

# CANADA AT A GLANCE



Canada is a diverse country in many respects. Its population of 31.4 million is spread across a vast geography, with regional differences in language, economic base and demography. There are large rural areas and densely populated urban centres. Canada is a multicultural, multiethnic and multiracial society, including Aboriginal peoples. Men, women and children, in Canada, live in a growing and dynamic variety of family arrangements. Canada's economy is evolving and presenting new opportunities and challenges.

Canada's constitutional structure provides unique roles and responsibilities for the federal government and for ten provincial and three territorial governments. These orders of government share responsibility for the issues addressed in the Beijing agreements as well as the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW).

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## PATTERNS AND TRENDS\*

- As of the 2001 Census, English is the mother tongue of 59.1% of Canadians, French 22.9% and other languages 18%.
- Immigrants made up 18.4% of the population, 3.3% of Canadians identified themselves as being Aboriginal and 13.4% identified as members of a visible minority.
- Women represented 50.4% of the population in 2002.
- 32% of women overall were under 25 years of age, while 51% of Aboriginal women were in that age group (2002).
- Families are getting smaller, with an average of 1.1 children living at home in 2001, down from 1.4 in 1981. Fertility rates for women aged 15-49 were 1.5 for the general population, 2.6 for Aboriginal women and 3.4 for Inuit women.
- For a number of years female lone parents have made up almost 20% of all families with children.
- In most two-parent families, both parents are employed.

- Women have outnumbered men in university enrollment at the undergraduate level for several years.
- The majority of women aged 18-64 are in the paid labour force, including 76% of those aged 25-44, and the majority are employed full-time.
- Women still perform about 2/3 of Canada's unpaid work.
- Women's earnings and incomes are gradually improving with a female-to-male ratio for total after-tax income of 66% in 2002.
- Women continue to have higher poverty rates than men, especially lone parents and Aboriginal women.
- Violence against women continues to be a persistent problem.
- Women were 57% of the population aged 65 years and over; and 70% of the population aged 85 years and over (2002).

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## TOWARDS EQUALITY

- 1970 The report of the 1967 Royal Commission on the Status of Women released with recommendations for policy change and for new government mechanisms.
- 1971 Appointment of Canada's first Minister responsible for the Status of Women.
- 1975 Canada participates in the 1<sup>st</sup> UN World Conference on Women in Mexico City, Mexico.
- 1976 Status of Women Canada established to coordinate policy with respect to the status of women.

- 1977 The *Canadian Human Rights Act* enters into force.
- 1980 Canada participates at the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Conference on Women in Copenhagen, Denmark.
- 1981 Canada ratifies the *UN CEDAW*.
- 1982 *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* adopted.
- 1982 The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) Ministers responsible for the Status of Women.
- 1985 Equality provisions of the *Charter* come into effect on April 17.
- 1985 Canada participates in the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya.
- 1993 Canada's work at UN contributed to the development of the *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*.
- 1995 *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China.
- 1995 Canada's *Federal Plan of Action for Gender Equality* includes a policy of undertaking gender-based analysis (GBA) of new policies and programs.
- 2000 The federal *Agenda for Gender Equality* developed as a strategy to accelerate implementation of gender equality objectives.
- 2002 Canada ratifies the *UN Optional Protocol to CEDAW*.
- 2003 Canada presents its most recent Report to the CEDAW Committee in New York.
- 2004 23<sup>rd</sup> annual meeting of FPT Ministers responsible for the Status of Women.
- 2004 Canada establishes a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Status of Women.
- 2005 The federal government to use lessons learned in the Beijing +10 review and appraisal process to work with NGOs, parliamentarians and other partners to develop a new federal strategy on gender equality for the future.

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\* The source for data is Statistics Canada unless otherwise mentioned. Also, please note that *Women in Canada 2005: a gender-based statistical report* is being developed by Statistics Canada for publication in the fall of 2005.