

## Early learning and child care: essential for women's economic security

Today in Canada, women cannot have economic security without paid employment outside of the home. To get access to paid employment, women with children need access to affordable early learning and child care services women—and those services must be high quality and inclusive.

### The motherhood penalty

Canadian data show that women with young children are less likely to be employed than are men or women without children. Further, if they are employed, they are more likely to work part-time and less steadily, which undermines their own economic security as well as that of their families. This holds true not only for low income women but for modest, middle and higher-income women.

A current Statistics Canada [report](#) (Moyser) summarizes the situation this way: "women's experiences of paid work tend to differ from those of men, being shaped to a greater extent by their care giving roles and/or their employers' presumptions of these roles". The report shows that gender and motherhood-linked employment characteristics tend to be associated with lower wages, less advancement and less job security--in other words, poorer economic security for women. The Statistics Canada report notes that in 2015 mothers with at least one child under the age of 18 earned \$0.85 for every dollar earned by fathers, while women without children earned \$0.90 for every dollar earned by men without children".

### Canadian evidence about child care's impact on women's economic security

Provincial child care policy in Quebec has made regulated childcare more available at a much lower (provincially set) fee than anywhere in the rest of Canada. The effect of Quebec's child care policy on female labour force participation and financial benefits in the form of increased taxes was examined by Quebec economist [Pierre Fortin and his colleagues](#). They calculated that the availability of more affordable childcare was responsible for the employment of 70,000 additional Quebec mothers in one year (2008). In a [2017 policy brief](#), Fortin stated that "advances of the kind and magnitude found in Quebec mothers' labour market performance and economic security have not been observed in other provinces, where the traditional full-fee childcare system with targeted subsidies has remained predominant".

The positive impact of Quebec's child care policy on the economic well-being of women was also studied by the Centre for the Study of Living Standards (CLSL). The research focused on Inuit Nunangat, a vast geographic area in Canada's far North that covers all of Nunavut as well as parts of the Northwest Territories, Quebec and Labrador. [The study](#), carried out by Jasmin

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Thomas, demonstrated that Nunavik, the northern Quebec region of Inuit Nunangat, “enjoys the strongest labour market performance relative to the other three regions, despite having the weakest educational attainment outcomes.” In 2011, the employment rate for Nunavik was 54.1 per cent compared to 45.6 per cent for the entire area. The researcher concluded the most important factor explaining the astonishing outcome was the much higher participation rate of women made possible because of the much greater availability of child care services at a much lower fee.

