



Longer school hours help mothers find better jobs in Chile

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Key messages

- Extending primary school hours helps mothers access better quality jobs
- Children's access to full-day schooling increases women's employment in full-time jobs with formal contracts and higher wages
- Women's labor force participation, employment and weekly hours worked also increase
- Mothers with low education levels benefited the most from the reform

Lack of childcare limits job quality for women who want to work

Women's labor force participation (LFP) in Chile has increased significantly in recent decades—from 39% in 1990 to 67% in 2015—but the gap to men's LFP remains substantial.

Women also tend to work fewer hours and in lower-quality jobs. These jobs typically have lower wages, are often informal and temporary, with no social protection.

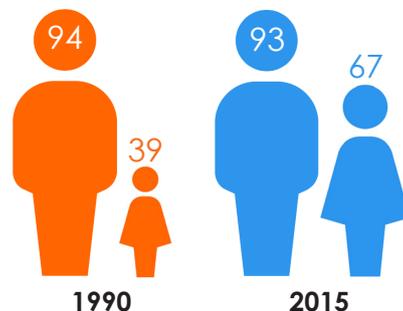
One of the main reasons women do not participate in the labor market is because they do not have access to

childcare for their children, and this occurs even when children reach school age. In 2015, 18% percent of women with children in primary school indicated that a lack of childcare was the main reason for not participating in the labor market.

In this context, it becomes relevant to understand how childcare provision policies can increase women's participation in the labor force, and assess whether these policies improve the quality of women's jobs. If successful, such policies can

help reduce gender gaps in labor market outcomes and may increase household wellbeing.

Labor Force Participation (%)

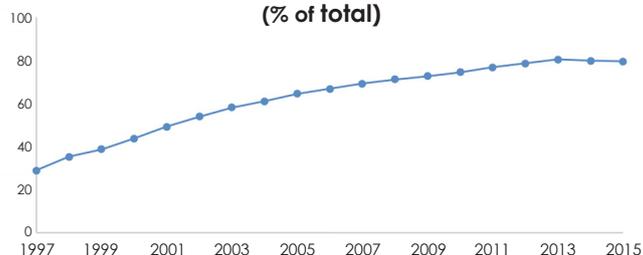


The Full-Day School Reform

In 1997 Chile began to implement a unique educational reform in Latin America to increase the hours children spent at school. The nation-wide program, known as the Full-Day School reform (FDS), increased how long primary and secondary students spent at school each day, moving schools from half- to full-day schedules. The main objective was to improve school quality in Chile—studies in various countries have found that longer school schedules increase children's academic achievement and improve non-academic outcomes. The longer school hours also helped provide childcare for school-aged children.

The reform was implemented gradually across the country and in 2015 reached approximately 1.3 million primary school children (70 percent of total enrollment).

Primary Schools with Full-Day Schedules 1997-2015 (% of total)



The analysis

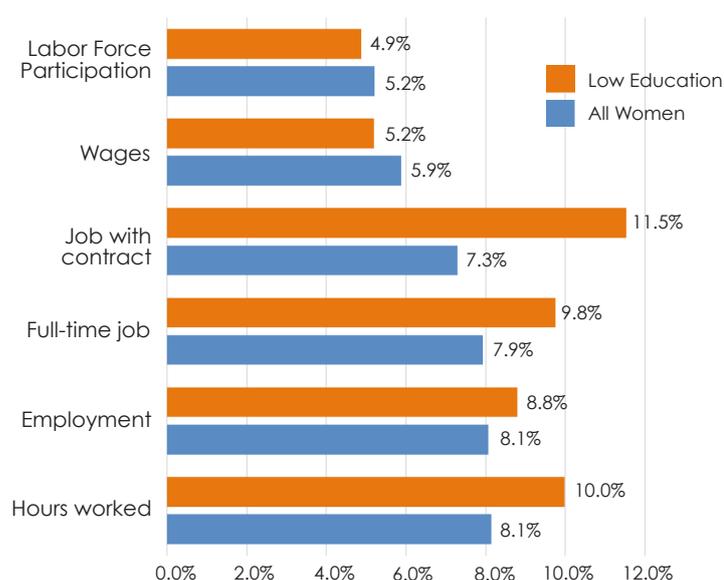
A team of local PEP researchers sought to investigate whether increased childcare for children at primary school improves mothers' job quality in Chile. They estimated the causal effect of a school schedule reform by analyzing data from Chile's Social Protection Survey (Encuesta de Protección Social) between 2002 and 2015.

Key findings

Extending school hours improved labor market outcomes for mothers of primary school-aged children, namely their:

- Labor force participation (LFP)
- Employment
- Hours worked
- Wages
- Likelihood of having a full-time job
- Likelihood of having a job with a contract

More specifically, the team's analysis indicates that a 25% increase in access to full-day schools—e.g. increasing coverage from 75% of schools to full FDS coverage—could improve labor market outcomes for women by:



Additionally, under the policy

- Job quality improves most for mothers with less than 12 years of education and for married mothers who were less attached to the labor market initially.
- Fathers' employment in open-ended contracts increases.

Conclusions and policy implications

The team's findings reveal that increasing the length of the school day benefits not only children but other family members as well. With longer school days, mothers are able to work longer hours, thus the time they can devote to work becomes more compatible with the schedules of higher quality jobs, which are typically full-time jobs.

These findings complement our understanding of how childcare affects mothers' labor supply and job quality. By increasing mothers' employment quality, access to childcare plays an important role in reducing within-household gender inequality (through higher maternal incomes and empowerment), and since the policy has greater benefits among lower educated women, it can decrease overall income inequality. At the same time, access to schools with longer schedules leads to an increase in overall family welfare through increased women's wages.

As well as assessing the effect of Full-Day Schooling reform in Chile, the team's findings provide evidence and lessons for policymakers in other countries interested in expanding access to childcare or the time children spend in schools.

As most developing countries have school schedules that are not matched with working hours, our results provide unique, useful evidence to assess the benefits of such reforms. Typically, these reforms are evaluated considering its direct effects on children; however, our study shows that there are economically relevant indirect effects, particularly through its effects on the women's labor market outcomes, and therefore its benefits have been typically underestimated.

