

Shifting gender norms and childcare in Canada ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Chapter abstract

The lack of high-quality, affordable childcare options for Canadian mothers provides stubborn, structural barriers to shifting traditional gender roles situating women as the primary caregivers for young children. While there is some evidence that societal attitudes towards who “should” care for children are beginning to change, structural constraints act as a persistent roadblock to changing the realities of women struggling to fulfill both their formal, paid responsibilities and informal, unpaid care work. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the types and structure of childcare service in Canada as well as describing key historical and current policy developments. Contemporary, comparative, national, and international empirical research that has examined the relationship between gender role attitudes and childcare arrangements will be explored and applied to the Canadian context. This chapter illustrates how the widespread inaccessibility of childcare in Canada continues to act as an insurmountable barrier to progressively shifting gender roles beyond the traditional, mother-as-primary-caregiver model. It is suggested that the state must play a greater role to ensure all mothers have access to the structural supports needed – particularly access to regulated childcare services – for equitable participation in society.

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