

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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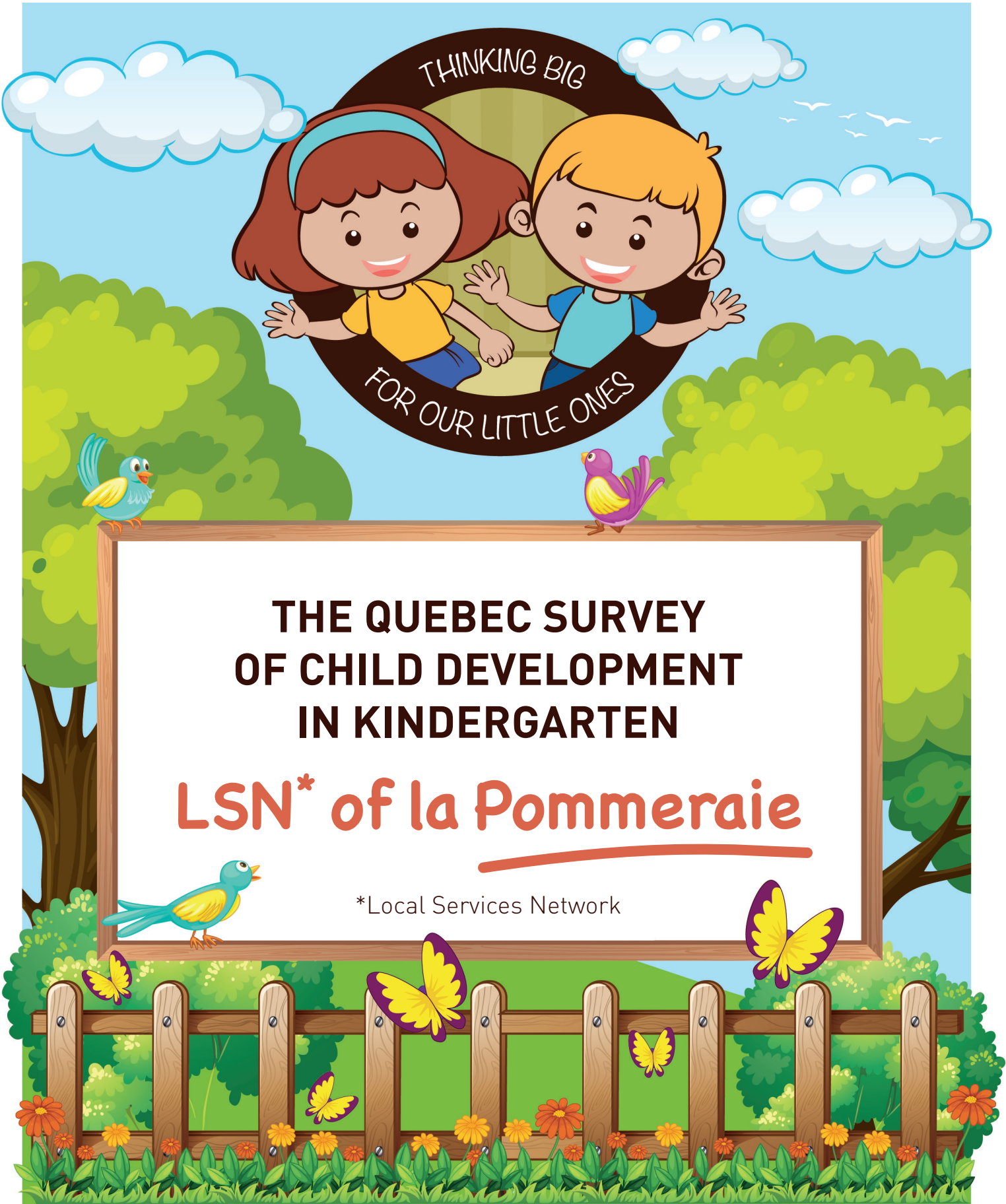
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Findings for the LSN of la Pommeraie

The response rate in the LSN of la Pommeraie was 96 %.

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 LA POMMERAIE			ESTRIE			QUEBEC		
	2012	2017	Change	2012	2017	Change	2012	2017	Change
Physical health and well-being	11.9	15.1(+)	Stable	9.8	11.4	Increase	9.5	10.6	Increase
Emotional maturity	13.1(+)	17.6(+)	Increase	10.1	13.3(+)	Increase	9.7	11.5	Increase
Social skills	9.7	16.8(+)	Increase	9.7	12.6(+)	Increase	9	10.2	Increase
Cognitive and language development	10	15.8(+)	Increase	10.7	13.2(+)	Increase	10	11.1	Increase
Communication skills and general knowledge	12.1	16.3(+)	Stable	10	11.4	Increase	10.8	11.1	Stable
At least 1 domain	28.7	35.9(+)	Increase	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 the LSN of la Pommeraie was approximately **550**, with **35.9%**—approximately 200 children—demonstrating vulnerability in at least one domain of child development. This proportion is higher than that for the province as a whole. Moreover, the proportions of vulnerable children in the LSN de la Pommeraie are higher than the provincial average in all the domains of child development.

The proportion of children vulnerable in the domains of emotional maturity, social competence, and cognitive and language development increased 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. Most of these observations also apply to the LSN of la Pommeraie but with some slight differences:

- The proportion of vulnerable girls is higher in Pommeraie than in the province as a whole.
- The children age 6 years or older are just as vulnerable as those under the age of 6 years.
- While there are more vulnerable children who have English as their mother tongue, the situation is also troubling for children who have French as their mother tongue.
- One-third of the children who attended day care before starting school are vulnerable, which is higher than in the province as a whole.

In addition, approximately 17% of the children living in the LSN of la Pommeraie have English as their mother tongue (about 100 children), and 19% of the children living there did not regularly attend day care before starting school.

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

CHARACTERISTICS	LSN OF LA POMMERAIE	ESTRIE	QUEBEC
Population breakdown	35.9(+)	29.4(+)	27.7
By sex			
Boys	42.7(+)	37.4(+)	35.0
Girls	28.3(+)	20.6	20.2
By age			
Under 6 years of age	36.1	33.2	31.7
6 years or older	35.6(+)	2.4	23.5
By spoken languages			
At least French	32.2(+)	27.1	25.6
English but not French	53.4(+)	50.3(+)	36.8
Neither French nor English	np	46.1(+)	34.6
By place of birth			
Canada	35.5(+)	28.6	27.3
Outside of Canada	np	52.4(+)	33.6
According to physical and social deprivation			
Privileged	24.6	22.5	22.9
Average	35.6(+)	28.8	27.1
Underprivileged	50.5(+)	40.5(+)	34.6
Regular day-care attendance before starting school			
Yes	33(+)	26	24.9
No	46	41.4	38.5

(+): Figure significantly higher than in the rest of Quebec (threshold of 0.05).
Np: The data is not presented because of the small number of children or for reasons of confidentiality.

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%).

