

Free, full-day programming for four-year-old children in Nova Scotia and women's labour market outcomes ^[1]

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Abstract

Despite significant changes in gender norms over the 20th century and a substantial increase in women's labour force participation, women continue to provide the majority of unpaid child care. This poses a barrier to further improvements in women's labour force participation, especially when child care is limited, inaccessible or unaffordable. This paper explores the impact of substantial increases in child care accessibility and affordability on women's labour market outcomes by exploiting the rollout of free, full-day programming for four-year-old children in Nova Scotia from 2017/18 to 2020/21 using a staggered difference-in-differences approach. The program led to a 21 percentage-point increase in the labour force participation of mothers with four-year-old children in Nova Scotia, via increased employment. Unsurprisingly, these impacts are significantly larger for women whose youngest child is four years old.

Related link: The roll out of full-day kindergarten in Nova Scotia had a positive impact on mothers' labour market participation ^[3]

How the cost and scarcity of child care for school-aged kids is hurting women's careers ^[4]

Region: Nova Scotia ^[5]

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