

FACT SHEET

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AND STILL WE RISE !

UNION SISTERS
ORGANIZE !

Equal pay for work of equal value: Are we there yet?

Women in Canada have been working for years to win equal pay at work. In 1951, Ontario women won the right to equal pay for equal work – for doing the same job as a man; between 1952 and 1975 all other provinces followed suit. But, winning equal pay for work of equal value continues to be a struggle. And, women are frequently told that we have achieved equality and don't need pay equity laws.

WHAT ARE THE FACTS?

The wage gap is still there, no matter how you look at it:

- ♀ On an hourly basis: the average woman makes 81.6% compared to the average male wage (\$15.82 vs. \$19.38).
- ♀ Average annual earnings of all women – 63.9% of the average earnings of men or \$13,414 less a year (this gap has increased since 1997).
- ♀ Almost 1 in 3 women were low paid in 2002, compared to 1 in 5 men (this proportion has actually increased since 1997). Low pay is defined as earning less than 2/3 of the national median wage.
- ♀ Only 44.5% of women worked in full-time, full-year jobs (down from almost 52% in 1995).
- ♀ The majority of women (56%) still work in the traditional clerical, sales and services categories.

♀ Women younger than 30 earn less today than women in that age group did two decades ago.

♀ And women with university degrees, who used to have a smaller pay gap, now earn just 69.8% compared to men with degrees (down from an all time high of 75.9% in 1995).

Only two Canadian provinces have pro-active pay equity laws – requiring employers to examine their pay structures for systemic discrimination in wages – which cover the private sector (Ontario and Quebec). Several provinces have no pay equity legislation at all.

Despite lobbying by the women's and trade union movements, no legislation includes race-based wage discrimination within pay equity legislation – despite overwhelming evidence of a race-based wage gap.

♀ In 1999, workers of colour earned 16.3% less than all other workers; for working women of colour the gap was almost 12%. Women of colour workers hold badly paid jobs, with average earnings of less than \$15,000. (The smaller gap for women of colour than men of colour is due to the fact that all women earn less than men and male workers of colour are excluded from the well-paid secure jobs which are disproportionately held by white men.)

♀ One in three people of colour live in poverty compared to the overall one in five poverty rate.

♀ The proportion of women of colour who earn more than \$80,000 a year is too statistically insignificant to report.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Counter the myths of equality with the facts. Women have not achieved economic equality. Pay equity and other equality demands are as relevant as they ever were.

Support your union. Unionization is the best way of eliminating the wage gap and winning economic equality – for women, the wage gap if you're unionized is 91.5%; for people of colour, unionization increases your wage by 29.9% annually. Advertise

the union advantage. Encourage the women and people of colour you know to join a union. Support campaigns to improve labour laws to make it easier for people to join a union.

Minimum wage laws are also critical, since so many women, people of colour and young people work at minimum wage. Support campaigns to increase the minimum wage – explain that this is a matter of equality.

Women are feeling the impact of globalization in our pockets. Part of the explanation of the persistence and increase in the wage gap is the growth of the number of women working part-time, non-standard jobs at the expense of full-time employment. Privatization, contracting out and downsizing are all women's issues. Support campaigns to stop free trade agreements and the privatization of public services.

Fight for proactive inclusive pay equity legislation. We need legislation which covers both private and public sectors, employers large and small, aims to eradicate sex and race-based wage discrimination and which includes a central role for unions. There are pay equity coalitions in most provinces: they need union women's involvement and support.

Bargain equality measures into your collective agreement.

“No one has ever objected to women working. The only thing they have ever objected to is paying for women working.”

Gladys Strum, Saskatchewan CCF MLA, 1945

