

More woman stressed out by work, families, says Dalhousie University study [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A popular T-shirt reads: If Momma Isn't Happy, Then Nobody's Happy.

If there's any truth to that adage, a Dalhousie University study on stress should sound an alarm for many Canadian families.

"We've got a lot of stressed-out people out there. It's not a good way to live. It's a health hazard, and a concern," economist Shelley Phipps, a member of the research team, said Tuesday.

The study shows dangerous levels of stress generally, but especially among married women returning to work after having children.

"Over half - 51.2 per cent - of women aged 25 to 54 with full-time paid employment in 1998 felt constantly under stress in comparison with 41.6 per cent of men," Ms. Phipps said.

"This figure has increased dramatically since 1992, when 45.9 per cent of women and 37.4 per cent of men with full-time employment reported feeling constantly stressed."

The study says more women face increased professional pressure combined with more demands on their time for care of children and elderly family members but are in a poor position to do anything about their plight.

"We should try to put in place the sort of programs that will help these people who are juggling so many responsibilities," Ms. Phipps said in an interview.

That might include public schools with programs for when classes are cancelled; employers who provide enhanced family support; and even government-subsidized elder care similar to that now in place for child care.

The researchers, who also included economists Lynn Lethbridge and Martha MacDonald, looked at paid and unpaid jobs that induce stress for about 3,000 Canadian women and a similar number of men. They found stress levels high enough "to detract from the enjoyment of life today and to generate health problems tomorrow."

The researchers cited known links between stress and health problems like heart disease, migraines, stomach problems and deteriorating emotional health.

Women in the "sandwich generation" - those juggling child care and elder care simultaneously - are most likely to experience serious stress, according to the study.

Despite increased publicity on the issue in the 1990s, the researchers noted that in the face of increasing hours at work, there has been no reduction in traditional child care, housework and elder-care responsibilities for most married women.

The study says women returning to work full time after giving birth can expect a serious increase in stress.

"Women with preschool children report an average of 96.4 unpaid work hours per week."

- reprinted from Canadian Press.

Tags: gender ^[2]

family resource programs ^[3]

maternity and parental leave ^[4]

mother's labour force participation ^[5]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/03/04/more-woman-stressed-out-work-families-says-dalhousie-university> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/gender> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/family-resource-programs> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/maternity-and-parental-leave> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8142>