

Summary of the Survey

Early childhood is a pivotal period of development. Childhood experiences—both positive and negative—affect the development of motor, cognitive, social, and language skills. Studies have shown that vulnerability in kindergarten has been associated with difficulties in social adjustment and school success.¹ Indeed, nearly half of the vulnerable children in kindergarten will have lower-than-average school performance by the fourth grade.

The *Quebec Survey of Child Development in Kindergarten* (QSCDK),² carried out by the *Institut de la statistique du Québec* in 2012 and 2017 in all public and private French and English speaking schools in the province (excluding students who were handicapped or with adaptation/learning difficulties) provides a means of measuring the development of groups of children. As part of this study, teachers filled out a questionnaire consisting of 104 questions that had been validated and used in other provinces and countries for each of their students.³ It should be pointed out that this questionnaire was based on observable behaviours related to developmental norms and was not designed to evaluate the curriculum, nor teacher/school performance.

5 Domains Assessed

The questionnaire made it possible to assess the proportion of vulnerable children in the following five domains:

Domain	Topics of Interest
Physical health and well-being	General physical development, motor skills, diet and dress, cleanliness, punctuality, alertness
Social competence	Social skills, self-confidence, sense of responsibility, respect of peers, adults, rules, and routines, work habits and autonomy, curiosity
Emotional maturity	Prosocial behaviour and mutual help, fear and anxiety, aggressive behaviour, hyperactivity and inattention, expression of emotions
Cognitive and language development	Interest and skills in reading, writing, and mathematics; adequate language use
Communication skills and general knowledge	Ability to communicate so as to make themselves understood, capacity to understand others, clear articulation, general knowledge

Children are considered vulnerable when their score in an area of development is equal to or lower than the threshold established in Quebec in 2012 (10th percentile of the distribution of results in the first cycle of the survey).

These children are:

- facing a challenge because their mastery of certain aptitudes or skills is lacking,
- less equipped to take full advantage of what school can offer, and
- more likely to experience difficulties in school.

Information and mobilization activities will also be provided throughout 2019.

References

- 1 SIMARD, Micha, Amélie LAVOIE and Nathalie AUDET (2018). *Enquête québécoise sur le développement des enfants à la maternelle 2017*, Québec, Institut de la statistique du Québec, 125 p.
- 2 *Gouvernement du Québec. Enquête québécoise sur le développement des enfants à la maternelle* [http://www.eqdem.stat.gouv.qc.ca/\[online.\]](http://www.eqdem.stat.gouv.qc.ca/[online.]) [Consulted on January 15, 2019].
- 3 Instrument de mesure du développement de la petite enfance, © 2000, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. [http://www.eqdem.stat.gouv.qc.ca/enquete_2017/documentation/guide-imdpe-eqdem2017.pdf/\[online.\]](http://www.eqdem.stat.gouv.qc.ca/enquete_2017/documentation/guide-imdpe-eqdem2017.pdf/[online.]) [Consulted on January 15, 2019].



It is important to keep in mind that children considered vulnerable in kindergarten may not demonstrate difficulties throughout their entire primary school pathway.



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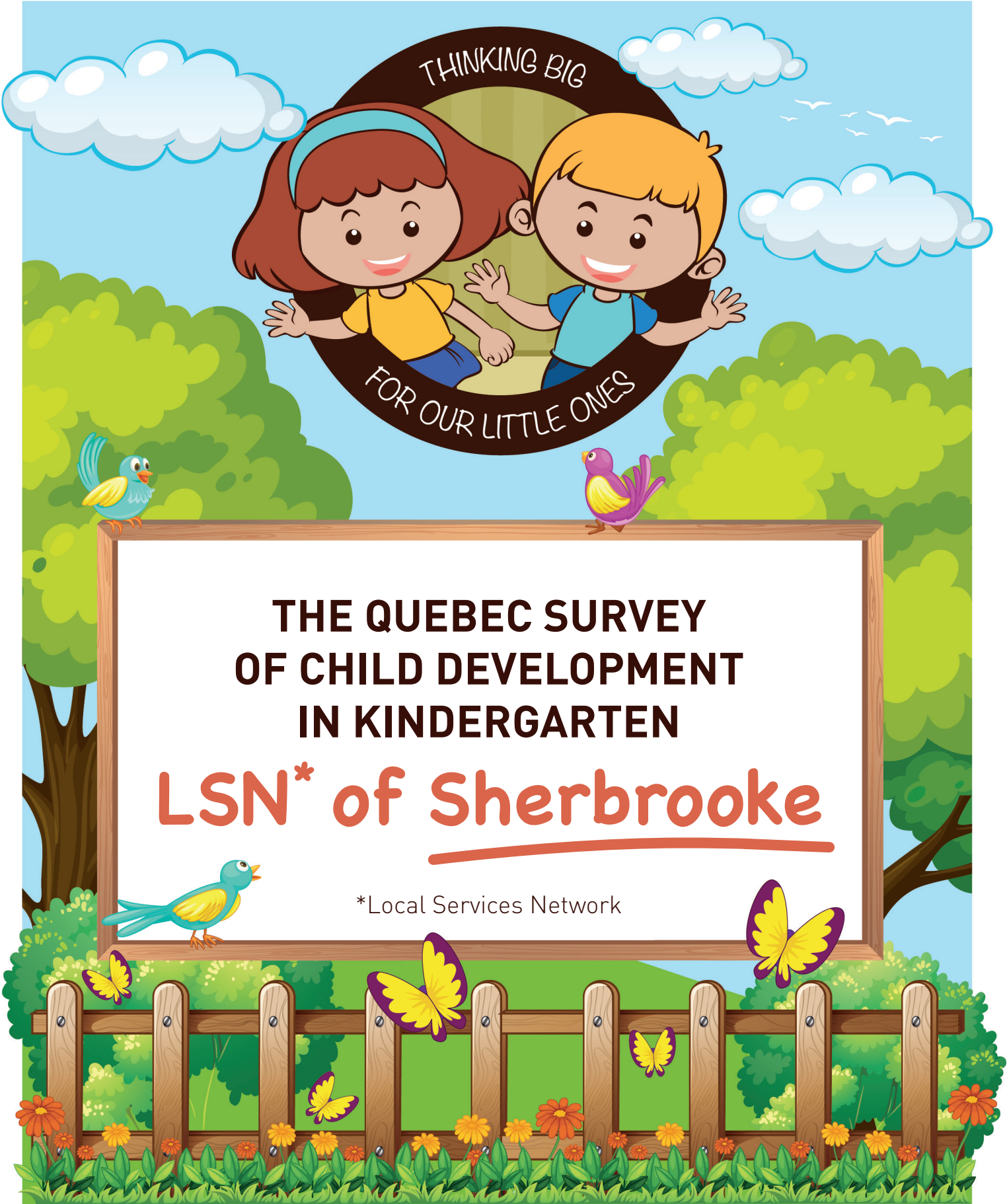
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Findings for the LSN of Sherbrooke



In the Estrie region served by the health and social services system (CIUSSS de l’Estrie – CHUS), **300 kindergarten teachers** completed the QSCDK questionnaire for **4628 children** in **144 schools**, between February and April 2017, yielding a **93%** response rate. The following table breaks down the proportions of vulnerable children by domain of child development (showing vulnerability in at least one domain).

Proportion of Vulnerable Children by Developmental Domain

Domain	LSN OF SHERBROOKE			ESTRIE			QUEBEC		
	2012	2017	Change	2012	2017	Change	2012	2017	Change
Physical health and well-being	8(-)	9.9	Stable	9.8	11.4	Increase	9.5	10.6	Increase
Emotional maturity	9.4	10.3	Stable	10.1	13.3(+)	Increase	9.7	11.5	Increase
Social skills	8.1	11.3	Increase	9.7	12.6(+)	Increase	9	10.2	Increase
Cognitive and language development	11	12.5	Stable	10.7	13.2(+)	Increase	10	11.1	Increase
Communication skills and general knowledge	9.1(-)	10.3	Stable	10	11.4	Increase	10.8	11.1	Stable
At least 1 domain	25	27	Stable	26.8	29.4(+)	Increase	25.6	27.7	Increase

(+): Figure significantly higher than in the rest of Quebec (threshold of 0.05).
Decrease/increase: Significant difference between the two cycles (threshold of 0.05 for Estrie and all the LSN; 0.01 for Quebec)

In 2017, the population of kindergarten-aged children in LSN of Sherbrooke was approximately **1700**, with **27%** of them—approximately 460 children—demonstrating vulnerability in at least one domain of child development. The statistical portrait of children in Sherbrooke is very similar to that of the province as a whole, although the proportion of children vulnerable in the domain of social skills increased in Sherbrooke from 2012 to 2017.

The Most Vulnerable Subgroups

In both the Estrie region and the province, the proportion of children vulnerable in at least one domain is greater in certain subgroups: boys, children under the age of 6 years, children who do not have French as their mother tongue, children born outside of Canada, children who live in underprivileged areas, and children who did not regularly attend day care before starting school. Vulnerability was particularly high in Sherbrooke among children with neither French nor English as their mother tongue and among children born outside of Canada.

It should be noted that approximately 3% of children in Sherbrooke have English as their mother tongue, 10% have neither French nor English as their mother tongue, and 8% were born outside of Canada.

Percentage of Children Vulnerable in at least One Domain (2017)

CHARACTERISTICS	LSN OF SHERBROOKE	ESTRIE	QUEBEC
Population breakdown	27	29.4(+)	27.7
By sex			
Boys	34.1	37.4(+)	35.0
Girls	19.6	20.6	20.2
By age			
Under 6 years of age	29.5	33.2	31.7
6 years or older	24.5	25.4	23.5
By spoken languages			
At least French	24.5	27.1	25.6
English but not French	30.6	50.3(+)	36.8
Neither French nor English	47.4(+)	46.1(+)	34.6
By place of birth			
Canada	25	28.6	27.3
Outside of Canada	51.3(+)	52.4(+)	33.6
According to physical and social deprivation			
Privileged	20.1	22.5	22.9
Average	28.5	28.8	27.1
Underprivileged	38.4	40.5(+)	34.6
Regular day-care attendance before starting school			
Yes	23.4	26	24.9
No	44.2	41.4	38.5

(+): Figure significantly higher than in the rest of Quebec (threshold of 0.05).

Some situations in the Estrie region are especially troubling. The differences are often greater in Estrie, as represented in the table, than in the province as a whole. To illustrate, the rate of vulnerability is almost two times higher among English-speaking children in the Estrie region than those who have French as their mother tongue, while the provincial ratio is at 1:4. In addition, vulnerability increased from 2012 to 2017 amongst boys (from 33.7% to 37.4%) and amongst children living in underprivileged areas (33.8% to 40.5%).

