

Time use: Total work burden, unpaid work, and leisure ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Caregiving

Both mothers and fathers spend more time on child care than thirty years ago, but women have increased their time with children to a greater extent than men.

Despite their increased labour force participation and its continuation over the life course, women are the predominant providers of informal (i.e., unpaid) care to children as well as to family members and friends with mental or physical limitations related to aging or chronic health conditions or disabilities. According to data from the 2012 General Social Survey (GSS) on Caregiving and Care Receiving, 62.3% of women aged 25 to 54 in Canada had a child under the age of 13 in the household, and/or served as a caregiver to family members and friends. The comparable figure for men was 56.7%.

Using the 2015 GSS on Time Use, child care as a primary activity can be distinguished from caregiving provided to an adult, either within the household or outside of it, such as assistance with personal care, grocery shopping, and transportation. These data confirm that women spend more time on child care than do men, and that gender gap has grown over time. Women spent an average of one hour per day caring for children 2015—30 minutes more than did men (30 minutes) (Chart 9). This partly reflects the fact that more women participated in caring for children than did men (37.4% versus 25.3%). Yet even among participants, women spent an average of 36 minutes more per day caring for children than did men (2.6 versus 2.0 hours).

Both women and men spent more time caring for children in 2015 than they did in 1986. Specifically, the average amount of time that women and men spent on child care increased by 12 minutes per day between 1986 and 2015 (from 48 minutes to one hour and from 18 to 30 minutes, respectively). These findings are consistent with studies in the United States, showing that mothers have maintained their time spent with children, even though they are spending more time on paid work and less time on housework, and fathers have augmented their time spent with children. This increase in time spent with children over time may partly reflect the ever-more intensive form of childrearing in which previous research demonstrates middle-class parents, particularly mothers, are engaged.

Notably, the gender gap in time spent on child care was stable between 1986 and 2015 at 30 minutes. Although fewer women participated in child care in 2015 than they did in 1986 (37.4% versus 41.7%), those who participated increased the amount of time that they spent on child care to a greater extent (36 minutes per day, from 2.0 to 2.6 hours per day) than did their male counterparts (24 minutes per day, from 1.6 to 2.0 hours per day).

When child care performed simultaneously with other activities is considered, the gender gap in time spent doing so is greater than when child care is considered as a primary activity only. Specifically, women spent an average of 1.9 hours per day on all child-care activities in 2010—one hour more per day than men (54 minutes per day). This partially reflects the fact that women were more likely than men to combine child care with other activities (42.2% of women did so, compared with 30.1% of men).

A greater proportion of women than men perform routine child-care tasks on a given day, and spend more time doing so

Like housework, child-care tasks are gendered: women generally spend more time than men on routine tasks related to the physical care of children. In 2010, 76.1% of women in Canada, aged 25 to 54, whose youngest child in the household was under the age of 16 performed routine child-care tasks on a given day, compared with 56.7% of men (a difference of 19.4 percentage points) (Chart 10). Further, these women spent nearly one hour more per day on routine child-care tasks than their male counterparts (2.3 versus 1.4 hours per day, a difference of 54 minutes).

The gender gap in participation and time spent was smaller for tasks related to child engagement, development, and education. Around 40% of women whose youngest child was under the age of 16 performed these tasks, as did 27.4% of men (a difference of 11.8 percentage points). Women who participated in child engagement, development, and education spent an average of 36 minutes per day on these tasks—about 12 minutes more than their male counterparts (24 minutes per day).

Region: Canada ^[3]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/18/10/time-use-total-work-burden-unpaid-work-and-leisure>

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