



FFE Fast Facts: Employment

Social Determinants of Health: Employment

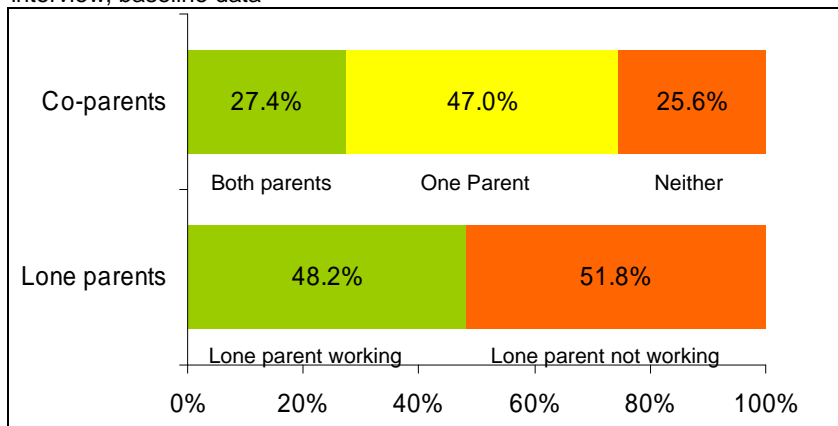
Working conditions are an important social determinant of health because of the great amount of time we spend in our workplaces. People who are already most vulnerable to poor health outcomes due to their lower income and education are also the ones most likely to experience adverse working conditions.¹

Increased health problems are seen among workers who experience high demands but have little control over how to meet these demands. These high-strain jobs are much more common among low-income women working in the sales and service sector.¹

This fact sheet explores the employment situation of FFE caregivers. First, employment rates for lone and co-parent households are considered. We then look at the types of jobs worked by primary caregivers and co-parents who are currently employed. Finally, this fact sheet compares the presence of underemployment for Canadian-born and foreign-born primary caregivers who have university credentials.

FFE households with two parents have higher employment rates than lone parent households. While 74% of co-parent households in the FFE study report at least one parent working outside of the home, approximately one in two lone parents work outside of the home (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage of FFE parents working outside of the home at the time of initial interview, baseline data



Source: Families First Edmonton (2009)

The employment status of parents may depend upon the age of the youngest child in the home ...

One factor that appears to impact whether a lone parent or both co-parents work outside of the home is the age of the youngest child. The average age of the youngest child in households where the lone parent is not working is 4.7 years. However, the average age of the youngest child in homes where lone parents work outside of the home is 6.7 years (school aged). Similarly, the youngest child in co-parent households where both parents are working is 5.7 years, almost 2-years older than the youngest children in households where only one or neither parents are working outside of the home. This difference



Families First Edmonton

Families First Edmonton is a research project to determine whether delivering health, family support and recreation services in a coordinated way can lead to better outcomes for low-income families.

suggests that parents may wait until the youngest child is of school age before engaging in work outside of the home.

What jobs are FFE parents working?

Of the FFE parents (lone parents and co-parents) who were working at the time they were interviewed, 35% were working in one of the following jobs:

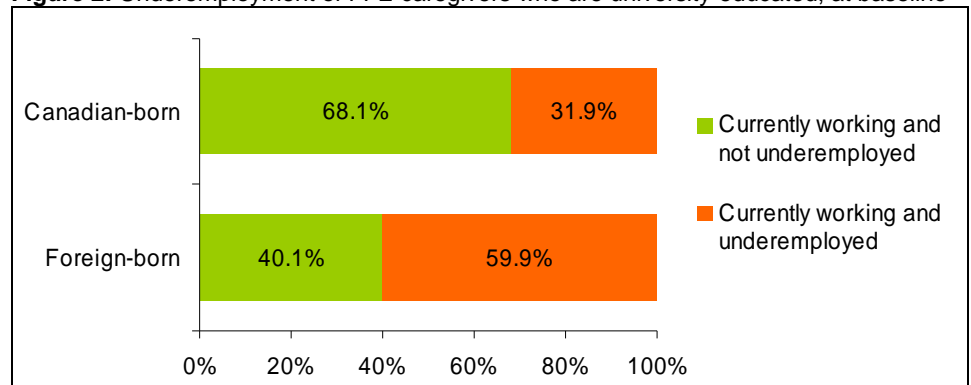
- Cashier
- General office clerk
- Retail salesperson/sales clerk
- Food and beverage server
- Material handler
- Community and social service worker
- Early childhood educator/assistant

The underemployment of FFE caregivers affects foreign-born caregivers more than Canadian-born caregivers...

According to Human Resources and Skills Development of Canada (HRSDC), “many skilled immigrants cannot get a job in their chosen field despite the fact that they are coming to Canada with higher qualifications... it is taking much longer for them to catch up to Canadians with similar levels of education and expertise – resulting in low income levels”.²

A person who is university educated yet holds a job that requires at most a high school education is considered to be underemployed.³ Figure 2 shows that underemployment is higher for FFE caregivers who immigrated to Canada compared to Canadian-born caregivers. Sixty percent of university-educated foreign-born caregivers currently hold a job that demands no more than a high school education while 32% of Canadian-born caregivers report the same.

Figure 2: Underemployment of FFE caregivers who are university-educated, at baseline



Source: Families First Edmonton (2009)



Things to Consider:

- Can employers offer childcare on site and/or through partnership to better support parents with young children?
- Does your organization know about programs and services to assist families in meeting childcare costs?
- Can employers provide additional workplace benefits, including child care, enhanced training opportunities and health benefits (especially in the social services and retail sectors)?
- Can funding levels address appropriate wages for staff working in the health/social services sector?
- Can the amount invested in training programs be increased to reduce the vulnerability of unemployed and under-employed Albertans?
- Does your organization know about training opportunities to assist under-employed Albertans to gain better employment?
- Does your organization know about programs and services in place to allow foreign trained workers to have their credentials recognized?
- Does your organization know how to support clients with concerns about their work environment (safety or employment standards)?

For information about FFE data contact:

Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth and Families, University of Alberta: (780) 492-6177

Dr. Jane Drummond, Principal Investigator

Dr. Laurie Schnirer

Dr. Maria Mayan

www.familiesfirstedmonton.ualberta.ca

June 2011



Bibliography

- ¹ Mikonnen & Raphael (2010). Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts. Retrieved April 11, 2011 from: http://www.thecanadianfacts.org/The_Canadian_Facts.pdf
- ² Human Resources and Skill Development Canada. (2007, May 29). *Overview - Foreign Credential Recognition*. Retrieved February 16, 2011, from Human Resources and Skill Development Canada: Retrieved <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/ws/programs/fcr/overview.shtml>
- ³ Galarneau, D., & Morissette, R. (2004). Immigrants: Settling for less?" *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, 5(6). Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-001-XIE. pp. 5-16. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/10604/6921-eng.htm>