



chapter 2

CAREGIVER CAPACITY



Key Messages

- Despite the high level of education among parents, the prevalence of low income is higher in Peel than in Ontario.
- 15% of Peel children under six years of age live in a low income household.
- Parents in Peel self-report being physically healthy and having excellent or very good mental health. One-quarter of parents have high levels of stress.
- The majority of Peel parents are physically inactive.

Children develop in an environment of relationships. Caregivers, including parents and other adults, differ in their capacities to support this development.

The capacity of a parent to provide a positive environment for their child is directly impacted by the determinants of health (e.g., education, income, social support). These determinants affect a parent's risk behaviours and overall health status. Healthy parents have increased capacity to provide a positive environment for child development. Parents who are chronically ill or have mental health concerns may be less able to actively engage with their children and therefore less likely to achieve secure attachment with a young child.

Key determinants of a caregiver's capacity include their:

- time and commitment (i.e., the nature and quality of time spent with the child);
- resources (including financial, psychological, emotional, health and social resources); and
- skills and knowledge (through education and training, interactions with professionals, and personal experiences).

Determinants of Health Affecting Caregiver Capacities

Employment

Employment not only provides income, it also provides a sense of identity and purpose allowing opportunities for personal and professional growth and access to “social capital” (aspects of social organization such as civic participation and trust in others that support and encourage cooperation among community members).

However, with the number of families where both parents are employed outside the home increasing significantly, parents are spending less time with each other and their children than in the past.⁷



Definition

The **unemployment rate** is the number of unemployed individuals expressed as a percentage of the labour force.

The unemployment rate has declined since 2009 but has not reached 2008 pre-recession levels (Figure 2.1). Peel's unemployment rate was noticeably higher than the national and provincial rates in 2009, and continues to be higher in 2011.

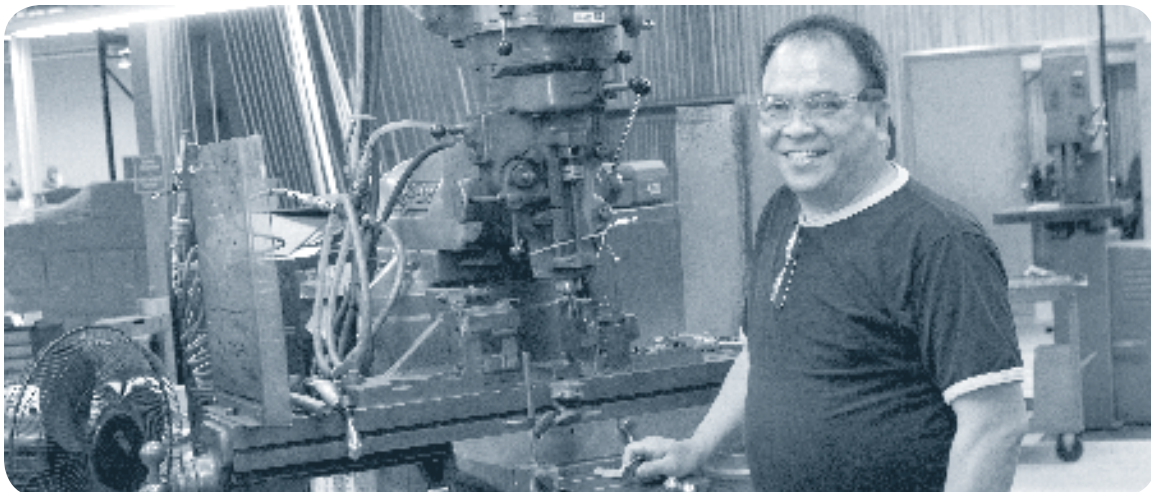
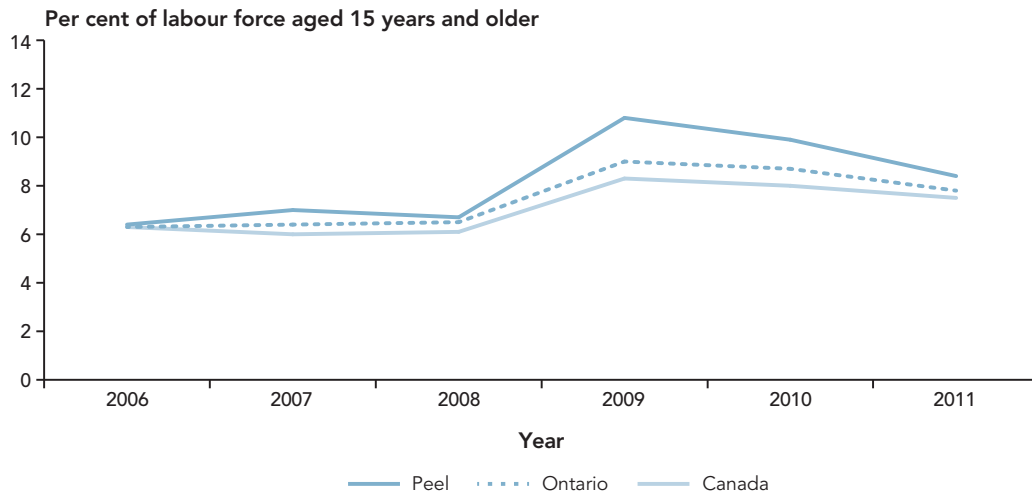


Figure 2.1
Unemployment Rates among those 15 Years and Older,
Peel, Ontario and Canada, 2006-2011



Source: Labour Force Survey 2006-2011, CANSIM Table 109-5324, Statistics Canada.

? Did You Know

Work Hours among Couples

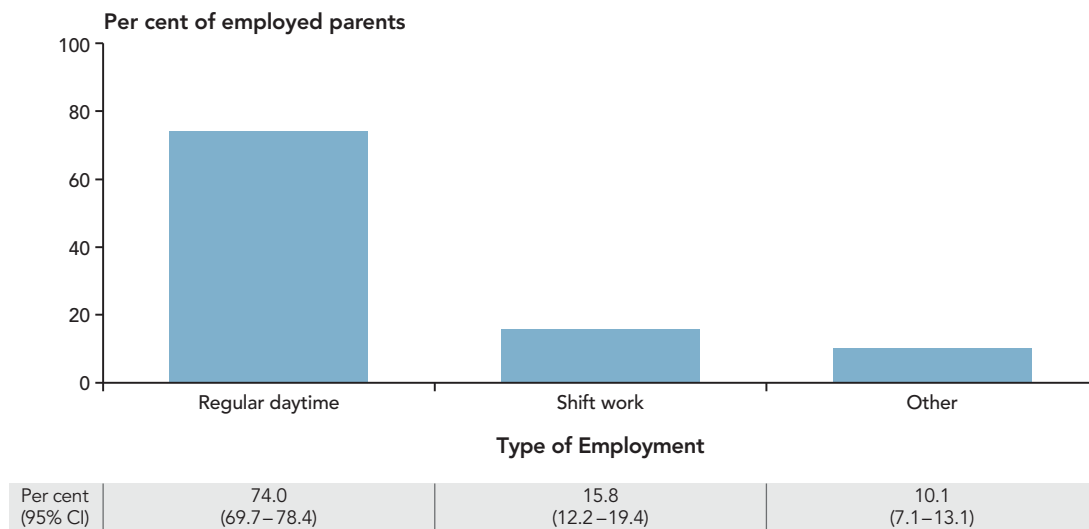
The proportion of couples with both spouses employed has increased in Canada from 40% in the mid-1970s to approximately 70% in 2008.⁸

Although the average number of work hours of dual-earner couples has remained stable over time, the average number of work hours of wives has increased while husbands' hours have decreased. This convergence in the number of hours worked by each spouse was considerable among couples with dependent children at home.⁸

Shift work has been associated with negative impacts on physical, social and psychological health.⁹ For parents, shift work may reduce the need for child care and lessen work-life conflict.¹⁰ Most Peel parents report regular daytime employment (Figure 2.2).



Figure 2.2
Type of Employment among Parents,
Peel, 2009



Note: 95% CI reflects the 95% confidence interval of the estimate.
Source: Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2009, Peel Public Health.

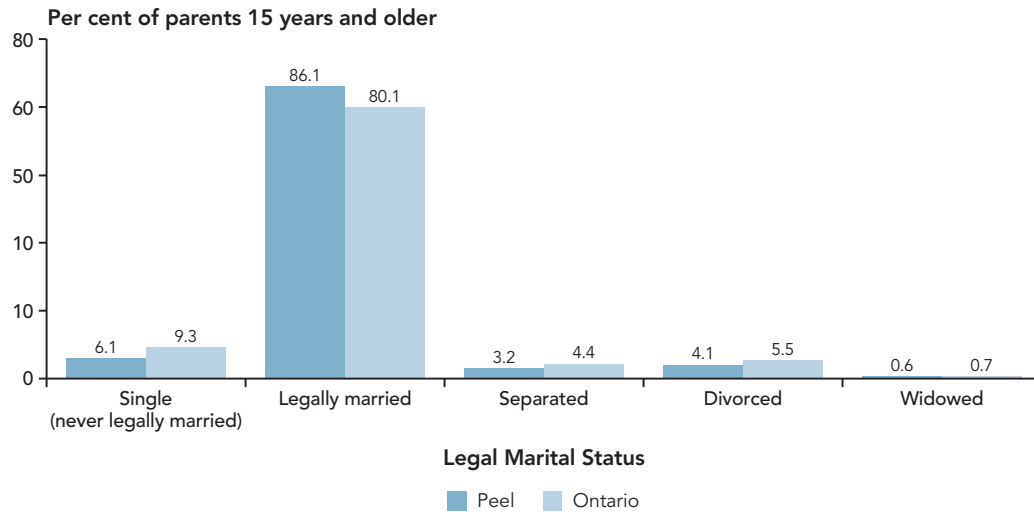
Marital Status

Being married may have positive health impacts on parents¹¹ and their children. For example, two-parent families may provide more social support and have a higher total income.

The vast majority of Peel parents are legally married (Figure 2.3). At the time of the 2006 Census common-law relationships were not included in the definition of legal marital status. Five per cent of Peel parents reported being in a common-law relationship (vs. 9% of Ontario parents).^{A2}



Figure 2.3
Legal Marital Status among Parents,
Peel and Ontario, 2006



Note: Those who are currently in a common-law relationship may be included within any of the categories above. This is due to the fact that legal marital status and common-law status were two separate questions on the 2006 census form.
 Source: Custom Profile, 2006 Census, Statistics Canada.



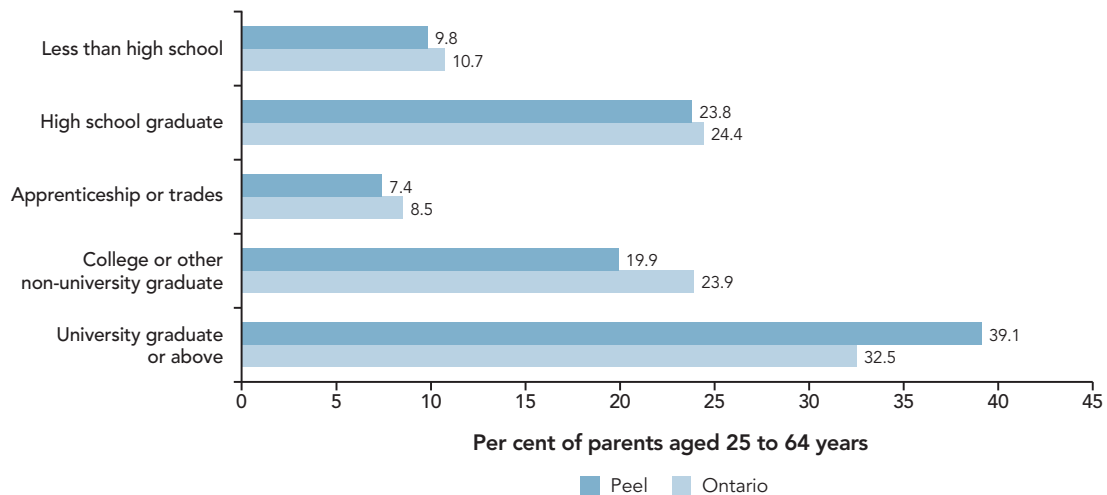
Education

Higher educational levels may lead to better employment, job security and economic stability. A mother's level of education has been shown to be of particular importance for child development.¹²

Almost 60% of Peel parents have a college or university degree or diploma.

Almost 60% of Peel parents have a college or university-level degree or diploma (Figure 2.4). In Peel, a greater proportion of recent immigrants (52%) have a university education compared to non-immigrants (22%).^{A2}

Figure 2.4
Highest Level of Education Attained by Parents,
Peel and Ontario, 2006



Source: Custom Profile, 2006 Census, Statistics Canada.

Peel parents 25 to 64 years of age were more likely to have received their post-secondary qualifications outside of Canada compared to Ontario parents (45% vs. 24%).^{A2}

Income

Lower family income is associated with poorer outcomes for children. The longer a child lives in poverty, the more pronounced the impacts.⁷

Household median after-tax income in Peel is higher than households in Ontario (Table 2.1). This is a result of the larger average household size in Peel compared to Ontario. For a more detailed description of the income distribution in Peel, see *Health in Peel: Determinants and Disparities* (2011) at peelregion.ca/health/reports.



Definition

The **median income** of a population is the income level at which half of the population has a higher income and half the population has a lower income.

The **mean income**, also referred to as the average income, is the total income divided by the number of people in the population. The average income measure can be skewed by very high and very low income values for a small number of individuals in the population.

Income measures may also be termed before-tax or after-tax to indicate whether the measure has been calculated with the income level prior to taxation and government transfer payments to which the individual/family may be entitled. This report includes after-tax income measures as they better reflect the usable income families have available.



Definition

Economic family refers to a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption. A couple may be of opposite or same sex. For the 2006 Census, foster children are included.

Couple families are those in which a member of either a married or common-law couple is the economic family reference person.

Lone-parent families are those in which either a male or female lone-parent is the economic family reference person.

See **Data Methods** for a visual depiction of the terms used to describe families by Statistics Canada from the 2006 Census.



Female lone-parent families in Peel had the lowest median income of any family type.

Table 2.1

Median and Mean After-Tax Family Income by Type of Family, Peel and Ontario, 2005

Family Type	Peel		Ontario	
	Median	Mean	Median	Mean
All economic families	\$ 67,841	\$ 77,442	\$ 62,288	\$ 73,454
Couple economic families	\$ 71,931	\$ 81,824	\$ 67,047	\$ 78,696
Male lone-parent families	\$ 55,736	\$ 61,937	\$ 49,000	\$ 56,457
Female lone-parent families	\$ 43,678	\$ 49,748	\$ 36,674	\$ 43,041

Source: 2006 Census, Statistics Canada.

The prevalence of low income among all economic families was slightly higher in Peel than in Ontario (10% vs. 9%) (Table 2.2). This may be the result of the higher

number of recent immigrants in Peel, who generally have lower income than non-immigrants or longer-term immigrants despite high levels of education.^{D1}



Definition

Prevalence of Low Income

In the 2006 Census, the *prevalence of low income* was defined as the proportion of families or unattached individuals who spent 20% or more of their total income on food, shelter and clothing than did the average family or unattached individual.

The low income cut-off (LICO) is based on a matrix that includes both family size and size of the community of residence. For example, a family of four living in an area with a population of 100,000 to 499,999 people would be classified as low income if its income level for 2005 was \$33,251 or less.



Female lone-parent families in Peel have the lowest median after-tax income compared to other family types. They were more than twice as likely to have low income compared to other types of families.

Fifteen per cent of Peel children under six years of age live in low income households.

Table 2.2

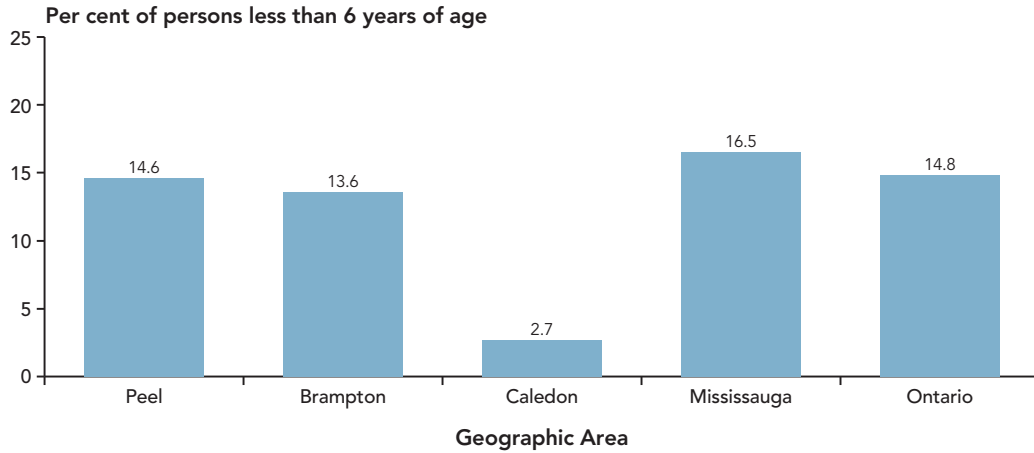
Prevalence of Low Income After-Tax by Type of Family, Peel, Brampton, Caledon, Mississauga and Ontario, 2005

Family Type	Peel (%)	Brampton (%)	Caledon (%)	Mississauga (%)	Ontario (%)
All economic families	9.7	9.2	3.0	10.7	8.6
Couple economic families	8.2	7.6	2.6	9.1	6.2
Male lone-parent families	11.9	11.5	2.8	12.9	12.2
Female lone-parent families	20.9	20.2	8.5	22.1	23.9

Source: 2006 Census, Statistics Canada.



Figure 2.5
Prevalence of Low Income After-Tax among Children less than Six Years Old, Peel, Brampton, Caledon, Mississauga and Ontario, 2005

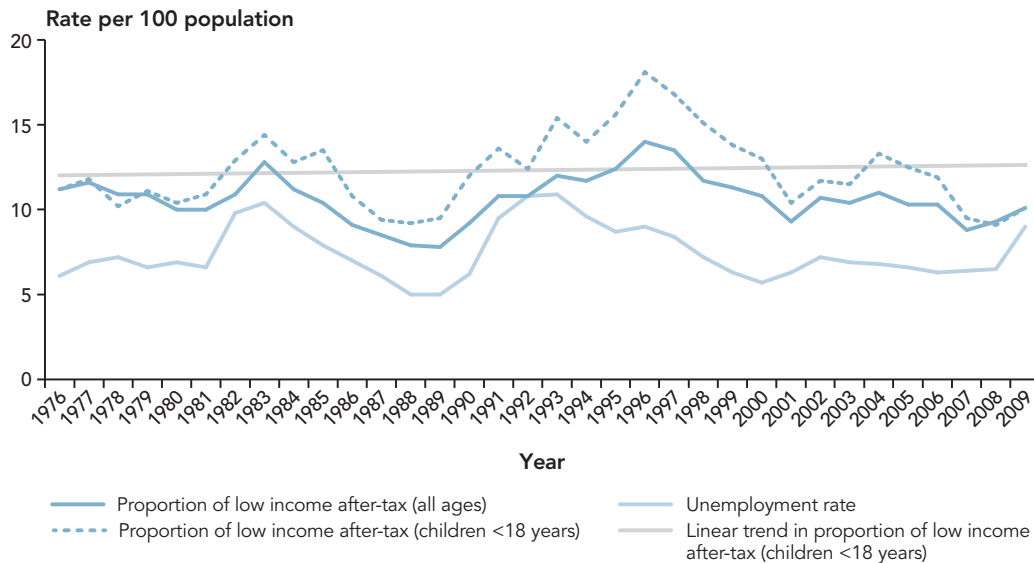


Source: 2006 Census, Statistics Canada.

Figure 2.6 shows how the provincial prevalence of low income has fluctuated over time along with the unemployment rate. The prevalence of low income among children and youth under 18 years of age

has fluctuated over the past 30 years with a slight overall increase. Those under 18 years of age have a higher prevalence of low income compared to those of all ages.

Figure 2.6
Proportion of Low Income After-Tax and Unemployment Rate, Ontario, 1976-2009



Sources: Statistics Canada. Table 202-0802 - Persons in low income families, annual.
 Statistics Canada. Table 282-0086 - Labour Force Survey estimates (LFS), supplementary unemployment rates by sex and age group, annual.
 Accessed: June 05, 2012.

The prevalence of low income among children in Ontario has increased very slightly over the past 30 years.

Health Status of Parents

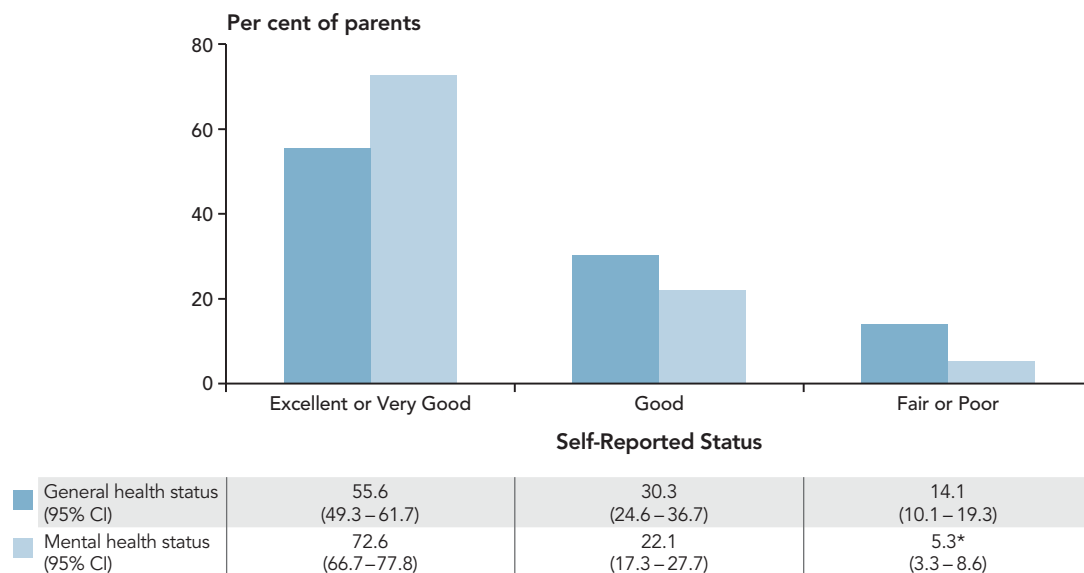
Parents who are in good health and have a positive mental health status are more likely to provide a nurturing environment for their children and to have responsive relationships with them.

Over half of Peel parents rate their health as excellent or very good, while almost three-quarters rate their mental health status as excellent or very good (Figure 2.7). Five per cent of Peel parents reported fair or poor mental health (use estimate with caution). This figure may underestimate mental health concerns among parents due to possible under-reporting.

Most Peel parents report that their daily activities are never limited by a long-term



Figure 2.7
Self-Reported General Health Status and Mental Health Status among Parents, Peel, 2009/2010



* Use estimate with caution.

Note: 95% CI reflects the 95% confidence interval of the estimate.

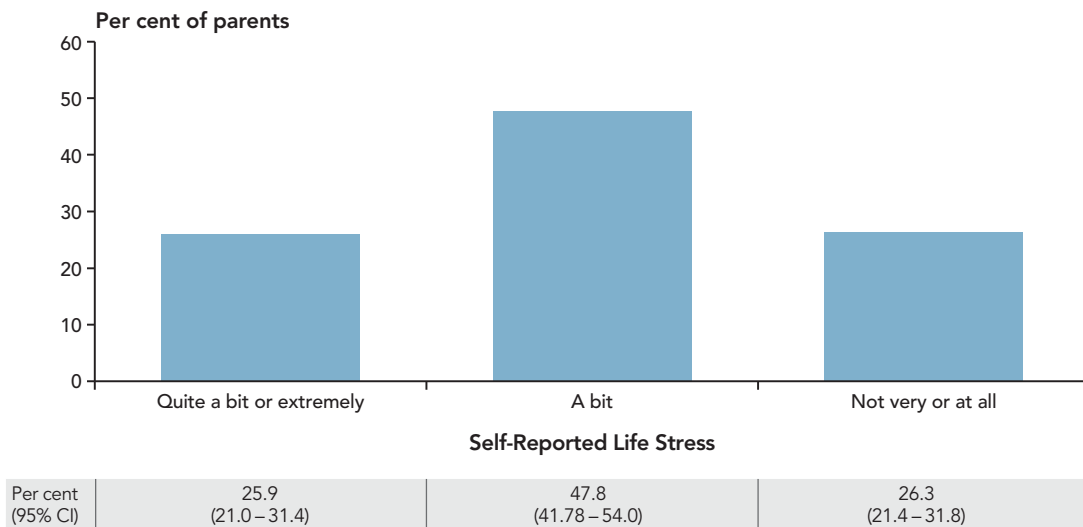
Source: Canadian Community Health Survey 2009/2010, Statistics Canada, Share File, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

physical, mental or health condition or problem.^{D1}

Twenty-six per cent of Peel parents report that their lives are ‘quite a bit’ or ‘extremely’ stressful (Figure 2.8).

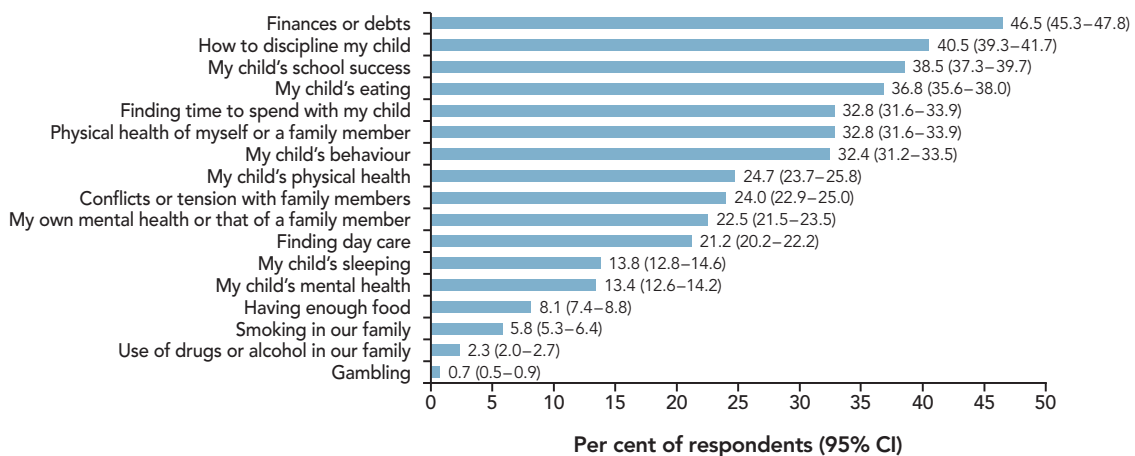
Finances, discipline, school success and eating habits are the top issues which caused parents of young children stress (Figure 2.9). The causes of stress among parents of older children are unknown.

Figure 2.8
Self-Reported Level of Life Stress among Parents, Peel, 2009/2010



Note: 95% CI reflects the 95% confidence interval of the estimate.
Source: Canadian Community Health Survey 2009/2010, Statistics Canada, Share File, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Figure 2.9
Issues that Cause Senior Kindergarten Parents Some or a lot of Stress or Worry, Peel, 2010



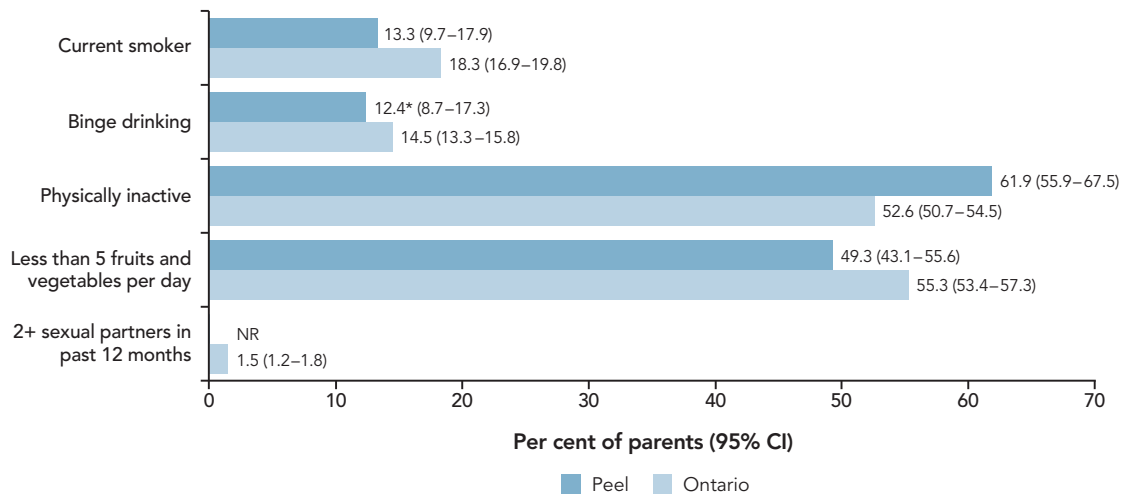
Note: 95% CI reflects the 95% confidence interval of the estimate.
Source: Senior Kindergarten Census 2010, Region of Peel.

Risk Behaviour among Parents

Parental behaviour influences children by impacting a parent's ability to provide a safe and nurturing environment, and by influencing their children's behaviour through role modelling. Parents who model positive behaviours and who expose their children and youth to positive role models in the community are strengthening their children's protective factors related to alcohol and drug use.^{13,14}

A minority of Peel parents are current smokers or report binge drinking in the past year. Parents in Peel are more likely to be physically inactive than Ontario parents (Figure 2.10). For information on these behaviours among youth, see Chapter 8, Risk Behaviour among Youth.

Figure 2.10
Selected Risk Behaviour among Parents,
Peel and Ontario, 2009/2010



* Use estimate with caution.

NR – not releasable due to small numbers.

Notes: 95% CI reflects the 95% confidence interval of the estimate.

Binge drinking is defined as having five or more drinks on one occasion in the past 12 months. A current smoker is a person who currently smokes daily or occasionally, has smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and has smoked in the past 30 days.

Physical inactivity is categorized based on the average daily energy expended during leisure time activities by the respondent in the past three months.

Source: Canadian Community Health Survey 2009/2010, Statistics Canada, Share File, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.