

EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN



The *Beijing Platform for Action* (PfA) has identified “inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training” as a critical area of concern. The PfA contains strategies and actions to: ensure equal access to education; eradicate illiteracy among women; improve access to vocational training, science and technology and continuing education; develop non discriminatory education and training; and, allocate sufficient resources.

Learning, which includes training, is an area of shared jurisdiction between provincial, territorial and federal governments, while responsibility for education rests primarily with the provincial and territorial governments. All orders of government recognize the importance of improving women’s learning opportunities as being central to improving their employment opportunities and, subsequently, their economic well-being.

PATTERNS AND TRENDS*

- 77% of women (aged 25+) had high school or higher education in 2003: 31% held a post-secondary diploma or certificate and 19% held a university degree. This compares to 78%, 32% and 21% for men aged 25+.
 - Young women had a 9% high school drop out rate compared to 15% for young men in 2002.ⁱ
 - Women accounted for 59% of individuals who received a degree, diploma or certificate in 2001.
 - Women enrolled in university in record numbers in 2001-02; an increase of 4% from the previous record set in 1992-93.
 - The annual increase in men’s university enrolment was similar to the increase for women.
 - 20% more women enrolled in mathematics, physical sciences, engineering and applied sciences, from 1998 to 2001. The proportion of women increased in every field of study except agricultural and biological sciences.
 - Immigrant and visible minority women are less likely to hold a university degree than their male counterparts, whereas, Aboriginal women and women with disabilities are more likely.
- Immigrant women aged 25 – 44, particularly recent immigrant women, tend to have higher levels of education at 17% compared to Canadian born women at 13% (2000).
 - 7.8% of Aboriginal women living off-reserve had a university degree compared to 5.0% living on-reserve in 2001. Aboriginal women with a university degree also had an unemployment rate of 8.2% compared to a rate of 23.3% for those with less than high school.
 - With regard to **workplace learning**, approximately 37% of women participated in job-related training in 2002, up from 31% in 1997, compared with 33% of men in 2002, up from 27% in 1997.ⁱⁱ Men had slightly below average likelihood to train while unemployed compared to women – 11.6% versus 13.2% in 2001.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - With regard to **literacy**, the International Adult Literacy Survey revealed that women in Canada scored higher than men on the prose scale measuring the ability to use information from text (24% versus 16%), men scored higher on the document scale measuring the ability to locate knowledge in text (23% versus 21%) and on the quantitative scale measuring the ability to perform arithmetic operations (22% versus 18%).

TOWARDS EQUALITY

Examples of federal measures include:

- The Government of Canada invests \$30 million annually to increase literacy skills and to making Canada’s social, economic and political life more accessible.

- The Canada Student Loans Program (CSLP) promotes accessibility through the Canada Study Grants (CSG) program for: high-need part-time students, such as sole support mothers; students with permanent disabilities; and, students with dependents. The CSG program includes a special grant intended to increase the participation of women in certain fields of study, such as engineering and applied sciences, at the doctoral level. In addition, the CSLP allows inclusion of child care costs in the assessment of students.
- Since 2000, the federal government, through the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, has provided scholarships to approximately 100,000 students annually through an endowment fund of \$2.5 billion (62% of the recipients were women and 38% were men). This initiative helps students who demonstrate high levels of need and merit access to post-secondary education.

RECENT INITIATIVES

Examples of federal government initiatives include:

- in 2004, the development of a Workplace Skills Strategy, in cooperation with its partners, with an emphasis on skills for, and acquired in, the workplace;
- introduction of two new grants in 2004: one worth up to \$3,000 to help up to 20,000 students from low-income families; and one with up to \$2,000 a year for students with disabilities;
- in 2004, the doubling of the Canada Education Savings Grant on Registered Education Savings Plans from 20% to 40% on the first \$500 of contributions each year for families earning less than \$35,000, many of which are headed by a female lone parent;
- improvements to savings incentives, in 2004, that build on the success already achieved by the Canada Education Savings Grant (CESG) Program, including the Canada Learning Bond for children born into low-income families on or after January 1, 2004, which could be worth up to \$3,000 by age 18; and increases to the

CESG on Registered Education Savings Plans; and

- a grant of \$85 million, in 2004, to the Canadian Council on Learning to promote and support evidence-based decision-making in all areas of lifelong learning.

* 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.

ⁱ Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002 *Highlights of the Progress of Canada's Children*

ⁱⁱ 1998 and 2003 Adult Education and Training Survey, Statistics Canada and Human Resources Skills and Development Canada

ⁱⁱⁱ Training While Unemployed, Evaluation and Data Development, Human Resources Development Canada