

WOMEN AND THE MEDIA



The *Beijing Platform for Action* (PfA) identifies “stereotyping of women and inequality in women’s access to and participation in all communication systems, especially the media” as a critical area of concern. The PfA contains strategic objectives and actions to: increase women’s participation in decision-making; increase access and use of media and new communication technologies; and promote balanced and non-stereotyped portrayals.

PATTERNS AND TRENDS*

- 657 television services and 1,155 radio services were available to Canadians in 2004.
- Canada has 16 commercial ethnic radio services, 4 ethnic conventional television services, and 20 specialty ethnic services.
- 19 foreign third-language programming services have been launched and are authorized for distribution in Canada.
- A Women’s Specialty Network was created in 1994.
- Men occupied approximately 75% of positions of power in the mass media in 2002.
- The Canadian Newspaper Association reported that, in 2002, 43% of employees were women (8% editors-in-chief; 12% publishers; 70% in advertising and 80% in accounting and finance).
- 28% of newspaper journalists and 37% of television journalists were women in 2001, according to the International Federation of Journalists.
- 63.5% of women of all ages used a computer in 2000, compared to 67.1% men; 49.6% of women used the Internet compared to 56.2% of men.

TOWARDS EQUALITY

Federal government measures include:

- Canada’s *Criminal Code* identifies obscenities, pornography, child pornography and hate propaganda conducted over the Internet as illegal.

- The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Employment Equity Act* are the foundations for the voluntary and mandatory measures implemented within the communications field that contribute to gender equality in the media.
- The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is an independent Public Authority responsible for regulating and supervising Canadian broadcasting and telecommunications. The Commissioners of the CRTC, which reports to Parliament, are appointed by Cabinet; four out of seven sitting Commissioners are women (2004).
- The Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) has developed voluntary codes on standards for discriminatory material, violence and sex-role portrayal. CAB has created an independent body, the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council, to administer these standards and respond to public complaints.
- Advertising Standards Canada, on behalf of the advertising industry, administers the Gender Portrayal Guidelines which are applicable to all Canadian paid media.

RECENT INITIATIVES

- Canada’s Computers for Schools Program is a national initiative sponsored by the federal government and delivered in partnership with the Telecom Pioneers, provincial and territorial governments, businesses, communities, educators and volunteer groups. Since 1993, it has distributed close to 600,000 computers to

schools, libraries and not-for-profit learning organizations.

- Through the Community Access Program (CAP), Industry Canada has provided Canadian communities, large and small, with access to the Internet. The CAP is narrowing its focus to areas of greatest need: low-income earners, rural residents, Canadians with disabilities, Aboriginal people, Francophones, seniors and new Canadians. By putting computers and Internet services in public institutions such as community centres, schools or libraries, women from these target groups can have access to computers. Many of the programs offer free or low cost computer education programs, and sometimes childcare is also available.
- In 2001, changes to the *Criminal Code* made luring children online or looking at child pornography on the Internet illegal. Canada was the first country to ban the act of surfing for child pornography, viewing it on-screen, e-mailing or exporting it abroad. The new offences carry penalties of five to ten years in jail.

* The source for data is Statistics Canada unless otherwise mentioned. Also, please note that *Women in Canada 2005: a gender-based statistical report* is being developed by Statistics Canada for publication in the fall of 2005.