



YWCA
CANADA

A TURNING POINT
FOR WOMEN

UN POINT TOURNANT
POUR LES FEMMES

EDUCATED, EMPLOYED AND EQUAL
THE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY CASE
FOR NATIONAL CHILD CARE



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About YWCA Canada:

YWCA Canada is the country's oldest and largest women's multi-service organization. With 33 Member Associations operating in more than 400 districts and communities across the country, our Turning Point Programs for Women™ address personal safety, economic security and well-being in nine provinces and one territory. YWCA Canada is the second largest provider of child care services, and the largest single provider of shelter to women in Canada. We are the largest provider of literacy, life skills, employment and counselling programs for women in the country. YWCA Canada is a member association of the World YWCA which unites 25 million women and girls worldwide and spans 125 countries. For more information about YWCA Canada and our Member Associations, visit www.ywacacanada.ca or find us on Twitter @YWCA_Canada or Facebook at www.facebook.com/ywacacanada.

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EDUCATED, EMPLOYED AND EQUAL

Executive Summary

Women’s advances in the work force and education over the last three decades demonstrate an unstoppable movement toward equality and mark a quiet revolution in women’s lives. The gender gap has closed in employment numbers and reversed in education without a corresponding social policy response. Canada needs early learning and child care services, not a social policy gap that is decades behind reality.

EMPLOYMENT: GENDER GAP CLOSES

Women’s employment in Canada has seen over 30 years of uninterrupted increases:

- Women and men are in the work force in virtually equal numbers
- Women surpassed men in paid employment in 2009: 50.9%
- 2009 employment rate for women with children under 5: 66.5%
- Employment rate increase for women with children under 3, 1976-2009: 233%

EDUCATION: GENDER GAP REVERSED

Women reversed the gender gap in higher education 20 years ago, becoming the majority of university graduates in 1991.

University Graduates Age 25-29

Year	1971	1981	1991	2001	2006
% Female	32	46	51	58	60

CHILD CARE: A SOCIAL POLICY GAP

Despite what amounts to a social revolution in the lives of women since 1970, early learning and child care services in Canada today remain an inadequate patchwork that does not offer choice. In 2008, Canada had regulated child care spaces for:

- 20.3% of children under 5
- 18.6% of children under 12

CLOSING THE GAP: A NATIONAL PLAN

With a workforce that is increasingly well-educated and in which more women than men are obtaining university and college educations, a national plan to ensure comprehensive access to quality, affordable early learning and child care services is essential to Canadian prosperity, a crucial support for children and parents and a common sense response to a changed society. As a choice for parents, early learning and child care services should be as normalized in our social structure as the public school system.

EDUCATED, EMPLOYED AND EQUAL

THE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY CASE FOR NATIONAL CHILD CARE

“...the new gender gap in education could be a harbinger of social and economic upheaval if males drift to the fringes of productivity and women have to be both primary breadwinners and child-bearers.”

Globe and Mail, October 16, 2010¹

“The most important determinant of a country’s competitiveness is its human talent – the skills, education and productivity of its workforce – and women account for one-half of the potential talent base throughout the world. Over time, therefore, a nation’s competitiveness depends significantly on whether and how it educates and utilizes its female talent.”

The Global Gender Gap Report 2010²

Child care services in Canada today are an inadequate patchwork³ that fails to meet the needs of children, families, communities and the nation. At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, women’s labour force participation is now essentially equal to men’s. Women have surpassed men in educational attainment, yet retain the majority of responsibility for child care. The prosperity of the nation is intimately tied to the labour force participation of an educated, skilled workforce that is becoming increasingly female. Barring a major shift of men into child-rearing, nationwide provision of early learning and child care services is essential to the nation’s future economic prosperity.

The social and educational benefits of early learning and child care services for children and families are now well established in the literature.⁴ These benefits are particularly acute for children living in poverty and low-income families, a disproportionate number of which are led by single mothers and from racialized communities.⁵ The economic case for comprehensive national early learning and child care services has been made as a labour market support for women. With Canadian women surpassing men in paid employment in 2009 and young women surpassing young men in education,⁶ Canada is at the brink of a broad sea-change in the workforce that cannot be supported by the current patchwork of early learning and child care services. As the second largest provider of child care in the country, YWCA Canada has seen this change first hand. Analysis of the costs and benefits of early learning and child care services as a national social policy needs to include the changes in the gender balance in employment and education that have occurred over the last 30 years.

Discussion of early learning and child care services has shifted from a narrow focus on costs to a detailed analysis of costs and benefits, in which public benefit is measured in terms of “strong and long-lasting effects on child development” and support for parents to maintain continuous employment and build job skills.⁷ The discussion of benefits needs to shift further, to recognize the social change that has already occurred and a macro-economic view of national prosperity.

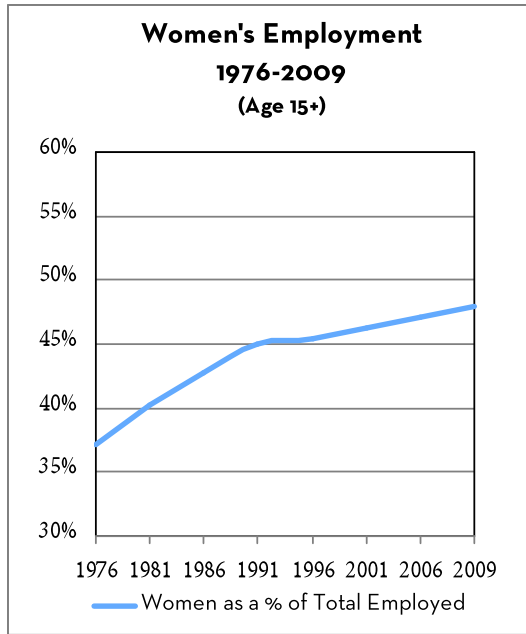
Women at Work: Closing the Gender Gap

More than 30 years of uninterrupted increases in women's employment has given Canada a labour force that is virtually gender-balanced: 47.9% women and 52.1% men in employment.⁸ This is the result of an incremental but relentless upward trend in women's employment from 37.1% in 1976. The number of women employed in Canada more than doubled between 1976 and 2009, rising from 3.6 million to over 7.7 million. Though this trend line flattened during recessions, it never dipped, regardless of economic conditions. A continuation of this average yearly increase of .327 percentage points will see women permanently surpass men in employment before the end of the decade.

Women's Employment 1976-2016 (15+ years)

Year	Total number of women employed (thousands)	% of women employed	Women as a % of total employed
1976	3,618.20	41.9	37.1
1981	4,556.60	47.7	40.3
1986	5,126.50	50.2	42.8
1991	5,790.50	52.8	45.0
1996	6,099.00	52.1	45.4
2001	6,910.30	55.6	46.2
2006	7,757.20	58.3	47.1
2011	8,477.00*	61.0*	48.7*
2016	9,136.80*	63.7*	50.3*
*Estimate based on the average yearly increase from 1976-2006 continuing over the period. Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey			

Women have already temporarily surpassed men in paid employment in Canada on two occasions. The first six months of 2009 saw more women than men in paid employment, though this was balanced off by the greater number of self-employed men. Previously, women had surpassed men in paid employment in a three month period in 2007. Women hit an all-time high at 50.9% of those in paid employment in March 2009. In 2009, a shrinking workforce with job losses concentrated in male-dominated manufacturing and resource sectors tipped the scales, but this was only possible because of the preceding three-decade increase.



The employment rate of women with children – that is, mothers – has followed a similar upward trend. In 1976, the employment rate for women with infants and toddlers (youngest child under three) was 27.6 %; by 2009, it had more than doubled to 64.4%. Adding in mothers with a youngest child in pre-school or kindergarten raised the employment rate slightly, to 66.5% in 2009. Where the rate took is significantly higher is for women with school-age children (6-15 years) at 78.5%, which is less than 2% lower than the 80.4% rate for women with no children.⁹ This 12-16 percentage point difference reveals a social policy gap: the lack of a system of early learning and child care services that would support women to work and have children.

Research has shown in countries “where it is relatively easy [for women] to work *and* have children, female employment and fertility tend to be higher.”¹⁰ Contrast that with the 13.4 % of women working part-time in 2009 who cited “caring for children” – not personal choice – as the reason they did not work full-time. This reason was cited by less than 2% of male part-time workers.¹¹ Labour force survey data across European countries showed child care consistently cited as the most common reason “for female inactivity in the work force.”¹²

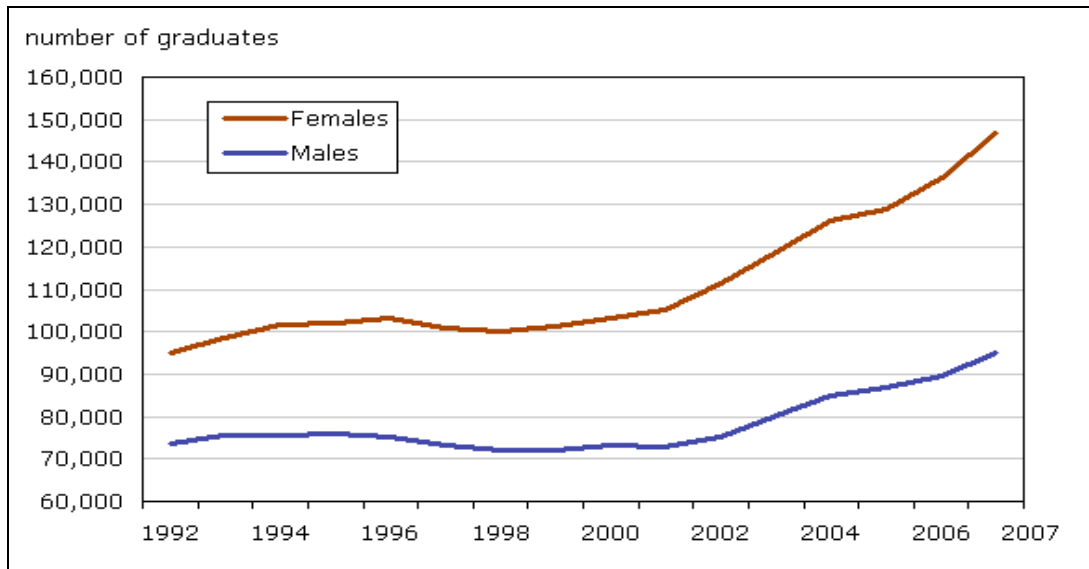
Educated Women: Gender Gap Reversal

Women’s increased labour force participation has been supported by a multi-decade trend toward increased attainment of higher education. According to Statistics Canada, a “dramatic reversal has taken place on Canadian university campuses”. Census data shows that in 1971, 68% of university graduates aged 25-29 were male, a figure that dropped to 54% by 1981. By 1991, 51% of those graduates were female, and by 2001, 58% female. The 2006 Census reported 60% of university graduates between the ages of 25 and 29 were women.¹³

University Graduates Age 25-29

Year	1971	1981	1991	2001	2006
% Female	32	46	51	58	60

Number of university graduates, by sex, Canada, 1992 to 2007¹⁴



Source: Statistics Canada, Trends in University Graduation

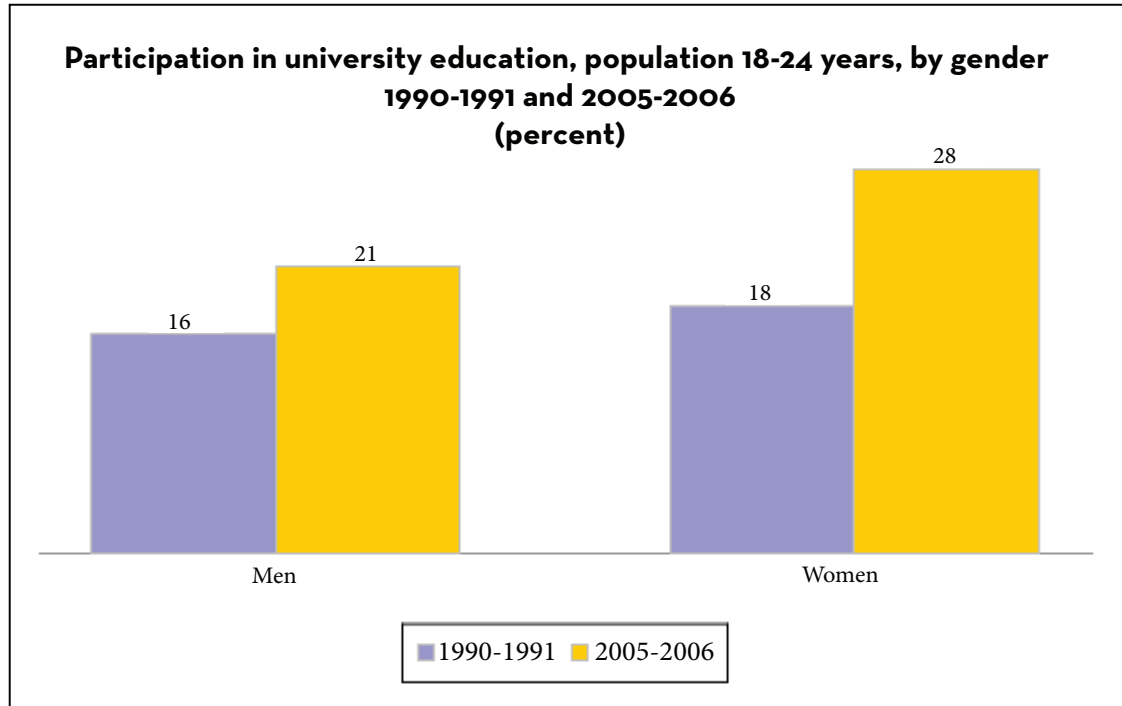
The population as a whole shows the impact of this trend over time. In 2007, more 25-44 year-old women (68%) than men (62%) had completed post-secondary education. This is a reverse of the figures for those 65 and over in the same year, where 40% of men and only 30% of women had completed post-secondary education. The proportion of women with post-secondary education had more than doubled in the intervening years. It's not surprising that over this period the child care services sector became established. What is surprising is that the federal government has left a policy vacuum for decades while this substantial social change occurred. In 2008, there were regulated child care spaces for only 18.6% of children under 12 in Canada and 20.3% of children under 5.¹⁵

Completion of post-secondary education, by age and gender, 2007 (percent)

	Men	Women
25-44 years	62	68
65+ years	40	30

Source: HRSDC calculations based on Statistics Canada. Labour Force Historical Review. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2007 (Cat. No.71F0004XCB).

While university attendance has increased for both young men and young women, it has increased at a much faster rate for women. In the 15 years between 1990-91 and 2005-06, the university participation rate for men age 18-24 increased by 5 percentage points, from 16% to 21%. For women, it increased 10 percentage points, moving from 18%, slightly ahead of men, to 28%, creating a seven point gap.



Source: Calculations of HRSDC based on special data request from Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey, 2006*. Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 2006.¹⁶

Recent data confirms a widening education gender gap. In the fall of 2010, the Council of Ministers of Education for Canada reported that in 2007, the first-time graduation rate for women from colleges was 32% compared to 21% for men, an 11 percentage point gender gap. For universities, this gap was a stunning 18 percentage points: for women, the first-time graduation rate was 43%, for men only 25%.¹⁷

As with women in employment, Canada has experienced a major social shift in women's education over the last three decades. Based on present trends, as a nation, we can look forward to a well-educated labour force in which significantly more women than men have university educations. In such a population, the need for quality early learning and child care services will increase, particularly if there is no corresponding increase in the child-raising work by men. Women will want their children well-cared for while they contribute to the economy and play their part in building the future of the nation. Canada will need educated women to be available for, and interested in, working. Social policies can support women to work *and* have children. First among those is a system of early learning and child care services that enhances the development of children. In Canada, this is a social policy gap that lags decades behind social development everywhere outside of Quebec.

Children, Families and Communities: The Benefit of Investing in the Future

Over the decades that have seen women's work and education change, a consistent body of evidence has accumulated confirming that a public system of early learning and child care services benefits children, families and communities. This body of work has established that access to quality early learning and childcare "can strengthen the foundations of lifelong learning for all children and support the broad educational and social needs of families."¹⁸ Early learning and child care programs "tend to significantly improve cognitive abilities, future economic well-being and social outcomes for disadvantaged children."¹⁹ Access to early learning and child care services is a key tool in reducing child poverty and its life-diminishing impacts.²⁰

A wealth of research assessing the cost-benefit of public investment in quality early learning and child care services concludes that net economic benefit occurs in both the short and long term. More than 90% of the cost of hiring child care workers returns to governments as increased revenue, and the federal government gains the most. A recent study determined that for Canada, over the long term, every public dollar invested in quality early learning and child care programs returns \$2.54 in benefits to society.²¹ This had been previously estimated at \$2 for every dollar invested.²²

The Path to Gender Equality is the Path to Prosperity

"...numerous studies during the last decade have confirmed that reducing gender inequality enhances productivity and economic growth."

*The Global Gender Gap Report 2010*²³

Closing the gender gap in employment has strong positive results for developed economies and decreasing the gap was "an important driver of European economic growth" in the decade before the recession.²⁴ Economist Kevin Daly estimates that increasing female employment to equal male employment would increase GDP in Italy 21%, Spain 19%, Japan 16% and 9% in Germany, France and US.²⁵ Citing the success of Scandinavian countries, Daly suggests that "with the right policies and a wide cultural acceptance of equal female employment, the male-female gap can be reduced close to zero." One of those policies is "subsidised childcare" – access to a government supported system of early learning and child care services.

Child care is also the "ramp to women's equality", as Supreme Court Justice Rosalie Abella has observed. For YWCA Canada, an association that has spent over 100 years working to achieve women's equality, universal quality early learning and child care "not only gives women the ability to work or go to school and support their families, but it also provides them with the opportunity to engage in social debate and political activity – elements that are key to the true transformation of Canada into an equality-based nation."²⁶ Women's advances in the work force and in education demonstrate an

unstoppable movement toward equality that has not been met with a social policy for early learning and child care services that would help women combine these advances with motherhood. It's long past time to close this gap.

Policy Recommendation: Close the Social Policy Gap

With the absence of the federal government from the field of child care, it is no surprise that provinces are moving forward at differing rates with partial schemes.²⁷ The pressure of women in the workforce and in higher education will be felt regardless of budget deficits and governments will be pressed to respond. The absence of the federal government from the field simply ensures that the response will be inadequate and patchwork.

Changes which can be fairly described as a social revolution have already occurred. The social infrastructure to support those changes needs to be put in place. Acting on this macro view — that the workforce is equally women and men and women have surpassed men in higher education — properly falls to the national government of the country.

A national plan to ensure comprehensive access to quality affordable early learning and child care services is not a luxury, a frill or a threat to Canadian families. It is essential to Canadian prosperity, a crucial support for children and parents and should become as normalized in our social structure as the public school system *as a choice for parents.*

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