

Quality of Employment in Canada

Employment rate of mothers and fathers, 2023

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Employment rate of mothers and fathers, 2023

The employment rate of mothers has increased substantially in the last five decades. However, in 2023, differences remained between the employment rates of mothers and fathers, and fathers (93.4%) had an employment rate that was 13.6 percentage points higher than the rate of mothers (79.8%).

This indicator compares the employment rates of mothers and fathers aged 20 to 49 who have children aged 17 years or younger living at home, to the rates of women and men in the same age group who live without children. In the context of measuring the quality of employment, this indicator may highlight the distribution of care responsibilities between mothers and fathers, as well as the impact of having children on labour market participation.

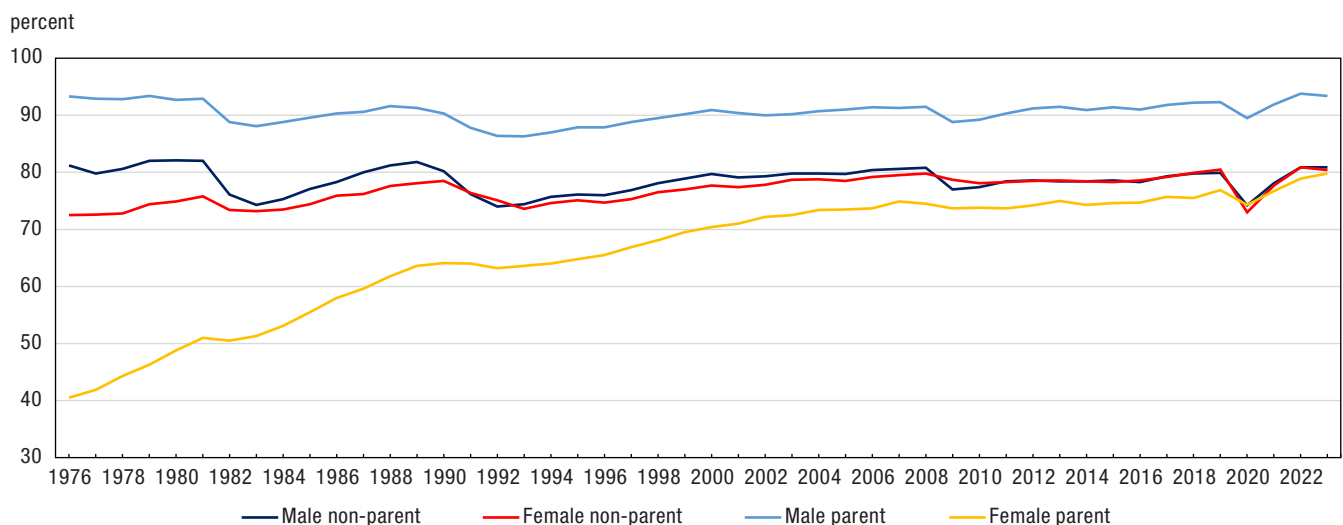
Historical trends, 1976 to 2023

One major labour market trend that has driven a narrowing of the employment rate gap between mothers and fathers since 1976 is the increase in the proportion of mothers who are employed. In 1976, 40.5% of mothers were employed in comparison to 93.3% of fathers (a 53.2 percentage point difference). By 2023, the employment rate of mothers had increased to 79.8%, reducing the gap with the employment rate of fathers (93.4%) to 13.6 percentage points. This 39.3 percentage point rise in the employment rate of mothers occurred alongside several important economic, cultural and policy changes related to gender norms and gender roles in Canada.

Women without children also experienced an increase in their employment rate. While the employment rate of men without children (81.2%) was higher than the rate for women without children (72.5%) in 1976, women without children have had a nearly identical employment rate as men without children since 2009. Over the last decade, the employment rates of non-parent men and women have remained within 0.6 percentage points of one another, with the exception of a 1.2 percentage point difference in 2020 due to a larger decline in the employment rate of women without children in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, the employment rate of non-parent women was 80.4%, and the employment rate of non-parent men was 80.9%. To contextualize the difference in employment rates between fathers and non-parent men, in 2023, a greater proportion of non-parent men were full-time students compared to fathers (10.0% versus 1.3%). Non-parent men were also younger and generally less likely to participate in the labour market.

Chart 1

Employment rates of parents and non-parents, 20- to 49-year-olds, by sex, Canada, 1976 to 2023



Note: Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables.
Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, custom tabulation.

A recent snapshot

Mothers in their 30s and 40s have higher employment rates than mothers in their 20s

Age is related to the employment rate of mothers, and mothers in their 30s and 40s—an age range where both men and women are more likely to be employed—had a higher rate of employment than mothers in their 20s. In 2023, the employment rate of mothers in their 20s was 64.9%, while it was 78.5% among mothers in their 30s, and 83.5% among mothers in their 40s.

Differences in fathers' employment rates were smaller, and the employment rate of fathers in their 20s (90.7%) was 2.8 percentage points lower than for fathers in their 30s (93.4%), and 3.0 percentage points lower than for fathers in their 40s (93.6%). However, the difference in employment rates between men without children in their 20s and men without children in their 30s was more pronounced. In 2023, the employment rate of non-parent men in their 20s (75.9%) was 10.6 percentage points lower than the employment rate of non-parent men in their 30s (86.4%). This may be related in part to a greater proportion of non-parent men in their 20s who were full-time students (18.5%) compared to non-parent men in their 30s (2.8%). However, although less pronounced, the general trend of a lower employment rate among non-parent men in their 20s compared with non-parent men in their 30s held when excluding full-time students from the analysis.

Non-racialized and South Asian fathers had higher-than-average employment rates

In 2023, fathers who were non-racialized and non-Indigenous (94.4%) had an employment rate slightly above the national average (93.3%), as did South Asian fathers (94.5%). Black fathers had an employment rate of 90.6%, 3.8 percentage points lower than the rate for non-racialized non-Indigenous fathers. The employment rate of West Asian fathers was 91.3%.

Non-racialized and non-Indigenous mothers had a higher-than-average employment rate (84.3% compared with 79.7%), as did Filipino mothers (82.5%). In contrast, Black mothers (72.9%) had an employment rate below the national average for mothers. The employment rate for Arab mothers (56.0%) was one of the lowest among racialized groups and was 28.3 percentage points lower than the rate of non-racialized non-Indigenous mothers. At the same time, the employment rate of West Asian mothers (60.6%) was 23.7 percentage points lower than the rate of non-racialized non-Indigenous mothers.

Higher educational attainment among mothers is associated with an elevated employment rate

In 2023, fathers had fairly similar employment rates no matter their level of education. The employment rate of fathers with at least a bachelor's degree was 94.8%, while the rate was 93.9% among those with postsecondary education below the bachelor's, and 89.6% among those with a high school diploma or a lower level of education. When comparing fathers to non-parent men, fathers had higher employment rates across all levels of education.

However, since 1976, mothers with postsecondary education have consistently had a higher employment rate than those with a high school diploma or less. In 2023, the employment rate for mothers with at least a bachelor's degree was 85.3%, while it was 81.3% for mothers with postsecondary education below the bachelor's degree, and 59.4% for those with at most a high school diploma.

When employed, mothers are more likely to work part-time

Beyond rates of employment, differences in the degree of participation in the labour market are also captured by the rate of part-time employment (working less than 30 hours per week). In 2023, employed mothers were nearly five times as likely as employed fathers to work part-time (17.6% compared with 3.7%). Among mothers and fathers working part-time, nearly half (46.1%) of mothers mainly did so to take care of their own children, compared to 15.8% of fathers.

Information on the indicator

Description or definition

The **employment rate of mothers and fathers** indicator is the percentage of mothers and fathers aged 20 to 49 who are in employment.

Source

Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 1976 to 2023.

Information for interpretation

For more information on the Labour Force Survey (LFS) methodology and population coverage, please consult the [Guide to the Labour Force Survey, 2020](#).

The LFS estimates are based on a sample and are therefore subject to sampling variability. The analysis focuses on differences between estimates that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables.

The definition of mothers and fathers is restricted to persons aged 20 to 49 who have at least 1 child aged 17 years or younger living in the same household. The effect of having children and the challenges related to work-life balance are unlikely to be the same for parents of adult children living at home.

In this article, mother (or father) as well as women (or men) without children represents persons whose reported sex at birth is female (or male).

Other related information

Additional Statistics Canada data are available on the following subject:

[Women in the labour market](#)