

The Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth, and Family
Policies at COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Canada

Distinctive Features: Although Canada has the array of social policy approaches characteristic of modern welfare states, its dominant system of beliefs and governmental structures yield a preference for a minimalist welfare state, means-testing over universality, market solutions and “individual-case” rather than public goods responses to problems, needs and change. Health and education are an exception, with a European approach to infrastructure. The provinces have considerable power and authority with reference to services, yielding great diversity, while the federal government retains the major income support responsibilities.

Maternity / Parental Leave

Benefit	Maternity and Parental: cash benefit and job-protected leave
Eligibility Criteria	Labor force participation
Duration of Leave	Maternity: 15 weeks, + additional 2 weeks (unpaid); Parental: 37 weeks paid.
Compensation Rate	Maternity and Parental: 55% of wages to a ceiling. Paid out of unemployment insurance

Early Childhood Education and Care

Age Group Served	6 and under
Eligibility Criteria	5-6s – universal, free nursery schools (education); under 5s—special needs, poor, children of working parents (social welfare system)
Fees	Mixed – Parental fees in centers, income-related. Provinces use some block grant funds for social assistance child care.
Locus of Care	Poor data. Great shortages. Much use of unregulated family day care. If pre-kindergarten is included, half of the under-5s are probably in center care or family day care.

Family and Child Allowances

Benefit & Eligibility	None. Abolished in 1998 in favor of refundable tax credit (see below)
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Child Support

Benefit	Provinces have program of support enforcement but no governmental child support assurance. Federal government cooperates in re: making tax files available, permitting tax refund seizure, and promulgating support standards.
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Child and Family Tax Benefits

Tax Deductions/Relief	Income-tested, indexed tax benefit, with thresholds including 90 percent of families.
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Other Child-Conditioned Income Transfers

There is a non-refundable child care tax credit for working families but not the poorest. Unemployment insurance replacement rises from 55% to 80% of wage for low-income claimants with dependents. Some provinces supplement the federal child tax credit via social assistance. Child supplements under federal social security system for orphans and to child dependents of permanent disability benefit recipients.

Child and Adolescent Health

Access to Coverage Canada's universal health insurance ("Medicare") has systems of benefits and delivery that vary considerably by province. Children generally have good coverage in prenatal and post natal care services, baby clinics, and public health and school services. Adolescents also have good coverage. Child and adolescent health indicators compare well internationally, with the exception of Aboriginal children.

School-Age Children Policies

Compulsory School Ages 6-16 years.

Youth Policies

Distinctive Features There is a Secretary of State for Children and Youth in Human Resources Development in Canada the lead federal agency. Provinces have diverse structures. Active discussion of youth issues including "participation" and "well being."