

WOMEN AND EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Big Picture

In Canada

- Women are more likely than men to be high school graduates, but are less likely to have either a trades certificate or diploma or to have completed some other form of non-university training.
- Women make up the majority of full-time students in most university departments. They remain concentrated in the humanities and social sciences, fields with weaker labour market outcomes but are making inroads into traditionally male-dominated fields.
- Overall, women are also somewhat less likely than men to have a university degree, although the gap is much smaller now than in the past. However young women are currently more likely than young men to have university degrees. Women's representation among university graduates also declines sharply the higher the level.
- Among the 25-29 age group, women are now achieving higher levels of educational attainment than men. This is a reversal of historic trends and indicates that policies aimed at improving women's educational outcomes have achieved a degree of success.
- The emergence of the knowledge-based economy and society in Canada has made women's access to education and training even more imperative, particularly in technical and scientific fields.
- Although women and men participate at an almost equal rate in training programs, women actually receive substantially fewer hours than men, an increasing trend through the 1990s.

Around the World

- Education is key to empowering women, leading to greater economic productivity, higher income, smaller families, improved health and higher status for women and girls.
- Access to education by itself is not enough to eliminate harmful attitudes and values held by society.
- Barriers to girls' education include early marriage and pregnancy, gender-biased teaching, lack of adequate and/or accessible schooling facilities, time-consuming domestic responsibilities, priority given to boys' education by parents and schools.

Facts and Figures

Statistics and figures are from Statistics Canada unless otherwise noted.

In Canada

- In 1999, 89% of women in Canada had high school or higher education: 28% held a post-secondary diploma; 14% held a university degree.
- In 1997-98, women made up 52% of college enrolment and 55% of university enrolment; 51% master's and 43% of doctoral ranks.
- In 1998, for all young women and men, 64% of young women aged 22-24 with dependent children left high school before graduating, compared to 28% of young men aged 22-24 with children.
- In 1997, women with university degrees averaged \$42,660 for full-time, full-year work while women with high school education averaged \$27,500 and women with some post-secondary education averaged \$28,300.



- In 1997, women with university degrees earned 74% of their male counterparts' income for full-time full-year work; compared with other post-secondary diploma or certificate: 71%; some post-secondary: 75%; some secondary school: 65%; less than Grade 9: 70%.
- In 1996, over 28.8% of Registered Indian women living on reserve had less than a grade 9 education compared to 15.3% of Registered Indian women living off reserve. Furthermore, Aboriginal women with a university degree experienced an unemployment rate of 7.2% compared to a rate of 27% for those with less than grade 9 education.
- Women's share of all male-dominated fields increased from 21% in 1981 to 34% in 1994 and several fields of study became gender neutral, including law, dentistry and political science. (*Economic Gender Equality Indicators*, Canada, 1997)
- Women increased their ranks in engineering and applied sciences in degrees granted from 16% in 1993 to 21% in 1997.
- Just 1.6% of apprentices registered in 15 predominant trades in 1997 were women. This was a slight increase from 1.2% of 1992 (and 0.6% in 1998).
- In 1997, 31.4% of women with jobs, or 1.9 million employed women, participated in job-related education and training, compared with 27.65% of men with jobs, or 2 million employed men.
- The number of illiterate adults fell from 895 million in 1990, to 880 million in 1998. In 1990, there were eight illiterate females for every ten males and this rate improved only slightly over the decade. (*Education for All Statistical Document*, UNESCO, 2000)
- The gender gap in literacy rates for people ages 15-24 everywhere but South Asia and Africa has been closed, with Sub-Saharan Africa seeing the greatest improvement in literacy rates for women in the 1990s increasing from 41% to 54%. (*Targets and Indicators: Selections from Progress of the World's Women*, UNIFEM, 2000)

Towards Equality

In Canada

- In Canada, responsibility for education rests primarily with the provincial governments. In the *Federal Plan for Gender Equality*, the Government of Canada has outlined a strategy, in partnership with provincial and territorial governments, and women's organizations, to improve women's access to lifelong learning, supporting women's participation in the fields of science and technology, and developing appropriate training materials and programs for women.
- The Canadian Opportunities Strategy provides increased accessibility to post-secondary education for persons with dependents and those with disabilities.
- The Canada Study Grants program for female doctoral students provides grants of up to \$3,000 per year for up to three years to help female students in Ph.D. programs where women are traditionally under-represented. The program also provides grants to students in financial need who have children.
- Under the Canada Student Loans Program, the needs assessment allows child care costs to be assessed for loans for both full- and part-time study.
- In 1996, federal and private sector funding supported the creation of five Chairs for Women in Science and Engineering at different Canadian universities across the country.

Around the World

- As many as 130 million children in the world today are not in school, 2/3 of them girls; 150 million children who enroll do not reach grade five. Girls continue to drop out, repeat or fail at higher rates than boys. (*State of the World's Children 1999*, UNICEF)
- At a global level, the proportion of girls enrolled in primary education, regardless of age, has steadily increased to the point that it almost equals the proportion of girls in the total school-age population. Despite the progress made in the absolute number of girls enrolled, the net enrollment ratios of girls remains lower than those of boys, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States and North Africa, and South and West Asia. (*Education for All Statistical Document*, UNESCO, 2000)

- The National Literacy Secretariat supports projects which facilitate the involvement of women in literacy programs. For example, the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women received support to research the effects of abuse on literacy learners and is examining ways of creating more appropriate practices for abuse survivors.
- Following the 1998 Federal Budget, part-time students, many of whom are women, now qualify for child care expense deductions and education tax credits for the first time.
- in Afghanistan, where girls are forbidden to go to school and women are not permitted to teach, a BBC radio project is providing basic education in literacy, numeracy, life skills (including information about landmines, found throughout the country) and civic responsibilities.

Around the World

- At the 1998 meeting of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) held in Geneva, three indigenous women teachers from Canada, as members of Canada's official delegation, organized and hosted a workshop on indigenous education and training, with financial support from the Government of Canada. The Canadian workshop supported the designated theme of Education for the 1998 WGIP as one of the principal themes of the International Decade for the World's Indigenous People.
- Through the Canadian International Development Agency, Canada supports a number of international education programs for women. For example:
 - in Bangladesh, an education project for adolescent girls helps prepare them to resist oppression and exploitation through instruction in basic literacy, numeracy and problem-solving, as well as providing income-generating skills, nurturing self-esteem and helping them exercising their human rights;
 - in Upper Egypt, girl-friendly schools — single-sex schools built by the community and staffed by women teachers recruited from the area — help reduce girls' illiteracy rates while also changing attitudes in the community about educating girls;
 - in Guyana, a basic teacher education training project is helping to upgrade the professional qualifications of primary level teachers, 80% of whom are women;