

Briefing Note: WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS IN CANADA, A SNAPSHOT

Produced by: CANADIAN FEMINIST ALLIANCE FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTION

I. Women's Inequality in Canada

1. Women's inequality in Canada is characterized by

- higher poverty rates and lower incomes for women;
- deep social and economic disadvantage experienced by particular groups of women, including single mothers, Aboriginal women, women of colour, women with disabilities, and older women;
- unequal representation in political office – Canada's Parliament has only 25% representation of women and one province, Manitoba, has the highest representation in Canada at 31% women.
- lower employment earnings, underemployment, gendered division of labour, and inadequate measures to overcome sex, race, and disability discrimination in the labour force, including sex and race discrimination in pay, and inadequate protections for migrant workers;
- inadequate access to quality, affordable child care;
- housing insecurity and inadequate access to safe, affordable housing;
- inadequate social assistance rates, and punitive rules and policies for recipients, particularly lone mothers, and women who are victims of violence;
- high rates of child apprehension, particularly from low income and Aboriginal mothers;
- lack of access to justice and effective remedies for violations of rights, due to inadequate civil legal aid and the cancellation of the Court Challenges Programme;
- constraints on women's ability to participate in policy development and democratic interaction with governments, because of denial of funding for women's non-governmental organizations for research and advocacy;
- male violence, accompanied by failures of the justice system (police, prosecutors, and judges) to respond in ways that effectively assist women and keep them safe, and inadequate shelters, housing, and income supports for women who experience male violence;
- overincarceration of Aboriginal women and girls, overclassification, discriminatory and harmful treatment of women prisoners.