

Mothers taking on 'shocking' number of hours caring for children during pandemic: study ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A new study indicates some Canadian mothers have taken on the equivalent of nearly two full-time jobs providing child care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Using data from COVID19monitor.org, McMaster University researchers tracked the time thousands of Canadian parents spent caring for children before and during the pandemic.

While both fathers and mothers clocked more time parenting, mothers took on the bulk of caregiving.

"The observations are nothing short of — perhaps shocking," said Clifton van der Linden, McMaster University political science professor and the founder of Vox Pop Labs, which is carrying out the COVID-19 Monitor.

In April and June, the researchers surveyed more than 4,000 stay-at-home and working parents regarding their child care responsibilities.

Men reported an average of 33 hours of caregiving per week before the pandemic and 46 hours during the pandemic. Women reported an average of 68 hours before COVID-19 hit Canada and 95 hours after.

"Despite having, often times, two people with full-time careers or full-time jobs, women are still taking on the lion's share of the burden when it comes to child care responsibilities," van der Linden said.

As the founder of Pros&Babes, a mentorship service for working mothers, Kinia Romanowska, sat down with her husband in the Spring in order to create a family plan to "protect" both of their careers.

"Our day home was shut down and my husband is a teacher so he had to teach from home," Romanowska said.

"We completely had to reevaluate our routine and simplify things to the maximum.

So we decided to really divide and conquer.

"We started time-blocking really soon, early on, so we had a strict routine so our kids could adapt to the change and thrive."

Romanowska's husband would take their sons, Jan and Lukasz, out for a hike in the morning while she worked. They tag teamed lunch and maximized work time while the boys had an afternoon nap. Romanowska would take on the afternoon parenting shift and then the couple would try to get a bit more work done after the boys had gone to sleep for the night.

"There are families where, it's true that, a lot of child care is on the mom's shoulders," Romanowska said.

"There are situations where women also negotiate the situation very effectively with their partners and find ways to make it work where men take time off work too and where women can focus on their career as well."

With the pandemic dragging on and health policy limiting the size of cohorts or bubbles, van der Linden isn't convinced the workload is easing for mothers.

"Those supports have not yet been fully replaced so the logical deduction that we can make is that women are still shouldering a disproportionate share of the burden related to child care responsibilities that have come along with the pandemic."

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: gender ^[4]

women's labour force participation ^[5]

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