

# Newborns and new schools: Critical times in women's employment<sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

- Full report in pdf<sup>[2]</sup>

- Press release in pdf<sup>[3]</sup>

## Excerpts from the report:

This report investigates how and when differences in work behaviour between men and women develop, focusing on the evolution of the gender gaps immediately after childbirth and during the initial years of family development. There are many competing theories that seek to explain gender differences in employment roles, but the viewpoint put forward here is that gender differences in the formal labour market stem from the division of parental duties between mothers and fathers in the home, with mothers being primarily responsible for the care of children.

The analysis presented here focuses on two crucial periods in family development: when a new baby arrives and when a child starts school. Newborns clearly affect women's work opportunities and choices: the need to provide care for the child and the additional domestic responsibilities raise the opportunity costs of working and, more controversially, may reduce the woman's productivity as a formal worker. However, the effect of a child starting school has received less attention as an important turning point, in spite of the fact that both academic research and government policy have consistently made the distinction by considering mothers with pre-school children as a separate entity from those with only school children.

While school entry at age four or five presents a substantial sudden change in circumstances through the provision of what is effectively free (and compulsory) childcare which may enhance work opportunities for mothers, it also comes with additional parental demands associated with school life and the complexities of organising care around normal school hours. There is a presumption underlying policy discussion that mothers' work opportunities are suddenly improved once their youngest child starts school, but there is little concrete evidence that work outcomes change dramatically at this point. As well as considering how participation in paid work alters for women around these critical times, the analysis considers how employment conditions, including the relative wage rate, develop at these points. In particular, it is important to assess whether women's overall labour market position is weakened relative to men around these crucial times or whether there are compensating changes between different types of work characteristics.

**Related link:** - Conference presentation in pdf<sup>[4]</sup>

**Region:** Europe<sup>[5]</sup>

**Tags:** integration<sup>[6]</sup>

gender<sup>[7]</sup>

school-age<sup>[8]</sup>

maternity and parental leave<sup>[9]</sup>

mother's labour force participation<sup>[10]</sup>

work/life balance<sup>[11]</sup>

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/06/03/newborns-and-new-schools-critical-times-womens-employment>

## Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/06/03/newborns-and-new-schools-critical-times-womens-employment> [2]

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2005-2006/rrep308.pdf> [3] <https://www.ifs.org.uk/pr/newborns.pdf> [4]

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