

Why women fared better in the recession ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Women fared better during the recession, thanks to a pattern of employment in industries less susceptible to economic shifts and an increasing presence in high paying professions.

When it comes to employment numbers women were hit less hard than men during the economic downturn. They also continued to hold far more part time jobs than men, but made significant gains in professions where they would earn a higher paycheque.

In 2009, the employment rate for women was 58.3, a one per cent dip from a historic high of 59.3 per cent in 2008. By comparison, in 2009 the employment rate for men was 65.2 per cent, a 2.9 per cent decline from the previous year.

The jobless rate for women was still high, hitting 7 per cent in 2009, the highest since 2003. For men it reached 9.4 per cent in 2009, the highest rate since 1996.

The statistics were laid out in a released portion of *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, from Statistics Canada tracking women's status in the labour market back to 1976.

The report showed that women dominate in service industries, including health care and social assistance, and educational services, where employment continued to grow. Women held 67 per cent of teaching, nursing and related health positions in 2009.

Women continued to make gains in higher paid professions, accounting for 51 per cent of business and financial professionals in 2009, up from 49 per cent in 1999. More than 55 per cent of doctors, dentists and people employed in other health occupations were women in 2009, compared to 47 per cent in 1999.

Eric Kam, an associate professor of economics with Ryerson University said women tend to fall into "job ghettos" on both the high and low end of the pay scale.

Kam said women in professional fields are "kind of untouchable" but both women and men in lower paying part time work are highly susceptible to fluctuations in the employment and the business cycle.

He said the increasing numbers of women graduating from University means their presence in high paying fields will continue to increase.

Men continue to dominate sectors hit hardest during the downturn, including goods-production, mainly manufacturing, construction and natural resources. Losses in those industries tended to be full time positions.

In Canada in 2009, about 70 per cent of part time work was done by women, a proportion that has been stagnant for the better part of three decades.

In 2009 about 12 per cent of women in the labour force identified as self employed, compared to 8.6 per cent in 1976. Even with that increase women only accounted for a third of self employed workers in Canada in 2009.

Employment among women with children has "risen sharply" but they are still less likely to be employed than single women.

In 2009, almost 73 per cent of women who had children below the age of 16 living at home were employed, compared to about 80 cent of women under the age of 55 who did not have children.

In 2009, almost 65 per cent of women with children under 3-years-old were employed, compared to about 27 per cent in 1976.

About 69 per cent of single women with children under sixteen were employed, compared with about 74 per cent of women with a partner, a reversal from the 1970s, the report showed.

-reprinted from the Toronto Star

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