

equimundo's STATE OF

Across 14 Countries,
Fatherhood is
“RESPONSIBILITY”
“LOVE” &
“CARE”

“I think we often forget
the ... beauty in
fatherhood.”
— Father, Canada

3 IN 4
PARENTS

Worry
About Their
Financial
Future

equimundo

THE WORLD'S
FATHERS 2026

STRETCHED TO THE
BREAKING POINT



2026



State of Canada's Fathers, 2026

EQUIMUNDO'S STATE OF THE WORLD'S
FATHERS, 2026 CANADA COUNTRY REPORT

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Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere gratitude to all the parents and caregivers who participated in this study, and shared their experiences with openness and honesty. We are also grateful to our partners and collaborators for their support, insights, and contributions to this research. We are especially grateful to our funders, Equipundo: Center for Masculinities and Social Justice and Caring Masculinity Fund, for their generous support of this work.

Introduction

“Family is, you know, an important part of life. It’s really, probably the most important thing.”

– FATHER OF TWO, 51 YEARS

Unpaid care is a massive, but often overlooked, part of the global economy. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that unpaid care work is worth US\$11 trillion annually, which amounts to 9 per cent of the global GDP (Addati et al., 2018). Studies from across the globe show that the distribution of unpaid care work within the household is gendered and unequal. Women often shoulder much of the responsibility of care work (Elson, 2017). Globally, women undertake approximately three-quarters of unpaid care work, devoting an average of 4 hours and 25 minutes per day, in contrast to men who allocate an average of 1 hour and 23 minutes daily (Addati et al., 2018). This gendered pattern is also evident in Canada, where women spent an average of 3.9 hours per day on unpaid work, compared with 2.4 hours among men in 2015 (Statistics Canada, 2018). The unequal distribution of care work can lead to time poverty, and limit women’s capacity to pursue education, look after their own health, and take on paid work.

While women continue to carry a disproportionate share of care work, growing attention to fathers’ participation in caregiving has become an important area of focus in efforts to support more equitable household labour arrangements, and to shift the idea of fatherhood from a focus on breadwinning towards a more caregiving-oriented and emotionally-engaged role. As such, contemporary fatherhood has come to be viewed in terms of significant tension between the traditional ideal of providing for the family, and newer models based on nurturing and involved fathering (Scheibling & Sunderland, 2026). Encouragingly, there is some evidence to show that Canadian fathers are

more involved in positive fathering, and less likely to adhere to traditional norms of masculinity, compared to American fathers (Shafer et al., 2021). At the same time, however, Scheibling & Sunderland (2026) argue that Canadian fathers are finding it challenging to navigate the shifting landscape of fatherhood as they continue to feel the pressure of financial provision and division of labour in spite of accepting the ideas of caring and involved fathering.

In addition to these normative changes, Canadian fathers are facing significant economic stress. In 2025, overall living costs in Canada remained elevated with the Consumer Price Index increasing by an annual average of 2.1%, and marking a cumulative increase of nearly 20% since 2020 (Statistics Canada, 2026).⁹ Paying attention to the heightened cost of living is particularly important because existing research suggests that economic precarity can affect parental psychological wellbeing, caregiving stress, and parenting practices (Conger et al., 2010).

In this study, we examine caregiving in Canada with a focus on fathers, and take into account the complex interplay of fatherhood with traditional norms, contemporary ideas of caregiving, the unequal distribution of household labour, and significant economic stress. The findings of this study are especially relevant to the ongoing research and conversations shaping Canada’s national policy on the health of men and boys¹⁰. While discussions of men’s health have often focused on physical and mental health outcomes, our findings highlight the importance of including caregiving, economic precarity, family relationships, and gender norms as key social determinants shaping men’s wellbeing.

¹ The survey for this study was administered in mid-2025.

² Canada’s Men and Boys’ Health Strategy is currently in its active public consultation and open engagement phase, and is expected to be released later in 2026.

Methods

This study of caregiving and fathers in Canada is part of a global research project, which was carried out in 16 countries across the world in 2025-26.⁹ To conduct the Canadian study, we used a mixed-methods approach which consisted of two components of data collection: a quantitative survey and semi-structured interviews with parents and caregivers in Canada. For the survey component, data were collected in August and September 2025 by a survey research firm through existing online panels consisting of individuals who had previously consented to participate in online research. The total sample size was 467 respondents, including 269 fathers and 196 mothers.¹⁰

We used quotas for age, income, region, and ethnicity based on Canadian population statistics in an effort to develop a nationally representative sample. However, because participants were recruited through existing online panels, the final sample included a higher proportion of urban, more educated, and higher-income respondents. It is, therefore, more useful to interpret the findings as indicative of broader patterns and experiences, instead of being considered generalizable to all fathers and caregivers in Canada.

For the qualitative component, we conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with survey participants who consented to participate in follow-up interviews, as well as additional participants recruited through snowball sampling. We conducted a total of 29 interviews, which included 19 fathers and 10 mothers. However, only four couples took part in the study, as few participants connected us with

their partners for follow-up interviews, and overall interview response rates were low.

While this report focuses primarily on the analysis of survey findings, selected interview excerpts are included throughout to contextualize and enrich the quantitative results. The interview findings will be explored in greater depth in a forthcoming publication.

▶ **Key Finding 1:**

The experience of economic precarity is gendered.

“ *Just make the economy better for everybody. Make jobs available, you know?*

– FATHER OF ONE, 34 YEARS

Across multiple indicators, our results show that economic precarity is widespread and gendered. Mothers report substantially higher levels of financial anxiety, financial vulnerability, and concern that home ownership is unattainable (see Table 1). However, both mothers and fathers share similar levels of concerns about some structural conditions, such as declining generational financial security (~80-84%) and worries about losing their jobs (~50-51%). Taken together, these results show that economic precarity is widespread, but experienced more intensely by mothers. We also found that caregiving costs take up half or more of the total income for ~41% of fathers and mothers, which suggests that caregiving costs may be contributing substantially to the experience of economic precarity.

³ The project was coordinated and led by Equipundo: Center for Masculinities and Social Justice. Countries other than Canada included Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, China, Croatia, Ireland, Mexico, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Türkiye, USA, and the UK.

⁴ Two respondents identifying outside the binary gender categories were excluded from gender-disaggregated analyses due to the small number of responses. See Appendix A for a detailed socio-demographic profile of survey respondents.

Table 1. Economic precarity indicators by gender

	Fathers (%)	Mothers (%)	Gap (pp)
Indicator			
Constant worry about financial future	66.4	82.8	16.4
Worry about job loss	49.8	51.0	1.2
Harder to feel financially secure compared to previous generation	80.5	83.8	3.3
Financially vulnerable (unable to meet expenses)	28.2	47.5	19.3
Financially fragile (secure but would struggle to cover a small emergency)	19.1	24.0	4.9
Home ownership out of reach	51.6	73.5	21.9

► **Key Finding 2:**

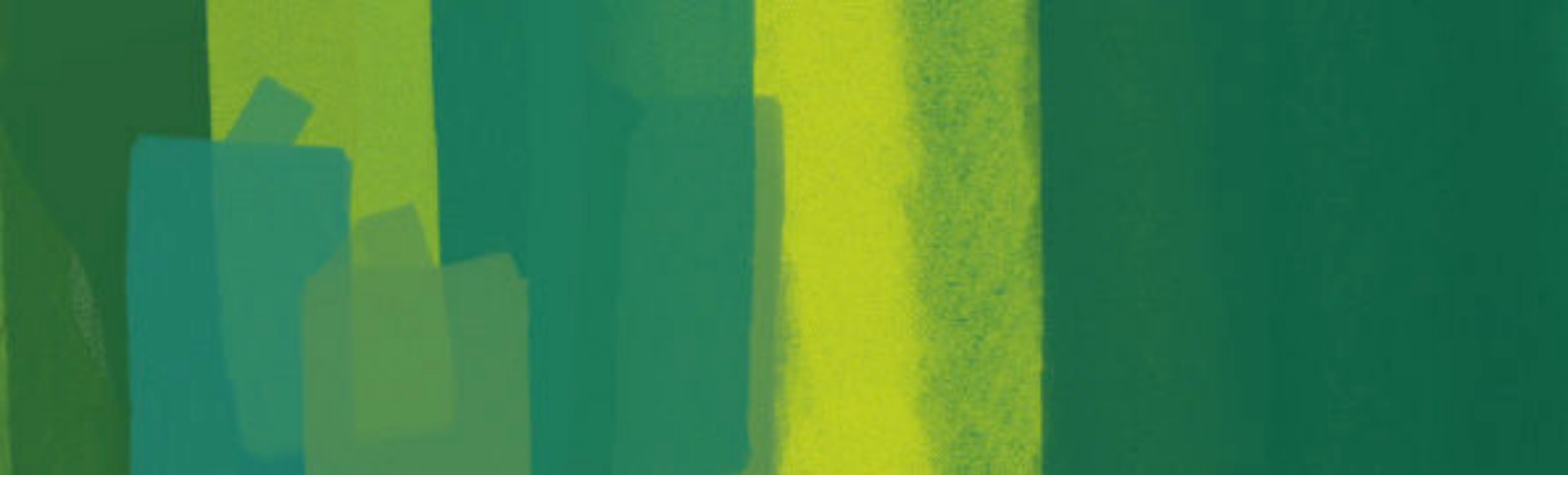
Caregiving burden is gendered, and positively associated with economic precarity and lower well-being.

Women were more likely than men to report significant sacrifices across multiple spheres of their lives in response to caregiving responsibilities, such as leaving work altogether (52% vs. 25%), delaying

or stopping education or training (50% vs. 34.3%), and delaying major purchases (74.5% vs. 58.8%). Our results show that while both men and women adjust their work and financial decisions due to caregiving responsibilities, women bear a disproportionately higher burden of economic trade-offs. These sacrifices are likely to increase women's financial vulnerability over time.

Table 2. Caregiving sacrifices by gender

	Women (%)	Men (%)
Indicator		
Left job / stopped work	52.0	25.3
Delayed or stopped education/training	50.0	34.3
Reduced non-essential spending	74.5	58.8
Delayed major purchases	34.3	47.5
Took less time for self	75.0	24.0
Stayed in precarious job	58.5	73.5



“ Yeah, money is an issue, so usually that's the biggest sacrifice I can think of, because everything goes towards my daughter, and I don't really think about myself much. In terms of all the finances, it's basically towards her, no matter in school or education, out-of-school activities, and also, investing in her education, future education, like going to university, or going on a trip. All this is more towards her instead of, like if I'm single, then I can purchase a better car, or I can purchase more, different stuff that I like... maybe, let's say, a game console. But, basically, all the finances and money are more for her.

– FATHER OF ONE, 34 YEARS

To further understand the burden of caregiving, we examined the association between caregiving burden and economic precarity using multivariate regression analysis⁹. The results show that economic precarity is the most significant predictor of care burden for both women and men. Respondents in the highest precarity group reported more than three additional care burden items ($b = 3.28, p < 0.05$) compared to those in the lowest precarity group. Overall, care burden was lower for men than women, but having young children (under 8 years of age) was associated with higher care burden for men only.

Given the substantial evidence on the impact of caregiving burden on mental health indicators (Wray, 2024; Statistics Canada, 2023), we used regression analysis to evaluate the relationship between wellbeing and care burden¹⁰. The analysis shows that higher care burden is positively and significantly associated with poorer wellbeing. Specifically, each additional care burden item is associated with a 0.046 increase in distress ($b = 0.046, p < 0.001$).

Taken together, the descriptive findings and

regression results examining caregiving burden show that women are more likely to make economic and career sacrifices for caregiving, economic precarity is positively and significantly associated with higher care burden for both women and men, and higher care burden is a predictor of poorer wellbeing for both genders.

“ My husband and I have a more traditional household where I have been the primary caregiver, and I tend to a lot of the household duties, my husband has been, always been the breadwinner, like, even when we first got married. We were both teachers, but I made the decision to stay at home to look after all of our kids. Yeah, I was kind of brought up that way, in a more traditional sense, even though my mother did work.

– MOTHER OF THREE, 53 YEARS

⁵ To examine this association, we constructed two aggregate measures. The measure of economic precarity (see Table B1 in Appendix B) was constructed by averaging responses to 12 items capturing perceptions of financial security and employment stability. Higher values indicate greater economic precarity. The care burden scale is a count-based index of 16 caregiving related challenges (see Table B2 in Appendix B). Higher scores indicate greater caregiving burden.

⁶ The wellbeing scale is a composite measure of 5 items which capture psychological distress (see Table B3 in Appendix B). Higher values indicate more frequent experiences of distress.

► **Key Finding 3:** Men are more likely to hold traditional caregiving views, especially under economic strain.

In order to understand the prevalence of traditional and more progressive ideas of caregiving among women and men, we examined the agreement of both groups of respondents with selected statements (see Table 3). The findings show a clear tension between progressive attitudes towards caregiving and persistent traditional gender norms. While most women and men agreed about the joy and significance of care work, traditional beliefs are also widespread. We found that men were more likely to endorse traditional views on caregiving. The largest gender gap was observed at the intersection of masculinity and fatherhood, with 48.4% of men and 35.3% of women agreeing that full-time fathers

are not seen as “real men”. A majority of both women (55.1%) and men (59.9%) supported the gendered division of labour, and only a minority saw caregiving as central to fatherhood.

These results indicate that traditional gender norms regarding caregiving persist alongside more progressive attitudes, as well as a disconnect between valuing care in principle and recognizing it as an important aspect of fatherhood.

“ I might feel less fulfilled as an individual and as a man if I wasn't also bringing home the bacon bits, if not the bacon, so to speak.

– FATHER OF ONE, 53 YEARS

Table 3. Caregiving attitudes by gender

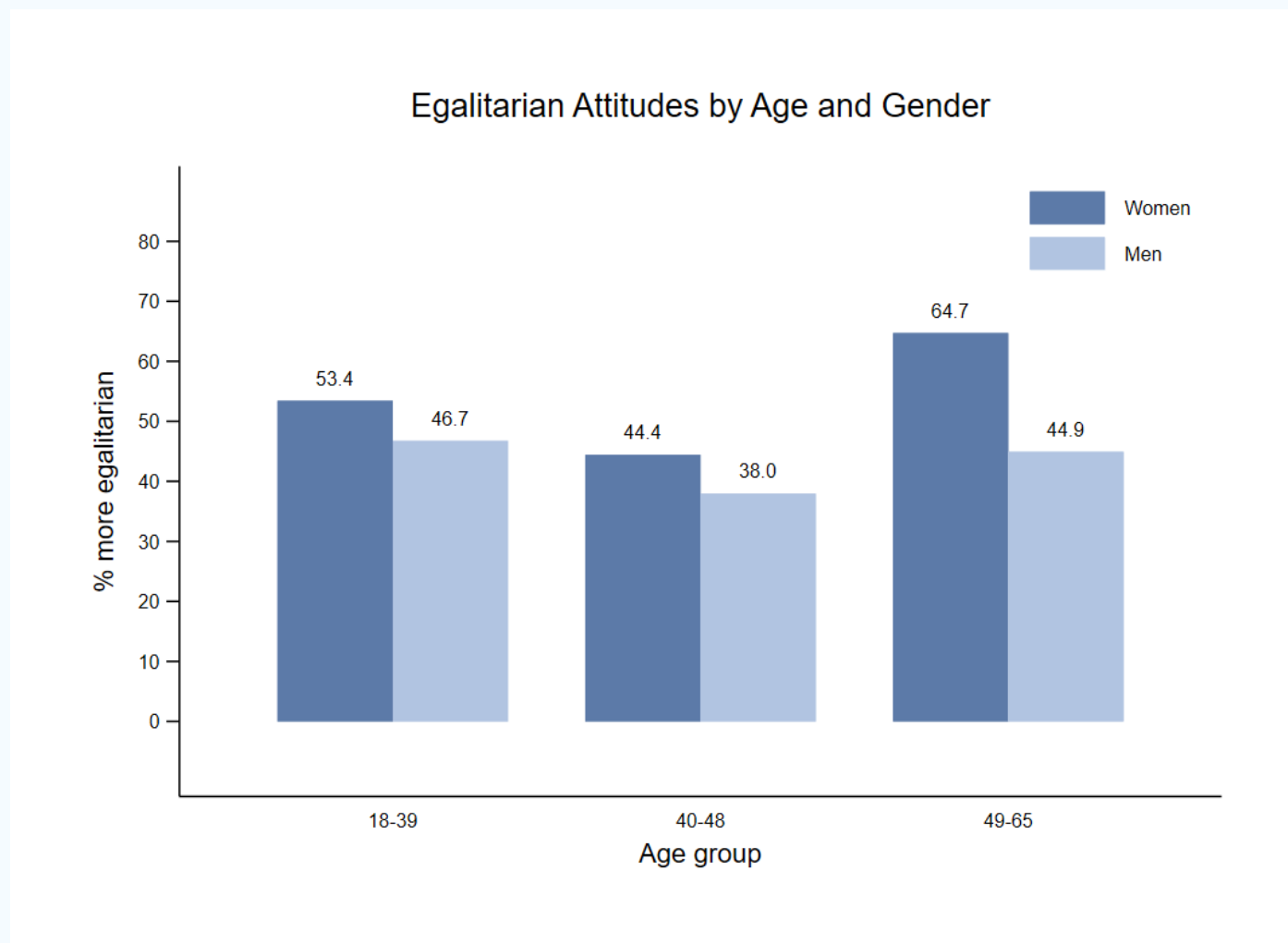
	Women (%)	Men (%)	Interpretation
Survey Item			
Caregiving is one of the most enjoyable aspects of life	97.5	96.7	Strong consensus between men and women
Care work is as important as paid work	94.5	92.0	Broad agreement on the value of care
Childcare is only a mother's responsibility	29.9	36.0	Higher traditional views among men
Full-time fathers are not seen as “real men”	35.3	48.4	Largest gender gap (13.1 percentage points)
Better if men do paid work and women do care work	55.1	59.9	Majority support a gendered division of labour
Financial provision is a father's core role	68.4	69.5	Strong endorsement of provider role across genders (-7 in 10)

Given the recent global studies indicating that younger men are more likely to hold traditional views on gender roles and caregiving (King's College London & Ipsos, 2026; UNRISD & UN-Women, 2025), we examined gender attitudes across genders and age groups. Our results show that men's egalitarian gender attitudes remain relatively consistent across age groups⁹ (see Graph 1). While middle-aged fathers appear somewhat less likely to hold egalitarian views,

these differences are not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 1.74, p = 0.418$), which indicates that there is no meaningful variation in attitudes across age groups. Women show greater variation, with older women reporting the highest levels of egalitarian views. While these differences were not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 4.93, p = 0.085$), they approached significance, suggesting a possible pattern where older women report more egalitarian attitudes.

⁹ To conduct this analysis, we constructed a composite measure (care norms scale) averaging six items capturing views towards gendered caregiving roles, where higher values indicate more egalitarian views (see Table B4 in Appendix B).

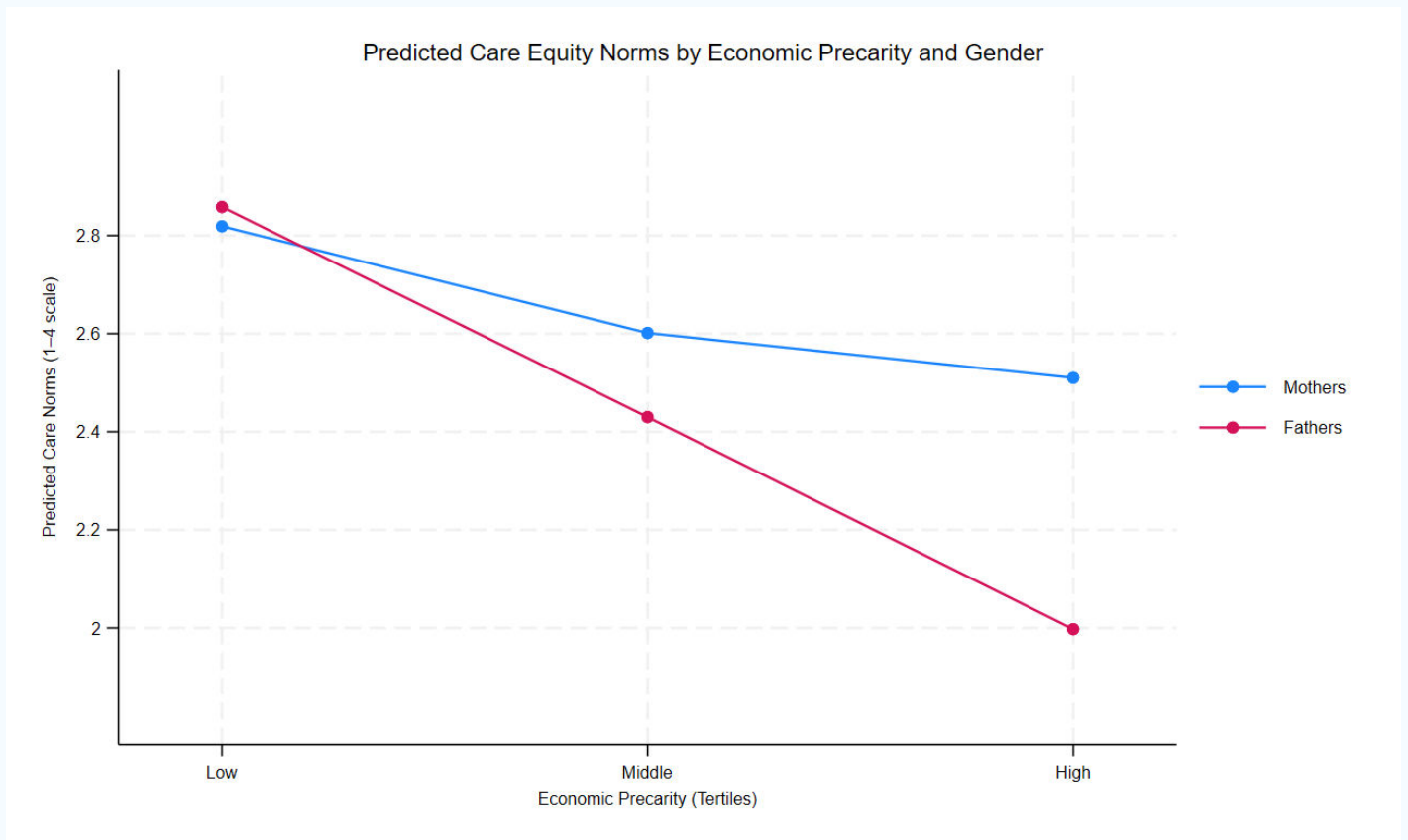
Graph 1: Egalitarian attitudes by age and gender



To further examine the factors impacting caregiving attitudes, we used Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression to calculate predicted values (model-estimated averages) of egalitarian caregiving attitudes for women and men at three levels of economic precarity. Among women, higher economic precarity is associated with a modest but statistically significant decline in egalitarian caregiving attitudes ($b = -0.25, p = 0.026$). For men, this decline is substantially larger and statistically significant (b

$= -0.62, p < 0.001$). Predicted values indicate that women and men have similar, relatively egalitarian views at low levels of economic precarity (see Graph 2). For both women and men, egalitarian attitudes decline as economic precarity increases. For women, the decline is modest (2.83 to 2.51), whereas men's decline is sharper (2.86 to 1.99). These results suggest that men experience more pronounced declines in egalitarian caregiving attitudes with increasing economic precarity compared to women.

Graph 2: Predicted care equity norms by economic precarity and gender



► **Key Finding 4:** Caregiving is widely valued even as traditional care norms are linked to relationship conflict.

In this section, we report our findings on couple communication regarding household labour and caregiving, and its association with traditional versus equitable views of care work, relationship conflict, and care valuing.

We found that 83.4% of respondents with traditional views on care work reported relationship conflict regarding the division of household labour and caregiving, while only 24.7% of respondents with relatively more equitable views on care work reported conflict⁹. The substantial size of this gap (~58 percentage points) suggests that collaborative and equitable communication about care work can play a key role in reducing relationship strain.

Next, we estimated an OLS regression model

to examine the association between care communication and economic precarity, gender, and other socio-demographic factors. Regression results show that men reported slightly higher levels of care communication ($b = 0.11, p < 0.05$) compared to women. However, it is worthwhile to emphasize that this finding captures self-reported levels of communication, and may not reflect actual equitable attitudes. Economic precarity emerged as the strongest predictor of care communication as respondents in the middle ($b = -0.32, p < 0.001$) and high precarity ($b = -0.54, p < 0.001$) groups reported substantially lower levels of care communication compared to those in the low precarity group. Taken together, these findings indicate that men reported slightly higher levels of equitable care communication than women, and that high economic stress was strongly associated with lower levels of such communication.

⁹ To analyze couple communication regarding caregiving and household labour, we constructed a composite measure (couple communication scale) averaging eight items, which capture the ways in which couples communicate and divide care work (see Table B5 in Appendix B). Higher values indicate more equitable and collaborative couple communication.

Furthermore, we examined the associations between couple communication, care norms, and care valuing using OLS regression⁹. For fathers, care communication is strongly and positively associated with care norms, but its association with care valuing is small and not statistically significant. More specifically, men who report more equitable care communication have higher and significant care norms scores ($b = 0.51, p < 0.001$). On the other hand, care communication is not a significant predictor ($b = 0.09, p = 0.20$) of care valuing. Predicted values of care norms increase sharply for fathers with traditional attitudes towards communication to those with more equitable attitudes (2.18 to 2.69), but the differences in predicted values of care valuing are small (3.14 to 3.22) (see Graph 3).

Overall, these results indicate that while equitable

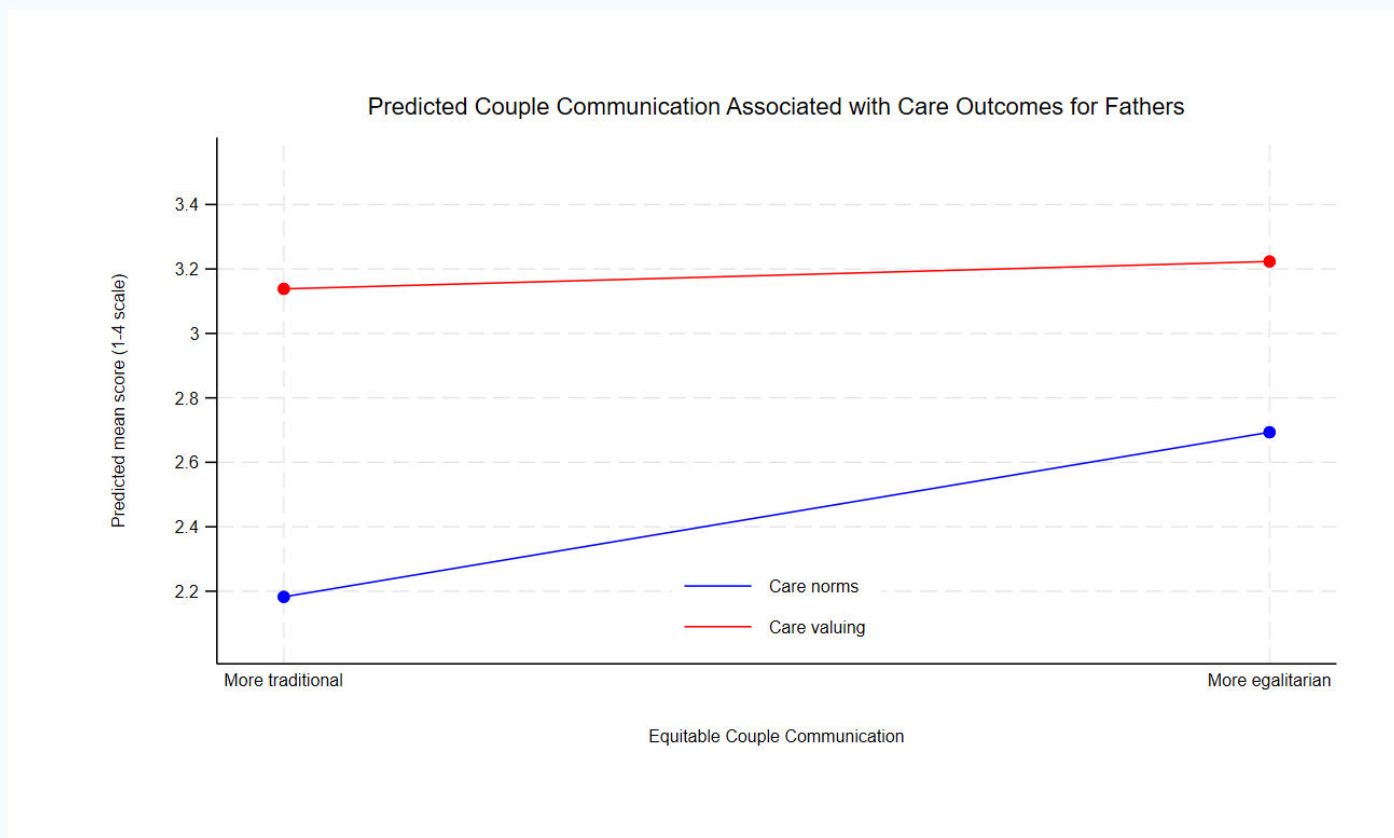
communication is strongly associated with more egalitarian norms regarding the division of care work, it is not significantly associated with broader beliefs about the importance of care work, which are already high across communication levels among most fathers.

“I think it's more challenging for the father, but also more rewarding, too, I think. Having a closer relationship with your kids that's gonna hopefully carry through life, I think it's rewarding, and it's valuable for the kids, and also for the dads to have that two-way relationship that stretches through your whole life.”

– FATHER OF TWO, 51 YEARS

⁹ For the care norms scale, see Table B4 in Appendix B. The care valuing scale was constructed by averaging six items, which capture attitudes towards the significance of caregiving (see Table B6 in Appendix B). Higher scores indicate greater valuing of care labour.

Graph 3: Predicted couple communication associated with care outcomes for fathers



Discussion and Policy Recommendations

The findings of this study underscore the interconnectedness between caregiving, economic precarity, gender norms, and wellbeing in Canada. Both women and men report economic stress, as well as caregiving pressures, but women continue to remain responsible for a disproportionate share of care work, a finding which aligns with the gendered division of care labour reported worldwide (Addati et al., 2018). Women are also substantially more likely to make employment and education-related sacrifices due to caregiving responsibilities. Furthermore, we found that economic precarity is a significant predictor of care burden for both women and men, and that it is associated with declines in egalitarian attitudes towards caregiving, with more pronounced declines among men. These findings indicate that caregiving-related inequities and concerns must be addressed at the level of household dynamics, as well as broader economic, social and policy frameworks.

One of the most striking findings of this study is the persistence of traditional gender norms among both women and men regarding the division of care work. In particular, the idea that caregiving is central to fatherhood found little resonance with respondents, and the majority agreed with the male breadwinner model. These findings highlight the need for policies and public initiatives that normalize men's participation in caregiving and support equitable distributions of care work within the household, but also suggest that such policies may encounter resistance, or face slow uptake due to deeply entrenched gender norms.

Another crucial finding indicates that equitable views on care work can reduce relationship conflict, which underscores the need to expand access to prenatal, parenting, and family support programs based on healthy communication and equitable approaches to caregiving.

To encourage fathers' participation in caregiving and mothers' participation in the labour market, Canada's existing parental leave system can be expanded to include mechanisms which increase fathers' and non-birthing parents' uptake of leave. For instance,

the Nordic dual earner/dual carer model promotes gender equality and children's rights to care from both parents through a set of family policy reforms including quota-based parental leave, universal childcare, and individual taxation. Evidence from Norway suggests that designated parental leave quotas for fathers have contributed to reduced conflict over the division of household labour, and increased fathers' participation in housework (Ellingsæter & Kitterød, 2025; Kotsadam & Finseraas, 2011). A similar use-it-or-lose-it style "daddy quota" in Quebec, which provides five weeks of parental leave for fathers and non birthing parents, has led to a reduction in the social stigma against parental leave, an increase in the likelihood of mothers' participation in the labour market, and a more egalitarian distribution of childcare and housework (Dunatchik & Özcan, 2021; Patnaik, 2019). Quebec's daddy quotas have also led to a much higher uptake of parental leave among fathers. In 2022, 92.9% fathers in Quebec claimed (or intended to claim) parental leave as compared to only 31.3% fathers outside Quebec (Battams & Mathieu, 2024). The evidence from Norway and Quebec indicates that "daddy quotas" can normalize and increase the participation of fathers in childcare and housework, and increase the participation of mothers in the labour market, thus improving household economic security.

Canada's current policy landscape provides support for economically stressed households through the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), and has begun to address the provision of national, subsidized childcare under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC). However, families experiencing economic precarity (irregular incomes, unstable scheduling, and shift/gig work) are often impacted by CCB clawbacks, and are unable to access childcare due to existing gaps, such as a lack of licensed spaces, shortage of early childhood educators, and long waitlists (Mahboubi & Zhang, 2026). We recommend an expansion of social protection measures, and the elimination of gaps in benefits and affordable childcare to mitigate the caregiving burden associated with economic precarity.

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Appendix A. Socio-Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

	Mothers (%)	Fathers (%)
Age		
18-39 (youngest third)	37.24	34.20
40-48 (middle third)	36.73	40.15
49-65 (oldest third)	26.03	25.65
Region		
Atlantic (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador)	8.67	5.20
Quebec	28.06	18.59
Ontario	40.31	40.15
Prairies (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta)	14.29	22.68
British Columbia	8.67	13.38
Relationship status		
Unpartnered (single, separated, divorced, widowed)	28.05	14.5
Partnered, not living together	5.61	1.49
Married, and/or living with a partner	65.32	82.9
Other/Prefer not to answer	1.02	1.11
Education		
Primary schooling	1.53	1.86
Secondary schooling (grades 7-12)	31.12	14.12
Vocational college/Technical school/Associate degree	27.56	15.62
Bachelor's degree or higher	39.79	68.40
Employment		
Employed (incl. full- and part-time, multiple jobs, self-employed, informal work, employed student)	63.77	89.96
Unemployed (incl. retired, looking for work, unable to work, unemployed student)	31.13	8.18
Unpaid domestic work	2.04	0.74
Other/Prefer not to answer	3.06	1.12
Caregiver responsibilities		
Children only	70.41	75.47
Adults only	0.51	0.37
Both children and adults	29.08	24.16

The following tables list the survey items used to construct composite scales for the quantitative analysis presented in this report. Survey items were measured using a four-point Likert scale to assess levels of agreement with each statement.

Table B1. Economic precarity scale

The financial conditions in my life are excellent.
I worry constantly about my future and my family's financial future.
Even though I have a job, it does not give me status and or a good reputation.
I don't think I am man enough unless I can provide for my family.
It's much harder for my generation to feel financially secure than my father's generation.
Home ownership is out of my reach.
My partner doesn't understand the financial stress that I am under.
Being born into wealth is more important than hard work or skills if you want to get ahead.
The only way to make it these days is to find a job that makes you rich quickly.
I am not in the career I wanted when I graduated from school or college.
Guys who are paid by the hour are losers.
I am worried about losing my job / employment.

Table B2. Care burden scale

Reduced work hours
Worked overtime
Changed job to have more flexible work hours
Left my job / stopped work
Turned down a promotion or professional opportunity
Taken on a second or third job or income stream
Stayed in a precarious job (e.g. low pay, poor condition, no benefits, long hours, limit or no growth opportunities to contribute to meet your family's care needs)
Migrated to another country to find work
Taken less time for yourself
Delayed major life purchases
Delayed or stopped your education or professional training
Tapped into emergency savings funds
Tapped into a retirement savings account
Refinanced or sold your home
Reduced spending on non-essential activities like shopping, going out to eat, going on vacation, etc.
Strengthened your family and social support networks

Table B3. Wellbeing/Distress scale

I had thoughts of suicide
I had felt a racing heart, sweaty, trouble breathing, felt faint, or shaky
Failed to do something that I had to normally do because of my drinking / alcohol consumption
I constantly worried about bad things happening, such as family tragedy, ill health, loss of a job, or accidents
Had 5 or more drinks containing alcohol on one occasion

Table B4. Care norms scale

Things are better if men do paid work and women do care work at home
Boys should not be taught to sew, cook, clean, or take care of their siblings
Changing diapers/nappies, giving kids a bath, and feeding kids are only a mother's responsibility
Boys should focus on their homework (schoolwork) rather than housework
A father's sole responsibility is to provide financially for his children
A mother's main and single responsibility is to provide emotional and daily care (food, hygiene) for her children

Table B5. Couple communication scale

For my partner and I, agreeing together on care work division makes our relationship stronger.
The way care work is divided in our relationship is a source of conflict in our relationship.
I have never thought about talking to my partner about housework and care work.
I feel I can't talk to my partner about housework and care work because my partner has the higher paying job.
I feel I can't talk to my partner about housework and care work because they have more experience and knowledge in these matters
My partner and I split our house and care work equally.
In my family, there are clear expectations that women should take on the primary caregiving role for children / elderly parents.
My partner and I split our house and care work fairly.

Table B6. Care valuing scale

Taking care of the home is just as important as paid work
All employees should receive childcare support (e.g., daycare in the building) from their employers
Those who care for their family members (e.g., children, elderly) should receive some type of subsidy/payment, either through insurance, social security, or other benefits
A 4-day work week would allow caregivers to get better work-life balance
Men who do their fair share of housework and care work make good partners
Men who are involved caregivers are seen as attractive partners to women