

Gender Pay Gap FAQ's

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1. Isn't the gender pay gap so 1970s?

Sadly not. Even though women now account for roughly half of the labour force, the gender pay gap in Ontario is 31.5% – one of the biggest reported gaps in the world.

Source: [CANSIM 202-0102](#)

2. What does this 31.5% gap actually mean?

The average annual earnings of female workers in Ontario is 31.5% less than the average annual earnings of male workers. The gap is even higher for women of colour and Aboriginal women.

There are many ways to calculate the pay gap (hourly wages, comparison of full-time workers, comparison of median incomes etc.) No matter how you calculate it, the gap is real.

The Equal Pay Coalition uses the average annual earnings calculation as it speaks to the total picture. About two-thirds of part-time workers in Ontario are women, many who have to work part-time as there is no affordable option for child care.

Sources: [CANSIM 202 – 0102](#), [CCPA paper Canada's Colour Coded Labour Market](#), [CANSIM 282-0002](#)

3. What is Equal Pay Day?

Equal Pay Day illustrates how far into the next year a woman, on average, must work to earn the same amount a man made in the previous year.

They are marked around the world.

2015 Equal Pay Day is: **April 20th**

4. Don't women just opt to work less and choose low paying fields?

Nobody chooses to have their work undervalued and underpaid.

Ontario women work in every field – as scientists, childcare workers, business leaders, and much more. The services they provide are essential for our economic and personal well-being, and yet job classes dominated by women tend to be paid less than those dominated by men. One example:

Licensed practical nurses	90% female	Median earnings: \$38,261
Cable television service and maintenance technicians	97% male	Median earnings: \$51,030

(source: 2006 Census)

Even when job classes like telephone operators and bank tellers transitioned from being male dominated to female dominated job classes the pay dropped overall.

That's not because women's work is less important. It is because it is undervalued. Female dominated job classes are often seen to not as being skilled because the tasks are related to domestic jobs that women were expected to carry out for free in the home.

(source The Future of Female-dominated Occupations by OECD)

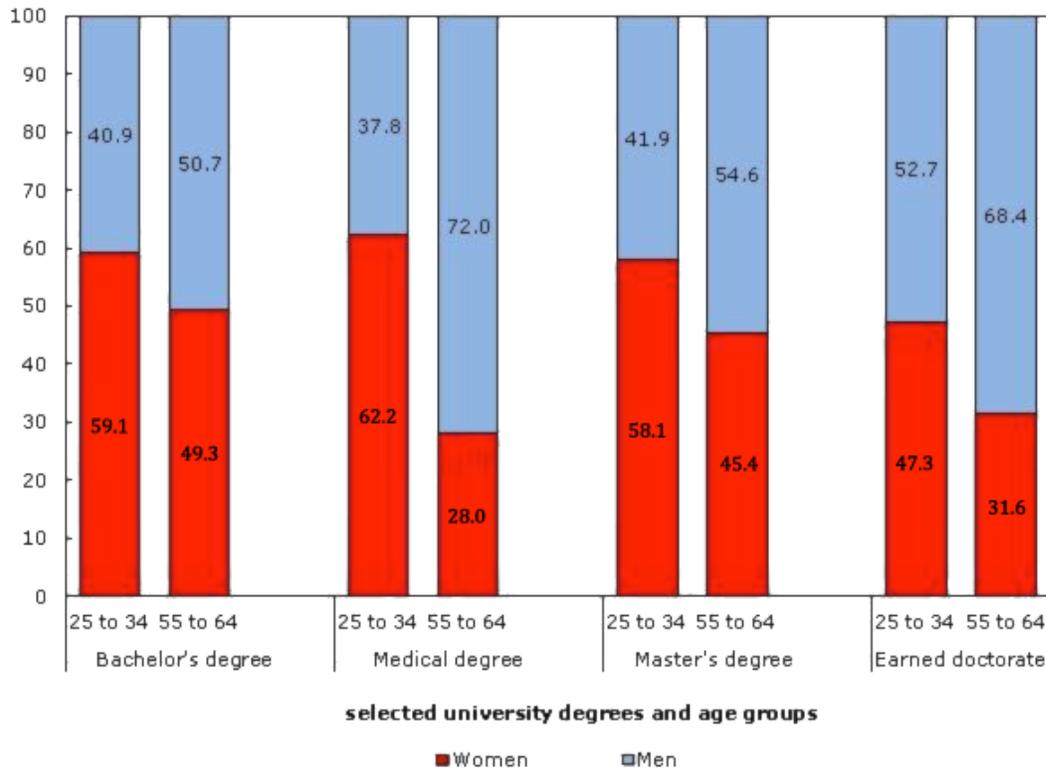
In Ontario, women make up 94% of part-time workers who state that caring for children is the reason they didn't work full time. Access to affordable child care can help to even the playing field for these women.

(Source: [CANSIM table 282-0013](#))

5. Do women earn less because they're not training or educating themselves as much as men?

More women than men aged 25 to 34 have bachelor, medical, and master's degrees in Canada.

percent



Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011.

6. I'm not a woman. How will closing the gap help me?

Pay equity is good for business

Pay equity is essential to having a highly motivated workforce. Rewarding staff for their skills can be highly motivating; doing the opposite can create a negative impact. Employers who pay women wages that match their value can create a positive work environment. This can help to increase productivity, reduce absenteeism and sick leave, and create a positive image with their customers.

Pay equity helps men too

Closing the gender pay gap is not about taking anything away from men. It's about fair pay and access to employment opportunities for everyone.

If you're a man working in a female dominated job class you can receive pay equity adjustments, same as your female coworkers.

International groups such as OECD continue to release reports explaining that improving female labour market outcomes such as pay is a cornerstone for strong economic growth.

More importantly closing the gender pay gap creates a fairer world for your daughters, mothers, partners, sisters, and other important women in your life!

Source: [OECD Closing the Gender Gap](#)

Pay equity is a poverty eradication strategy

Pay equity is closely linked to poverty eradication. One US study found that if married women were paid the same as men doing comparable work, their families' poverty rates would fall from 2.1% to 0.8%. If single working mothers earned as much as men doing comparable work, their poverty rates would be cut in half, from 24.3% to 12.6%.

7. Why does the gap persist?

With a labour market highly segregated into male and female dominated occupations, there are two main causes for the pay gap:

1. Women's work is paid less than different but comparable men's work and,
2. Women face many barriers in gaining access to higher paying jobs where men predominate.

To close the gap, both these problems must be addressed. In 1987, with the passage of Ontario's Pay Equity Act, the Government pledged an "unalterable commitment" to end pay discrimination. The Pay Equity Commission acknowledges that there is widespread non-compliance with the law which addresses the first cause of the pay gap. In 1995, Ontario repealed its Employment Equity Act which addressed the second cause.

Like poverty reduction, closing the pay gap requires a multi-faceted plan. Which is why the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, working with the Equal Pay Coalition Chair Mary Cornish, identified in the [10 key steps to closing the gender pay gap](#) the need to develop, implement and resource a province-wide plan to close Ontario's 31.5% gender pay gap by 2025.

8. This gap has been around a long time. Is change really possible?

Of course it is! We have already made progress. Ontario's gender pay gap has narrowed significantly since 1987 when the Ontario government first passed the Pay Equity Act.

But when women are earning almost a third less than men, we have work yet to do. Women of colour, Aboriginal women, and women with disabilities face unique barriers that need to be addressed through employment equity. Also, access to affordable child care and collective bargaining and increasing the minimum wage are part of the road map to closing the gap.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, working with Equal Pay Coalition Chair Mary Cornish, identified [10 keys steps to closing the gender pay gap](#) last year including a call to develop, implement and resource a province-wide plan to close Ontario's 31.5% gender pay gap by 2025. Let's get this done!

9. What is pay equity?

Pay equity is equal pay for work of equal value. Pay equity is the fundamental human right of women workers to be paid wages that are free of the systemic gender-based discrimination that values and pays women's work less than men's work of comparable value.

Pay equity is the legal remedy to sex-based wage discrimination. Pay equity requires that women's and men's jobs be evaluated in a non-discriminatory way by accurately identifying and valuing the skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions of the job. Pay equity requires that female jobs be paid the same as male jobs of similar value. If a female job is paid less than a male job of similar value, pay equity requires that pay to the female job be raised to the match the male job.

In summary, pay equity means:

- paying jobs usually done by women at least the same as jobs usually done by men
- even though they are different jobs
- as long as the jobs are of equal or comparable value.

10. How is Pay Equity different from Equal Pay for Equal Work?

Equal pay for equal work laws only compare wages for workers in the same job.

These laws could be applied where a female electrician was earning less than a male electrician.

These provisions are useful but they fail to address that women's work that is different but comparable to men's work is usually pays less.

11. How is pay equity different from employment equity?

Employment equity laws and policies require employers to plan to end discriminatory practices facing women, racialized and Aboriginal peoples, people living with disabilities, and others who are similarly disadvantaged.

Implementing employment equity is one of the [key steps](#) the CCPA has identified for closing the gender pay gap in Ontario.

12. Why do we need pay equity?

Historically, men and women tended to work in different jobs. The majority of women with paid employment are concentrated in a few female-dominated sectors included health, teaching, clerical, sales and service. This sex segregation of work has been and continues to be linked with pay discrimination.

In general, work traditionally or predominantly done by women is paid less than work traditionally or predominantly done by men regardless of the value of the work to the employer or the consumer. The more heavily women are concentrated in a job, the less it pays.

This has created a significant pay gap between men and women.

Pay equity legislation works to eliminate that discrimination and close the gender pay gap. In 1987, the year before Ontario's Pay Equity Act came into force, comparing average yearly full time salaries, women earned only 64% of what men earned. After almost twenty years of pay equity laws, women now earn 68.5% of what men earn.

Pay equity works. But the Pay Equity Commission has expressed concern that one broader public sector and private sectors are substantially not complying with the law. The Act must continue to be enforced and pay discrimination must be eliminated.