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Exploring barriers to geoscience conference attendance for people with young children

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People with young children, particularly primary caregivers, face challenges in attending academic conferences. Issues such as additional costs and arranging child care can present major hurdles to participation. Some researchers may delay starting a family until they have job security, impacting their attendance at conferences during critical career progression periods. Some graduate students may also have intersectional considerations (e.g., newcomers to Canada, undiagnosed neurodiversity, eldercare) that may impact their participation. Factors impacting attendance may not be immediately obvious to conference organizers and other participants, complicating efforts to encourage participation. Primary caregivers, often women, are particularly impacted by these issues due to unequal distribution of parenting labour. Addressing limitations on participation is relevant more broadly to efforts to decrease rates of attrition amongst underrepresented groups in geoscience. In this ethnographic study, we invite conference attendees to share their experiences and perspectives on barriers to participation for parents of young children. The results of these discussions are intended to provide insight to guide further formal studies on this topic including development of a best practices model.