

Canada lags on pay equity ^[1]

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Canadian women outperform men at all levels of education, but still make significantly less money in the workplace.

Canada's gender-wage gap is much wider than that of most developed countries, according to a new report from the Council of Ministers of Education.

Women in Canada are 8% more likely than men to graduate from high school, 11% more likely to graduate from college, and 18% more likely to graduate from university.

But in 2007, women with college or university degrees made, on average, 63% of what similarly educated men earned.

In the other 30 developed countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the wage gap was much narrower, with women making an average of 71% of men's salaries.

Canada's wage gap has remained more or less the same for a decade. In 1998, Canadian women made 61% of men's salaries.

"The numbers are disappointing. We would have hoped and expected to see the gap close for men and women," said Deborah Gillis, vice-president North America for Catalyst, an organization that promotes women in business.

"I'm not really surprised by the numbers," said Sam Spady, advocacy and communications co-ordinator for the Canadian Federation of University Women, an organization of women university graduates that promotes equal rights.

"Women may be outperforming men in school, but once they enter the workforce, they face systemic barriers."

First, women are more likely to be balancing unpaid work - like raising children or taking care of elderly family members - with their careers, she said. As a result, they're likely to take on part-time or casual work.

According to Statistics Canada, women in Canada are twice as likely to work part-time jobs.

Spady said other countries are probably faring better because they have better access to child care and social services.

But it also has to do with the fields women choose to work in, she added.

"The higher-earning jobs in engineering and sciences are where women are underrepresented."

Those are the fields that see the brunt of stimulus spending, she said, whereas women-centric fields like education, health care and social work often face funding cuts.

But even women who enter high-paying fields full time with no family obligations are making less than their male counterparts, said Gillis.

A 2010 Catalyst study found female graduates from top MBA programs across the country made \$4,600 less than their male counterparts in their first post-university jobs, whether they had children or not.

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- reprinted from the Toronto Sun

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