



**Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation**

Advancing Free Trade
for Asia-Pacific **Prosperity**

Effects of policies promoting the work-life balance in the development of women who lead MSMEs, in the context of the post-COVID-19 economic recovery

APEC Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy

April 2023



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Final Study Report

APEC Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy

April 2023

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	5
2.1 Gender equality and intersectionality	5
2.2 Sexual division of labor	5
Sexual division in time use	6
The gap in the labor market between men and women	7
2.3 MSME: child rearing and gaps between men and women	8
2.4 Care	10
2.5 Work-life balance/Work-family balance: policies addressed in this study 10	
2.6 Approaching diverse work-family balance policies.....	11
2. WORK-FAMILY BALANCE POLICIES: AN OVERVIEW	13
3.1 Australia; Canada; New Zealand; and The United States.....	13
3.2 China; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Korea; Malaysia; the Philippines; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; and Viet Nam	16
3.3 Chile; Mexico; and Peru	17
3.4 Russia.....	20
3. COVID-19 AND WORK-FAMILY BALANCE POLICIES	21
4. METHODOLOGY	25
5. THE CASES UNDER ANALYSIS	27
AUSTRALIA.....	27
CANADA.....	31
CHILE	37
JAPAN	40
PERU.....	44
THE PHILIPPINES	46
RUSSIA	49
CHINESE TAIPEI	52
VIET NAM.....	56
TOOLKIT TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK OF BEST PRACTICES FOR WORK- FAMILY BALANCE	62
REFERENCES	65
ANNEX 1	71

INTRODUCTION

MSME account for a very significant proportion of women labor activity. It is particularly important for women of the global south. Considering the APEC economies, there is a clear tendency: the lower the GDP, the higher the proportion of women running a MSME, as a percentage of women employed. Therefore, as shown in this document, member economies like Indonesia (35%); Viet Nam (35%); and Peru (38%) show the highest percentages. Given that women take the main load of domestic and care work (ILO, 2019), they need flexible arrangements to be able to do remunerated work and running their own business makes it possible. This scenario confronts women with an overload of work that limits both their wellbeing and the growth possibilities of their businesses.

On the other hand, in a broader perspective, women own one-third of the total formal businesses worldwide, thus they contribute to job creation and economic development; however, for women all-around the world there are barriers limiting their growth related to work-life balance (APEC, 2020), above all domestic and care work. According to ILO (2019) women do 76,2% of all the unpaid care work, dedicating 3,2 times more time than men. This has increased due to the Covid-19 pandemic (APEC, 2020).

Despite the variances that different economies show, from all the aspects of life that impact economic growth of women and a rational distribution of working hours in their lives, family responsibilities in general and rearing children in particular are the most crucial. Therefore, this project has the following objectives:

- A. Carry out a study to identify the policies promoted by APEC economies to achieve work-family balance and their effect on the development of women leading MSMEs, considering an intersectional approach. Special attention will be given to the impact of COVID-19.
- B. Disseminate a selection of best practices in order to contribute to the improvement of work-family balance policies within the APEC community.

This report has seven sections, the first being this introduction. The following section presents the theoretical framework, and the third section presents a literature review of work family balance policies in the different APEC economies. The fourth section presents very briefly the work family balance policies undertaken in the context of COVID. After that, the methodology of the study is described and in the following section the cases that have been analyzed with more detail are presented. Finally, the last section shows the toolkit for framing the work family balance policies that can be considered as best practices.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis of work-family balance or care policies in relation to the situation of women's participation in the labor market and entrepreneurship activities, lead us necessarily to pay attention to certain key concepts and perspectives:

2.1 Gender equality and intersectionality

The organization of work, including job opportunities and quality, wages, distribution of productive and reproductive activities, among others, differ remarkably for men and women around the globe. It is also the case of the family, an institution which is the core organization in society. For this study, "gender equality" is a key perspective to frame the analysis developed.

There are diverse studies on the matter. As we develop here an analysis of public policy the focus is placed on the level of normative concepts, however we will be referring also to social institutions as the family, the market, the state, among others.

Closing inequalities between men and women has also been reinforced as a horizon for Human Development in several international agreements. Thereby, Sustainable Development Goal 5 is "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (United Nations Women, 2022). One of the targets of this goal is to recognize and value unpaid care by providing public services, infrastructure and policies of social protection and to promote shared responsibility inside the household.

Nevertheless, this situation regarding inequalities between men and women does not work alone, it relates with other hierarchical vectors of social organization as: ethnicity, socio-economic position, sexuality, age, among others; creating different social outcomes for different social groups. The analysis of the way several hierarchical vectors of social organization intertwine has been referred as an intersectional approach. This approach is very useful here as we will be analyzing policies targeted to women of very different regions of the world, different economies as well as different positions within them.

2.2 Sexual division of labor

According to feminist academics as Federici (2017) and Pateman (1995) modern states and the industrialization process consolidated a model of society based on a rigid sexual division of labor, pillar of a patriarchal order, that placed women in the domestic sphere in charge of reproductive work, namely responsible of domestic chores and family care; while men kept responsible for productive work, material provision for the family and participation in the public sphere.

The traditional order mentioned, created what Federici (Ibid) called "patriarchy of wage" which in the beginning of modern times ensured radical economic dependence of women towards men as the reproductive activities assigned to them were naturalized as part of the feminine condition and bereft of economic value.

This rigid sexual division of labor has been changing over time, above all in the twentieth century, mainly in that women increasingly participate in labor markets. Although it has been a process that shows important differences per regions, it is a global trend. However, a gap that disadvantages women persists.

The other side of the coin of this gap is that men have not entered the private sphere and assumed domestic and care work in the proportion that women have entered the public sphere and the labor market. This has meant an overload of work for women. In the next lines it is shown quantitative information regarding time use and the gap in the labor market between men and women.

Sexual division in time use

Surveys on time use for different economies show that women spend more time than men on unpaid care work. Table 1 presents the share of unpaid work by sex, for the latest available year. This table shows that even though these differences vary by economy, they persist for every economy for which there is data.

The difference in the time assigned to unpaid care gets reflected in a lower amount of time allocated to paid work for women. Additionally, women spend a higher amount of time working, if we sum the time dedicated to both types of work: unpaid care and paid work (Charmes, 2019). The unequal distribution of duties implies that some women work long hours.

In the case of Mexico, the average number of hours they work per day is 10 and in Chile it is higher than 11 (Charmes, 2019). Since these are averages, a high proportion of women work more than 10 hours a day in Mexico and more than 11 hours a day in Chile. These women are facing exhausting shifts, without enough time for rest and leisure.

Table 1. Share of total unpaid work, by sex, latest year.

Member economy	Men	Women
Canada	39.8	60.2
United States	38.9	61.1
New Zealand	36.3	63.7
Australia	35.8	64.2
Peru	29.6	70.4
China	28.4	71.6
Japan	23.3	76.7
Chinese Taipei	19.6	80.4
Korea	17.2	82.8

Source: ILO (2019).

The gap in the labor market between men and women

An alternative way of assessing the impact of childcare on the work for pay is to look at the relation between participation in the labor market (either as employed or as looking for employment) and the presence of dependents in the household. ILO (2019) estimates show that the presence of children younger than 6 years reduces the likelihood of women participating in the labor market in 6 percentage points, while for men this likelihood increases in 3.4 percentage points. Likewise, the presence of older persons in the household decreases this likelihood by only 1.6 percentage points in the case of women and by 4.6 percentage points in the case of men. These results show that the presence of children in the household contributes to the gap between men and women in the labor market more than the presence of older adults.

The presence of kids in the household not only affects the likelihood of participating in the labor market but also the number of hours worked by those who participate. Using information on 86 economies, ILO (2019) shows that, among persons without kids, men work 4 hours more than women. Among individuals with one kid under 6 in the household, this gap increases to 5 hours per week and it goes up to 8 hours per week when there are three or more children under 6. For Latin America, Ñopo (2012) uses data of 18 economies to estimate (for 2007) the proportion of women and men that work part time. The results show that 25% of working women do it part time, while this percentage is only 9% for men.

Individuals that work for payment and undertake care activities at home will face more restrictions in their job. One restriction is related to the number of hours, as just described in the previous paragraph. A second restriction could be related to distance from the household: they have to work near the household to be able to attend to the needs of those members under their care. These restrictions surely hinder the possibilities of achieving higher income levels as better paid off jobs might be farther away or less flexible than needed.

Thus, unpaid care work is a factor behind the gender pay gaps reported in several pieces. According to Ñopo (2012) estimates, men earn ten percent more than women per hour in 2007 in Latin America. For the case of China, Qi and Dong (2015) show that unpaid care work explains approximately one third of the payment gap between men and women.

What are the factors that mediate between unpaid care activities and income per hour? There is not much empirical research about these mediating factors. For the case of the United States, Goldin (2014) presents evidence according to which care activities increase the pay gap in those occupations that present a high (and positive) sensitivity of income per hour to a long number of working hours.

For the case of the US, these occupations are the business type ones. In contrast, Alfors (2016) provides qualitative evidence (based on interviews) on how working alongside a child reduces productivity. For example, in the case of Thailand home

based workers referred that taking care of young children interferes with their duties as their kids require constant attention (Moussié, 2021).

2.3 MSME: child rearing and gaps between men and women

In its statistics, ILOSTAT¹ classifies the status of employment using four categories: employees, employers, own account workers and family workers. The last three categories are considered inside the self-employment sector. In this framework, two are the categories that comprise women that lead MSME: employers and own account workers. Table 2 shows the number of individuals in each employment status, for the APEC member economies for which information is available. The economies are sorted according to their GDP per capita.

Table 2 shows that as GDP decreases, the share of employees decreases, and the share of own account workers increases. It is also interesting to see that in economies with relatively low GDP per capita (Indonesia; Peru; the Philippines; and Viet Nam) women are less likely to be employees than men and more likely to be family workers.

Self-employment, in its three categories, has the advantage of providing more flexibility than dependent employment. Radhakrishnan (2010) shows for the case of Indonesia, for the 1987-1993 period, that women exit dependent employment and look for self-employment when they have children².

This flexibility appears to come at a cost. As already stressed, Table 2 shows that, in a group of economies, women are more likely to be family workers compared to men. This option might be triggered by the need for flexibility and it is very costly since these women do not have an income of their own. Gindling et al. (2016) compares the income perceived by employees with the income perceived by different types of self-employed workers. They find that women nonprofessional own account workers face a higher penalty (compared to employees) than men.

This difference is higher for middle and high income economies. At the same time, male employers and own account professionals earn a premium compared to employees, while women pay a penalty. These results can be interpreted as women accepting lower paying activities in the self-employment sector in exchange of higher flexibility and men moving into self-employment for other reasons like the possibility of earning more.

¹ ILOSTAT data can be downloaded from <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>

² The study finds that women exit “formal employment” and move into “informal employment” when they have children. Radhakrishnan (2010) includes salaried work and self-employment with permanent workers as part of formal employment and considers family workers, self-employed and self-employed with temporary workers in the informal employment sector. Given the low prevalence of female employers in Indonesia, we can interpret this finding as women moving out of dependent or salaried employment when they have children.

Table 2. Number of individuals by employment status (as a proportion of individuals that work). 2019

Number of individuals by employment status (as a proportion of individuals that work). 2019

Member economy	Sex	Employees	Employers	Own-account workers	Contributing family workers	Total	GDP per capita 2015 (US \$)
United States	Sex: Male	93%	0%	7%	0%	100%	56863
United States	Sex: Female	95%	0%	5%	0%	100%	56863
Australia	Sex: Male	80%	8%	13%	0%	100%	56707
Australia	Sex: Female	88%	4%	8%	0%	100%	56707
Singapore	Sex: Male	83%	6%	11%	0%	100%	55647
Singapore	Sex: Female	91%	3%	6%	1%	100%	55647
Canada	Sex: Male	82%	6%	12%	0%	100%	43596
Canada	Sex: Female	88%	3%	9%	0%	100%	43596
New Zealand	Sex: Male	78%	8%	13%	1%	100%	38631
New Zealand	Sex: Female	85%	4%	9%	1%	100%	38631
Japan	Sex: Male	89%	3%	8%	1%	100%	34961
Japan	Sex: Female	92%	1%	4%	4%	100%	34961
Korea	Sex: Male	73%	7%	18%	1%	100%	34961
Korea	Sex: Female	78%	3%	11%	8%	100%	34961
Brunei Darussalam	Sex: Male	92%	3%	4%	1%	100%	31164
Brunei Darussalam	Sex: Female	89%	2%	8%	1%	100%	31164
Chinese Taipei	Sex: Male	76%	6%	15%	3%	100%	22753
Chinese Taipei	Sex: Female	84%	2%	7%	8%	100%	22753
Hong Kong, China	Sex: Male	88%	4%	8%	0%	100%	42432
Hong Kong, China	Sex: Female	95%	1%	4%	0%	100%	42432
Chile	Sex: Male	72%	5%	22%	1%	100%	13574
Chile	Sex: Female	74%	2%	22%	1%	100%	13574
Malaysia	Sex: Male	75%	5%	18%	2%	100%	9955
Malaysia	Sex: Female	74%	2%	18%	6%	100%	9955
Mexico	Sex: Male	69%	6%	22%	3%	100%	9617
Mexico	Sex: Female	67%	3%	23%	7%	100%	9617
Russian Federation	Sex: Male	92%	2%	5%	0%	100%	9313
Russian Federation	Sex: Female	94%	1%	4%	0%	100%	9313
Peru	Sex: Male	52%	5%	36%	8%	100%	6229
Peru	Sex: Female	42%	3%	35%	21%	100%	6229
Thailand	Sex: Male	50%	3%	35%	11%	100%	5840
Thailand	Sex: Female	50%	1%	27%	22%	100%	5840
Indonesia	Sex: Male	53%	5%	37%	6%	100%	3332
Indonesia	Sex: Female	41%	2%	33%	24%	100%	3332
Philippines	Sex: Male	66%	3%	26%	4%	100%	3001
Philippines	Sex: Female	60%	2%	28%	9%	100%	3001
Viet Nam	Sex: Male	54%	4%	34%	8%	100%	2085
Viet Nam	Sex: Female	48%	2%	33%	17%	100%	2085

Sources: ILOSTAT, World Bank, countryeconomy.com

2.4 Care

Care is a fundamental basis for human life and the sustainability of every kind of society. It is present throughout the life cycle of a person, especially at the beginning and at the end or according to dependency situations (Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables [MIMP], 2021:31).

Care is a category with a significant history in the feminist movement since the 1970s. Discussions about care have generated debate and complex developments in activism as well as academia and the realm of public policies. For the sake of this analysis, a concept relating the context of public policies analysis will be privileged. Thus, following Battyani (2019): “care designates the action of helping a child or a dependent person in the development and well-being of their daily life” (p. 150). As the author states, care involves material and psychological dimensions as it is “work and interpersonal relationship” (p. 151). At the same time care is a socially constructed responsibility configured by particular social and economic contexts (Ibid: 151).

The notion of “social organization of care” (Daly and Lewis, 2000) captures the distribution of the care among instances and groups considering key actors as: State, family, market and community organizations (Rodriguez, 2015) (Ibid). Care should be distributed among these different actors and within the family between men and women.

2.5 Work-life balance/Work-family balance: policies addressed in this study

“Work-life balance” is a term used to describe the balance between remunerated work and personal life and it was the contribution of ‘New ways to Work and the Working Mothers Association’ in the United Kingdom during the late 1970s. The growing participation of women in the labor force was a major impulse for its creation (Joseph, 2019: 54).

Even though the “life” part of the category denotes a wide range of dimensions, relationships and activities, the use of it in the early decades after its appearance focused mainly on the family. This further resulted in the confinement of the work-life balance research in the concept of work-family balance. Nonetheless, by the end of 1990s more researchers started exploring life-work balance beyond the scope of work and family domains and argued in favor of work-family balance to be considered only a sub-theme of the work-life balance category (Ibid).

For the sake of this study, the focus will remain in work-family balance as family duties are pointed out as some of the most important factors affecting women entrepreneurs’ business activities globally and above all in the context of developing economies (Welsch et al., 2017). Moreover, according to Schindehutte et al. (2001) women’s motivation to become entrepreneurs is to achieve work–family balance. Studies that compare women and men entrepreneurs (Collins-Dodd, Gordon & Smart, 2004; Marlow, 1997; Shane, Kolvereid & Westhead, 1991; Still & Soutar, 2001) show clearly that women entrepreneurs are more influenced by family-related factors than men (Kirkwood and Tootell, 2008).

As already explained in section 2.2, according to the data, the presence of children is an important factor behind gaps in labor force participation between men and women and in the number of hours worked. Policies aimed at lessening the burden of child rearing on women include: provision of childcare services, parental leaves, cash transfers in exchange for taking care of the kids and flexible arrangements in the work place like: flexible hours, working from home and a part time schedule.

From these four types of policies, it can exclude flexible arrangements from the analysis as they concern dependent workers. On the other hand, besides maternity leaves, parental and paternity leaves might be relevant for women entrepreneurs as their partners might be dependent workers. Additionally, parental and paternity policies aim to gear mentalities when father only leaves are provided. Consequently, our policy analysis will only exclude those policies categorized as flexible arrangements in the workplace.

Historically, public policy related to women and families has almost entirely focused on women as dependent employees (Gatewood et al., 2015). However, there is a growing recognition that policies also need to be adapted to self-employment which is the case for women entrepreneurs. For this group, an important starting point for policy makers is also to examine how work and private life are integrated (Kossek et al., 2010 as cited in OECD, 2016).

2.6 Approaching diverse work-family balance policies

To establish a characterization of some of the member economies in this study we will rely on Esping-Andersen's typology of welfare state policies as either (1) corporatist or conservative, (2) liberal or (3) social democratic (1990). This approach has been broadly used in cross-economy policy research and according to Berglund (2018), for example, the small stream of literature that has studied the relationship between women's entrepreneurship and different welfare state policies have mostly used this characterization.

The main characteristic of the "liberal" welfare state is the assumption that individuals should rely on their own earnings and that the state should keep a low level of intervention, mainly when families cannot cope. "Corporatist" or "conservative" regimes tended to preserve status differentials by focusing on social insurance programs that share the cost of social protection for long-term employees. 'Social democratic' regimes, on the other hand, aim to reduce inequality-based class implementing universal policies and progressive taxation (Baker, 2011: 40).

The response of the author was to propose the concept of *defamilisation*, which refers to the degree to which states assume responsibilities of family care (Ibañez, 2021: 3). The higher degree of defamilisation take place in social democratic regimes where social provision in general, and regarding care in particular, tend to be universal and strong. It is paradigmatically the case of Nordic economies, even though lately they also go through a liberalization process (Berglund, 2018).

Liberal regimes, meanwhile, show a low level of defamilisation, and childcare or family services are mainly led by market forces (Yerkes and Javornik, 2019) in the way of services provided by private corporations which are in some degree covered by the state in a targeted approach (Ibañez, 2020). This in the case of economies like the Australia; Canada; New Zealand; and The United States, with different degrees of public policies outreach.

On the other hand, conservative welfare states have also a low level of defamilisation as they rely on traditional family roles. In conservative welfare states and in liberal welfare states that rely on marketization of welfare services, lack of affordable childcare makes difficult full-time employment; therefore, many women start a livelihood business to be able to secure an income and care for a family (Tonoyan, Budig, & Strohmeyer, 2010 in Berglund, 2018: 4).

Esping – Andersen formulation has been created to help understanding welfare regimes in western contexts. Therefore, it is not enough to understand the diversity of economies/world regions this study involves. However, the concept of defamilisation sheds some light to the situation of work-family balance and offer a general comparative lens.

2. WORK-FAMILY BALANCE POLICIES: AN OVERVIEW

The overview presented here offers a description of the main characteristics and paradigms that give shape to work-family balance policies affecting working women. Besides, this balance reports current work-family balance policies in general emphasizing those that could reach self-employed / entrepreneur women. As already explained, the emphasis is in: childcare, leaves and transfers. The APEC economies in this overview are approached by socio-economic and cultural affinities.

3.1 Australia; Canada; New Zealand; and The United States

Following Esping-Anderson's typology, Australia; the United States; New Zealand; and Canada could be characterized as liberal welfare states as they encourage the market to be the main service provider and show low interventionism. Besides, they have in common that they are all OECD members. Except for the US, all of them are Commonwealth and except for New Zealand all are G20 members. However, beyond this general picture these economies show also internal differences regarding work-family balance policies.

According to Baker (2011: 39) in a comparative study on New Zealand and Canada, in these societies' child care was historically viewed as a private matter, governments or employers hardly intervened. However, in the early 20th century governments started supporting maternal care at home by providing tax relief to male-breadwinner families among other measures. In the 1940s, both member economies developed universal child allowances. By the 1970s they provided subsidies for early childhood education and care and continued to offer income support programs for disadvantaged parents caring for children at home (Baker, 2006; Kedgley, 1996; May, 1997; McClure, 1998).

In the last decades, the Canadian welfare state has undergone a profound transformation with large reductions in social programs including day care subsidies (McKeen, 2009: 73). However, Quebec is an exception from this liberal trend, as Canada's only province with a highly subsidized "universal" child care system. According to RodBeaujot (2013): "The uniqueness of Quebec family policy can be related to its Civil Law tradition, in contrast to the rest of the economy, which is based on British Common Law" (Cardus, 2019: 10-11). In 2004, the OECD Directorate for Education proclaimed Canada's early-learning strategy was inadequate except for "the advance made by Québec, which has launched one of the most ambitious early education and care policies in North America" (Ibid: 27).

Baker et al. (2008) analyzes the impact of Quebec's universal child care system on the labor force participation of women. This policy, known as The Quebec Family Policy, began in 1997 and it initially consisted in the extension of full time kindergarten to all 5-year-old children and the provision of child care at a subsidized price of 5 dollars per day to all 4-year-old. This subsidy was extended to all 3-year-old kids in 1998, to all 2-year-old kids in 1999 and to all children aged less than 2 in 2000.

To estimate the impact of this policy on child care use and women labor force participation Baker et al. (2008) compares the changes in these outcomes for the province of Quebec to the changes observed in the other provinces of Canada. The results show an increase of 15 percentage points in the use of child care for kids under 5 years old. It is worth noting that the percentage of kids that receive care after the policy change is higher than 15 percentage points, but because of substitution from informal care to formal care not all this usage implies an increase in the use of care.

At the same time there is an increase of 8 percentage points in the likelihood of the mother working. The difference between this impact and the impact of 15 pp on the use of child care is attributed to mothers that use care but do not work and also to mothers that did not really increase their care use but did not inform about its previous use because it was informal care.

This study highlights that the public provision of care does not necessarily implies a higher use of care since there will be a substitution from informal care arrangements to the care provided by the State. The higher is this substitution, the lower is the impact of the public provision of care on female labor market participation.

New Zealand's government has not traditionally had a strong role in the delivery of childcare. However, since the late 1990s, the government has had a more interventionist approach in line with the changing place of early education policy for young children in the economy (Mitchell, 2013). The introduction of Te Whāriki (1993), a bicultural curriculum from birth to school age, represented a leading stance by NZ in early education and care (Lee, et al. 2012). Part of this interventionist approach was to encourage greater emphasis on regulation and training in the sector. However, under pressure from the private sector the support to this program has been reduced (Gallagher, 2017).

New Zealand lobby regarding childcare policies has been dominated by ECEC providers and child poverty activists, who are more focused on early childhood education than maternal employment while Canada has had a strong employment-related child care lobby. Nevertheless, in both member economies ECEC subsidies have been strengthened for moderate- and low-income parents who are studying, training or working for pay, and some free early education has been provided (Baker, 2011: 45).

In the US, child care policy has focused on providing financial assistance to a targeted group of working families with low wages and providing a small tax credit for those with higher incomes (Kashen and Hamm, 2019). The US presents one of the lowest fiscal efforts compared to other OECD members regarding public expenditure (1.2% GDP) and a large part of that effort comes in the form of tax breaks, not direct cash. In comparison to US, Canada – that has a system that is also means-tested on family income – has a larger coverage and is far more generous. Besides, the US does not have a family allowance system, while Canada has a strong one (Filgueira and Rossel, 2020: 226).

In Australia childcare is largely delivered by the private sector (Brennan et al. 2012). In 2000, the “Childcare Benefit” was introduced to support parents receiving the childcare payment, replacing the previous support arrangements. Families could choose to have the Government pay the benefit direct to the childcare provider, or receive their benefit as a lump sum payment³. In 2018, the Government proposed the Women’s Economic Security Package which aimed to improve women’s workforce participation with childcare arrangements (Australian Government, 2018). The main change was the new “Childcare Subsidy” (CCS), replacing the Childcare Benefit and Childcare Rebate, by paying directly to childcare providers a fee percentage (Australian Government, 2020b). Subsidies depend on annual income, type of care used, hours of parents’ or carers’ activity (work, study, volunteering or looking for work), and number of children. From July 2023, the Australian Government will lift the maximum CCS rate to 90 per cent for families earning \$80,000 or less⁴, increase subsidy rates for a large proportion of families⁵ and increase subsidised ECEC for families with First Nations children⁶.

UNICEF’s 2008 analysis of 25 economies shows that the top ranked in regard to childcare provision are those where childcare is much more publicly-funded and publicly-managed (Sweden, Finland, Iceland, France), while the most marketised ranked from the lower middle (the UK and US) to the very bottom (Australia, Ireland and Canada) (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2008). This is important evidence of the pitfalls of approaching childcare as a private responsibility and a market commodity (Friendly, 2019).

Regarding parental leave: Australia introduced paid parental leave in 2011 with a length of 18 weeks. New Zealand did it in 2003, introduced a 12-week maternity leave which by 2016 reached a total of 18 weeks. No paid parental or paternity leave are available in New Zealand while Australia introduced two weeks of paid paternity leave as optional quota of the parental leave by 2013. Both economies have around 40 weeks of non-paid, but job protected parental leave (Filgueira and Rossel, 2020: 230).

In New Zealand, self-employed workers who have been working for at least six months (at least ten hours a week) receive 100% of self-employed workers’ average weekly earnings or US\$ 130 per week. An alternative means-tested benefit may be paid to all residents in New Zealand with at least 2 years of continuous residence, including the unemployed (ILO, 2013: 25).

The United States has no mandatory paid maternity leave or parental leaves. The federal law guarantees job protection for 12 weeks of unpaid maternity leave but employers with less than 50 employees are exempted from complying with the

³<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4402.0Main+Features1Jun%202002?OpenDocument=#:~:text=11%20The%20CCB%20was%20introduced,parents%20to%20receive%20the%20CCB>

⁴ <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-much-child-care-subsidy-you-can-get?context=41186>

⁵ <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/recognised-activities-for-child-care-subsidy?context=41186>

⁶ <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/cheaper-child-care>

norm. Canada, meanwhile, has had maternity leaves related to social security since the 1970s and during the nineties has introduced and increased parental leave scheme and has arrived in 2016 with 52 weeks of potential paid maternity leave including both maternity and parental leaves (Filgueira and Rossel, 2020: 227).

3.2 China; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Korea; Malaysia; the Philippines; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; and Viet Nam

According to Tonelli et al. (2021), although there is academic interest in the social policy regimes of Asian welfare states, little attention has been given to the comparative study of their family policies and most of it focuses on few high-income economies as Chinese Taipei; Japan; and Korea. In order to fill this gap, these authors have carried out an important comparative study of family policies in East and Southeast Asia that include 11 of the 21 APEC economies: China; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Korea; Malaysia; the Philippines; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; and Viet Nam.

The study provides a descriptive map of different profiles of family policies, embedded in the wider context of welfare regimes considering socio-economic, demographic and cultural factors. A classification of four distinctive family policy profiles is proposed, three of them refer to the economies of our interest: (1) Employment oriented: Singapore; Thailand; and Viet Nam (2) Poverty relief support: China; the Philippines; Hong Kong, China; Malaysia; and Indonesia and (3) Encompassing support: Japan; Korea; and Chinese Taipei.

Economies under the “Employment-oriented support” profile present a family policy model moderately protective with a strong productivist profile and defamilialising. Leave policies include fairly long maternity leave schemes that can favor the reintegration of mothers in the labor market after childbirth. Viet Nam and Singapore provide paternity leave and Singapore provides parental leave.

All economies provide baby bonuses. Public social expenditure on children is low but expenditure in child care education is relatively high which is reflected in a high enrolment rate above all in Viet Nam. Some relevant social characteristics of these economies are: low levels of fertility, relatively high level of female employment and low democracy score. They recognize women’s contribution to economic development but at the same time familial relationships are traditional (Ibid: 391).

The profile “Poverty-relief support” groups economies whose policies have limited intervention in family welfare. When the state provides family support it is mostly means-tested and thus limited to poverty-relief measures. The market is the major provider of infrastructure for work-family reconciliation. The family policy thus provides minimal protection, is moderately productivist and implicitly familialising. Maternity leaves in these economies are rather short, except for China they do not provide the minimum ILO standard (98 days).

All of them provide paternity leave but none provide parental leave. Two provide maternity leave for self-employed women. Most of them have mean-tested benefits for poor children except for Malaysia that has none. They do not provide a baby bonus. Government expenditure on social protection for children is relatively low and that is also the case for the expenditure level for pre-primary education. Member economies under this profile are described as attached to traditional family models and having little interest in defamilialisation (Ibid: 391).

The third profile “Encompassing support” is constituted by economies where the policy model shows a medium-high level of protection, a moderate productivist trend and also an optional familialistic trend. This means that maternity leaves are short but parental leaves are long and they have maternity leave for self-employed women. Expenditure levels on social protection and pre-primary education are both high but the take-up of public child care service is relatively low. Both universal and means-tested benefits can be found in this cluster. Only Chinese Taipei has a baby bonus. These economies are democratic, have high levels of HDI and low total fertility rates. However, the low take-up rate of public childcare services despite the provision, suggest that the familial culture of this region is strong and conservative regarding traditional family values (Ibid: 391-392).

For the case of Japan, there are studies that estimate the impact of public child care on female employment. Asai et al. (2015) and Zhang and Managi (2020) analyze the impact of the increase in child care capacity led by the government in Japan since 1990⁷. Asai et al. (2015) estimate the impact for the 1990-2010 period. According to their results the increased childcare capacity did not have a positive effect on maternal labor employment. They argue that these results are explained by the substitution of informal labor arrangements for licensed childcare centers.

Zhang and Managi (2020), on the other hand, find a positive effect of the increased accredited childcare capacity for the 2015-2017 period: a one percentage point increase in the childcare capacity⁸ implies an increase of 0.27 percentage points in mothers labor participation. They explain that the difference with Asai et al. (2015) results reside in the lower prevalence of three generation households in the later period. Additionally, the new childcare facilities do not require mothers to be working full time in order to be able to use the service, allowing for there to be an impact on part- time employment.

3.3 Chile; Mexico; and Peru

In spite of recent developments in some economies, work-family balance policies based on the redistribution of care labor among state, market and families are scarce in Latin America. There has been important progress in normative that

⁷ It is important to highlight that even though Japan presents an “Encompassing support profile” there is insufficient supply of public child care centers and long waiting lists for these centers (Zhang and Managi, 2020).

⁸ The childcare capacity is measured as the percentage of children in the population covered by the childcare facilities accredited by the government.

promotes gender equality, nonetheless economic, social and politic institutions continue operating based on a sexual division of labor that consider women the main providers of care while men the main providers of material resources (Batthyany, 2019: 161-162). The approach of the states in the region can be considered highly familialising and it reflects very clearly in childcare policies coverage.

Following ECLAC, in 2009 Latin America's net enrollment in care services for children between 0 to 3 years old was between 5% and 20%. The net enrollment rate for children between 3 and 6 years old was much higher, but only Cuba and Mexico reach levels that are near universal. Peru belongs to a category of economies that present enrollment levels that are between 60 and 70% (CEPAL, 2011; Rossel et al., 2015). In the last decade, Mexico, Chile, and Uruguay have expanded child care infrastructure, improving the availability of services for children between 0 and 3 years old (Staab, 2010). A recent study published by ECLAC shows that in 2014, the coverage of ECEC services for 3–5 years reached 77% in Chile, 72% in Mexico and 64% in Peru (Filgeira and Rossel, 2020: 240).

Staab and Gerhard (2011) compare childcare policies in Mexico and Chile. In the first years of the twentieth century both economies launched programs aimed at women from the informal sector. Before, childcare services reached mostly individuals in the formal sector. Childcare services of the formal sector are company based in Chile and they are provided as part of the social security system in Mexico.

The Federal Day Care program for working mothers was introduced in Mexico in 2007. It works under the purview of the Ministry of Social Development and it was designed to reach working mothers without access to the social security system, with the objective of increasing female employment. The program provides installation subsidies to individuals or organizations interested in running a daycare center. After the center has been installed the State covers part of the operation costs. There is also a user paid fee. Mothers have to be working or studying and to receive an income lower than a certain threshold in order to receive the childcare services.

The program has been criticized for providing a service of lower quality compared to the service provided by the social security system. The two systems do differ in their costs, with the social security system better funded and at the same time attending a lower number of children.

In Chile, contrary to Mexico, the public provision of childcare services is under the purview of the Ministry of Education. In 2006, the government launched the program Chile Crece Contigo, which guaranteed access to childcare services for the two poorest income quintiles and universal pre-school coverage for four- and five-year-old. The program works through Early Childhood Education and Care Centers administered by two institutions that hold agreements with the Ministry of Education. In opposition to the Mexican program, the intervention is directed towards better education for children.

When comparing both economies, Staab and Gehrard (2011) highlight the higher quality of the services provided in Chile, given their higher requisites for childcare personnel. At the same time, in the Chilean case, the subsidies cover a higher proportion of the population, reaching middle income families, compared to Mexico where only low-income families are covered.

Calderon (2015) estimates the impact of the Mexican program for the 2007-2010 period, finding that one additional child space for every ten children increases the likelihood of participating in the labor market by 1.5 percentage points, for mothers. This author also finds a positive impact on women's labor income and a higher likelihood of switching jobs for men. Calderon interprets this last finding as being a consequence of the insurance provided by the new income earned by the mother.

For the case of Chile, Medrano (2009) and Encina and Martínez (2009) studied the impact of the expansion of publicly financed childcare centers on female labor market participation, finding no impact for low-income households. Contreras et al. (2012) estimates the impact of certain characteristics of daycare services on female labor participation using a survey on women in charge of children younger than 6. They find that reported distance to the daycare facilities as well as the reported compatibility of their opening hours with the working hours of the respondent are more important than the price of these services in determining the likelihood of female participation in the labor market.

The results presented in Contreras et al. (2012) suggest that a possible factor behind the absence of results in previous impact evaluations of Chile's daycare provision policies are related to the nearness and their opening hours of the daycare centers. Nevertheless, this possibility has not been empirically studied and the reasons behind the lack of impact remain unclear.

In the case of Peru in 1993 the Project "Wawa Wasi" started as a sort of pilot model of comprehensive attention for children under 3 under the denomination of "educative community homes". In 1996 the Ministry of Women was created, and the project was transferred under its mandate becoming a program widespread through Peru (Diaz, 2022).

At an early phase, the "Domestic Program Wawa Wasi" responded to a mix of paradigms regarding gender equality. On the one hand, it aimed at responding to the needs of working mothers and promoting their participation in the labor market and on the other hand it relied on voluntary female care work reinforcing the feminization and precarious nature of the care work (Ibid).

Even though the Wawa Wasi program targeted mainly areas in poverty and extreme poverty this program included institutional Wawa wasis as well, which were oriented to attend children of all socio-economic sectors and recognized the general need of day care for the children of workers of public and private institutions (Ibid).

Finally, this childcare program was transferred to the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion in 2012 and change the name to "Cuna Más". This change

meant a loss of the female labor inclusion objective in a broad sense. Currently it is centered mainly on children wellbeing and targets only the poorest areas of the Peruvian economy (Ibid). However, Boyd and Renteria (2018) find an important impact of “Cuna Más” on the likelihood of having an employment, for women that belong to the targeted group and have kids under 6 years of age.

In Latin America the enrollment in child care services is highly stratified by socioeconomic level (high-income population has higher access to services, while lower income sectors present lower attendance rates) and by urban/rural (with less coverage in rural areas) (CEPAL, 2017). Besides, the quality of ECEC services in the region is highly heterogeneous. The little evidence available suggests high heterogeneity and precariousness in several member economies, mainly in rural areas and in low socioeconomic groups (Araujo, López Boo, & Puyana, 2013; Vegas & Santibáñez, 2010 in Filgueira and Rossel, 2020: 240-241).

Regarding leave policies: all economies in the region have maternity leave policies. However, there is variation in terms of length and most economies offer less than the 14 weeks established by the ILO; Mexico, for example, provides 12 weeks. On the other hand, Peru provides 14 weeks. Chile is an exception with a 24-week maternity leave since 2011. Parental leaves are exceptional in Latin America (OIT, ONU Mujeres & PNUD, 2012; Pautassi & Rico, 2011). To date, only three economies have parental schemes, included within the maternity leaves (Cuba, Uruguay and Chile). Chile offers mothers the possibility to transfer the benefit to fathers after the 7th week after childbirth and for a maximum of 3 months (Rossel, Filgueira, & Rico, 2015) (Ibid).

The most important deficit in Latin America’s maternity and parental leaves is still basic coverage. In Latin America, maternity leaves are still limited or non-existent for sectors, even if formal, like domestic workers, subcontracted, and temporal workers. Therefore, the proportion of employed women that use the maternity leave benefit is relatively low. Besides, there is a high level of informality and almost no system includes informal workers, this also explains that maternity and parental leaves are restricted to a very small proportion of working mothers (Ibid).

Paternity leaves are not found in all economies and in most of them are around 5 days. Chile and México have 5 days and Peru has 10 days that could be extended until 30 days under particular circumstances. (Quevedo, 2021; Pacheco, 2019; Goldberg, 2020).

3.4 Russia

Historically, under the Soviet Union, women's participation in the labor force was higher than in almost any other industrialized economies. Women worked full-time the whole year round and there was very little part-time employment (less than 1% of the work force). This was possible because of the wide range of government-subsidized childcare programs (nurseries, preschool, kindergartens, and after-school programs) (Lokshin, 2000). In the Soviet Union, the image of the “working mother” was the core of female identity and despite of the wide range of

policies it was constructed also upon the “double burden” of domestic care duties and full-time paid work (Gradskova, 2007; Khotkina, 2001 in Sätre, 2016: 54).

Reforms introduced by the Russian government in early 1992 dramatically changed the socioeconomic situation in Russia and put a great strain on the existing system of social protection and state-subsidized institutions leading to a sharp decline in the number of state-run childcare organizations (Lokshin, 2000). According to Kazakova (2019) this decline was due to both reduction in the fertility rate and financial and economic crisis in this member economy.

3. COVID-19 AND WORK-FAMILY BALANCE POLICIES

The COVID-19 pandemic implied an important change in childcare availability for several reasons. First, the closure of childcare and education centers decreased the availability of institutional childcare services. Additionally, fear of infection precluded hiring care workers at home. Finally, the recommended isolation of the elderly made it difficult to rely on grandparents to help with childcare. Given the sexual division of labor, we expect women to be more affected by these changes.

A second reason for women to be specially affected by the pandemic is their concentration in sectors that had been hit the hardest (ILO, 2021). For the case of Peru, Aldana et al. (2020) categorizes all the productive sectors according to the risk for the consumer in the COVID context. Those sectors with no risk are those in which the consumer does not need to leave her house to access the service.

Sectors with medium risk are those in which it is preferable to leave the house to access the service and sectors with high risk are those in which the risk assumed by the consumer is high. In this group, restaurants and hotels are both included. Aldana et al. (2021) uses a phone survey implemented in 2020 in Peru and finds that for individuals employed in the urban sector just before the pandemic, the proportion working in the high-risk sector is 55% among women and only 33% among men.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the evolution of the labor force participation for women, for the 2010-2021 period considering the APEC economies for which there is information. The economies that show a higher decrease in labor force participation in 2020 are: Mexico (-3.7 pp), the Philippines (-3.8 pp), Chile (-6.4%) and Peru (-13.5%). Nevertheless, only for the cases of Chile and Peru the reduction is higher for women than for men. In the case of Chile, the change for male is of -4.8 pp and in the case of Peru this change is of -10.91 pp.

Figure 1

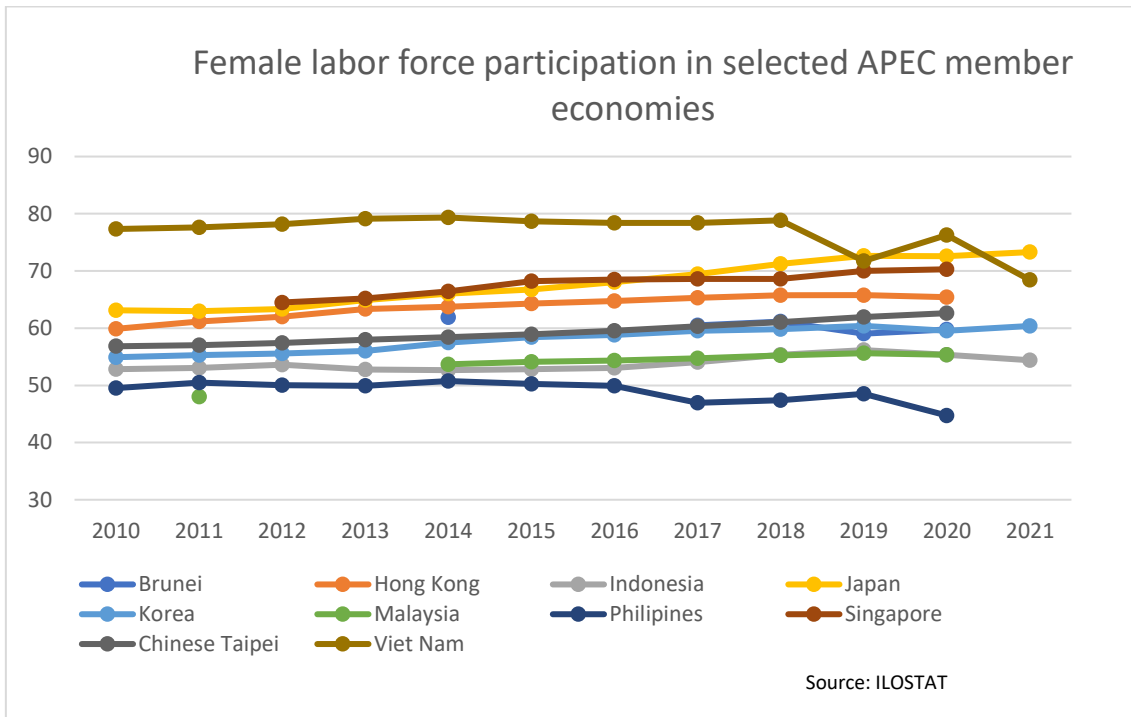
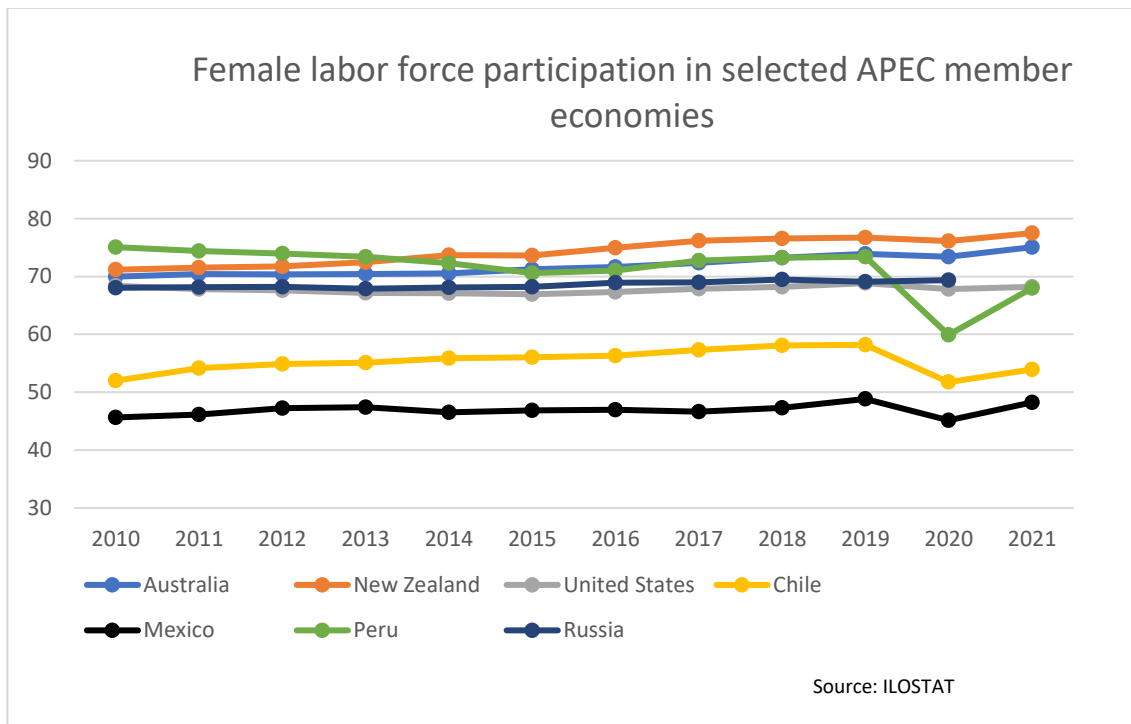


Figure 2



In order to assess the care policies implemented in the COVID 19 context, we use the UNDP–UN Women Global Gender Response Tracker⁹ that maps policies implemented during the pandemic. For the case of Asia, it has been reviewed only the economies that were identified by UNESCAP (2021) as having the higher

⁹ Retrieved from: <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/> [April, 2022]

number of care sensitive measures in the COVID 19 context. These economies are: Indonesia; Japan; Korea; Malaysia; and Singapore. For the case of the Pacific, it has been reviewed all APEC member economies.

Table 3 shows the work-family balance policies applied in response to COVID 19 in these economies, according to this database. To ease visualization, we have divided these policies in 5 categories: broad childcare provision, provision of childcare for specific groups, leaves, allowances and productive policies for MSMEs led by women.

For the Asian economies shown in Table 3, it can be identified Indonesia and the Philippines as the member economies with lower protection for women in the face of higher care demands. In the Philippines there are no policies oriented to bring a better work-family balance to women, while in Indonesia the only two policies implemented are: subsidies to Conditional Cash Transfer beneficiaries and credit grants to women entrepreneurs. These two policies are very far from covering women's needs as they only target a certain type of women in the first case and have very low coverage in the second case. It is important to recall that both the Philippines and Indonesia are economies with a poverty relief support profile (see section 3).

For Australia; Canada; New Zealand; and The United States, the case that shows a lower level of protection for women entrepreneurs in the COVID 19 context is Canada. In this economy, childcare services are provided only for certain groups (essential workers and indigenous communities) and paid leave for care reasons covers dependent workers only. Thus, women entrepreneurs are not protected by the government in this more time demanding context.

In Latin America, the economy that shows lower provision of policies to help women with work-family balance is Peru, where the only policy applied is the provision of allowances to conditional cash transfer beneficiaries. Mexico also appears as an economy where women are highly vulnerable as the only policies implemented in the COVID 19 context are subsidies to vulnerable women and credits or grants to female entrepreneurs. Given that these credit programs tend to have very low coverage, it is likely that an important bulk of women are left unprotected in Mexico.

Table 3. Work-family balance policies during COVID-19

Policy category	Asia						Anglosaxon economies				Latinamerica			Russia
	Singapore	Malaysia	Indonesia	The Philippines	Japan	Korea	Australia	Canada	New Zealand	USA	Chile	Mexico	Peru	Russia
Broad childcare provision														
Childcare services for workers in general (essential or not essential)						x	x			x				x
Subsidies to cover childcare expenses		x			x	x			x		x			
Childcare provision for specific groups														
Childcare services or subsidies for essential workers	x							x		x				
Childcare subsidies for essential workers										x				
Childcare services for indigenous communities								x						
Tax credit to self employed workers that take care of children										x				
Baby bonus	x							x						
Subsidies to childcare, to disadvantaged families or mothers									x			x		
Leaves														
Leaves due to child care for dependent workers					x	x	x	x		x	x			
Leaves due to child care for independent workers					x						x			
Allowances														
Allowances or tax credit for households with children		x							x	x				x
Consumption vouchers for households with children						x				x				
Subsidies to Conditional Cash Transfer beneficiaries			x								x		x	
Productive policies for MSMEs led by women														
Credits or grants			x				x				x	x		
Training							x			x	x		x	
Source: UNDP–UN Women Global Gender Response Tracker														
Papua New Guinea presented no work-family balance policies in the database														

4. METHODOLOGY

In this section we describe the methodology followed in this study with the objectives of identifying the policies that promote work-family balance in APEC and selecting some of these policies as best practices. In the beginning, we were expected to follow these 5 consecutive steps for this study: 1. Theoretical framework and systematic literature review, 2. Survey among APEC member economies, 3. Interviews with public officials, 4. Three virtual discussion sessions, and 5. Writing of the final report.

One of the objectives of the first step (theoretical framework and systematic literature review) was to begin mapping the work-family balance policies in the APEC economies. With regard to the survey, the objective was to provide a more thorough and more detailed mapping of these policies. The interviews were planned with the idea of filling the gaps in the information derived from the survey as well as gathering the assessment of public officials on the policies implemented in their respective economies.

The aim was to perform a deeper analysis on a sub group of APEC economies. In this scheme, the interviews were a step that only covered these selected economies. We planned to select the economies that, according to the survey, showed best practices. When choosing these economies, we also were going to seek representation of the different sociocultural groups to which APEC economies belong.

As presented in section 3, the sociocultural groups that are being considered are:

- Group 1: Australia; Canada; New Zealand; and The United States
- Group 2: China; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Korea; Malaysia; the Philippines; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; and Viet Nam.
- Group 3: Chile; Mexico; and Peru.
- Group 4: Russia.

Nevertheless, the survey was answered only by 7 of the 21 APEC member economies. The economies that filled out the survey were: Chile; Japan; Malaysia; Peru; the Philippines; Russia; and Chinese Taipei. Given this low response rate, we decided to choose the cases for a deeper analysis according to the following criteria: the literature shows best practices, we have information for this economy, and we achieve representativity of the different sociocultural groups to which APEC economies belong. Under these criteria, the economies selected for undertaking a deeper analysis were: Australia; Canada; Chile; Japan; Russia; Peru; the Philippines; Chinese Taipei; and Viet Nam. We were able to interview representatives of some of these economies (Canada; Chile; Peru; the Philippines; and Chinese Taipei).

The analysis of these cases started by combining the information provided by representatives of the economies (through surveys and interviews) with information from secondary sources. The initial findings were presented in three workshops. The cases of Chile and Peru were discussed in the first workshop, the Philippines in the second one, and Australia; Russia; and Chinese Taipei in the third one. Feedback on the preliminary results was received through these workshops and through subsequent interactions with the representatives of these economies. The final analysis mapped the different policies of these economies and identified their best practices, both of which are presented in the following section.

5. THE CASES UNDER ANALYSIS

AUSTRALIA

1. CONTEXT

Australia is a high-income economy with a GDP per capita of 60,443.1 US dollars¹⁰. The Gini index indicates rather low inequality in this economy with a coefficient of 0.33¹¹. The economic stability of Australia in the last decades has developed together with sustained growth with an annual average of 3.3 per cent over the period from 1992 to 2017¹² which is high for a developed economy.

The participation of women in the remunerated labor force: 62.1 compared with 71.3 per cent for men¹³. This gap relates to the persistent differences of men and women in assuming care and unpaid work. In Australia women spent an average of 3 hours and 23 minutes a day in domestic activities while men spent an average of 2 hours and 38 minutes¹⁴.

2. CHILDCARE SYSTEM

Childcare services in Australia are provided mainly by the private sector, this is a trend that started since the 1990s, before for-profit childcare services were uncommon. The government expanded the offering of for-profit services combining the provision of capital grants and parent fee subsidies (Ibañez, 2020). Currently, Australia has high levels of public spending on child benefits concentrated mainly on direct cash transfers.

According to Filgueira and Rossel (2020), its system of family allowances is “inspired by principles of universality but subsequently became means-tested to increase payments for lower income families. However, remains a high coverage system that neither rely on narrow definitions of need, nor on contributory formal employment. In Australia, almost all families with children can access family allowances and additional payments for child support” (p. 229).

Overall coverage of Early Child Education and Care (ECEC) at very early ages (0-2 years old) shows a clear upward trend since 1990’s reaching an overall coverage of around 30%. For those aged 3 coverage is rather low, but for 4- and 5-year-olds is high, almost universal (Filgueira and Rossel, op. cit.). This

¹⁰ <https://data.worldbank.org/country/AU>

¹¹ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/aus/228/welfare-in-australia/international-comparisons-of-welfare-data>

¹² [https://www.aph.gov.au/About Parliament/Parliamentary Departments/Parliamentary Library/pubs/BriefingBook46p/LastRecession](https://www.aph.gov.au/About%20Parliament/Parliamentary%20Departments/Parliamentary%20Library/pubs/BriefingBook46p/LastRecession)

¹³ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/gender-indicators>

¹⁴ The source of this information is: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/how-australians-use-their-time/latest-release> and the data corresponds to 2020/2021

difference reflects the importance of the goal of preparing children for mandatory school attendance

The Early childhood education and care sector provide families the following choice of services:

- ▶ **Long Day Care (LDC)** – a centre-based form of ECEC that caters for children aged 0–6 years.
- ▶ **Family Day Care (FDC)** – a flexible form of ECEC (all-day, part-time, casual, overnight, before/after school and school holiday care) that is provided in the private home of carers (who are now referred to in the ECEC sector as educators).
- ▶ **In-Home Care (IHC)** – a flexible form of ECEC (all-day, part-time, casual, overnight, before/after school and school holiday care) provided to eligible children by an educator in the family home.
- ▶ **Outside School Hours Care (OSHC)** – a centre-based form of ECEC for primary school aged children (6–12 years) and available before and after school (7.30am–9.00am, 3.00pm–6.00pm), during school holidays and on pupil-free days.
- ▶ **Occasional Care** – a flexible form of centre-based ECEC that can be accessed on a regular basis (like LDC) or as the need arises—for example, when parents have irregular or unpredictable work hours.

Source:

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1415/Quick_Guides/ChildCare

Government gave, as an exceptional policy during the pandemic for Covid 19, free childcare services for all families, by providing weekly payments to child care providers to ensure ongoing care is delivered¹⁵ and also to support predictability for the workforce and providers.

3. TRANSFERS

Australia has primarily private childcare provision and the government supports parents with the payments via transfers to childcare providers on behalf of elected families.

The subsidies have gone through certain changes, in 2000 a “Childcare Benefit” (CB) was introduced to support parents with the childcare payments, parents had the option of receiving lump sum transfers or having payments made directly from

¹⁵ <https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-package/resources/early-childhood-education-and-care-relief-package-conditions>

Government to providers¹⁶. Afterwards, in 2018 a “Women's Economic Security Package” was launched aimed to improve women's workforce participation with childcare arrangements. One main shift introduced by the latter was the new Child Care Subsidy (CCS) which replaced the CB supporting parents by paying directly to childcare providers a fee percentage. The amount of the subsidies depends on annual income, type of care used, hours of parents’ or carers’ activity (work, study, volunteering or looking for work), and number of children¹⁷.

Two innovative benefits increase accessibility to childcare:

Additional Childcare Subsidy in three circumstances: (1) for family members in charge of childcare (such as grandparents) (2) transitioning to work (3) experiencing temporary financial hardship.

Community Childcare Fund, grants supporting childcare providers in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

From July 2023, Australia will invest \$4.5 billion in making childcare cheaper and more accessible by lifting the maximum CCS rate to 90 per cent for those families earning \$80,000 or less, increase subsidy rates for a large proportion of families and increase subsidy rates for families with First Nations children¹⁸.

4. LEAVE

Relatively late, in 2010, Australia introduced cash benefits for maternity leave under its first paid parental leave scheme with 18 weeks of pay at the federal minimum wage (flat rate). Whereas in 2013, the *Dad and partner* paid was introduced 14 days of paid paternity leave by the Australian government. About \$622 per week before tax. Australia also has voluntary coverage schemes for self-employed workers for maternity and paternity leaves (ILO, 2014).

This included mothers being able to take six weeks of prenatal leave (ILO, 2014).

Adoptive parents are entitled to the same parental leave benefits as biological parents: 18 weeks of paid leave at the minimum wage (flat rate) (ILO, 2014).

The Australian government legislated changes to the Paid Parental Leave scheme in 2023 The current Dad and Partner Pay scheme has been rolled into the Parental Leave Pay scheme and now there is two weeks reserved on a 'use

¹⁶<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4402.0Main+Features1Jun%202002?OpenDocument=#:~:text=11%20The%20CCB%20was%20introduced,parents%20to%20receive%20the%20CCB.>

¹⁷ <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-much-child-care-subsidy-you-can-get?context=41186>
<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/recognised-activities-for-child-care-subsidy?context=41186>

¹⁸ <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/cheaper-child-care>

it or lose' basis for each parent and it has made paid parental leave consist only of flexible PPL days. There has been an increase in the Paid Parental Leave scheme from 18 weeks to 20 weeks. Primary carers can share all or part of their fully flexible leave entitlements for Parental Leave Pay. There will also be changes to the income test to allow more parents to qualify.

The Government is bringing forward additional legislation to increase the scheme to 26 weeks by 2026.

5. BEST PRACTICES

- Wide range of service modalities.
- Large coverage (including children until 13 years old).
Encompassing support: several kinds of subsidies (Additional Child Care Subsidy).
- Special support for vulnerable communities (Community Child Care Fund).

CANADA

1. CONTEXT

General economic overview

Canada is a Federal State located in North America composed by ten provinces and three territories. It has one of the fastest economic growth rates of any G7 nation: between 0.8% and 1.2% for the past ten years¹⁹. Canada is a high-income economy according to World Bank standards with a GDP per capita recorded at 43945.56 US dollars in 2021²⁰. It is an OECD economy and belongs to the Commonwealth. Besides, in terms of inequality, Canada presents a low Gini index of 33,3 (World Bank, 2017).

Even though Canada's fertility rate is 1.53 births per woman, under the replacement rate, the population continues to grow due to immigration. Canada has the eighth-highest net migration rate in the world: 6.375 per 1,000 people (World population review, 2022).

Self-employed workers account for 15% of total workers in Canada. More women than men indicated that work-family balance and flexibility were important reasons for their self-employment (Yssad & Ferrao, 2019).

Gender equality, care, women employment

Women in Canada have a globally comparative higher rate of participation in the remunerated labor force: 75,6 percent, however still seven points behind men: 82,6 percent (ILO 2021²¹). According to Fortin (2019) participation of women in the remunerated labor force is five percent higher in Quebec than in the rest of Canada which can be related to a more accessible childcare system in this province. Women in Canada are still the main caregivers so according to Charmes (2019) women perform 257 minutes of unpaid work a day while men only 170.

2. CHILDCARE SYSTEM

Canada has a market-based system so the provision of childcare services relies on the private sector (large and small corporations, for-profit and non-for-profit entities). However, the central government has an important role in terms of economic investment and progress assessment, particularly in recent years. Thus, it is becoming more and more a publicly managed system while being run by the private sector. In Canada, care and education are managed separately, care until 5 years old rely on private sector while education from 6 years onwards rely on the public sector. (Interview with Public Official of the Federal Government²²).

¹⁹ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/canada-population>

²⁰ <https://tradingeconomics.com/canada/gdp-per-capita>

²¹ <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>

²² Director of Federal and Provincial Territorial Relationships on Early Learning and Childcare.

In 2021 the central government started an initiative to enhance childcare services consisting of a very large investment transferred to the private sector in the different provinces and territories under agreements to ensure the enhancement of: accessibility, affordability, quality and inclusiveness. According to our informant, besides the wellbeing of children, a very important motivation for this investment has to do with the pandemic that showed the importance for childcare for the activity of essential workers and economic recovery, and also with a wider context of shortage of labor force already previous to the pandemic.

The coverage of Childcare in Canada for children aged 0 to 5 varies according to provinces and territories. However, most of them have a coverage between 20 and 30% considering full or part time attendance. Quebec stands out with a coverage of 42% considering full-time attendance.

Province or territory	Percentage of center-based space for children age 0-5	
Newfoundland and Labrador	Do not specify	25%
Prince Edward Island	full or part-time	41%
Nova Scotia	full or part-time	25%
New Brunswick	Full or part-time	35%
Quebec	Full-time	42%
Ontario	full or part-time	20.6%
Manitoba	full or part-time	25%
Saskatchewan	Do not specify	17%
Alberta	full or part-time	22%
British Columbia	full or part-time	27%
Northwest territories	full or part-time	21%
Nunavut	full or part-time	22%
Yukon	full or part-time	40.7%

Source: <https://findingqualitychildcare.ca> (2019)

Childcare in Quebec

Quebec is a unique case within Canada, it has developed an approach to childcare that resulted in greater availability and affordability than most of the rest of Canada. Due to a significant amount of public funding provided to childcare centers and family day homes it has been possible that these services are able to provide spaces at reduced fees (currently of \$8.50per day²³). This approach started in 1997 when Quebec’s Educational Childcare Act fostered this low-fee universal program. The objectives were: to improve work-life balance and to enhance child development. Currently, regardless of employment, marital or income status, all parents have access to low-cost childcare for their children 0 to 5 years (Fortin, 2019:2).

²³ <https://findingqualitychildcare.ca/quebec>

The system offers direct subsidies to three types of providers: center-based non-profit *centres de la petite enfance* (CPEs), family-based caregivers and for-profit private *garderies* that conform to official regulations. These three types reach 83 percent of children in care, the other 17 percent of children in care attend for-profit private *garderies* that charge full fees. However, even this latter allows a fee reduction, through a provincial refundable tax credit that significantly lowers parents' net after-tax payment (Ibid).

As for the accomplishment of the objectives of the system it is possible to affirm that it has allowed mothers to balance work and family. The labor force participation rate of Quebec women 20 to 44 years old in 2016 (85 percent) was the highest in the world, only achieved also by Switzerland and it was five percent higher than the rate in the rest of Canada. However, the system has not been as successful in achieving the highest standards of quality for childcare services and responding adequately to the special needs of disadvantaged children who are less present than other children in good-quality licensed childcare (Fortin, 2019:12).

3. TRANSFERS / TAX RELIEFS FOR CARE

Childcare subsidies

Besides the general investment that the federal government is doing to allow prices of childcare to be more accessible there are subsidies directed to families by local governments of provinces and territories. They present some variations (see annex) but most of them are given to eligible families to cover full or partial costs of childcare services.

The main eligibility criteria are income (low and in some cases middle income) and in some cases also parental employment and schooling status. They are transferred directly to childcare providers on behalf of eligible parents but in Northwest territories where subsidies are paid directly to the parents. Services considered are mostly those regulated or licensed (non-profit or for-profit) also, in some provinces, community day care homes. In Manitoba they also consider family child care providers. British Columbia also offers subsidy funding to parents who hire a non-familial caregiver to care for the child in their own home

Tax deductions for Childcare

There are tax deductions at the federal and at the provincial level. The deduction depends on the declaration of expenditure on childcare services. According to our informant, in the past the economic support for parents for childcare was focalized in tax deductions they are still in place but no longer the main route as they do not permit the government to have influence on aspects as quality and inclusivity but only affordability.

Canada Child Benefit (CCB)²⁴

The CCB is administered by the Canada Revenue Agency of the federal government is a tax-free monthly payment made to eligible families to help with the cost of raising children under 18 years of age. The person who is primarily responsible for the care and upbringing of the child should apply for the CCB²⁵. That person is responsible for things such as: supervising the child's daily activities and needs, making sure the child's medical needs are met, arranging for child care when necessary.

When two individuals who are spouses or common-law partners reside in the same home as the child, the female parent is presumed to be primarily responsible for the care and upbringing of all the children in the home. She should be the one applying for the CCB. The female presumption is a legislative requirement and only one payment per household can be issued under the Income Tax Act. No matter which parent receives the CCB, the amount will be the same. However, if the male parent is primarily responsible, they should apply and attach a signed letter from the female parent stating that they are primarily responsible for the care and upbringing of all the children in the home.

If the child resides with same-sex parents, only one parent should apply for all the children in the home.

Local Child Benefits

Most of the provinces and territories also have their own Child Benefit for low and, in some cases, also middle-income families with children under 18. In all provinces that have this benefit, except Quebec, it is received together with the CCB in a sole monthly payment. The amount of the payments varies across provinces and also within them depending on the income of families.

4. LEAVES

In Canada, for Federally Regulated Employees the statutory leave protections fall under the *Canada Labor Code (CLC)*. The CLC provides maternity and parental related leave entitlements to all employees, regardless of how long they have

²⁴ The contents of this section have been almost literally taken from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/canada-child-benefit-overview.html>.

²⁵ The person applying must meet the following conditions: live with a child who is under 18 years of age, be the primarily responsible for the care and upbringing of the child, be resident of Canada for tax purpose, he/she or the spouse or common-law partner must be **any of the following**: a Canadian, a permanent resident, a protected person, a temporary resident who has lived in Canada for the previous 18 months, and who has a valid permit in the 19th month **other** than one that states "does not confer status" or "does not confer temporary resident status", an individual who is registered, or entitled to be registered under the [Indian Act](https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/canada-child-benefit-overview.html). (<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/canada-child-benefit-overview.html>).

worked for the employer. There is no paternity leave as such, but it is incorporated in the parental leave. These leaves rely on federal Employment Insurance.

Maternity leave

It has the following conditions: it could be taken as early as 13 weeks before their estimated date of confinement, it could be taken up to 17 weeks. It may be extended if (a) the confinement has not occurred during the period of leave, or (b) the child born is hospitalized.

Parental leave

The parental leave allows an employee with a new-born child or a newly adopted child to take up to 63 weeks of leave. This period must fall within the 1.5 year (78 week) of the child being born or coming into the employee's care. This 1.5-year period may be extended if (a) the employee is absent on other specific leaves, such as medical leave or (b) the child is hospitalized. In total, the period must not be longer than 104 weeks.

If both parents work for the same employer, they may share parental leave to access an additional 8 weeks of leave. The total amount of shared parental leave available is 71 weeks.

If one employee takes maternity and parental leave under the *CLC*, the total amount of leave is capped at 78 weeks. Parents who share maternity and parental leave under the *CLC* can take a combined total of 86 weeks of leave.

Provinces and territories

For provincially regulated employees, statutory maternity and parental leave protections are governed by province's employment standards laws which present some variation. The maximum amount of combined maternity and parental leave range from 1 year to approximately 1.5 years. Unlike federally regulated employees, in some provinces, it is necessary that employees had worked a certain amount of time continuously to qualify (see annex).

In the case of self-employed workers our informant said that they can voluntarily contribute to the Employment Insurance and access to all the same benefits as employees in terms of leaves. But they have to be enrolled at least 1 year before being able to claim the benefits.

5. BEST PRACTICES

- Same sex families are recognized for benefits like the Canada Child Benefit or Parental leaves.
- Insurance for self-employed with the same benefits as employees.
- Diversity of sources of support to subsidize more affordable Childcare services.
- Quebec flat rate of Childcare (related to the highest percentage of women in the labor force).

- Significant investment of the federal government to expand quality childcare across provinces and territories.
- Experiences of flexibility: seasonal workers, joint attention during weekends.
- Collaboration between the private sector and the State in the provision of childcare services.

CHILE

1. CONTEXT

Chile is a middle-income economy with a GDP per capita of 14.7 thousand US dollars in 2019, the year before the pandemic (World Bank, 2022). Chile's economic model was a neoliberal one since the seventies and until the election of Gabriel Boric in 2022. Under this neoliberal scheme the provision of services and pensions was private. Currently Chile is undergoing a change in the Constitution with the objective of devising a new economic model.

In Chile the labor force is mainly given by dependent workers. In 2019, 72% of male workers were dependent employees and 74% of female workers had this same employment status (ILOSTAT). Nevertheless, the self-employment sector is still highly relevant. Most of the employment in this sector is that of own account workers, with the number of employers and contributing family workers being much lower (ILOSTAT).

Chile is characterized for being a conservative economy with a very low female labor participation rate. In 2019 the female labor force participation rate was 58% while it reached 72% for men. Acosta, Peticara and Ramos (2005), cited in Encina and Martinez (2009), identify the idea of a traditional family as an important factor behind the low female participation rate.

2. CHILDCARE SERVICES

Since Bachelet's first period (2006-2010) there has been an important expansion in the public provision of childcare (Staab and Gerhard, 2019). These public childcare services are provided with an educational objective and are overseen by the Ministry of Education. Nevertheless, as we will see below, this has not implied that the needs of the caregivers inside the family (who are mostly the kid's mothers) are not considered in the design of these services.

The two main implementing institutions of public early childhood education are Junji and Integra. Junji is part of the Education Ministry, while Integra is a Foundation that is part of the Office of the President and is managed by the First Lady. Public early childhood education is provided in "Salas Cunas" for kids below 2 years old. For kids between 2 and 6 years old (without including those with 6 years old) the education is provided in centers of "Nivel Medio" (for 2 and 3 year old), "Pre kinder" (for 4 year old) and "Kinder" (for 5 year old).

A third institution that is key in the implementation of childcare services in Chile is the program Chile Crece Contigo. This program coordinates and monitors the different programs directed towards children development. One of its objectives is: monitor the fulfillment of the guarantee of access to public "Salas Cunas" and centers of "Nivel Medio". Currently, this guarantee is provided to households with an income that belongs to the lower 60%. A second objective of Chile Crece Contigo is to reach universal access for kids with 4 and 5 years old.

Public early childhood education is free and in contrast with the primary and secondary education, runs parallel to the private sector provision with no interaction between the private and the public sectors. In the case of primary and secondary education there are three types of provision: public, private and private with public subsidies. This last type is cheaper than the private one but not free as the public education.

Another important characteristic of the public provision of childcare is that it gives an important number of hours of care per day to each kid. Full time attention goes from 8 am to 6 pm, and it can be extended until 7 or 7: 30 pm. Households that access the guarantee get access to the full-time schedule. In order to have access to the extended schedule, it has to be shown that the caregiver is working or is studying. There is an important number of cases that are left out given that the extended schedule presents a very high demand and a limited supply.

The coverage of early childhood education for kids with less than 2 years old is 14%²⁶. For the group of kids between 2 and (not including) 6 years old the coverage is of 67%, being much higher for older kids. In the case of Kinder, for example, the coverage is of 94%. It is known that there has been an increase in coverage of early childhood education in Chile (Staab and Gerhard, 2019).

The level for which we have information on past coverage is that of Salas Cunas (for kids below 2 years old). The number of enrolled children in 2005 was 14,581 and in 2007 it was 34,321 (Encina y Martínez, 2009). This implies an important increase since 2005 given that the enrollment in Salas Cunas reached 65,324 in 2021 (MINEDUC, 2022).

Most of the access to early childhood education is through the public sector. In the case of children less than 2 years old, the public sector represents more than 99% of total enrollment. For children between 2 and 6 years old, the public sector also accounts for more than 99% of total enrollment (MINEDUC, 2022).

The guarantee of access to childcare education for kids below 5 years old is an important aspect of the policy framework that helps women achieve work family balance. In the interview, the expert said that the guarantee is generally fulfilled but not necessarily in the center the family is asking for. On the other hand, Chile Crece Contigo has to be coordinating with other instances in order to improve the fulfillment of this guarantee.

For example, Chile Crece Contigo has coordinated with Junji and Integra the creation of a computer system through which families can ask for the guarantee. Additionally, Chile Crece Contigo coordinated with the Education monitoring agency, that forms part of the Ministry of Education, for the exceptional increase (beyond the maximum allowed) in the number of kids per caregiver to face emergency situations related to the guarantee.

²⁶ The coverage is calculated considering the number of children that attended (according to MINEDUC, 2022) and the total number of kids below 2 years old (according to MINEDUC, 2022).

The expert who was interviewed stated that the demand for early childhood education is particularly high among international migrants. An initial obstacle related to the access of migrants to early childhood education is that given that they do not have a formal working status, their socioeconomic status cannot be classified, and it is not possible to assess whether they belong to the lower 60% in terms of income. In answer to this, it was decided that international migrants have access to the guarantee even if their socioeconomic status cannot be classified.

3. LEAVES

Chile has maternity and paternity leaves. There are no parental leaves, but part of the maternity leave can be transferred to the father. The maternity leave has a length of 18 weeks: 6 weeks before birth and 12 weeks after birth. These 18 weeks of leave are mandatory. In addition, the mother can ask for 12 more weeks and these have to be granted by the employer. The leave is paid, and the amount is 100% of the mother's income (Bosch, 2020).

The leave is available for formal dependent workers and formal independent workers. Formal independent workers have to meet the following requirements: to contribute to a health insurance institution and to have contributed to the pension system for at least one year and at least six months during the last 12 months (Bosch, 2020).

Women can choose to transfer part of the second part of the leave to the father. They can transfer 6 weeks full time or 12 weeks part time of the 12 weeks full time they have available. The father will receive 100% of the salary paid by his health insurance or his employer (Bosch, 2020).

4. TRANSFERS FOR CARE GIVEN BY NON-FAMILY MEMBERS

No policies of this type have been found for the case of Chile.

5. OTHER POLICIES TO INVOLVE FATHERS IN CHILDRISING

The program "Chile Crece Contigo" has developed several tools to help parents in their childraising duties. In these tools the involvement of the father in childraising is promoted.

6. BEST PRACTICES

- Increase in coverage of public childcare.
- Long business hours of public childcare services.
- The guarantee of access to households in the lower 60% of the income distribution.
- The inclusion of international migrants in this guarantee.
- The possibility of transferring the maternity leave to the father.
- Maternity leaves for independent workers.

JAPAN

1. CONTEXT

Japan is a high income economy with a GDP per capita that reached 40.5 thousand US dollars in 2019 (World Bank, 2022). As it is usual in high income economies, most of the labor force works as a dependent employee instead of being self-employed. In 2019, 89% of male workers were employees, and this proportion was equal to 92% in the case of female workers.

Japan is characterized by a declining birth rate, a matter that is very pressing for this economy. While in 1950 there were around 2.3 million births per year, in 2021 the number was around 800 thousand (NHK World Japan, 2022). Currently, Japanese women are expected to have 1.3 children over their lifetime and this number is needed to be 2.1 for the population not to decline.

The Japanese economy is a conservative one. Extramarital childbirth is not socially accepted, for example (Yamaura, 2020). Nevertheless, female labor force participation is relatively high for Asian standards. This rate was equal to 73% in 2019.

2. CHILDCARE SERVICES

In Japan, as in most of the cases analyzed, childcare services are provided by both, the private and the public sector. The peculiarity of the Japanese case resides in that the private sector is heavily regulated. In this economy most of the childcare is provided in accredited childcare centers (that should satisfy certain requirements such as a minimum teacher/pupil ratio) (Asai et al., 2015) and private childcare centers that form part of the accredited system are heavily regulated by the government.

Parallel to these accredited centers there are non-accredited centers that provide services that are more expensive and of lower quality. These centers attend the demand that is not covered by the accredited centers, characterized by long waiting lists in big cities (Asai et al., 2015).

Local governments play an important role in the regulation of childcare services. First, they are required to estimate the supply and demand of childcare and to elaborate a plan to close the gap (Nakazato et al., 2022). Second, they provide certificates that allow families to have access to a childcare slot in the accredited system. And third, they determine the childcare fees for children between 0 and 2 years old in the accredited system (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2015).

To have access to a slot in an accredited childcare center, it is required that the family has at least one of the reasons established as valid (see box). In the case of childcare fees -for kids below 3 years old- these are determined based on upper limits established by the central government. These limits are lower for lower income families and the service is free for households exempted from local income tax (Nakazato et al., 2022 and Cabinet Office of Japan, 2015). Childcare fees in the accredited system are free for kids with 3 years old or above (Nakazato et al., 2022).

The childcare system has evolved through different plans developed to expand and improve childcare services (Yamaura, 2020). The final objective of these plans is to increase the birth rate. The last two plans have been:

1- The Comprehensive Support System for Children and Child-rearing. This plan was developed in 2015 and the changes implied by this program are:

- Sharp expansion of the supply of childcare centers.
- Installation of small childcare facilities in urban and rural areas (to use small spaces in urban areas and to cater to the smaller number of kids in the rural areas).
- Temporary custody for non-working parents.
- Higher number of afterschool children's clubs (for when the kids are in elementary school).
- Higher number of childcares for sick kids.
- Childcare support centers, that provide information and advice to parents.
- Home visits to assess the needs of the kids and to provide information to the parents -Reduction of childcare fees for families with multiple children (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2015).

2- Dreamweaving childcare support. This plan begun in 2016 and it contains measures to decrease the rate of late marriage, to reduce educational expenses on children and to expand childcare services (Tobita, 2016).

The Comprehensive Support System for Children and Child-rearing was funded with an increase in the sales tax to 10%. This increase reveals the importance that childcare services have in the Japanese society and, specifically, in the government. The centrality of childcare services resides in the necessity of haltering the decrease in the Japanese birth rate.

The policies implemented to increase the supply of childcare services are reflected in a marked improvement in the provision of childcare services. Between 2014 and 2019, the number of children who are attended in nurseries increased from 2,266,813 to 2,679,651 e (Yamaura, 2020). In 2019 the coverage of childcare services for kids below 3 years old reached 38% (Yamaura, 2020), a rate that is relatively high for this age range.

Reasons for need of childcare

- Employment
- Pregnancy and childbirth
- Sickness and disability of parents/guardians
- Nursing or caring of a relative
- Restoration after a disaster
- Job seeking activities
- Schooling
- Risk of abuse or domestic violence
- When there is a need for continuous use of childcare
- When the municipal government acknowledges that there is a similar situation to one of the above.

Source: Cabinet Office of Japan (2015).

3. LEAVES

Japan has maternity and parental leaves. There is no paternity leave in this economy. Maternity leave is provided only for full time dependent employees. The length of the maternity leave is 14 weeks, 6 weeks before birth and 8 weeks after birth. The payment is equivalent to two thirds of the mother's average earnings.

Parental leave can be taken by each parent until the child is 12 months old. In case both parents take the leave, it can be extended until the baby is 14 months old. The payment is two thirds of the parent's average earnings for the first 3 months and it is 50% of these earnings afterwards. Parental leaves are not available to self-employed women.

The policy that increases the parental leave length in case both parents take it, can be considered a policy that promotes the involvement of fathers in child raising.

4. TRANSFERS FOR CARE OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

The accredited childcare system is heavily subsidized. As already explained, in the case of children between 0 and 2 years old subsidies are higher for lower income families and childcare services are free for kids above 2 years old. Since 2019, the subsidies are such that families with an income that is low enough to be exonerated of local income taxes pay no fees. In the case of children above 2 years old there are no fees, regardless of family income, since 2019 (Nakazato et al., 2022).

5. TRANSFERS FOR CARE INSIDE THE FAMILY

We have not found this type of policies in the case of Japan.

6. BEST PRACTICES

The best practices we have identified for the case of Japan are:

- A strong childcare system, with a high coverage rate of kids below 3 years old.
- A system that has improved in terms of flexibility. Temporary care for non-working parents and after school care have improved the flexibility of the system allowing to cover the needs of more parents.
- An incentive to increase the involvement of fathers in child raising through a parental leave that is longer if both parents assume the care of the child.

PERU

1. CONTEXT

Peru is a middle-income economy whose GDP has grown significantly in the last decades. However, the drastic neoliberal approach followed by this economy has implied low investment in social policies and this reflects particularly in care policies that are very underdeveloped in regional comparison. It is very recent that a political discussion about care has entered the public agenda: in 2022 the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations has proposed a bill to be discussed in the Congress regarding a “Domestic System of Care”.

In Peru, the participation of women in the labor market is high for regional and global standards: 73,4 percent, but still 14 percent less than men’s participation (ILOSAT, 2020). However, the background of this participation of women as labor force is precarity of labor conditions. In spite of economic growth, Peru is an unequal society (Gini index: 43,8) and most of the working population (71%) works in the informal economy, being women more informal (74%) than men (68%) (ENAHO, 2017).

Besides, women still assume most of the unpaid care work so according to the ENUT (2010) women dedicate 24 hours weekly more than men to this kind of work.

2. CHILDCARE SYSTEM

Childcare services for children under 6 are very underdeveloped in Peru. Particularly those for children under 2. The coverage for children aged 0 to 2 is 8,5 percent, while for children aged 3 to 5 is 86,6 percent. Most childcare services for children under 6 are early child education services and depend on the Ministry of Education (96%) and also are mostly public (82,9%).

The programs covering most of the services for children under 2 (89,3%) are: CUNA MÁS, covering 41,1%, under the rule of the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion and PRONOEI (Non-formal school program of early education) covering 48,2% under the Ministry of Education. There is also the program WAWA WASI that offers childcare services in institutions (not focalized in poor areas) but has very low coverage: only 268 children (0%), it is ruled by the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations.

CUNA MÁS is the main care program in Peru exclusively focused on childcare and it is a focalized program for children of poor and extremely poor families. The explicit goal, according to the description of the policy, is the wellbeing and development of children but does not make explicit the objective of allowing women to enter the labor market. This program counts on the voluntary work of the “madres cuidadoras” (caring mothers) who are paid a “propina” (tip). Thus, reinforces inequality between men and women, feminization of care and devaluation of care work.

There are other programs with components of care: (1) The PRONOEI that started as a program for rural areas where formal education was scarce but

currently operates also in urban areas has a relatively significant coverage, as mentioned before, and (2) CEDIF (Center for family's comprehensive development) that involves community work with parents for the enhancement of childrearing. The coverage of these programs is low.

3. TRANSFERS

Peru does not have cash transfers for care, neither related to the presence of children nor baby bonuses. The only transfer policy is: JUNTOS, directed to poor families in rural areas. The transfer is conditioned to the fact that mothers take their children to health and education services. As in the case of CUNA MÁS, JUNTOS leans on the care role of women and therefore reinforces inequality between men and women.

4. LEAVES

Maternity leaves are available for dependent workers and for formal independent workers in a contributory approach. The duration is 90 days (45 days before and 45 days after delivery). Paternity leaves are also available for dependent workers and for formal independent workers in a contributory approach. The duration is 10 days after delivery. There are no parental leaves.

Even though 10 days of paternity leave is a very short period it is one of the largest in the Latin-American region.

5. POLICIES INVOLVING FATHERS IN CHILDRISING

CEDIF (Center for family's comprehensive development) is a program, already mentioned, that involves community work with parents for the enhancement of childrearing. According to an interviewee it is designed to include also men, however they do not participate that much.

Before official childcare public policies/programs were created in Peru, there were some community level experiences upon which the state programs also developed. One of these experiences is the Wawa Wasi – Wawa Uta in Puno (an Aymara indigenous region) in the 1970s; this was a community experience of childcare that included men as care givers (Diaz et al., 2022).

Unfortunately, once the state policy was designed and implemented men were no longer included. However, it is worth mentioning as it could inspire some necessary changes towards the improvement of men inclusion in care activities

6. BEST PRACTICES

- WAWA UTA: was a community program for childcare in the Aymara region (an indigenous andean region) which existed before the State programs and involved men in care. When the State programs started this participation of men stopped.
- PRONOEI: bilingual training, community participation in care.
- CEDIF: fosters community participation, involve men in care tasks.

THE PHILIPPINES

1. CONTEXT

The Philippines is a lower middle-income economy with a per capita income of \$3,600 has been growing at about 6.5 percent per year for most of the past decade (World Bank). As it tends to happen in economies with lower income levels there is a high proportion of the labor force that is self-employed: 40% for women and 36% for men (ILOSTAT).

As it is also expected, a high proportion of the labor force works in the informal sector. The incidence of informal sector employment has declined but remains to be a significant feature of the Philippine labor market, accounting for 40% for women and 36% for men workers (2017).

The Philippines is a conservative economy with a low level of female labor participation: 49% of women and 74% of men participate in the labor market (ILOSTAT). Results from the 2021 Women Work and Childcare survey reveal that women's reluctance to join the labor force seem to be based on beliefs about the role of women in the household as well as the belief that mothers working outside the home can negatively affect children.

2. CHILDCARE SERVICES

In the Philippines the public provision of childcare runs parallel to the private provision of these services. In the interviews it was stated that higher income families tend to send their kids to private childcare services, while lower income families tend to send them to public centers.

There are several public institutions that are in charge of the provision of childcare services. In first place, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, which supervises and designs the policy of childcare and education provision for kids below 5 years of age. Second, the Ministry of Education, that is in charge of Early Childhood Education for kids of 5 years old. Additionally, the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Council, which is in charge of monitoring the different services related to early childhood care and development, including childcare, health and nutrition.

The ECCD Council is a coordination instance of three agencies: Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Health and National Nutrition Council. Finally, the Local Government Units (LGU) are in charge of financing and implementing the centers where childcare is provided.

The information collected indicates that there has been an important effort in providing high quality childcare and education. De los Angeles (2012) reports that day care workers have received "high quality training, sufficient material resources and effective supervision" (De los Angeles, 2012: 11). At the same time, currently, there is an effort to pass a law that will provide child development

workers with better wages and tenure²⁷. Another positive aspect of childcare policies in the Philippines is that public childcare is free.

Nevertheless, the number of hours a child is attending is very low for it to allow an important participation of women in the labor market. The attention for less than 3 year old kids is 2 hours a day, while the attention for kids of 3 or 4 years old is 2 to 3 hours a day. Additionally, one of the experts interviewed told us that some of the centers give homework to the children, which implies an additional burden for the mothers. It seems that the public childcare centers are not provided with the goal of supporting women to achieve a better balance between work and family.

There are four types of public programs that provide childcare to non vulnerable children (vulnerable children include: orphans, involved in child labor or other):

- Day Care Centers or ECCD program (for 3 and 4 years old). It operates Monday to Friday.
- Child Minding Centers (for less than 3 year old kids). It operates Monday to Friday and has very limited coverage.
- NCDC Domestic Childhood Development Centers (for less than 3 years old kids). It operates Monday to Friday. It is a flagship community program managed by the ECCD council (in coordination with some LGU) with a very limited coverage. There are less than a thousand economy-wide.
- Supervised Neighborhood Play (for 3 to 6 year old kids). Community based centers that attend kids that do not go to day-care centers due to distance, low capacity or other. Volunteer parents together with child development workers are in charge of the service. It operates less days a week than the other public programs.

From these 4 types of public programs the one that works continuously (from Monday to Friday) and has a coverage that is not categorized as very limited is that of day-care Centers. Meanwhile, there were 1,766,034 0-4 years old in childcare centers run by the LGU (ECCD Council, 2019). We can use these two pieces of information to have an idea of the coverage reached by public childcare in the Philippines.

Considering the total number of kids between 0 and 4 years old, according to United Nations, the coverage is around 10%. If we take into account that most of the kids go to the daycare centers (which attends kids of 3 or 4 years old) we will have a coverage near zero for kids below 3 years old and around 38% for kids of 3 or 4 years old. In the case of 5 year old kids, the attendance is mandatory so even though we do not have the coverage numbers it must be near 100%.

²⁷ In 2019 only 10% of childcare workers had permanent status (ECCD Council, 2019)

An important aspect of childcare services policies is that LGU are obliged to establish a Daycare Center in every village. This requirement began in 1990, as it was included in the Republic Act 6972. This policy has the advantage of creating a higher geographic dispersion of childcare centers, thus improving access for households through the Philippines.

De los Angeles (2012) reports low demand for daycare in the Philippines in general, and among poor families in particular. This low demand is expressed in under-enrolled daycare centers and inactive supervised neighborhood playgroups. According to the experts interviewed, this low demand can be explained by the idea that children should be cared for inside their families. They also stated that the particularly low demand for poor families can be explained by the costs entailed by taking their children to daycare centers.

These costs exist because even though there are no fees, families must finance expenditures in stationery and others. The experts also said that a policy that has helped tackle the low demand for childcare services is the monitoring and training provided to the beneficiaries of the cash transfer program. This program makes it mandatory for children to attend these centers.

3. LEAVES AND OTHER TRANSFERS FOR CHILDCARE BY FAMILY MEMBERS

The information provided in this section on leaves and other transfer for childcare by family members was provided in the survey or the interview held with the representatives, unless stated otherwise. The Philippines has maternity, paternity and parental leaves. Currently, the maternity leave has an extension of 105 days, with the possibility of extending it for 30 more days without pay. Paternity leave has an extension of 7 days.

Maternity leaves are available for formal employees and for independent workers, whether they are formal or not. Leaves are financed by social insurance and there is a possibility of voluntarily contributing. This possibility allows independent workers, including informal ones, to have maternity leaves. To access this benefit, it is required to have contributed 3 months in the semester prior to the pregnancy. Paternity leaves are available for married fathers that are dependent employees.

The Philippines also has parental leaves, which are provided to solo parents, the mother or the father. Parental leaves last 7 days per year until the child is 18 years old (Domestic Statistics Office, 2008).

4. BEST PRACTICES

- The law that requires Local Government Units to establish at least one daycare center in each village.
- The availability of maternity leaves for independent workers.
- The investment in the quality of public childcare services.

RUSSIA

1. CONTEXT

The Russian Federation is a middle-income economy that in 2021 had a GDP per capita of 12.19 thousand US dollars (World Bank, 2022). The Russian economy is based on exports of natural resources, such as natural gas, and of products based on natural resources, like fertilizers.

In Russia, as already stated in section 3.4, female labor force participation was pretty high during the Soviet Union. In 2019, the year before the pandemic, female labor force participation was equal to 69% and male labor force participation was 80% (ILOSTAT). This gap of 11 percentage points is relatively low with Canada and New Zealand being the only two APEC member economies for which the gap is lower (ILOSTAT). By 2022, female labor force participation was equal to 70.4% and male labor force participation was 80.5% (ILOSTAT).

2. CHILDCARE SERVICES

During the Soviet Union there was a wide range of government childcare programs that allowed the high female labor force participation that prevailed in this era. Reforms introduced after the end of Soviet Union led to a sharp decline in the number of state-run child care organizations. Due to these reforms, childcare services were transferred from public organizations to local municipalities.

The government has put efforts into increasing childcare availability, leading to an increase in coverage for children aged 0 to 6 years old. In the year 2015, the last for which we have information, 1.4% of children enrolled in childcare, attended a private organization (Kazakova, 2019). This number implies that the public sector is still the main provider of childcare in Russia.

Using information from UNESCO on childcare enrollment and information from United Nations on population by age, we can calculate the proportion of kids covered by childcare. According to these data, coverage of childcare services is very high in Russia. Childcare enrollment is around 22% for kids between 0 and 2 years old and around 85% for kids between 3 and 6 years old in 2019. Despite these relatively high enrollment rates, there are long waiting lists of children to get a place in childcare. Using information from the Federal State Statistic Service of Russian Federation, Kazakova (2019) finds that in 2014, 2.8 out of 12.2 million children aged 0-6 were on a waiting list, that is about 1 in 4 children under the age of 6 years.

Using data from a representative survey Lokshin (2000) in research prompted by the significant impact that the reform of the child care system has had on the political and economic environment of Russia, it estimates the impact of changes in the price of child care on maternal labor employment, finding a negative impact on both female participation and number of hours.

Furthermore, Kazakova (2019) studies the effects of the expansion of childcare availability in Russia between 2000 and 2015. She states that the estimates imply that the expansion of childcare availability in Russia between those years has increased maternal labour force participation by 3.4%, maternal employment by 2.9% and maternal full-time employment by 2.2%.

3. LEAVES AND OTHER TRANSFERS FOR CHILDCARE BY FAMILY MEMBERS

The information of this section was provided by Ministry of Labour and Social Protection filled out the survey and attended the workshop. In Russia there are maternity and parental leaves. Both leaves are contributory and the agency in charge of managing the funds is The Social Insurance Fund of the Russian Federation. Maternity leave has a length of 140 days, 70 days before childbirth (in case of the multiple pregnancy – 84 days) and 70 days after childbirth (in case of complicated birth – 86 days; in case of birth 2 or more children – 110 days). This leave is paid at 100% of the mother's income. By law, all employees must be insured and, consequently, they have access to maternity leave. Self employees, on the other hand, have the opportunity of contributing voluntarily to The Social Insurance Fund of the Russian Federation and, thus, of having access to maternity leave.

Parental leaves come into play after the maternity leave ends. Parental leaves can be used not only by the mother but also by any insured caregiver (child's mother, child's father, grandmother, grandfather, other relatives or guardian who is actually taking care of the child). Paid parental leave lasts until the kid reaches 1.5 years old and the total parental leave lasts until the kid reaches 3 years old. The leave is paid at 40% of the caregiver's income but at the same time, the allowance cannot be lower than the regional subsistence minimum level. As in the case of maternity leaves, self employees can have parental leave if they chose to contribute to The Social Insurance Fund of the Russian Federation.

Additionally, there are monthly transfers for care administered at the regional level. Contrary to the maternal and parental leaves, these transfers are aimed towards children of poor households only. Transfers are provided to households with children under 3 years old in which family income is lower than a certain threshold, defined in function of the regional living wage.

Transfers are also provided to families with children between 3 and 18 years old. In this case the family income threshold is lower, so a lower proportion of families receive this transfer. For the case of kids between 3 and 18 years old, the need assessment also examines movable property, non-movable property and employment of the able bodied members of the family.

There are other cash transfers provided to families in Russia. For example, baby bonuses can be received in connection with the child birth and upbringing period in the form of a lump-sum allowance at the birth time and in the form of a monthly childcare allowance until the child reaches 1,5 years old. Government also realizes a program called "Maternity capital" (State financial support after the childbirth intended for improving housing condition or paying for education).

There are other transfers provided to families in Russia, but these are not related to childcare. Lokshin (2000) estimated the impact of having access to transfers finding that the allowances have no impact on female labor participation. Since he also finds that the change in the price of childcare services do have an effect on female labor participation, his study concludes that day care subsidies are more effective in increasing income.

4. BEST PRACTICES

- A very strong public childcare system, with high enrollment rates.
- A long maternity and parental leave.
- Pregnant women who are registered at the early stage of pregnancy (earlier than 12 weeks) can receive additional monthly payments.
- The Russian Federation has social services for families with children. This program is administered by the Executive body of state authorities for a certain category of children: disabled children, children in need of social adaptation, children left without parental care (orphans) and others. Social services are not educational activities. Care centers provide social services which means providing constant/periodic/one-time assistance to all children aimed to improve living conditions and (or) ability independently provide basic living needs.

**In social service system “basic living needs” means – providing care (eating, cleaning the living space, hygienic procedures, etc.), as well as communication with other people, psychological well-being, and organization of leisure.*

CHINESE TAIPEI

1. CONTEXT

Chinese Taipei is a high-income economy with a GDP per capita of 25.9 thousand US dollars²⁸. In Chinese Taipei most of the employment is dependent: 84% of female workers are employees while this rate is 76% for men (ILOSTAT). As in the case of Chile, we can say that self-employment is highly relevant in spite of not being the main form of employment.

Chinese Taipei has a birth rate that is declining at least since 1980. There were about 357,500 babies born in the year 1980, in 2000 this number dropped to 292,700 and in 2010 it reached 167,300 (Chui and Wei, 2011). In 2020, this number was around 160 thousand (Taipei Times, 2020). At the same time, there is an important demand from the citizens, for more support in raising their children. These two factors have pushed the government to increase its investment in support of parents.

2. CHILDCARE SERVICES

As in other economies (e.g. the Philippines) there are two different institutions in charge of early childcare and education. Childcare for kids between 0 and 2 years old is supervised by the Ministry of Health and Welfare while childcare for kids between 3 and 6 years old is supervised by the Ministry of Education.

Contrary to the case of other economies where the public and private provision of childcare services run parallel to each other, in the case of Chinese Taipei there is a deliberate interaction between the private and the public sectors through the quasi-public system. This system provides subsidies to the families or to the provider and, at the same time, establishes a group of regulations to the provider. Additionally, there are childcare centers that are run by private institutions (non-profit organizations) and are funded by the government.

The following lines show the types of childcare that exist in Chinese Taipei, for kids between 0 and 2 years old. This information was provided by the expert of Chinese Taipei that was present in the workshop. In this list, we can see that home based caregivers can also form part of the quasi-public childcare.

- Public childcare center and community public nursery homes funded by government and operated by nonprofit organizations (the space is also provided by the government).
- Private childcare center that signs up to quasi public childcare.
- Private childcare center.

²⁸<https://countryeconomy.com/gdp/taiwan?year=2019#:~:text=The%20absolute%20value%20of%20GDP,in%202018%2C%20it%20was%20%2425%2C826.>

- Home based childcare with registered caregivers (nannies) that sign up to quasi public childcare.
- Home based childcare with registered caregivers that do not sign up to quasi public childcare.
- Home based childcare by family members.

The following lines show the types of childcare for children between 3 and 6 years old. In this case the list was also provided by the representative of Chinese Taipei that attended one of the workshops.

- Public preschool run by municipalities.
- Non-profit preschool funded by government and operated by nonprofit organizations (the space is also provided by the government).
- Private preschool in the quasi public scheme (subsidized by government).
- Private preschool.

Thus, the quasi-public scheme involves childcare centers for children under 2 years old, preschools for kids older than 2 and under 6 years old and also home based caregivers. The caregiver, whether it is a nanny or a childcare center, can decide if she or it forms part of the quasi-public system. Forming part of this system implies the reception of subsidies and also being subject to a group of regulations. For the case of less than 2 year old kids, the subsidy will be given to the families. In the case of kids older than 2 and under 6 years old, the subsidy is received by the childcare center. The regulations cover prices or fees and in the case of older kids, the content of the curriculum.

The fees of the quasi-public system are higher than those of the public sector but lower than those of the private caregivers that have not signed up to the quasi-public system. It is worth noting that in the case of kids between 2 and under 6 years old, the fees vary according to the income of the family and sometimes there is no charge to the family. And the fees will be deducted if the kid is the second or third child in the family.²⁹

An original aspect of the childcare policy of Chinese Taipei is related to home based caregivers or nannies. As already noted, nannies can be part of the quasi-public system. Additionally, and related to this, there is a registry of home based caregivers. Registered nannies are certificated and being registered gives them access to the “childcare service matching platform”, which helps them find clients.

Regarding coverage of childcare services, there were 34551 children between 0 and 2 years old enrolled in childcare centers in 2020 (Ministry of Health and

²⁹ First child: NT\$3000
 Second child: NT\$2000
 Third child: NT\$1000

Welfare, 2021). Considering the population in this age range, according to United Nations, this implies a coverage of around 6% of childcare centers. From this 6%, 3.7% attended quasi-public centers, 1.5% attended public childcare centers and the rest (around 0.8%) attended private centers. For children between 3 and 5 years old the coverage is higher. In 2017 there were around 189 thousand children in public preschool³⁰ and around 110 thousand openings in quasi-public preschool (Ministry of Education of Chinese Taipei, 2020). Adding up both numbers, we have a coverage of 48%, considering both public and quasi-public preschool.

The quasi-public system began in 2018 but has an important precedent in the Childcare Management and Assistant Implementation Plan (CMAIP), which began in 2008 (Yeh and Liu, 2022). This plan provided subsidies to households that use home or center based childcare and it also built up the child caregivers registry. After 2012, this plan began to regulate the fees of childcare providers. The CMAIP was established as a result of pressure exerted by the feminist movement in Chinese Taipei (Yeh and Liu, 2022).

According to the representative of Chinese Taipei that attended the workshop, the increase in budget implied by the CMAIP and by the current quasi-public system derives from a willingness that is established in the government of Chinese Taipei and that responds to the declining birth rate of this economy. In addition to this, there is a general demand, from the citizens from Chinese Taipei, for more support in raising their children. It is thought that this additional support will stop the decline in the birth rate.

In spite of this increase in budget there are important restrictions that preclude a faster increase in the access to childcare. One of them is related to training and building up the human resources needed for this task (i.e., the childcare workers or caregivers). Another one is related to the availability of proper venues for building more childcare centers. This information was also provided by the Chinese Taipei representative that attended the workshop.

3. LEAVES AND OTHER TRANSFERS FOR CHILDCARE BY FAMILY MEMBERS

Chinese Taipei has maternity, paternity and parental leaves. According to information provided in the survey, the three types of leaves are provided to formal employees, there are no maternity leaves for independent workers. Maternity leave lasts 8 weeks in total and can be applied before and after giving birth. The mother is paid 100% of her salary. Paternity leaves last 7 days and unless it is during a prenatal visit, the leave must fall 15 days before or after childbirth.

Parental leave is also available to mothers and fathers until the kid is 3 years old. The first six months are paid, and the payment is 80% of the salary, according to the representative of Chinese Taipei that attended one of the workshops. The

³⁰ This number was deduced based on information provided at Ministry of Education of Chinese Taipei (2020).

provision of parental leaves begun in 2002 and its payment begun in 2009, with an amount equal to 60% of the income of the mother or the father (Taipei Times, 2020). In 2020, over 83,000 people received initially-approved subsidies for parental leaves, 81.8% of whom were women. Although the percentage of male grantees remained low, it has increased from 15.7% in 2014 to 18.2% in 2020 (Department of Gender Equality, 2022). This number shows that parental leaves give the possibility of a higher involvement of fathers, which has increased but remained low.

Additionally, since 2018, a monthly subsidy is given to families in which children, in this age range, are being cared for by unpaid family members, without the requirement of the caregiver to be registered. Currently, this subsidy is equal to 160 US dollars per month³¹.

4. TRANSFERS FOR CARE OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

As already stated in the previous section, the quasi-public system implies, in the case of kids younger than 3, that families receive subsidies for sending their kids to childcare centers or for hiring a home based caregiver. An average family that uses this system receives 272 US dollars per month. An additional amount of 32 US dollars per month is given to families with two children and families with 3 children or more receive an extra of 64 US dollars per month³². The subsidies are higher for lower income families. Family who sends their children to public childcare center can also receive a subsidy of US\$176. The extra amount for 2 children and 3 children is the same as the quasi-public system.

Regarding coverage of these policies, there were 47017 children between 0 and 2 years old that were beneficiaries of subsidies in 2020 (Ministry of Health and Welfare (2021). Considering the population in this age range, provided by United Nations, this implies that 8.3% of kids between 0 and 2 received the subsidy.

The representative of Chinese Taipei said that since 2018 the government also provides subsidies to families that send their children to private childcare centers. The amount is the same as the one provided to families where care is provided by family members (160 US dollars per month).

5. BEST PRACTICES

- The incorporation of private child caregivers to the quasi public system.
- Relatively long paid parental leave.

³¹ This information was provided by the Chinese Taipei representative that attended the workshop. The transformation to US dollars has used an exchange rate of 0.032 TWD per USD.

³² This information was provided by the Chinese Taipei representative that attended the workshop. The transformation to US dollars has used an exchange rate of 0.032 TWD per USD.

VIET NAM

1. CONTEXT

General economic overview

Viet Nam is a lower middle-income economy located in South East Asia. It is socialist with a market economy. In 1986, this economy made the transition to a neoliberal market economy, when the 6th Party Congress launched the Doi Moi or 'Renovation' reform (Cox et al., 2011 in: Abbot et al. 2019: 1).

Since the early 1990s, Viet Nam has gone through steady economic growth achieving the second-fastest growth rate per capita worldwide since 1990 after China (IFC, 2020: 7). In 2000, it was still a lower-income economy, mainly dependent on agricultural production but since that year its average GDP per capita growth rate has been 5.4% (Abbot et al. 2019: 1). The proportion of people living on less than US\$1.25 per day fall from 64% in 1993 to 17% in 2008 (ADB, 2014 in: IFC, 2020:7).

The Gini index was 37.6 in 2002 and dropped to 35.6 in 2012 (World Bank, 2015) indicating that wealth is becoming more evenly spread; but there are still important disparities for the disadvantage of women, ethnic minorities and rural areas (Dang et al. 2019). Besides, despite economic growth, almost half (44%) the working population is still self-employed in the agriculture sector, and more than two-thirds (68%) of those who work are self-employed (Dang et al. 2019: 4).

Gender equality, care, women employment

Viet Nam has high levels of female labor-force participation by global standards, with around 72 percent of women in the labor force, nonetheless it is still 10 percentage points lower than the men's rate: 82 percent (GSO, 2018). A key contributing factor to this disparity is care work (IFC, 2020: 7).

Strong cultural expectations in Viet Nam foster that women will take on the primary responsibility for care. On average, Vietnamese women spend 105 minutes more on unpaid care work each day compared to men (women: 274 minutes for women, while men: 169 minutes). (IFC, 2020).

Dang et al. (2019) found childcare to have a very small effect on parental work, which may be due to the high rate of self-employment in this economy. However, they also found that childcare has a strong effect on women's labor market participation and probability of having a formal job. Specifically, the use of childcare increases the probability of women having a wage-earning job by 41 percent and increases the probability of their having a formal job by 26 percent. Thus, childcare can significantly shift women's occupations from self-employment to paid employment.

The mentioned study also found that childcare has more significant effects for women of ethnic majority and highly-educated, and for areas with higher wages or greater opportunity costs for not entering the labor market. (Dang et al. 2019: 23).

2. CHILDCARE SYSTEM

Background

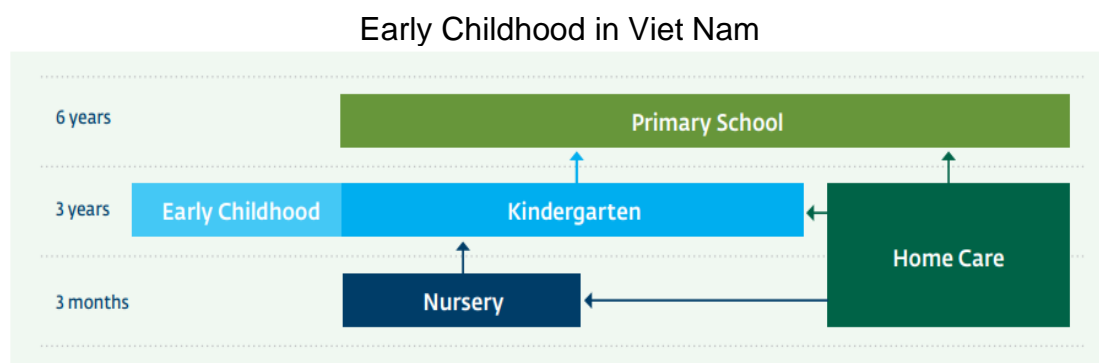
Viet Nam has a long history of providing day care for children. In 1945, the newly established Democratic Republic of Viet Nam set up state-run nurseries and kindergartens with the main purpose to allow mothers to work. Nevertheless, it was only in 1998 with the Education Law legislating for ECE that the government acknowledged responsibility for supporting parents and communities in raising preschool children (Boyd & Phuong, 2017). However still non-government sectors played an important role in provision, quality was poor outside urban areas; teachers were poorly qualified and their terms and conditions of employment were poor. (Abbot et al. 2019: 2).

The situation of ECCE in Viet Nam started changing in 2000. Since then, the government has adopted an ambitious approach, increasing access and improving quality, including a more play-based curriculum. This was officially launched in 2009 (Ibid).

The government also set ambitious targets for increasing the number of children attending ECCE, including committing in its Education for All action plan (2003) to have all 5-year-olds attending ECE by 2015, and in 2009, it made ECE compulsory for all 5-year-olds. By 2018, the target of a universal pre-school year had been achieved, with 98.8% of all five-year-old enrolled in pre-school education, compared to 72% in 2000. (Abbot et al: 3).

Organization

According to Boyd and Pough (2017) “provision for early childcare and education in Viet Nam include: nurseries (for infants to three years); home based childcare (for groups of five to 15 infants up to two years); kindergartens (for three to six year old) and childcare centers, combining nurseries and kindergartens, for children from 12 months to six years (MoET, 2015). There is a deliberate government effort to remove the distinction between nurseries and kindergartens, to ensure that these services are all part of one developmental continuum” (p. 11).



Source: EVNB, 2018

Excerpt from: IFC, 2020.

The education system in Viet Nam is provided mainly by the state, with 90% of children age 3-5 attending public kindergartens and the rest going to private kindergartens. More children below the age of 3, however, are enrolled in private childcare centers. The proportion of children age below 3 attending private and public childcare centers was 27% and 73% in 2016, respectively. (Dahl et al. 2019).

According to Boyd and Phuong (2017) State-run (public) kindergartens are divided into two types: (1) **Fully state-run** kindergartens (public) established in socio-economically disadvantaged and geographically isolated areas directed to children of poor and ethnic minority families, and **Semi-state** kindergartens: urban kindergartens which originated as state-run that changed to a scheme where the state established and financed the material resources, while parents provided remaining resources to maintain the activities of kindergartens. There are also **Non-state (non-public)** kindergartens provided by private sector and directed to children of affluent families, rely on the fees paid by parents to operate, and are often established in urban areas. They account for only 8 percent of service provision. Non-Public kindergarten should be licensed, comply with the prescribed guidelines, and be monitored by local authorities. (Boyd & Phuong, 2017:8).

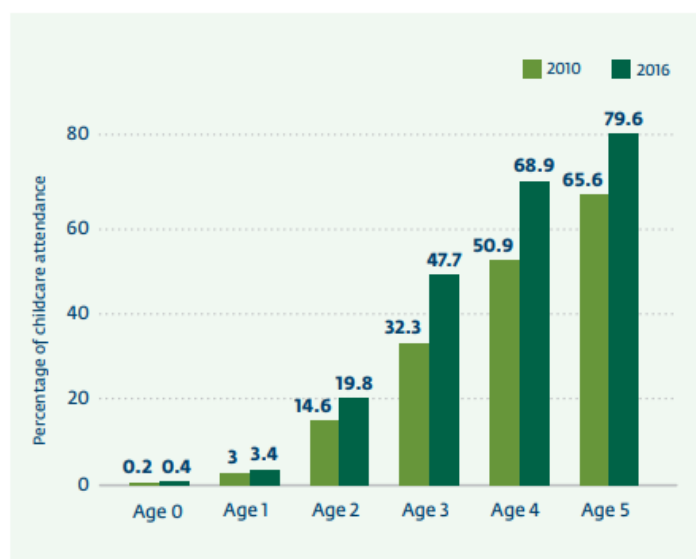
To date, grandparents and extended family have been an important source of informal care in Viet Nam, facilitating high levels of women's participation in the labor force. However, these support structures are being undermined by demographic shifts, such as the urbanization of the population (IFC, 2020: 7).

Coverage

Viet Nam has made significant progress in expanding access to ECCE. “From 2001 to 2013 preschool enrolment rates increased from 32 percent to 42 percent across children ages from six weeks to five years old (MoET, 2015). Specifically access for the birth to two years age group increased from 11 to 14 percent, but the gain was greatest for three to five years rising from 49 percent to 81percent, while for five-year-old children the enrolment rates grew from 72 percent to 98 percent over this period. Targets for access have been achieved for five-year-old children but not for birth to two years” (Boyd & Phuong, 2017: 12).

Despite the progress there is still room for improvement, especially in rural areas and industrial zones where availability and access is difficult. For example, preschool facilities in industrial parks and export-processing zones in Ho Chi Minh City only meet 2 percent of demand (UNICEF, 2017 in IFC, 2020: 13-14). In 2016, 44% of urban children age below 6 attended childcare centers and kindergartens, while this rate for rural children was lower at 35% (Dahl et al. 2019: 6).

Percentage of children attending childcare in Viet Nam, 2010-2016



Source: Estimation from Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey 2010 and 2016, cited in Dang et al. (2019). Source: Dang et al, 2019, based on data from Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey 2010 and 2016.

Excerpt from: IFC, 2020

3. LEAVES

Maternity leave

Maternity leave in Viet Nam lasts six months, this places Viet Nam among the economies with the longest leave globally. According to the Labor Code 2012, female workers on maternity leave will receive maternity allowance from the Social Insurance Fund, which is calculated as 100 per cent of the average monthly salary level of payment for social insurance within six months before taking maternity leave. (Thi Ngoc & Thi Bich, 2021) The salary during the maternity leave is completely paid for by the social insurance. Employers do have to contribute 18% of monthly payroll toward social insurance, while workers contribute 8% of their monthly salary (Vu & Glewwe, 2022).

The extended maternity leave policy did not increase the access of women participating in formal labor markets. Instead, it seems to be an improvement for women without infants compared to men in formal jobs, at around 1.9 per cent increase. Besides, women with infants, before the new law came into effect, had incomes 24 per cent lower than those of men; since the new law came into effect they have incomes 11.6 per cent lower than those of men. The gender pay gap for other groups of women did not change (Thi Ngoc & Thi Bich, 2021).

Paternity leave

Paternity leave in Viet Nam came into effect in 2016, following an amendment to the 2014 Social Insurance Law. The Vietnamese Law on Social Insurance provides employed, married fathers in Viet Nam with a paid paternity leave entitlement of between 5 to 14 days. This regime applies only to male employees

currently paying social insurance premiums whose wives give birth. The leave entitlement is paid through Viet Nam’s Social Insurance Fund (Baird & Hill, 2019).

The duration of paid paternity leave to which a Vietnamese father is entitled depends on the type of birth, number of children born and if the child is adopted. In the case of maternal death, a father is entitled to the full amount of unused maternity leave, which is paid at 100% until the child reaches six months of age (Baird & Hill, 2019).

Type of Leave	Entitlement
Natural birth	5 days
Surgical or premature birth	7 days
Twins born naturally	10 days
Twins or multiple children born via surgical birth	14 days
Multiple births, from third child on	3 additional days per child
Adopted children under 6 months	Leave limited to qualifying mother OR father but not both
Care for sick children under 3	20 days maximum per year
Care for sick children aged 3 to 7	15 days maximum per year

Excerpt from: Baird & Hill, 2019.

4. TRANSFERS

The government subsidized the fees of housing, healthcare, and education for the first two children, but not for the third child. Families with more than two children had to pay extra fees for housing, education, and health care of the third child (Council of Ministers, 1989 in Ngo, 2018:6) According to Tonelli, Viet Nam policies include Baby Bonus.

5. GOOD PRACTICES

Quality ECCE

- Following UNESCO (2015), an important advancement in the quality of ECCE in Viet Nam has to do with the training for teachers which has the following characteristics:

(1) Robust: two months each year are reserved for in-service training.

(2) Flexible: it takes place during summers and on weekends.

(3) Pedagogically attuned to children development: Early childhood teachers are trained with childcentered learning incorporating the use of play, active engagement, and questioning.

(4) Monitored and assessed at the local level under the responsibility of preschool principals or district and provincial supervisors.

- Almost 100 percent of pre-primary teachers are trained to formal standards. While other economies have expanded the amount of ECCE teachers by recruiting untrained teachers (UNESCO, 2015: 37).
- Viet Nam is making progress in reducing the staff to child ratios, from 22 to 18 children per staff member over the period 2000-2013. (Boyd & Phuong, 2017: 20).

Accessibility ECCE

- The access to ECCE for 5-year-old children in Viet Nam has become almost universal and kindergarten for children 3 to 5 has risen very significantly. This achievement was possible as a result of the Government's ongoing efforts:
 - (1) Developing and implementing a **parent education program**³³ on the value of preschool education.
 - (2) Active **community involvement** (Boyd & Phuong, 2017).

³³ While ECCE is not compulsory nor a pre-requisite for entry into primary school, the government has attempted to create an awareness among parents to mobilise children's participation in ECCE through education programmes and the use of various media for raising awareness. (Boyd & Phuong, 2017: 27).

TOOLKIT TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK OF BEST PRACTICES FOR WORK-FAMILY BALANCE

The different cases included in this study have shown a set of practices that depending on the context could favor work/family balance. In this section we will elaborate on the potential of the most important in a route that offers a framework with priorities and key components.

1. Establishing strong childcare services as a priority

As presented in the first section of this report, the literature has already established that Childcare services are central in order to enhance the balance between work and family life, particularly for women and this includes women who lead MSMEs. This fact needs to be a main guide of public policy leading to a prioritization of the topic for budget and technical attention. This **high prioritization is a starting point best practice**.

The cases reviewed in this study show different degrees of prioritization of the policies regarding childcare services by the governments. For instance, among lower middle income economies we found economies such as **Viet Nam** where **governments have highly prioritized childcare and early education policies** whereas economies such as Peru stay behind.

In the case of Viet Nam there are several concrete practices that demonstrate this commitment and political will towards the topic: normative approval, budget assignment, plans in the short and long term with the double objective of strengthening services quality and infrastructure and also sensitizing the population regarding the importance of ECEC. This has resulted in a childcare and early education system that in the last years have enhanced affordability, accessibility and quality.

In the case of rich economies such as Canada and Australia, the tendency since the 1990s for a marketized system has shown certain limits of the free market for sensitive services such as Childcare so that a **strong collaboration between private and public sector** has taken place in order to guarantee quality, affordability, accessibility and inclusiveness.

One best practice that is a very good example of this is a recent very significant investment done by the federal government in Canada starting in 2021 for strengthening private Childcare services and making them more affordable across provinces and territories. Another example comes from Chinese Taipei, where private child caregivers have been incorporated into the quasi-public system, which implies price regulations and access to subsidies.

2. Establishing and following criteria for a Strong Childcare system

The literature has already pointed out the following principles as the guidelines to guarantee strong childcare systems: quality, affordability, accessibility and inclusiveness. Here some examples of best practices regarding each of the principles from the economies of this study:

Quality

Viet Nam has invested resources and efforts in order to improve the quality of the services of ECEC, improving the training of the teachers of ECEC, raising the qualifications needed, implementing flexible schedules for training and improving the pedagogic approach (shifting from a traditional to a play-centered one).

Chile has a public program that contemplates long service hours, from 8 am to 6 pm, allowing enough time for an adequate incorporation of women in the labor market.

Affordability

Quebec is a Canadian province that has a very effective best practice towards this important objective which is the implementation of a flat rate of approximately 8 US dollar a day of universal character.

Canada and Australia have several types of subsidies aimed to support parents with the fees which is also a best practice.

Viet Nam has a strong public system with a high coverage, although mainly free for the more disadvantaged families

The Philippines and Chile provide public early childhood education at no cost.

Inclusiveness

Many of the economies reviewed for this study have significant numbers of immigrant populations (e.g.: Canada, Chile, Australia). Nonetheless not all of them have a sensitivity for the difficult situation of immigrants in illegal conditions for example in terms of their need of childcare services. Regarding this, Chile has an important best practice allowing them to access the service. Chile has included international migrants as beneficiaries of the guarantee to access public childcare.

Accessibility

An interesting example of a best practice in terms of accessibility takes place in the Philippines. In this economy a law requires Local Government Units to install a childcare center in every village, requirement that clearly increases accessibility through a higher geographic dispersion.

3. Implementing encompassing support

Besides strong childcare services that allow parents (mainly women) to have the time for joining the labor force, another aspect in order to allow the reconciliation of work and family life could be the development of several possibilities of support so there are enough incentives for effectively forming a family. Economies like Russia, Canada and Australia in this study have follow this path so for example

Canada and Australia besides subsidies for child care have different child benefits in the way of direct transfers to parents, this is also the case for Russia.

4. Exploring and seizing the different possibilities of combining care and early childhood education

For example, Viet Nam is an interesting experience that through the inclusion and promotion of strong pre-school programs achieved advances also in care. This is a best practice that could inspire advances in other conservative economies that have a high appreciation for education.

5. Extending leaves to independent workers

Paid leaves around childbirth are a benefit that has traditionally excluded self-employed mothers. Nevertheless, there are some economies, such as the Russian Federation and the Philippines, that are providing them the option of accessing leaves through voluntary contributions.

6. Providing fathers the option of taking care of their children

In some economies there are only very short father leaves and no parental leaves, a scheme that does not provide fathers the option of leaving work for some time to take care of their kids. In addition, it is important to consider that longer father leaves do not guarantee that the father is effectively taking care of the child during the whole extension of the leave. A nice alternative is given by parental leaves that allow the mother to be substituted by the father as a main caregiver for part of the leave period. Economies like Chile; Russia; and Chinese Taipei have these types of leaves.

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ANNEX 1

Childcare subsidies across provinces and territories in Canada

Province or territory	Terms and conditions for subsidies
Newfoundland and Labrador	<p>Eligible families may receive financial assistance through the Child Care Services Subsidy Program, administered by regional child care service offices.</p> <p>Child care subsidy may cover the partial or full cost of child care, depending on family income. However, some child care providers may charge higher fees than the maximum subsidy rates and parents are responsible for paying the difference. Fee subsidies are paid directly to service providers on behalf of eligible parents and can be used in either non-profit or for-profit regulated centres or licensed family child care homes.</p>
Prince Edward Island	<p>The Child Care Subsidy Program, administered by the Supports and Services division of the Department of Social Development and Housing, provides eligible families with a partial or full subsidy based on a province-wide income test. Find more information, including specific eligibility criteria, in the Child Care Subsidy Policies.</p> <p>In Prince Edward Island, subsidies can be used in either non-profit or for-profit regulated centres, and family child care. In non- Early Years Centres where the fees are not capped families are responsible for paying a share of the fee</p>
Nova Scotia	<p>The Child Care Subsidy Program may provide families with a subsidy to cover a portion of their child care costs. Family income, financial assets, and special needs within the family determine subsidies.</p> <p>Child care subsidies can be used in any licensed program and are paid directly to the child care centre or family home day care on behalf of eligible parents. A program may surcharge subsidized parents if costs are above the maximum subsidy rate.</p>
New Brunswick	<p>The Day Care Assistance Program can provide families, with an income of \$55,000 or less, a partial subsidy based on needs and income test. Fee subsidies are paid directly to service providers on behalf of eligible parents and can be used in non-profit, for-profit centres and community day care homes. Parents are responsible for paying the difference</p>

	between the actual cost of their child care fees and the actual amount approved for subsidy.
Quebec	Quebec is unique in Canada in that the provincial government sets a flat fee for children in most child care centres, family child care homes and child care in schools at \$8.50. These spaces are referred to as “reduced contribution spaces” or “subsidized spaces”.
Ontario	<p>The Ontario Child Care Subsidy Program, which is administered by your local Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) or District Social Services Administration Board (DSSAB) may provide families with a partial or full subsidy based on a province-wide income test.</p> <p>In Ontario, fee subsidies are available in all types of regulated child care (centres and home based, public, not-for-profit and for-profit). However, not all regulated child care services have service contracts with the local municipality to provide subsidized child care, so it’s important for parents who may be income-eligible for a subsidy to check this with each service being considered.</p>
Manitoba	<p>Some parents may be eligible for a partial or full subsidy through the child care fee subsidy program. Eligibility for a subsidy is determined through a province-wide income test and parental employment/schooling status.</p> <p>Families may be eligible for subsidy regardless of whether they are using regulated non-profit or for-profit centres or family child care providers. There are no fee subsidies for children in unregulated child care.</p> <p>Although financial criteria must be met, families can receive subsidy for nursery school service without employment or enrolment in education/training (including a stay-at-home parent).</p>
Saskatchewan	<p>A child care subsidy may be available through the Ministry of Social Services to reduce the fees charged to eligible parents.</p> <p>Subsidies are paid directly to service providers; they vary on a sliding scale with income — the lower the income, the higher the subsidy. Subsidy rates also vary by age of the child, the type of care provided and by region.</p> <p>These usually do not cover the full fee: subsidized parents are responsible for the difference. Parents, even those with a full subsidy, are always required to pay a minimum of 10% of child care fees.</p>

	<p>Parents must be employed, enrolled in education or have special health needs to qualify for subsidy.</p> <p>If parents are on social assistance and involved in employment, training or rehabilitation, the parent portion of regulated care or the community average cost of unregulated care may be subsidized.</p> <p>Subsidies are available in regulated non-profit child care centres and licensed family child care homes. Parents must secure a child care space before applying for a subsidy.</p>
Alberta	<p>Alberta's child care fee subsidy program supplements fees for low income parents. Children enrolled in licensed non-profit and for-profit centres, facility-based or home-based care are eligible. The subsidy is paid from the provincial government to the service provider.</p> <p>The maximum fee subsidy is dependent on the income of the family.</p> <p>There is a twostep eligibility process. First parents must demonstrate the need for care (i.e., employment and/or schooling) and then a province-wide income test is applied.</p>
British Columbia	<p>The Ministry of Children and Family Development administers child care subsidies under the Affordable Child Care Benefit (ACCB). ACCB are paid directly to service providers on behalf of parents and may be used in for-profit or non-profit, licensed or unlicensed child care.</p> <p>The Ministry of Children and Family Development also offers Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative as well as Universal Child Care Prototypes that do not cost more than \$200 a month per child.</p> <p>Child care providers may (and often do) charge parents more than the maximum subsidy rate.</p> <p>BC is unique in that it offers subsidy funding to parents who hire a non-familial caregiver to care for the child in their own home.</p> <p>Parents must secure a child care space before applying for a subsidy.</p> <p>Eligibility is based on income, family size, age of children and type of care.</p>

Northwest territories	<p>There is no stand alone child care subsidy program. Parents must qualify for the territorial Income Assistance Program (IA) under the Department of Education, Culture, and Employment. Fee subsidies can be used in both license and unlicensed child care.</p> <p>Subsidies are paid directly to the parents unless the parent requests that the regulated child care service is paid directly. Parents must be attending school or work outside the home.</p>
Nunavut	<p>The Daycare Subsidy (DS) Program, which is administered by Income Assistance, may provide families with a partial subsidy based on a territory-wide needs test. Parents must be attending school or work outside the home to be eligible for a subsidy or have a child with a disability for whom child care is recommended by a recognised health care professional.</p> <p>Fee subsidies can be used in both regulated and unregulated child care settings as well as full and part-time spots. Subsidies are paid directly to regulated service providers on behalf of families. For unregulated care, the subsidy is paid to the parent based on an invoice signed by the child care provider. An unregulated provider may be a relative of the child being subsidized.</p>
Yukon	<p>The Child Care Subsidy Program, which is administered by the Child Care Service Unit, may provide eligible families with a subsidy to cover part or all of their child care costs based on a territory-wide income test. In Yukon, subsidies may be used in any licensed for-profit or nonprofit licensed program, both full and part time programs are eligible.</p> <p>Fee subsidies are paid directly to service providers on behalf of eligible parents. If costs are above the maximum subsidy rate, the subsidized parents will be charged the difference.</p>

Source: <https://findingqualitychildcare.ca>