

Achieving Pay Equity for Women in Canada

Advancing Economic Justice, Safety and Financial Security

CANADIAN CENTER FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT | CENTRE CANADIEN POUR L'AUTONOMISATION DES FEMMES

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Land Acknowledgement

CCFWE is located on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation, and we are honoured to be guests on this land. We extend our deepest respect to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, whose past and present contributions continue to shape this country.

As our work focuses on economic abuse and financial exploitation, it is important to recognize that these harms are not new. They are connected to the history and ongoing legacy of colonization in Canada. Efforts to prevent economic abuse must therefore be grounded in justice, accountability, and ongoing work toward reconciliation.

Executive Summary

The Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment's report, Achieving Pay Equity for Women in Canada, examines critical opportunities for the public, private, and non-profit sectors to advance pay equity and close the gender wage gap. Designed to complement CCFWE's sister report, Employment Insurance and Economic Abuse, it demonstrates why fair and adequate compensation is foundational to economic security and empowerment for every person in Canada.

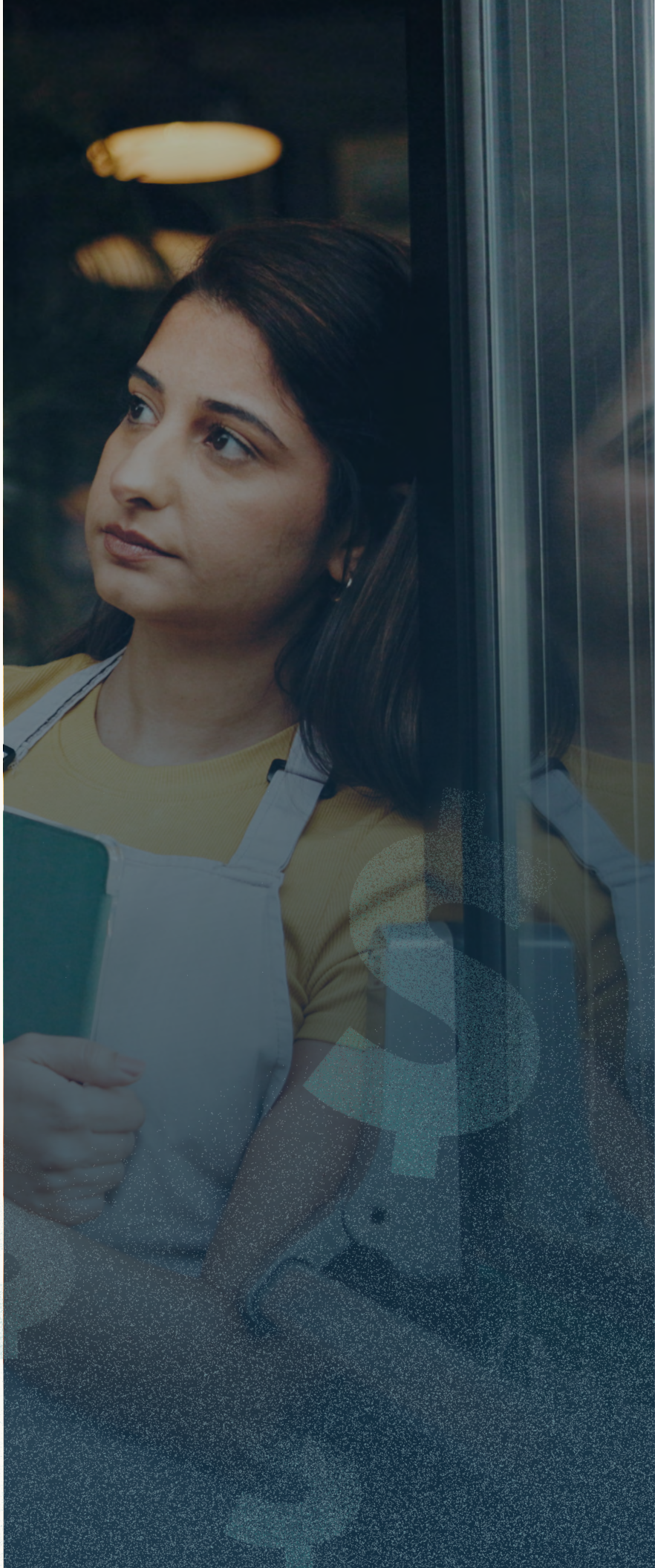
The report frames pay inequity as both a gender equity issue and a systemic economic inefficiency. Pay equity goes beyond equal pay for equal work to address the undervaluation of female-dominated work and persistent wage disparities that limit economic participation, household purchasing power, and national productivity. Closing the gender employment gap could increase Canada's GDP per capita by an estimated 3.6% over time.

The report also examines the intersection of economic inequality, gender-based violence (GBV), and economic abuse. Employment sabotage, restricted access to transportation or childcare, and workplace absences related to safety concerns or legal proceedings can disrupt workforce participation and produce lasting impacts on earnings, career progression, pensions, and retirement security. At a broader structural level, persistent workplace inequities can limit women's economic autonomy and reinforce financial dependency.

Canada's fragmented legal framework further limits progress. The federal *Pay Equity Act, Employment Equity Act,* and *Canadian Human Rights Act* address interconnected aspects of workplace equity but operate largely in silos. This limits their ability to address how employment barriers, representation gaps, and compensation disparities compound, particularly for racialized women. The report therefore recommends amalgamating these three statutes into a single, integrated federal equity framework. At the provincial and territorial level, most jurisdictions have public-sector pay equity measures, while Alberta, Yukon, and Nunavut lack pay equity legislation. Only Ontario and Quebec currently have specific proactive pay equity legislation covering the private sector. Since 2022, four new provinces have passed pay transparency laws, which are also an important tool for closing the wage gap by making compensation disparities visible and supporting action to address them. Beyond the domestic policy landscape, the implementation and enforcement of pay equity legislation is part of Canada's commitments under international human rights law.

Achieving lasting pay equity requires broader structural change, including addressing the devaluation of caregiving and service work, precarious employment, temporary foreign worker exploitation, unpredictable scheduling, and binary data collection that excludes gender-diverse people. The report concludes with calls to action for the federal government, provincial and territorial governments, private sector employers, and non-governmental organizations.

Ultimately, pay equity is both an equity imperative and an economic one. Closing structural wage and employment gaps can strengthen workforce participation, increase household purchasing power, improve economic resilience, and provide people experiencing gender-based violence with the financial independence necessary to rebuild safe, self-determined lives.



Message from the Executive Director

Pay equity is not only about what women earn. It is about the choices they are able to make, the safety they can build, and the future they can create.

Through my work at the Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE), I have seen how deeply economic security affects every part of a woman's life. For women experiencing gender-based violence and economic abuse, the barriers can be even greater. Employment can be interrupted. Hours can be reduced. Transportation or childcare can be controlled. Women may have to miss work because of safety concerns, legal appointments, or the need to protect themselves and their children. Over time, these experiences can affect income, career progression, pensions, retirement security, and long-term independence.

This is why pay equity cannot be treated only as a workplace issue. It is also an issue of economic justice, safety and freedom.

Canada has made important progress, but the findings in this report show that we still have work to do. Women aged 25 to 54 earned approximately 89 cents for every dollar earned by men in the data examined in this report. The report also shows that pay equity protections remain inconsistent across provinces and territories, particularly in the private sector.

These gaps matter not only to women and families, but to our entire economy.

When women are prevented from participating fully in the labour market, Canada loses talent, skills, leadership and economic potential. The analysis in this report estimates that eliminating the gender employment gap could increase GDP per person by approximately 3.6% over time. Fairness and economic growth are not competing goals. When women can participate fully and fairly, our economy becomes stronger.

This is also part of a much larger global conversation.

For decades, women around the world have called for equal pay, equal opportunity and equal participation in economic life. International commitments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action recognize equal pay for work of equal value as a fundamental right. Canada has an opportunity not only to meet these commitments, but to demonstrate leadership in how they are put into practice.

But legislation alone will not close the gap.

We need leadership from governments, employers, institutions and communities. We need stronger implementation and accountability, better pay transparency, and workplaces that understand how gender-based violence and economic abuse can affect employment and income.

We also need policies that recognize that women do not all experience the labour market in the same way. Race, disability, immigration status, caregiving responsibilities, gender identity and experiences of violence can all shape economic opportunity.

I want to sincerely thank Women and Gender Equality Canada for its financial support and for making this important work possible.

I also want to recognize our CCFWE research and policy team, our Policy and Systems Change Task Force, our partners, community organizations, advocates, experts and everyone who contributed their knowledge and time to this report.

Most importantly, I want to acknowledge the women and survivors whose experiences continue to guide our work. Behind every statistic is a person trying to build a safe life, support a family, grow a career, and have control over her own economic future.

At CCFWE, we believe economic safety is fundamental to freedom.

My hope is that this report does more than describe the problem. I hope it helps governments, employers and leaders make better decisions and move from commitment to action.

Women should not have to wait another generation for fair pay, safe workplaces and equal economic opportunity.

We have the evidence. We understand the gaps. Now we need the leadership and collective action to close them.

Meseret Haileyesus
Founder and Executive Director,
Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE)



Definitions

While drafting this report, we found that some concepts did not include all the criteria that we believe are essential for creating an economically just world. As such, we have created our own definitions that are based on existing thought to bridge the gap between economics and social policy.

Economic Abuse: incorporates a range of behaviours that allow a person causing harm to control someone else's economic resources or freedoms. It refers to various tactics that limit an individual's financial autonomy, including but not limited to denying them access to their money, exerting control over their resources, or leveraging intimidation and threats to constrain their economic freedom.

Pay Equity: is ensuring fair and liveable compensation for all workers not only across gender, race, ethnicity, and other identity factors, but also in recognition of life circumstances that can limit one's ability to participate fully in the workforce. Pay equity seeks to eliminate systemic barriers that create wage and labour participation gaps. It does this by creating pathways to economic security through valuing work based on its skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions. In order to achieve pay equity the wage gap and the gender participation gap must be closed.

Wage Gap: Also known as the "pay gap." Refers to the difference between the average or median hourly wages between two groups of people, most commonly between men and women (Statistics Canada, 2023).

The wage gap can occur in three main ways:

1. **Unequal Pay for Equal Work:** When individuals performing the same job are compensated differently due to factors like gender or race.

2. **Unequal Pay for Work of Equal Value:** When jobs traditionally held by women, racialized and historically marginalized groups, including people with disabilities, are undervalued and paid less, even though they require comparable skill, effort, and responsibility as higher-paying jobs.

3. **Labour Participation Gap:** Differences in labour force participation between groups. Structural barriers (including caregiving responsibilities, discrimination, and unequal access to employment) can limit women's ability to enter, remain in, and participate fully in the labour market, contributing to persistent wage gaps.

Note on language

CCFWE acknowledges that there is no single or universally adequate language to describe people's lived experiences. People who have experienced economic abuse may use different terms to describe themselves and their experiences, including "survivor," "victim," or other language that reflects their own understanding and agency. CCFWE respects self-identification and recognizes that language around economic abuse, like the experience itself, is not fixed or uniform.

CCFWE strives to use gender-inclusive language wherever possible. However, this is not always feasible when engaging with research, data, or policy frameworks that are sex- or gender-specific due to the lack of studies on gender-diverse individuals. As such, this paper uses the terms "female" and "women" as included in the cited sources. These terms are not interchangeable. Rather, they reflect distinctions between sex (female/male) and gender (woman/man) as they appear within the original research or policy context. Language is a practice of inclusion, and it is not a linear or perfect process.

CCFWE remains committed to critically reflecting on and evolving our language to ensure it is equity-centred, survivor-led, and responsive to lived experience, particularly in the context of gendered economic abuse.

Content Warning

This brief discusses the topics of gender-based violence and economic abuse. We encourage readers to care for their well-being while engaging with this content.

Knowing and honouring your emotional limits is part of the work and essential for your humanity. The fight to end systemic harms is collective. Take breaks, step away if needed, and return only when you have the capacity to do so. When you need to pause, others will carry the fight for you.

Introduction

This report examines critical opportunities for federal, provincial, and territorial governments to support pay equity policies and close the existing wage gap, with specific consideration for populations experiencing gender-based violence (GBV) and economic abuse. While Canada has been an international leader in advancing pay equity, stronger, more equitable nation-wide implementation of the existing legislation is needed at the systemic and organizational level.

This report's aim is to analyze pay equity in Canada to help policymakers close the wage gap, ensuring alignment with international human rights standards, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The report begins by examining the economic impact of pay inequity in Canada. It then looks at the relationship between the wage gap, GBV and economic abuse. Understanding how these populations intersect, the report highlights policy responses that tackle the barriers to full economic participation; from employment conditions, to labour market inequities, to structural inequality.

Then, the report analyzes Canada's Pay Equity Act and how it operates alongside other federal policies as well as provincial and territorial legislation. The intent is to provide realistic recommendations for decision-makers and employers on how they can meaningfully impact pay equity within Canada's current political and work environment.

This report is meant to be read in conjunction with CCFWE's sister report, **Employment Insurance and Economic Abuse**. Pay equity is essential in ensuring that employment insurance (EI) programs are successful. Without pay that meets basic living standards, questions about rates within EI become irrelevant.



Employment Insurance and Economic Abuse:
A critical review of Canada's financial safety net
(Sister report)

Pay Equity and the Economy

Starting in the 90's, the notion of pay equity gained traction as the idea of pay equality lost strength. Pay equality refers to equal pay for equal work (assessed based on the nature of the work and the amount of work needed), whereas pay equity refers to equal pay for work of equal value. As stated in the 2023 CCPA report, Tired of Waiting, this change matters because pay equity sheds light on the way society values work, such as valuing the work of some female-dominated professions less than the work of some male-dominated professions, even though they might equally contribute to society.

> Equal pay laws are regressive because they minimize the impact of gender by insisting on a universal worker identity.[2] In application, this universalization allows systemic gender inequality and biases to go unaddressed. Pay equity laws are progressive because they make gender the central focus.
>
> (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2023: 19)

2 The authors of the 2023 CCPA report are citing Sydney Kruth. (2015). "A Case for Canadian Pay Equity Reform." The University of Western Ontario Journal of Legal Studies 5, no. 2.

Pay equity is also recognized in international law. Article 11 of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) recognizes the right to equal pay for work of equal value. Similarly, the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) calls governments to promote legislation that ensures pay equity.

While pay equity is often discussed in terms of fairness and gender justice, it is also deeply tied to the health of our economy. Persistent wage gaps reflect not individual choice or ability, but structural conditions that shape who can participate in the labour market, under what terms, and at what cost. When women's labour is underpaid or constrained by systemic barriers, the impacts extend beyond individual workers to families, communities, and the broader economy. Understanding the economic impact of pay inequity requires examining how gendered expectations, caregiving responsibilities, and discriminatory labour market practices influence employment outcomes and economic well-being in Canada.

These inequities are often intensified for people who are experiencing GBV, including economic abuse. People may experience employment disruption, reduced earnings, forced debt, damaged credit, or barriers to education and career advancement, all of which contribute to persistent pay inequities and labour market exclusion. **Addressing pay equity, therefore, requires recognizing and responding to the ways GBV and economic abuse shape women's economic participation throughout their lives.**

Economic Perspective of Women's Labour

Economists have been studying the differences in pay and levels of employment between the female and male labour demand and supply for a long time (Andersson et al., 2023). To better understand these issues, understanding what economists define as a healthy labour market is important.

Economic theory says that to have a balanced labour market, the number of jobs available should be equal to the number of workers who want a job. In theory, this will lead to full employment, a healthier economy, and a more efficient use of economic resources, including labour. However, it is not easy to reach this equilibrium. This is especially true when the female labour supply is underutilized and/or underpaid. In 2023, the "average full-time earnings" for women in Canada were approximately $15,000 less than those earned by men (Adkins-Hackett et al., 2024).

The field of economics has defined discriminatory practices in the labour market as a market failure caused by firms when hiring, promoting, and firing workers based on non-economic factors like gender and race (Arrow, 1998; Charles & Guryan, 2013; Heyman et al., 2023; Neumark, 2018; Stiglitz, 1973).

Discriminatory practices in the labour market are a problem not only due to their ethical and social impacts, but because they prevent resources from being used effectively, which hurts the economy. In other words, if women earned the same as their male counterparts, the economy would benefit.

A balanced labour market must go beyond determining employment outcomes based on skills, experience, and productivity. It needs to recognize and address the systemic and intersectional barriers that prevent many people, particularly women and equity-deserving groups, from achieving equitable participation.

For instance, women still carry a disproportionate share of caregiving responsibilities with housework, children and elderly family members. Despite this labour divide, work place environments are not set up to accommodate for this reality. As such, this can adversely impact their availability, productivity, and career advancement opportunities at work. In some cases, these dynamics are compounded by gender-based violence where coercive control, financial restriction, or forced dependency further limits women's ability to seek or maintain employment and economic independence. However, caregiving responsibilities, whether freely undertaken or shaped by coercive circumstances, should not hinder women's ability to participate in the economy or to be fairly compensated for their contributions if they choose to do so.

Achieving what economists deem a balanced labour market requires government legislation that mandates organizational policies and practices to accommodate diverse realities and support pay equity. This includes flexible work schedules, accessible childcare, transparent pay schedules, accommodations that meet the needs of people with disabilities, robust parental leave policies, and equitable training opportunities to level the playing field. It also means addressing systemic inequities, such as financial barriers to education and the undervalued or unpaid work predominantly performed by women or racialized individuals, including caregiving and service roles.

Creating these supports and removing barriers benefits everyone, not just those directly affected. A labour market where all individuals can participate at the level they want and be paid equitably, strengthens innovation, boosts productivity, and enhances economic resilience. Investing in inclusive policies is not just about fairness, it is about building a labour market that reflects the full potential of Canada's diverse population and supports long-term economic health and social equity.



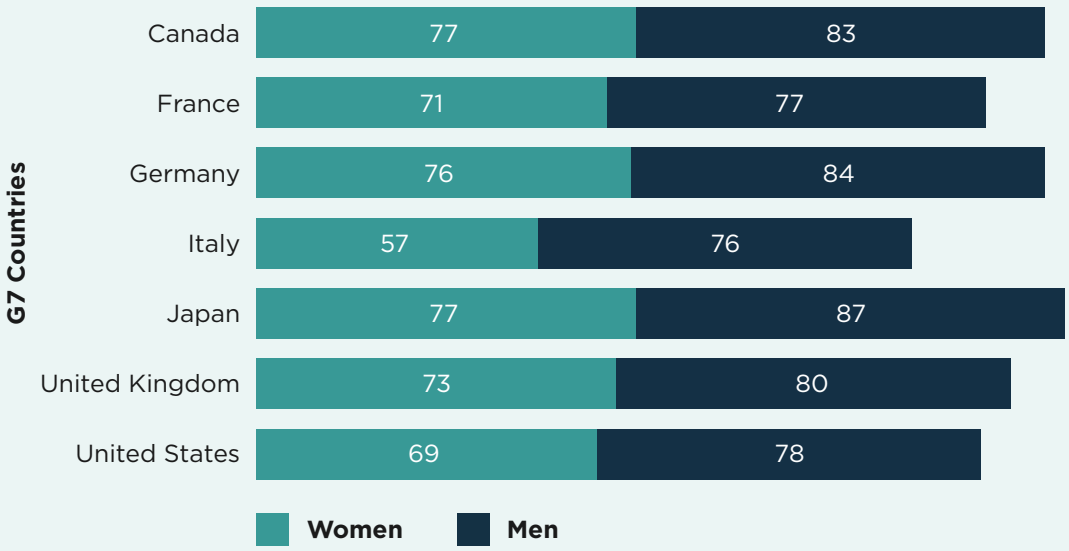
Impact of Pay Equity on the Economy

In order to achieve pay equity we need to look at closing the wage gap between women and men. This includes closing the labour participation gap, which refers to the difference in labour force participation rates between men and women highlighting how structural barriers, including caregiving responsibilities, discrimination, and unequal access to employment, can affect women's ability to enter, remain in, and participate fully in the labour market.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) covered the labour participation gap in their 2017 study named "Women are key for future growth: evidence from Canada" which focused on Canada's female labour participation rate (LPR). The IMF found that if the labour participation gap between men and women closed by a 6.8% due to increased LPR of highly educated women in 2017, GDP levels could have increased by 4%. This held true with an increase in the LPR for women with less education as well, although information about the percentage increase was not mentioned in the report.

It is worth highlighting that, regarding LPR, organizations like the Bank of Canada (2024) and the World Bank (2024) assert that Canada's female LPR is very high compared to other similar economies like those of the G7 countries. As seen from Figure 1, Canada's female LPR was the highest in 2024 among the G7 countries.

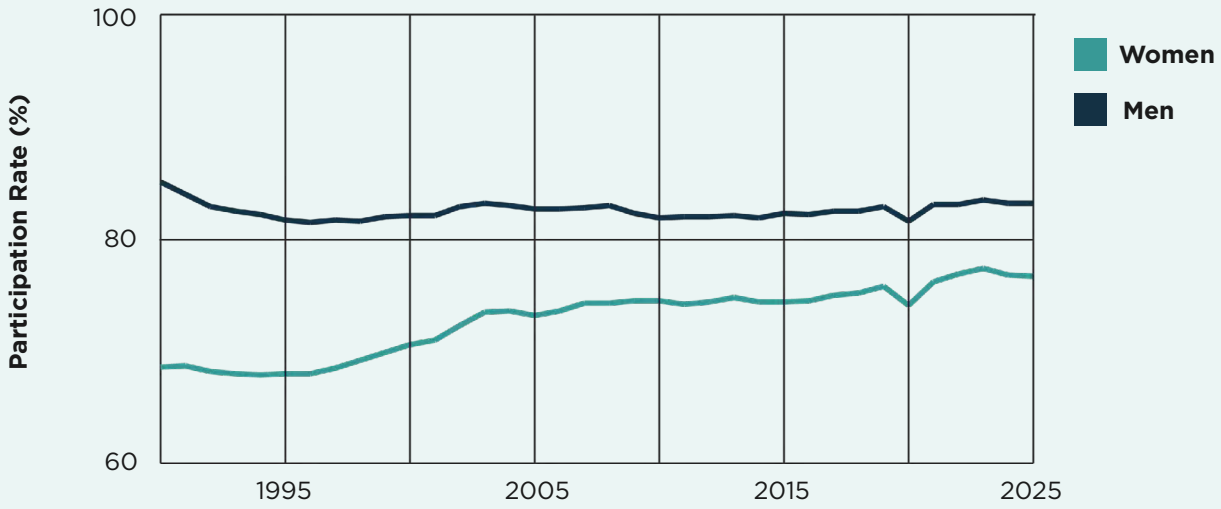
Figure 1 - G7 countries' female labour force participation rate for the year 2024



Notes: the female labour participation (data) rate represents the proportion of the female population that was economically active during the year of 2024. Their ages were 15-64. **Sources:** World Bank Data Group, 2024

This is mostly attributed to women's educational attainment, a shift towards a service-oriented economy, and implementing laws to address pay inequities over the last three to four decades (Bank of Canada, 2024). However, as Figure 2 points out, while the LPR gap has diminished it still exists.

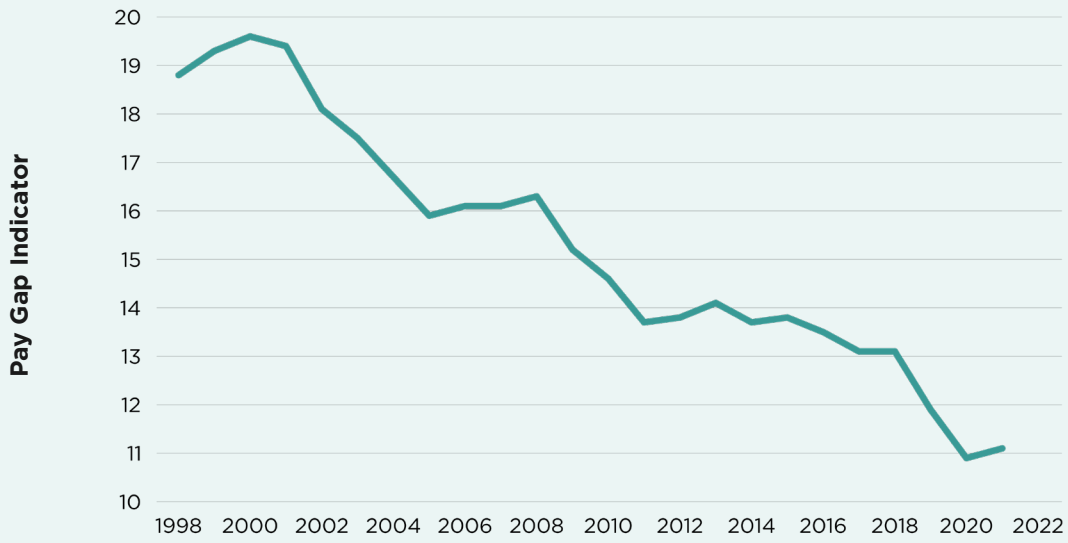
Figure 2 - Canadian Labour Force Participation Rate by Gender from 1990-2025



Like the labour participation gap, while progress has been done, the wage gaps between women and men persist (see Figure 3). **The indicator used by Statistics Canada to measure the gender wage gap "in hourly wages" between women and men shows that the gap narrowed by only 7.7 points from 1998 to 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022a).** Addressing pay inequity therefore requires not only increasing women's participation in the labour market, but also addressing unequal pay for work of equal value and the structural conditions that continue to undervalue women's work.

Statistics Canada's report, Pay gap, 1998 to 2021 (2022a), mostly attributed the reduction of the wage gap to the increase in women's educational attainment and changes in occupations among genders, where the portion of men working in construction and manufacturing declined during the period. Despite the closing of the wage gap, in 2021, the cohort of women between 25 and 54 years of age "earned $0.89 for every dollar earned by men". So while there has been some progress in closing the wage gap, it still persists alongside other barriers, including the "motherhood penalty" (Maturn and The Brand is Female, 2024). Moreover, the Statistics Canada Pay gap, 1998 to 2021 report (2022a) shows that almost two-thirds of the wage gap in 2021 could not be accounted for by considering the differences between men and women in terms of human capital, job attributes, occupation and industry, and demographics. This means that further work needs to be done to remove systemic barriers that are enabling the wage gap to persist.

Figure 3 - Pay gap indicator for the years 1998 to 2021



Notes: The pay gap indicator measures the wages per hour of paid employees that were 25 to 54 and were part of the Labour Force Survey. **Sources:** Statistics Canada, 2022

Another way to analyse the impacts of gender differences on the economy is to estimate the potential economic benefits a country could gain from closing the wage gap. The basic Gender Employment Gap Index (GEGI) indicator provides an approximation of these benefits (Pennings, 2022). It does this by estimating how much the GDP per capita can increase in the long-run if the gap in wages between women and men is eliminated.

It should be noted that this indicator has its limitations. The GEGI is a tool designed and used by economists that does not always align with people's realities and the social problems highlighted in this report. It takes an equality approach rather than an equity approach to the wage gap. For instance, the GEGI assumes men and women are equally productive, that women want to participate in the job market in the same way as men, and that productivity and human capital mean the same thing for everyone. It also assumes it takes the same time for capital to accumulate and for women to reach the same levels of labour participation as those of men. Despite these shortcomings, GEGI can quantify the potential benefits of pay equity between women and men and allow cross-countries comparisons. It also is a tool that relates this social issue to economic terms, making it easier to make a economic case to advance pay equity.

The Basic GEGI is measured as follows:

$$\text{Basic GEGI} = \frac{(\text{Male ETPR} - \text{Female ETPR})}{(\text{Male ETPR} + \text{Female ETPR})} \times 100\%$$

where ETPR stands for employment-to-population ratio[2].

The potential economic impact of closing the wage gap in Canada was calculated using data from the International Labour Organization for 2024. If the gap is eliminated, it could lead to a 3.6% increase in GDP per person over time. In other words, the GDP per capita will be higher by 3.6% in a generation from now if any policies to eliminate the problem take effect today.

Taken together, it makes economic sense to reach the point where pay equity in the workforce is no longer an aspiration for people in Canada, but a reality so that women and future generations can be part of a healthier and more inclusive labour market.



2 The employment-to-population ratio is the share of persons that were employed and/or self-employed as a proportion of the total working population ages 15-64 (International Labour Organization, 2024).

Gender-based Violence and Economic Abuse: Barriers to Equity

Achieving pay equity requires addressing the wage gaps that prevent people from accessing fair and liveable compensation. While unequal pay for equal work and unequal pay for work of equal value are direct forms of wage inequality, labour participation gaps reflect the structural barriers that determine who can enter, remain in, and fully participate in the labour market. Gender-based violence (GBV) and economic abuse can reinforce all three. Employment sabotage (including interference with transportation, childcare, communication, attendance, and scheduling) can disrupt employment, reduce hours, limit career advancement, or result in job loss.

People experiencing GBV may also face forced absences or extended periods away from work due to safety concerns or legal/court-related processes. Over time, these disruptions can affect lifetime earnings, employment histories, pensions, and retirement security, including through concealed income and manipulated financial records (see Employment Insurance and Economic Abuse report).

These impacts can deepen existing wage gaps and prevent people from benefiting fully from pay equity measures. Addressing GBV and economic abuse is therefore critical to achieving pay equity. Without accounting for these barriers, efforts to close wage gaps may leave people experiencing GBV and economic abuse behind, limiting the ability to achieve meaningful and lasting pay equity.

These barriers occur within a broader context of structural inequity in Canada, where women-led, lone-parent, and/or racialized households experience disproportionately high rates of poverty. As noted by Baker (2010), these outcomes reflect intersecting disparities in employment rates, wages, debt burdens, and constrained working hours due to caregiving responsibilities.

While CCFWE defines economic abuse at the individual and relational level, we recognize that employers and labour market realities can produce similar patterns of financial control, dependency, and exclusion. Persistent wage gaps, barriers to advancement, inequitable employment standards, and discriminatory compensation practices can all constrain economic autonomy, mimicking the harms of economic abuse in relationships. This can make a person feel trapped in a job or career that is causing harm, as well as trapping them in homes or lifestyles that are where GBV and economic abuse is occurring.

Addressing pay equity therefore requires more than closing wage gaps. It also requires targeted policy responses that address the institutional and labour market conditions that enable both pay inequity and economic abuse to persist. This includes reviewing existing government policy that oversees and shapes employment structures, compensation systems, and workplace policies that shape economic power, autonomy, and security.

Canadian Policy Context

International Human Rights Standards

Canada's efforts to achieve pay equity must not only focus on domestic policy but meet its obligations under international human rights law. Canada has signed on to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. These international human rights frameworks recognize equal pay for work of equal value as a fundamental right and affirm that governments have a responsibility to eliminate systemic discrimination that contributes to persistent gender and racial wage gaps.

Canada has shown its commitment to advancing these international standards to ensure pay equity and reported on its progress in the implementation of CEDAW (Canada's Tenth Report to CEDAW, 2022) and the Beijing Platform (Canada's Fifth Review of the Beijing Platform 2019-2024). Progress includes the proactive pay equity laws (2018) and pay transparency laws (2021) in federally regulated workplaces, with an Office of the Pay Equity Commissioner to advance and enforce the application of the Pay Equity Act. It also includes the review of the Employment Equity Act in 2021, to strengthen it by focusing on removing systemic barriers to equity for historically disadvantaged groups to create a more inclusive federal workforce.

As Canada continues to address longstanding wage gaps, these international standards provide an important foundation for evaluating existing legislation, strengthening implementation, and ensuring that pay equity reforms advance substantive equality for all workers, including those experiencing gender-based violence and economic abuse.

Federal Laws and Policy

Three federal laws address different aspects of workplace equity: the Pay Equity Act, the Employment Equity Act, and the Canadian Human Rights Act. Although these laws are intended to address related forms of inequity, they operate largely as separate frameworks rather than as a coordinated system for achieving economic equity.

The Pay Equity Act, which came into force in 2021, establishes a proactive pay equity requirement for federally regulated employers with 10 or more employees. Employers must develop and maintain pay equity plans to identify and address gender-based differences in compensation between predominantly female and predominantly male job classes performing work of equal or comparable value. The Employment Equity Act, by contrast, focuses on barriers to employment and representation for four designated groups: "women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and members of visible minorities." In other words, it seeks to eliminate the labour participation gap. The Canadian Human Rights Act provides protection against discrimination in employment on prohibited grounds, including sex, race, and disability. Together, these laws address pay, employment access and discrimination; however, as separate entities they do not fully address the intersectionality of inequity.

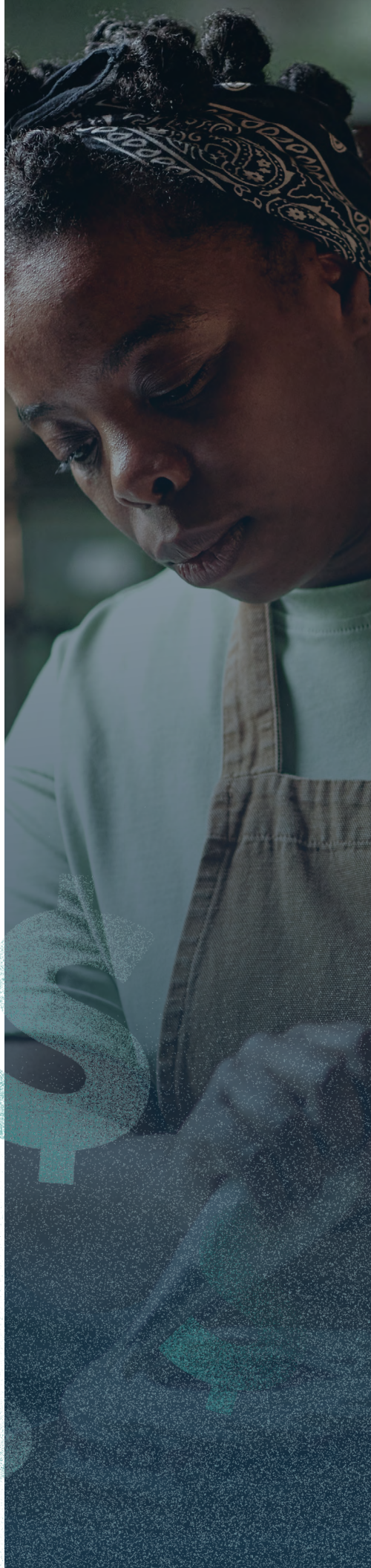
This fragmented approach is a significant weakness. Pay equity and employment equity are not separate problems, but having separate legislations treats them as distinct policy issues. Occupational segregation, underrepresentation, inequitable access to employment, and inequitable compensation are interconnected outcomes of systemic gender discrimination. The Pay Equity Act addresses compensation inequities within predominantly female job classes, while the Employment Equity Act addresses representation and employment barriers, but there is limited integration between the two.

As a result, the framework does not adequately capture how barriers to entering, remaining in, and advancing within the labour market contribute to persistent pay inequities between men and women.

This gap is particularly significant for racialized women, who experience the compounding effects of gender and racial discrimination. A gender-only approach to pay equity cannot fully capture these experiences, while employment equity and human rights protections do not substitute for a comprehensive assessment of compensation. Racialized women may be concentrated in lower-paid, precarious, or predominantly female occupations while simultaneously experiencing barriers to hiring, promotion, leadership, and equal compensation. Addressing these issues through separate legislative lenses will not address the wage gap.

A more integrated approach would also better align with Canada's international commitments. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) calls on states to eliminate discrimination against women and ensure equality in employment, including equal remuneration and equal treatment in respect of work of equal value. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action similarly identifies women's economic empowerment, equal access to employment and resources, and the elimination of discrimination in the labour market as critical areas for action. These commitments support an approach that addresses the structural and intersecting causes of economic inequity.

Canada should therefore move toward a coordinated federal equity framework in which pay equity, employment equity, and human rights protections reinforce one another.



Provincial and Territorial Laws and Policy

A pay equity scan was conducted between June and July 2025 and updated in July 2026, covering all provinces and territories. Findings are organized into two tables. Table 1 presents the current landscape along with strengths and opportunities for provinces and territories (PTs) in advancing pay equity and pay transparency. The provincial and territorial government has pay equity and pay transparency laws, which is why this language was used. Pay transparency laws are an important tool for closing the wage gap and advancing pay equity by increasing visibility into compensation and helping identify and address unjustified pay disparities.

Table 2 tracks references to pay equity, wage gap, and pay transparency across ministerial mandate letters, budgets, and active bills in each jurisdiction, and identifies relevant resources, key players, and institutions beyond the responsible ministries.

As a summary of Table 1, with the exception of Alberta, every province has pay equity provisions for the public sector, whether through dedicated legislation (Ontario, Manitoba, Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and New Brunswick) or a policy framework (Saskatchewan and British Columbia).

The scan found several strengths existing in advancing pay equity and pay transparency:

- Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island have adopted proactive pay equity legislation, meaning employers are required to establish pay equity programs themselves, rather than placing the burden on individuals or unions to pursue complaints (Newfoundland & Labrador Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 2022).
- Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec's legislation explicitly recognizes the systemic nature of gender-based wage discrimination.
- Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Northwest Territories define pay equity explicitly as equal pay for work of equal value.

Several opportunities for advancing pay equity and pay transparency also emerge from the scan:

- Only Ontario and Quebec have specific pay equity legislation covering the private sector, leaving 11 of 13 jurisdictions without it; this represents a clear opportunity for other provinces and territories to draw on the Ontario and Quebec models.
- A related opportunity lies in pay transparency legislation, which currently exists in Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, British Columbia, and New Brunswick, jurisdictions that could serve as models for others to follow.

- Among the territories, only the Northwest Territories has public-sector pay equity legislation, while Nunavut and Yukon have none.
- Pay equity legislation in Ontario, Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador includes sanctions for non-compliance, and maintenance provisions are in place in Quebec and New Brunswick. In this regard, there is significant room for improving enforcement and maintenance provisions, creating them where they don't exist and strengthening the existing ones.
- Legislation should further reflect the real-world composition of businesses in the jurisdictions it governs; in Ontario and British Columbia, for example, pay equity laws apply only to businesses above an employee-count threshold that exceeds the size of most businesses in the province, which limits the legislation's practical reach and impact.

The scan also points to a relationship between having pay equity legislation or policy in place and a stronger wage gap performance. According to the report The Gender Wage Gap in BC (2025), the four provinces that outperformed the national average in 2024 (Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Quebec, in that order), all had pay equity legislation or policy in place, while the four provinces without such measures (British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, and Alberta), fell below the national average.

More broadly, the six provinces with some form of pay equity provision also had the smallest wage gaps overall (Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Manitoba, and Ontario, in that order). This pattern is not new: as the Newfoundland & Labrador Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women noted in its 2022 report, citing 2016 Conference Board of Canada data, the six provinces with proactive pay equity legislation already had lower gender wage gaps that year, supporting the broader conclusion that proactive pay equity legislation has a measurable impact.

Table 2 shows that there are two references to pay equity in the PT's 2025 budgets, in New Brunswick and British Columbia; and that pay equity does not appear in the mandate letters of relevant PTs ministries. Resources specifically devoted to pay equity work and clear instructions to ministers are crucial to support the implementation and enforcement of pay equity and pay transparency provisions. The lack of references to pay equity in most of the PTs' 2025 budgets shows that pay equity is not a new priority for them, as budgets highlight new investments. For the PTs that have institutions devoted to pay equity, those have an annual operating budget that is not shown in the PTs' 2025 budgets because it is not a new investment.

Table 1 - Pay Equity Legislation in Canada

Province or Territory	Pay Equity legislation - public sector	Pay Equity legislation - private sector	Pay Transparency legislation	Strengths	Shortcomings / Opportunities
Alberta	No [Only province with no legislation or policy at all]	No	No	N/A	N/A
British Columbia	No [but the Public Sector Employers Act includes pay equity provisions]	No	Yes [2023]	No	Currently the pay equity legislation applies to employers with 1,000+ workers; starting Nov 2025 it will be employers with 300+ workers; and 50+ workers in Nov 2026. However, 98% of businesses in the province have less than 50 employees.[1]
Manitoba	Yes [1986]	No	No	• Proactive	
New Brunswick	Yes [1989; repealed and replaced in 2009]	No [but the NB Employment Standards Act (Section 37.1) establishes equal pay for equal work for all province employees[2] + Pay transparency legislation as a step toward pay equity in the private sector [3]	Yes [June 2026]	• Proactive • Maintenance provisions included in the Act	From the NB Pay Equity Coalition website: "The (Pay Equity) Act itself needs improvements: • It does not apply to jobs done by less than 10 employees, • It does not apply to municipalities, universities or services mandated and funded by the government but provided by the private sector (parapublic sector) such as nursing homes, home support and child care; • There are no clear and consistent methods regarding the selection of male comparators; • There are few dispute resolution options; • The Pay Equity Bureau has limited powers: a) It lacks independence since it reports to a Minister rather than to the whole Legislative Assembly; b) It doesn't have the power to receive complaints or make binding rulings."

Province or Territory	Pay Equity legislation - public sector	Pay Equity legislation - private sector	Pay Transparency legislation	Strengths	Shortcomings / Opportunities
Newfoundland and Labrador	Yes [Royal assent in Nov 2022; only in force in core government departments of more than 10 employees since April 1, 2023; will be in force in the future for more public bodies]	No	Yes [Nov 2022, but not in force yet; it is for both public and private sector]	• Equal pay for work of equal value • Consultations with unions and women's organizations • Potential for sanctions if there is a failure to comply	• Largest wage gap among the Canadian provinces
Northwest Territories	Yes [Public Service Act from 1988]	No	No	• Equal pay for work of equal value	The Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Equal Pay Commissioner provides recommendations about reviewing the Public Service Act for amendments on intersectionality, maintenance, and proactive arrangements.
Nova Scotia	Yes [1989]	No	Not yet [the Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act (Bill 98) had its first reading in March 2025 but has not been passed]	• Proactive	• Pay Equity Act does not address systemic nature of pay inequity[4]
Nunavut	No	No	No	N/A	N/A

Province or Territory	Pay Equity legislation - public sector	Pay Equity legislation - private sector	Pay Transparency legislation	Strengths	Shortcomings / Opportunities
Ontario	Yes [1990]	Yes [1990, except for employers with less than 10 employees]	Yes [2018, in force since 2026]	• Proactive[5] • Enforcement provisions in place • Addresses systemic nature of pay inequity[6] (CCPA, 2023) • Differentiation between pay equity and equal pay for work of equal value	• Addresses 100+ employees' private businesses, when most of the businesses in the province are below that number[7]
Prince Edward Island	Yes [1988]	No [but the transparency measures in the Employment Standards Act are for all employees in the province]	Yes [Effective June 1st 2022, in the Section 18 of the Employment Standards Act]	• Lowest gender wage gap among Canadian provinces • Proactive • Addresses systemic nature of pay inequity[8]	• Focus on equal pay for equal work in the PEI Human Rights Act (rather than equal pay for work of equal value)[9]
Quebec	Yes [1996, 2009]	Yes [except for employers with less than 10 employees]	No [but the pay equity exercise that employers with 10 or more employees have to make includes posting the results of that exercise for their employees to see]	• Proactive • Provisions for maintenance • Sanctions for failure to comply: fines [$1000-45000 for the first violation] • Recognizes the systemic nature of pay inequity (CCPA, 2023)	

Province or Territory	Pay Equity legislation - public sector	Pay Equity legislation - private sector	Pay Transparency legislation	Strengths	Shortcomings / Opportunities
Saskatchewan	No [but has a 1999 policy framework that applies to the public sector + the Saskatchewan Employment Act includes pay equity provisions]	No	No	N/A	N/A
Yukon	No	No	No	N/A	N/A

[1] Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 2022: 23.
[2] Employment Standards Act SNB 1982, c E-7.2
Available from: https://www.canlii.org/en/nb/laws/stat/snb-1982-c-e-7.2/221491/snb-1982-c-e-7.2.html [Accessed Feb 13 2026]
[3] CBC, June 12, 2026.
Available from: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/pay-transparency-act-equity-new-brunswick-workers-9.7233312
[Accessed August 6 2026]
[4] CCPA, 2023: 40.
[5] "Proactive pay equity legislation puts the onus on an employer to introduce a pay equity program, rather than relying on an individual or union to put the resources into pursuing a lengthy case." Also, "this type of legislation exists now in Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island" (Newfoundland & Labrador Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 2022: 13).
[6] CCPA, 2023: 32.
[7] CCPA, 2023: 39.
[8] CCPA, 2023: 39.
[9] Comparative Analysis of Pay Equity Regimes Across Canada, West Coast Leaf, 2019: 3.

Table 2 - Other Relevant Pay Equity Documents and Institutions in Canada

Province or Territory	Mandate letters from relevant ministries	Most recent budget	Active bills	Resources	Relevant institutions / Key players of note (other than the relevant ministries)
Alberta	No reference to keywords	No reference to keywords in the 2025 budget			Alberta Union of Provincial Employees
British Columbia	Despite the fact that mandate letters to ministries are supposed to be public in BC, and that summaries of the letters contents were found in the news and in documents produced by other organizations, the 2025 full letters to the relevant ministries (Finance, especially the Gender Equity Office; Labour; Jobs; Social Development) were not found. The implementation of the 2023 Pay Transparency Act is highlighted in the short description of the Gender Equity Office.	No reference to keywords in the 2025 budget. The 2025/2026-2027/2028 Annual Service Plan Report from the Ministry of Finance measures the province's progress in tackling the pay gap from 2023 to 2024 and includes closing the gender pay gap among the key strategies to improve equity in BC.			
Manitoba	We checked Labour and Immigration; Families, the Minister Responsible for Accessibility, and the Minister responsible for Gender Equity; and Business, Trade, Mining and Job Creation. No reference to pay equity in these letters.	No reference to keywords in the 2025 budget	Pay Transparency Act (Bill 228)	• 2024 CCPA report: "The Imperative of Manitoba's Overdue Pay Equity Reform" • 2023 CCPA report: "Tired of Waiting: Rectifying Manitoba's Pay Gap"	Pay Equity Act established the creation of a Pay Equity Bureau and a Pay Equity Commissioner, but these have not existed since 1995

Province or Territory	Mandate letters from relevant ministries	Most recent budget	Active bills	Resources	Relevant institutions / Key players of note (other than the relevant ministries)
New Brunswick	We checked mandate letters for Women's Equality, Economic Development, Training & Labour, and Social Development [Commitment to act as lead (WE) and support (ED, TL, and SD) to "Phase in pay equity in the private and care sector, using a model similar to Quebec and Ontario"]. We did not find any references in the letters to the ministers of Indigenous Affairs and Immigration.	The 2025-2026 budget specifically refers to investing in the Pay Equity Bureau to support the "effective implementation of a phased-in approach to pay equity in the private and care sectors" (p. 12)		• "Advocates welcome promised pay equity in N.B...." (CBC, Nov 2024) • "Advocates launch pay transparency campaign..." (NB Media Coop, May 2025) • June 2025 NB Coalition for Pay Equity report: "Pay Equity Evaluations"	• Pay Equity Bureau (represents the employer in the implementation of wage adjustments) • New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity
Newfoundland and Labrador	We checked the Office of Women and Gender Equality, the Department of Environment and Climate Change, and the Treasury Board Secretariat (which were the ones running the consultations), but mandate letters were not publicly available.	No reference to keywords in the budget 2025		• 2022 report from the Newfoundland & Labrador Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women: "Jurisdictional Scan of Pay Equity in Canada and Abroad." • 2024 government report on 2023 consultations: "What We Heard."	Stakeholders who did written submissions to the agencies running the consultations: • Decent Work and Health Network • Workers' Action Network of Newfoundland and Labrador • Provincial Action Network on the Status of Women • Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour • Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission • St. John's Status of Women Council • Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers

Province or Territory	Mandate letters from relevant ministries	Most recent budget	Active bills	Resources	Relevant institutions / Key players of note (other than the relevant ministries)
Northwest Territories	We checked the letters from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Employment; Status of Women; Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission; and Finance. No reference to keywords.	No reference to keywords in the budget 2025-2026		• Report on the Review of the 2024-2025 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Equal Pay Commissioner	• Equal Pay Commissioner
Nova Scotia	We checked Ministers of Labour, Skills and Immigration; Economic Development; Advanced Education; Community Services + L'nu Affairs + Advisory Council on the Status of Women; Communities + Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives; Labour Relations; Trade. No reference to pay equity in these letters.	No reference to keywords in the 2025-2026 budget	Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act Bill 98, with a first reading on March 20, 2025.		• Pay Equity Commission • Nova Scotia Federation of Labour
Nunavut	We checked the letters from the Ministry of Finance; Economic Development; and Community. No reference to keywords.	No reference to keywords in the budget 2025-2026			

Province or Territory	Mandate letters from relevant ministries	Most recent budget	Active bills	Resources	Relevant institutions / Key players of note (other than the relevant ministries)
Ontario	We checked Children, community and social services; Economic development, job creation and trade; Labour, immigration, training and skills development Minister working on Women's issues. Mandate letters were not available / available from previous periods	No reference to keywords in the 2025 budget		• List of readings for Ontario, Canada, and global: • Ontario's example on how to calculate and implement pay equity (with concrete examples) https://payequity.gov.on.ca/pay-equity-7-steps/	• Pay Equity Office and Pay Equity Hearing Tribunal • Ontario Equal Pay Coalition
Prince Edward Island	We checked Ministers of Workforce; Economic Development; Social Development; Housing, Land, and Communities; and Education. No reference to pay equity in these letters.	No reference to keywords in the 2025 budget			• Pay Equity Bureau and Commissioner of Pay Equity
Quebec	N/A Relevant ministries: Employment Ministry [Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale] and Ministry of Labour [Ministère du Travail].	No reference to keywords in the 2025-2026 budget		• News piece assessing the effect of the pay equity laws on the gender wage gap	• Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST) [Pay Equity Commission]

Province or Territory	Mandate letters from relevant ministries	Most recent budget	Active bills	Resources	Relevant institutions / Key players of note (other than the relevant ministries)
Saskatchewan	Not available publicly	No reference to keywords in the budget 2025-2026		• Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value and Pay Equity Policy Framework (March 1999)	• Saskatchewan Pay Equity Coalition
Yukon	We checked the letters from the Ministry of Education and Women and Gender Equity Directorate; Community Services and Workers' Safety and Compensation Board; Finance; and the Yukon Housing Corporation and Economic Development. No references to keywords.	The budget 2026-2027 mentions among the tasks of the Public Service Commission: "To develop and implement classification frameworks and structures that support employment and pay equity" (p. 326).			

Systems Change Analysis

This brief recognizes that achieving true pay equity requires a deeper examination of the structural inequities embedded within how work is organized, valued, and distributed. These are not surface-level fixes. They involve slow, deliberate, and difficult shifts to major systems, embedded values, and long-standing organizational norms that resist quick or easy change.

Pay equity must also address larger systemic barriers that disproportionately impact equity-deserving groups, including women, disabled and racialized communities as well as GBV and economic abuse. Progress on this front depends on the sustained use of multiple, complementary levers rather than any single intervention. There is no quick fix that can resolve inequities built up over time. Meaningful change requires sustained commitment across many fronts at once, applied consistently over the long term. Some examples of these systemic changes that are required for true pay equity to be achieved include:

1. Undervalued Work

Jobs predominantly held by women or equity-seeking populations, such as caregiving, domestic work, and service roles, are often undervalued and underpaid. Pay equity involves challenging societal norms that devalue these roles and advocating for compensation that reflects their true economic and social contributions.

2. Precarious Work Conditions

Temporary and part-time positions, often filled by women or immigrant workers, lack the stability, benefits, and protections of full-time roles. These work positions are also often the only channels that can accommodate the needs of women experiencing GBV and economic abuse (due to scheduling, child care needs etc.). Pay equity must address the overrepresentation of historically marginalized groups in precarious employment and push for policies that promote job security, flexibility, and fair compensation across all employment types. There is also the need to make workplace environments safe for every employee. This means ensuring legislated and organizational policies provide tangible measures to support workers and create workplaces free from harassment, while ensuring meaningful supports are available for people experiencing GBV.

3. Temporary Foreign Worker Exploitation

Temporary foreign workers often face exploitative practices, such as lack of freedom to move around, lower wages, limited rights, limited-to-no ability to advance, and poor working conditions, despite being critical to certain industries. Pay equity calls for stronger protections and equitable treatment for all workers, regardless of immigration status, including calling into question the dynamics and structures that are at the basis of the temporary foreign worker program.



4. Barriers in Work Scheduling

Unpredictable or inflexible work schedules disproportionately affect women and people experiencing GBV. Scheduling practices can limit opportunities for advancement, reduce earning potential, and create additional stress. Pay equity involves advocating for fair scheduling policies that allow workers to balance professional and personal responsibilities, as well as access to affordable childcare services that allows parents to return to work.

5. Inequitable Access to Labour Participation

Structural barriers, such as systemic racism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, and gender biases, restrict access to higher-paying roles and leadership positions. Pay equity includes addressing discriminatory hiring practices, unequal access to education and training, and the lack of mentorship opportunities for equity-deserving groups.

6. Binary understanding of gender

We know that gender-diverse people are disproportionally impacted by labour market inequities and systemic barriers. However, research on pay equity, both domestically and internationally, uses the female/male and men/women binary categories to measure the pay gap. We need an intersectional approach to the study of pay equity in order to capture the diversity of experiences and the true dimension of inequities, so that we can design interventions that address the problem appropriately and effectively.

Calls to Action

While major systems change work is required to undo the undervaluing of labour across equity-deserving populations, there are immediate changes that can be made that can begin the shift towards pay equity and ending the wage gap, including for populations experiencing GBV. This section outlines direct calls to action that can be implemented to shift the needle towards an equitable labour market for the federal, provincial and territorial governments, employers and NGOs and changemakers.

Federal Government

The following calls to action are directed to the Minister of Labour and federal labour authorities addressing pay equity and the wage gap. These calls to action support Canada's obligations under CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Amalgamate the Pay Equity Act and Employment Equity Act under the Canadian Human Rights Act into a single federal equity framework. Canada should replace its fragmented approach with one comprehensive framework addressing pay equity, employment barriers, representation, and workplace discrimination. The framework should establish common requirements for intersectional GBA+, data collection, transparency, compliance, enforcement, and remedies, while preserving the broader human rights protections of the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Embed an intersectional approach to pay equity. Require federal equity assessments (including Statistics Canada data collection) to consider the intersection of gender, race, disability, gender-based violence, economic abuse, immigration status, and other systemic barriers, including their impacts on hiring, retention, advancement, and compensation. This should include all gender identities.

Recognize gender-based violence as an employment equity issue. Amend the federal equity framework to recognize people experiencing gender-based violence as a population facing systemic barriers to labour and economic participation and establish appropriate protections and supports.

Strengthen pay transparency and protections against wage theft. Establish federal protections against wage theft, unlawful withholding of wages, and retaliation for reporting violations, alongside stronger pay transparency requirements. Protections should apply to workers regardless of employment status or immigration status. If the amalgamation of the three Acts is done, this should be under the new federal framework.

Strengthen income and employment protections for people experiencing economic abuse. Ensure access to adequate paid leave, health benefits, protection from workplace exploitation and labour trafficking, and income supports, including reforms to Employment Insurance consistent with CCFWE's Employment Insurance and Economic Abuse recommendations.

Strengthen implementation and enforcement. Provide adequate resources to the Pay Equity Commissioner and relevant federal labour and human rights authorities, clarify their respective responsibilities, strengthen proactive compliance and enforcement, and require regular public reporting on pay and employment equity outcomes.

Provinces and Territories

Pay equity legislation for all PTs:

- Each PT should have pay equity legislation that covers public and private sector employees. Pay equity legislation for the private sector where it currently exists (Ontario and Quebec) can be the starting point to develop similar legislation in the other PTs.
- Legislation should be proactive, and include monitoring and compliance mechanisms for the government, such as sanctions for failure to comply and maintenance provisions.
- Alberta, Yukon and Nunavut should implement a pay equity act immediately that is intended to address the wage gap. This should include both private and public sector jobs.

Pay transparency legislation for all PTs:

- Pay transparency legislation where it currently exists (Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, British Columbia, and New Brunswick), can serve as the basis for similar legislation in the other PTs.
- The Minister responsible for overseeing Labour and/or Finance should introduce legislation that mandates employers to disclose pay scales in the hiring process.

Consistency in minimum wage and wage restitution across PTs: Minimum wage standards and civil remedies regarding wage restitution for exploited persons should be consistent across PTs.

Amend employment and labour legislation to recognize the economic impacts of gender-based violence and economic abuse, including financial control, interference with employment or income, and coercion that affects a person's ability to work or maintain employment.

Provide standards to encourage job-protected leave, flexible work arrangements, and workplace accommodations for people experiencing GBV and economic abuse, without requiring disclosure of unnecessary personal information.



Employers

Fulfill obligations under federal and provincial pay equity legislation, including monitoring and compliance.

Fair compensation practices, with organizational policies that support pay equity and transparency, including disclosing pay scales in the hiring process, paying overtime and track hours appropriately, thus avoiding underreported hours. Underreported hours are worked because of a manager or supervisor's demand or request but are not covered under flat rate salaries and will not be compensated.

Equal hiring and promotion opportunities for women and equity deserving groups to enter and advance in the workforce. This might involve: offering accommodations and accessibility provisions in the recruitment and promotion processes; avoiding job descriptions that include overly restrictive requirements, which can penalize applicants for gaps in their resumes related to GBV experiences; ensuring hiring panels are diverse; and training HR staff to be aware of systemic barriers and identify and mitigate their unconscious biases.

Inclusive workplace practices:

- **Job flexibility,** including through part-time jobs, flexible scheduling, and time off. GBV and EA survivors need periods off for various reasons, including court dates, mental health access, or child care, which is often not supported in work environments, even with domestic violence leave days.
- **Prevent survivors' stigmatization:** Survivors' stigmatization can translate into pay inequities and unequal career advancement opportunities. Employers should have trauma-informed HR policies and staff training to prevent stigmatization and bias in workplace responses to survivors' disclosure of their abuse experiences or need of time off.
- **Childcare access support:** on-site childcare, equal parental leave, and flexible working arrangements.
- **Payment options:** Employers should provide a secure process for workers to change payroll destination information, and, where systems permit, offer survivor directed options such as split deposits or alternate accounts while maintaining privacy and fraud safeguards.

NGOs and Changemakers

NGOs and changemakers are uniquely situated to help influence both systemic and organizational policies. This includes unions that support the demands and rights of workers to create better working conditions; among them, pay equity and support for people experiencing gender-based violence and economic abuse.

Training: Offer training to workers about their rights in terms of pay equity, pay transparency, and wage theft, as well as GBV (e.g., pay rights for survivors who take a domestic violence leave or time off).

Access to justice: Support access to legal representation for workers experiencing EA and GBV.

Advocate for inclusive workplace practices: This includes trauma-informed HR policies preventing survivors from being penalized in their pay or promotion opportunities for disclosing their experience of GBV or needing accommodations.

Conduct further research into the relationship between GBV and EA and pay inequities, using an intersectional lens.

Conclusion

Pay equity is, at its core, an economic strategy. A strong economy is one where everyone can participate at the level they choose, and be paid equitably for the work they do. As Canada focuses on economic empowerment and contends with an ongoing affordability crisis, closing the wage gap should be treated as central to that agenda, not separate from it. Fair compensation strengthens household purchasing power, improves productivity, and builds a more resilient economy for everyone, not only those directly affected by wage inequity. Achieving this requires sustained, coordinated action across multiple sectors, including government intervention, employer accountability, and stronger enforcement of existing legislation. It also requires understanding that people experiencing GBV and economic abuse face unique circumstances that must be considered in this work, else the goal will not be achieved. For survivors of GBV and economic abuse, pay equity also requires workplace protections, income security, and support that help them remain employed, rebuild financial stability, and safely move toward economic independence. While there is no single fix, Canada has the tools and international commitments to lead on pay equity; what remains is the sustained political and institutional will to see this work through.



About the Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment

The Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE) is Canada's only nonprofit organization solely dedicated to addressing economic abuse and advancing economic justice. Based in Ottawa, CCFWE works to dismantle the systemic barriers that prevent survivors from accessing economic safety, financial security, and long-term independence.

CCFWE's work is grounded in survivor-informed practice, trauma-informed research, equity, and systems change. The organization works across research, policy, public education, financial empowerment, technology, and community collaboration to help ensure that survivors are not left to navigate financial harm alone.

Through its programs and partnerships, CCFWE supports survivors, service providers, financial institutions, policymakers, employers, and community organizations to better recognize and respond to economic abuse. This includes work on coerced debt, financial exploitation, employment sabotage, access to banking, safe technology, and the policy gaps that keep survivors trapped in unsafe situations.

CCFWE also leads national awareness and advocacy initiatives, including Economic Abuse Awareness Day, survivor-informed research, financial empowerment programs, training for multiple sectors, and tools that help advance economic safety and inclusion. At the heart of this work is a simple belief: economic safety is essential to freedom, dignity, and justice.

Learn more through CCFWE's website www.ccfwe.org



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