

Canada's Gender Gap

A Summary Report of Canada's Global Standing

Overview

Today, women constitute nearly 70 percent of the world's 1.3 billion people living in poverty, 65 percent of the world's refugees and two thirds of the world's illiterate population.¹ Women also make up two thirds of the exploited informal workplace, own just 1 percent of the world's resources, and earn one tenth of the world's income.²

Contemporary development discourse appreciates the importance of gender equality as essential to alleviating poverty in all countries of the world. In 2006, Oxfam International and Oxfam Canada adopted women's rights as their thematic focus, recognizing women's rights as pivotal in determining the health and welfare of nations.³ UNICEF recently cited gender equality as central to realizing the agenda of the Millennium Declaration and its Development Goals.⁴ The current prevailing theme is that gender equality empowers women and their communities and countries because poverty can only be overcome through the full participation of all members of society.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women was adopted in 1979. Although the convention has received 184 ratifications, accessions and successions, gender inequality persists.⁵ Gender-based inequality does not only exist in the developing world. It is a phenomenon that transcends nearly all of the world's cultures, religions and nations, including Canada.

In May 2006, the World Economic Forum released The Global Gender Gap Report, offering a Gender Gap Index. The index includes over 115 countries and their economies, including all current and candidate European Union countries, 20 from Latin America and Caribbean, over 20 from sub-Saharan Africa, North America, and 10 from the Arab World. Together, the 115 countries represent over 90 percent of the world's population.⁶ The study and index use available data from international organizations and the World Economic Forum's Executive Opinion Survey to assess the level of equality between women and men.⁷

The unique and noteworthy strength of the Gender Gap Index is not the wealth and diversity of its data, but rather its focus on measuring gaps rather than levels. The report measures gender-based gaps in access to resources and opportunities rather than levels of available resources and opportunities. Rich countries have stronger economies and higher levels of education, and measuring levels alone will simply illustrate this fact. Instead, the index penalizes or rewards countries based on the size of the gap between women and men in income, for example, but not for the overall levels of income in the country.

The use of gaps over levels makes the Global Gender Gap Report particularly useful in assessing the current status of Canada's gender equality relative to other countries in the world. The report reveals that Canada is insufficient in areas such as political empowerment and education, and lagging behind many countries that are often perceived as less progressive towards implementing women's rights.

¹ Oxfam Canada. "Women's Equality." Available online at <<http://www.oxfam.ca/what-we-do/our-approach/womens-equality>>. April 2007.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ UNICEF. The State of the World's Children 2007. "Women and Children: The Double Dividend of Gender Equality." Available online at <http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/The_State_of_the_Worlds_Children_2007_e.pdf>. April 2007.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ World Economic Forum. "The Global Gender Gap Report 2006." Available online at <<http://www.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/report2006.pdf>>. April 2007.

⁷ Ibid.

Below is a summary of Canada's global standing as reported by The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report. The summary illustrates Canada's status on three levels employing more than 10 different indicators. It also highlights the relationship between Canada's standing and the domestic implementation of its international human rights commitments, in particular its commitments to CEDAW.

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CEDAW	Indicators	Canada's Ranking	Surpassing Canada
<p>Poverty</p> <p>"Assess the gender impact of antipoverty measures and increase its efforts to combat poverty among women in general and the vulnerable groups of women in particular" (Recommendation of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 28th Session, January 13-21st 2003: Paragraph 358).</p>	<p>Economic Participation and Opportunity:</p> <p>Ratio: female labour force participation over male value⁸</p> <p>Wage equality between men and women for similar work (converted to female-over-male ratio)⁹</p> <p>Ratio: estimated female earned income over male value¹⁰</p> <p>Ratio: female legislators, senior officials and managers over male value¹¹</p> <p>Ratio: female professional and technical workers over male value¹²</p>	10 th	<p>Tanzania (1)</p> <p>Moldova (2)</p> <p>United States (3)</p> <p>Philippines (4)</p> <p>Ghana (5)*</p> <p>Uzbekistan (6)*</p> <p>Jamaica (7)</p> <p>Finland (8)</p> <p>Sweden (9)</p>

* One missing value within the subindex.

⁸ International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market, 2005

⁹ World Economic Forum, Executive Opinion Survey 2006

¹⁰ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2005*, 2003 or latest available data

¹¹ International Labour Organization, *LABORSTA* online database, 2005 or latest year available

¹² International Labour Organization, *LABORSTA* online database, 2005 or latest year available

CEDAW	Indicators	Canada's Ranking	Surpassing Canada
<p>Political Under-Representation</p> <p>"Take additional measures to increase the representation of women in political and public life. It recommends the introduction of temporary special measures with numerical goals and timetables to increase the representation of women in decision-making positions at all levels"(Recommendation of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 28th Session, January 13-21st 2003: Paragraph 372).</p>	<p>Political Empowerment:</p> <p>Ratio: women with seats in parliament over male value¹³</p> <p>Ratio: women at the ministerial level over male value¹⁴</p> <p>Ratio: number of years of a female head of state (last 50 years) over male value¹⁵</p>	<p>33rd</p>	<p>Sweden (1) Norway (2) Finland (3) Iceland (4) Spain (5) Germany (6) Sri Lanka (7) South Africa (8) Ireland (9) Netherlands (10) New Zealand (11) United Kingdom (12) Denmark (13) Austria (14) Costa Rica (15) Philippines (16) Bangladesh (17) Croatia (18) Belgium (19) India (20) Latvia (21) Uganda (22) Argentina (23) El Salvador (24) Nicaragua (25)* Tanzania (26) Colombia (27) Macedonia (28) Namibia (29) Bulgaria (30) Peru (31) Australia (32)</p>

¹³ International Parliamentary Union, October 2006

¹⁴ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2005*, as of January 1 2005

¹⁵ Gender Gap Report calculations, June 2006

CEDAW	Indicators	Canada's Ranking	Surpassing Canada
<p>Education</p> <p>"The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education... The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely"(Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Part III, Article 10).</p>	<p>Educational Attainment:</p> <p>Ratio: female literacy rate over male value¹⁶</p> <p>Ratio: female net primary enrolment over male value (elementary)¹⁷</p> <p>Ratio: female net secondary level enrolment over male value (secondary)¹⁸</p> <p>Ratio: female gross tertiary level enrolment over male value (post-secondary)¹⁹</p>	<p>21st</p>	<p>Australia (1) Belgium (1) Denmark (1) Dominican Republic (1) France (1) Honduras (1) Ireland (1) Jamaica (1) Lesotho (1) Luxembourg (1) Philippines (1) United Kingdom (1) Poland (13) Colombia (14) Norway (15) Estonia (16) New Zealand (17) Finland (18) Russian Federation (19) Mongolia (20)</p>

¹⁶ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2005*, Survey data between 2000 and 2004; World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2005*

¹⁷ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2005*, 2002/3

¹⁸ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2005*, 2002/3

¹⁹ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2005*, 2002/3