

What is it?

Gender Equality means that women and men enjoy the same status and have equal opportunity to realize their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development, and to benefit from the results⁽¹⁾.

Gender Equality is NOT...

- a competition between men and women
- male bashing
- about giving women jobs they are not qualified to perform
- maintaining gender inequality but giving women the advantage instead of men

Why is it important?

Gender Equality is a part of human rights, including the right to be free from coercion, intimidation, and violence at work and at home.

Inequalities that exclude or disadvantage women in decision-making and access to economic and social resources (e.g., education, health services) are linked to historical patterns of gender inequality, including the devaluing of women⁽²⁾.

Gendered violence is rooted in gender inequalities and other systems of oppression. Intimate partner and sexual violence are disproportionately perpetrated against women and violate their right to live free from abuse and violence.

Patterns of gender inequality constrain the progress of a society by limiting the opportunities available to fully one-half of its population – that is, women and girls. When women are constrained from reaching their full potential, this potential is lost to the society as a whole, resulting in decreased levels of education, lower economic/workforce participation, and lower gross domestic product (GDP). This loss affects every member of society.

For instance, estimates indicate "violence against women costs Canada more than \$9.3 billion a year and if the gap between men's and women's employment continues at its present rate, Canada could lose as much as 8% in GDP growth over the next twenty years"⁽³⁾.

Consider Kate McInturff's analysis⁽⁴⁾ using Canadian data:



Yet, our investment as a society to prevent violence against women and support victims is only a fraction of the costs of this violence in Canada. The federal government spending in the 2011/12 fiscal year on programs and services related to spousal violence and sexual assault was approximately \$80 million:



How does Gender Equality differ from Gender Equity?

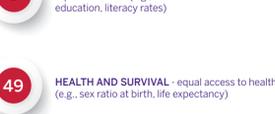
"Gender Equity is the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, strategies and measures must be available to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that have kept women from enjoying equal opportunity. Equity contributes to equality"⁽⁵⁾.

Learn more about complimentary gender equality approaches⁽⁶⁾:

Intersectionality...Gender Mainstreaming...Social Exclusion...Anti-Oppression

How is Gender Equality measured?

While no single measure fully captures gender equality, gaps in equality between men and women are examined with measures in four basic areas⁽⁷⁾:



Economic Participation and Opportunity

Educational Attainment

Health and Survival

Political Empowerment

Since 2005, the World Economic Forum has used measures in the above areas to rank countries on gender equality. Canada's rankings out of 136 countries in 2013 are below⁽⁸⁾:



Let's take a closer look at some of the gender gaps that still exist in Canada...

A gap continues to exist in women's political participation.

As of January 1, 2014, women held a minority of positions in Canadian parliament⁽⁹⁾:



The health and well-being of women in Canada are negatively affected by the disproportionate levels of intimate partner and sexual violence they experience. Violence against women erodes safety, limits where women choose to work, live, travel or spend their time, and undermine women's opportunities and health.

"Personal security, such as safety from harassment, sexual violence and intimate partner violence, is also an important measure of equality that is notably absent in all of the current indices of gender equality conducted internationally"⁽¹⁰⁾.

1 in 4 Women in Canada will experience intimate partner or sexual violence in their lifetime⁽¹¹⁾

Violence reported to the police in 2011 shows the gendered nature of the following violence⁽¹²⁾:



A 2014 RCMP report estimated that a total of 1017 Aboriginal women and girls were murdered between 1980 and 2012 in Canada. There were 164 Aboriginal women and girls missing in Canada on November 4, 2013 for a period exceeding 30 days⁽¹³⁾. There have been repeated calls for a national public inquiry into this devastating Canadian crisis.

The violence experienced by women may compromise their participation and productivity in the workforce. For example, experiencing intimate partner or sexual violence may lead to distractibility, absenteeism, mental health concerns, and safety issues that impact functioning at work. Workplaces that are informed about violence and its impacts increase employee safety, and foster productivity in employees who are abusive or abused. These workplaces not only support their employees, but in doing so, they also take steps to improve their bottom line.



While women experience more threats to their security and safety within their homes and intimate relationships, men are disproportionately affected by violence outside of the home and relationships. Women and men have the right to personal security and safety.

Economic instability or dependence keeps women in abusive relationships. "The loss of belongings, home, salary, health and dental benefits are examples of the burden a woman must carry with her the moment she leaves"⁽¹⁶⁾.



"Ensuring women's economic security is a key step toward ensuring women's personal security and overall well-being. It is also important to the economic well-being of the country"⁽¹⁸⁾. Yet, women's economic well-being continues to lag behind their male peers despite advances for women in education and training.



It's true that working part-time can be a personal preference, however, over the past 5 years, almost double the number of women (compared to men) state the reason they are working part-time is because of a lack of full-time jobs or business conditions⁽²¹⁾.

Gender gaps that disadvantage women during their working years compromise their economic security in older age. For instance, older women have less income and a higher percentage of their income comes from government transfers (e.g., old age security, CPP, social assistance) than from market income (salaries, retirement income). Sources of retirement income for older women in 2008⁽²²⁾:



There's more to this story...

Greater gaps in equality are experienced by women belonging to communities affected by historical disadvantages, discrimination, and systemic barriers.

For instance, women living with disabilities, Aboriginal women, or women living in remote communities may experience more barriers to equality compared to men living in the same situations; or to other groups of women. Belonging to more than one community may act as a protective factor and increase opportunities, or it may reinforce conditions of inequality and reduce opportunities.

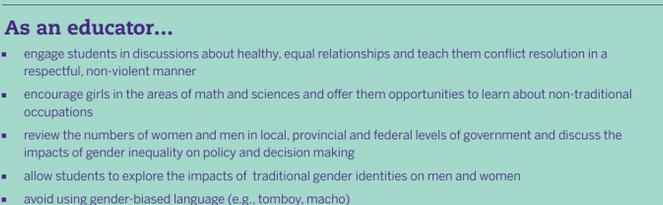
Consider employment rates in 2011 for women and men living in communities of various social locations⁽²³⁾:

	MALES (25 TO 64)	FEMALES (25 TO 64)
Aboriginal Identity	65.3%	60.1%
Non-Aboriginal Identity	80.3%	71.4%
Immigrant	79.9%	72.9%
Non-Immigrant	80.1%	65.7%
Visible Minority	79.8%	64.4%
Non-Visible Minority	80.7%	68.1%

Median annual employment incomes in 2011 for women and men living in communities of various social locations⁽²⁴⁾:

	MALE (25 TO 54)	FEMALE (25 TO 54)
Aboriginal Identity	\$37,617	\$33,871
Non-Aboriginal Identity	\$47,895	\$34,112
Visible Minority	\$38,676	\$29,157
Non-Visible Minority	\$49,789	\$34,963
First Generation Immigrant	\$40,962	\$29,758
Non-Immigrant	\$49,611	\$35,099

Women living with disabilities for 6 years or more earn an average hourly rate that is...



The above differences in earnings gaps decline when accounting for demographic and labor market characteristics but remain significant⁽²⁵⁾.

Over 200 years

The length of time to close the gender gap in Canada at the current rate of progress⁽²⁶⁾.

What can we do to foster gender equality?

As a parent...

- be a role model for gender equality through your relationships with your children, partner, family, friends, co-workers, and the general public
- engage youth in discussions about healthy, equal relationships and the meaning of consent in intimate relationships
- acknowledge the connections between gender inequality and violence against women and talk about these connections with your children (e.g., when you see these connections on TV, in books, in movies, and other media)
- support girls' and boys' participation in activities traditionally associated with the opposite gender
- look for teachable moments that highlight gender equality such as Malala Yousafzai's call for universal education and girls' rights
- involve girls and boys in similar household and outdoor chores



As an educator...

- engage students in discussions about healthy, equal relationships and teach them conflict resolution in a respectful, non-violent manner
- encourage girls in the areas of math and sciences and offer them opportunities to learn about non-traditional occupations
- review the numbers of women and men in local, provincial and federal levels of government and discuss the impacts of gender inequality on policy and decision making
- allow students to explore the impacts of traditional gender identities on men and women
- avoid using gender-biased language (e.g., tomboy, macho)
- showcase the role women have played in various fields (e.g., history, science, education, politics, healthcare)



As an employer/employee...

- offer mandatory gender equality and diversity training
- provide domestic and sexual violence education to all employees
- establish a zero tolerance policy for workplace sexual harassment and discrimination
- ensure workplace policies on violence include domestic violence
- develop a comprehensive and proactive program for responding to and preventing violence against women in the workplace
- provide support for parents such as on-site childcare or childcare benefits
- provide the same pay for a job regardless of gender
- increase women's access to jobs that allow for professional development and promotion



As a member of the community...

- speak out against violence against women and gender discrimination
- support events and campaigns to raise awareness and challenge social norms that foster gender inequality
- support organizations that promote gender equality
- challenge other community members who say or do things that are disrespectful to women and girls
- learn to recognize warning signs of domestic violence and sexual violence and where to get help



The Learning Network Team

- LINDA BAKER, Director
- MARCIE CAMPBELL, Research Associate
- ANNA-LEE STRAATMAN, Research Associate
- ELSA BARRETO, Multi-media Specialist

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PETER JAFFE, Academic Director, Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, Western University

NICOLE PIETSCH, Coordinator, Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres

RANIA SALEM, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Toronto

MARSHA SFEIR, Director, Springtide Resources

KATHERINE VINK, Doctoral Student, University of Alberta

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For references and additional online resources related to this issue go to: www.vawlearningnetwork.ca

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Footnotes

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