

Working Women: Still a Long Way from Equality

There is an unfair and persistent wage gap between men and women.

In 2005, women working full-time for the full year earned an average of \$39,200, or 70.5% as much as men who earned an average of \$55,700. The pay gap is even greater for university-educated women, who earned just 68% as much as men in 2005, down from 75% a decade ago. The gender pay gap in Canada is the fifth greatest in the advanced industrial (OECD) countries: it is even bigger than the wage gap in the United States.

DISTRIBUTION OF ANNUAL EARNINGS <i>Women vs Men in 2005</i>		
	WOMEN	MEN
less than \$5,000	17.2%	13.1%
\$5,000 - \$10,000	13.0%	8.2%
\$10,000 - \$15,000	10.0%	7.1%
\$15,000 - \$20,000	8.9%	6.0%
\$20,000 - \$25,000	8.0%	5.6%
\$25,000 - \$30,000	7.4%	5.9%
\$30,000 - \$35,000	6.9%	6.7%
\$35,000 - \$40,000	5.8%	6.1%
\$40,000 - \$45,000	4.7%	5.4%
\$45,000 - \$50,000	3.8%	4.9%
\$50,000 - \$60,000	5.4%	8.3%
over \$60,000	8.8%	22.9%
Median annual earnings	\$20,200	\$32,700
Average annual earnings	\$26,800	\$41,900

Source: Statistics Canada, *Income Trends in Canada*.

HAVEN'T THINGS CHANGED?

While the gap between men's and women's wages did narrow from the 1970s, when women earned about two-thirds of the male dollar, the wage gap has stood at around 70% since then (70.5% for full-time, full-year work). But some things have changed. Women have done everything they were supposed to do to narrow the wage gap.

Women are more educated.

More women than men go on to university or college. Almost half (49%) of women aged 25 to 45 have a post-secondary qualification. Women are the majority of university graduates and almost 60% of those with a community college qualification. It is particularly disturbing that university-educated women face an even larger wage gap than average.

Women are working - in great numbers and for longer hours.

The percentage of women who are working outside the home has been steadily rising since the 1970s. It is now 74% percent. Men's rate is 82%. (For women aged 25 to 54, the participation rate in Canada was a very high 86% in 2006). In addition, although women still make up the majority of part-time workers, three quarters of women working do so full-time. And women are working longer hours than ever: one in seven women work more than 41 hours a week.

Women are having fewer children and are taking less time away from work.

It is certainly true that women continue to take on most of the child care and domestic work for their families, however, the time taken out of work is much less than it used to be. Women are having fewer children than in the past; an average of 1.4 compared to 2.4 just a few decades ago. Two thirds of women with children under the age of six are in paid employment. Women are taking six months or a year off on maternity leave; not six years until the kids are in school.



Equality
once and for all!



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THE PAY GAP: EARNINGS OF WOMEN VS MEN

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
AVERAGE ANNUAL EARNINGS OF MEN <i>(full year/full-time)</i>	\$53,300	\$54,400	\$54,500	\$54,300	\$56,300	\$55,700
AVERAGE ANNUAL EARNINGS OF WOMEN <i>(full year/full-time)</i>	\$37,700	\$38,000	\$38,300	\$38,100	\$39,300	\$39,200
PAY GAP	\$15,600	\$16,400	\$16,200	\$16,200	\$17,000	\$16,500

AVERAGE ANNUAL EARNINGS OF WOMEN *(as a percentage of the average annual earnings of men)*

All	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Full Year / Full-Time	70.6%	69.9%	70.2%	70.2%	69.9%	70.5%
Full Year / Full-Time with University Degree	68.6%	65.5%	69.0%	69.0%	65.6%	67.9%

Source: Statistics Canada

WHAT ARE THE KEY PROBLEMS?

♀ Occupational segregation and the undervaluing of women's work.

Men and women hold very different kinds of jobs and women predominate in lower-paid occupations, even though educational requirements and necessary skills for these jobs differ very little. Women are still concentrated in a small number of traditional female occupations: health care, teaching, clerical, administrative, sales and services. Generally speaking, these occupations are undervalued and underpaid. About 70% of women work in these areas.

♀ The restructuring of women's work by privatization and contracting out.

Public services employ 29% of all women compared to 17% of men (and the gap is even greater if we take account of the community social services sector.) Women have borne the brunt of privatization and contracting-out to the private sector, where wages are lower and wage gaps are much greater.

♀ The lack of access to quality, affordable public child care.

The majority of mothers with children under six are working, but public child care is only available to about 15% of them. The evidence suggests that giving birth to a child lowers the future earnings of Canadian mothers, compared to women without children, by between 5% - 13%. The OECD has found that the gender pay gap is lowest in countries like France and the Scandinavian countries which provide affordable, quality public child care services, and also the most family-friendly workplaces.

In spite of the fact that over the years, women have done everything they were told to do to eliminate the wage gap, there has been little change.



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Women are much more likely to live in poverty.

During the peak earning years of 25 to 54, more than one in five women make less than \$12 per hour, almost double the proportion of men. Two-thirds of minimum wage earners are women. Working women, especially recent immigrant women of colour, have suffered most from the failure of governments to maintain adequate minimum wages and employment standards to protect low-paid and precarious workers.

The continued economic inequality of women makes many women, especially single mothers and women seniors, vulnerable to poverty. Working families' real incomes have been maintained over the past twenty years only through the increased paid working time of women. Women have been pushed into a cycle of working more and more, with less and less time for children and the community, while still failing to get ahead.

Wage gaps and low income over the course of a working lifetime condemn many women to low income in old age. The low income rate of elderly women on their own significantly exceeds that of men (8.4% compared to 3.2% in 2005).

Why can't women get better-paid jobs?

When it comes to better-paid jobs, women are still largely excluded from blue collar jobs, especially in the skilled trades. A large and growing number of women have moved into professional and skilled technical jobs, in education, health care and other community and public services. But these women are still paid less than men, and are significantly under-represented in very well-paid jobs.

More than three in four of the earners making at least \$89,000 per year (the top 5% of the Canadian workforce) are men. And men are still three times more likely than women to be senior managers.

Unions are a girl's best friend.

The union wage advantage is between \$7 and \$14 an hour. It is therefore not surprising that the percentage of unionized women is now higher than for men - 31.7% compared to 31.6%. Women make up half of the membership of the Canadian union movement. In addition to better pay, unionization has improved wages and benefits for many working women, especially lower-paid women.

The Persistent Gender Wage Gap.

Economic inequality between women and men persists and is worsening because of a failure to deal with the key issues, in the workplace and in society as a whole. While we have won a few victories - such as extended parental leaves under EI - our governments have generally failed to address such key issues as continued pay discrimination, low pay, long hours and inflexible work schedules, and lack of access to the services we need, like child care and elder care.

Women still face discrimination and barriers. Real equality of opportunity does not yet exist. Women's economic inequality at work has major negative impacts on Employment Insurance earnings for women, on our pensions, on our retirement incomes, and on women's vulnerability to violence.





What you can do

Counter the myths of equality with the facts.
Women have not achieved economic equality.

Call your elected representative and ask them about the following seven solutions to the wage gap:

- ♀ A national, publicly-funded not-for-profit child care program.
- ♀ A \$10 minimum wage.
- ♀ Effective pay equity laws.
- ♀ EI reform.
- ♀ Pension reform.
- ♀ Measures to end violence against women.
- ♀ Better labour laws to make it easier to join a union.

Vote!

Talk to your friends, family and co-workers about the gender wage gap.

Host a discussion with the education materials posted on our web site.

Join this campaign, find more information on child care and other equality issues on our web site:

www.onceandforall.ca

Check it out!

