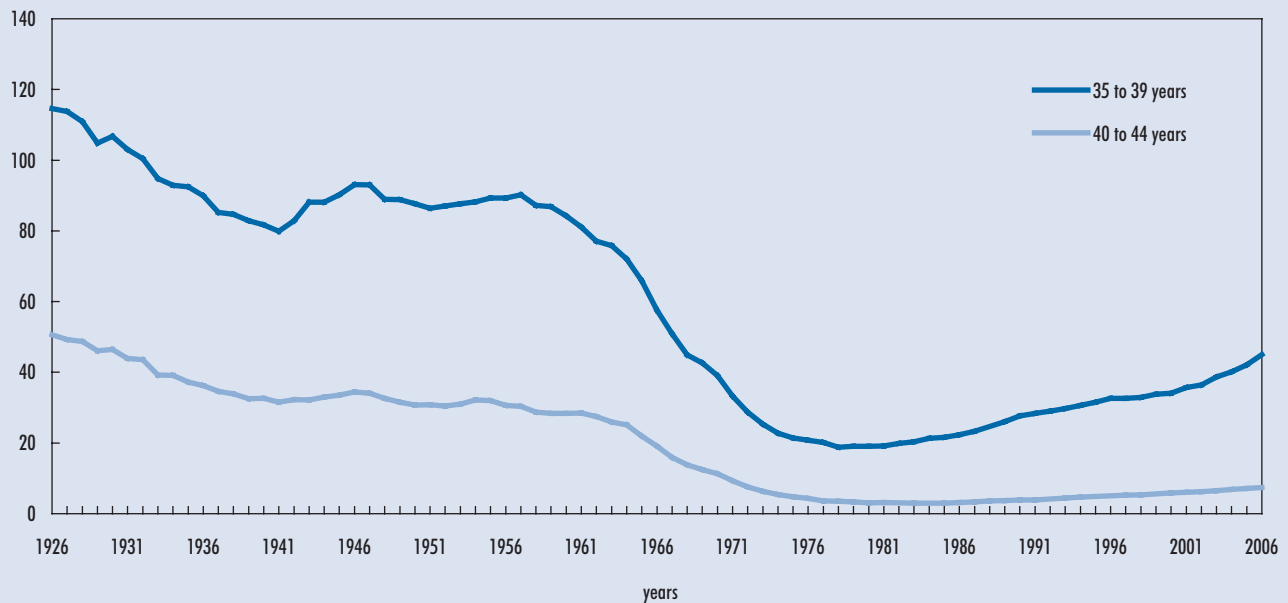
In contrast, during the period immediately following World War II, the total fertility rate increased to a post-war peak

of 3.9 children per woman in 1959. Also during this period, women began their families in their twenties, and were unlikely to have their first child in their thirties or forties.³ During the 1970s and 1980s, most women continued to begin their families when they were in their twenties. However, with declining fertility, most of them stopped after two children and as a result, few women gave birth after they had entered their mid-thirties. In contrast, in the present era, mothers in their forties are much more likely to be raising their first child.

1. The total fertility rate refers to the number of children that a woman would have over the course of her reproductive life (age 15 to 49) if she experienced the age-specific fertility rates observed in a given calendar year.
2. Milan, Anne. (2000). One hundred years of families. *Canadian Social Trends*, 56. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 11-008.
3. Statistics Canada. (2003). *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 91-209-XIE. Ottawa: Minister of Industry.

Fertility rate among women 35 to 44 years old, Canada, 1926 to 2006

Fertility rate per thousand women



Sources: Statistics Canada, Health Statistics Division and Demography Division.

The fact that women are, on average, giving birth to their first child later has a number of consequences for them and for society. With regard to the impact on women's health, later pregnancy is associated with certain risks, such as greater prevalence of low birth weight and premature delivery (or false labour),¹ and higher incidence of gestational hypertension and pregnancy diabetes.² Although medical advances have substantially improved the survival rates of premature babies, researchers have shown that prematurity could saddle both families and society with financial costs and a significant burden in terms of the additional care required.³ Moreover, children born to older women (especially women aged 45 or older) are more likely to have chromosomal abnormalities.⁴

Aside from the health effects, the fact that women are older when they give birth for the first time may have an impact on population renewal through births. The chances of getting pregnant and giving birth decline as women age: 91% of women succeed in getting pregnant at age 30, compared with 77% at age 35 and 53% at age 40.⁵ The older a woman is at first birth, the fewer children she is likely to have.⁶

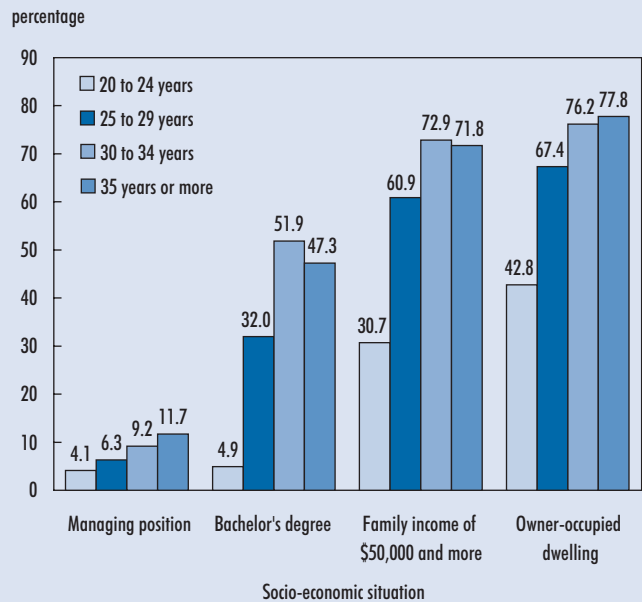
In addition, delayed childbearing may have an impact on employers and workplaces. Women who have their first child later are more likely to have jobs that require a high level of skill; they are also more likely to have risen to supervisory and management positions in their workplace. Some may be more difficult to replace when they take maternity leave, because they have more experience in their workplace.

There are, however, also positive consequences related to delayed childbearing. For example, the many years spent getting an education and pursuing personal or professional goals are the reason that women have children later, in many cases. Those years of study and work are important, as they provide the means to acquire a variety of financial and other resources that may help them when they become parents.

That is the main argument of a recent study that found that women who have children after age 35 have more financial resources and more life experience and are more satisfied with their career and marital situation than women who become mothers earlier.⁷ Several of those ideas are supported by census data. In general, women who delayed childbearing were in a better socio-economic situation when their first child was born. In particular, they were better educated, more likely to live in a family whose income was in excess of \$50,000, more

likely to have a university degree and more likely to own their home (Chart below). They were also much more likely to have a management position in their workplace.

Women who have a first child at a more advanced age have a better socio-economic situation when the child is born, 2006



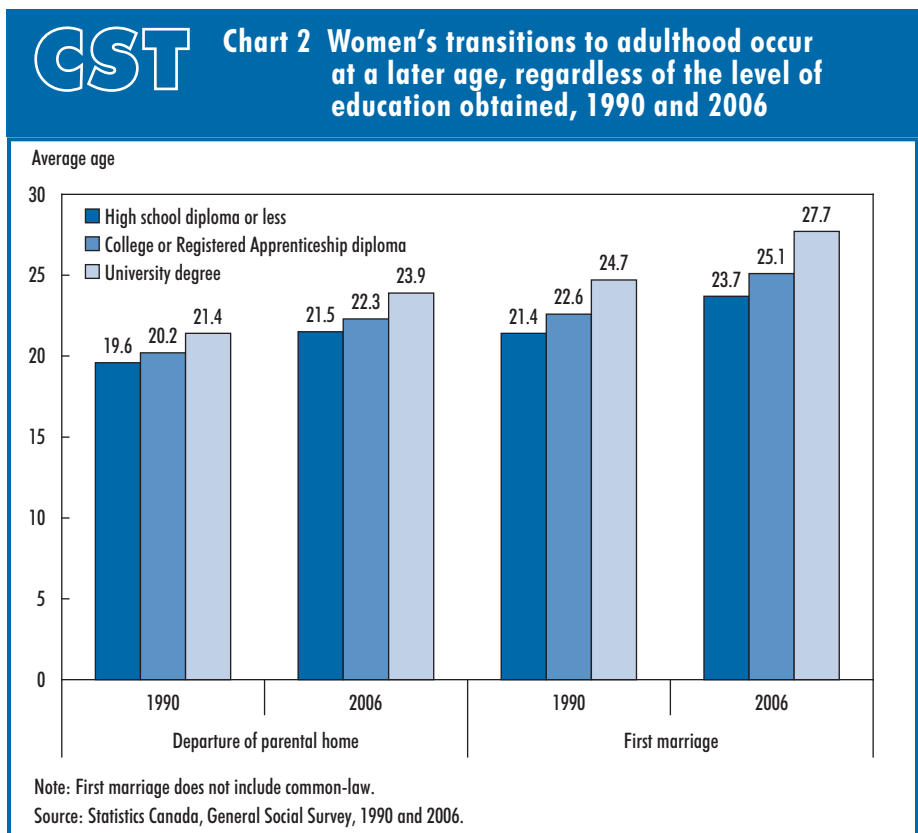
Note: Only includes mothers of a child less than one year old on Census Day (and that are not already the mother of an older child), according to age group. Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Moreover, even though the risks associated with pregnancies carried to term after age 35 clearly exist, they are relative. The difference between younger women (age 20 to 34) and older women (age 35 to 49) having a child with low birth weight or a premature baby is small. In 2006, the proportion of babies with low birth weight was 8.3% for women aged 35 to 49 and 6.7% for women aged 20 to 34.⁸ Similarly, in 2006-2007, 8% of births were premature for mothers between the ages of 20 and 34, while the proportion for mothers aged 35 and over was only slightly higher at 10%.⁹ Additionally, the effects on the health and early childhood development of children of mothers over 35 appear to be fairly limited. According to a study published by Statistics Canada, the mother's age has little impact on the physical, behavioural and cognitive development of children aged 0 to 5.¹⁰

1. Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2009). *Too Early, Too Small: A Profile of Small Babies Across Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Institute for Health Information.
2. Joseph, K. S., Allen, A. C., Dodds, L., Turner, L. A., Scott, H., and Liston, R. (2005). The perinatal effects of delayed childbearing. *Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 105(6), 1410-1418.
3. Public Health Agency of Canada. (2005). *Make Every Mother and Child Count: Report on Maternal and Child Health in Canada*, H124-13/2005. Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada.
Petrou, S., Sach, T., and Davidson, L. (2001). The long-term costs of preterm birth and low birth weight: Results of a systematic review. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 27(2)(March), 97-115.
4. Health Canada. (2002). *Congenital Anomalies in Canada : A Perinatal Health Report*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.
5. Senzilet, L. et al. (2004). Reproduction at Older Ages: The Health Implications. *Health Canada, Health Policy Research Bulletin*, 10, 15-20.
6. Kohler, H.-P., Billari, F. C., and Ortega, J. A. (2002). The emergence of lowest-low fertility in Europe during the 1990s. *Population and Development Review*, 28, 641-680.
7. Gregory, E. (2007). *Ready: Why Women Are Embracing the New Later Motherhood*. Philadelphia, PA: Basic Books.
8. Statistique Canada. Live births, birth weight indicators, by characteristics of the mother and child, Canada, annual (percent unless otherwise noted). CANSIM Table no. 102-4511.
9. Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2009).
10. Bushnik, T., and Garner, R. (2008). The children of older first-time mothers in Canada: Their health and development. *Children and Youth Research Paper Series, 005*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-599-M.

The changes in the timing of these transitions have affected all women, regardless of their level of schooling (Chart 2). As a result, less well-educated women are twice as likely to have young children at a more advanced age than they were 20 years ago: the proportion of women with a high school diploma or less who had pre-school children was 3.4% in 1986 and 6.4% in 2006 (Chart 1). The ratio between these two proportions points to an even faster increase than for women with a university degree. Some researchers have attributed this slight convergence in the fertility of better educated women and less well educated women to policies that have reduced the conflicts between pursuing a career and having children, such as the availability of child care services.⁹

Education is nevertheless a key factor in understanding the increase in the proportion of 40-year-old women who have young children.

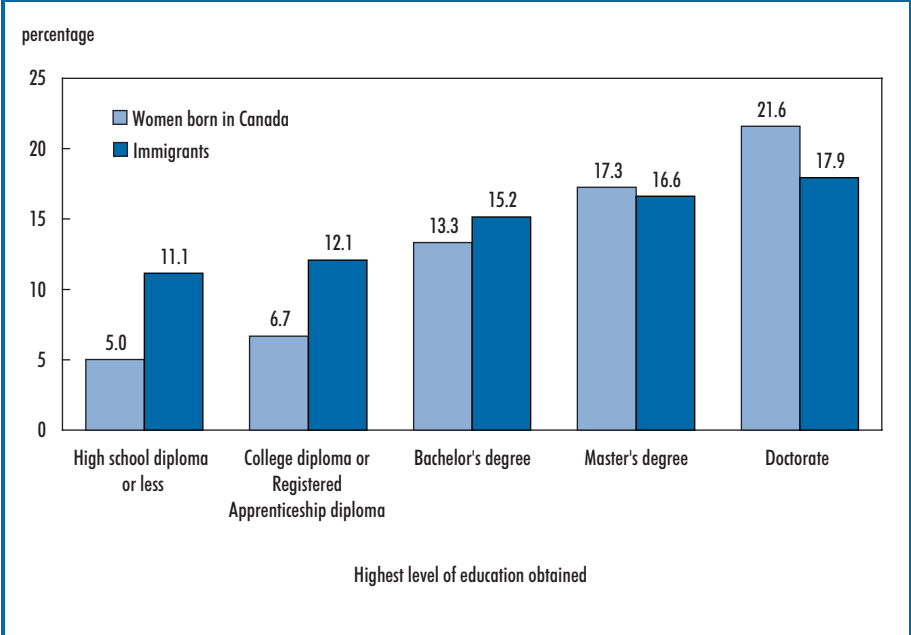


Immigrant women are more likely than Canadian-born women to be older mothers of young children

Since education is one of the most important factors in the probability that a woman in her forties will have a young child, those with the highest levels of education at this age are also more likely to be mothers of young children than other women of the same age. This is particularly true of women in that age group who were born outside of Canada. In 2006, 1 in 3 had a university degree, compared with 1 in 5 Canadian-born women. The proportion that had a pre-school child was also higher: 12.9% versus 7.5% for Canadian-born women.

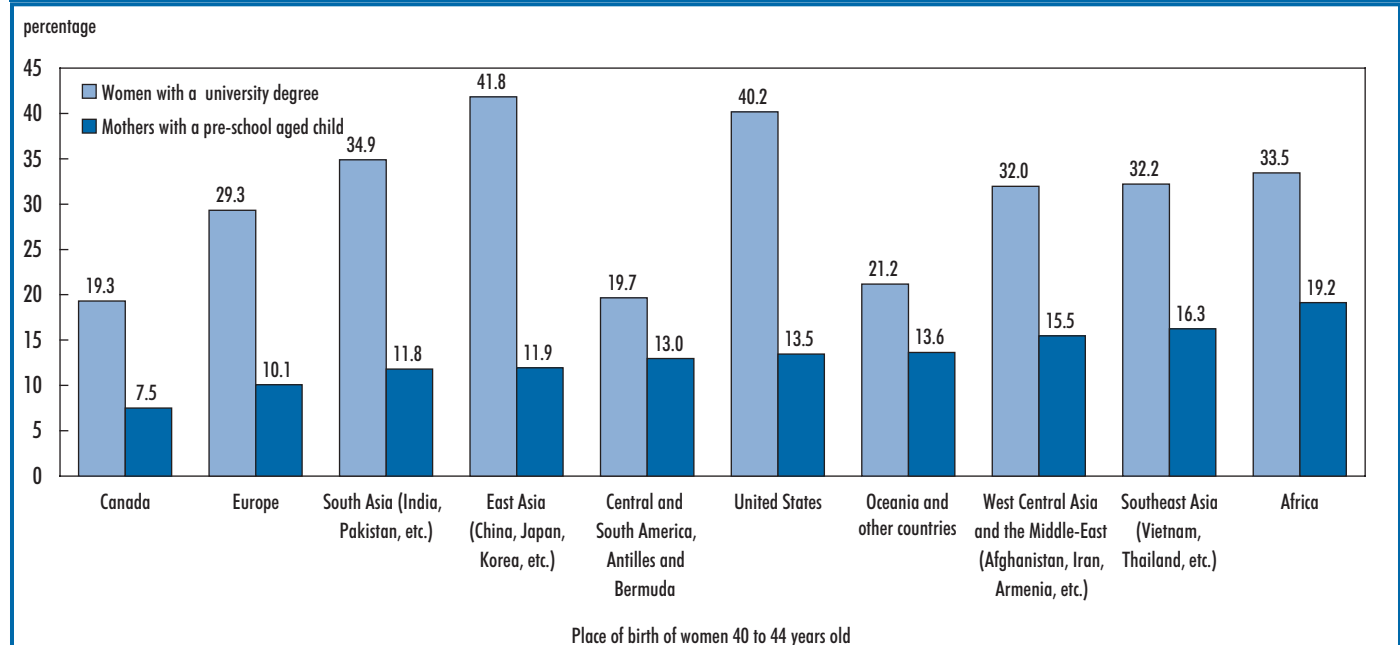
However, education does not explain everything. Immigrant women with lower levels of educational attainment were considerably more likely than non-immigrants to be older mothers of young children (Chart 3). Moreover, the correlation between educational attainment and the likelihood of being a mother in her

CST Chart 3 Among women aged 40 to 44 with a high school diploma or less, immigrants were twice likely as women born in Canada to be the mother of a young child in 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of population, 2006.

CST Chart 4 Though East-Asian-born women aged 40 to 44 were more likely to have a university degree, they were no more likely to be the mother of a child under 5 years old in 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

forties was stronger for non-immigrant women than for immigrants.

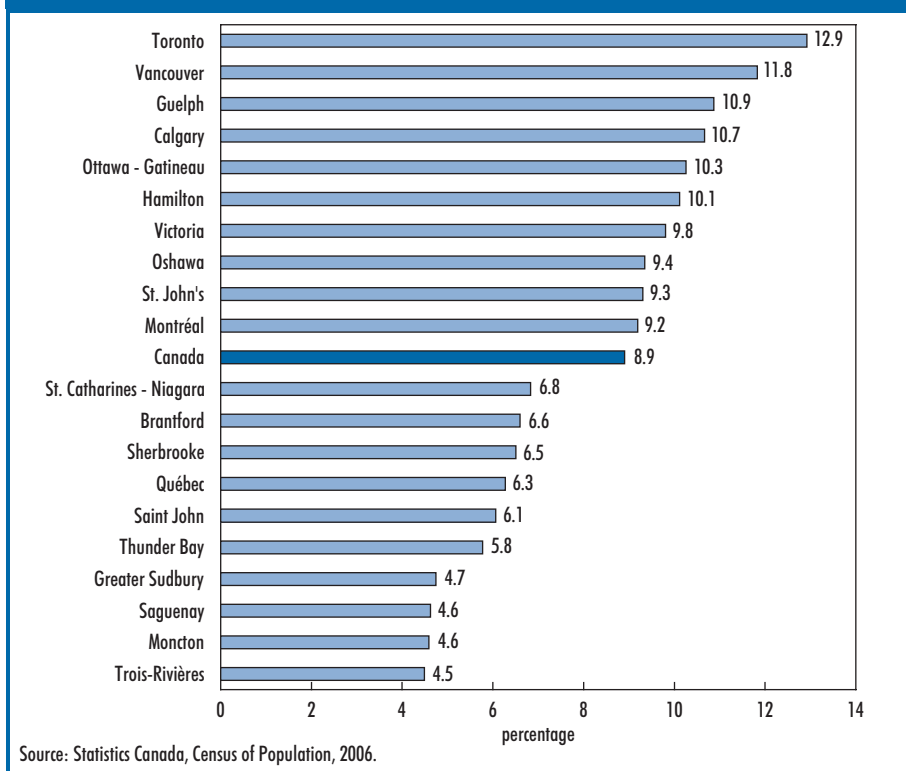
Cultural factors, such as religious affiliation,¹⁰ can enter the mix and may have an impact on the likelihood of being a 40-year-old mother with young children. The same holds true for the relationship between an immigrant woman's place of birth and her propensity to have young children at that stage of her life. For example, although women aged 40 to 44 who were born in East Asia had the highest levels of education, they were not the most likely to have young children in their forties. Conversely, while women aged 40 to 44 who were born in Central America, South America, the Caribbean and Bermuda were not noticeably more likely than Canadian-born women to have a university degree, a larger proportion of them were mothers of young children (Chart 4).

Older mothers whose oldest child is under 5 are more likely to live in urban areas

In general, urban populations are better educated and have a higher proportion of immigrants than rural populations. Consequently, women aged 40 to 44 who had only pre-school children were more likely to live in urban areas (89.6% of them) than women in the same age group whose children were all age 5 or older (81.2%) (results not shown).

Metropolitan areas differ with respect to the adult population's average level of education, income and the concentration of the immigrant population. The Toronto and Vancouver census metropolitan areas (CMAs) had by far the highest proportions of immigrants and led all CMAs in the proportion of the adult population with a university degree (Chart 5). In 2006, these two cities were also the CMAs with the largest percentages of women in their early forties who had a pre-school child. The Guelph CMA, which ranks third in the proportion of women in their forties who have young children, is a university area that has a high

Chart 5 The 10 metropolitan areas with the highest and the lowest proportions of women aged 40 to 44, who were mothers of pre-school-aged children, varied according to the size of the region in 2006



proportion of women with a master's degree or a doctorate (in 2006, it ranked third highest of all CMAs in this respect).

Women in their forties whose oldest child is under 5 have jobs that require a high level of skill

Given that women aged 40 to 44 who have young children are better educated on average than other women in this age group, they might be expected to work in occupations that demand a higher level of skill. Census data support this. About 29.7% of women aged 40 to 44 who had young children were in a "professional" occupation, that is, an occupation that requires a university degree (a bachelor's degree or higher) (Table 1). The corresponding proportion was 23.3% for women whose youngest child was between 5 and 11, and 13.8% for women with children aged 12 and over.

The set of "professional" occupations is very diverse, ranging from physicist to high school teacher, from optometrist to accountant. As a result, a closer look at the occupations of older mothers with young children is of interest.

Women physicians in their early forties are the most likely to have young children

Table 2 shows that in the female population aged 40 to 44, health professionals were particularly likely to have young children. In 2006, that was true for more than one in five women physicians, dentists or veterinarians (22.0%). In fact, when we look only at women specialist physicians (doctors with a medical specialty), one in four was the mother of pre-school children (the highest proportion reported for any individual occupation in Canada¹¹) (results not shown). Following next

Table 1 Distribution of mothers aged 40 to 44 years old by child's age and skill level required by their occupation, 2006

Occupation by skill level	Mothers 40 to 44 years old		
	with a child aged 0 to 4 years	with youngest child aged 5 to 11 years	with child(ren) aged 12 years or more
	percentage		
Managers	10.3	9.0	8.8
Professionals (level A)	29.7	23.3	13.8
Technicians (level B)	25.9	27.3	28.1
Intermediate workers (level C)	26.3	31.4	36.7
Less skilled workers (level D)	7.9	9.0	12.7

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

were women judges, lawyers and Quebec notaries (19.5%); followed by engineers (17.5%); and university professors and assistants (17.2%). In general, the professions with high proportions of older mothers of pre-school children required a high level of specialization.

The occupations in which women who have young children are best represented are not necessarily the most common occupations among women in their early forties. The bottom section of Table 2 shows the top 10 occupations among women in that age group. Several of those occupations, such as retail sales clerk, secretary, cleaner and administrative officer, require fewer years of education. Women in these occupations are less likely to have young children when they are in their forties. Nurses and pre-school and elementary school teachers, very common occupations among women aged 40 to 44 that require a postsecondary education, have proportions of older mothers with young children that are above average for the female population (10.0% and 11.5%).

Table 2 Occupations with the highest proportion of older mothers of pre-school children and the most common occupations of all women aged 40 to 44, 2006

	Mothers aged 40 to 44 with child(ren) aged 0 to 4 years
	percentage
Occupations which have the highest percentage of pre-school aged child(ren)	
Physicians, dentists and veterinarians	22.0
Judges, lawyers (across Canada) and Quebec notaries	19.5
Civil, mechanical, electrical and chemical engineers	17.5
University professors and assistants	17.2
Life science professionals	16.9
Optometrists, chiropractors and other health diagnosing and treating professionals	16.7
Pharmacists, dietitians and nutritionists	16.3
Architects, urban planners and land surveyors	16.1
Therapy and assessment professionals	15.3
Creative and performing artists	14.8
Most common occupations among women of 40 to 44 years old	
Retail salespersons and sales clerks — retail trade	6.1
General office clerks	6.9
Registered nurses	10.0
Secretaries (except legal and medical)	5.9
Elementary school and kindergarten teachers	11.5
Accounting and related clerks	6.4
Light duty cleaners	5.4
Administrative officers	7.7
Early childhood educators and assistants	10.4
Managers — retail trade	6.0

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Women in their early forties who have only pre-school children have higher incomes

In general, women in their early forties who have one or more pre-school children (and therefore gave birth to their first child at the age of 35 or older) have higher incomes than women who have older children.

For example, in 2005 the median personal income of women aged 40 to 44 who had one or more pre-school children was \$27,500 after taxes, which is more than women who had both school-age and pre-school children (\$24,500) and more than women who had only children aged 12 and over (\$25,600) (Table 3).

If we limit the comparison to women with paid work, we see that the median income of women aged 40 to 44 whose children were all under 5 years old was \$5,000 more than women in the same age group

whose children were all age 12 or older. Moreover, the lower threshold for being in the top 25% of personal income earners was \$49,300 for women who only had pre-school children, compared with \$39,400 for women whose children were 12 or older.

These results are consistent with the findings of a Statistics Canada study which showed that women who delayed childbearing earned higher salaries, even when a number of other factors affecting salary were taken into account.¹²

The pattern is the same for family income. Women who have only young children live in families that have higher average and median incomes than women who have older children. Their family income is also more likely to be close to \$100,000 a year than that of other mothers: in 2005, a quarter of them lived in families

whose income (after taxes) was more than \$96,600.

Many mothers in their forties are providing assistance and support to an elderly person

Work-life balance is a concern for most parents with paid work. For women in their forties who have young children, the issue may be of particular consequence. Caring for young children takes, on average, more time than looking after older children. That is true regardless of the mother's age. However, more women in their forties have aging parents, who may need care or assistance. How much care and assistance do mothers of young children provide to an elderly person on top of the time they spend with their young families?

As shown in Table 4, older mothers of pre-school children spent more



Table 3 After tax income quartiles of mothers aged 40 to 44 years old, by age of their child(ren), 2006

	Mothers 40 to 44 years old			
	whose child(ren) are aged 0 to 4 only	whose child(ren) are aged 0 to 4, and 5 years old and more	whose youngest child is between 5 and 11 years	whose child(ren) are 12 and older
in dollars				
Personal income after taxes in 2005				
Average	32,000	29,400	31,000	27,800
Bottom quartile	0	0	0	0
Second quartile	12,000	11,300	14,000	14,600
Third quartile (median)	27,500	24,500	27,600	25,600
Top quartile	43,800	40,100	41,700	37,000
Personal income after taxes in 2005 of women with paid work				
Average	39,000	36,400	35,400	31,000
Bottom quartile	0	0	0	0
Second quartile	20,900	19,700	20,000	18,800
Third quartile (median)	33,700	32,300	32,100	28,700
Top quartile	49,300	47,000	45,200	39,400
Family income after taxes in 2005				
Average	80,000	79,400	78,800	70,700
Bottom quartile	0	0	0	0
Second quartile	43,700	43,100	44,000	41,200
Third quartile (median)	68,200	66,200	67,400	64,200
Top quartile	96,600	95,000	95,000	89,400

Note: The amount at the lower level of the third quartile corresponds to the median revenue for the group in question.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Table 4 Number of hours spent on childcare and on providing care to a senior, by mothers 40 to 44, by age of child(ren), 2006

	Mothers aged 40 to 44 years old			
	whose child(ren) are aged 0 to 4 only	whose child(ren) are aged 0 to 4, and 5 years old and more	whose youngest child is between 5 and 11 years	whose child(ren) are 12 and older
	percentage			
Childcare				
No	3.3	3.6	4.4	25.9
Yes	96.5	96.5	95.7	74.0
Number of hours per week				
Less than 5	1.4	2.2	3.9	14.8
5 to 14	6.9	9.0	18.5	24.1
15 to 29	16.2	18.0	24.6	15.3
30 to 59	27.8	24.5	23.0	9.0
60 or more	44.2	42.8	25.7	10.8
Senior care				
No	76.3	73.6	71.5	71.1
Yes	23.7	26.4	28.6	28.9
Number of hours per week				
Less than 5	13.9	15.9	17.8	18.0
5 or more	9.8	10.5	10.8	10.9

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

hours caring for their children than women who had children aged 12 and over. On the other hand, they were less likely to be caring for an elderly person. However, the difference between mothers of pre-school children and mothers of school-age children was not especially large: 23.7% of women whose children were all of pre-school age had provided assistance or support to an elderly person, compared with 28.9% of women whose children were all aged 12 or over. In addition, women with young children were nearly as likely as women with children aged 12 or over to spend five or more hours a week caring for an elderly person (9.8% versus 10.9%).

Some mothers may feel the pressures of this dual role.¹³ In 2006, 7.9% of women aged 40 to 44 who had young children spent 30 or more hours a week looking after their children and five or more hours caring for an elderly person. The corresponding proportion for women

whose children were all aged 12 or over was 3.6% (results not shown).

Summary

Women who have pre-school children in their forties are still in the minority, but the phenomenon is not as uncommon as it was 20 years ago. Since 1986, the proportion has more than doubled. In 2006, nearly one out of 10 women aged 40 to 44 had a pre-school child, more than double the proportion observed in 1986 (8.9% versus 4.3%).

Length of schooling is an important factor in explaining that increase. Immigrant women, who are more likely to have a university degree, are also more likely to have a young child when they are in their forties. The fact that the proportion of women who are university graduates, including those with master's degrees and doctorates, continues to grow suggests that the proportion of women in their forties who have small children will also rise.

The professional and economic situation of women in their forties who have pre-school children is appreciably different from that of women in the same age group who had their children earlier. The study showed that the occupations with the highest percentages of these mothers in their forties were those which required a high level of skill and more education, such as in medicine, law, and engineering and university teaching. There were higher concentrations of them in major urban centres such as Toronto and Vancouver, which are home to many jobs requiring advanced skills. They also belonged to the higher-income segments of the population.



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