

Unfinished Business

A Parallel Report on Canada's Implementation
of the Beijing Declaration and Platform
for Action

Prepared by a network of women's rights
and equality-seeking organizations, trade unions
and independent experts





CCPA

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Dedication to Kate McInturff

This past year, we lost our colleague Kate McInturff, who was the creative force behind the 2014 parallel report on Canada's implementation of the Beijing Platform.

Kate touched many lives with her intelligence, wit and passion for social justice—here in Canada and around the world. Kate's work in the areas of women's rights, pay equity, feminist economics and government accountability, among others, was always timely, informative and often very funny. She was able to expertly shift from relatable media pundit to feminist compatriot to policy advocate, passionately testifying to decision-makers about the economic policies that would lift women out of low incomes, narrow the wage gap and address gender-based violence.

The release of *Unfinished Business* is a moment to remember our wonderful colleague and celebrate her remarkable legacy. Progress on gender equality may be slow—and painfully so at times. But as Kate argued, time and again, it is absolutely within reach.

Foreword

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: A Parallel Report on Canada's Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has been prepared by a network of over 50 women's rights and equality-seeking organizations, trade unions and independent experts to mark the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Women's rights and gender equality organizations have been conducting reviews of Canada's progress in meeting the goals set out in the Beijing Platform every five years since 1995. Our goal this year is to produce a report that highlights the diverse realities of women who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and incorporates an up-to-date assessment of federal policy and programs supporting women and gender equality in Canada.

This parallel report is being submitted to the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in advance of the Beijing +25 Regional Review Meeting and provides an analysis of the 12 priority areas of concern identified in 1995 as well as additional information on key policy areas that are essential to women's progress today. It contains a set of recommendations, developed in consultation with chapter authors and Beijing +25 network members, for the accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform.

These recommendations represent the diverse views and positions of women's rights and gender equality groups in Canada and, as such, are offered as a point of departure for ongoing advocacy and public education work in the lead up to Beijing +25 — including the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women Meetings, the #GenerationEquality Global CSO Forum being hosted by the governments of Mexico and France, and the high level meeting of the UN General Assembly in September 2020.

Introduction

Progress on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, 50,000 activists, diplomats and world leaders met in Beijing, China to plan for a world in which all women everywhere — in all of their diversity — could live full and equal lives. The resulting declaration and platform for action was the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women’s rights.¹ Together with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),² the Beijing Declaration outlines some of the greatest obstacles to gender equality and how we can overcome them.

Considerable progress has been made in the intervening years. Gender equality is now understood to be integral to sustainable development, as expressed most recently in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.³ As stated in Canada’s interim 2030 *Agenda* National Strategy, “[s]ustainable development cannot be achieved if half of humanity continues to be left behind.”⁴

1 UN Women, Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*.

2 The Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

3 UN (2015), *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

4 Government of Canada (2019). *Towards Canada’s 2030 Agenda National Strategy: Interim Document*, p. 11.

No country — including Canada — has finished this agenda. In the last five years, the federal government has appointed the first gender-balanced cabinet, elevated Status of Women Canada to a full government department, and launched Canada’s first feminist international assistance policy and first federal strategy to prevent and address gender-based violence. It has strengthened institutional mechanisms to expand the use of “gender-based analysis plus” (GBA+) across government in the formulation of policy and implementation of programs. This past year, the government passed landmark proactive pay equity and gender budgeting legislation and made significant investments in building the capacity of women’s rights and gender equality organizations.

But as this report shows, Canada is not nearly close enough to meeting its 2030 Agenda goals: women are still waiting for meaningful equality. Years of effort to remove entrenched economic, cultural and social barriers to women’s progress are not achieving the results we all expected by now.

The World Economic Forum’s (WEF) Global Gender Gap Index tells the national story.⁵ Canada eked out only meagre increases in its score between 2006 and 2016 — averaging just 0.15 percentage points a year. By 2015, our ranking had fallen from 19th to 30th place, and dropped again to 35th place in 2016. Canada turned this around in 2017 by moving up the index to 16th place and holding that position in 2018 — the direct result of a boost in women’s representation in the federal cabinet after the 2015 election.

But a closer examination reveals uneven progress across the different factors that determine a country’s place on the WEF gender index. Near perfect scores in the areas of health and educational attainment in Canada have not translated into notable progress on the economic front or in women’s representation in leadership. Most critically, these scores hide fundamental disparities between different groups of women.

All things being equal, we would expect that men and women would be employed in roughly the same numbers and earn roughly the same wages; that men and women would occupy the same share of management jobs and the same share of seats in Parliament; and that men and women would spend the same amount of time in unpaid work and care.

Unfortunately, all things are not equal, and the gaps are especially wide and persistent for marginalized groups of women in Canada.

Since 1995, the proportion of women completing some form of tertiary education has increased by 60%, with 64.2% of women aged 25 and older

⁵ World Economic Forum (2018). *The Global Gender Gap Report 2018*.

(compared to 48.8% of men) now holding a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree.⁶ Immigrant women are even more highly educated than Canadian-born women.⁷

Progress in education, however, has not produced an equally steady level of progress in women's economic security. Canada's score for economic participation and opportunity in the WEF gender gap index, however, is well below our positive standing in health and education. Between 2006 and 2018, Canada's gender gap in this area inched forward an average of 0.2% per year. At this rate, *it will take 164 years to close the economic gender gap in Canada.*

The gap between men's and women's earnings is a significant factor in Canada's mediocre showing in this area. Although employment incomes for men and women overall have grown since 2006, the ratio of women to men's earned income has barely moved — rising from 64% in 2006 to 67% in 2018.

Canada's gender pay gap is one of the highest in the OECD: we are in 31st place out of 36 countries, behind all European countries and the United States. Average full-time earnings among Canadian women are certainly higher than in many countries, but they are still paid only 82 cents on average for every dollar men take home.⁸

The gap is even larger for racialized women and Indigenous women, who make 60% and 57%, respectively, of what non-racialized men earn. If those Indigenous and racialized women had been making the same salaries as their white male peers, their bank accounts (and the Canadian economy) would have been \$43 billion richer in 2015.⁹

The biggest drag on Canada's WEF gender gap score in this area is poor performance with respect to the share of women in government and public and private sector management positions. In 2018, men outnumbered women in these professions by two to one,¹⁰ while the racialized and Indigenous women's share of management jobs was a fraction of the share of non-racialized and non-Indigenous men (6.5% and 1.2% of all senior managers, respectively).¹¹

In the political arena, only 27.2% of all members of Parliament are women. What's more, only 4.4% of the seats in the House of Commons are occupied

6 Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0118-01 Labour force characteristics by educational degree, annual (x 1,000).

7 Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0087-01 Labour force characteristics of immigrants by educational attainment, annual (x 1,000).

8 OECD (2019), Gender Wage Gap.

9 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population.

10 Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0335-01 Labour force characteristics by occupation, annual.

11 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population.

by racialized women and 0.9% by Indigenous women.¹² Political participation is the one area measured in which rapid change should be easy to realize, yet progress in closing the gap has been achingly slow.

All people deserve to live and work in environments that are safe, inclusive and fair. Yet gender-based violence is still a daily reality for far too many people in Canada. In 2017, over 75,000 women reported incidents of intimate partner violence to the police;¹³ tens of thousands more incidents go unreported.¹⁴ Estimates of unreported sexual assault and criminal harassment are even higher.¹⁵

The experience and threat of violence is particularly acute for Indigenous women, women with disabilities, and LGBTQI2S people.¹⁶ Research from the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls found that Indigenous women and girls were 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than any other women in Canada, and 16 times more likely than white women.¹⁷ Almost half (45%) of incidents of violent crime reported by women—that is, sexual assault, robbery, or physical assault—involved a victim with a disability.

The closer women get to closing the gender gap, it seems the greater the barriers become to achieving equality. It's also clear that the barriers are considerably higher for women and gender-diverse people who face multiple and interacting systems of oppression that systematically undermine their human rights and reproduce inequality.

To be clear, the pace of progress has shifted over the past five years. Having a prime minister proudly proclaim he is a feminist, in an era of backlash against women's rights, sends a powerful signal. Under this government,

12 FEWO (2019), *Elect her: A roadmap for improving the representation of women in Canadian politics, Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women*, p. 15.

13 Intimate partner violence is the most common kind of violence experienced by women. In 2017, 45% of all female victims of violence had been victimized by a current or former partner. Marta Burczycka (2018), "Police-reported intimate partner violence in Canada, 2017," In *Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2017*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

14 Marta Burczycka (2016), "Trends in self-reported spousal violence, 2014." In *Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2014*, Juristat, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

15 Shana Conroy and Adam Cotter (2017), "Self-reported sexual assault in Canada, 2014," Juristat, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

16 In this report, we use the acronym LGBTQI2S to refer to people who describe their identity as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, queer/questioning, intersex and Two-Spirited. Two-Spirited is a term that some Indigenous people use to describe their sexual, gender or spiritual identity.

17 National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*. Volume 1a, p. 55.

gender equality and women’s rights have moved from the far periphery of public debate to become issues of central concern.

The government has started to build a foundation for a more equal and inclusive society after years of backsliding and measurable losses. It now needs to cement this legacy by tackling the critical issues highlighted in this report, sharpening the focus on feminist intersectionality and committing the necessary resources to turn “feminist progress into lasting change.”¹⁸

This report, which was jointly produced by a network of national women’s rights organizations, civil society groups and trade unions, details Canada’s progress toward equality over the past five years. It addresses priority areas identified in 1995, but also provides additional information not covered in the Beijing documents about the status of key groups, while discussing other issue areas such as the environment. In each of the 20 chapters, contributors consider the achievements, challenges and setbacks to progress on gender equality then make recommendations for the accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform, summarized in the conclusion.

* * *

We can’t be complacent. Around the world, women’s rights and women’s voices are under attack. There are reasons yet to march, gaps yet to be closed. With miles to go before we meet the goals set out in Beijing, this report is itself a testament to the resilience of our contributors and the communities in which they work.

The 25th anniversary of Beijing provides new opportunities to reconnect, regenerate commitment, charge up political will and mobilize the public. The Beijing Platform for Action, still forward-looking at 25, offers an important focus for rallying people around gender equality and women’s empowerment. Its promises are necessarily ambitious. But over time, and with the energy of new generations, those promises can be kept.

¹⁸ Oxfam Canada (2019), *Turning feminist progress into lasting change: Feminist Scorecard 2019*, p. 2.

Indigenous Women and Girls

This chapter includes an overall account of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit women, as well as distinct sections on Métis women and Inuit women because of their legal, social and cultural differences.

TO CANADA'S SHAME, the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls has exposed the devastating effects of colonization, racism, and sexism on Indigenous women and girls.¹⁹ The Final Report shows that over time, colonizing governments in Canada have built a structure of laws, policies and practices that treat First Nations, Métis and Inuit women, girls and two-spirited people as lesser human beings — sexualized, racialized, and disposable — because of their gender/sex and their Indigeneity. The result is high rates of violence, exploitation, rapes, disappearances, and murders. Colonial laws and policies have also created the context in which violence against Indigenous women and girls occurs within their own communities, including family violence, domestic violence, and sexual violence. The job of governments in Canada now — federal, provincial, and territorial, Indigenous, municipal — is to dismantle this deeply embedded discrimination against Indigenous women, girls

¹⁹ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*.

and two-spirit people. That can only be done through strategic, concerted, and coordinated action that is grounded in human rights. Actions must be planned, measured, and monitored.

1. Genocide in Canada: Violence against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people

On June 2, 2019, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) released its final report, finding that Canada has committed genocide against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit persons. This finding is based on extensive evidence, testimony, and independent research and legal analysis carried out by the Inquiry over the time of its mandate.²⁰ The report concluded that Canada's federal, provincial and municipal laws, policies and practices have created an infrastructure of violence that has led to thousands of murders and disappearances as well as other grave human rights violations.

The report included 231 Calls for Justice, with the most significant recommendation being a national action plan to implement the Calls for Action through coordinated programs, strategies and actions, working with provincial, territorial and Indigenous governments, with timelines, measurable goals, adequate oversight, and monitoring.²¹ This is to be done with Indigenous women as full participants and decision-makers in this process. The government has agreed that a national action plan is necessary.²²

The report noted the extreme violence against Indigenous women and girls as been recognized as a human rights crisis, with roots embedded in the history of colonization but continuing in the present. The Calls for Justice require profound changes to the extreme social and economic disadvantages of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people, including:

- Over-representation of Indigenous children in foster care;
- Ongoing racial discrimination in Canada's justice system from police officers to courts to prisons;

²⁰ Please see: National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), *A Legal Analysis of Genocide: Supplementary Report*.

²¹ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), Final Report, Volume 1b, pp. 167–218.

²² See e.g. Gloria Galloway (2019), "Trudeau vows action on MMIWG but declines to endorse inquiry's genocide finding," *The Globe and Mail*, June 3, 2019.

- High rates of sexualized violence, including sexual exploitation and human trafficking;
- Many forms of violence associated with “man camps” related to extractive industries;
- Forced and coerced sterilization of Indigenous women often associated with the child welfare system;
- Criminalization and over-incarceration of Indigenous women and girls — the fastest growing prison population in Canada;
- Overt sex discrimination in the *Indian Act* which excludes Indigenous women and children from membership in their communities and access to critical programs and services as well as treaty rights; and
- Purposeful, chronic and racially discriminatory underfunding of human services like access to water, food, housing, and adequate health care which has created the crisis-level socio-economic conditions of Indigenous women and girls, including ill-health, pre-mature deaths and suicides.

Indigenous women leaders — First Nations, Inuit and Métis — insist that the national action plan must be designed, and the Calls for Action must be implemented, under their leadership.²³ Adequate funding and political support will be required for Indigenous women to carry out that leadership role.

2. State-based violence against Indigenous women and girls

In July 2019, shortly after the National Inquiry issued its Final Report, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women its causes and consequences, Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, issued her report on her mission to Canada, to the Human Rights Council, which underscores the National Inquiry’s findings.²⁴ The Special Rapporteur found that Canada has engaged in

²³ In this context, referencing First Nations, Métis and Inuit women must be understood to include non-status First Nations women

²⁴ Dubravka Šimonović (2019), *Violence against women, its causes and consequences: Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences*, 32, A/HRC/41/42/Add.1 [Advance, unedited version], June 3, 2019.

what she called “gendered colonization” and that the associated grave human rights violations continue into the present. She noted the socio-economic conditions of poverty, under-education, over-incarceration, ill health and suicides as rooted in Canada’s colonial structure. She also specifically noted the many ways in which violence is committed against Indigenous women and girls, including forced and coerced sterilizations, child apprehensions into foster care, human trafficking, and rapes, disappearances and murders. She also called for an external, independent review of state actors, like police and corrections officers, for their roles violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Given the state’s role in genocide and violence against Indigenous women and girls, Indigenous women leaders and their allies say it will require assistance from the United Nations treaty bodies, rapporteurs and agencies, and from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, to assist and oversee the design of institutional reforms in partnership with Indigenous women and girls. It is critical that the United Nations human rights bodies intervene to ensure Canada addresses ongoing genocide and grave human rights violations, by changing discriminatory government laws, policies, and practices. These changes could thus be based on global best practices and the experience of human rights experts.

3. *Indian Act* sex discrimination

On August 15, 2019, the Government of Canada brought into force provisions that will eliminate long-standing sex discrimination against First Nations women and their descendants, prescribed in the federal *Indian Act*. Since 1876, the *Indian Act* has discriminated against First Nations women and their descendants. It has privileged Indian men²⁵ and their descendants over Indian women and their descendants. For more than 100 years, being entitled to Indian status required being related to a male Indian by blood or marriage. There was a one-parent rule for transmission of status, and the one parent was male. In addition, Indian women who married non-Indian men lost their status, while Indian men who married non-Indian women endowed their Indian status on their wives.

²⁵ Note that we use the term “Indian” in this particular context as this is the legal term in the *Indian Act*; “Indian”, however, is an archaic, colonial term that is not socially acceptable and should not be used to identify an Indigenous person.

This discrimination has had profoundly harmful effects on First Nations women, their descendants and their communities. The sex discrimination has functioned effectively as a tool of assimilation, defining thousands of First Nations women and their descendants as non-Indian, not entitled to recognition, belonging in their communities, political voice, or the benefits of treaties or inherent rights. This discrimination has been identified by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as a root cause of the violence against Indigenous women and girls. On January 11, 2019, the United Nations Human Rights Committee, ruling on the petition of Sharon McIvor, found that the *Indian Act* violates the rights of First Nations women to equal protection of the law and to equal enjoyment of their culture.²⁶

In its announcement of August 15, 2019, the Government of Canada estimates removing the sex discrimination from the *Indian Act* will have the effect of newly entitling about 450,000 First Nations women and their descendants to Indian status.

4. Trafficking of Indigenous women and girls

Human trafficking, primarily for the purposes of sexual exploitation, of Indigenous women and girls, is a part of the crisis of violence, murders and disappearances. It must be specifically addressed, as social services, policing and justice systems do not currently ensure the safety of Indigenous women and girls or work effectively to prevent their exposure to sexual violence.

Between 2017 and 2018, the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaison project of the Ontario Native Women's Association engaged with over 3,000 community members, over 250 of whom identified as survivors of human trafficking. The project has developed a comprehensive model for addressing the needs of Indigenous women and girls — both survivors and those who are at risk of being trafficked.²⁷

²⁶ See: Patrick Clark (2019), "McIvor v Canada 2019," The Poverty and Human Rights Centre.

²⁷ Ontario Native Women's Association (2018), *Journey to Safe Spaces: Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Engagement Report 2017-2018*. The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) is a not for profit organization that was established in 1971 to empower and support Indigenous women and their families through the province of Ontario. ONWA is a voice for Indigenous women's issues in the province of Ontario

5. Sterilization of Indigenous women without their consent

Across Canada and as recently as 2018, Indigenous women have reported being forcibly or coercively sterilized. Some women were incorrectly told that the procedure is reversible. Others were separated from their babies until they consented to a tubal ligation.

Forced and coerced sterilizations of Indigenous women are a result of systemic bias and discrimination against Indigenous peoples in the provision of public services in Canada, a pattern well known and acknowledged by government. They are an assault on the cultural integrity of societies that have already endured grave human rights violations. Measures to prevent births within ethnic or racial groups is explicitly prohibited by the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

In December 2018, the UN Committee on Torture (UNCAT) affirmed that forced and coerced sterilization of women in Canada is a form of torture²⁸ and called on Canada to “ensure that all allegations of forced or coerced sterilization are impartially investigated, that the persons responsible are held accountable and that adequate redress is provided to the victims.”²⁹ The report also called on Canada to adopt laws and policies to prevent and criminalize sterilization without consent, and to clearly define “the requirements of free, prior and informed consent with regard to sterilization and by raising awareness among Indigenous women and medical personnel of that requirement.”³⁰

The federal government has the jurisdictional authority and the obligation to ensure that the UN Committee on Torture’s recommendations are implemented across all provinces and territories as federal coordination and leadership are essential to ensuring a consistent, country-wide approach to addressing this pressing human rights concern. Such an approach must involve survivors, Indigenous women’s organizations, human rights organizations, provinces, territories, and medical bodies.

To date, federal action has been limited, and there has been no marked progress in implementing the UN Committee on Torture’s recommendations.

²⁸ Amnesty International (2018), “Sterilizing Indigenous Women without Consent is Torture, says UN Committee,” News Release, December 7, 2018.

²⁹ UN Committee against Torture (2018), “Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Canada,” CAT/C/CAN/CO/7, December 21, 2018.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

6. Participation in governance: Indigenous women’s voice excluded

Indigenous women do not have an established role in decision-making which concerns them, nor a place at the table with male-led settler governments and male-led Indigenous organizations. Indigenous women have the right to voice their concerns and provide solutions and recommendations for the issues they face. Canadian governments exclude Indigenous women’s groups, as well as other Indigenous women experts and community leaders from their deliberations on issues that directly affect Indigenous women. This raises concerns about serious gaps in policy perspectives and governance roles by Indigenous women in the “nation to nation” dialogue Canada has set out for itself. For this reason, these groups have added their voices to this section of the Parallel Report.

Métis Women and Girls

MÉTIS WOMEN AND girls are distinct from First Nations and Inuit women and girls. We have different political and organizational approaches. Our life circumstances are different. While many of our women share the same levels of poverty, their circumstances stem from different socio-economic determinants and have been shaped by a long history of non-recognition by federal, provincial and municipal governments. The current systems of support – where they exist – are not focused enough to address these circumstances.

The Women of the Métis Nation (WMN)³¹ believe in holistic and coordinated approaches to addressing the unique social, cultural and economic circumstances of Métis women and girls. WMN believes that this requires all orders of government to work with the Métis Nation to recognize the rights, interests and jurisdictions of Métis Governing bodies and to transfer or devolve responsibility for cultural, social and economic programs and services to Métis.

The federal government has placed a priority on addressing Indigenous issues and has announced the formation of a Métis Nation *Permanent Bilateral Forum* to address shared priority issues. The Forum is composed of the Prime Minister, Premiers, and engaged ministers with responsibility for Indigenous policy areas. This is a step in the right direction. Addressing

31 Women of the Métis Nation [WMN] is a Métis women’s collective body representing the Métis Women from the Governing Members of the Métis Nation and is officially mandated by the Métis National Council. This section is taken from from: Women of the Métis Nation (2018), *Women of the Métis Women Perspectives*, 5th National Indigenous Women’s Summit.

social determinants of health will be a key to closing the gaps between Métis and other Canadians. Given the current understanding of the federal government's jurisdiction for Métis citizens, federal Aboriginal programming in areas such as employment and training, housing, economic development, education, culture and health should be extended to the Métis Nation.

Taking culture into account is of critical importance for the Métis Nation who have in many cases fallen victim to Pan-Aboriginal / Pan-Indigenous approaches. Many times, these approaches completely fail to deal with the Métis as Métis or to deal with Métis at all. [As the government moves forward, particularly with the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples], there needs to be a clear plan as to how they intend to implement the Declaration and ensure that a gender-based [and culturally-based] lens is employed in developing the implementation strategy.

Inuit Women and Girls

NEARLY 25 YEARS after the launch of the progressive Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Inuit women and girls continue to face significant social, economic and political inequalities.³² Inuit do not share the same standard of living or have the same access to health and social services, food, housing, employment, education or socioeconomic development as most other Canadians. These conditions have a negative impact on Inuit women and children. Canadian society overall is also negatively impacted.

1. Housing and safety

For decades Inuit have faced an acute housing crisis resulting in severe overcrowding, substandard homes, increased exposure to preventable disease and a lack of affordable and suitable housing. Statistics Canada data show that in 2016, over half (51.7%) of Inuit in Inuit Nunangat live in crowded housing compared to 8.5% of non-Indigenous Canadians.³³ Overcrowded housing is linked to higher rates of family violence³⁴ and for Inuit, this combines with

32 This chapter was prepared by Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada. Pauktuutit is the national representative organization of Inuit women. It raises awareness of the needs of Inuit women, advocates for equality and social improvements, and encourages Inuit women's full participation in the community, regional and national life of Canada.

33 Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Government of Canada (2019), *Inuit Nunangat Housing Strategy*. Data based on 2016 Census of Population.

34 Cathleen Knotsch and Dianne Kinnon (2011). *If not now – when? Addressing the ongoing Inuit housing crisis in Canada*. Ottawa: National Aboriginal Health Organization.

shelter shortages resulting in those experiencing violence and abuse in their homes often having no place in their community to seek safety.

In 2017, Canada committed \$240 million over 10 years for housing in Nunavut. Last year, an additional \$400 million over 10 years was committed for the other three regions of Inuit Nunangat. Given population growth of 20.1% in Canada's North, coupled with the high cost of materials and construction, the money Canada has allocated to address the housing crisis is inadequate and may never close the housing gap.

Inuit women's and girls' ability to lead healthy and happy lives is inseparably linked to their access to culturally-appropriate, safe, adequate and affordable housing. The right to adequate housing is established in several human rights treaties that Canada has signed on and ratified.

2. Violence against Inuit women

At the rate of 14 times the national average, violence is a leading cause of morbidity and mortality for Inuit women. In Nunavut, women and girls continue to be far more likely to be killed than in any jurisdiction in Canada³⁵ and the risk of a woman being sexually assaulted is 12 times greater than the provincial/territorial average.³⁶ These levels of violence severely undermine Inuit women's physical, emotional and psychological well-being and that of their children.

Violence against women is recognized in international law as a violation of human rights, as confirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the International Covenant on Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights (ICESR). Despite this, 70% of the 51 Inuit communities across Inuit Nunangat do not have a safe shelter for women. While the provinces and territories are responsible for housing and safe shelters for women, Indigenous Services Canada provides operational funding to shelters on-reserve, and also reimburses costs for off-reserve shelter services used by First Nations

³⁵ Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability. (2018). *Understanding gender-related killings of women and girls in Canada 2018*.

³⁶ Adam Cotter and Pascale Beaupré (2014), "Police-reported sexual offences against children and youth in Canada, 2012," *Juristat*, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X; Cecilia Benoit, *et.al.* (2015), *Issue brief: Sexual violence against women in Canada*. This Issue Brief was commissioned by the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Senior Officials for the Status of Women Canada.

peoples ordinarily resident on-reserve. Since Inuit communities are not reserves, shelters serving Inuit women in the Arctic are disallowed from accessing this funding. This specifically excludes Inuit women and girls from developing and accessing shelters in the North.

Barring Inuit from accessing shelter funding contravenes UNDRIP Article 22, which declares: “States shall take measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.” Just as the federal government funds shelters on reserves, so must they fund shelters for Inuit communities.

3. Inuit women and poverty

Canada has ratified several treaties that specifically relate to poverty including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This legally obligates states to protect the rights stipulated in the Covenant such as hunger, homelessness and poor health. Yet, for too many Inuit families, poverty is a leading barrier to achieving health and wellness. The median individual before-tax income for Inuit in Inuit Nunangat is \$23,485, while it is \$92,011 for non-Indigenous people in the same region, a gap of more than \$68,000.³⁷ This disparity is striking when considering the high cost of living in the North.

A 2016 study by Pauktuutit, *Breaking Barriers, Creating Opportunities*, found that some of the critical barriers to Inuit women’s economic participation include the absence of available, affordable and reliable child care.³⁸ Without a safe and reliable place for their children, Inuit women are unable to continue or complete their education, attend training programs, search for and retain employment or establish a business. Where child care is available there are often long waitlists and fees that are too expensive for many families — and these costs multiply for those with more than one child. Child care is a particularly pressing issue as women form most single-parent households in Inuit Nunangat.

With the highest rates of hunger in Canada, food insecurity for Inuit is at crisis levels. The Inuit Health Survey found that 70% of Inuit households

³⁷ Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (2018), *Inuit Statistical Profile 2018*. Data based on 2016 Census of Population.

³⁸ Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2017), *Angiqatigik—Breaking Barriers, Creating Opportunities: Strategy to Engage Inuit Women in Economic Participation*.

in Nunavut are food insecure.³⁹ This is six times higher than the Canadian national average and represents the highest documented food insecurity rate for any Indigenous population residing in a developed country.⁴⁰ As with most issues, food insecurity in the North disproportionately affects Inuit women, as they will go without food to ensure that their family is fed.

4. Power and decision-making by Inuit women

Despite Inuit women and girls having the right to equitable standards of education, employment, health care, housing and safety, the attainment of gender equality and human rights as adopted at the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women remains only an aspiration in Canada. Inuit women continue to fight to have their rights respected and to be directly included, consulted and engaged in decision-making that affects their lives. Improvement of the political, social, economic and health circumstances of Inuit women and their families requires that Inuit women have equal primacy in all policy-level discussions.

39 Paula Arriagada (2017), *Insights on Canadian society food insecurity among Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat, Insights on Canadian Society*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 75-006-X.

40 Inuit Tapirrit Kanatami (n.d.), *Inuit food insecurity in Canada*.

Women with Disabilities

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES⁴¹ face unique forms of discrimination linked to living in a male-dominated society geared to able-bodied needs.⁴² One-quarter of all women (24%) report a disability,⁴³ yet women with disabilities continue to be overlooked and ignored, hidden away in institutions and consigned to the footnotes in policy and program documents.⁴⁴

This invisibility has devastating consequences for the women's well-being and their ability to live life on their own terms, especially for those who experience multiple barriers as a result of the type of their disability, racialized status, age or geographic location.⁴⁵ Tangible action is needed to uphold the rights of women with disabilities and ensure their full inclusion

41 This chapter was prepared by DisAbleD Women's Network (DAWN) Canada. DAWN is a national, feminist, cross-disability organization that has provided opportunities for self-determination and leadership development for women with disabilities for 30 years. It works to end the poverty, isolation, discrimination and violence experienced by Canadian women with disabilities and Deaf women.

42 Susan Wendell (1997), "Toward a feminist theory of disability," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, Lennard Davis (ed.), New York : Routledge, pp. 243–256.

43 Stuart Morris, et.al. (2018). *A demographic, employment and income profile of Canadians with disabilities aged 15 years and over, 2017*. Canadian Survey on Disability Reports, Statistics Canada. Catalogue no. 89-654-X2018002.

44 DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada / Réseau d'Actions des femmes Handicapées Canada (2018), DAWN Canada. *More Than A Footnote : A Research Report on Women and Girls with Disabilities in Canada*, 1st Edition.

45 Susan Manning (2016), Experiences of Women with Disabilities in Canada's North, A Fem-NorthNet Factsheet.

in society as set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other national and international human rights covenants.

1. Violence against women

Women with disabilities experience much higher levels of violence than women without disabilities, as confirmed in recent research.⁴⁶ In 2014, for example, 45% of all female victims of violent crime (including sexual assault, robbery and physical assault) were women with disabilities, according to Statistics Canada's General Social Survey on Victimization.

Women with disabilities were also more likely to report being the victim of multiple and separate incidents of violence compared to those without disabilities, and they were twice as likely as women without disabilities to have been sexually assaulted in the year before the survey. Four out of 10 (38%) women with disabilities reported that the physical or sexual assault occurred before the age of 15, while 18% reported sexual abuse by an adult before the age of 15.

For women with disabilities, the risk of violence increases when they are racialized, younger, Indigenous, LGBTQI2S, migrant workers, immigrants, non-status migrants or living in rural areas.⁴⁷ An intersectional lens uncovers a troubling picture of how certain groups of women with disabilities are differently impacted.⁴⁸ For example:

- One-quarter (24%) of women with cognitive disabilities (including learning, intellectual and memory disabilities) and 26% of women with mental health-related disabilities reported being sexually abused before the age of 15.⁴⁹ While Canadian data are scarce, American research confirms children with disabilities remain at a higher risk of being victims of sexual abuse than those without disabilities.⁵⁰
- For women with cognitive and mental health disabilities, rates of violent victimization are four times the rate of those who do not have

46 Adam Cotter (2018), *Violence and Victimization of Women with Disabilities*, Juristat, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

47 Canadian Labour Congress (2017), Submission to Employment and Social Development Canada on Accessibility Legislation for Canadians with Disabilities.

48 Adam Cotter (2018).

49 Nancy Smith and Sandra Harrell (2013), *Sexual Abuse of Children with Disabilities: A National Snapshot*. VERA Institute of Justice.

50 Adam Cotter (2018).

a disability. Women with sensory disabilities also experience higher levels of violent victimization than women without disabilities.⁵¹

- In general, women with disabilities who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual experience 2.3 times higher rates of violence compared to heterosexual women with disabilities.⁵²

2. Disability and domestic violence

There are also important links between domestic violence and disability. It is estimated that as many as 276,000 women in Canada experience a traumatic brain injury each year as a result of intimate partner violence.⁵³ Recent Canadian research confirms that for every professional hockey player who acquires a concussion, an estimated 7,000 women will acquire a concussion as a result of gender-based violence.⁵⁴

With respect to intimate partner violence, 71% of women with disabilities reported contacting or using formal support services following an experience of violence.⁵⁵ However, women with disabilities face significant barriers when attempting to leave abusive situations, as both disability-related services and services for victims of abuse are not always able to respond to their needs.⁵⁶ Women with disabilities are also five times more likely to report unsatisfactory services from police compared to women without disabilities.⁵⁷ Supports and services can be even more difficult to access for racialized women and girls with disabilities.⁵⁸

51 *Ibid.*

52 *Ibid.*

53 Paul van Donkelaar (2015), “*Traumatic Brain Injury: The unseen impact of domestic violence.*” The Conversation Canada.

54 Brie Welton (2019), “*Women getting head injuries from partners at a higher rate than hockey players getting concussions, UBC researcher says,*” [iNFOnews.ca](http://info.ca)

55 Adam Cotter (2018).

56 Paula Pinto. (2015), “Women, disability, and the right to health,” *Women’s Health, Second Edition: Intersections of Policy, Research, and Practice*, Pat Armstrong and Ann Pederson (eds.), Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.

57 Adam Cotter (2018).

58 Krista Melanie Riley (2011), “Violence in the Lives of Muslim Girls and Women in Canada,” Muslim Resource Centre and Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children, Western University.

3. Incarceration of women with disabilities

Incarceration and disability cannot be understood as separate issues. One key legacy of disability policy is the practice of removing people with disabilities from community settings. Indeed, policies related to people with disabilities have historically favoured spatial exclusion.⁵⁹

Even as we have moved toward deinstitutionalization, many women with disabilities remain vulnerable to various forms of modern incarceration in institutions such as psychiatric facilities, group homes and long-term care facilities. Some Canadian research also interrogates practices like community treatment orders issued by physicians, which provide individuals with conditional releases from institutions so long as they comply with treatment plans.⁶⁰ There is a need, when looking at disability, to always understand that incarceration exists even outside of prison walls.

The literature around the school-to-prison pipeline also highlights troubling trends. While much of this literature focuses on boys, racialized students, students with disabilities and girl children are at heightened risk for incarceration.⁶¹ Women with disabilities make up a significant share of the prison population, and many of them have experienced traumatic brain injuries at some point, as new research shows.⁶²

4. Poverty and the economy

In Canada, persons with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty as those without disabilities.⁶³ Overall, women are more likely than men to experience poverty,⁶⁴ and the risk of poverty increases when compounding

59 Deborah Carter Park and John Radford (1999), Rhetoric and place in the ‘mental deficiency’ asylum. *Mind and Body Spaces: Geographies of illness, impairment and disability*, Ruth Butler and Hester Parr (eds.), pp. 70–97.

60 Jihan Abbas and Jijian Voronka (2014), Remembering institutional erasures: The meaning of histories of disability incarceration in Ontario, In *Disability Incarcerated: Imprisonment and disability in the United States and Canada*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 121–138.

61 Subini Ancy Annamma (2014), “Disabling juvenile justice: Engaging the stories of incarcerated young women of color with disabilities,” *Remedial and Special Education*, Vol. 35, No. 5, pp. 313–324.

62 Eric Durand, et.al. (2017), “Traumatic brain injury among female offenders in a prison population: results of the FleuryTBI study,” *Brain and behavior*, Vol. 7, No. 1.

63 Cam Crawford (2013) *Looking into Poverty: Income Sources of Poor People with Disabilities in Canada*. Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society.

64 Dan Fox and Melissa Moyer (2018). The Economic Well-being of Women in Canada, *Women in Canada: A gender-based statistical report*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue 89-503-X.

factors like disability are present.⁶⁵ An estimated 23.1% to 25.0%⁶⁶ of women with disabilities (aged 25 to 64) live in poverty, more than twice the rates among women without disabilities in this age group.

For children and youth, we know that poverty disproportionately impacts racialized groups, Indigenous persons, recent immigrants, those with disabilities, and children in households led by lone parents who are women.⁶⁷ Young women with disabilities who are poor are also almost two times as likely as their male counterparts to be recipients of social assistance (23.3%).⁶⁸

While women in general are more likely than men to experience poverty, Indigenous women with disabilities, older women, women of colour, and immigrant and refugee women are most affected by housing issues.⁶⁹ Almost half of all women who report having been homeless at some point in their lives (46%) also report having a disability.⁷⁰

In general, women are more likely than men to experience invisible and/or less visible conditions like pain and chronic fatigue, which are less likely to be covered under programs that compensate for work-related disabilities.⁷¹ In general, women with disabilities are less likely than women and men without disabilities to participate in the labour force, with a labour force participation rate of only 61.3% and an unemployment rate of 13.4%.⁷²

65 A. Duchesne (2015), *Women and Homelessness in Canada: A Brief Literature Review*. Mission Old Brewery, McGill University, and Centre for Research on Women and Children.

66 Katherine Wall (2017), Low income among persons with a disability in Canada, Insights on Canadian Society, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 75-006-X.

67 Campaign 2000 (2015), *Let's Do This, Let's End Child Poverty for Good. 2015 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada*. Family Services Toronto.

68 Cam Crawford (2013).

69 Canadian Women's Health Network (nd), Women, Housing, and Health.

70 Adam Cotter (2018).

71 Marta Meana, Robert Cho and Marie DesMeules (2004), "Chronic pain: the extra burden on Canadian women," *BMC women's health*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Supplement 1, p. S17.

72 Amanda Burlock (2017), Women with Disabilities. *Women in Canada: a Gender Based Statistical Report*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 89-503-X.

Immigrant and Refugee Women

RECENT CHANGES TO Canada's immigration and refugee system do not go far enough toward creating a system that affords dignity and respect to all migrants.⁷³ This is especially true for migrant women who confront unique barriers related to their precarious status, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and violence – a situation made worse by social isolation, language barriers, lack of knowledge of the justice system, discrimination and racism.

1. Bill C-97: Changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act

The number of refugees worldwide is growing. By the end of 2018, 68.5 million people had been displaced globally as a result of persecution, conflict or human rights violations; among them are nearly 25.4 million refugees, more than half of whom are under the age of 18, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In Canada the number of people arriving in search of refuge has also grown.

⁷³ This chapter was prepared with the assistance of the following groups: Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, Ontario Coalition of Agencies Serving Immigrants, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario, Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, and Institute for International Women's Rights–Manitoba

Over the past two years, an increasing number of refugee claimants have been arriving in Canada via the land border with the United States. The Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) between these two countries requires asylum seekers to claim refugee protection in the first country of arrival. Through Bill C-97, the Budget Implementation Act, the federal government has proposed substantial changes to the refugee determination process. Refugee claimants will now be deemed ineligible if they have previously made a claim for refugee protection in the U.S. or certain other countries.⁷⁴ In addition to fanning the flames of xenophobia, this provision will bar refugee claimants from the protections of an independent refugee determination hearing even if they have never had a hearing on their asylum claim in the other country, or have compelling reasons to come to Canada (e.g., to reunite with family members).

There are significant gaps in U.S. refugee protections, and the system is especially harmful to women and trans women. In 2018, for example, former U.S. attorney general Jeff Sessions issued a precedential decision restricting access to asylum for women fleeing domestic violence.⁷⁵ By contrast, Canada has an independent adjudicative tribunal and prides itself on its long-standing recognition of domestic violence as a form of gender-based persecution. With the introduction of the new measures in Bill C-97, Canada is in effect supporting U.S. policy and the violation of the human rights of women and children seeking asylum.

2. Family sponsorship

In 2014, the federal government introduced restrictions on the sponsorship of parents and grandparents (PGPs). They included increasing the income requirement of sponsors to 30% above the low income cut-off, doubling the sponsorship period to 20 years and capping sponsorship applications at 5,000 a year. These changes have had distressing impacts on families seeking unification.⁷⁶ Following the 2015 federal election the cap was increased to the current level of 20,000. The government also introduced a lottery system

⁷⁴ Proposed change by section 306 of Bill C-97, to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, s. 101(1) (c.1).

⁷⁵ US Department of Justice, Office of the Attorney General (2018), *Matter of A-B-*, 27 I&N Dec. 316 (A.G. 2018).

⁷⁶ OCASI (2013), “Proposed immigration sponsorship changes will keep families apart.”

for PGP sponsorship that is unique among Canadian immigration classes, but the remaining restrictions were left in place.⁷⁷

The majority of Canadians who seek to sponsor PGPs are women immigrants of colour who do not meet the income requirement to sponsor. In fact, family support often helps women in their successful economic and social integration; for newcomers particularly, it improves their access to the labour market and helps alleviate their burden of family responsibility. Parental support is also critical for newcomer immigrant women going through separation or divorce, and/or fleeing family violence, as it is often the only way to mitigate the heightened isolation faced by migration and family breakdown. The government's refusal to remove barriers to PGP sponsorship is having a disproportionately negative impact on immigrant women of colour.

3. Migrant care workers

The Temporary Foreign Worker Program has grown exponentially over the last decade and has become deeply entrenched in the Canadian labour market as an ongoing source of cheap labour. Care workers, the vast majority of whom are racialized women from the Global South, are particularly at risk of abuse and exploitation.

The increased risk to these women is inherent in the caregiver program due to the isolation of workers and lack of workplace inspections, which would ensure workers are not abused or mistreated.⁷⁸ The backlog in processing caregiver applications for permanent residency has grown over the years, causing lengthy family separation and considerable hardship for workers and their families.⁷⁹

Changes to the program implemented by the government in 2014 removed the guaranteed pathway to permanent residency for temporary workers and introduced higher language requirements and more stringent labour market impact assessment (LMIA) requirements for employers, along with a new fee and a cap on the number of applications.

⁷⁷ Kathleen Harris (2017), "95,000 sponsors vie for 10,000 spots in lottery to bring parents, grandparents to Canada," *CBC News*. May 2, 2017.

⁷⁸ Office of the Auditor General of Canada (2017), *Report 5—Temporary Foreign Worker Program—Employment and Social Development Canada*. 2017 Spring Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada.

⁷⁹ Caregivers Action Centre (2016), Submission to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities on the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. May 16, 2016.

The current government introduced an interim program to open pathways to permanent residency status for some caregivers. However, stringent requirements prevent many workers from being eligible. Applicants must have 12 months of service as a caregiver in Canada, a valid job, advanced language skills and a high school education. The government introduced a new five-year pilot⁸⁰ that will allow future applicants to arrive with family members, and that removes the LMIA and employer fee. But the stringent requirements have not changed, and the cap remains in place.

4. The Canada Child Benefit

When the federal government introduced the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) in 2016, its goal was to lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. Yet many children are denied this benefit because their families are ineligible.

One of the criteria for CCB eligibility is the immigration status of the child’s parent(s). The parent applying for CCB, or their spouse or common-law partner, must be a Canadian citizen, permanent resident, protected person, temporary resident who has lived in Canada for 18 months, or registered as “Indian” under the Indian Act. Thus, children of people claiming refugee status in Canada, who cannot leave Canada for reasons beyond their control or who do not have regularized status, are unfairly and arbitrarily excluded — even if the child is a Canadian citizen.⁸¹

Women are still the primary caregiver in most Canadian families. CCB applicants are largely women, as the application has to be made by the parent who is “primarily responsible” for the children. Excluding children from CCB based on a parent’s immigration status has a significantly disproportionate impact on women with precarious status. These women are possibly most in need of the CCB due to the structural barriers that push them and their families into poverty. But without access to needed resources, they are often forced to choose between living in an abusive or damaging relationship, deportation, or living without access to social services or the ability to work. Others will be compelled to give up custody of their children.

⁸⁰ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Permanent Residence for Caregivers.

⁸¹ Income Security Advocacy Centre, *et.al.*, (2018), *Every Child Counts: Making sure the Canada Child Benefit is a benefit for all children*.

5. Conditional permanent residency

In 2017, the federal government eliminated the two-year cohabitation requirement for spousal sponsorships, which trapped many women in abusive relationships. Even if there were exceptions for those facing abuse, many newcomer women facing language and other barriers were not able to prove the abuse and take advantage of the exception. However, stringent screening procedures are still in place that, while designed to detect fake marriages, threaten to exacerbate racial discrimination against immigrants from regions stereotyped as sources of marriages of convenience (e.g., Asia and Africa).⁸² For example, the procedures rely on discriminatory and ethno-specific criteria for distinguishing fraudulent marriages from authentic ones.⁸³

There has also been an increase in “misrepresentation” or “marriage fraud” investigations where survivors of domestic violence, mostly young women, are penalized for leaving an abusive relationship with their sponsor once they arrive in Canada as permanent residents. Women are required to provide evidence of both the abuse and the genuineness of marriage, documents that in many cases are in the possession of their controlling and abusive sponsor. These women also do not often have access to language-specific and affordable legal services that are crucial for newcomer women.

82 Kathleen Harris (2017), “Liberals ‘doubly committed’ to tackling marriage fraud while ending 2-year spousal residency rule,” *CBC News*, 28 April 2017.

83 Nicholas Keung (2015), “Immigration guide for detecting marriage fraud called ‘racist and offensive,’” *Toronto Star*, May 19, 2015.

The Girl-Child

DESPITE EFFORTS AND progress toward achieving gender equality since 2014, inequality is still the norm for the 3.4 million girls⁸⁴ in Canada who represent 9.4% of the total population and 18.7% of the female population.⁸⁵ While gender equality issues are often seen as women's issues, for girls, gender-based discrimination and inequities start early and vary across communities. Growing up in Canada, girls from Indigenous, Muslim, racialized and newcomer communities, girls living with disabilities, and people who identify as LGBTQI2S continue to face significant barriers due to systemic discrimination. For Indigenous girls this includes continuing and compounding impacts of settler colonialism.

Experiences of inequality do not go unnoticed by girls. Research with teens aged 12–17 found that girls are much more likely than boys to feel the impact of gender inequality; they are twice as likely as boys (43% vs. 21%) to report experiencing sexism, and more than a third more likely to say that gender inequality has impacted their life (35% vs. 20%). Thirty-five per cent of girls report having been treated unequally or unfairly due to their gender.⁸⁶ Many girls in Canada notice inequality in their lives before their teen years, with more than half of girls (54%) saying they first noticed it between the ages of 10 and 13.⁸⁷

84 The use of the term girls is trans-inclusive.

85 Tamara Hudon (2017), *The Girl Child*, in *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, Statistics Canada.

86 Girl Guides of Canada (2018), *Sexism, Feminism & Equality: What Teens in Canada Really Think*.

87 *Ibid.*

For girls who report unequal treatment, discriminatory experiences are common. Among this group, one in four (23%) say it happens regularly. These girls spoke about having fewer opportunities and not being taken seriously. One respondent said, “I have felt that my opinions aren’t often taken as seriously because I am not a boy.”⁸⁸

1. Gender-based violence

In the aggregate, girls experience the preponderance of gender-based violence. More than 33,000 girls reported violent assaults to police in 2017. Thirty-two per cent of those were assaulted by a family member, most often a parent.⁸⁹ Girls aged 12–17 experience incidents of violence at a rate that is 42% higher than the rate for boys the same age, while the incidence of reported sexual assault among teenaged girls is nine times higher than among teenaged boys.⁹⁰

The rate of violent assaults on girls climbs dramatically as they enter teen years and puberty. Girls aged 15 experience the highest rate of violence of any demographic group in Canada, five times the rate of 10-year-olds.⁹¹ Girls and teens also report significant abuse and harassment online, much of it sexist or misogynist in nature.⁹² One in five young people experience cyberstalking and cyberbullying, with higher rates of victimization against young women and the LGBTQI2S population.⁹³ Gender-based violence and workplace harassment is also a key issue for girls.⁹⁴

Levels of violence are higher again among Indigenous girls and teens,⁹⁵ as highlighted in recent years through research and advocacy by families, national Indigenous women’s organizations and the National Inquiry into

88 *Ibid.*

89 Marta Burczycka, Shana Conroy and Laura Savage (2018), *Family Violence in Canada, 2017*. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada. Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

90 Shana Conroy (2017). *Police-reported violence against girls and young women in Canada*. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada. Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

91 *Ibid.*

92 YWCA Canada (2015). Creating a safer digital world for young women. Project Shift – Needs Assessment Report Summary.

93 Tamara Hudon (2017). *The Girl Child*.

94 Girl Guides of Canada (2019), *Girls on the Job: Realities in Canada*.

95 A larger proportion of Indigenous people self-report being physically or sexually maltreated before the age of 15 (40%) than non-Indigenous people (29%). Of this group, Indigenous girls are more likely to report experiencing both physical **and** sexual maltreatment compared to Indigenous boys. Jillian Boyce (2016). “Victimization of Aboriginal people in Canada, 2014,” Juristat, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.⁹⁶ Historical and current policies and practices of the federal government have created a system of racial discrimination that both reproduces and perpetuates social devaluation and economic disadvantage. Indigenous women and girls are targets for violence under this system, which fails to extend them police protection or facilitate legal redress through federal and provincial/territorial justice systems.⁹⁷

Similarly, girls with disabilities face a heightened risk of violence yet experience significant marginalization as the result of norms and biases around both gender and disability,⁹⁸ their needs unidentified and unsupported.⁹⁹ One in four women with disabilities aged 25–34 years (26%) report having been bullied at school because of their disability, and over one-third (36%) also shared that they were avoided or excluded in educational settings because of their disability.¹⁰⁰

Several provinces and territories have introduced anti-bullying legislation and funded anti-violence programming targeting women and girls. Quebec’s Government Strategy to Prevent and Counteract Sexual Violence, for example, includes several measures to combat the sexual exploitation of children. The federal government has taken action to facilitate human trafficking prosecutions. These actions, while welcome, do not constitute a co-ordinated focus or effort to tackle the root causes of violence and provide comprehensive levels of service across the country. Girls and teens remain at risk.

2. Health, well-being and child welfare

In almost every age bracket, and from as early as nine years old, girls are feeling pressure to succeed in school and extracurricular activities, be attractive, please parents, teachers and peers, and to conform to society’s images of

96 National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), *Reclaiming Power and Place: Final Report*.

97 FAFIA, CWP and Pamela Palmater (2019), *A National Action Plan to End Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls: The Time is Now*.

98 United Nations Girls Education Initiative (2017), *Still left behind: Pathways to inclusive education for girls with disabilities*.

99 National Centre for Learning Disabilities (2014), *The state of learning disabilities: Facts, trends and emerging issues*.

100 Amanda Burlock (2017), Women with disabilities. In *Women in Canada: A gender-based statistical report*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 89-503-X. See also: Ruhab Arim (2014), A profile of persons with disabilities among Canadians aged 15 and older, 2012, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 89-654-X.

girls. According to the Girl Guides of Canada, a majority of girls aged 15–17 (59%) report feeling pressure from society – through the media, social media, friends, parents and teachers – to conform to unrealistic standards about what it means to be “a girl.”¹⁰¹ And over half again (55%) report that trying to meet social expectations about how they should look or act has negatively impacted their self-esteem.¹⁰² Girls tend to internalize their difficulties,¹⁰³ which contributes to lower levels of self-confidence and higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress when compared to boys the same age.¹⁰⁴

Issues of health and well-being are critical for Indigenous girls. Suicide is a leading cause of death among girls aged 1–17, accounting for more than one-quarter (25.8%) of deaths among girls aged 15–17.¹⁰⁵ These rates rise to epidemic levels when the lens is focused on Indigenous girls. For First Nations girls and young women the suicide rate is seven times the rate for non-Indigenous girls and young women, with 35 deaths per 100,000 versus five per 100,000.¹⁰⁶ The prevalence of suicide has been connected to shared grief and intergenerational trauma from residential school experiences, including child sexual abuse, the destruction of culture, and living conditions that fail to meet standards of social determinants of health.

The disruption of Indigenous family life through more than 100 years of forced attendance at residential schools has also had a profound impact on the health and well-being on Indigenous children, which is reflected in the very high rate of apprehensions by child protection authorities relative to their representation in the population.¹⁰⁷ Across Canadian provinces, the proportion of children in state child protection who are Indigenous ranges from two to seven times their proportion of the population. In Manitoba, for example, 23% of the child population is Indigenous, yet 87% of children in state care are Indigenous. A significant percentage of young women who experience homelessness, which exposes them to exploitation and violence, were in state care as girls.¹⁰⁸

101 Girl Guides of Canada (2017), *International Day of the Girl 2017 – Nationwide Survey*.

102 *Ibid.*

103 Girl Action Foundation (2008), *The Need for a gender sensitive approach to the mental health of young Canadians*. Montreal.

104 Canadian Women’s Foundation (nd), Fact Sheet: Moving Girls Into Confidence.

105 Tamara Hudon (2017), *The Girl Child*.

106 Michael Shulman and Jesse Tahirali (2016), Suicide among Canada’s First Nations: Key numbers, *CTV news online*, 11 April 2016.

107 Council of the Federation Secretariat (2015). *Aboriginal Children in Care*. Report to Canada’s Premiers.

108 Covenant House Toronto (nd), *Youth Homelessness: Facts and Stats*.

Failure to provide culturally appropriate community-based programming and mental health services as well as child welfare services has compounded these issues. New federal legislation affirms the rights and authorities of Indigenous peoples to create and deliver child and family services, and establishes a child’s “cultural, linguistic, religious and spiritual upbringing” as key to determining the best interests of the child.¹⁰⁹ But there remain significant gaps in service levels — and levels of funding — for Indigenous children and other vulnerable groups of young people such as those with disabilities.¹¹⁰ Lack of a pan-Canadian approach or framework for services and appropriate levels of funding continues to undermine child well-being.¹¹¹

3. Youth employment and leadership

The same inequalities and stereotypes that women face in the world of work impact girls from the moment they enter the labour force. Girls are slotted into different sectors and occupations from the start, as new research from the Girl Guides of Canada shows. Girls are most likely to work in roles that involve caring for others (28% versus 17% of boys) while boys find jobs in maintenance, gardening or groundskeeping (23% versus 9% of girls).¹¹² In turn, there are stark differences in pay. Overall, teen girls working full time at a summer job earned about \$3 per hour less than boys; the gap was even larger for girls who worked in an informal setting for family, friends, or neighbours — at \$6.31 per hour.¹¹³

Young women are taking on leadership roles in the community, in schools and at work. Despite these accomplishments, young women still face significant barriers to their advancement and development. Given that these numbers mirror the patterns seen in the adult workforce,¹¹⁴ it’s worth asking whether girls are actively choosing their futures or, in the absence of support and opportunity, defaulting to deeply entrenched gendered stereotypes and social norms.

109 Bill C-92, *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*,

110 For an analysis of Canada’s new Indigenous child welfare legislation, see: Yellowhead Institute (2019), *Does C-92 make the grade?* Toronto: Ryerson University.

111 See: Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children (2019), *Closing Gaps: Systemic Change is Essential to Implement Children’s Rights in Canada*.

112 Girl Guides of Canada (2019), *Girls on the Job: Realities in Canada*.

113 *Ibid.*

114 Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0023-01 Labour force characteristics by industry, annual (x 1,000) (2017).

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

A CRISIS IN early childhood education and child care (ECEC) is blocking Canada's progress in advancing the status of women.¹¹⁵ At the centre of this crisis is the failure of all levels of government to treat access to regulated child care services as a right or entitlement.¹¹⁶ One result of this is an absence of public policy to create a comprehensive, publicly managed, publicly funded system of ECEC.

Canada has a serious shortage of regulated, affordable, inclusive high quality ECEC services.¹¹⁷ Canada's ECEC performs poorly by international standards. UNICEF's 2008 report card on ECEC in 25 OECD countries ranked Canada at the bottom of the list in terms of 10 quantified benchmarks.¹¹⁸ Since 2008, ECEC in Europe and elsewhere has continued to develop, leaving Canada further behind.

115 House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (June 2018). *Women's Economic Security: Securing the Future of Canada's Economy*. Ottawa: House of Commons, 90–99.

116 Martha Friendly, *et. al.*, (2018). *Early childhood education and care in Canada 2016*. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit, p. ix.

117 *Ibid.*

118 Peter Adamson (2008). The Child Care Transition: A league table of early childhood education and care in economically advanced countries, *Innocenti Report Card* no. 8. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Canada's reliance on a market-based approach to meet families' child care needs has produced a patchwork of scarce and inadequate services, unaffordable high parent fees and the rapid growth, since 2006, of for-profit child care, including large corporate-type regional chains and single-owner operations.¹¹⁹ Barriers to access are especially high for Indigenous communities, children with disabilities, infants, rural communities, and parents employed in non-standard jobs.

Women — mothers and women in the child care workforce — bear the brunt of the child care crisis. Inadequate child care keeps mothers of young children out of the workforce or unable to fully engage in it, while the almost entirely female child care workforce experiences low wages and poor recognition for the value of care work. Women experiencing vulnerability and exclusion — because of poverty, racism, Indigenous status, disability, homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, citizenship status and/or other intersectional factors contributing to discrimination — are especially disadvantaged.¹²⁰

In Canada's federation, the delivery of ECEC services rests primarily with provinces/territories. Nevertheless, Canada's federal government has the authority to develop and advance national social policy, such as health care or ECEC, by using its spending power to negotiate funding and policy arrangements with provincial/territorial governments. The federal government also has authority to fund and deliver programs to populations for whom it has special responsibility, including Indigenous people, military families, and new immigrants and refugees.

To date, however, despite some movement forward, the federal government has largely failed to use the levers available to it to address the child care crisis and build a child care ramp to women's economic equality and security.

The current government (elected in 2015) made a long-term commitment to fund ECEC over an 11-year period starting in the 2016-17 fiscal year.¹²¹ This was a welcome re-engagement in child care at the federal level after a decade of stagnation. A previous federal government had cancelled unilaterally the 2005 federal/provincial/territorial child care policy and funding agreements, thereby withdrawing the national government from any role in ECEC services.

Following its multi-year ECEC budget commitment in 2017, the current federal government reached a new Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework agreement as well as three-year bilateral funding agreements (April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2020) with each province and territory. Each

119 Child Care Now (2018). *The Growth of For-Profit Child Care in Canada*.

120 House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (June 2018).

121 Canada. Department of Finance (2017). *Building a Strong Middle Class, #Budget2017*.

bilateral agreement sets out an action plan action based on the province's or territory's spending priorities.¹²²

In 2018, the federal government released an Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Framework, co-developed by the federal government and national Indigenous organizations, which makes broad commitments “to support, co-ordinate and guide the design, delivery and governance of Indigenous ELCC that is anchored in self-determination, centred on children and grounded in culture, through new policies, processes, partnerships, authorities, capacities, programs and investments that will strengthen Indigenous ELCC in Canada.”¹²³

Together all these agreements represent a positive commitment by the federal government to work with provinces/territories and Indigenous peoples of Canada on key ECEC issues. However, the agreements will not make systemic changes in how the supply of ECEC is managed, funded and delivered — changes that are necessary to expand the availability of licensed child care for all age groups, improve quality and make programs inclusive of all children. Specifically, these bilateral agreements are insufficient in the following ways:

- The agreements fail to commit federal, provincial and territorial governments to a Canada-wide, *universal* system of ECEC. Instead, they nominally support a targeted approach to ECEC with a focus on vulnerable families.
- Although principles of quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility and inclusivity are identified in the agreements, the provincial/territorial action plans are not required to set specific goals, timelines or accountability measures for achieving the principles.
- It will be difficult to operationalize these principles because the federal funding supporting the frameworks is woefully inadequate.
- The agreements do not provide federal funds to address child care workforce challenges such as low wages and difficult working conditions for the women who work in the sector, or any of the other factors blocking recruitment and retention of qualified staff.

¹²² Child Care Now (2019). *An Analysis of the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework and the Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreements*.

¹²³ Government of Canada (2018). *Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework*. Ottawa: Government of Canada.

- There is no provision for the infrastructure needed for ECEC system-building.

Education and Training

WOMEN IN CANADA have made tremendous gains in education, outpacing their male counterparts in both high school and post-secondary completion.¹²⁴ As has been the case since the early 1990s, the majority of students enrolled in Canada's public colleges and universities — and the majority of graduates — are women.¹²⁵ Despite women's accomplishments and proven competencies, however, women still earn less than men, at every level of education,¹²⁶ reflecting deep and persistent gender biases in the education system and the labour market.

1. Gender disparities in education

Underrepresentation in certain academic and professional fields, as well as in senior leadership roles, is a key factor explaining pay gaps and other gender biases in the workforce. Women are still less likely to pursue training in traditionally male-dominated and well-paid fields in the sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics sectors (STEM).¹²⁷ Women comprise just one-third (32%) of graduates in mathematics, and computer and information sciences, for example, and just one in five (20%) graduates in architecture, engineering and related technologies.¹²⁸

124 Statistics Canada (2018), *Education Indicators in Canada: An International Perspective 2018*. Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics, Catalogue no. 81-604-X.

125 Sarah Jane Ferguson (2016), *Women and Education: Qualifications, Skills and Technology in, Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*.

126 In general, female university graduates earn roughly 80% of what male university graduates earn — depending on the degree. The female to male earnings ratio was less than 80% at other levels of education. Statistics Canada (2017), *Does education pay? A comparison of earnings by level of education in Canada and its provinces and territories. Census in Brief*, Catalogue no. 98-200-X2016024.

127 Katherine Wall (2019), *Persistence and Representation of Women in STEM Programs*. Insights on Canadian Society, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 75-006-X, p. 2.

128 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016285.

Gender differences in fields of study are also clearly evident in the trades. In 2016, the three most common fields of study among women aged 25 to 64 with an apprenticeship certificate were personal and culinary services (33%), health professions and related programs (24%) and business, management, marketing and related support services (23%), while men continue to be overwhelmingly concentrated in the construction trades, mechanic and repair technologies, and precision production.¹²⁹

Women's lack of progress is particularly troubling given the attention the issue has received in recent years. Young women face gender stereotypes that negatively impact their interest in these subjects. Even when young women choose to enrol in STEM programs, their rates of retention are lower than those of their male peers.¹³⁰

2. Significant educational gaps persist for Indigenous students

Significant gaps in educational attainment continue to persist between Indigenous women and girls and non-Indigenous people — despite positive gains in post-secondary education among First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit at all levels. Inuit women have the lowest levels of educational attainment; less than one-third of women aged 15 and older (29%) have a post-secondary credential. The respective figure for First Nations women is 39%. Métis women have better educational outcomes but still lag behind the general population, with 49% attaining some form of post-secondary education.¹³¹

Lower than average educational outcomes for Indigenous women and men alike are attributed to several factors including high rates of poverty and chronically underfunded primary and secondary education systems on reserves that fail to meet students' needs. Funding for on-reserve schools is the responsibility of the federal government and administered by First Nations. Between 1996 and 2016, federal funding was subject to a 2% annual cap on expenditures, creating a significant gap in the resources available to educate First Nations children. A 2016 report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimated the federal government would have to boost spending by between \$336 million and \$665 million to provide on-reserve students with

129 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016241.

130 Katherine Wall (2019).

131 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016264.

educations comparable to those available to students in other Canadian communities.¹³²

3. Accessing education remains a challenge for students with disabilities

Students with disabilities continue to lack the institutional support, the accommodation, the funding and the programs and infrastructure required to access and benefit from the same quality of education as their peers without disabilities — at all levels of education.¹³³ These barriers often lead to higher educational costs for families and work to prevent students with disabilities from pursuing courses of their choosing and completing their educations. Women with disabilities (aged 25–54), for example, were more than twice as likely as women without disabilities to have not completed high school (18.3% vs 8.3%). By contrast, women without disabilities were twice as likely as those with disabilities to be a university graduate (30.7% vs 15.7%).¹³⁴

4. Economic barriers to post-secondary education

The cost of post-secondary education has continued to rise across Canada over the past two decades, forcing many students to take on government and private loans to pay for their studies. On average, students are graduating with nearly \$28,000 of total debt from government and private sources according to a 2018 survey of Canadian universities.¹³⁵ In total, public student debt now exceeds \$36 billion, of which over \$18 billion is owed to the federal government.¹³⁶

Heavy debt loads weigh heavily on low- and modest-income students, especially young women, who account for 60% of Canada Student Loan Program (CSLP) recipients and 66% of Repayment Assistance Program

132 Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer (2016), *Federal Spending on Primary and Secondary Education on First Nations Reserves*.

133 Also see: Canadian Human Rights Commission (2017), *Left Out: Challenges faced by persons with disabilities in Canada's schools*.

134 Amanda Burlock (2017), Women with Disabilities. In *Women in Canada: A gender-based statistical report*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 89-503-X.

135 Canadian University Survey Consortium (2018), *2018 Graduating Student Survey: Master Report*, p. 35.

136 Canadian Federation of Students (2019), *Time to be bold: Education for all*.

(RAP) users.¹³⁷ Debt holders least able to shoulder the added expense end up paying over \$10,000 more for their educations after they leave school. High debt not only affects the overall cost of a degree (e.g., through higher compound interest), it has far-reaching impacts on career choice and future income, as well as the likelihood of owning a home, saving for retirement or putting money away for emergencies.¹³⁸

These numbers understate the consequences of high tuition fees and student debt for marginalized groups such as students with disabilities, racialized students, queer or trans students, and Indigenous students, who are more likely to come from low-income households.¹³⁹

5. Policies and programs, 2014–2019

Profound and longstanding funding inequities have systematically undermined the educational aspirations of Indigenous children. A new funding formula announced in 2019 promises a more equitable approach to primary and secondary education and greater control over Indigenous school systems. New investments in language and cultural programming as well as early child development are also important steps forward.

Financial assistance is provided to some status First Nations, Métis and Inuit students to cover the costs of tuition fees, books, supplies, travel, and living expenses. In 2016, the federal government lifted the 2% cap on all Indigenous programs and since then has taken action to increase funding for Indigenous post-secondary students, the Canada Student Grants program, and skills development and employment training. However, these investments still fall short of what is needed to close the gap in education. It will take continued effort and sustained investment to turn around the devastating impact of years of chronic underfunding and discrimination.¹⁴⁰

In 2016-17, the last year for which data are available, the Canada Student Loan Program provided loans to 497,000 students and modest grants to 380,000 low- and middle-income students.¹⁴¹ Funding for these grants was

137 Government of Canada (2017), Chapter 5 – Equal Opportunity: Budget 2017’s Gender Statement. Cited in Canadian Federation of Students (2017), *The Political Economy of Student Debt*.

138 May Luong (2010), The Financial Impact of Student Loans, *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, January 2010, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 75-001-X.

139 Canadian Federation of Students (2016), *Time to Think BIG*, pp. 5–6.

140 Assembly of First Nations (2018), 2019 Pre-Budget Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance, Aug. 3, 2018.

141 Employment and Skills Development Canada (2018), *Canada Student Loan Program: Annual Report 2016-2017*.

increased by 50% in the 2016 federal budget, a change that was funded by the elimination of several post-secondary education tax credits.¹⁴² The 2019 budget lowered the interest rate on Canada Student Loans, introduced greater flexibility, and made the first six months after a borrower exits post-secondary education interest-free. These changes should have a positive impact on post-secondary access for women. However, changes to provincial student loan programs, particularly the cancellation of targeted tuition programs for low-income students, will negatively impact efforts to improve education equality in Canada.¹⁴³ Many students will continue to struggle to finance their education.¹⁴⁴

Several smaller programs have been introduced to enhance interest and uptake of STEM programs and involvement in other non-traditional fields.¹⁴⁵ Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program and the Skills and Partnership Fund have been created to provide culturally-appropriate, wrap-around supports and opportunities for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban/Non-affiliated Indigenous peoples, including Indigenous women. Success to date has been modest; the gender gap in STEM fields is still very large. Much more remains to be done to tackle the root causes of these disparities, including deep-seated stereotypes, and building out networks to support women entering these occupations and industries.

142 The total amount of grants awarded to students in the 2016–2017 loan year was \$1.0 billion, an increase of 41% from the previous year, as a result of increases in grant amounts. *Ibid.*

143 The Canadian Press (2019), Ontario PCs to eliminate free tuition for low income students, *CBC News*, Jan. 17, 2019; Angela Bosse (2019), University students face lose-lose scenario after free tuition program scuppered, *CBC News*, April 13, 2019.

144 Saira Pessker (2019), Students graduating with debt say recent budget changes amount to a ‘tiny band-aid’ on a ‘gushing wound,’ *The Globe and Mail*, April 15, 2019.

145 Government of Canada (2018), *The Government of Canada and STEM*.

Women and the Economy

THE BEIJING DECLARATION and Platform for Action recognizes that high levels of employment and earnings are essential to women’s economic well-being and security — and the well-being and security of their families. Women’s economic participation is also critical to the health of the economy and Canada’s collective prosperity.¹⁴⁶

Since 2015, the federal government has taken action to facilitate women’s equal and full participation in the economy, by establishing gender equality goals and passing gender-based budgeting legislation, for example. Funding has been set aside to assist small enterprises led by women and women seeking to enter the trades. A new “use it or lose it” parental leave was introduced to encourage uptake by second caregivers (usually fathers). Yet much more remains to be done to deliver on the promise of these initiatives and achieve meaningful change in the lives of women and girls.

1. Labour market trends

Over the last decade, the employment rate among women aged 25 to 54 has hovered around 78%, rising in 2018 by a single percentage point. The employment rate of men experienced greater volatility, falling in the aftermath of the 2008-09 recession and subsequently bouncing back to pre-recessionary levels of 86% by 2018.¹⁴⁷ As a consequence, and despite several years of positive economic growth, there has only been slight progress in closing the gender employment gap.

Employment levels are lower yet among some groups of women in Canada. Immigrant women’s employment lags 10 percentage points behind

146 UN Women and ILO (2012), *Decent work and women’s economic empowerment: Good policy and practice*; OECD (2012), *Closing the gender gap: Act now*; Remco Oostendorp (2009), “Globalization and the gender wage gap,” *World Bank Economic Review*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 141–161.

147 Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0327-01 - Labour force characteristics by sex and detailed age group, annual.

Canadian-born women and 14 percentage points behind the rate for immigrant men.¹⁴⁸ The employment rate for Indigenous women is 11 percentage points below that of non-Indigenous women and six percentage points below the rate for Indigenous men.¹⁴⁹ Women with disabilities who are able to work and who are actively engaged in the labour force have even lower levels of employment. In 2017, the employment rate of women with disabilities aged 25 to 64 was 57.4%, 19 percentage points less than the rate for women without disabilities.¹⁵⁰

The push to close the gap between what men and women earn has also faltered. In almost every industry, at every educational level, working part time or full time, women in Canada are paid less than men. Forty years ago, women working full time made 38% less than their male peers. Today, they make 22% less.¹⁵¹ At the current rate of progress it will take another half-century to see parity in wages.

Increasing access to higher education has clearly had a positive effect on women's incomes and on the wage gap. That said, women holding a university degree still earn an average of 15% less than men with a university degree (working full time, full year). The largest pay gap is among men and women in the trades, where women working full time, full year earn 40% less than their male peers.¹⁵²

And again, for some groups of working women the picture is worse. According to the 2016 census, racialized women made on average 84.3% of the average non-racialized women's income and only 59.5% of the non-racialized men's income.¹⁵³ Recent research for Ontario shows that the wage gaps are

148 Employment rates (2018) for those of core working age: 25 to 54 years. Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0085-01 - Labour force characteristics of immigrants by sex and age group, annual.

149 Employment rates (2018) for those of core working age: 25 to 54 years. Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0364-01 - Labour force characteristics by province, region and Aboriginal group.

150 Statistics Canada, Table 13-10-0377-01 - Labour force status of persons with and without disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories (Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017).

151 The gender wage ratio is the wage for women divided by the wage for men. These figures are based on the annual employment income of full-time workers. Statistics Canada, Table 11-10-0143-01 - Average female and male earnings and female-to-male earnings ratio; Table 11-10-0240-01 - Distribution of employment income of individuals by sex and work activity, Canada, provinces and selected census metropolitan areas.

152 Median employment income of men and women aged 25 to 64 years by educational attainment status. Statistics Canada, 2016 Census - Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016261.

153 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population.

deepest for women who identify as West Asian, Arab, Latin American and Southeast Asian.¹⁵⁴

The size of the wage gap is also significant for Indigenous peoples. In 2015, Indigenous women brought home \$17,000 less than non-Indigenous men, and \$5,700 less than non-Indigenous women.¹⁵⁵ If Indigenous and racialized women had been making the same salaries as their white male peers, they would have added \$43 billion more to Canada's economy and their own bank accounts in 2015.¹⁵⁶

One of the major forces contributing to the gap in men's and women's wages is the unequal distribution of unpaid work. Women in Canada continue to spend much more time on unpaid care work than men do.¹⁵⁷ The difference is even greater when we take into account the fact that women often perform unpaid work alongside other activities.¹⁵⁸

As long as there are only 24 hours in the day, that will put an absolute limit on the number of hours of paid employment they can take on. It also limits the kind of paid work women can do. Thus we see a concentration of women in occupations with hours that accommodate their unpaid work, such as nursing, teaching and retail. We also see an overrepresentation of women in part-time work, with 25.7% of working women holding part-time jobs (compared to 12.2% of working men), a share that hasn't budged in two decades.¹⁵⁹

Occupational segregation is another major factor in the pay gap. Men and women tend to work different jobs in Canada. That would not necessarily lead to a pay gap if we valued the work of women and men equally. But we do not. In Canada, for example, motor vehicle and transit drivers (93% of whom are male) make a median annual full-time, full-year wage of \$47,635. Home care providers and educational assistants (92% of whom are female) make a median annual wage of \$26,400.¹⁶⁰ Overall, women are more likely to work in minimum wage jobs and low wage sectors of the economy,

154 Sheila Block and Grace-Edward Galabuzi (2019), *Persistent Inequality: Ontario's Colour Coded Labour Market*, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

155 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population.

156 Author's calculations.

157 Statistics Canada, Table 45-10-0014-02 - Daily average time in hours and proportion of day spent on unpaid domestic and care work by sex. General Social Survey on Time Use 2015.

158 Women spent an average of 2.5 hours more per day on all unpaid-work activities — both primary and simultaneous — in 2010 than did men: 5.4 versus 2.9 hours. Melissa Moyser and Amanda Burlock (2018), *Time use: Total work burden, unpaid work and leisure*, *Women in Canada: A Gender-based statistical report*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 89-503-X.

159 Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0327-01.

160 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016304.

characterized by high rates precarity, few employment benefits and low rates of union representation.¹⁶¹

Increasing the representation of women in predominantly male employment sectors may pay off for women and their communities in the longer term, but the rate of change is slow. While the federal government is promoting apprenticeships in skilled trades and technology, and investing billions in updating Canada's infrastructure, there has been little change on the ground. For example, efforts to boost women's participation in the mining, oil and gas sector have failed to move the needle. The share of women working in that sector actually fell between 2016 and 2018,¹⁶² while the women who are employed there continue to be concentrated in back-office jobs.¹⁶³

Underemploying and underpaying women is costing women and the Canadian economy billions of dollars annually. The International Monetary Fund estimates that "if the current gap of 7 percentage points between male and female labour force participation with high education attainment were eliminated, the level of real GDP could be about 4 per cent higher."¹⁶⁴ The federal government should be working closely with the provinces and territories to eliminate the economic inequalities that impoverish women and undercut the potential of the economy to generate shared prosperity.

2. Gender inequalities in the tax system

Structural and systemic gender inequalities that are evident in labour market are also evident in and even exacerbated by government benefit programs and tax laws. Over the last 30 years, Canada's drive to lower taxes for corporations and the wealthiest Canadians has made the tax system much more regressive and systematically undercut total revenues available to design and fund high quality services and supports fundamental to the advance of gender equality. In 2015 alone, the government "gave away" 52% of total revenues from personal income tax, corporate income tax and sales

161 Dominique Dionne-Simard and Jacob Miller (2019), "Maximum insights on minimum wage workers: 20 years of data," Statistics Canada, Labour Statistics: Research Papers, Catalogue no. 75-004-M—2019003; Nicole Fortin, Brian Bell and Michael Bohm (2017), "Top earnings inequality and the gender pay gap: Canada, Sweden, and the United Kingdom," *Labour Economics*, Vol. 47, pp. 107–123.

162 Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0023-01 Labour force characteristics by industry, annual (x 1,000)

163 PetroLMI (2018), *Diversifying Canada's oil and gas workforce: Decade in review*, Energy Safety Canada.

164 Bengt Petersson, Rodrigo Mariscal, and Kotaro Ishi (2017), Women are Key for Future Growth: Evidence from Canada, International Monetary Fund, Working Paper WP 17/166.

taxes through a raft of tax expenditure programs — a total of \$117.9 billion in foregone revenue.¹⁶⁵

Women and girls lose out from the cumulative impact of these policies, first when they lose access to essential public services due to insufficient revenues/funding, and secondly, when they are forced to fill those gaps with many hours of unpaid caring work because they cannot afford the high costs of care services that enable them to engage in paid work.

Gender discrimination is built into the very structure of Canada's tax system. Many tax provisions, including those that explicitly support caregiving, are designed to be "joint" or "household" tax laws, and not as individual provisions — even though Canada does use the individual as the basic legal taxpaying unit. This special set of joint tax and benefit laws increases the after-tax incomes of the individuals — usually men — who get special tax benefits for supporting family members who perform unpaid work of various types, while creating tax incentives for other family members — usually women — to reduce their own earnings. As such, they "disincentivize" women's paid work, resulting in lower after-tax incomes and increased financial vulnerability among women.¹⁶⁶

At the same time, the tax system does not adequately support women's paid labour. In 2014-2015, only 6% of the total \$25.5 billion in tax expenditures directed at supporting family caregiving (both paid and unpaid)¹⁶⁷ went to women with paid care costs while earning or learning.¹⁶⁸ The replacement of several earlier 2014-15 tax and cash benefits to families with an enhanced Canada Child Benefit (CCB) in 2016, however, reduced this share even further:

165 Finance Canada (2017), *Report on Federal Tax Expenditures 2017*, Chart 1: Value and Number of Tax Expenditures by Tax Base, 2015, p. 288.

166 If all adults had been taxed as single individuals in 2016, women would have had \$33.9 billion more net after-tax income, representing an estimated loss of government revenues in the order of \$27.7 billion. Kathleen Lahey (2016), "Tax Units in Canada and Gender: Ability to pay, equity or keeping women in their place?" in Jinyan Li, Brian Wilkie and Larry Chapman (eds.), *Income Tax at 100 Years: Reflections on the Income War Tax Act*, Toronto: Canadian Tax Foundation, Table 2, p. 5:21.

167 The total includes the cost of the following programs: Canada Child Tax Benefit, Universal Child Care Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Dependent Spousal Credits, Disability Dependent Tax Credit, Caregiver tax credits, Family Tax Cut Credit (the short-lived spousal income-splitting tax credit), and the Child Care Expenses Deduction (CCED). The CCED is the only tax benefit explicitly designed to assist with the paid childcare costs of parents in paid work.

168 Kathleen Lahey (2017), "The politics of income splitting, sex equality and sex role stereotypes: Caring for children or keeping women in their place," in Rachel Langford, Susan Prentice and Patricia Albanese *Caring for Children: Social movements and public policy* (eds.), Vancouver: UBC Press, p. 58.

In 2019, only 4.8% of a total \$27.6 billion in tax/cash expenditures supporting women’s unpaid and paid work went to women with paid care costs.¹⁶⁹

While income transfer programs such as the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) provide essential cash to low income families, these cash benefits are designed to meet a variety of essential needs, including paid care. There is little concrete information on just how many parents actually opt to use the CCB to finance paid care costs so that single parent or second earners can earn sustainable after-tax employment incomes.¹⁷⁰

Given the very high costs of caring services and the typically modest wages that most women earn, paid work “does not pay” in Canada. An average Ontario woman, living in dual-income family with two pre-school kids, earning two-thirds of the average wage, only keeps 25% of her actual earnings after taking the high cost of child care and related taxes and benefits into account. A single parent with the same earnings keeps just 8% of actual earnings. No other high-income country comes close to these figures – not even the United States.¹⁷¹

In a world of concentrating wealth and privilege, refundable child care credits or even universal care strategies cannot on their own reduce deeply rooted structural barriers to economic gender equality or the narrow formalistic approaches being taken to gender equality in taxation. The very composition of tax systems and their detailed distributional gender and intersectional impacts need to be identified and taken into account in devising a tax system that can advance – rather than stymie – gender equality.

An important place to start would be to track individual after-tax disposable incomes (net of all personal income tax paid) and after-tax consumable incomes (net of all sales taxes then paid on consumption), both part of the original set of economic gender equality indicators chosen by federal and provincial/territorial governments to track progress in implementing the

169 Kathleen Lahey (in publication), “Gender inequality and Canadian fiscal policy: From ‘taxing for growth’ to ‘taxing for gender equality,’” in Elsbeth Heaman (ed.), *Who Pays for Canada? Taxes and fairness*, Montreal: Queen’s-McGill Press.

170 According to Statistics Canada, the value of total household care costs came to \$6.2 billion in 2014 and \$6.9 billion in 2018. The federal Child Care Expense Deduction (CCEDo, however, returned only 17.5% of those care costs to parents in 2014 and 19.7% in 2018. Those with low incomes receive no benefits from the CCED at all. Finance Canada (2019), “Gender-based analysis plus of existing federal personal income tax measures,” in *Report on Federal Tax Expenditures: Concepts, estimates and evaluations*, p. 75.

171 Kathleen Lahey (in publication), “Gender inequality and Canadian fiscal policy: From ‘taxing for growth’ to ‘taxing for gender equality,’” in Elsbeth Heaman (ed.), *Who Pays for Canada? Taxes and fairness*, Montreal: Queen’s-McGill Press, Table 6, derived from OECD, *Measures of Childcare Costs and Related Work Incentives* (2015), OECD Tax-Benefit Models, Tabs 2015 PTR LP 67, 2015 PTR CF 100+67 (copy available from author or OECD archives).

Beijing Platform for Action in the 1990s,¹⁷² now absent from the current Gender Results Framework.

3. Policies and programs, 2015–19

To truly close the gap for women living in Canada, we need sustained action. We need policy that targets discrimination against Indigenous and racialized women, women with disabilities, and gender-diverse people. We need high quality affordable child care, elder care and support for persons with disabilities. We need investments in the sectors where women work. We need a strong social safety net and a progressive tax system to ensure that all Canadians live with dignity.

After years of austerity following the 2008-09 recession, rollbacks of important labour protections, and regressive tax policy,¹⁷³ the federal government has taken action to advance women's economic equality, enshrining a commitment to gender budgeting in legislation, improving the evidence base for effective and responsive policy and programs. The law requires future governments to take gender and diversity into consideration in taxation, resource allocation and all other fiscal decisions.

The introduction of proactive pay equity legislation was another significant milestone. The new legislation, passed in December 2018, requires that federally regulated employers with 10 or more employees ensure that men and women receive equal pay for work of equal value.¹⁷⁴ Employers will now be required to develop pay equity plans for their workplaces and take action to address systemic disparities, and a new Pay Equity Commissioner will be appointed to administer and enforce the Act. What is needed now are the resources and a strong set of regulations (including pay transparency provisions) to ensure that we won't be involved, once again, in decades of litigation, continued exploitation and economic hardship. As it currently stands, it will be at least a decade before women see any difference in their pay cheques.¹⁷⁵

172 Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women (1997), *Economic Gender Equality Indicators*, pp. 9, 13–19; Warren Clark (2000), *Economic Gender Equality Indicators 2000*, pp. 3–4.

173 For a discussion of the 2009–2014 period, see *Progress on Women's Rights: Missing in Action. A Shadow Report on Canada's Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 2014.

174 Approximately 900,000 workers are subject to federal labour standards, 6% of all workers. Government of Canada (2019), Pay Equity Act, S.C. 2018, c. 27, s. 416

175 Katherine Scott (2019), Action on Pay Equity: Does Canada's new legislation deliver? *Behind the Numbers*, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

The federal government has also revamped the suite of caregiver benefits under the Employment Insurance system. The new consolidated Canada Caregiver Credit is a nonrefundable tax credit that provides support to individuals providing care for a spouse or partner, child, grandchild, or other family member with a physical or mental impairment. The government has increased the flexibility of the parental leave system, offering new parents the option of taking up to 61 weeks of parental leave at a lower wage replacement rate than the standard (33% vs. 55%).¹⁷⁶

A new “use it or lose it” parental sharing benefit for second caregivers was introduced in 2018. An additional five weeks of leave (or 8 weeks of extended leave) is now available to a second caregiver if they agree to take the leave over the one-year or 18 months of leave. The same replacement rates apply.¹⁷⁷

Recent federal reforms, while welcome, have done little to improve access to the maternity/parental benefits or tackle the needs of low- and modest-income families, a significant number of whom do not have the hours of insured employment necessary to qualify for support. Indeed, there are concerns that offering the option of taking benefits over an 18 month period at 33% of earnings effectively targets this benefit to higher income families (who can afford to take the leave) and reinforces a gendered division of labour in the home, as lower income spouses drop out to provide care.¹⁷⁸ Commensurate action is also needed to help offset the very high costs of care for those women and their families who cannot afford to take – or are not eligible for – caregiving leave.

Over the past few years, the government has attempted to simplify the tax system and eliminate selected “boutique” tax measures and unfair loopholes. In 2015, it abandoned plans to introduce income splitting for coupled families with children, a measure that would have enriched the wealthiest families at an estimated cost of \$2 billion per year.¹⁷⁹ Automatic enrolment for key income security is another positive step, helping to ensure that all people get the benefits they are entitled to.

But much remains to be done to enhance the progressivity and efficiency of the tax system, generating needed revenues to fund essential public services, reverse growing inequalities, and tackle Canada’s pressing social,

¹⁷⁶ Employment and Skills Development Canada (nd), EI caregiving benefits and leave.

¹⁷⁷ Finance Canada (2018), Canada’s new Parental Sharing Benefit. Background. Budget 2018.

¹⁷⁸ Kate Bezanson (2019), “Feminism, Federalism and Families: Canada’s Mixed Social Policy Architecture,” *Journal of Law and Equality*, Vol. 14, No. 1, p. 188.

¹⁷⁹ Kate McInturff and David Macdonald (2015), *Time to grow up: Families policies for the way we live now*, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

economic and environmental challenges.¹⁸⁰ The fiscal space is there. By 2015, federal program spending as a share of the economy stood at 13.0% of GDP — close to what it was before the birth of the welfare state — and its debt-to-GDP ratio was 31%, the lowest in the G7.¹⁸¹

180 For a discussion of Canada's tax system, see: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2019), *No time to lose: Alternative Federal Budget 2019*.

181 Finance Canada (2016), *Budget 2016: Growing the Middle Class*.

Women and Poverty

CANADA FARES POORLY in OECD standings on poverty rankings (22nd out of 35 countries). Its relative rate of poverty is higher than the OECD average and much higher in the case of children.¹⁸² However, the situation has improved since 2015. Among women, rates of poverty have fallen by more than a percentage point, from 14.7% in 2015 to 13.5% in 2017 (as measured by the after-tax low income measure),¹⁸³ reflecting a stronger labour market and rising median incomes.

Canada's new official poverty line, based on the market basket (MBM) measure, also records a decline in poverty among women, from 12.3% in 2015 to 9.6% in 2017.¹⁸⁴ Similarly in 2017, female-headed lone-parent families experienced a very significant reduction in poverty, the rate falling from 37.9% in 2014 to 24.8% in 2017.¹⁸⁵

The MBM is based on the income needed to purchase a “modest” or adequate basket of goods and services. New investments in programs such as the Canada Child Benefit and Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement have had a positive impact, particularly among women, raising household incomes and reducing poverty in turn.

However, there is more to the picture of poverty among women in Canada. Marginalized women still experience poverty in disproportionate numbers, and Canada still has enormous gaps in data collection that prevent the ability to capture and address these disparities in a systematic and regular way.

Poverty among Indigenous women is much higher than among non-Indigenous women. According to the 2016 census, First Nation women experience poverty at a rate of 31.2%, Métis women at 18.8% and Inuit women

182 OECD (2019), OECD Income Distribution Database

183 Statistics Canada, Table 11-10-0135-01 (formerly CANSIM 206-0041): Low income statistics by age, sex and economic family type.

184 *Ibid.*

185 Statistics Canada, Table 11-10-0136-01 (formerly CANSIM 206-0042): Low income statistics by economic family type.

at 19.6%.¹⁸⁶ This compares to a rate of 14.5% among non-Indigenous women. Indeed, the gap is likely much higher, as many Indigenous people do not participate in the census or other Statistics Canada surveys.

Similarly, there is a large gap in the rates of poverty between racialized and non-racialized women (21.0% vs. 13.1%),¹⁸⁷ and between recent immigrants and Canadian-born women (31.4% vs. 13.3%).¹⁸⁸ Among those with disabilities aged 15 years and over who were living below the MBM line in 2017, women outnumbered men (622,300 versus 425,030).¹⁸⁹ The underlying conditions that exacerbate inequality for women are deeply rooted in the failure of governments in Canada to implement women's economic and social rights.¹⁹⁰

1. Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy

After many years of advocacy by civil society, Canada released its first poverty reduction strategy, *Opportunity for All*,¹⁹¹ followed by legislation in Spring 2019. The strategy was not attached to new program funding, but instead focused on setting targets, establishing an official methodology for poverty measurement, and establishing an advisory council to review and report publicly on progress.

Civil society organizations have raised serious concerns as to whether this strategy truly implements Canada's international obligations for women, particularly marginalized women. *Opportunity for All* does not include any new investments in the programs needed to achieve the strategy's goals. A strategy implies a plan to get from where we are to where we seek to go — and

186 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016173. All Census figures are for 2015 and have been produced using the after-tax low income measure.

187 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016211.

188 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016206.

189 Stuart Morris, *et.al.* (2018). A demographic, employment and income profile of Canadians with disabilities aged 15 years and over, 2017. Canadian Survey on Disability Reports, Statistics Canada. Catalogue no. 89-654-X2018002.

190 Canada's lack of implementation of economic and social rights of women has been a central pillar of recent United Nations' reviews of Canada. This includes reviews under the Universal Periodic Review; the Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD); as well as the Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR).

191 Employment and Skills Development Canada (2018), *Opportunity for All – Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy*.

crucially, the resources to back it up. On this score, low income Canadians are still waiting.

Furthermore, the government's targets fall considerably short of the mark, lacking the ambition and sense of urgency necessary to meet the vision of a Canada without poverty. With the strategy's extended timeframe, another generation of children will grow up in poverty and millions more will continue to struggle.

2. Canada's National Housing Strategy

Housing affordability is a key concern in Canada. Roughly one-quarter of Canadian households (24.1%) spend more than the recommended 30% of their annual income on shelter; one in 10 (10.0%) spend more than 50% and are in severe housing need. Housing need is particularly acute among renters (39.9% spend more than 30% of total income on shelter). One in three lone-parent families (32.3%) also struggle with high levels of housing need.¹⁹² Skyrocketing housing prices and lack affordable housing in communities across Canada, due in no small part to the cancellation of the federal social housing program in 1993, have created an affordability crisis.¹⁹³

Women make up about 27.3% of the overall population of those experiencing homelessness in Canada. However, many women are not captured in official measurements of the problem, as women are more likely to experience hidden homelessness (sleeping on a friend's couch, for example).¹⁹⁴ Not only are these women frequently not counted, the hidden homeless are often excluded from housing programs.

Shelters in Canada are often at full capacity. In 2017, it was reported that 36% of shelters for victims fleeing abuse were full on any given day. Over this year, 669 women were turned away, 82% of them because the shelters were full.¹⁹⁵

In 2019, the federal government made historic progress by legislating the right to housing in Canada. The National Housing Act declares that housing is a fundamental human right. It creates a federal housing advocate, a National

192 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016228.

193 Housing Services Corporation (2014), *Canada's Social and Affordable Housing Landscape: A Province to Province Overview*; see also *Generation Squeeze* for an analysis of the challenges facing younger adults.

194 Canadian Observatory on Homeless, Homelessness Hub (nd), *Priority Populations: Single Women*.

195 Statistics Canada (2019), *Residential facilities for victims of abuse in Canada, 2017/2018*.

Housing Council, and requires that the Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development respond to recommendations made by these bodies.

The housing act provides the foundation for new programming announced in the government's National Housing Strategy. Released in 2017, the strategy promises \$11.2 billion over 11 years to cut chronic homelessness in half, remove 530,000 families from housing need and invest in the construction of up to 100,000 new affordable homes.¹⁹⁶ It includes several different funding programs to support the creation of new affordable housing in the private market and the expansion and preservation of existing social housing and co-ops targeting different groups in need. A Canada Housing Benefit with the strategy will provide an average of \$2,500 per year to eligible low-income households to assist with rental payments.

It takes time to plan, finance and build housing, but the glacial pace of new construction is troubling. Much of the federal money that was announced is contingent on cost-sharing with the provinces and territories, the level of government directly responsible for housing. At the end of 2018, only three bilateral agreements had been concluded — and people in critical housing need continue to wait. While housing is not a singular solution to gender-based violence and discrimination, having a secure place to live is critical to women's overall health and well-being.

3. Food security

Women, particularly women of colour, are at significant risk of experiencing food insecurity and poverty. Much of Canada's current approach to food security is based on short-term emergency solutions, such as food banks, which are under-resourced and do not address systemic causes of food insecurity. The experience of food insecurity for children is directly connected to women's poverty, as women are often the primary caregivers, particularly in single-parent families.

In March 2018, 1.1 million people in Canada visited a food bank in the country. While single parent families represent only one in 10 households, they make up one-fifth (19%) of those who accessed food banks last year.¹⁹⁷ Food insecurity in Canada's North is particularly striking. A shocking seven out of 10 Inuit preschoolers in Nunavut are living in food insecure house-

¹⁹⁶ Government of Canada (2017), *Canada's National Housing Strategy: A Place to Call Home*.

¹⁹⁷ Food Banks Canada (2019), *Hunger Count 2018: The Data*.

holds.¹⁹⁸ A recent report found that Canada’s approach to food insecurity in Canada’s North is failing northern communities. Levels of food insecurity have worsened in recent years following the introduction of Nutrition North Canada in 2011. More effective programs are urgently needed to tackle hunger and insecurity.¹⁹⁹

In June 2019, the federal government released *Food Policy for Canada – Everyone at the Table*, which sets out several national priorities including tackling food waste, improving community access to healthy food, the creation of a National School Food Program, and increasing food security in northern and remote communities.²⁰⁰ A new multi-stakeholder Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council will help develop policy targets, guide implementation and monitor progress. However, the related budget (\$134 million) is modest given the scale of the challenge. The new food policy also does not address the role of the current industrial food system in diet-related disease and the climate crisis, or work to strengthen food sovereignty, particularly with respect to Indigenous peoples.²⁰¹

4. Income security

Canada’s social security systems include transfers from the federal government and subnational governments. In recent years, improvements to federal transfers, including the Canada Child Benefit and Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement, have significantly impacted the experience of poverty for women with children and senior women, respectively. However, for those women who do not have young children, and who are not yet 65 years old, there remain significant gaps in Canada’s social security systems – especially for groups facing additional barriers and health challenges. But even among seniors, there are important shortcomings as recent increases in poverty among single women reveal.

General welfare and disability programs provided by the state are typically distributed by subnational governments, and across the country rates fall far below any measure of poverty. For single women living in poverty, rates

198 Hilary Ferguson (2011), “Inuit Food (In)security in Canada: Assessing the Implications and Effectiveness of Policy,” *Queen’s Policy Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2.

199 Andrée-Anne Fafard St-Germain, Tracey Galloway and Valerie Tarasuk (2019), “Food insecurity in Nunavut following the introduction of Nutrition North Canada,” *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, Vol. 191, Issue 20, pp. E552-8.

200 Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (2019), *Food Policy for Canada – Everyone at the Table*.

201 See Food Secure Canada (2019), News Release: A food policy for Canada, “Everyone at the Table” – An important first step. June 19, 2019.

remain woefully inadequate. For example, in Vancouver, British Columbia a single mother with two children receives \$1,095.58 per month,²⁰² which includes \$570.00 for housing. Meanwhile, the current average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Vancouver is \$1,842 per month.²⁰³ In some cases – particularly for Indigenous women, women of colour and women with disabilities – the gap between welfare rates and the cost of living is so significant that women are forced into situations where children may be apprehended by child welfare authorities. In these cases, symptoms of poverty are regarded as neglect while the state’s negligence in addressing systemic poverty remains unaddressed.

While many of Canada’s social security systems are governed by subnational governments, the federal government plays a critical role in setting national standards for provinces and territories with respect to income assistance and benefit rates for women that accord with Canada’s human rights obligations. Although many international authorities have encouraged Canada to set national standards as human rights guidelines, as the country once did through the Canada Assistance Program (CAP), the federal government has indicated no intention of setting national standards for social security for women.

202 Government of British Columbia (2019), “Income Assistance Rate Table,” *BC Employment & Assistance Policy & Procedure Manual*.

203 The average rent for a Vancouver 2-bedroom apartment presented here is based on values for purpose built rental accommodation and rental accommodation in condominium buildings. David MacDonald (2019), *Unaccommodating: Rental Housing Wage in Canada*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Violence against Women

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN continues to be one of the most pervasive human rights violations. A report from the World Health Organization makes it clear that: “violence against women is not a small problem that only occurs in some pockets of society, but rather is a global public health problem of epidemic proportions, requiring urgent action. It is time for the world to take action: a life free of violence is a basic human right, one that every woman, man and child deserves.”²⁰⁴

1. Current trends

The most recent data show that in 2017 almost 96,000 people in Canada were victims of intimate partner violence,²⁰⁵ representing just over a quarter (30%) of all victims of police-reported violent crime. Four out of five victims of all police-reported intimate partner violence were women (79%) — representing over 75,000 female victims.²⁰⁶ Women make up an even larger share of victims in intimate partner homicides: in 2017, 84% of all victims of intimate partner homicides were women.²⁰⁷

Levels of sexual assault are another critical concern. The rate of police-reported sexual offences has been increasing,²⁰⁸ especially among young

204 World Health Organization (2013), *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*.

205 Intimate partner violence (IPV) includes violent offences that occur between current and former legally married spouses, common-law partners, dating partners and other kinds of intimate partners. Figures are for individuals aged 15 to 89 years.

206 Intimate partner violence is the most common kind of violence experienced by women. In 2017, 45% of all female victims of violence had been victimized by a current or former partner. Marta Burczycka (2018), “Police-reported intimate partner violence in Canada, 2017,” In *Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2017*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

207 *Ibid.*

208 Shana Conroy (2018), *Police-reported Violence against Girls and Young Women in Canada, 2017*. Juristat, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

women and girls.²⁰⁹ In 2017 alone, there were approximately 25,000 police-reported sexual assaults, an increase of 13% from 2016,²¹⁰ following the #MeToo movement.²¹¹

The #MeToo movement has also prompted women to speak out about violence in the workplace. Women are twice as likely as men to report physical violence against them at work, and more than five times as likely to report sexual harassment or unwanted sexual attention.²¹² This is especially true for women working in female-dominated sectors such as health care, teaching, social services and hospitality workers — occupations that all involve a high degree of interaction with the public.²¹³ A survey conducted by the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions in 2017 found that 61% of nurses had experienced an incident of extreme violence in previous months.²¹⁴

It is important to note that police-reported statistics provide only a partial picture of the violence women experience. Sexual assault and intimate partner violence are vastly underreported. Statistics Canada estimates that 90% of the incidents of sexual assault and harassment²¹⁵ and 70% of the incidents of intimate partner violence are never reported to the police.²¹⁶ And only a fraction of those that are reported lead to a conviction.²¹⁷ Concern about deeply embedded biases of the criminal justice system is just one of the barriers deterring victims from reporting. Negative attitudes that expose survivors

209 Cristine Rotenberg (2017), *Police-reported Sexual Assaults in Canada, 2009 to 2014: A Statistical Profile*. Juristat, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

210 Mary Allen (2018). *Police-reported Crime Statistics in Canada, 2017*, Juristat, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

211 The number peaked in October, with 29% more reports than the month before and 46% more than the October of the prior year. Cristine Rotenberg and Adam Cotter (2018), *Police-reported Sexual Assaults in Canada before and after #MeToo, 2016 and 2017*. Juristat, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

212 In 2016, one in five women aged 15–64 years (19%) reported experiencing at least one form of harassment in the workplace in the previous 12 months. Darcy Hango and Melissa Moyser (2018), *Harassment in Canadian workplaces, Insights on Canadian Society*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 75-006-X.

213 House of Commons Standing Committee on Health (2019), *Violence facing health care workers in Canada*.

214 Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (2017), *National Membership Poll: Nurses Speak Up on Patient Safety and Working Conditions*. The Vector Poll.

215 Shana Conroy and Adam Cotter (2017), “Self-reported sexual assault in Canada, 2014,” Juristat, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

216 Marta Burczycka (2016), “Trends in self-reported spousal violence, 2014.” In *Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2014*. Juristat. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

217 Cristine Rotenberg (2017), “From Arrest to Conviction: Court Outcomes of Police-Reported Sexual Assaults in Canada, 2009 to 2014,” Juristat, Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 85-002-X.

to blame, shame, scepticism and stigma, as well as well-founded fears of continuing violence for themselves and others work to silence women.²¹⁸

Certain groups such Indigenous women, women with significant mental health concerns, LGBTQI2S people, women with disabilities, and immigrant and refugee women²¹⁹ are at a much higher risk of violence than others.

According to the 2014 General Social Survey, Indigenous women and girls had an overall rate of violent victimization that was close to triple that of non-Indigenous women and girls, and Indigenous women were three times more likely than non-Indigenous women to have been a victim of spousal violence.²²⁰ Research from the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls found that Indigenous women and girls were 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than any other women in Canada, and 16 times more likely than Caucasian women.²²¹ One quarter of all female homicide victims in Canada in 2015 were Indigenous, up from nine per cent in 1980.²²²

Women with disabilities were nearly twice as likely to be sexually assaulted or the victim of repeated violent crimes compared to women without a disability.²²³ In 2014, over one in five (23%) women with disabilities experienced emotional, financial, physical or sexual violence or abuse committed by a current or former partner in the previous five years, a rate almost double those without disabilities.²²⁴ It is important to acknowledge that women and girls with disabilities can be subject to unique forms of violence that spring from their dependence on caregivers (e.g., threats of abandonment, withholding needed care and supports) which can in turn make it extremely difficult to leave violent situations.²²⁵

218 Alana Prochuk (2018), *We are here: Women's experiences of the barriers to reporting sexual assault*, West Coast LEAF.

219 Rupaleem Bhuyan, Bethany Osborne, Sajedah Zahraei, and Sarah Tarshis (2014), *Unprotected, Unrecognized Canadian Immigration Policy and Violence Against Women, 2008–2013*, University of Toronto.

220 Jillian Boyce (2016), "Victimization of Aboriginal people in Canada, 2014." *Juristat*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

221 National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), *Reclaiming Power and Place: Final Report*. Volume 1a, p. 55.

222 Tina Hotton Mahony, Joanna Jacob and Heather Hobson (2017), Women and the Criminal Justice System, In *Women in Canada: A gender-based statistical report*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 89-503-X.

223 Adam Cotter (2018), *Violent victimization of Women with disabilities, 2014*, *Juristat*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

224 *Ibid.*

225 Mary Ann Curry and Fran Navarro (2002), "Responding to abuse against women with disabilities: Broadening the definition of domestic violence," In *End Abuse Health Alert*, Vol. 8, No. 1.

Individuals who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual were also more than twice as likely to be sexually assaulted as those who identified as heterosexual. Bisexual women, in particular, reported much higher levels of violent victimization and sexual assault compared to their heterosexual peers.²²⁶

2. Key milestones since 2014

Federal Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-based Violence

Much work has been done since 2014 to address the issue of violence against women. The cornerstone has been the federal government's Gender Based Violence Strategy. Launched in June 2017, the strategy is based on three pillars – prevention, support for survivors, and promotion of responsive legal and justice systems – under which a number of measures have been introduced and are being implemented.²²⁷

The 2017 and 2018 federal budgets committed resources (\$100 million and \$86 million, respectively) for the rollout of the strategy over a five-year period.²²⁸ Much of the funding has been earmarked for internal federal government priorities and initiatives and selected community projects.

Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls

Following concerted and long-term pressure by families of survivors, Indigenous women's movements, settler women's groups, as well as many civil society activists, the federal government fulfilled its pledge to carry out an inquiry into murdered and missing Indigenous women. The inquiry was launched in December 2015, and the final report, *Reclaiming Power and Place*, was officially presented to the government on June 3, 2019.²²⁹

The report calls for transformative legal and social changes to resolve the crisis that has devastated Indigenous communities across the country. Over 200 calls for justice are directed at governments, institutions, social service providers, industries and all Canadians.

226 Laura Simpson (2018), "Violent victimization of lesbians, gays and bisexuals, 2014," Juristat, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

227 Status of Women Canada (2018) *Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*.

228 *Ibid.*

229 National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (2019).

At the closing ceremony, Chief Commissioner Marion Buller noted that “the hard truth is that we live in a country whose laws and institutions perpetuate violations of fundamental rights, amounting to a genocide against Indigenous women, girls and LGBTQI2S people.” The Commission called on all political leaders to work together to create and implement a national action plan with Indigenous peoples at the table to address violence against Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQI2S people.

The federal government has announced it will bring forward a national action plan, but no further details are currently available.

United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on violence against women

In June 2019, the United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Dubravka Šimonović, released her final report following her visit to Canada in April 2018. The rapporteur highlights that there is an urgent need for a more comprehensive and holistic national action plan on violence against women, ensuring that women and girls in all areas of the country have access to comparable levels of services and human rights protection.

In her report Šimonović notes: “Canada is a federal system with a division of responsibilities between the federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) governments, including in the area of violence against women. While the federal government has jurisdiction over criminal law, the administration of justice is a provincial and territorial responsibility. However, federalism should not constitute a barrier to human rights implementation.”²³⁰

The rapporteur recommended that Canada adopt, in co-operation with independent human rights institutions and civil society organizations, a national action plan on violence against women, and a national action plan on violence against Indigenous women that ensures the same level of protection across the country, based on the implementation of international human rights standards and the recommendations of the CEDAW inquiry²³¹ report.²³²

230 UN Human Rights Council (2019), *Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences*. A/HRC/41/42/Add.1, p. 5.

231 UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2015), *Report of the inquiry concerning Canada of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*, CEDAW/C/OP.8/CAN/1.

232 UN Human Rights Council (2019), p. 18.

Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability

The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA) was established in 2017 and released its first report on January 30, 2019.²³³ The CFOJA's mandate is to establish a visible and national focus on femicide in Canada by: (1) documenting femicides as they occur; and (2) monitoring state, legal and social responses to these killings. Its 2018 report found that:

- 148 women and girls were killed by violence in 2018. On average, every 2.5 days one woman or girl is killed in Canada — a consistent trend for four decades.
- Where an accused has been identified, 91% are male, consistent with national and international patterns.
- Indigenous women and girls are overrepresented as victims, comprising about 5% of the population in Canada but 36% of women and girls killed by violence.

Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking

Human trafficking disproportionately affects women. According to a report released by Statistics Canada, between 2009 and 2016, 95% of the victims of human trafficking were female, with young women and girls under age 25 representing 70% of all victims.²³⁴ With funding from the federal government, the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking launched the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline in May 2019, a new multilingual, 24/7 service that works to connect victims and survivors with social services, law enforcement and emergency services.²³⁵

233 Myrna Dawson, Danielle Sutton, Michelle Carrigan, and Valérie Grand'Maison (2019), *#CallItFemicide: Understanding gender-related killings of women and girls in Canada, 2018*. Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, University of Guelph.

234 Dyna Ibrahim (2018), *Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2016*, Juristat Bulletin — Quick Fact, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

235 Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline.

3. Legislation linked to violence against women since 2014

In 2017, the Canadian Human Rights Act was amended to include gender identity as a prohibited ground for discrimination. Violence motivated by gender identity was also included as a form of hate crime under the Criminal Code.²³⁶

In 2018, the Canada Labour Code was amended to strengthen the existing framework for the prevention of harassment and violence, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, in federal workplaces.²³⁷ Several provinces have also amended occupational health and safety and employment standards legislation, recognizing domestic violence as a workplace hazard and establishing paid and unpaid leave for domestic violence survivors.

On June 21, 2019, Bill C-78 came into law, amending the Divorce Act. Although the legislation did not include key amendments proposed by advocates,²³⁸ it is a step forward that provides more protection to women fleeing violence.²³⁹ At the same time, Bill C-71 received royal assent, amending current firearms regulations. This is seen as an important first step forward in reducing the number of women and children who are victims of femicide in Canada.²⁴⁰

236 Bill C-16: An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code.

237 Bill C-65: An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (harassment and violence), the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1.

238 See: Luke's Place Support and Research Centre and National Association of Women and the Law (2018), *Brief to Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, Study of Bill C-78*.

239 Bill C-78: An Act to amend the Divorce Act.

240 Bill C-71: An Act to amend certain Acts and Regulations in relation to firearms.

Gender and Health

WHILE WOMEN IN Canada have relatively long life expectancies, they continue to experience disproportionate rates of chronic illness and use the health care system more often than their male counterparts, particularly as they age.²⁴¹ Women's experiences of health are impacted by a range of factors including race, Indigeneity, ethnicity, citizenship status, geographic location, language, sexual orientation, employment status, education, physical and intellectual ability, and especially significant, socioeconomic status.²⁴²

For women in Canada, gender disparities in health are largely attributed to social structural and psychosocial (rather than behavioural) factors,²⁴³ which manifest in high rates of mental health disorders and particularly mood and anxiety disorders.²⁴⁴ There remain, however, significant gaps in knowledge about women's experiences of health, and the effects of medical interventions on women's bodies are little known.²⁴⁵ There are additional challenges facing those seeking access to gender affirming care²⁴⁶ and those living in rural, remote and northern communities, among others.²⁴⁷

These challenges are especially important for women with disabilities. They face profound barriers in accessing quality care that fundamentally undermines their quality of life, including a lack of disability-specific know-

241 Canadian Population Health Index, Health Canada and Canadian Institute for Health Information (2004), *Women's Health Surveillance Report: Supplementary Chapters*; Tracey Bushnik (2016), "The Health of Women and Girls," in *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. no. 89-503-X.

242 UNBC, Northern Fire (nd), *Women's Health in a Northern Context*. Website.

243 Margaret Denton, Steven Prus and Vivienne Walters (2004), "Gender differences in health: A Canadian study of the psychosocial, structural and behavioural determinants of health," *Social Science & Medicine*, Vol. 58, No. 12, June 2004, pp. 2585–2600.

244 CAMH (nd), *Mental Illness and Addiction: Facts and Statistics*. Website.

245 Anita Layton (2019), "Gender bias in health care is hurting women," *The Globe and Mail*, March 8, 2019.

246 Rainbow Health Ontario (nd), *Caring for trans and gender diverse people*, Trans health connection project.

247 Annette Brown (nd), "Issues Affecting Access to Health Services in Northern, Rural and Remote Regions of Canada," University of Northern British Columbia.

ledge and educational resources, a lack of accessible equipment in healthcare settings, practitioners' unwillingness to provide care, and systemic barriers within the health system such as time limits for appointments.²⁴⁸

1. Federal action on women and health

After the fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, Health Canada developed the Women's Health Strategy to guide its work²⁴⁹ and established a Women's Health Bureau. The strategy also supported the creation of the Canadian Women's Health Network (CWHN) and five Centres for Excellence for Women's Health across the country,²⁵⁰ as part of the government's goal to increase the understanding of gendered disparities in health and to "address the biases and insensitivities of the health system to women and their issues."

Many of the initiatives developed and funded under the Women's Health Strategy were terminated or defunded over the 2006–2015 period. In 2012, funding was cut for health research and service programs carried out by a number of organizations working with Indigenous communities. Health Canada's Women's Health Contribution Program was cut the following year, resulting in the closure or significant scaling back of several centres of excellence and the CWHN.

Support for gender-based research and analysis has been a higher priority since 2015. Health Canada's Gender and Health Unit conducts gender-based analysis of its activities, including all Treasury Board submissions and memoranda to cabinet. The government has also committed to ensuring that all publicly funded health research improves our understanding of gendered and sex differences in the causes and experiences of illness, presenting symptoms, the effectiveness of relevant interventions, and short- and long-term outcomes.²⁵¹ On this score, much work remains to be done.

248 Paula Pinto (2015), "Women, disability and the right to health," In *Women's Health: Intersections of Policy, Research and Practice* (2nd edition), edited by Pat Armstrong and Ann Pederson. Toronto: Women's Press.

249 Health Canada (1999), Women's Health Strategy. For a discussion of the Strategy, see Olena Hankivsky (2006), "Reflections on Women's Health and Gender Equality in Canada," *Canadian Woman Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 4.

250 See: Canadian Women's Health Network (CWHN) and Centre of Excellence for Women's Health (CEWH, formerly the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health).

251 See for example, CIHR (nd), Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) at CIHR. Website.

2. Universal, single-payer, comprehensive pharmacare

Canada is the only country in the world with universal health care and no national pharmacare strategy. Instead, Canada relies on a patchwork of more than 100 government-run drug insurance programs and more than 100,000 private drug insurance plans, a system that is “fragmented, uneven, unequal and unfair.”²⁵² Many people fall through the cracks, resulting in profound and discriminatory impacts on health outcomes. Given that women are frequent users of health care services, experience higher rates of chronic disease and — like people belonging to other marginalized groups — are more likely to be employed in the kinds of part-time and precarious work that do not provide insurance, universal, comprehensive pharmacare is a matter of fundamental equity.²⁵³

Access to contraception is key to upholding people’s right to health, achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment, realizing public health goals and reducing health care costs.²⁵⁴ When women and adolescents are empowered to choose if, when and how many children to have, they are better positioned to continue their education and access employment opportunities, which has positive impacts on income, mental health, family stability and children’s well-being.²⁵⁵

Transgender and gender-nonconforming people (particularly youth) often face discrimination when trying to access appropriate, non-stigmatizing, high quality health care.²⁵⁶ For example, availability and cost coverage for hormone replacement therapy differs greatly between provincial, territorial and federal levels. Further, few physicians are well equipped to understand or provide the comprehensive medical care trans folks require. In many places the medications are not covered at all, and where they are, onerous bureaucratic processes exist that can amount to another major barrier for trans individuals seeking care.

252 Health Canada (2019), *A Prescription for Canada: Achieving Pharmacare for All*. Final Report of the Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare, p. 7.

253 Michael Law, *et.al.* (2018), “The consequences of patient charges for prescription drugs in Canada: a cross-sectional survey,” *CMAJ Open*, Vol. 6, No. 1.

254 Adam Sonfield, Kinsey Hasstedt, Megan Kavanaugh and Ragnar Anderson (2013), *The Social and Economic Benefits of Women’s Ability to Determine Whether and When to Have Children*, New York: Guttmacher Institute.

255 *Ibid.*

256 Jaimie Veale, *et. al.* (2015), *Being Safe, Being Me: Results of the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey*. Vancouver: Stigma and Resilience among Vulnerable Youth Centre, School of Nursing, University of British Columbia.

There have been at least five attempts to implement national pharmacare in Canada since 1949. In 2018, the federal government commissioned a study on the viability of a national plan. Released in June 2019, the pharmacare advisory council's report recommends that "the federal government work with provincial and territorial governments and stakeholders to establish universal, single-payer, public pharmacare in Canada."²⁵⁷ The government has announced its intention to develop a national program but has not provided any details about what form the program might take.²⁵⁸

257 Health Canada (2019), *A Prescription for Canada: Achieving Pharmacare for All. Final Report of the Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare.*

258 Bruce Champion-Smith and Alex Boutilier, "Trudeau says Liberals are committed to launching a national pharmacare plan to ensure drug coverage for Canadians," *The Toronto Star*, June 12, 2019.

Sexual and Reproductive Health

ISSUES OF SEXUAL and reproductive justice are critical to the advancement of gender equality. In addition to concerns addressed in this chapter about access to abortion care, the rights of sex workers, and the availability of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, other current issues in sexual and reproductive justice include access to relevant pharmaceuticals, contraception and gender affirming care, and forced and coerced sterilization.

1. Access to abortion care

Following the 1988 Supreme Court of Canada decision *R v. Morgentaler*,²⁵⁹ there have been no legal restrictions on access to abortion in Canada. Paragraphs 97 and 106 of the Beijing Platform for Action identify safe access to abortion as a matter of public health integral to women’s “opportunities in public and private life, including opportunities for education and economic and political empowerment.” These commitments are further advanced in Social Development Goal 3.7 of the platform, which states that national governments must ensure “universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services” by 2030.

Still, critical barriers persist. Access to abortion services is uneven across Canada and particularly challenging for women living in rural or remote regions. Most abortion providers are located less than 150 km from the U.S. border and only one hospital in six offers abortion services, leaving many women to travel large distances to access services, either within or across provincial/territorial lines. Those who are unable to pay for the service out

²⁵⁹ *R v Morgentaler*, [1988] 1 SCR 30.

of pocket must travel significant distances and incur additional travel and accommodation expenses.²⁶⁰

In New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, the provincial government will not cover the cost of surgical abortion services outside of hospitals. This means that freestanding abortion clinics either cannot exist or must charge patients for services that should, by federal law, be covered by medicare. The unavailability in Canada of abortion services for women who have been pregnant longer than 23 weeks also forces people to travel to the United States to find care.

Interference and intimidation from anti-choice organizations and activists often misleads, obfuscates and delays individuals seeking abortion care. Harassment, threats, violence and intimidation from anti-choice protesters are also common around sexual health service centres.

Since 2015, Canada has taken steps to improve access to medical abortion through the approval of Mifegymiso, a combination product containing the drugs mifepristone and misoprostol. The availability of Mifegymiso has the potential to improve access to abortion services in rural and remote communities, and universal cost coverage can help reduce health inequities and gender- and income-based discrimination. As of June 2019, all provinces and most territories have approved universal cost coverage programs for Mifegymiso. Nunavut has not implemented any cost coverage strategy for medical abortion.

In June 2015, the Interprovincial Health Insurance Agreements Co-ordinating Committee, chaired by Health Canada, removed abortion services from the list of excluded services (although those seeking abortion services at private clinics²⁶¹ are not eligible for reciprocal billing).²⁶² Facing a legal challenge in 2016, the Prince Edward Island government agreed to establish one clinic in the provincial capital that will provide abortion services.²⁶³

260 Costs associated with travel and accommodation are often doubled because hospitals won't allow women to leave without a support person (which hospitals do not provide).

261 Government of Ontario. Health Services Branch (2015). Bulletin to hospitals: "Reciprocal Billing of Abortion Services." September 8, 2015.

262 Reciprocal billing states that individuals who are not present (either travelling or changing their residence) within their province or territory of residence at the time of needing a specific medically necessary service or procedure are to be either covered or reimbursed in full of the monetary costs by their provincial or territorial health system.

263 Government of Prince Edward Island (2016). News Release: Province responds to abortion challenge.

2. Rights of sex workers

Sex workers face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, leading to disproportionately high rates of violence, intimidation, harassment and abuse, and reduced access to prevention, care and support.²⁶⁴ The stigma associated with sex work and the discrimination that different sex workers experience in the health, criminal and social service systems, and the wider society, undermine their fundamental rights to health and personal safety.

In practical terms, the criminalization of the purchase of sexual services increases sex workers' isolation and marginalization while it concurrently limits access to police protection and support services.²⁶⁵ As importantly, lack of knowledge about the ways in which racialized status, socio-economic class, immigration status, presence of disability, and sex and gender identity interact turn sex workers away from needed support, compounding their disadvantage and the likelihood of negative outcomes and harm.²⁶⁶

3. Access to comprehensive sexuality education

Comprehensive sexuality education is recognized as a basic human right of all children and youth in international human rights declarations and instruments, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. In Canada, the federal government has an obligation to ensure that all children have equal access to high quality, evidence-based, scientifically accurate, comprehensive sexuality education.²⁶⁷

264 Danielle Sawicki, Brienna Meffert, Kate Read and Adrienne Heinz (2019), "Culturally competent health care for sex workers: an examination of myths that stigmatize sex work and hinder access to care," *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp. 355–371.

265 Kim Blankenship and Stephen Koester (2002), "Criminal Law, Policing Policy and HIV Risk in Female Street Sex Workers and Injection Drug Users," *Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics*, Vol. 30, No. 4, p. 550; Annika Eriksson and Anna Gavanas (2008), *Prostitution in Sweden 2007*, Socialstyrelsen, p. 48; Ulf Stridbeck (ed.) (2004), *Purchasing Sexual Services in Sweden and the Netherlands: Legal Regulation and Experiences – An Abbreviated English Version. A Report by a Working Group on the legal regulation of the purchase of sexual services*, Ministry of Justice and the Police, pp.13 and 19; Petra Östergren (2015), *Sexworkers critique of Swedish Prostitution policy*; Rosie Campbell and Merl Storr (2001), "Challenging the Kerb Crawler Rehabilitation Programme," *Feminist Review*, Vol. 67, No. 1, p. 102 citing Steph Wilcock (1998), *The Lifeline Sexwork Project Report: Occupational Health and Safety Issues and Drug Using Patterns of Current Sexworker: Survey Findings*, Manchester: Lifeline; Pro Sentret, Året 2010/2011, pp.72, 78–79.

266 International experts, UN agencies and human rights bodies affirm that the decriminalization of sex work is the single most efficient structural intervention to reduce HIV infections among sex workers by reducing the risk of violence. "HIV and Sex Workers," *The Lancet*, July 23, 2014.

267 UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/39/L.13/Rev.1

Recent evidence suggests there are significant gaps in the sexual health knowledge of Canadian youth.²⁶⁸ In one B.C. study, over half of youth surveyed reported they were not taught where to access testing for sexually transmitted infections (57%) or acquire emergency contraception (52%). Four in 10 (38%) reported they weren't taught where to get free condoms or contraception, or where to access birth control (47%).²⁶⁹

The impact of these gaps is evident in the rising rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among young people. Reported rates of chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis have been steadily increasing since the 1990s.²⁷⁰ In 2011, over one-quarter of positive HIV tests were attributed to young people between the ages of 15 and 29.²⁷¹ According to 2010 national STI surveillance data, 63% of new cases of chlamydia, 49% of new cases of gonorrhea, and 14.9% of new cases of infectious syphilis were among young people aged 15–24.²⁷²

Women and girls with disabilities face specific barriers accessing sexual and reproductive health care, grounded in negative attitudes around their sexual and reproductive rights²⁷³ and a history of surgical sterilization influenced by the eugenics movement throughout the 20th century.²⁷⁴ Healthcare providers' perceptions about disability as well as their lack of knowledge and training and reluctance to address sexual health needs works to heighten the risk of victimization and unwanted outcomes like unplanned pregnancy and STIs.²⁷⁵

There is a strong body of research that demonstrates the positive impact that high quality sex-ed makes in young people's lives when it is effectively developed and delivered. Human rights-based, sex-positive and accurate information has been shown to not only increase knowledge – a key goal in promoting health and preventing unwanted pregnancies – but is also

268 See for example Maya Kumar, *et. al.*, (2013), "Sexual knowledge of Canadian adolescents after completion of high school sexual education requirements," *Pediatric Child Health*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 74–80; Sarah Flicker, *et. al.* (2009), *Sexpress: The Toronto Teen Survey Report*, Planned Parenthood Toronto.

269 McCreary Centre Society (2015), *Sexual health of youth in BC*. Vancouver.

270 Public Health Agency of Canada (2014), *Population Specific Status Report: HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted and blood born infections among youth in Canada*.

271 *Ibid.*

272 *Ibid.*

273 Paula Pinto (2015), "Women, disability and the right to health," In *Women's Health: Intersections of Policy, Research and Practice* (2nd edition), edited by Pat Armstrong and Ann Pederson. Toronto: Women's Press

274 John Radford and Deborah Park (1995). "The eugenic legacy," *Journal on Developmental Disabilities*, Vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 73–84.

275 Kaylee Ramage (2015), *Sexual Health Education for Adolescents with Intellectual Disabilities*, Saskatchewan Prevention Institute.

essential to advancing gender equality, preventing gender-based violence and bullying and empowering youth, all of which are connected to longer-term positive physical and psychosocial outcomes among young people.

The federal government has a clear role to play in preventing and addressing gender-based violence, empowering women and girls, achieving public health goals, addressing rising rates of sexually transmitted infections, supporting healthy relationships among young people and creating a culture of consent.²⁷⁶ Setting clear benchmarks to guide provincial and territorial curriculum development, implementation and evaluation, investing in training and capacity building for sexual health educators, and raising public awareness about the importance of sex-ed are all well within the mandate and capacity of the federal government.

There is no standardized comprehensive sexuality education curriculum in Canada. This has resulted in inconsistent, outdated and substandard implementation of sex-ed across the country. Content varies greatly between classrooms, often overlooks the experiences of students who are LGBTQI2S and is distanced from the current realities in which youth navigate sexual decision-making. Comprehensive sexuality education curricula is rarely monitored and evaluated to ensure high quality delivery and is often offered by educators who receive little to no support from provincial/territorial education departments, and whose comfort level with the subject matter is low. Young people in schools with limited resources or where sex-ed is a low priority might not get any information at all.

The United Nations has called on Canada to uphold young people's right to quality sex-ed. On December 19, 2018, Canada received an official communication from UN human rights experts demanding the government take immediate steps to ensure compliance with human rights obligations in regard to sexuality education.²⁷⁷ The message to Canada is clear: federal and provincial governments have an obligation to ensure all young people are provided with sexuality education; failure to do so is a violation of human rights.²⁷⁸

276 Public Health Agency of Canada, Mandate.

277 UN Human Rights Council, Office of the High Commissioner, Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law (2018), "Letter to the Government of Canada concerning changes to the sexuality education curriculum of the Province of Ontario," OL CAN 4/2018, December 18, 2018.

278 The Government of Canada was asked to take immediate action to: (1) "ensure that all individuals and groups have access to comprehensive, non-discriminatory, evidence-based, scientifically accurate and age appropriate information on all aspects of sexual and reproductive health, including gender equality, sexual and gender-based violence, and the issue of consent" and (2) ensure all jurisdictions comply with international human rights obligations. Educators

Gender Equality and LGBTQI2S Rights

1. Policies and programs, 2014–2019

Since 2015, the federal government has taken a number of positive measures aimed at ending discrimination and violence experienced by LGBTQI2S people in Canada and around the world. In 2016, the government appointed a member of Parliament as Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on LGBTQ2 issues.²⁷⁹ In 2017, an LGBTQ2 secretariat was established within the Privy Council Office to consult with civil society on issues of importance to LGBTQI2S communities.²⁸⁰

That same year saw the passage into law of Bill C-16, which amends both the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code to include protections for gender identity and gender expression.²⁸¹ Also in 2017, Prime Minister Justin

have the obligation and the right to teach the best possible curriculum to their students and must not be punished for upholding the standards of their profession. The communication further establishes the role of the federal government in ensuring provincial jurisdictions comply with human rights violation obligations. Canada has also received a specific recommendation to deliver quality and comprehensive sexuality education in its most recent UN Universal Period Review.

279 Government of Canada (2016), “Prime Minister announces Special Advisor on LGBTQ2 Issues,” News release.

280 <https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/campaigns/free-to-be-me/about-us/about-lgbtq2-secretariat.html>.

281 Amnesty International (2017), “Canada: Human rights protections extended to trans people,” Press release.

Trudeau issued a formal apology to individuals harmed by Canada’s prior legislation, policy and practices criminalizing and discriminating against LGBTQ2 people. The apology accompanied the introduction of legislation to permanently destroy the records of unjust convictions.²⁸²

On the international stage, Canada served as co-chair of the intergovernmental Equal Rights Coalition (ERC) from 2017–2019.²⁸³ The ERC works with civil society, UN agencies and other multilateral partners to protect of the rights of LGBTI persons globally and promote inclusive development.

New funding has been allocated to support and build the capacity of LGBTQI2S organizations in Canada and abroad, strengthen frontline services, combat homophobia and transphobia in education systems, and generally promote LGBTQI2S rights.²⁸⁴

2. Persistent discrimination and barriers to LGBTQI2S rights

Despite this progress, LGBTQI2S people continue to face significant challenges that require urgent action on the part of the government. For example, there are barriers to accessing employment, housing and mental health services compared to heterosexual and/or cisgender Canadians.²⁸⁵ An estimated 25–40% of homeless youth in Canada are LGBTQI2S.²⁸⁶ Transgender, gender-diverse, non-binary and Two Spirit people feel these inequities most severely.

Community-based research reveals that more than 50% of trans individuals in Ontario experience clinical depression and 43% have a history of attempting suicide — a result of experiencing both systemic and interpersonal forms of oppression based on their gender identity.²⁸⁷ Trans people experience

282 Government of Canada (2017), “Remarks by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to Apologize to LGBTQ2 Canadians,” November 28, 2017.

283 Government of Canada, Equal Rights Coalition.

284 See, for example, Global Affairs Canada (2019), “Canada announces new funds in support of LGBTQ2 rights,” News release.

285 In this report, we use the acronym LGBTQI2S to refer to people who describe their identity as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, queer/questioning, intersex and Two-Spirited. Two-Spirited is a term that some Indigenous people use to describe their sexual, gender or spiritual identity.

286 Stephen Gaetz, Jesse Donaldson, Tim Ritcher and Tanya Gulliver-Garcia (2013). *The state of homelessness in Canada 2013*, p. 26.

287 Greta Baur and Ayden Scheim (2015), *Transgender People in Ontario, Canada: Statistics from the Trans PULSE Project to Inform Human Rights Policy*. Epidemiology and Biostatistics, University of Western Ontario.

higher rates of homelessness and poor employment access. One-third of trans people (34%) live in a low-income household.²⁸⁸

LGBTQI2S people's experiences of violence, assault and criminalization are underrepresented in both national public research and in community-based programming and resource allocation. LGBTQI2S Canadians often choose not to report experiences of gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, or discrimination to the police due to fears of re-victimization or of becoming targets for police violence themselves. Yet LGBTQI2S people experience higher rates of intimate partner violence than their cisgender, heterosexual counterparts,²⁸⁹ and hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation that are reported to police are more likely to be violent than hate crimes against other groups.²⁹⁰

Poor knowledge of LGBTQI2S experiences of violence affects the government's ability to adequately support or accurately address the LGBTQI2S communities' needs. This challenge is made more difficult by high levels of mistrust between the LGBTQI2S community and the police, including police reporting systems.

Other issues that require urgent action include the federal government's recent rejection of a public petition asking it to condemn and/or prohibit conversion therapy, the act of coercing or counselling individuals to change their sexual orientation or gender identity.²⁹¹ The state of human rights for intersex people in Canada is also fraught, as the Criminal Code continues to exempt non-consensual and medically unnecessary sex normalizing surgeries on intersex infants.

Canada's growing leadership in support of LGBTQI2S rights is necessary and welcome. But urgent action is needed to end the pervasive and ongoing discrimination and violence experienced by LGBTQI2S people in Canada.

288 Bauer and Scheim (2015); Robb Travers, et al. (2013), *Impacts of strong parental support for trans youth*, A report prepared for Children's Aid Society and Delisle Youth Centre; Greta Baur et al. (2012), "High heterogeneity of HIV-related sexual risk among transgender people in Ontario, Canada: a province-wide respondent-driven sampling survey," *BMC Public Health*, Vol. 12, No. 1.

289 Nadine Wathen, Jennifer MacGregor, Masako Tanaka and Barb MackQuarrie. (2018), "The impacts of intimate partner violence on the health and work of gender and sexual minorities in Canada," *International Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 63, No. 8.

290 Mary Allen (2015), Police-reported hate crime in Canada, 2013. *Juristat*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

291 Perlita Stroh (2019), "Ottawa rejects plea for nationwide conversion therapy ban," CBC News.

Criminalized and Imprisoned Women

WOMEN — PARTICULARLY those who are racialized, young, impoverished and/or living with mental health issues — remain the fastest-growing prison population in Canada. Over the past 10 years, and in contrast to a declining male prison population, the number of federally sentenced women has increased by nearly 30%.²⁹² Indigenous women now account for 40% of all federally sentenced women but are 4% of the total female population in Canada.²⁹³

Marginalization and victimization continue to be the most common characteristics shared among federally sentenced women: 91% of Indigenous women and 87% of non-Indigenous women in prison have been victims of male sexual and physical violence.²⁹⁴ Further, nearly 80% of all federally sentenced women have diagnosable mental health issues.²⁹⁵ The 2015-16 annual report of the Office of the Correctional Investigator states, “the number of incarcerated women who present with challenging and complex mental health needs, including increasingly serious, chronic and near lethal forms of self-injurious behaviour, continues to rise.”²⁹⁶

292 Office of the Correctional Investigator (2018), *Annual Report, 2017-2018*, p. 82.

293 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

294 Senator Kim Pate (2018), *Policy Briefing Note: Rising Incarceration Rates of Racialized Women*. Ottawa, Ontario: Policy 4 Women; Office of the Correctional Investigator (2017), *Annual Report, 2016-2017*.

295 Office of the Correctional Investigator (2014), *Annual Report, 2013-2014*, p. 45.

296 Office of the Correctional Investigator (2016), *Annual Report, 2015-2016*, p. 61.

Eight out of 10 (82%) women are jailed as a result of their attempts to navigate and cope with the realities of male violence against women, poverty, addictions and mental health issues.²⁹⁷ Non-violent property- and drug-related offences represent the majority of crimes for which women are convicted. Even where women are convicted of violent crimes, those crimes must be appropriately contextualized. For example, Indigenous women are overpoliced but underprotected;²⁹⁸ they have been trained by the state “to believe they are on their own in circumstances where they face violence [and] [w]hen women are forced to meet violence with violence the travesty is they are then susceptible to facing criminal charges.”²⁹⁹ The vast majority of women charged for using reactive—usually defensive—force do not pursue a legal defence and are likely to plead guilty.³⁰⁰

Relative to men, women have lower rates of recidivism and pose far less risk to community safety.³⁰¹ Despite the low risk women pose to community safety, incarcerating them comes with high human, social and fiscal costs. The majority of women in prison are mothers who were the sole supporter of their children before being jailed. Ninety per cent of these women’s children are taken into the “care” of the state, compared to 10% of the children of incarcerated men, perpetuating the cycle of marginalization, victimization and criminalization.³⁰² In 2017, the federal auditor general found that the cost to incarcerate one woman a year was about \$190,000, whereas the cost for community supervision was \$31,000 annually.³⁰³ The majority of Canadians (73%) believe that greater focus should be on community-based responses to crime.³⁰⁴

The discrimination and human rights abuses women face in the community are amplified and compounded once inside prison. As a group, federally sentenced women, particularly racialized and Indigenous women, are, and have historically been, subject to more disadvantaged treatment and

297 Senator Kim Pate (2018).

298 National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), *Reclaiming Power and Place: Final Report*.

299 CAEFS and NWAC (2008), “Women and the Canadian Legal System: Examining Situations of Hyper-Responsibility,” *Canadian Women Studies*, Vol 94, No. 3-4, p. 97.

300 Senator Kim Pate (2018).

301 Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (2008), *Female Offenders in Canada*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada; Shoshana Pollack, (2008), *Locked In, Locked Out: Imprisoning Women in the Shrinking and Punitive Welfare State*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University, p. 7.

302 Senator Kim Pate (2018).

303 Auditor General of Canada (2017), *Report 5 – Preparing Women Offenders [sic] for Release – Correctional Service Canada*.

304 EKOS Research Associates Inc. (2017), *National Justice Survey 2017: Issues in Canada’s Criminal Justice System*. Prepared for Department of Justice, p. 24.

more restrictive conditions of confinement than men. Indigenous women account for 50% of all segregation and maximum security placements,³⁰⁵ and women's admission rates to segregation are the highest per individual prisoner.³⁰⁶ More women are segregated than men (40% versus 25%) and are significantly impacted by the conditions of segregation.³⁰⁷

Women account for just 5% of the prison population overall, but represent almost one-third of all self-harm incidents in prisons.³⁰⁸ The response of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) to women's mental health and self-harm continues to be security driven and punitive, most often involving isolation and deprivation.³⁰⁹ When prison officials adopt counselling services like those seen in community-based programs, these often lack a sex/gender, race, disability, and class analysis of women's experiences and needs and become part of the punitive regime.³¹⁰ In recognition of these realities, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women recommended in 2018 that "preference be given, in every case, to alternatives to imprisonment for women prisoners with disabling mental health issues."³¹¹

Despite the positive obligation, set out in Section 4 (g) of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, to consider and be sensitive to the unique needs of women, particularly Indigenous women and women with mental health issues, CSC has a long history of applying the same practices, such as classification and strip searching, to both men and women, thereby exacerbating the disadvantage and harm to women. Today, CSC's approach to women prisoners is difficult to distinguish from its approach to men.³¹²

In October 2018, Bill C-83 was introduced to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and bring transformative changes to CSC. The bill

305 Office of the Correctional Investigator (2018), *Annual Report, 2017-2018*, p. 59.

306 *British Columbia Civil Liberties Association v. Canada (Attorney General)*, 2019, BCCA 5, 17 January 2018, at para. 64. [BCCLA].

307 BCCLA at para. 64.

308 Office of the Correctional Investigator (2018), *Annual Report, 2017-2018*, p. 86; Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (2018), *Study on the Human Rights of Federally-Sentenced Persons: The Most Basic Human Right Is To Be Treated As A Human Being* (1 February 2017 - 26 March 2018).

309 Canada, Office of the Correctional Investigator (2018), *Annual Report 2017-2018*; Correctional Service Canada (2017). *Interventions to Preserve Life and Prevent Serious Bodily Harm*, Commissioner's Directive 843.

310 Shoshana Pollack (2002), *Results of CAEFS Survey, Mental Health Services: Elizabeth Fry Societies*; Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (2018). *Study on The Human Rights of Federally-Sentenced Persons: The Most Basic Human Right Is To Be Treated As A Human Being* (1 February 2017 - 26 March 2018).

311 Dubravka Simonovic (2018), United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its causes and consequences, *End of Mission Statement*, Official Visit to Canada. 23 April 2018.

312 Office of the Correctional Investigator (2018). *Annual Report, 2017-2018*, p. 80.

has been heavily criticized as “cosmetic rebranding,” especially regarding its changes to segregation.³¹³ CSC continues to interpret the proposed legislative changes through a security lens and intends to rely on static security measures such as correctional officers and isolating physical barriers, absent of any sex-based analysis.³¹⁴ The Senate, Canada’s upper house of Parliament, recommended significant amendments to the bill, including the addition of judicial oversight, ending strip searching and strengthening those sections enabling community-based alternatives to incarceration.³¹⁵

Unfortunately, on June 21, 2019, Bill C-83 was passed into law without many of these key amendments. In particular, the requirement that CSC apply to courts to extend a segregation placement beyond 48 hours was rejected. A few days following the passage of Bill C-83, a decision of the Court of Appeal of British Columbia held that the current practice of segregation was unconstitutional and that external, non-CSC review within five days of placement was a constitutional necessity.³¹⁶ Under the new law, placement in conditions amounting to segregation could persist³¹⁷ well beyond the United Nations’ recommended time caps³¹⁸ and without oversight from the judiciary.

The increasing incarceration rates of women as a group, in particular women in poverty, Indigenous women, racialized women, women with disabilities and women who are victims of male violence, points to the serious and detrimental consequence of Canada’s unattained progress on many critical areas in the Beijing Platform for Action. Progress for the most marginalized women is not only stalled but completely unrealized. The overincarceration of women is a good indicator of this failed progress.³¹⁹

313 Senator Kim Pate, (2018), *Memo to The Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, Impact and implications of Bill C-83*, (November 19, 2018); Diana Majury (2019). Testimony before the Standing Senate Committee On Social Affairs, Science And Technology, (May 9, 2019).

314 Diana Majury (2019).

315 Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, Thirty-Fifth Report, Thursday, May 30, 2019.

316 *British Columbia Civil Liberties Association v. Canada (Attorney General)*, 2019 BCCA 228.

317 Honourable Ralph Goodale (2019), Testifying before The Standing Senate Committee On Social Affairs, Science And Technology, available online.

318 United Nations, General Assembly (2016), Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules).

319 Ann Hansen (2018), *Taking the Rap: Women doing Time for Society’s Crimes*. Toronto: Between the Lines. “Taking the Rap reveals in sometimes excruciatingly vivid detail the injustices and inequalities heaped on women as a result of social, economic, and legal systems that privilege those in power...Her passionate alliance with the women whose struggle she shares provides readers with a rare vantage point from which to examine the impoverishment of a legal system that is too often devoid of justice.”

Women and Canada's Foreign Policy

IN 2015, PRIME MINISTER Justin Trudeau announced “Canada is back” on the world stage. The government overhauled Canada’s international aid agenda; announced historical funding for women’s rights globally; launched a reinvigorated national action plan on women, peace and security; championed women’s rights in diplomatic spaces, including Canada’s presidency of the G7; and supported the rights of LGBTQI2S people. Though it embraced the idea of a feminist foreign policy and has made very meaningful progress, the government has not consistently applied a feminist lens across all areas of foreign policy. This lack of policy coherence has undermined the government’s feminist commitments.

1. Canada’s new Feminist International Assistance Policy

After an extensive consultation process, Global Affairs Canada revamped its approach to aid and released a new Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) in June 2017. The policy marks a clear shift in vision and focus, with a strong new emphasis on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and a commitment to rooting Canadian aid in a human right-based approach. This makes Canada one of the few donor countries to

focus its development and humanitarian funding so deliberately on making progress toward women’s rights and gender equality.

The FIAP has six action areas. Mirroring the Sustainable Development Goals, the policy features gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls both as a “core action area” and as a crosscutting objective throughout. The policy recognizes the importance of advocacy work for transforming social norms and power relations and structures, and states that Global Affairs Canada will now require all of its partners to consult and significantly involve local women’s organizations. Significantly, the FIAP reorients spending toward gender equality by committing 15% of all bilateral international development assistance to initiatives dedicated to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and 80% toward initiatives that increase the integration of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls across all international assistance efforts. This is a considerable shift given that only 1–2% of Canada’s aid budget was allocated to such initiatives over the previous five-year period.³²⁰

While elements of the government’s “feminist approach” can be inferred from the FIAP, the policy fails to offer a concise definition of the term, which is essential to the policy’s consistent and predictable application. Moreover, the vision of gender equality in the FIAP comes across as instrumentalist in some sections. For example, while the policy emphasizes the benefits that women’s economic inclusion can have on family health, social stability and economic growth, it focuses less on ways in which Canadian aid can help tackle the structural inequality and deep-rooted discrimination that keep women from benefiting from the gains to which they contribute. The policy also does not include a plan for tracking progress and reporting on commitments.

2. Ground-breaking announcements, consistently low levels of international aid

Following the 2015 federal election, the government set out to close existing gaps in Canada’s global funding for maternal, newborn and child health, particularly in relation to women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). This was particularly noteworthy in the context of the U.S.

³²⁰ Canadian Statistical Reports on International Assistance, as compiled by the Canadian Council for International Cooperation.

administration's reinstatement of the "global gag rule"³²¹ and global backlash against women's right to choose. The government committed an initial \$650 million for SRHR global programs in 2017. In 2019, it then announced an investment of \$700 million a year by 2023 – with an emphasis on the most neglected and stigmatized areas of SRHR, including safe and legal abortion, comprehensive sexuality education, and SRHR in emergency settings – as part of a new commitment that will see Canada's global health spending increase to \$1.4 billion and maintained through 2030. This historic commitment came in response to unrelenting advocacy by Canadian civil society and is a testament to the importance of feminist advocacy to achieve real progress for women's rights and gender equality.

The government has also undertaken high-profile initiatives supporting the rights of LGBTQI2S people globally, such as chairing the Equal Rights Coalition, supporting Pride events around the world, and dedicating new funding.³²²

Despite their tireless work to challenge discriminatory social norms, raise consciousness and build collective strategies for change, women's rights organizations receive very little support from governments and donors. As part of the new Feminist International Assistance Policy, the government announced \$150 million over five years to support local women's organizations and movements in developing countries in 2017.³²³ In 2019, the government announced \$300 million for the Equality Fund, a unique partnership that leverages philanthropy and investment strategies for feminist grant-making to ensure greater sustainability for women's rights organizations and feminist movements both in Canada and around the world. This was the largest announcement of funding for women's organizations in history.

Despite these ground-breaking funding announcements (all coming out of existing budgets) and an additional \$2 billion investment in overseas development assistance over five years, Canada's total spending on international assistance over this period has hovered around 0.28% of gross national income (GNI),³²⁴ well behind several peer countries and a far cry

321 "The global gag rule prohibits foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) who receive U.S. global health assistance from providing legal abortion services or referrals, while also barring advocacy for abortion law reform – even if it's done with the NGO's own, non-U.S. funds." See: Open Society Foundation (2019), "What is the Global Gag Rule?"

322 Global Affairs Canada (2019), News Release: Canada announces new funds in support of LGBTQI2S rights, February 7, 2019.

323 Global Affairs Canada (2019), *Women's Voice and Leadership*.

324 OECD (2019), Development aid drops in 2018, especially to neediest countries. Official development assistance 2018.

from the agreed target of 0.7%. Canada will fail to deliver on the promise of the Feminist International Assistance Policy without a long-term plan to increase aid.

3. New policy for gender equality in humanitarian action

In 2018, the government announced it would create a dedicated humanitarian funding pool, which will help promote timely and predictable humanitarian funding and avoid sidelining other development priorities when emergency strikes. In 2019, Global Affairs Canada released its new Policy for Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action, which commits to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, fund SRHR services and strengthen women’s local leadership during humanitarian crises. While the policy is a major step forward, it falls short of articulating a clear, costed plan for upholding the principles it espouses, such as the “grand bargain” commitment to allocating 25% of humanitarian funding to local organizations.

The government made use of Canada’s G7 presidency to spearhead a \$3.8 billion investment in promoting education and tackling the barriers to education for women and girls in conflict and crisis situations, encouraged G7 countries to make commitments through the Whistler Declaration on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, and assumed the leadership of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies. It also invested \$68.7 million in sexual and reproductive health services in humanitarian sectors — a crucial and often neglected area. However, Canadian humanitarian organizations and their partners find it difficult to secure funding for gender-focused programming in emergency contexts, and Canada still funds far too few local women’s rights actors in humanitarian action.

4. Progress on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

In November 2017, the government launched an updated Women, Peace and Security (WPS) national action plan (CNAP).³²⁵ This plan was a marked improvement on the original version in ambition, analysis, investments and scope. Objectives cover increasing women’s participation in conflict

325 Global Affairs Canada (2017), Gender Equality: A Foundation for Peace. Canada’s National Action Plan 2017–2022.

resolution and peacebuilding, addressing conflict-related sexual violence, promoting the rights of women and girls in conflict settings (including sexual and reproductive rights), and strengthening the capacity of peace operations to address the WPS agenda. The plan also recognized the important role played by civil society, especially women’s organizations, and incorporated commitments from a wide range of government departments. The government has committed to timely annual reports on CNAP implementation, which will strengthen accountability and transparency. In June 2019, the government took an important step forward with the appointment of Canada’s first WPS ambassador.³²⁶

Civil society representatives and organizations welcomed the new CNAP, but they also pointed out that significant work was required to implement this ambitious agenda.³²⁷ They have urged the adoption of a comprehensive approach to WPS issues that includes LGBTQI2S human rights and environmental issues, and the integration of conflict, resource extraction and gender. As well, the CNAP does not fully address all of the issues raised in the Beijing Platform for Action, including building a culture of peace or reducing military expenditures.

5. Feminist foreign policy: Need for greater policy coherence

From the start of its mandate in 2015, the federal government has publicly embraced the idea of a feminist foreign policy. Although the government has yet to articulate what this involves in areas such as trade or diplomacy, or how these different elements fit together, much can be gathered from the government’s actions in recent years.

For example, the government demonstrated feminist leadership during Canada’s 2018 G7 presidency, through the establishment of the first G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council and the first feminist W7.³²⁸ The government has also applied a human rights–based approach to several high-profile foreign policy decisions, such as speaking out in support of imprisoned women’s rights activists in Saudi Arabia despite diplomatic and economic retaliation

326 Government of Canada (2019), News Release: Prime Minister names first Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security , June 12, 2019.

327 Beth Woroniuk, Margaret Capelazo and Sarah Tuckey (2018). Women, Peace and Security in the Age of Feminist Foreign Policy: Reflections on Canada’s New National Action Plan. Ottawa: WPSN-C.

328 W7: Feminist Visions for the G7.

from the Saudi regime. It has been outspoken about SRHR and the right to safe abortion in many global fora. On the trade front, Canada pushed for the inclusion of gender chapters in several new trade agreements. Canada's new 2017 defence policy³²⁹ includes commitments to increase the use of GBA+ analysis, increase the percentage of women in the Canadian Armed Forces (and greater diversity overall), and address sexual abuse and harassment in the military. Canada also finally acceded to the Arms Trade Treaty.

These are substantial and important gains. However, there is no public document outlining Canada's feminist foreign policy that could serve as a roadmap to ensure policy coherence across aid, trade, diplomacy and defence policy. Delivering on a feminist foreign policy requires consistent and sustained attention to feminist principles and goals across all of Canada's international policies where currently there are significant gaps.

Some Canadian feminists, including Canadian Voice of Women for Peace,³³⁰ are campaigning for a demilitarized foreign policy that moves resources from war to peace. They have pointed to the glaring differences in government spending in the defence budget, compared to environmental and official development investments. Others have raised questions regarding Canada's nuclear weapons policy, including the government's unwillingness to sign the Nuclear Ban Treaty.³³¹ There are several loopholes in the Arms Trade Treaty legislation and nothing prevents Canada from selling arms to Saudi Arabia, which is engaged in a devastating war in Yemen that has resulted in the world's largest humanitarian crisis today. Canada's ongoing participation in the arms industry is also an issue of concern.

Issues of coherence have also been raised regarding trade and investment policies. Analysts have pointed out that it is important to go beyond including specific chapters on gender equality in trade agreements to addressing labour provisions, environmental safeguards and tax fairness.³³² More must also be done to ensure the responsible and ethical behaviour of Canadian companies operating internationally, especially those in the extractive industries.

329 National Defence (2017), *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's New Defence Policy*.

330 See: Canadian Voice of Women for Peace.

331 Beatrice Finn (2018), *Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy Cannot Include Nuclear Weapons*, *The Globe and Mail*, Sept. 28, 2018.

332 Francesca Rhodes (2017), *How Canada Can Tackle Gender Inequality Through Trade*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives; Laura Macdonald and Nadia Ibrahim (2019), *The new NAFTA is a missed opportunity for gender equality*, *Behind the Numbers*, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Women and the Media

CANADA HAS SUPPORTED a number of initiatives in the past five years aimed at improving various aspects of women's influence or representation in media industries, platforms and products. These are summarized here in response to two key questions: 1) What actions has your country taken in the last five years to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls due to online sexual harassment, online stalking and non-consensual sharing of intimate images?; and 2) What actions has your country taken in the last five years to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media?

1. Strengthening the Criminal Code to prevent online sharing of intimate images

In March 2015, partly in response to the high-profile suicides of two young women who had been subjected to online sexual harassment and bullying, the federal government added a provision to the Criminal Code that makes it an offence to share intimate images of a person of any age without their consent.³³³

In 2016, the Minister of Status of Women also undertook a national consultation on the issue of gender-based violence designed to inform

333 Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada (2019), Appearance before Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics on the Joint Investigation of Facebook Inc. by the Privacy Commissioner of Canada and the Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia, May 7, 2019.

future federal action. The summary of findings contains one reference to the importance of “developing and implementing tools to monitor social media,” but nothing substantive appears to have been done on this front since.³³⁴

In 2019, Canada’s privacy commissioner launched an investigation of Facebook and called for greater regulation, but this was prompted by concerns about the social media company’s violation of privacy law related to the disclosure of users’ personal information in the context of election interference.³³⁵

2. Putting sexual assault on the media agenda leads to shift in policing policies

In the past five years, Canadian news media have played a significant role in drawing attention to sexual assault and gender-based violence. Before the #MeToo movement erupted in 2017, an increasing number of legal experts and women’s advocates used op-eds to draw attention to sexual violence against women.

In February 2017, the country’s most influential national newspaper published a month-long investigative feature on the chronic failure of police forces to adequately investigate sexual assault complaints. This award-winning journalism has since led to widespread police review of complaints previously dismissed as unfounded, the adoption of a more progressive model of dealing with sexual assault complainants, and the decision by Statistics Canada to resume reporting on criminal cases deemed unfounded by police.³³⁶

In July 2019, the federal government also announced funding for a project that aims to improve the process of reporting sexual harassment in federally regulated workplaces, including those in the arts and entertainment industries such as TV and film production.³³⁷ In addition, the government provides some financial support for the work of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, a nonprofit organization that runs Cybertip.ca, a tipline aimed at protecting kids from online sexual exploitation.

334 WAGE (2017), *Final Report of the Engagement Process for the Federal Strategy to Address Gender-based Violence*.

335 Public Safety Canada (nd), What are the potential legal consequences for cyberbullying?

336 Tavia Grant (2018), “Statistics Canada set to resume reporting on unfounded cases.” *The Globe and Mail*, July 12, 2018.

337 Marsha Lederman (2019), “Ottawa announces more than \$2.7-million for project to improve process of reporting sexual harassment,” *The Globe and Mail*, July 5, 2019.

The tipline was adopted under the government's 2004 National Strategy for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation on the Internet. It processes more than 160,000 reports of suspected images of child sexual abuse per month and has issued close to four million removal notices to content providers around the world in the past two and a half years. However, the removals are dependent on the co-operation of large and small technology companies that facilitate online user-generated content, and their current lack of accountability means that thousands of child sexual abuse images and videos are being left online.³³⁸

3. Amplifying women's voices in public discourse

In 2015, Canada's federal government funded research by the nonprofit Media Action to provide baseline data on the gender of sources quoted in major Canadian media of national reach. The study found that men accounted for 71% of all persons quoted and women 29%. Public broadcasters were overrepresented in the sample, and their talk shows performed considerably better (40%) than the private broadcaster (23%) or print media (26% to 37%) studied.³³⁹

Media Action subsequently created a database of women sources, also funded by the government, designed to make it easy for journalists to better reflect women's perspectives. Launched in 2017, the database now features 1,600 women with demonstrated subject matter expertise in a wide variety of fields who are willing and able to respond to media interviews.³⁴⁰

With significant in-kind assistance from a Canadian university, Media Action has created an online digital monitoring tool to measure publicly, in real time, the ratio of male and female sources in Canada's most influential news media. From October 2018 to February 2019, the ratio of women's voices in Canadian media averaged 25.3%. In the six months immediately following the launch of Informed Opinion's Gender Gap Tracker, this increased by almost five points to 29%, as five of the news organizations identified specific strategies for diversifying their sources and created internal tracking mechanisms to measure their own progress.³⁴¹

338 Canadian Centre for Child Protection (nd), About Cybertip.ca.

339 Marika Morris (2016), *Gender of sources used in major Canadian media*, Informed Opinion.

340 See: <https://informedopinions.org> and <https://femmesexpertes.ca>

341 See Gender Gap Tracker

4. Increasing women's participation in senior roles and creative film and TV production

Federal funding also supported continuing research by the nonprofit Women in View revealing that women in Canada's film and TV industry, especially women of colour and Indigenous women, remain seriously underrepresented as writers, directors and cinematographers. This is true of women with disabilities as well. However, when diverse women do hold key creative roles their leadership results in both gender balance and greater diversity in other production positions.³⁴²

In 2018, Canada's broadcast regulator, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), appeared to act on some of Women in View's recommendations, convening a meeting of the country's largest public and private sector broadcasters to discuss lasting solutions to increasing women's representation at the senior levels of broadcast production. Broadcast leaders committed to developing action plans to address the chronic underrepresentation of women as producers, directors, writers, cinematographers and showrunners in a bid to ward off imposed regulations.³⁴³

In 2019, the federal Department of Women and Gender Equality (previously Status of Women Canada) announced funding for a new project, led by Women in Communications and Technology, designed to improve the imbalance of women in management, decision-making and technology management roles in technology, digital and media companies. As of 2017, women's share of the workforce in these sectors remained stalled at 27.7%, almost three points lower than it was in 2011.³⁴⁴

This three-year initiative will work with private and public sector business leaders to explore best practices and develop implementation plans aimed at building more inclusive workplaces and improving recruitment, retention and advancement of women in the communication, media and technology workforce in Canada.³⁴⁵

342 Jill Golick and Amber-Sekowan Daniels (May 2019). Women in View: On Screen Report. Women in View.

343 Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (2018), Joint Statement on Achieving Gender Parity Following CRTC Women in Production Summit.

344 Women in Communications and Technology (2018), *Close the Gender Gap: A Blueprint for Women's Leadership in the Digital Economy*.

345 Women and Gender Equality Canada (2019), New Release: New federal investment will help improve women's economic security in Ottawa.

Women and the Environment

SEX AND GENDER inequality — which is shaped by intersecting factors such as “race,” Indigeneity, socioeconomic status/class, age, sexuality and location, among others — creates different experiences of climate change and other environment-related issues for different groups of people. Even in high-income countries like Canada, the persistence of gendered work roles, unequal access to resources, and lack of decision-making power can increase women’s vulnerability to industrial and so-called natural disasters.^{346,347} Studies in several Canadian regions have shown that gender roles may affect

346 Marjorie Griffin Cohen (Ed.) (2017). *Climate change and gender in rich countries: Work, public policy and action*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge.

347 Lewis Williams, Amber Fletcher, Cindy Hanson, Jackie Neapole & Marion Pollack (2018). *Women and climate change impacts and action in Canada: Feminist, Indigenous, and intersectional approaches*. Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women.

women’s experience of, and adaptation to, climate extremes.^{348,349,350,351} Although women – especially Indigenous women – and other marginalized groups hold important knowledge for both mitigation and adaptation,³⁵² they remain underrepresented in environmental policy-making at multiple levels.

1. Policies and programs, 2014–2019

Canada’s federal actions on gender and environment are currently guided by two main frameworks: the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change’s 2015 Paris Agreement and associated Gender Action Plan (of which Canada was a key proponent), and the government’s commitment to gender-based analysis plus (GBA+).

In 2016, the federal government launched its Action Plan on Gender-based Analysis (2016–2020)³⁵³ to expand GBA+ application within federal departments. To date, such efforts have largely centred on building supportive resources for GBA+ (e.g., training) and plans for monitoring (see Chapter XIX).

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) reports that “several” departmental staff members are working on GBA+, but further details such as number of staff or percentage of staff time dedicated to GBA+ are not available.³⁵⁴ ECCC contains a GBA+ Centre of Responsibility and it is implementing a GBA+ action plan. Departmental reports for 2018–19 and 2019–20 provide a few examples of GBA+ activities that have been completed

348 Anna Bunce, James Ford, Sherilee Harper, Victoria Edge & IHACC Research Team (2016). “Vulnerability and adaptive capacity of Inuit women to climate change: a case study from Iqaluit, Nunavut.” *Natural Hazards*, 83, 1419–1441.

349 Amber Fletcher & Erin Knuttila (2016). “Gendering change: Canadian farm women respond to drought.” In Harry Diaz, Margot Hurlbert & Jim Warren (Eds.), *Vulnerability and adaptation to drought: The Canadian prairies and South America* (pp. 159–177). Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press.

350 Maureen Reed, Alyssa Scott, David Natcher & Mark Johnston (2014). “Linking gender, climate change, adaptive capacity and forest-based communities in Canada.” *Canadian Journal of Forest Research*, 44(9), 995–1004.

351 Liette Vasseur, Mary Thornbush & Steve Plante (2015). Gender-based experiences and perceptions after the 2010 winter storms in Atlantic Canada. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 12(10), 12518–12529.

352 Kyle Powys Whyte (2014). “Indigenous women, climate change impacts, and collective action.” *Hypatia*, 29(3), 599–616.

353 Canada (2016), *Status of Women Canada, Privy Council Office and Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat Action Plan (2016-2020)*.

354 Environment and Climate Change Canada (2018), *Departmental Plan 2018 to 2019, Supplementary Tables, Chapter 6*.

such as an analysis of protected areas legislation and ongoing efforts to seek gender parity in key projects.

GBA+ is also evident in the work of Public Safety Canada (PSC) and other federal departments responsible for disaster response. Like ECCC, PSC has developed an action plan and there is an internal committee for GBA+.³⁵⁵ The outcomes of this work should be clearly documented through research and broadly distributed.³⁵⁶

Canada's study of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies (currently out for public consultation) includes a section that examines gender and other inequality effects on particular groups.³⁵⁷ New environmental initiatives in the 2019 federal budget were also subjected to a gender impact analysis,³⁵⁸ with some showing gender-neutral impacts and others, such as the Just Transition Strategy for Canadian Coal Workers and Communities, disproportionately benefiting men.³⁵⁹ Unfortunately, the plans for addressing these imbalances consist mainly of further monitoring.

Applying a GBA+ lens also highlights the importance of investing in community infrastructure. First Nations women, for example, are the main beneficiaries of additional funding to eliminate boil-water advisories on reserves, as they and their families experience the greatest negative impacts of tainted water.

Despite some progress, the study and analysis of gender and environment remain siloed; more often than not discussions of the relationship between the two are a footnote or afterthought and rarely bring an intersectional lens to bear. The Gender Equality Statement from the 2019 budget, for example, mentions neither the environment nor climate change.³⁶⁰ A gender analysis was not included in the first annual report coming out of the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, although it briefly men-

355 Public Safety Canada (2018), *Departmental Plan 2019-19*.

356 For one example, see: National Defence, "GBA+: Assistance to Canadians during natural disasters," *The Maple Leaf—Defence Stories*

357 ECCC, *Discussion document for Canada's assessment framework of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies*.

358 Finance Canada (2019). Gender Equality Statement, *Budget 2019*.

359 The majority of Canada's coal transition programs are narrowly focused on a subset of relatively privileged workers to the exclusion of marginalized people in those same communities who will nevertheless be impacted by the phase-out policy. Research also shows that high-income, Canadian-born white men are also the primary beneficiaries of the growth of alternative green industries. In the absence of proactive social policies to promote greater workforce diversification and inclusion, just transition programming and measures that support the greening of the economy, more broadly, run the risk of reproducing existing social and economic inequities. See: Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood and Zaeed Deshpande (2019), *Who is included in a Just Transition? Considering social equity in Canada's shift to a zero-carbon economy*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

360 Finance Canada (2019). Gender Equality Statement, *Budget 2019*.

tions gender considerations in international climate financing.³⁶¹ The Federal Adaptation Policy Framework for climate change makes no mention of women or gender and does not emphasize equality concerns.³⁶²

In addition to ongoing concerns about potable water on First Nations,³⁶³ Indigenous activists, scholars and communities have raised significant concerns about Canada's welcoming approach to pipeline and other resource extraction projects.³⁶⁴ The recent National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, along with other research,³⁶⁵ has highlighted the pressing issues of trafficking and safety of women and girls in the resource sectors.

On the international front, the federal government has dedicated funding (totalling \$2.65 billion) to supporting the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, especially women and girls, as they deal with the impacts of climate change. Unfortunately, the government continues to favour investments in private sector mitigation efforts rather than public finance for the important work of adaptation, which is the approach best suited for reaching women confronting the worst impacts of climate change today, and it has yet to roll out an international climate finance project in which gender equality is the primary objective.³⁶⁶

Two recent environmental policies — carbon pricing and the new Impact Assessment Act (Bill C-69) — illustrate both commitment and ongoing challenges in the area of gender and environment.

In 2019, Canada implemented a federal carbon pricing system. The government's own GBA+ found that the measure may disproportionately benefit men, as the new output-based pricing system is expected to provide relief to energy-intensive, trade-exposed industries where men typically make up a larger share of the labour force.³⁶⁷ This is the only gender-based impact identified in the entirety of the Estimated Results Report. There

361 Government of Canada (2017). *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change First Annual Report: Complementary Actions to Reduce Emissions*.

362 Government of Canada (2011). *Federal Adaptation Policy Framework for Climate Change*.

363 Human Rights Watch. (2016). *Make it safe: Canada's obligation to end the First Nations water crisis*.

364 "Protesters across Canada support Wet'suwet'en anti-pipeline camps," *CBC News*, January 8, 2019.

365 Adam Bond and Leah Quinlan (2018). *Indigenous gender-based analysis for Informing the Canadian Minerals and Metals Plan*. Akwesasne, ON: Native Women's Association of Canada. P. 54.

366 Sven Harmeling (2018), *Punching below their weight: Monitoring the G7 support for adaptation and gender equality*. CARE International.

367 Environment and Climate Change Canada (2018), *Estimated results of the federal carbon pollution pricing system*. Cat. No. En4-326/2018E-PDF.

were no formal consultations with women's groups in the development or implementation of Canada's Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change.³⁶⁸

Bill C-69, which received royal assent on June 21, amends and updates the federal environmental assessment process. It contains a provision for both GBA+ in environmental projects and the identification of potential effects on Indigenous communities. In the heated debate around the legislation, these provisions were lauded by environmental and equity-seeking groups but came under attack by business and industry lobbies.

In conclusion, Canada has made significant progress in recognizing the gender-environment intersection, mostly through policy analysis, monitoring and rhetorical support on mitigation. The extent to which these activities actually shape policies and programs and expand our knowledge of the environment through an intersectional lens remains to be seen.

368 Government of Canada (2017). *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change*.

Women in Power and Decision-making

WOMEN MAKE UP just over half of the Canadian population yet continue to be underrepresented in political and professional leadership positions. Canada's poor performance on leadership is the biggest drag on Canada's score on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index.³⁶⁹ The appointment of a gender-balanced cabinet in 2015 notwithstanding, the ratio of women to men in these leadership roles has remained nearly unchanged since the mid 2000s. Canada's ranking on women's representation in Parliament has actually fallen as other countries have pushed forward.

1. Women's participation in public life

Progress for women's representation in Canadian politics has been slow and incremental, if not stagnant, since 2014. Given the rate of change over the last five federal elections, it will take 87 years before we reach gender parity in our elected chamber.³⁷⁰

On average, women hold 24% of seats in the lower houses of legislatures around the world.³⁷¹ Internationally, Canada ranks 61st for women's

369 WEF (2018), *The Global Gender Gap Index Report 2018*.

370 Equal Voice (2015), *Internal data*.

371 International Parliamentary Union (2019), *Women in National Parliaments: World Average*.

representation in the federal government as of February 1, 2019, down from 50th in 2015.³⁷²

In October 2019, Canada elected 98 women to the federal House of Commons. Women now represent 29% of the 338 elected Members of Parliament (MPs), up from 27% in the last parliament.³⁷³

Structural barriers to political participation remain. For racialized and Indigenous women, the path to politics is harder still,³⁷⁴ while women with disabilities are all but invisible in Parliament. In the last federal election, only 14 people (including both men and women) reported a disability out of close to 1,500 candidates.³⁷⁵

Women represent only 18% of mayors and 28% of municipal councillors, and while there were six women premiers in 2013, that number is now zero following the 2019 provincial election in Alberta.

Indigenous women are particularly under-represented in democratic leadership and politics, including in Indigenous governments where they represent 94 of 545 chiefs.³⁷⁶ This reflects the colonial system and patriarchal values imposed on Indigenous nations by the Canadian state.

In sum, there have been significant steps forward, but the rate of change is very, very slow, and women continue to face large barriers to their full and equal participation.

A monumental first was achieved in Canada when the first ever gender-balanced cabinet was appointed at the federal level in 2015, with women taking on an equal number of seats at the cabinet table as men.

Canada's upper chamber, the Senate, has also reached an historic high, with 46% of senators identifying as women, making it the highest-ranking legislative body in terms of women's representation in Canada.³⁷⁷

Canada has also observed significant increases in the number and percentage of women elected to legislatures at the provincial and territorial level. Quebec holds the highest percentage following their October 1, 2018 election at just over 43%, with women holding 54 of the total 125 seats.³⁷⁸ Ontario now holds second spot, after 39.5% of elected seats (49 out of 124 ridings)

372 International Parliamentary Union (2019), *Women in National Parliaments*.

373 House of Commons Canada (2019), *Current Members of Parliament*.

374 For a discussion of the experiences of racialized women in politics. Erin Tolley (2016), *Media and the Coverage of Race in Canadian Politics*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

375 Mario Levesque (2015), *Missing in Action: Disability Policy and Persons with Disabilities*, *The Samara Blog*, Dec. 8, 2015.

376 Standing Committee on the Status of Women (2019), *Elect her: A roadmap for improving the representation of women in Canadian politics*, p. 21.

377 Senate of Canada (2019), *Senators*.

378 Assemblée nationale du Québec (2018), *Députés*.

were taken by women, up slightly from the previous provincial election.³⁷⁹ In the 2017 British Columbia election, women significantly increased their seat count, taking 34 out of 87 ridings, or 39%.³⁸⁰

As important as it is to ensure women get to run and serve as elected officials, it is equally important that once elected, women stay in politics. Lack of accommodation for caregiving, a hostile and combative political culture, entrenched sexism and stereotypes, disparaging media coverage — these barriers not only serve to dissuade women from running for office in the first place but impact their work experience once elected.

Various forms of gender-based violence and discrimination — from hateful and misogynistic comments to sexual assault — are real barriers to women’s participation at all levels, especially for young women, racialized women and Indigenous women. Research conducted by the Young Women’s Leadership Network with people who had experienced sexual violence and/or harassment while working in Canadian politics (either elected or as staff) found that 80% left the sector or did not seek re-election as a result of their experience and how it was handled by political parties.³⁸¹

The period between 2014 and 2019 saw many initiatives seeking to improve the accessibility of legislatures for women and families.

In October 2016, the legislative assembly of Alberta adopted a report of the Special Standing Committee on Members’ Services on family-friendly practices and policies. In this report, the subcommittee made seven key recommendations for change including explicitly permitting infants on the chamber floor, allowing absence for pregnancy without financial penalty, and improving physical infrastructure to be more family friendly (i.e., family rooms, child care facilities etc.).³⁸² Many of the recommendations were formally adopted between 2017 and 2019.³⁸³

Similarly, in April 2019, political parties in Saskatchewan came together and introduced parental leave and other provisions for politicians, including the right to bring babies and infants to work, the installation of change tables, and making highchairs available in the legislature.³⁸⁴

379 Legislative Assembly of Ontario (2019), Currents MPPs.

380 Legislative Assembly of British Columbia (2019), Members of the Legislative Assembly.

381 Young Women’s Leadership Network (2018), *It’s Time: Addressing Sexual Violence in Political Institutions*

382 Legislative Assembly of Alberta (2016), *Final Report — Review of Family-Friendly Practices and Policies for Legislatures*.

383 Legislative Assembly of Alberta (2019), Family Friendly Resources.

384 Stephanie Taylor (2019), “Saskatchewan government introduces parental leave for politicians.” *The Canadian Press*, April 1, 2019.

In 2018, the legislative assembly of the Northwest Territories adopted a motion establishing a goal of increasing the representation of women in government to 20% by 2023, and 30% by 2027. A special committee was struck to study and examine options to address barriers and recommend initiatives to achieve these goals.³⁸⁵

The federal government has taken action to strengthen provisions in the Canada Labour Code by introducing a comprehensive approach to ensure that all federal workplaces are violence and harassment free, including Parliament Hill.³⁸⁶ Funds have been allocated to support the development of regulations to implement the legislation and the support of employees lodging complaints.

2. Women, leadership and decision-making

The measurement of women's representation in decision-making bodies must go beyond electoral politics. The Canadian chapter of the 30% Club was founded in 2015 to achieve 30% representation of women on corporate boards by 2020. Public appointment boards and not-for-profit and charity boards are also places where we should be increasing representation of women in decision-making.

Progress on all fronts has been slow, and even the data collected are not sufficient to understand Canada's gains and gaps. Data from the FP500, the *Financial Post's* list of 500 largest corporations by revenue, point to increasing representation, but women are not making gains quickly enough to meet the 30% Club's target. A policy of "comply or explain" has been in use in Ontario since 2014, but rapid gains have not been seen. In 2018, women's representation on FP500 boards was 24.5%.³⁸⁷ Statistics Canada reported on data collected in 2016 on all private corporations, government business enterprises and public corporations. It found women's representation to be 19.4%.³⁸⁸ Within the c-suites of FP500 companies, women's representation has stalled at 19.5%.³⁸⁹ Of the 60 largest TSX-listed companies, only 3.3% of

385 Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, Special Committee on Increasing the Representation of Women in the Legislative Assembly.

386 An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (harassment and violence), the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1

387 Canadian Board Diversity Council (2018), *Annual Report Card 2018*.

388 Statistics Canada (2019), Study: Representation of Women on Boards of Directors, 2016, *The Daily*, May 7, 2019.

389 Canadian Board Diversity Council (2018).

have a female CEO and only 3.5% of corporate boards have a female board chair.³⁹⁰

Canada must work to ensure widespread representation of women from diverse backgrounds in any decision-making body. Statistics Canada found women were most likely to be on boards with three or more directors (55.2%) compared with 31.4% for corporations with two board directors and 14.6% of corporations with one director.³⁹¹ Studies have identified a minimum of three women on a board as the “critical mass” needed in order to shift boardroom dynamics and behaviour.^{392,393} Moving away from “tokenization” toward gender balance is not only the right thing to do, it yields better business performance and economic growth.³⁹⁴

Currently, there are significant gaps in what we know about the composition of corporate boards with respect to the representation of women of colour, Indigenous women, gender-diverse people, women with disabilities, or even women of different ages. When data about other diversity factors are included they are not disaggregated by gender. This is true of the 170,000 charities and non-profits registered in Canada as well. Better and more comprehensive data that applies an intersectional lens, both in collection and analysis, is needed to drive the gains in women’s participation on all boards and decision-making bodies in Canada.

390 Andrew MacDougall and John Valley, *et. al.* (2018), *2018 Diversity Disclosure Practices*, Toronto: Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt.

391 Statistics Canada (2019), Study: Representation of Women on Boards of Directors, 2016. *The Daily*, May 7, 2019.

392 *Ibid.*

393 Institute for Gender and the Economy (2016), The Debate about Quotas, *Research in Brief*. Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto.

394 Canada 30% Club (2016), *Creating Stronger Businesses and a Stronger Canada Through Better Gender Balance*.

Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

IN 2014, CANADA'S shadow report on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action painted a discouraging picture of the institutional mechanisms in place for advancing gender equality. In previous years, the words "equality" and "advocacy" had been removed from the mandate of Status of Women Canada (the federal mechanism for promoting gender equality), while three-quarters of its regional offices were closed and support for women's rights and gender equality organizations significantly scaled back.

The picture has improved since then. Canada's federal government elected in 2015 has highlighted gender equality as core to its mandate and vision for the country. New resources have been invested to support the integration and application of a gender and diversity lens to the development of public policies and programs, the expansion of knowledge and programming in the areas of gender-based violence, and the work of organizations representing Indigenous women and other civil society groups.

At the same time, actions have fallen short of the recommendations noted in the 2016 concluding observations on Canada's report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.³⁹⁵ Canada has not

395 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2016). *Concluding observations on the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of Canada*. United Nations. See Canada's

developed a comprehensive national gender equality action plan across all levels of government or developed a co-ordinated accountability mechanism for monitoring outcomes.³⁹⁶

The following discussion highlights developments with respect to the institutional mechanisms for advancing women’s equality since 2015, organized under the three strategic objectives set out in the Beijing Platform for Action.

1. Create and strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies

Canada’s federal cabinet has included a minister responsible for the status of women since 1971, and an accompanying federal agency known as Status of Women (or Status of Women Canada, SWC) since 1976. In December 2018, SWC was transformed from an agency operating under the portfolio of the Department of Canadian Heritage into a free-standing Department for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) with its own minister. The new department’s statutory mandate includes “the advancement of equality” and the promotion of “a greater understanding of the intersection of sex and gender with other identify factors that include race, national and ethnic origin, Indigenous origin or identity, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic condition, place of residence and disability.”³⁹⁷

WAGE is mandated to advance gender equality through “developing and implementing policies, providing grants and contributions, delivering programs, investing in research, and providing advice to achieve equality for people of all genders, including women.”³⁹⁸ To that end, the department operates two separate general programs: expertise and outreach, and community action and innovation. Under the first program the department plays an advisory and promotional role within government and with external partners on gender equality issues and the implementation of GBA+. Under the second it acts as a funding agency for projects and organizations across the country working to advance gender equality and spur systemic change in the underlying factors that perpetuate inequality at a local and regional level.

response distributed on April 16, 2019. Addendum: Information provided by Canada in follow-up to the concluding observations.

396 See: FAFIA (2016), *Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the Occasion of the Committee’s Eighth and Ninth Periodic Review of Canada*.

397 *Department for Women and Gender Equality Act*, SC 2018 c. 27, s. 661.

398 Status of Women Canada (2019). Who we are.

Since taking office in 2015, the government has taken a number of steps to revitalize Status of Women Canada, including lifting the previous government’s ban on funding for advocacy and related activities.³⁹⁹ While the SWC budget did not immediately show much improvement, in 2017, the government committed \$100 million over five years — supplemented with another \$86 million in 2018 — to launch its Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-based Violence.⁴⁰⁰ While these funds are disbursed across numerous government departments, the new WAGE department acts as the centre of excellence to lead the program’s agenda. Roughly one-quarter of this funding has been allocated to support diverse groups of survivors and their families, and \$10 million will be used to establish a Commemoration Fund to honour the lives and legacies of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQI2S individuals.

In addition, significant new funding has been injected into SWC’s funding stream for disbursement to organizations promoting women’s equality. That includes \$100 million (over five years) in 2018,⁴⁰¹ and additional funds in 2019 to increase the Women’s Program budget from roughly \$22 million in the current year to \$100 million annually by 2023-24.⁴⁰² These funds, designed “to support a viable and sustainable women’s movement across Canada,” prioritize projects that focus on ensuring women’s financial security, freedom from violence, and participation in society.⁴⁰³ Despite this progress, however, WAGE has to date restricted new funding opportunities to project and “capacity” funding, and not restored core operating funding for women’s organizations — and the department has not restored funding for community-based research projects or initiatives. Fully three-quarters of the new funding is back-ended, allocated in 2022-23 and 2023-24.

In order to guide policy and track federal progress on gender equality, the government has introduced a Gender Results Framework that identifies various equality priorities and goals that promote them. For example, eradicating workplace harassment is one of the goals under the priority area

399 Status of Women Canada (2018, July 18). *Government of Canada restores advocacy to scope of Status of Women Canada projects* [Press release].

400 Finance Canada (2017). *Building a Strong Middle Class: #Budget2017*, p. 188; Finance Canada (2018). *Equality Growth: A Strong Middle Class (Budget 2018)*, p. 199.

401 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

402 Finance Canada (2019). *Investing in the Middle Class (2019)*, p. 170.

403 Finance Canada (2018), p. 53.

of gender-based violence.⁴⁰⁴ An online portal, launched in 2019, makes the data and research relevant to the framework more accessible.⁴⁰⁵

WAGE's strategic goals and related investments, as well as those set out in the Gender Results Framework, are aligned with the goals and targets set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as highlighted in Canada's 2018 voluntary national report.⁴⁰⁶ An SDG unit has been established at Employment and Skills Development Canada to facilitate co-ordination across federal departments and agencies and with Canadian stakeholders in the development and implementation of a national strategy to meet the agenda goals. To this end, the government has released an interim report to facilitate further discussion on the structures, processes and activities needed to move the 2030 agenda forward and it has presented a Canadian indicator framework to measure progress toward Canada's selected targets.⁴⁰⁷

It should be noted that the federal government has not developed a national action plan that addresses “the structural factors that cause persistent inequalities with respect to women and girls,” as recommended repeatedly by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.⁴⁰⁸ Gender equality is a key priority for the federal government, and the provinces and territories have a range of plans, strategies, legislation and programming to advance women's empowerment of varying quality and efficacy. Federal, provincial and territorial ministers meet annually to share information and exchange best practices, but these activities do not constitute a meaningful or valid national strategy or plan for tackling the profound challenges diverse women and girls face. There are no effective mechanisms, as required, for “the transparent, coherent and consistent implementation of the Convention [on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women]” throughout Canada. Indeed, lack of federal-provincial-territorial

404 Finance Canada (2018), p. 221.

405 Status of Women Canada (2019). *The Government of Canada's Gender Results Framework*.

406 Global Affairs Canada (2018), *Canada's Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

407 Government of Canada (2019), *Towards Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy* (Interim Report).

408 WAGE has provided support for development and work of the Gender Equality Network Canada — a project that is being hosted by the Canadian Women's Foundation. Through this national network, more than 150 women from across Canada who are working locally on gender equality, come together to advocate for policy changes, build inclusive intersectional leadership, and are in the process of developing a document for broad national consultations on a proposed Action Plan focused on gender equality. See: <https://www.canadianwomen.org/our-work/gender-equality-network-canada/>

collaboration remains a significant threat to women fleeing violence and the security of migrant women, a point highlighted elsewhere in this report.

2. Integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects

In 1995, Canada introduced gender-based analysis (GBA) as a tool to evaluate the differential impacts of public policy on women. In 2011, GBA morphed into GBA+ to highlight the idea that an individual's experiences are influenced by multiple identity factors such as ethnicity or age.⁴⁰⁹ GBA+ is understood and promoted as “an analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people may experience policies, programs and initiatives.” It is currently required in all memoranda to cabinet and all Treasury Board submissions. Federal organizations are also expected to include a gender and diversity lens in their evaluations, public engagements and consultations, as well as departmental plans and departmental results reports.

Canada has struggled to implement GBA+ across levels of government. A 2015 report from Canada's auditor general⁴¹⁰ mirrored the findings of an earlier 2009 audit⁴¹¹ that found GBA/GBA+ has been applied incompletely and inconsistently across government departments and agencies. A 2016 study from the Parliamentary Committee on the Status of Women corroborated these findings.⁴¹² In response, the government released an action plan in 2016 to tackle the barriers to GBA+ implementation, including the development of interactive tools and training targeting different audiences, improved information sharing, and support for individuals tasked with conducting GBA+ analysis.⁴¹³

Since 2017, federal budgets have emerged as central to Canada's conversation on GBA+. The 2017 budget included a Gender Statement that reiterated the government's pledge to advance gender equality and committed to

409 Status of Women Canada (2018). *Introduction to GBA*.

410 Office of the Auditor General of Canada (2015). *2015 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada Report 1 – Implementing Gender-Based Analysis*.

411 Office of the Auditor General of Canada (2009), *2009 Spring Report of the Auditor General of Canada Spring 2009 Report, Chapter 1 – Gender-Based Analysis*.

412 Standing Committee on the Status of Women (2016), *Implementing Gender-Based Analysis Plus in the Government of Canada*. Parliament of Canada.

413 Status of Women Canada, Privy Council Office and Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2016), *Action Plan on Gender-based Analysis (2016–2020)*.

incorporate GBA+ into public policy, including all budget proposals.⁴¹⁴ The Canadian Gender Budgeting Act, passed in 2018, bound the government to thoroughly vet its future taxation and resource allocation decisions through GBA+ lens.⁴¹⁵ Consequently, the 2018 and 2019 budgets, the former referred to by some as the “Gender Equality Budget,”⁴¹⁶ applied GBA+ to every spending item.⁴¹⁷

These are important developments bringing Canada into line with international best practice, helping to create an accountability mechanism for tracking real improvements in the lives of women and girls. Internal reports, however, continue to find inconsistent implementation. Results from a 2018 survey of public servants found that fewer than half of departments and agencies have a GBA+ plan in place, with most departments saying they lack the internal mechanisms to apply one.⁴¹⁸ Many more are familiar with the concept of GBA+, but they continue to struggle with implementation. A good deal more needs to be done to entrench GBA+ and its related processes into the machinery of government.

One of the key issues in this regard is the lack of vehicles for meaningful consultation and engagement with women’s and feminist organizations from the beginning of a policy process throughout its development and implementation (i.e., co-operative relationship as stated in the Beijing Platform, paragraph 205 [b]). More work needs to be done to support and facilitate relationships with civil society, and in particular with equality-seeking groups.

3. Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation

In Canada, the census is a crucial source of gender-disaggregated data. Canada uses a “short form” and “long form” questionnaire to canvas the population every five years on a diverse range of topics. The long-form census, a more detailed questionnaire sent to 25% of the population, was eliminated in 2010. While the current government reinstated it in time for

414 Finance Canada (2017). pp. 217–242.

415 *Canadian Gender Budgeting Act*, SC 2018 c. 27, s. 314.

416 Katherine Scott (2019). Budget watch 2019: Moving forward on a federal feminist agenda. *Behind the Numbers*, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

417 Finance Canada (2019). *Gender Report, Budget 2019*.

418 Teresa Wright (2019, February 2). “Internal docs shows many federal departments not meeting gender analysis targets,” *The Canadian Press*.

the 2016 census, the gap in data between 2006 and 2016 continues to present challenges for statistical analysis.⁴¹⁹

The census is not the government's only source of gender-disaggregated data. Statistics Canada regularly compiles such data through other surveys and statistical programs such as the Canadian Survey on Disability, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, and Labour Force Survey.

To facilitate the dissemination of gender-disaggregated data, Statistics Canada publishes *Women in Canada: A Gender-Based Statistical Report*. The report, compiling data on issues such as women's unpaid work and family status, operates under the view that "understanding the role of women in Canadian society...is dependent on having information that can begin to shed light on the diverse circumstances and experiences of women." Noting that individual experiences "differ not only across gender but also within gender groups,"⁴²⁰ the report also contains chapters with specific data pertaining to racialized women, older women, Indigenous women as well as women with disabilities.

In December 2018, the Canadian government launched the Centre for Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion Statistics with the objective of "address[ing] gaps in the availability of disaggregated data on gender and other intersecting identities."⁴²¹ To that end, the centre is mandated to disseminate gender-disaggregated data, monitor and respond to data needs and contribute to GBA+.⁴²² The centre hosts a website⁴²³ presenting existing Statistics Canada data on issues such as labour and health. The centre has been allocated \$6.7 million over five years to expand its data holdings and improve its operations.⁴²⁴

419 Jordan Press (2017, October 23). "Despite return of long-form census, StatsCan readies for day without it." *The Canadian Press*.

420 Statistics Canada. (2018). *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*. Catalogue no. 89-503-X.

421 Pamela Best (2018). *GBA+ and the New Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics*, Statistics Canada, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, PowerPoint Presentation, p. 4.

422 *Ibid*, p. 3.

423 Statistics Canada, Gender, diversity and inclusion statistics, Website.

424 Finance Canada (2018), p. 279.

Data and Statistics on Gender Equality

THE BEIJING +25 PROCESS provides an important opportunity to reflect on Canada's achievements and the continuing challenges that women and gender-diverse people face in the full realization of their rights and participation in society. To this end, it's essential to continually push for better information that can illuminate the scope of gender inequality in all of its diversity by filling the data gaps that silence and render invisible too many in our communities.

The most obvious problem with our data deficit is that we don't have all of the evidence needed to flag important problems, to make good decisions, to evaluate the impact of different policies and programs, or to take action to eliminate life-damaging disparities. The intersection of sex and gender with all other identity factors must always be accounted for when examining potential social, economic, health and environmental impacts of major programs and projects.

While Canada has historically enjoyed a strong reputation for the quality of its research and statistical agencies, largescale funding cuts over the 2006–2015 period systematically eroded information systems across the country. The cancellation of the long-form census in 2010 was the most high-profile and profoundly damaging step taken, since it replaced Canada's largest source

of community-level and sex-disaggregated data on a wide variety of issues with a voluntary survey of inferior quality.⁴²⁵

1. Policies and programs 2014–2019

In 2015, a newly elected federal government moved quickly to reinstate the long-form census, announcing its commitment to “good evidence and quality data.” More recently, the government has tasked Statistics Canada to serve as a focal point for gender statistics and analysis to support the integration of gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) across government⁴²⁶ and to facilitate public reporting on the government’s Gender Results Framework and progress on the UN Social Development Goals (SDGs).

Introduced in 2018, the Gender Results Framework is a tool to help guide policy decisions and track developments in gender equality and diversity in six key areas.⁴²⁷ Each area has an associated set of goals and indicators to benchmark progress in achieving gender equality and diversity, aligned with the Global Indicator Framework⁴²⁸ and the newly created Canadian Indicator Framework⁴²⁹ to monitor progress on the SDGs. Federal, provincial and territorial ministers have also agreed to track a subset of gender equality indicators to measure progress over time.

A Gender Results Framework Portal⁴³⁰ is now available, providing a platform for data and research relevant to the indicators identified in the framework. Statistics Canada’s Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics⁴³¹ houses the related data tables while the new SDG Data Hub⁴³² tracks Canada’s progress in meeting its sustainable development targets, including all those that advance gender equality.

Canada is currently working to populate its SDG reporting framework. It now reports on seven indicators under the goal of achieving gender equality

425 Tavia Grant (2013), “Canadian income data ‘is garbage’ without census, experts say,” *The Globe and Mail*, October 4, 2013.

426 Statistics Canada (2018), *Departmental Results Report 2017-2018*, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.

427 Government of Canada (2018), “Chapter 5: Equality,” *Equality and Growth: A Strong Middle Class. Budget Plan 2018*.

428 UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (nd), Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

429 Government of Canada (2019), *Towards Canada’s 2030 Agenda National Strategy* (Interim Report). Annex II.

430 WAGE, Gender Results Framework Portal, Website.

431 Statistics Canada, Gender, diversity and inclusion statistics, Website.

432 Statistics Canada, Sustainable Development Goals Data Hub, Website.

and empowering women and girls, with six indicators still under development. Some information on the status of women and girls is available for other indicators in the SDG Global Indicator Framework (e.g., proportion of women living in poverty), but large data gaps remain under each goal.⁴³³ Equal Measures 2030 is working to help fill these gaps through the development of an SDG Gender Index. Its 2019 SDG Gender Index includes 51 indicators across 14 of the 17 official SDGs for 129 countries, including Canada.⁴³⁴

Canada's Gender Results Framework provides more detailed information on women's progress in six areas: education and skills development; economic participation and prosperity; leadership and democratic participation; gender-based violence and access to justice; poverty reduction, health and well-being; and gender equality around the world (see Appendix 1).

For the most part, the framework reports on national level information. Some information is available for the provinces and territories; some by age, household income, and level of education. Very little information is provided for key groups such as racialized women, Indigenous women, LGBTQI2S people or women with disabilities – groups that have been historically marginalized in Canada and continue to face significant barriers to their well-being.

There remain significant data gaps within those areas covered by the gender framework (e.g., intimate partner violence, business ownership among women, and reproductive health) as well those outside of its scope (e.g., infrastructure development, climate change impacts, and transit patterns). Canada has a long way to go in creating the evidence base needed – from the national level down to communities and neighbourhoods – to drive the ambitious policy, law and program decisions needed to achieve gender equality across all issues and portfolios.

In the last five years, the government has taken action to help fill key gaps concerning gender-based violence. Data collection on violence against women is notoriously difficult to gather because of low reporting. The only regular measure of adult sexual assault and intimate partner violence conducted by the federal government is the General Social Survey's entry on victimization. Carried out every five years, this survey is designed to provide a better estimate than the annual Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, which

433 Canada reports on another 17 gender-specific SDG indicators, for a total of 24 gender-specific indicators out of a total of 53 indicators included in the global indicator framework.

434 Canada ranks 8th out of 129 countries with respect to the achievement of gender equality in relation to the 51 indicators included in the EM2030 Gender Index. See: Equal Measure 2030 (2019), *Harnessing the power of data for gender equality: Introducing the 2019 EM2030 SDG Gender Index*.

only counts cases reported to the police, and only for the police services that participate in the survey.

Statistics Canada is currently in the process of fielding three new surveys, the first of which – the Survey of Safety in Private and Public Spaces – will provide information on lifetime prevalence of intimate partner, sexual and physical violence as well as other “inappropriate behaviours” (e.g., unwanted sexual attention or physical contact). The survey will also provide information on Canadians’ perceptions of gender roles and gender-based violence. Two other surveys are in development: one focused on gender-based violence in the workplace, and the other on gender-based violence among post-secondary students.

Statistics Canada is heading up another key initiative that for the first time will help reveal the experiences of gender-diverse people. A new set of questions that capture sex assigned at birth and gender identity is being developed and tested for the 2021 census. In public consultations, information about the LGBTQI2S community was the most commonly reported data gap in the demography and household composition sections of the census questionnaire.

Finance Canada is co-ordinating efforts to implement gender-based budgeting across government. Introduced in 2018, the new Gender Budgeting Act⁴³⁵ requires the federal government to publish a gender impact assessment of proposed budget measures (including revenue generation), providing an important new source of information on the differential impact of government policy on women and other key groups such as low-income Canadians. The 2019 Gender Report, released alongside of the 2019 Budget, presented a line-by-line assessment of new measures. Changes to student loan programs, for example, will benefit women who pursue post-secondary education and carry significant student debt in large numbers. By contrast, men are expected to be primary beneficiaries of research and development tax credits – in their roles as shareholders (with a larger share of investment income) and as workers in scientific and technical occupations where they outnumber women.⁴³⁶

This gender budgeting initiative not only sets the bar for excellence in public administration and accountability, it creates the machinery for bringing an intersectional gender lens to bear on areas like infrastructure and tax expenditures that have historically been mistakenly presented as “neutral” or “gender blind.” With a better understanding of the intended

⁴³⁵ *Canadian Gender Budgeting Act* (S.C. 2018, c. 27, s. 314).

⁴³⁶ Finance Canada (2019), *Gender Report, Budget 2019*.

(and unintended) impacts of policy, governments can take steps to help level the playing field.

2. Who's missing: Filling intersectional data gaps

At present in Canada, it remains extremely difficult to find meaningful data that distinguish sex and gender. Researchers therefore find it difficult to examine gender as it intersects with more than one additional identity factor or social location, such as membership in an Indigenous community; residence in a rural, urban or remote region of the country; or identification as a person from a visible minority (itself a disaggregated construction), someone with a visible or invisible disability, a minoritized sexual orientation, marginalized ethnic or age group, or someone from a community already enduring severe climate effects, to name a few vital examples, none of which is necessarily mutually exclusive. First Nations peoples on reserves are often missing or excluded from national surveys, which is a significant issue in terms of grasping the role of settler colonialism in violence against women. Use of “Indian Status” as a category of analysis remains fraught in terms of Indigenous gender justice or data sovereignty.

National level surveys and similar initiatives are key tools for assessing women's progress but have seldom been designed to capture the experiences of all key groups as outlined above. That is why it is so important to acknowledge and support forms of research and data collection that are explicitly designed around the needs and experiences of different women — and rely on intersectional methodologies and diverse cultural ways of knowing for telling peoples' stories.

Indigenous peoples have been in the forefront of efforts to assert “data sovereignty” through the work of organizations such as the First Nations Information Governance Centre,⁴³⁷ as well as actively engaging historically marginalized communities in the production and use of information. The National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls gathered the stories of thousands of women and their families, providing the foundation of their calls to justice and a vital record for generations to come.⁴³⁸

437 See: First Nations Information Governance Centre.

438 National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), *Reclaiming Power and Place: Final Report*.

Smaller community-based research projects and public education initiatives also play a key role in identifying critical data gaps and setting the agenda for data development and policy and program reform. The Trans PULSE project, based in Toronto, is an excellent example of community-based research that is generating meaningful, relevant and empowering research on the social determinants of health among trans people, given the huge barriers to care they face.⁴³⁹ The DisAabled Women’s Network of Canada’s (DAWN) recent report, *More than a Footnote*, is another example of cutting-edge research on the high rates of violence, poverty and homelessness that women and girls with disabilities face – giving voice to experiences overlooked in national level overviews or buried in footnotes.⁴⁴⁰

In practice, intersectional methodologies support democratic structures because they strive for substantive accountabilities. They do not privilege one identity category or social location over others in evaluating experiences for the purpose of designing policies and practices. Rather, they permit research respondents to outline their own ways of understanding their identities and social locations, encouraging them to explain the roles that particular factors play in shaping their experiences.⁴⁴¹ Intersectional methodologies recognize that in different contexts, identity categories are lived differently. They are explicitly designed to benefit research participants. In a world that too often facilitates aggression toward marginalized groups, intersectional data gathering and analyses provide a powerful set of tools for correcting the distorted social structures and disparities that result when policy-makers depend upon reductive abstractions, rather than demanding the robust evidence that is necessary for building better societies.

439 See Trans PULSE Project.

440 DAWN (2019), *More than a Footnote: A Research Report on Women and Girls with Disabilities in Canada*.

441 Heather Hillsberg (2013). “Towards a Methodology of Intersectionality: An Axiom-Based Approach.” *Atlantis*, Vol 36, No. 1.

Conclusion

Opportunities and Challenges

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND gender equality are on the public agenda in Canada after years of neglect and backsliding. Yet there can be no complacency. Compared to some countries, Canada is closer to achieving gender equality in some areas, but we are still a great distance from our goal.

Canada has currently achieved 14 of its 169 2030 SDG targets, outperforming other OECD countries on education (Goal 4) and institutions (Goal 16) and significantly underperforming on infrastructure (Goal 9) and the goals relating to the planet: climate, oceans and biodiversity (Goals 13, 14 and 15).^{442,443}

On achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls (Goal 5), Canada has made only modest progress in meeting its SDG targets.

442 Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation; Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development; Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

443 At this time, Canada is tracking 119 indicators, covering 93 of the 169 targets associated with all of the SDG Goals. OECD, (2019): "Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets 2019: An Assessment of Where OECD Countries Stand" (third edition).

As this report has shown, significant gaps remain across a range of areas — from the studied neglect of women with disabilities and challenges facing migrant workers, to food insecurity in households headed by women and the prevalence of online hatred and cyberviolence directed toward women, girls and gender-diverse people.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women notes some of these concerns and others in its concluding observations on Canada’s 2016 Periodic Report, including:

- women’s inadequate access to legal aid and housing;
- the poor record of existing pay equity legislation in tackling Canada’s sizable gender pay gap;
- Canada’s fragmented system of child care and reproductive health services; and
- the treatment of women in detention.

The committee also noted, more generally, the lack of co-ordination and resourcing of gender equality plans, policies and programs, “in all areas and at all levels of government,” that systematically undercuts any and all efforts to address persistent inequalities and intersecting forms of discrimination.⁴⁴⁴

As noted in Canada’s April 2019 response to the committee’s observations,⁴⁴⁵ and its own 2019 National Report on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,⁴⁴⁶ the government has enhanced its capacity to advance gender equality by creating permanent corporate structures and processes to co-ordinate activities across government, and by investing in the expansion of gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) in policy and programming.

These steps have helped create the foundation for progress. New gender budgeting legislation and a Gender Results Framework to track government progress in meeting its gender equality goals are two key examples of this work. Establishing the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigen-

444 UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2016), *Concluding Observations on the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of Canada*, CEDAW/C/CAN/CO/8-9. See Paragraphs 21 (a), (b), (d).

445 UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2019), *Concluding observations on the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of Canada. Addendum: Information provided by Canada in follow-up to the concluding observations*, CEDAW/C/CAN/CO/8-9/Add.1.

446 Canada (2019), *Canada’s National Report on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)*.

ous Women and Girls in 2015, as recommended by the UN,⁴⁴⁷ was another critical milestone.

What is needed now is the investment and political will to take the action necessary to tackle entrenched barriers to gender equality and “ensure the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”⁴⁴⁸

Our call to action comes against a backdrop of rising populism and attacks on women’s rights in Canada and around the world. In Canada, the provincial government of Quebec has passed legislation restricting the right of public sector workers to wear religious symbols and requiring all those seeking public service to reveal their faces.⁴⁴⁹ This legislation directly undermines women’s freedom of expression and their personal autonomy, by limiting their choices regarding what they do with their own bodies. In particular, the new law targets niqab-wearing Muslim women, limiting their access to education and employment and community services.

The federal government has been a vocal proponent of women’s rights and gender equality, notably on the global stage. But since the summer of 2018, references to feminism in parliamentary debates had dropped off significantly, according to an analysis from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. “Words alone mean little, but silence coupled with uneven or unfinished action speaks volumes.”⁴⁵⁰

Moving forward

To make further progress, governments must commit to new policies and programs that can tackle persistent and profound barriers to change and challenge entrenched norms and stereotypes. Success will only be achieved if women’s rights and gender equality organizations are equal partners and leaders in this work.

We urge the government to support civil society groups whose work is grounded in **lived experience**, and whose members are most impacted

447 UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2015), *Report of the inquiry concerning Canada of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women under article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, CEDAW/C/OP.8/CAN/1.

448 UN (1995), *Beijing Declaration*.

449 Bill 21, “An Act respecting the laicity of the State”, passed on June 16, 2019.

450 Alyssa O’Dell (2019), The rise and fall of feminism in the House of Commons, *Behind the Numbers*, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

by gendered oppression. Real change can only be achieved by promoting the work and leadership of these groups and building out their capacity to engage, at all levels, through flexible and sustained support and funding.

This will demand a laser focus on **feminist intersectionality**. Where programs, services, funding and research are concerned, there needs to be an intersectional lens to capture the diversity of women’s experience and to break down the program silos that reinforce discrimination and injustice. The fight for racial equality, for example, is deeply connected to many issues – from reproductive rights to justice for migrant workers to reform of the justice system. Embedding an intersectional focus is necessary to affecting lasting and meaningful change.

It will also take considerable resolve and effort to create **infrastructure that can sustain change**. This includes new policies, laws and regulations such as effective pay equity and pay transparency laws, as well as efforts to change social and cultural values and beliefs that constrain and undermine women’s rights and those of other equality-seeking groups.

Recommendations for the accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

The following recommendations have been developed with the above considerations in mind. Drawing on the knowledge and experience of the members of the Beijing +25 Network, these recommendations set out a comprehensive agenda for the accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. They are organized under six themes developed by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women for the Feminist and Women’s Movement Action Plan for Beijing +25.

Indigenous Women and Girls	SDG Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="483 306 1243 548">• Collaborate with Indigenous women and girls and autonomous Indigenous women’s organizations to develop a comprehensive, adequately funded national action plan to prevent and address all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls. The plan should include timetables, measurable goals for change, and a robust monitoring mechanism. <li data-bbox="483 604 1243 884">• Conduct an independent, comprehensive national investigation into police violence against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people in all police forces, noting all filed complaints, investigations, charges, discipline and prosecutions, and including a review of police acts, regulations and policies related to prevention, investigation and discipline for acts of sexism, racism, abuse, and violence against Indigenous women and girls. 	5.2, 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 17.17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="483 921 1243 1839">• Redesign the child welfare system to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="526 1005 1201 1079">• support Indigenous women’s ability to care for their children and protect them inside their families and communities; <li data-bbox="526 1136 1201 1209">• protect Indigenous girls from dislocation, sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking, disappearances and death; <li data-bbox="526 1266 922 1293">• prohibit apprehensions at birth; <li data-bbox="526 1350 1201 1461">• prohibit any engagement of child welfare/family services officials in sterilizations of Indigenous women or girls without their free, full, and informed consent; <li data-bbox="526 1518 1201 1629">• redesign funding formulas to incentivize Indigenous children remaining with their mothers, families and communities; and <li data-bbox="526 1686 1201 1839">• institute zero tolerance policies and strict performance codes and protocols for foster care/group homes to ensure that Indigenous girls are protected from sexual abuse while in care. 	1.3, 5.1, 16.2

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- Thoroughly investigate all allegations of forced or coerced sterilizations of Indigenous women in Canada; establish policies and accountability mechanisms across Canada that provide clear guidance on how to ensure sterilizations are only performed with free, full, and informed consent; and provide access to justice for survivors and their families. 5.6
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- Identify strategies that will disrupt and reverse the pattern of incarceration, over-classification and segregation of Indigenous women, and establish programs and services that will support their decarceration and reintegration into families and communities.

- End the use of segregation in all its forms in Canadian prisons.
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- Ensure that the Indian Registrar exercises her authority in a way that is fully in compliance with international human rights law as well as Canada's *Charter*, and has adequate resources to address applications for Indian status from all those newly entitled. 1.4

- Provide reparations to First Nations women and their descendants and communities, as required by the UN Human Rights Committee.

Women with Disabilities

SDG Target

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- Protect and uphold the rights of women and girls with disabilities with respect to programs, services, funding and research in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRDP) along with its optional protocols. This includes acknowledging the intersectional nature of discrimination as acknowledged in the new Accessible Canada Act and using the tools available under GBA+ in all policy and program development. Given the realities and barriers that marginalized women and girls with disabilities experience, government-led action, including the work and studies of both parliamentary and Senate committees, must also adopt both these important mechanisms (in the act and GBA+) as fundamental to their work and decision-making. 10.2, 10.3, 16.b
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- Provide more policy and program support for women and girls with disabilities at the intersection of multiple oppressions – groups that are almost completely invisible in policy, research and programming. This includes girls, Indigenous women and girls, deaf and hearing impaired women and girls, and women and girls with invisible and less-understood disabilities such as traumatic brain injuries, episodic and chronic disabilities, and intellectual and learning disabilities. 1.3, 8.5, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4, 11.2, 11.3, 11.5, 11.7
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- Dismantle systemic legacies of exclusion and the structural barriers facing women and girls with disabilities. An intersectional human rights monitoring system would remove the siloes inadvertently created by Canada being a signatory to multiple human rights treaties. Harmonizing existing institutions and processes would be an important next step in creating a stronger and more responsive system for evaluating human rights complaints, the majority of which are related to disability. Canada needs a co-ordinated approach that connects all human rights actors, including the Canadian Human Rights Commission, provincial and territorial tribunals, organizations representing Indigenous people, civil society organizations and the broader Canadian society. 16.b

Immigrant and Refugee Women	SDG Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeal all provisions in Bill C-97 dealing with the refugee determination system. • Repeal the minimum necessary income requirement and remove the cap on the sponsorship of parents and grandparents. • Loosen the stringent requirements on migrant care workers to allow a more accessible and inclusive process for caregivers applying for permanent residency. • Adjudicate fairly the evidence provided by the woman and family members to support their claim for conditional permanent residency. 	10.7, 8.8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the Canada Child Benefit available to all children in Canada regardless of their parents' immigration status. 	1.3, 10.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to guarantee protection to survivors of trafficking. Canada also needs to offer adequate support to trafficked persons and faster access to permanent residence. 	5.2, 16.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase oversight and implement independent and effective complaints and monitoring mechanisms of CBSA detention policies. • Increase training and education to immigration and CBSA officials about gender-based violence and domestic violence, as well as the trauma faced by women and children in detention. • Stop detaining children and pregnant women within the immigration process. 	10.7

The Girl Child	SDG Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take steps to close critical gaps in services and supports that are essential to the healthy development and well-being of all girls and young women, ensuring that no group of young people is left behind. 	4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply fully with Canadian Human Rights Tribunal rulings on First Nations child welfare and establish equitable funding for Indigenous children’s services. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In collaboration with girls and young women, create resources to prevent gender-based violence, promote health and well-being, and facilitate youth leadership. 	4.7, 5.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in leadership programming and safe spaces that take an intersectional feminist approach to supporting girls and young women through skills training, mentorship, mental health and well-being programming, and efforts to foster girls’ understanding of their human rights, from childhood through the transition to post-secondary education and employment. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance youth employment programming, targeting young women in greatest need with wraparound services, and helping students balance work and education over the year. 	8.5
Early Learning and Child Care	SDG Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play a greater leadership role, in the next and subsequent phases of bilateral agreement negotiations with the provinces/territories, in building a stable child care system for all families and children that advances the cause of women’s rights and gender equality over a period of 10 years. 	4.2, 4.a

- Boost funding significantly by increasing Canada’s early childhood education and care (ECEC) budget by \$1 billion each year over 10 years, bringing Canada in line with international benchmarks (e.g., spending at least 1% of GDP on ECEC) and allowing Canada to reach the goal of affordable, high quality, inclusive child care for all.

- Negotiate ECEC agreements with the provinces and territories that:

- put in place strategies for planned expansion through public/non-profit services;
- make child care affordable through operational funding and affordable fees; and
- improve quality and stability through public spending on the child care workforce, including spending on improving child care workforce wages.

- Continue to work with Indigenous leaders and communities to operationalize, implement and expand the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework to realize the goals and aspirations of Indigenous peoples.

- Put in place federal infrastructure (legislation, a federal secretariat, funding to the child care sector) to support the above recommendations for action.

Education and Training

SDG Target

- Expand access to high quality, publicly funded education and training by restoring federal transfers to the provinces and territories for post-secondary education to 1996 levels (accounting for enrolment growth and inflation) and establishing national standards for post-secondary education, upholding the principles of universality, accessibility, comprehensiveness, public administration and freedom of expression.

4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.a

- Expand the Canada Student Grants Program and remove all interest on federal student loans, greatly reducing the debt owed by students to the federal government.
- Complete the transfer of control for education — and the necessary resources — to Indigenous communities to close the education gap once and for all.
- Enhance the quality of, and access to, STEM education at all levels for young women and other equality-seeking groups by developing curricula targeting the needs and interests of these groups, providing supports for mentoring and networking, fostering the development of inclusive learning and working environments, and tackling stereotypes and norms that define traditionally “feminine” or “masculine” professions.

Women and the Economy

SDG Target

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in the sectors where women work today, ensuring that job stimulus and infrastructure spending is directed at Canada’s entire labour force. | 5.4, 9.1 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch a federal task force to examine paid and unpaid care work and develop a federal strategy to meet increasing demands for care. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase resources to ensure the swift implementation of the 2018 Pay Equity Act, upholding existing human rights protections, and including support for effective training and education, compliance and enforcement and provisions for pay transparency. | 8.5, 8.8 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update the federal Employment Equity Act, improve mechanisms to hold employers accountable for their obligations and create resources to assist in examining workplace practices for unconscious bias. | |
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that women earn living wages by raising the minimum wage for workers under federal jurisdiction (indexed to increases in average wages) and strengthening labour standards to ensure all workers – regardless of whether they are full-time or part-time, temporary or casual – have equal terms, conditions and opportunities at work, and access to equitable wages and benefits. • Incentivize businesses to unionize by prioritizing unionized businesses in procurement. 	8.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackle the gender bias in income security programs such as employment insurance, seniors benefits and the Canada Workers Benefit that undercut women’s economic security and reproduce disadvantage, by ensuring equitable access and enhancing the support on offer (e.g., instituting a lower uniform entry requirement for EI benefits, bringing back the “drop out” provisions that allowed caregivers to exclude months of zero- or low-income in the calculation of their CPP benefits). 	1.3, 10.3, 10.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on revenue generation and stability in federal revenues through progressive tax reforms, including the elimination of wasteful and regressive tax loopholes and expenditures as well as those that overwhelmingly benefit wealthy Canadians and corporations, exacerbating gender inequality. • Commission an independent review of the tax system to identify and propose alternatives to regressive measures that undermine women’s economic security and exploit the gendered division of labour. 	10.4, 10.5, 17.1
Women and Poverty	SDG Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy and related subnational strategies are 1) based in human rights, 2) adequately resourced, and 3) designed to tackle the unique barriers that women face. 	1.1, 1.2, 10.1, 10.2, 10.4

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- Ensure the National Housing Strategy is implemented in a manner consistent with international human rights obligations, including women’s rights, with a maximum of available resources dedicated to the advancement of the right to housing; 11.1, 10.3
 - The National Housing Strategy must respond urgently to the over-representation of LGBTQI2S youth experiencing homelessness.
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- Take the following immediate steps to address economic and social disparities among marginalized groups: 1.3, 2.1, 3.8
 - Implement the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, with special attention to the severe rates of food insecurity in northern Canada for women and girls.
 - Increase transfer payments to provinces and territories for women and girls while earmarking funds for social assistance and designating that transfer payments be conditional on provinces and territories setting their social assistance rates at adequate levels.
 - Develop a 10-year health accord for the implementation of high quality, universal, gender-responsive, culturally appropriate, publicly- funded and managed health promotion, prevention and acute care (including a national pharmacare program and dental strategy).

Violence against Women and Girls

SDG Target

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a national action plan on violence against women through a process that:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• engages with all stakeholders, including women, gender-diverse people, youth, frontline workers and survivors;• recognizes multiple and intersecting identities that place women and gender-diverse people at greater risk of experiencing violence;• provides for the direct and meaningful participation of equality-seeking women’s groups and other civil society organizations and a formal mechanism for their ongoing participation in the planning and implementation of the action plan;• involves high-level leadership and accountability from governments at all jurisdictional levels – Indigenous, federal, provincial, territorial, municipal;• includes clearly defined, time-bound goals and targets measured against detailed baseline data;• is supported by adequate human and financial resources; and• complements a national action plan on violence against Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit persons, as recommended by the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. | <p>5.2, 16.1, 16. 2, 16.3, 17.17</p> |
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- Ensure that the action plan includes:
 - effective prevention mechanisms;
 - universal coverage of response mechanisms for survivors;
 - a review of all justice mechanisms including policing, prosecution and offender management practices;
 - efforts to strengthen social policies that eliminate women's and gender-diverse people's vulnerability to violence;
 - actions to target online violence (e.g., working with social media companies to discourage gendered hate on their platforms);
 - support for reliable and responsive data collection allowing for better tracking of trends and evaluation of interventions, including distinctions-based analysis of the experiences of Indigenous women and girls; and
 - adequate human and financial resources to support these measures.

Women and Health	SDG Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to primary care, particularly for those facing the largest health disparities (e.g., women, Indigenous peoples, and those living in rural, remote and northern communities). • Improve mental health services and access to comprehensive, gender-responsive addictions supports in all areas of Canada, targeting resources for those in greatest need. • Implement a universal, gender-affirming care strategy that is supportive of trans, Two-Spirit, non-binary and gender-diverse communities across Canada and ensure this strategy is supportive of gender-affirming medical care across the country. 	3.8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-invest in the Canadian Women’s Health Network and Centres of Excellence for Women’s Health, which were central to advancements made following the Women’s Health Strategy. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a national pharmacare strategy that is universal, single payer, portable, accessible and comprehensive. • Ensure that any national formulary includes <i>all</i> prescription medications that relate to sexual and reproductive health and rights and other issues of critical concern. 	3.8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit immediately to universal cost coverage for contraceptives for everyone in Canada. • Ensure that care strategies are inclusive of LGBTQI2S family planning and diverse family structures by providing 1) training to health care professionals, 2) IVF supports, and 3) inpatient care that eschews heteronormative and cisnormative assumptions about family planning, fertility and reproductive health. 	3.7

Reproductive and Sexual Health	SDG Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withhold funding transfers from provinces and territories failing to ensure the availability and accessibility of abortion services. 	3.7, 10.2, 10.3, 10.7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish accurate health information on the Health Canada website about reproductive health; actively dispel false health information proliferated by anti-choice organizations; and disclose where information is provided by for-profit, industry organizations. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a national protocol for women and gender-diverse individuals seeking abortion services outside of Canada after the 23-week period, including funding to cover travel and accommodation costs prior to leaving the country. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take action to improve the health and safety of individuals selling sexual services and to assist those who wish to transition out of the sex industry by strengthening the social safety net and community-based services (e.g., access to income support, affordable and safe housing, quality child care, education and training, poverty alleviation programming, and treatment and support for addictions). 	1.3, 3.8, 4.2, 4.5, 8.5, 10.2, 10.4, 11.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect, protect and fulfil sex workers' rights to health and safety by engaging in a review of the Criminal Code in order to ensure compliance with the Supreme Court of Canada's 2013 <i>Canada v. Bedford</i> decision. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate funds to the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the Department for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) to co-lead a national public awareness campaign in support of comprehensive sexuality education. • Allocate resources to PHAC to invest in an earmarked program for capacity building and gender-responsive training of sexual health educators. • Conduct regular national monitoring through, for example, broad-based surveys of a robust set of sexual health indicators disaggregated by relevant factors including but not limited to sex, gender, age, location, racialized identity and disability status. • Develop and launch a national strategy toward equalizing access to high quality sex-ed across provinces and territories, targeting the needs of key groups such as women and girls with disabilities 	17.19		
<hr/> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Gender Equality and LGBTQI2S Rights</th> <th style="text-align: right;">SDG Target</th> </tr> </thead> </table> <hr/>		Gender Equality and LGBTQI2S Rights	SDG Target
Gender Equality and LGBTQI2S Rights	SDG Target		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take immediate steps to ensure the protections and autonomous decision making of intersex people, first by amending subsection 268(3) of the Criminal Code, which exempts non-consensual, medically unnecessary sex-normalizing surgeries on intersex infants from the purview of aggravated assault. • Include sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression as protected grounds in the federal Employment Equity Act, understanding that LGBTQI2S people, specifically trans, trans-feminine and non-binary people experience disproportionate violence, erasure and discrimination in the employment sector. 	16.2		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate specific national funding resources to address the disproportionate experiences of both gender-based violence and intimate partner violence across the LGBTQI2S community, understanding the unique contexts of LGBTQI2S peoples' experiences of violence as they are shaped in relation to heteronormativity, cisnormativity and sexism. 	5.1, 5.2, 16.1, 16.3		

- Develop, in consultation with community-based organizations, a national strategy dedicated to the support of LGBTQI2S seniors that will 1) build a national level body of research, 2) translate research into policy, programming and supports for care providers, and 3) increase the visibility and validation of LGBTQI2S seniors and their life experiences.

- Work with Canadian civil society organizations, including equality-seeking women’s groups, to thoroughly review the strategic plans and new funding commitments in support of LGBTQI2S rights globally – to ensure that proposed projects align with the government’s stated values, national legislation and priorities. 17.17
- Prioritize funding engagements that support community-based organizations, understanding the value of the knowledge and contexts that local actors bring to LGBTQI2S advocacy, and emphasize providing evaluation, research and monitoring support to ensure that indicators are relevant and meaningful to impacted communities.

Criminalized and Imprisoned Women

SDG Target

- Develop, in consultation with community-based organizations, a national strategy for the decarceration of women prisoners, particularly mothers, young women, Indigenous women and women with mental health issues. This strategy should include the reallocation of funds from Correctional Service of Canada to community-based alternatives using sections 29, 81 and 84 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. These in-community alternatives must move away from community *supervision* models, which are paternalistic in nature, toward community *support* models with wraparound services.

- Strengthen the social safety net and community-based services to stem the flow of Canada’s most marginalized and victimized women into prison. Targeted services should include affordable and safe housing, universal and free child care, free or affordable schooling, and universal, free access to health care, including mental health care. 1.3, 3.8, 4.2, 4.5, 8.5, 10.2, 10.4, 11.1

Women and Canada's Foreign Policy

SDG Target

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- Release a feminist foreign policy and associated action plan that is rights-based, inclusive and fully intersectional in its approach; includes the goal of demilitarization and non-violent conflict resolution; and that orients all of Canada's efforts across international assistance, foreign relations, diplomacy, trade and defence.
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- Develop a 10-year plan to achieve the UN aid target of 0.7% of GNI.
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- Commit to dedicating at least 15% of humanitarian funding for standalone Gender in Emergencies initiatives and announce a fully-funded gender-responsive humanitarian action plan that reflects the lifesaving nature of sexual and reproductive health and rights in fragile and emergency settings and enables crisis-affected women to participate in humanitarian decision-making.
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- Announce dedicated and additional resources to ensure the impact and success of Canada's national action plan on women, peace and security.
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- Develop a more consistent approach to demilitarization and disarmament issues, including signing the Nuclear Ban Treaty and developing a plan to reduce defence spending.

Women and the Media

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- Incentivize the news media — through CRTC regulatory mechanisms and explicit expectations tied to funding allocated in support of the newspaper industry — to measure the ratio of male and female perspectives reflected in news coverage and include other historically marginalized voices.
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- Collaborate with other countries to insist that social media giants take greater responsibility for policing their platforms to reduce online sexual harassment, online stalking and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

Women and the Environment	SDG Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify, analyze and concretely address impacts of resource development on gender equality and women’s rights at all stages of project development, approvals, implementation and monitoring. This should include mechanisms to ensure project decisions are consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). • Expand intersectional gender-based analysis and activities, address the structural roots of inequalities, conduct meaningful community engagement, and prioritize environmental responsibility and the well-being of Indigenous communities in policy development and climate adaptation planning at all levels. 	6.1, 7.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralize the leadership and valuable knowledge of Indigenous women, as keepers of traditional knowledge, in environmental efforts. 	17.17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a mechanism for public transparency on whether and how policies are actually changed or altered because of identified gender/equality impacts and publish information on remedial action taken to address deficiencies. 	11.3, 13.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize and support women’s existing work in low-emissions professions beyond “green” technology and infrastructure, while facilitating women’s entry into these emerging industries and ensuring the creation of decent work. 	8.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support workers and their communities through the transition to a low carbon future, including funds for community planning, collaboration, diversification and stabilization that prioritize the needs and aspirations of historically marginalized groups including women. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in public transit and other areas of dual benefit to women and the environment. 	11.2

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- Adopt a policy commitment to ensure that at least 50% of public climate finance for developing countries is for adaptation, of which at least 20% targets gender equality as a principal objective, and at least 80% targets gender equality as a significant objective.<?> 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.a, 13.b
 - Earmark a proportion of public climate finance for grassroots' women organizations providing critical support to communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis
 - Incorporate a gender-responsive approach in measures designed to prevent and address damage and loss related to global warming.

Women in Power and Decision-making

SDG Target

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- Introduce comprehensive, gender-responsive policies in public legislatures to eliminate all forms of harassment and enhance personal security and legislative decorum. This will include establishing independent bodies to oversee harassment policies, conduct investigations, solicit third party expertise, report on results and update policies as required. 16.7, 16.b, 5.2
 - Provide independent, trauma-informed and survivor-centric support services to assist victims of violence and offer training on harassment to all legislative members and political staff.
 - Create family-friendly workplaces through the introduction of parental and pregnancy leave, child care arrangements and related infrastructure, family travel accommodations, and predictable parliamentary calendars and sitting hours.
 - Update current practices for sitting legislatures, such as implementing proxy voting and remote participation policies, establishing fixed election dates and making provisions for adequate staff support and compensation.
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- Invest in a talent pipeline that trains, mentors and prepares women and gender-diverse people to step into board roles and other decision-making spaces.
- Institute policies that effectively incentivize decision-making bodies to be inclusive of diverse women and hold senior managers accountable for improving gender metrics and ensuring safe and inclusive environments.
- Expand the criteria for selection and cultivate broader networks to identify more diverse potential candidates for leadership roles, proactively addressing barriers that have thwarted the participation of historically marginalized groups.

Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

SDG Target

- Design a national action plan – in collaboration with provincial and territorial ministers, and representatives of Indigenous organizations and women’s rights and gender equality groups – for implementing, in a co-ordinated manner, the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action. The plan should include a monitoring mechanism for ensuring the domestic compliance with and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

- Invite and support leadership from marginalized women (e.g., racialized, low income, rural, LGBTQI2S, immigrant women) in all stages of policy-making, particularly agenda setting.^{<?>}
- Support Indigenous women’s active participation in policy development and decision-making that affects them, including dialogue between government leaders and national Aboriginal organizations.

- Establish a regular process for engaging women’s rights and gender equality groups, other civil society organizations, and feminist academic and research communities to consider mechanisms and measures needed to address entrenched and interconnected factors that cause and perpetuate gender inequality.
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- Move forward on funding reform and create mechanisms to provide ongoing support for the core operations of independent women’s rights and gender equality organizations working at the local, provincial/territorial, national and international levels.
 - Invest stable and permanent core funding in autonomous Indigenous women’s organizations to ensure they can provide core services and that Indigenous women can participate fully and equally in policy development and decision-making that affects them.

Data and Statistics on Gender Equality

SDG Target

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- Bring a feminist intersectional lens to all national research in order to support substantive gender equality. This means that national datasets must include the broadest possible accounting of situated social categories and locations.

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- Demand that feminist intersectionality be the gold standard of gender-sensitive data-gathering for the formulation of law and policy and the implementation of programs and projects.

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- Systematically collect distinctions-based data on: 1) all forms of gender-based violence against Indigenous women, disaggregated by sex, age, ethnic group, and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator(s); 2) protection orders, prosecutions and sentences imposed on perpetrators; 3) the number of Indigenous women and girls who are trafficked; 4) cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women, including cold cases and suspicious deaths; and 5) all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls that are committed by police officers.

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- Ensure inter-agency co-ordination of training for, and processes of, data gathering and analysis, while promoting compatible use of data categories between federal and provincial research initiatives.
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- Consolidate available research over the past decade that is relevant to gender equality across all categories of identity and social location. This will allow the government to establish baseline information on specialized topics, such as time use, gender-based violence, asset ownership, poverty, disability, climate footprint by sector, etc., as a foundation for constructing new surveys on vital issues.
-
- Encourage greater use of administrative-based or alternative data sources to address gender data gaps, taking the necessary steps to enhance quality and ensure broad accessibility, e.g., sexual health indicators.
-
- Provide training in intersectional gender-based analysis at all levels of public and advanced education systems, building the capacity of students, researchers and analysts to use available resources and apply them across the disciplines.
-
- Support the production of knowledge products and interactive data tools that meet the needs of different stakeholders including the public, civil society organizations, and women's rights and gender equality groups.

Appendix

Gender Results Framework: Equality Goals and Indicators

1. Education and Skills Development

Goal: Equal opportunities and diversified paths in education and skills development

More diversified educational paths and career choices

- Proportion of post-secondary qualification holders who are women, by field of study and qualification type
- Proportion of post-secondary students who are women, by field of study and credential type
- High school completion rate

Reduced gender gaps in reading and numeracy skills among youth, including Indigenous youth

- High school reading and mathematics test scores

Equal lifelong learning opportunities and outcomes for adults

- Adults' literacy and numeracy test scores

2. Economic Participation and Prosperity

Goal: Equal and full participation in the economy

Increased labour market opportunities for women, especially women in underrepresented groups

- Labour force participation rate
- Employment rate

Reduced gender wage gap

- Gender gap in median hourly wages
- Gender gap in average hourly wages
- Gender gap in median annual employment income
- Gender gap in average annual employment income

Increased full-time employment of women

- Proportion of workers in full-time jobs

Equal sharing of parenting roles and family responsibilities

- Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work
- Number of children in regulated child care spaces and/or early learning programs and/or benefitting from subsidies
- Proportion of annual household income spent on child care, by economic family type

Better gender balance across occupations

- Proportion of occupational group who are women

More women in higher quality jobs, such as permanent and well-paid jobs

- Proportion of persons employed in temporary, involuntary part-time, or low-wage jobs

3. Leadership and Democratic Participation

Goal: Gender Equality in leadership roles and at all levels of decision-making

More women in senior management positions, and more diversity in senior leadership positions

- Proportion of employees in management positions who are women, by management level

Increased opportunities for women to start and grow their businesses, and succeed on a global scale

- Proportion of businesses majority-owned by women, by business size

More company board seats held by women, and more diversity on company boards

- Proportion of board members who are women, by type of board

Greater representation of women and underrepresented groups in elected office and ministerial positions in national and sub-national governments

- Proportion of seats held by women in Parliament
- Proportion of seats held by women in local governments (provincial, territorial, municipal, First Nations band councils)
- Proportion of ministerial positions held by women in federal-provincial-territorial governments and chiefs in First Nations communities who are women

Increased representation of women and underrepresented groups as administrators of the justice system

- Proportion of federally appointed judges (federal and provincial courts) who are women
- Proportion of law enforcement, security and intelligence officers who are women, by rank

4. Gender-based violence and access to justice

Goal: Eliminating gender-based violence and harassment and promoting security of the person and access to justice

Workplaces are harassment-free

- Proportion of employees who self-report being harassed in the workplace

Fewer women are victims of intimate partner violence and sexual assault

- Proportion of women and girls aged 15 and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner
- Proportion of population who self-reported being sexually assaulted since age 15

Fewer victims of childhood maltreatment

- Proportion of population who self-reported childhood maltreatment (before age 15), by type of maltreatment

Fewer women killed by an intimate partner

- Homicide rate, by relationship to the perpetrator

Increased police reporting of violent crimes

- Proportion of self-reported incidents of violent crime reported to police, past 12 months, by type of crime

Fewer Indigenous women and girls are victims of violence

- Proportion of Indigenous women and girls subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence, by Indigenous identity

Increased accountability and responsiveness of the Canadian criminal justice system

- Proportion of sexual assaults reported to police that are deemed “unfounded”

5. Poverty reduction, health and well-being

Goal: Reduced poverty and improved health outcomes

Fewer vulnerable individuals living in poverty

- Prevalence of low income, by economic family type

Fewer women and children living in food-insecure households

- Proportion of individuals living in households that are moderately or severely food-insecure, by economic family type

Fewer vulnerable individuals lacking stable, safe and permanent housing

- Proportion of the population in core housing need, by economic family type

Child and spousal support orders enforced

- Collection rate, by type of beneficiary

More years in good health

- Leading causes of death
- Health-adjusted life expectancy at birth
- Proportion of population that participated regularly in sport

Improved mental health

- Proportion of adults who have high psychological well-being

Improved access to contraception for young people and reduced adolescent birth rate

- Proportion of population aged 15–34 that did not use contraception among sexually active population not trying to conceive
- Adolescent birth rate (aged 15–19) per 1,000 women in that age group

6. Gender equality around the world

Goal: Promoting gender equality to build a more peaceful, inclusive, rules-based and prosperous world

Feminist international approach to all policies and programs, including diplomacy, trade, security and development:

- Increased and meaningful participation of women in peace and security efforts
- More women in leadership and decision-making roles, and stronger women's rights organizations
- More women and girls have access to sexual and reproductive health services and their rights are promoted
- More of Canada's trade agreements include gender-related provisions
- More women have equitable access and control over the resources they need to build their own economic success and the economic success of their communities
- Fewer people are victims of sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, including in conflict settings and online

- More girls and women access quality education and skills training

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