

FAMILY AND SENIOR POLICY



Photo : Sylvie Gallant

FAMILY AND SENIOR POLICY

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A WORD FROM THE PREFECT

What you are currently holding is the very first Family and Senior Policy of the MRC Avignon. I am very proud to present this achievement; it stands as a testimony to our commitment to improve the living conditions and environment of our community members.

Over the last few years, the MRC Avignon positioned itself as a leader in local economic and social development. We made the decision to take a leading role in local processes of social development to increase collaborative efforts with all the organizations that cater to our communities' general well-being. This commitment on our part makes it easier for us to engage all the relevant development resources towards making progress on current issues as well as creating positive and effective impacts on our communities' living environments.

The eleven municipalities of the MRC Avignon joined us in the task of collecting data and analyzing our communities' needs. I'd like to thank all the people who participated in the committees that worked tirelessly to prepare our new policies. Public health restrictions due to COVID-19 have been a burden on this initiative, and I commend all committee members for their resilience. Their commitment to the tasks at hand is noteworthy and should be emphasized. I also wish to thank all staff members who worked alongside committee members to help them identify the most promising actions to be undertaken.

We will work hard to implement all actions presented in the following policy.

Mathieu Lapointe
PREFECT, MRC AVIGNON



A WORD FROM THE FAMILY AND SENIOR REPRESENTATIVE

I'm very glad to present you the first Family and Senior Policy of the MRC Avignon. Until today, individual municipalities had adopted policies and action plans, but this new policy is the next step in the right direction. The MRC Avignon is now committed to support local municipalities in their efforts towards improving our families' and seniors' living environments to make sure they're both tailored to their needs and expectations.

Even though our local communities are ageing fast, they also attract more and more young people in search of a better and more balanced lifestyle. Our municipalities must act to answer the needs of these new members in our communities.

I wish to highlight the incredible efforts of municipal committees mostly made of local volunteers who worked tirelessly for more than a year listening to our communities' needs and developing the present policy. I'd like to give special thanks to the MRC's Steering Committee for Municipal Family (PFM) and Senior Friendly (MADA) Policies, their hard work, and their perseverance in the context of COVID-19 restrictions.

Bruce Wafer

ELECTED OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF FAMILY
AND SENIOR AFFAIRS



INTRODUCING THE STEERING COMMITTEE

All steps of the initiative leading to this policy were supervised by a Steering Committee. The project managers also participated in some of the MRC's projects in social development, notably those related to children, families, seniors, housing and transportation, all of which contributed to the development of the content of the present policy.

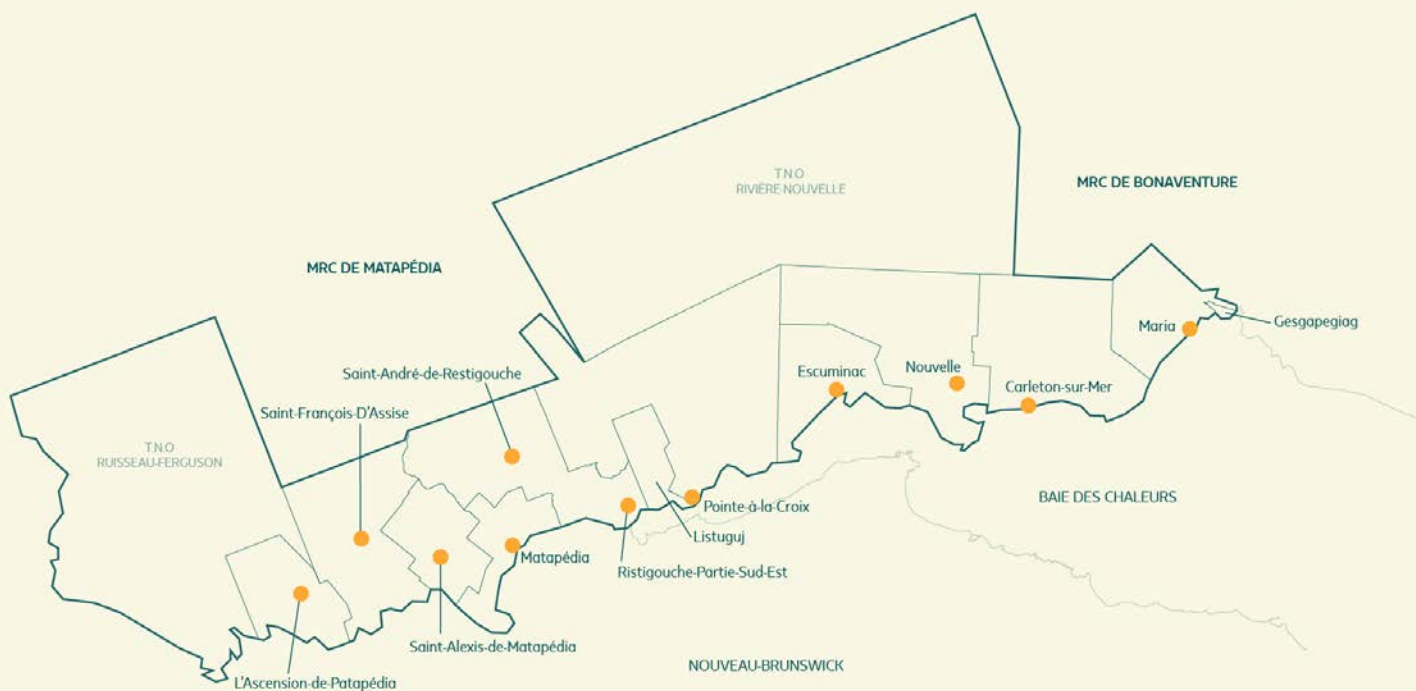
The Steering Committee members have met nine times since the onset of the initiative in May 2020. The Committee is made of the following members:

- Bruce Wafer, Mayor of Escuminac, elected official in charge of Family and Senior affairs;
- Maryève Charland-Lallier, Community Organizer, CISSS de la Gaspésie;
- Mireille Chartrand, Community Organizer, CISSS de la Gaspésie;
- Marie-Christine LeBlanc, Coordinator, Maison de la famille Avignon;
- Danielle Perreault, PFM-MADA Coach, Espace-MUNI;
- Aude Buévoz, Strategic Planning Manager, MRC Avignon;
- Matthieu Paradis, Social Development Coordinator, MRC Avignon;
- Johanne Poulin, PFM-MADA Project Manager, MRC Avignon;
- Lisa Guerette, PFM-MADA Project Manager, MRC Avignon.

The Committee also took into account the outcomes of the initiatives meant to update local Family and Senior policies in all 11 municipalities in the MRC, which were all adopted in 2021.

TERRITORY

The MRC Avignon is located in the administrative region of Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine, with neighbouring MRCs being Matapédia in the North, Bonaventure in the East, La Mitis in the West, and with the Ristigouche River and Chaleur Bay acting as its southern border. This territory is comprised of eleven municipalities, two non-organized territories (TNO), as well as the two Mi'gmaq communities of Gesgapegiag and Listuguj that do not fall under the MRC's jurisdiction.



THE FUNDAMENTALS OF OUR POLICY



Photo : Municipalité de Nouvelle – inauguration Terrain de pétanque



Photo : Municipalité Saint-André-de-Restigouche

The MRC Avignon is in charge of various mandates related to land and living environments' development and management, from both social and economic perspectives.

The MRC Avignon's 2019-2023 Strategic Land Use Planning addresses issues of economic development and management as well as other development perspectives in order to cater to its municipalities' needs in a more comprehensive manner. This planning exercise focuses on four primary development orientations, one of which being **supporting the development of activities and services that are both complementary and accessible to all members of the community**. In order to reach this objective, the MRC Avignon hired a team of professionals who are dedicated to our communities' collective well-being. It is through this initiative that MRC Avignon wished to adopt a Family and Senior policy.

Moreover, the MRC Avignon also acts as a trustee for the local social development initiative. The Community Plan and related objectives that stem from this initiative can and should be in line with the other development objectives put forward by the MRC.

Our mission

OUR MISSION IS TO ENERGIZE MUNICIPALITIES, ORGANIZATIONS AND THE POPULATION TO CREATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT SO THAT FAMILIES AND SENIORS CAN THRIVE, WORK, FIND NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND LEARN.

Our values

SOLIDARITY Support families and seniors and finding the resources that are necessary to satisfy their needs.

MUTUAL AID Foster mutual aid and collaboration.

RESPECT Respect the autonomy and differences of families and seniors.

FAIRNESS Treat all community members fairly, no matter their age or personal, social, or economic situation.

INCLUSION Adapt local projects to make sure all community members can participate equally in the development of their communities.

Working definitions

FAMILY

A group of people made of parents and children living together, supported by an extended family bound by blood and other types of relationships over generations, thus stimulating the development and evolution of individuals and societies.

SENIOR

People gradually become senior citizens, at different times depending on personal characteristics. This period of life is usually marked by the end of parental responsibilities due to children becoming adults, and by a gradual or sudden withdrawal from the job market. In Canada and Quebec, 65 years of age is usually considered the starting point of the social aging phase.

The MRC's commitments

THE MRC AVIGNON IS COMMITTED TO IMPLEMENTING THE FAMILY AND SENIOR POLICY AND TO ACT BY:

- **Deploying** all necessary human and financial resources to this end;
- **Helping and supporting** local municipalities and communities in planning and implementing their own initiatives;
- **Finding innovative and creative solutions** to local issues and challenges;
- **Acknowledging** the essential role played by community members, local stakeholders, municipalities and organizations that work directly with families and seniors within or parallel to local development initiatives;
- **Relying on a long-term and evolving vision** which takes account of the interconnections between local environmental, social, educational, cultural and economic issues;
- **Enforcing principles of inclusion and accessibility** that address the diversity of local needs and realities;
- **Taking practical steps** to enhance our community members' well-being, quality of life and living environment.

The MRC's roles

Provide leadership by supporting the dynamism of municipalities, organizations and the population of its territory.

Encourage, support and promote the initiatives of partners, municipalities, organizations and of the population and support them in the implementation of local Family and Senior policies.

Promote actions that benefit families and seniors and publishing related information in the area.

Represent local municipalities, organizations and community members before stakeholders who offer solutions to local issues and challenges.

THE INITIATIVE

Photo : Mélanie Guèvremont



Photo : Plan de développement de communauté nourricière Matapédia et Les-Plateaux



Photo : Magali Deslauriers

CONTEXT

The eleven municipalities of the MRC Avignon have all adopted Family and Senior policies between 2013 and 2015. Several changes favorable to community members have found it difficult to implement. However, the smaller municipalities have found it difficult to implement their own action plans without the proper resources they need to coordinate and implement such actions.

In 2019, local municipalities initiated an updating process for their Family and Senior policies and related action plans, this time with the help of the MRC. The MRC took part in those collective efforts in part also to design its own territorial policy. Two project managers were hired in 2020 to assist municipal initiatives and see to the completion of the MRC's.

The pandemic created quite a disturbance in the whole process, notably by causing various setbacks and delays. Local and/or territorial organizations and municipalities have had to deal with this challenge on a daily basis. The process outcomes have been satisfying nonetheless since all municipal Family and Senior policies (including the MRC's) have been adopted by local municipal councils and the MRC's council, notwithstanding the aforementioned delays.



Photo : Municipalité de Nouvelle



Photo : Mélanie Guèvremont

QUESTIONNAIRE-DRIVEN CONSULTATIONS

During this process, local committees identified issues and topics on which they wished to consult with community members. The same approach was used by the members of the MRC's Steering Committee. The project managers then compiled a set of questions in preparation of the consultation rounds. Around fifty questions were selected all in all. Respondents were required to mention their town of residence and to answer the questions related to issues that were relevant for both their place of residence and the rest of the MRC.

The questionnaire was sent out in April 2021, following a promotion campaign broadcasted on social and written media as well as on the radio. Community members who could not access the internet were also allowed to fill out the survey by hand or to call directly the project managers to answer the survey on the phone. 881 people participated in total, which represents 9 % of the MRC's total adult population.

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE CONSULTATIONS

In addition to the survey, the project managers met directly with seniors and families either individually or in groups to know more about their specific concerns. They also hosted meetings with students attending the two local secondary schools. Finally, agents from local community groups who work with vulnerable populations were also consulted on their clientele's most pressing needs.



STATISTICAL PROFILE OF MRC AVIGNON'S POPULATION

The following statistical data was collected and analyzed by CIRADD¹ in 2020, at the request of the MRC².

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

- Total population in 2018: 14 736
- Population density in 2016: 4,1 hab./km²
- Population variation 1996-2018: -7,31 %
- Average size of private households 2016: 2,1
- Average size of families in the 2016 census: 2,7
- Average housing price 2016: 140 174 \$
- % of households renting a subsidized unit 2016: 16,6 %
- Economic vitality index 2018³: -9,2983

Unemployment rate 2016: 18 %

Employment rate 2016: 43,9 %

Rate of participation in the workforce 2016: 53,6

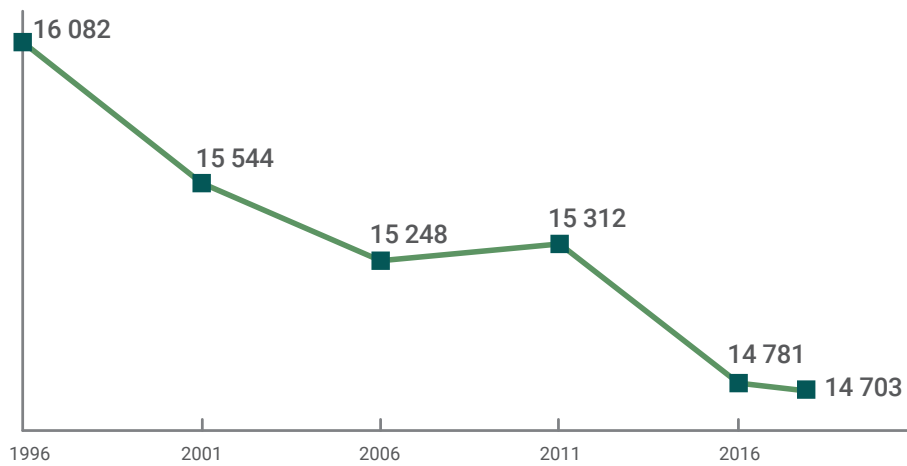
Sources : Institut de la statistique du Québec (ISQ), 2018; ISQ, 2020a and Statistics Canada, 2017a.

1. Centre de recherche en innovation sociale spécialisé en développement durable.

2. Jean-Daniel GLAZER ALLARD, Sandrine LEBLANC-FLORENT and Nicolas ROY, *Portrait statistique de la population de la MRC Avignon*, CIRADD, 2020. 84 pages.

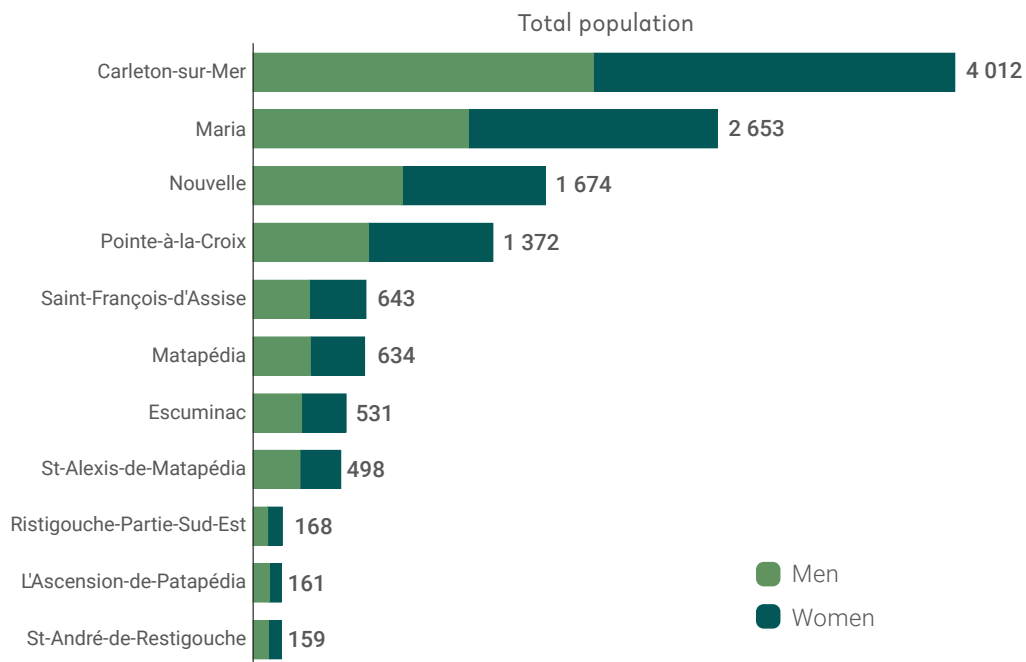
3. « The economic vitality index represents the geometric means of the standardized variables of three indicators: the rate of participation in the workforce, the median total income of private households, and the five-year average population growth rate. Each indicator represents an essential component of vitality, i.e. the workforce, living standards and demographic tendencies. » (Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2018a)

MRC AVIGNON'S POPULATION VARIATION, 1996-2018



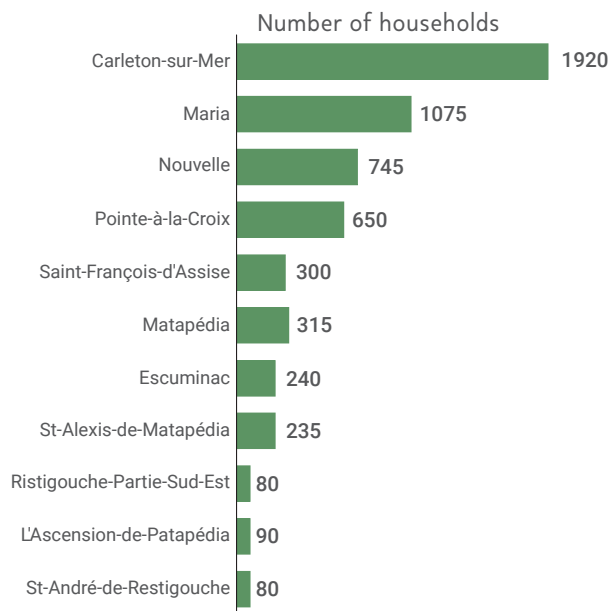
Source : Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2020a.

TOTAL POPULATION AND POPULATION BY GENDER IN MRC AVIGNON AND LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES (2018)



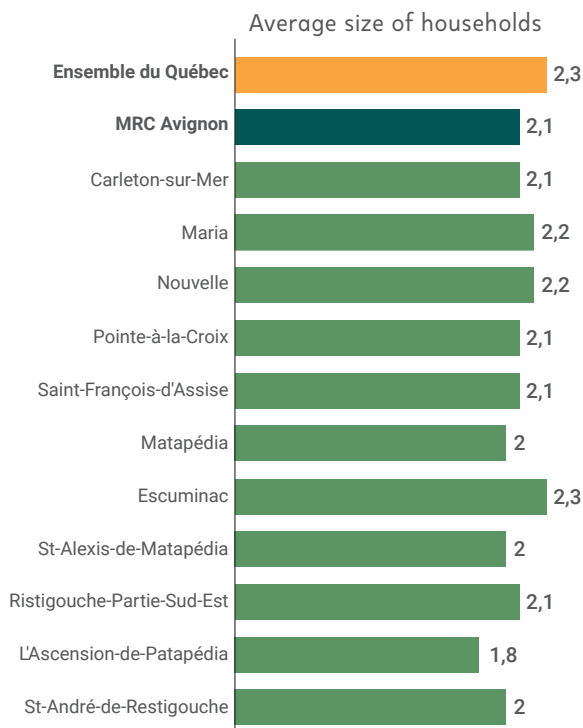
Source : Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2020b.

NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS IN EACH MRC AVIGNON MUNICIPALITIES (2016)



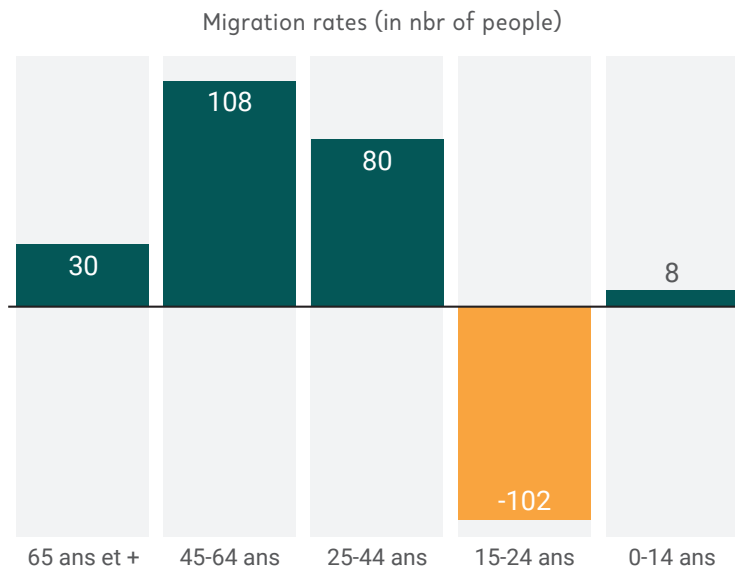
Sources: Statistics Canada, 2017a and Statistics Canada, 2017.

AVERAGE SIZE OF HOUSEHOLDS IN EACH MUNICIPALITY COMPARED TO THOSE OF MRC AVIGNON AND IN THE REST OF QUEBEC (2016)



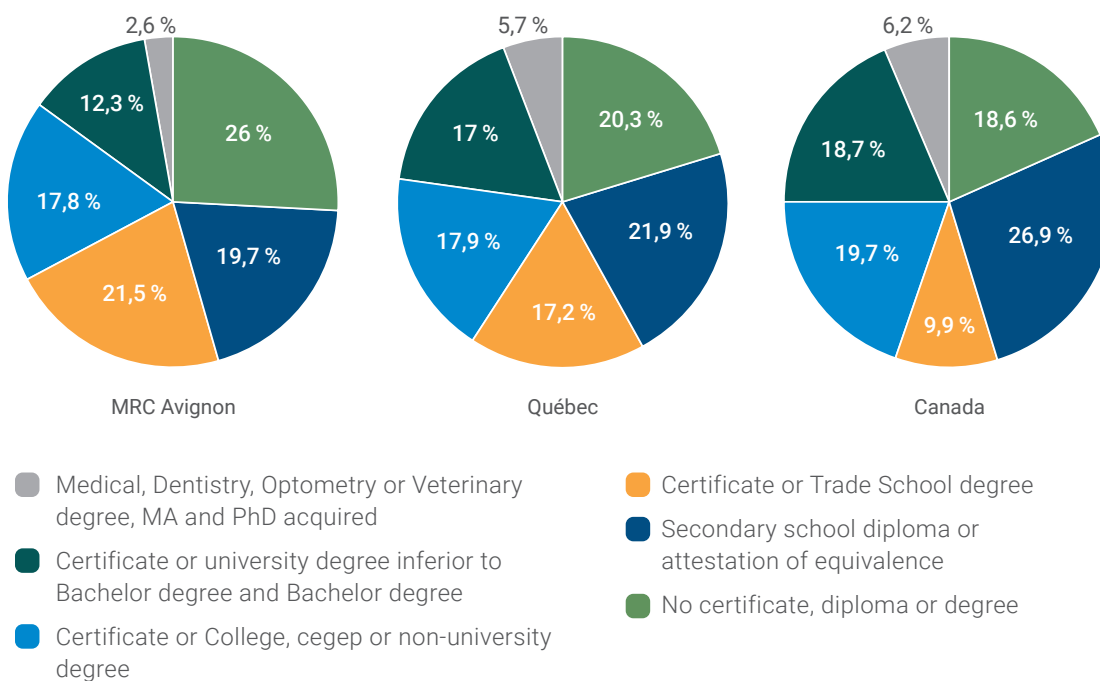
Sources : Statistics Canada, 2017a and Statistics Canada, 2017b.

NET MIGRATION PER AGE RANGE, MRC AVIGNON (2016-2019)



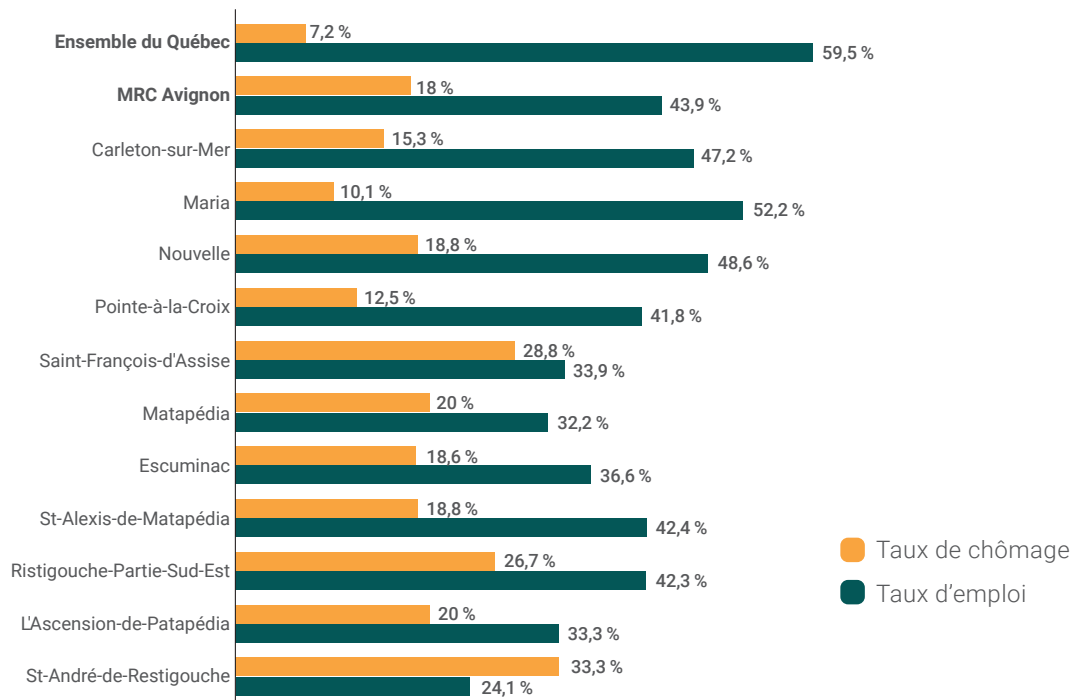
Source : Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2020f.

HIGHEST CERTIFICATE, DIPLOMA OR DEGREE FOR PEOPLE 15 AND OLDER IN MRC AVIGNON'S PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS COMPARED TO THOSE IN THE REST OF QUEBEC AND CANADA (2016)



Sources : Statistics Canada, 2017a and Statistics Canada, 2017b.

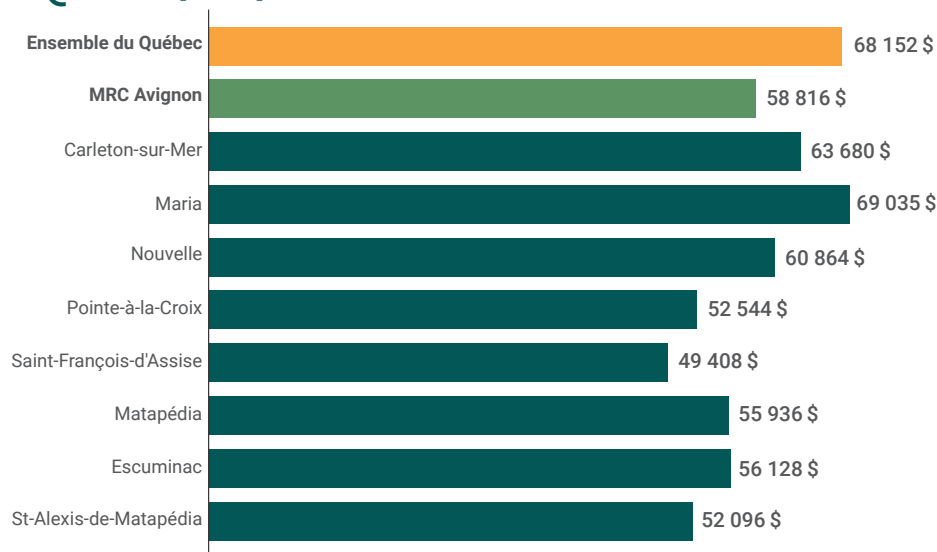
UNEMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT RATES IN LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES, IN MRC AVIGNON AND IN THE REST OF QUEBEC (2016)



Note: The employment rate corresponds to the number of people with an occupation presented as a ratio of the total population 15 and older (Statistics Canada, 2017a).

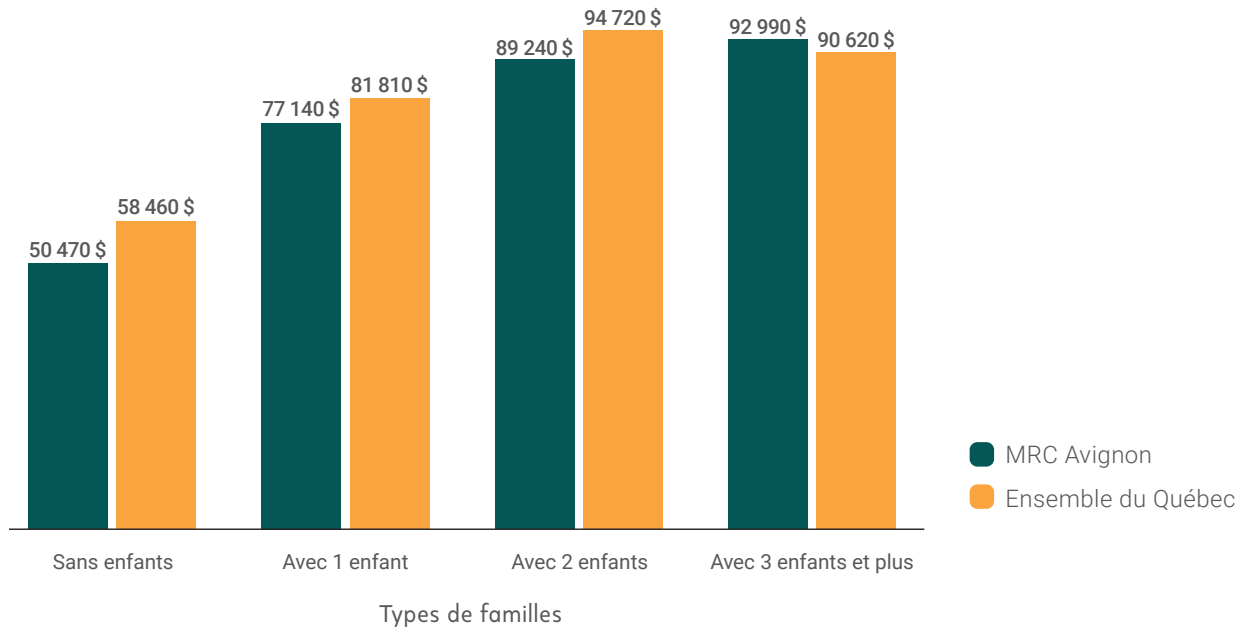
Source: Statistics Canada, 2017a.

MEDIAN TOTAL INCOME AFTER TAX FOR ECONOMIC HOUSEHOLDS IN MRC AVIGNON MUNICIPALITIES, COMPARED TO THOSE IN THE REST OF QUEBEC (2015)



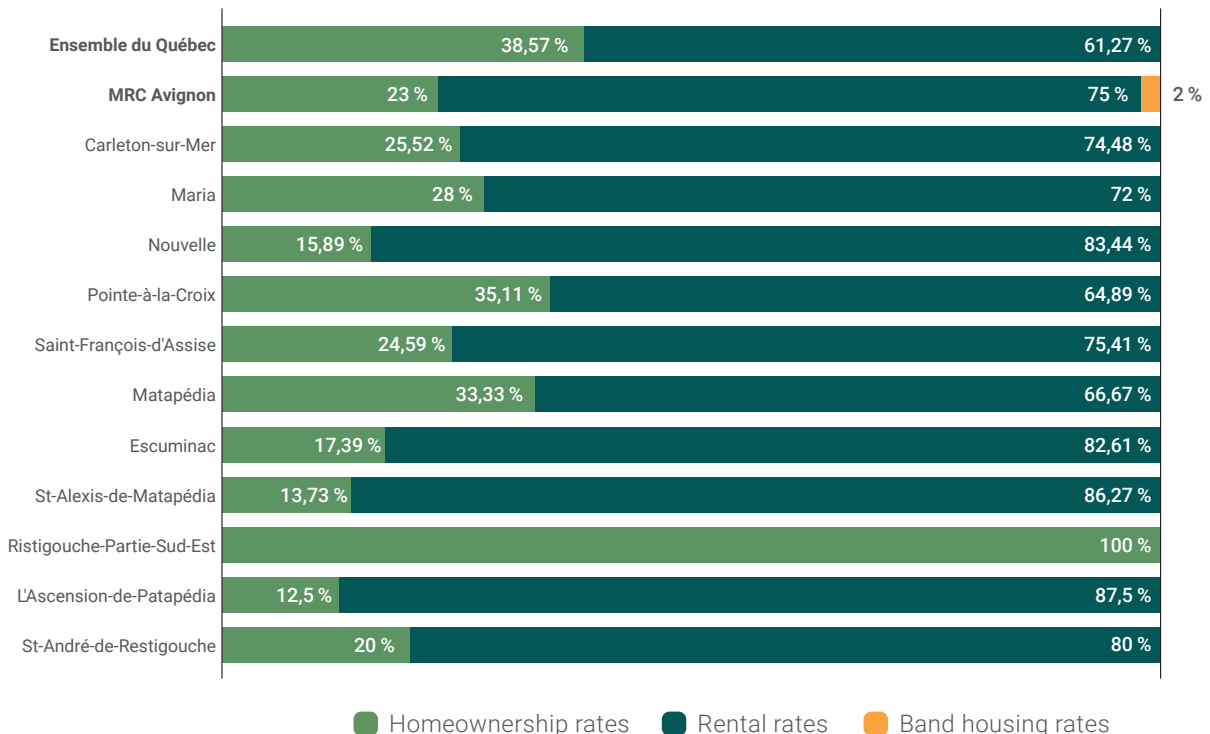
Source: Statistics Canada, 2017b.

MEDIAN INCOME AFTER TAX FOR ECONOMIC FAMILIES WITH ONE COUPLE, DEPENDING ON TYPE OF FAMILY, IN MRC AVIGNON (2016)



Sources : Institut de la statistique du Québec (ISQ), 2019a et ISQ, 2019b.

RATES OF HOMEOWNERSHIP AND RENTAL IN MRC AVIGNON (2016)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2017a.

FOCUS, OBSERVATIONS AND GUIDELINES

1. LEISURE, CULTURE AND COMMUNITY LIFE

FINDINGS

- Community gardens play an important role as places of socialization and outdoor activity, and the committees taking care of them are always in need of support in terms of management.
- Municipalities lack resources to set up summer day camp programs and ensure the quality of related programs and operations.
- There are few places dedicated to informal meetings for families and seniors.

GUIDELINES

Collaborate with municipalities and local organizations so they can offer a variety of recreational activities for families and seniors, and to make sure these activities meet their specific needs.

2. HOUSING AND LIVING ENVIRONMENT

FINDINGS

- The housing shortage in Gaspésie is a reality for all municipalities located in the MRC. Families and seniors who moved in the last three years experienced difficulties in finding new accommodations, mostly due to a lack of options.
- The lack of suitable housing options for seniors with disabilities or reduced autonomy is worrisome. There are too few options in terms of functional and affordable housing, and waiting lists for senior residences are full.

GUIDELINES

Contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of local families and seniors in order to create more pleasant, accessible, and evolving living environments tailored to their needs.

3. MUNICIPAL ORGANIZATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

FINDINGS

- Some municipal stakeholders (particularly those from the center and western corners of the MRC) have acknowledged the usefulness of collaborative and pooling initiatives, but they do not know how to set up such initiatives.
- Local organizations and volunteer committees that organize and host community activities do not always have the resources they need to properly advertise and promote said activities.
- Choosing the right media to reach out to the population isn't always easy depending on the age group being targeted.
- Community members are not well acquainted with the services offered by local organizations.

GUIDELINES

Support municipalities in the development of a communication strategy and service offer to the population.

4. HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

FINDINGS

- Along with the current lack of family physicians, the restriction of access to New-Brunswick and its hospital during the pandemic has weakened local community members' access to health care services, which is cause for concern.
- The lack of family physicians is limiting the access to regular and specialized health care services for all members of the community.

GUIDELINES

Make use of all relevant the MRC's governance bodies and jurisdictions to improve local health and social services.

5. RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

FINDINGS

- The most vulnerable seniors experience isolation and exclusion.
- Seniors experience difficulties in keeping up to date with new technologies.
- The pandemic left a lot of people with a strong feeling of social exclusion.

GUIDELINES

Break down the isolation people experience by supporting intergenerational initiatives that bring people together in order to help seniors feel more included in their community.

6. COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORT

FINDINGS

- Families would benefit from knowing more about Maison de la famille's programs.
- Parents with young children sometimes experience difficulties accessing municipal services and activities that are intended for all members of the community.
- Parents are not aware they are welcome to Maison de la famille Avignon's activities even when these are taking place in locations outside of their municipality of residence.

GUIDELINES

Make sure to collaborate with local community organizations for the promotion of family services.

7. SCHOOL SUCCESS

FINDINGS

- Smaller municipalities sometimes experience difficulties in accessing school facilities to host activities due to requirements and costs being too high for them.
- Children are not learning enough about food autonomy.
- The current daycare offer doesn't meet the needs of local families.
- Extended school breaks such as summer break result in loss of skills and lower school achievements for children.

GUIDELINES

Support initiatives undertaken by local organizations and municipalities that contribute to educational success of local children.

8. URBAN PLANNING, OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS

FINDINGS

- Survey respondents wished there were more trails available and they agreed with the initiative leading to a trail linking municipalities.
- Local public trail use is limited due to short-term agreements between municipalities and private landowners.
- Outdoor meeting locations contribute to experiencing a local sense of belonging.

GUIDELINES

Offer families and seniors easily accessible and safe outdoor infrastructures that also meet their needs.

9. TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

FINDINGS

- The lack of options in terms of transportation has been noted by different categories of respondents (community members who do not own a car, seniors, youth) whatever their needs may be (appointments, groceries, activities, etc.).
- There is a pressing need for taxi, delivery and accompaniment (for grocery-shopping and/or daily needs) services for senior and disadvantaged community members.

GUIDELINES

Work collaboratively towards the development of transportation services that meet present and future needs of local families and seniors.

10. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATION

FINDINGS

- Municipalities experience difficulties in getting people interested in municipal affairs as well as in recruiting the next generation of municipal leaders.

GUIDELINES

Put in place ways to encourage the social participation of local families and seniors.

11. SECURITY OF GOODS AND PEOPLE

FINDINGS

- Senior citizens and vulnerable households are at higher risk of suffering directly from the consequences of climate change.
- Senior abuse is often insidious.

GUIDELINES

Make sure local families and seniors benefit from safe and secure living environments that can help them thrive within their community.