

The care economy in post-reform China: Feminist research on unpaid and paid work and well-being ^[1]

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ABSTRACT

As China embarked on the path of economic and social reforms, social provisions from the Maoist era were dismantled, and care responsibilities shifted back from the state to the household. Rural-urban migration, a steep decline in fertility, and increasing longevity have led to changes in the age structure of the population both overall and by region. Using seven different surveys, the eleven contributions in this volume study the distributive consequences of post-reform care policies and the impact of unpaid care responsibilities on women's and men's opportunities and gender inequality. Overall, reduced care services have created care deficits for disadvantaged groups, including low-income rural elderly and children. The shifted care burden has also limited women's ability to participate fully in the market economy and has contributed to rising gender inequalities in labor force participation, off-farm employment, earnings, pensions, and mental health outcomes.

KEYWORDS: Childcare, China reforms, eldercare, employment, gender inequality, unpaid work

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