

Child care keeping women out of workforce despite COVID rebound: Report ^[1]

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Excerpts

Canadian women's employment has rebounded since the losses of the early COVID-19 pandemic, but workforce gaps between women and men persist and child care is a significant sticking point, according to a new report.

Authors of the C.D. Howe Institute report titled 'Juggling Act: Women, Work and Closing the Gaps with Men' recommended flexible work options and accessible, affordable child care as options to help address Canada's workplace gender imbalance.

"Reducing disparities in gender participation and employment rates and encouraging women to work in in-demand and high-paying jobs would help mitigate aging's impact on Canada's labour force growth, address labour and skills shortages, and strengthen the economy," Tingting Zhang, one of the report's authors, said in written statement.

"This requires encouraging greater labour force participation and removing employment barriers for women who wish to work, especially older women and those with children."

...

The participation gap is largest for women aged 55 and older, according to the report. Women are also overrepresented in the part-time workforce, and child care remains a barrier to full-time work.

Among women who aren't working, personal and family responsibilities have been cited as a main reason keeping them out of the workforce, and women working part time reported that child care was the main reason they are not able to work full time.

However, the report highlighted "good news" as there were noticeable improvements for working mothers in 2022, and cited research from the Bank of Canada that suggested federal policies with universal child-care targets helping more mothers enter the workforce.

The "child-care factor" keeping part-time employed women from full-time jobs was lowest in Quebec, which has had subsidized child care since 1997, "highlighting the role of accessing affordable child care in women's employment decisions."

Region: Canada ^[3]

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