

Women and poverty ^[1]

CRIAW Fact Sheet: Third Edition

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Source: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women

Format: Fact sheet

Publication Date: 1 Sep 2005

AVAILABILITY

Fact sheet in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts from the fact sheet:

Women and poverty are connected for many reasons. Various structural factors work towards making women more vulnerable to poverty, or to keeping them in poverty. Over the last decade, Canada has been moving towards a different model for its economy, drastically cutting social services. Despite seven years of budgetary surpluses, money is still not being channeled back into these social services and the depth of poverty (that is the gap between the average income of the poor and the amount needed to bring their income up to the level of the low-income cut off) is worsening.

There are simple structural reasons for women's lower incomes: A Statistics Canada study found that the major factor in the wage gap is the presence of children, rather than age, marriage or education. Women are still expected to perform the majority of household chores and child care. In 52% of families in which both partners had full-time paid employment, the female partner was responsible for all the daily housework, in 28% the woman was mainly responsible, in 10% the chores were shared equally and in another 10% the man was primarily responsible.³⁵ Women are expected to cut down on their paid work, quit their jobs, take emergency leave from work, or refuse promotions, in order to care for children, elderly parents or in-laws, or disabled relatives.

Lack of affordable, good quality child care keeps many women from finding full-time, well-paying work. In Metro Toronto alone, 16,000 families are on the waiting list for child care. One third of these parents (over 5,000) could take a job tomorrow if they had child care. There is also a danger of child care becoming privatized. This would make it too expensive for most parents to afford, and not necessarily accountable to regulatory standards. Under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) if we don't keep child care in the not-for-profit sector, we could face challenges from large commercial childcare chains who want to come to Canada and who put profits before quality child care, as experience has shown in Australia. The government needs to live up to its promises of national child-care and ensure that it is accessible, affordable, high quality, publicly funded and regulated, and not-for-profit. Not only is child care necessary if parents are to provide an adequate income for their family, but children attending good quality, regulated child care are also more likely to do better at school.

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: poverty ^[4]

affordability ^[5]

privatization ^[6]

gender ^[7]

demand ^[8]

availability ^[9]

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