



Join the Conversation

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GENDER AND FAMILY STATUS

When it comes to thinking about paid and unpaid work, there are still clear gender differences. Overall, most of the work that men do is paid and most of the work women do is not. This pattern still holds true, even with the rising number of women in the labour force over the past 25 years.

Women are simply more likely to do ‘caring work’ in families, in addition to paid labour outside the home. Since women tend to be given the bulk of the work of raising children and other essential (but not paid)

work, women are especially economically vulnerable.

The ‘household’ or ‘care’ economy functions right alongside the ‘market’ economy of business and jobs. It’s an essential part of our health, wellbeing and social cohesion. It includes the work of cooking, cleaning, shopping, laundry, home maintenance, repairs and improvements that are a necessary part of life and the work of raising children, caring for each other and building relationships and communities – all the things that make life worth living.

Women’s economic vulnerability is most obvious when they are alone, and is often most severe among lone mothers of young children who are trapped in society’s failure to come to grips with the fact that they cannot be in two places at once -- caring for their children and out doing a paid job. The result, too often, is both ‘time poverty’ and ‘income poverty.’ In our society, income is power and the lack of it affects just about every aspect of a person’s life -- material, physical, psychological and social.

Recognizing that the lone parent household is most likely to be headed by a woman, she also faces a high probability of discrimination in the job market.

“The extreme poverty to which unattached individuals on welfare are subject is punitive and along with many other problems that this creates, it exacerbates unhealthy relationships between women and men.”

– Sheila Regehr, BICN

Solutions to poverty and gender inequality have to work for lone parents with young children. If they do not, then all women remain at risk from a financial standpoint. Women tend to have fewer options than men and their decisions carry more severe consequences.

In our money-focused society, any real progress towards gender equality means that any basic income should be paid to individual adults within families, not a household 'head'. Women need their own income to enable them to have a greater say in shaping their future, at the household level and within society.

Skills and Training Opportunities

A basic income that accounts for the time demands on lone parents with young chil-

dren should also increase the options available to these parents to further their education and training. This will help them to improve their earning ability as children grow older and more time is available for work outside the home.

A basic income can reduce risk for everyone and provide more options to women to balance the varied demands of their lives and help close gender gaps in income, work time and access to learning.

KEY FACTS

- In Canada, when a lone mother's children reach 18 years of age, the family loses child benefits, a form of basic income, and all family members become more vulnerable to poverty and its effects, like school drop out.
- Having far too little to make ends meet makes women highly vulnerable to male exploitation and violence.
- If men, too, are allowed to be impoverished it has negative consequences for families and communities of sons, brothers, fathers and uncles who otherwise could be contributing to their own and others' well-being.

DID YOU KNOW?

A basic income could make a critical contribution to increasing security and self-sufficiency for women, men and families in order to improve their well-being. It would also close many of the cracks through which people fall into poverty initially and help them to rebound from setbacks.