

Women in the Canadian Labour Market

EMPLOYMENT FACTS FROM ACTEW



Women's Work Patterns Differ From Men's

- Approximately 40% of working women, in comparison with less than 30% men, are in part-time, contract, or other non-standard work arrangements.¹ As of October 2007, 21.2% of Canadian women worked part-time compared to 6.4% of men.² Women are almost twice as likely as men to be part-time temporary workers.³
- Women, especially those between 15 and 24, are less likely than men to be unemployed.⁴ In October 2007, women's unemployment reached a record low at 4.3%, almost one percentage point below men's (5.2%).⁵ Unemployed women are less likely than men to have been laid off or to have lost their jobs, and more likely than men to have not worked in the previous year or to have never worked at all.⁶
- Women are more likely than men to have breaks in their work history, largely due to child bearing and caring. One half return to work when their youngest child is 12 to 47 months; one-third return when the child is between 6 and 12 months.⁷ In comparison, 67% of fathers return when their child is less than one month old.⁸
- The average Canadian woman spends an average of 4.4 hours per day in paid work compared to a man's 6.3 hours. She will perform 4.3 hours of unpaid work in contrast to a man's 2.5 hours.⁹
- Two-thirds of women work in occupations traditionally held by women, such as nursing, teaching, clerical and sales positions.¹⁰

Dramatic Increases in Women's Labour Market Participation

- At 47%, women make up almost half the workforce. This is a 10% increase since 1976.¹¹
- Women account for 70% of the employment increases in Canada in 2007, while men make up the remaining 30%.¹²
- Women 25 years and older have a labour market participation rate of 62% to men's 74%, a difference of only 8%, as of October 2007.¹³ In 1976, the difference was 31%.¹⁴
- In 2006, 64% of women with children under three and 69% with children between three and five were engaged in paid work. In 1976, the employment rates for such women were 28% and 37% respectively.¹⁵
- Canadian women's employment levels increased 16.4% between 1976 and 2006; in comparison, men's employment *decreased* 5%.¹⁶

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Gains and Losses in Non-Traditional Work

- In Ontario, 29% of working women are engaged in non-traditional occupations.¹⁷ Five percent of women work in 202 occupations deemed non-traditional for their sex, compared with 6% of men working in 71 occupations.¹⁸ Between 1991 and 2001, women's representation in 26 occupations increased enough to move these occupations out of the non-traditional category.¹⁹
- Women have made significant gains in the professional fields of medicine, business and finance.²⁰ In 2004, 55% of Canadian doctors and dentists were women.²¹ Between 1987 and 2005, Ontarian women's participation in various professional occupations increased significantly: up 15% in business and finance, 14% in education, and 10% in health.²²
- Over the past three decades women have been taking on more managerial positions.²³ However, only 22% of senior management positions are held by women, a decrease from 27% since 1996.²⁴
- As of 2006, women's participation in professional positions in the natural sciences, engineering and mathematics fields had increased only 2% in two decades.²⁵
- The proportion of women enrolled in Canadian undergraduate engineering programs has steadily declined since 2002; enrolment peaked at 20.7% in 2001 and was 17.5% in 2005.²⁶
- While nationally only 7% of women are employed in transportation, trades and construction work,²⁷ there may be advancements in regions facing skills shortages. In the last decade, the Albertan Construction industry has seen a 116% increase of female workers, and the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services report an 83% increase.²⁸

Precariously Employed

Many Canadian women are in jobs that are temporary, part-time and/or do not provide benefits or access to Employment Insurance:

- In 2004, 27% of women worked part-time compared with 11% of men.²⁹ In the same year, 57% of unemployed part-timer workers did not qualify for EI.³⁰
- Most women do not choose to work part-time. Twenty-three percent of female part-timers cannot find full-time work. Thirty-six percent between 25-44 are caring for children. Two-thirds of women (and men) under 25 work part-time because they are attending school. Only 28% do so out of personal preference and most of these women (57%) are 45 years and older.³¹
- Women are almost twice as likely as men to be part-time temporary workers.³² A part-time temporary worker makes on average \$11 less an hour than a full-time permanent worker³³ and while covered by EI, because they must work the same number of hours as all other employees to qualify, they rarely are able to access EI benefits or training.³⁴
- In 2002, among women, 43% of those of a visible minority and 37% of non-visible minorities were part-time and/or temporary workers. In comparison, 27% of white men and 28% visible minority men were part-time and/or workers.³⁵ Well more than half of immigrant women who arrived in Canada between 2001 and 1991 work part-time.³⁶

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- Women account for one-third of Canada's self-employed.³⁷ Only 17% of these women will make more than \$30,000 a year, compared with 42% of self-employed men.³⁸ Under most circumstances, self-employed Canadians do not qualify for government benefits and insurance programs such as EI, maternity/parental leave, disability and pension programs.³⁹
- Among Canadian women making EI contributions, only one in three will be eligible for benefits in the event of job loss.⁴⁰ Thirty-two percent of women can access EI in comparison to 40% of men.⁴¹

The Income Gap

- A Canadian woman's annual income in 2006 was 63% a man's.⁴²
- In 2003, the average annual pre-tax income of women aged 16 and over from all sources, including employment earnings, government transfer payments, investment income and other money income was \$24,400, while men had an average income of \$39,300.⁴³
- The biggest income gap is in Alberta, where the incomes of women in 2003 were just 56% those of their male counterparts. The figure was just 60% in Ontario, while in the remaining provinces it ranged from 63% in Nova Scotia to highs of 68% in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan.⁴⁴

The Wage Gap

- In 2006, a Canadian woman earns 72 cents to every dollar a man in similar work earns,⁴⁵ a decrease of 8 cents since 1999⁴⁶.
- "Wage equality" is one of Canada's poorest areas, according to *The Global Gender Gap Report 2007*. This annual international report on women's equality from the World Economic Forum ranks Canada's wage equality in 38th place behind countries as diverse as Ghana (1st place), the Philippines (7th) and the United Arab Emirates (29th).
- The wage difference is often more pronounced in male-dominated occupations. For example, the Albertan occupational category, "Health Care and Social Assistance", has a female participation rate of 83.8% and the lowest wage discrepancy of any category with women making an average of \$21.36 per hour to men's \$22.97. In contrast, the traditionally male-dominated industries "Professional, Scientific and Technical Services" and "Construction", women will average respectively \$21.24 and \$17.41 per hour to men's \$30.43 and \$23.11.⁴⁷

This fact sheet was created by **A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women (ACTEW)** in December 2007. This is one of a series of fact sheets on employment that can be accessed and downloaded at: www.actew.org/pwp

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