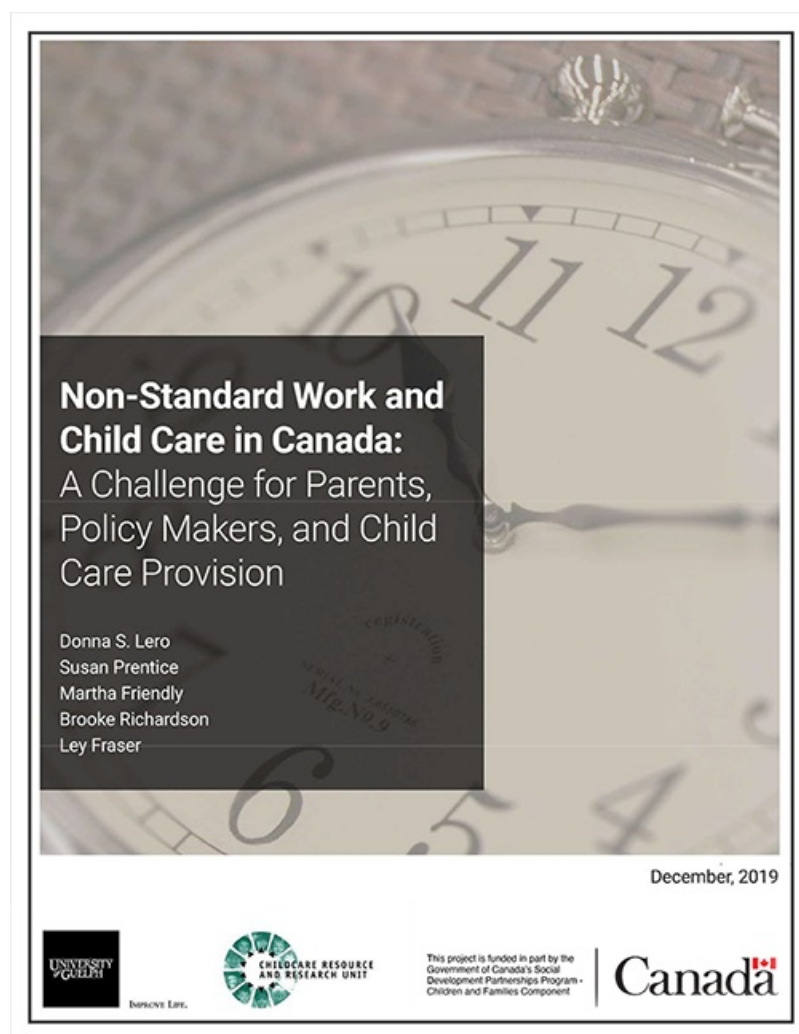


Non-standard work and child care in Canada: A challenge for parents, policy makers, and child care provision ^[1]



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[Access full report \(PDF\)](#) ^[2]

[Executive Summary in EN](#) (p. i)

[Executive Summary in FR](#) (p. xx).

A new report exploring the experiences of Canadian parents who work non-standard hours concludes that a stable, core system of quality, affordable, accessible, inclusive services is required as a foundation in order to tackle the challenges of providing more difficult-to-sustain non-standard hours services in a major way. It makes a series of recommendations for tackling non-standard hours child care issues at multiple levels to ameliorate challenges faced by families and service providers. The research notes that high rates of non-standard work have characterized the Canadian economy for well over a decade and are predicted to increase.

The report, funded by Employment and Social Development Canada, used a combination of methods including analysis of new Statistics Canada data, literature reviews, interviews with parents, a scan of provincial/territorial approaches to non-standard hours child care and developed profiles of seven Canadian non-standard hours child care services.

The report identifies that almost four in ten (39%) families with a child under 6 years of age have at least one parent who works non-standard hours (a schedule other than regular weekdays) or about 1.5 million parents of young children in Canada in 2016-2017. More than one in four mothers and one in four fathers who worked at a job or business have non-standard work hours (27% of mothers and 27% of fathers). Almost one sixth of these parents work regular evenings or nights, three quarters have rotating shifts or irregular hours, and many may have little advance notice of their work hours.

The researchers found that parents working non-standard hours face real challenges finding and maintaining reliable, affordable child care

that meets their needs, relying on complex and often unstable “packages” of child care, combining parent ‘tag-teaming’, reliance on family, and regulated or unregulated child care. The study found that mothers working non-standard hours are less likely to use licensed child care than mothers who work standard hours and are more likely to use non-parental care arrangements on an irregular or occasional basis. Where families can find and afford regulated childcare, it may form the stable backbone of a care package.

The report found that licensed non-standard hours child care is limited everywhere in Canada, especially child care overnight or late into the night. The researchers estimated that less than 2% of child care centres across Canada offer some form of non-standard hours child care, and most of these centres provide only slightly earlier opening times or slightly later closing times. Care over night or on weekends is rare.

Non-standard hours child care needs have gender implications. Mothers do most of the organizing of child care “packages” and face additional challenges when work hours are unpredictable. Mothers who work non-standard hours are more likely to have temporary work or work part time, and to sacrifice career opportunities and promotions to manage work and child care responsibilities.

The profiles show that non-standard hours child care services are even more difficult to sustain financially, operationally and administratively than regular hours services. Non-standard hours child care services are more costly to operate, require substantially more administration, and experience more challenges recruiting and retaining staff than standard child care programs. Providing “flexibility” in child care (i.e., for parents with less predictable schedules) is especially difficult. Pilot projects and short-term funding make these services vulnerable.

The report observes that federal and provincial/territorial governments express interest in the issue of non-standard hours child care. A number of provinces/territories now have various initiatives on non-standard hours child care including improved information for parents, clearer definitions, specific regulations, funding, and pilot projects, but these are limited and modest in number. The study suggests that the 2017 federal Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care has contributed to provincial/territorial engagement in non-standard hours child care.

The problems faced by parents working non-standard hours finding and affording reliable, quality child care are similar to the problems facing many other Canadian families yet are greatly magnified. Correspondingly, the issues facing non-standard hours service providers are similar to the issues facing child care service providers generally; these are also magnified.

The five researchers conclude that it is not reasonable to expect non-standard hours child care services to become much more available and sustainable without major changes in child care policies and provision that address the significant issues of accessibility, affordability and quality. A stable, core system of quality, affordable, accessible, inclusive services is required as a foundation in order to tackle the challenges of providing more difficult-to-sustain non-standard hours services in a major way. The researchers also conclude that serious thought needs to be given to modifying employment policies to respond to the growing share of workers with non-standard and precarious work.

Attachment	Size
 Non standard work and child care in Canada Final [PDF pp 227].pdf ^[2]	1.48 MB

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[flexible](#) ^[4]

[non-standard hours](#) ^[5]

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