

Differences and Inequalities to Consider

One size does not fit all. By using a gender equality lens to examine differences and inequalities between women and men (girls and boys), and among women, we take a practical step forward in correcting systemic prejudices or discrimination. Below are key gender equality concerns to consider:

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

As gender roles change, men are more involved in the home. However, women still have primary responsibility in caring for home and family members - children and vulnerable adults, including the sick and the elderly. Canadian men do a half hour more of housework each day than they did 20 years ago, however, women are still doing nearly twice as much as men. (Statistics Canada, 2006)

UNPAID WORK

In the home and as community volunteers, women do 2/3 of all unpaid work in Canada. (Statistics Canada, 1999) As social programs were reduced in the 1990's, women's unpaid work increased as they were more likely than men to assume the extra tasks that needed to be done in the home and community (ex. care for the elderly, health care, school monitors, care for persons with disabilities).

IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Research has shown women were adversely affected by cuts to social services in the 1990's in Ottawa. This is because women rely on social services to meet the needs of their families, they are more likely to live in poverty, and they live longer. (Working Group on Women's Access to Municipal Services, 2001)

For this reason, it is important to address barriers that women may experience in trying to access services. In cases where men are the minority of users, such as services for seniors where the ratio of women to men is 2:1, program development has to ensure that the model used appeals to men as well.

“Asking women about city services is one stop shopping, because, in their role in caring for the family, women are most likely to have a handle on how the web of city services is working.”

Barbara Carroll, Coalition of Community Houses

INCOME

- Women are more likely than men to occupy low-paying jobs, be in part-time or temporary positions, and interrupt their careers due to family responsibilities, such as child care and elder care and then experience barriers when re-entering the workforce. All of these factors contribute to women, on average, making less than men – for full-year, full-time work, women earn 71% of what men earn (Pay Equity Task Force, 2004).
- Recent immigrant women, women with disabilities, visible minority women, and Aboriginal women are particularly disadvantaged in obtaining jobs and a decent living wage. Women in each of these equity seeking groups earn less than men in these population groups. Many professional immigrant and refugee women (and men) are unable to work in their fields. (SPC, 2004)

POVERTY

Women are more likely to live in poverty than men as they are more likely to be single parents, work part-time, have lower salaries with fewer benefits and live longer than men. In Ottawa, one-third of all lone-parent families, most of whom were women and children (83%), lived on low income in the year 2000 (SPC, 2003). In Canada, the populations of women over-represented at the extreme end of the poverty continuum are women with disabilities, women of Aboriginal descent and visible minorities.

TIME USE AND MOBILITY

As women juggle family responsibilities, volunteer work and paid work, their schedule is very full. A woman is likely to be doing multiple errands at one time. Women are more likely to be traveling on public transit with children or an elderly, disabled or ill family member. This makes inflexible day-care, rigid operating hours and bus connections all the more challenging.

SAFETY

Violence against women, and the fear of it, plays a significant role in limiting women's choices and expectations in their homes, workplaces and communities. Women are more likely than men to be injured, fear for their life and be killed by their partner. The rate of spousal assault among Aboriginal women is three times higher than non-Aboriginal women. In 2003, girls were the victims in 8 out of 10 family-related sexual assaults. Senior women are twice as likely as senior men to be assaulted by a family member. (Status of Women, 2005)

DISCRIMINATION

Women (girls) may experience unfair treatment in the form of prejudicial attitudes, practices of service providers, sexual harassment, or hiring practices in a male dominated field. A woman (girl) may be doubly or triply discriminated against according to the colour of her skin, language, place of origin, ancestry, marital status, same sex partner status, sexual orientation, age, disability, citizenship, family status or religion.

PERSPECTIVES NOT HEARD

Women are experts in day-to-day living, as a large majority of them juggle family and work demands. Women from equity seeking groups have particular perspectives to bring in creating a more inclusive Ottawa. The expertise of the full diversity of women and their organizations will not be fully considered unless specific steps are taken to ensure their inclusion.

LIMITED ACCESS TO DECISION MAKING

Though gains have been made, women are still less likely to hold key management positions and sit on City Council (FCM, 2004). When visible minority women, Aboriginal women and women with disabilities do not see themselves represented among decision makers, they question whether their views are taken into account. (CAWI, 2004)