

# Going to daycare good for boys

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Starting daycare as early as six months old is especially good for boys, a new Canadian study suggests: more go on to complete high school and

do better economically as adults than those who start later or don't attend daycare at all.

Published in July in *Pediatrics*, the study led by researchers at Université de Montréal followed a Quebec cohort of some 2,900 francophone children born in 1980 and 1981 to see how attending daycare affected their success later in life.

The results were revealing: the earlier they started daycare, boys were 8-per-cent more likely to finish [high school](#) and 4-per-cent less likely to have [low income](#) as young adults. For girls, attending daycare early had no effect on their graduation rate and incomes.

"Daycare is very prevalent in our society, so although a few percentage points difference may not seem like much, the effect can be widespread," said lead author Sylvana Côté, a professor at UdeM's School of Public Health and researcher at the CHU Sainte-Justine children's hospital.

"Dropping out of high school has a major economic cost, both for individuals and for society in general," she added. "That's why early [child care](#) is important: it can be a cost-effective way to spur social development, economic opportunity and to protect against poverty."

Co-written with first author Pascale Dumond, the study is the first to follow up into adulthood children from all walks of society, not just from lower-income neighborhoods who started daycare as infants and went on to complete high school.

It is also the first to use official income-tax data, not just self-reported data from questionnaires and surveys, to show that boys who went to daycare do better economically as adults.

## A role in social-equalizing

"Boys are most at risk at dropping out of school, said Côté. "Other studies have shown children of lower socioeconomic status benefit the most from child care. So on the whole, child care may play a role in social-equalizing."

Carried out with help from researchers at McGill University, Statistics Canada, Sciences Po in Paris, Université de Bordeaux and University College Dublin, the study paints a detailed socioeconomic portrait of children who attend daycare.

Among the findings:

- Children who started daycare in infancy, as compared with starting as toddlers or never having been exposed, were less likely to come from families with low levels of education or low occupational prestige. Mothers were more likely to be working; they were also less likely to have had a teenage pregnancy.
- When compared with male, females in the study had higher high-school graduation rates (79 vs 59 percent, had lower personal earnings (\$32,500 vs \$47,000 a year), were more likely to be married or cohabiting, and were more likely to have [children](#) living in the household by age 35.

"To our knowledge, this study provides the first evidence of an association between early child care, increased rates of high school graduation, and lower risks of poverty in young adulthood, particularly for boys," the authors conclude.

"The findings suggest that benefits of formal child care may extend well beyond school readiness and parental participation in the workforce, including a reduction in high [school](#) drop-out rates for boys, for long-

term socioeconomic gain."

**More information:** Pascale Domond et al. Child Care Attendance and Educational and Economic Outcomes in Adulthood, *Pediatrics* (2020).  
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