



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATIONS
OF CANADA

VitalSigns.



Gender Equality in Canada

Planet

Introduction to Gender Equality in Canada

To create communities of true belonging, we need to advance gender equality across the country.

The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated gender inequality.

For a just recovery from the pandemic, it is more pressing than ever to invest in women*, girls, Two-Spirit people and gender-diverse people.

THERE IS WORK TO DO

From a lack of representation in political and decision-making positions to persisting wage gaps, economic inequalities and staggering rates of gender-based violence, it's clear that we have work to do.

In 2019, Canada ranked only 11th among all countries for women's equality and well-being.¹

From coast to coast to coast, the women's movement and feminist organizations have a long and rich history of mobilization to advance gender equality in our country. As budgets get re-allocated to public health and economic programs in the wake of the pandemic, these organizations are most at risk of losing funding. There is an urgent need to fund organizations that work with the most marginalized. These organizations cannot and should not have to do this work alone. If Community Foundations of Canada is serious about creating communities where everyone belongs (and we are!), it's time we invest more meaningfully in a just recovery for all and a feminist future.

**References to "women" are inclusive of trans women.*

What we mean by "feminist future"

A vision of a world where all women, girls, Two-Spirit people and gender-diverse people have equal access to justice, opportunities, resources and decision-making. One where people have body autonomy and self-determination, and can live a life free from violence. A global community that benefits when those most impacted by oppression are lifted up. A decolonized future, a future where power is shared and where identity does not dictate life outcomes. We have a vision of the future where all identities are celebrated and are a source of joy and solidarity.

In the context of the pandemic, we need a clear vision of a just recovery and a path to get there, leaving no one behind.

TAKING THE PULSE: WHY NOW?

Alongside many community foundations and partners across Canada, Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) is [stepping up through our commitment](#) to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #5 Gender Equality as well as collaborating with the Equality Fund—an unprecedented multi-year initiative to advance gender equality in Canada, with support from the federal government. 2019 marked the first of a five-year collaboration with CFC and community foundations to deliver momentum for women’s movements and grants through the [Communities for Gender Equality](#) program.

At CFC, we are focusing our three-part *Vital Signs* report series on gender equality in Canada. Each report corresponds to a theme from the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), and Women and Gender Equality Canada’s Gender Results Framework: Power, Peace and Planet. *Vital Signs* reflects the integration of the economic, social and environmental elements that are key to sustainable development, analyzed through the lens of gender equality.

.....
→ **READ:** [CFC’s Sustainable Development Goals Guidebook and Toolkit](#)
.....



Why planet? Gender equality and environmental well-being are inextricably linked.

The way we have been living on the planet has had negative consequences on the land, air, water and climate—and similarly negative consequences for women, girls, Two-Spirit people and gender-diverse people. They are also holders of important knowledge and leadership, which can support sustainable land use and community development.

The United Nations’ three pillars of sustainable development—economic, social and environmental—show how we cannot separate human concerns and activities from our natural environment. A healthy environment is vital to ensuring sustainable and healthy societies, economies and communities.

We use the word “exploitation” to describe both natural resources being taken for granted and acts of violence against the innocent. This is no coincidence—pillaging and extraction are symptoms of patriarchy.

What do we see differently if we think of gender equality as an environmental issue and sustainability as a gender issue? Research has found that increasing gender parity in leadership improves how decisions are made and makes policies more “green.” The insights and knowledge of women, girls, Two-Spirit people and gender-diverse people are what the world needs right now to help solve our most pressing problems, including climate change and its effects.



UNDERSTANDING THE EVIDENCE

Within each report—Power, Peace and Planet—we explore how different dimensions of inequality and privilege intersect and interact in people’s lives and identities. These dimensions include age, class, gender, race, Indigeneity, religion, immigrant status, sexual orientation and disability.

THE DATA CHALLENGE

Gender is commonly defined as it relates to the characteristics cultures apply to the concepts of “feminine” and “masculine.” These characteristics range from social roles to physical appearance. Gender identities include female, male, non-binary and gender non-conforming. The term “sex” is biological, but the term “gender” is a social construction.

Finding inclusive data that captures the experiences of trans and non-binary individuals is a challenge. For the most part, sources used in this report do not indicate inclusion of trans or non-binary individuals.

All Statistics Canada data is based solely on sex: “male” or “female” as designated on birth certificates. However, Statistics Canada has made a commitment to using gender—as self-identified—rather than biological sex in most social statistics programs. Look for this change in the 2021 Census!²

→ **TIP:** When collecting data, community foundations and others can adjust their surveys to allow more options in the “gender” box, asking people to self-identify and offering Two-Spirit, non-binary, trans and open fields.

Intersectionality

noun | ,ɪn(t)əˈseksɪhəˈnælədē |

The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class and gender as they apply to a given individual or group regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

This report is framed in the context of SDG #5 Gender Equality.

It also speaks to the interconnectedness of gender inequality and outcomes related to SDG #3 Good Health and Well-being, SDG #6 Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG #7 Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG #8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG #9 Industry, Infrastructure and Innovation, SDG #11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG #13 Climate Action and SDG #15 Life on Land.



Reconciliation, Opportunity & Indigenous Women as Leaders

In order to address gender inequality, the concept of feminism must be challenged through a decolonial lens and be centred on the voices of First Nations, Métis and Inuit women.



When statistics are used to talk about Indigenous women and communities, they often paint a negative picture, and the voices of Métis, Inuit and First Nations women are left out. Each *Vital Signs* report in this series features the voice of an inspiring Indigenous leader from the field. Here, we hear from Melina Laboucan-Massimo, who is Lubicon Cree from Northern Alberta, host of the TV show *Power to the People*, founder of [Sacred Earth Solar](#) and Campaigns Director at [Indigenous Climate Action](#).

A lot of people see a church as a place of prayer. For us, we see the land as a place of prayer. So, when you destroy the land, you're destroying the places where we practice ceremony, all of the things that revolve around our culture. This is essentially cultural genocide. And what's replacing it is contaminated watersheds, contaminated air, industrialized landscapes.

What's happening in this region is a microcosm of what we see happening across the world, with Indigenous peoples in over 90 countries. Indigenous peoples actually guard 80% of what's left of Earth's biodiversity. It is so necessary for us to stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples across the world, because our fate is tied up with theirs, because when our homelands are destroyed, we are, in fact, exacerbating climate change.

Indigenous peoples call the Earth our mother. That's why I say it's no coincidence that our women are dying just like the land is truly dying right now—unless we actually implement the climate solutions that we really need to see. We have an epidemic here in Canada of

murdered and missing Indigenous women, up to 4,000. Women are also the first and foremost to be impacted by climate change. So, our communities are really protecting the land and protecting our women.

What does a just transition look like in our communities? What people call zero-waste communities is what our communities have always called "living off the land." Renewable energy is much more in alignment with our Indigenous worldview and our way of being, as opposed to resource extraction. I never really knew what it was like to cry tears of joy until I started putting up the solar project. We built it all with local hands. I don't think a lot of people actually realize that there are over 2,300 small-scale solar projects in Indigenous communities across Canada, and 180 large, revenue-generating renewable energy projects across Canada in Indigenous communities. So, this is happening, we're already doing this, and it's pretty exciting to be a part of that push.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LAND FOR MÉTIS, INUIT AND FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples estimated that, since Confederation (1867), two-thirds of the lands in the possession of Indigenous peoples have been removed from their use and stewardship. Lands have been removed from Indigenous communities through displacement, appropriation, theft, encroachment and the environmental consequences of Canadian settler policies and activities. Lack of access to land was found to be a central factor behind pervasive poverty, ill health and social stress experienced by Indigenous communities across Canada.³

"The communities that receive the brunt of environmental degradation need to be on the front of climate solutions as well."

— MELINA LABOUCAN-MASSIMO

Excerpt from a speech, May 26, 2018

What Climate Change Looks Like in Canada

Climate change impacts all areas of our country but not in the same ways.

This is important to keep in mind when thinking about the different ways women, Two-Spirit people and gender-diverse people are affected.

Climate change must be tackled with absolute urgency. As a country, we are not on track to meet our commitments under the [Paris Agreement](#), and our greenhouse gas emissions per capita are 2.5 times the average of other G20 Countries.⁴

KEY IMPACTS, ACCORDING TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA

West Coast

- Higher temperatures
- Rising sea level, coastal flooding
- Increased snow, glacier retreat
- More severe spring floods
- More frequent and intense summer drought

Prairies

- Hotter and drier weather conditions
- Increased severity and length of droughts
- Greater frequency of flooding
- Warmer winters

Arctic

- Dramatically higher temperatures
- Increased precipitation
- Loss of permafrost and sea ice

Quebec and Ontario

- Hotter summers
- Warmer winters with less snow
- More storms and heavy rain events

Atlantic

- Rising sea level
- Greater risk of flooding
- Coastal erosion
- More intense storms

A Healthy Environment Is a Gender Issue

Around the world, data shows that the effects of a polluted environment and changing climate tend to exacerbate gender inequalities.

Often this is due to women's and gender-diverse people's lower incomes relative to men, their experience of multiple forms of discrimination and the limitations of rigid gender roles, and the ways these interact with environmental degradation.

Most data about the gendered impacts of climate change comes from other countries. Gradually, however, more studies are examining the impacts of environmental degradation in Canada, including rural, urban and Indigenous communities that face their own unique challenges and opportunities regarding gender equality and environmental sustainability.

Depending on the effectiveness of climate action, Canada could see an increase of up to 400% in heat-related deaths in 2031-2080, compared to 1971-2020.⁵

Effects of climate change in our communities

HEAT WAVES

A 2°C rise in global temperatures would double the annual death rate from heat waves in many cities.⁶

- Around the world, between 2000 and 2016, the number of people exposed to heat waves increased by around 125 million. In 2015 alone, 175 million additional people were exposed to heat waves compared to average years.⁷
- Evidence indicates that women in wealthy countries such as Canada are at greater risk than men,⁸ perhaps because women make up a greater proportion of the elderly who are more affected by extreme heat. However, many factors play a part, including social isolation: unmarried and elderly men have been found to also be at high risk during heat waves in the US and Europe.⁹

“A changing climate affects everyone, but it’s the world’s poorest and those in vulnerable situations, especially women and girls, who bear the brunt of environmental, economic and social shocks. Often, women and girls are the last to eat or be rescued; they face greater health and safety risks as water and sanitation systems become compromised and they take on increased domestic and care work as resources dwindle.”¹⁰

— UN WOMEN

AIR POLLUTION

- In Canada’s largest cities—Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto—children are exposed to more air pollution in lower socio-economic status neighbourhoods.¹¹
- In Toronto and Vancouver, neighbourhoods with a higher proportion of children in lone-parent families (the majority lone-mother) had greater exposure to nitrogen dioxide, a by-product of car and truck exhaust.¹²

Children in Canada’s lowest-income neighbourhoods are 1.5x more likely to be hospitalized for asthma compared with children in the country’s highest-income neighbourhoods.¹³

- According to the Canadian Medical Association, COVID-19 can trigger asthmatic reactions, and adults with asthma are overrepresented in hospitalizations related to COVID-19.¹⁴

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Climate change poses a major challenge in rural and remote communities, where people often rely more closely on the natural environment for sustenance and livelihood. Rural communities have many strengths to draw upon to address climate challenges: close social ties, knowledge of the local environment and high rates of community participation.¹⁵ But the more rigid division of labour between genders that tends to play out in these communities can lead to gender bias in reacting to natural disasters and adapting to climate change.¹⁶

NATURAL DISASTERS AND MENTAL HEALTH

- After the 2013 floods in southern Alberta, a sharp rise in sexual assaults was reported as well as a steep increase in anti-anxiety and sleep aid prescriptions among women.¹⁷ Women were more likely than men after this crisis to experience disruption to their sense of security.¹⁸
- Over 70% of pregnant and postpartum evacuees of the 2016 Fort McMurray wildfire experienced posttraumatic stress and 30% had symptoms consistent with PTSD.¹⁹ The number of breastfeeding mothers fell by half (from 64% to 36%), due to stress, inadequate facilities in evacuation centres and the need to wait in lines to get help.²⁰
- Youth were also highly affected by the Fort McMurray fire and evacuation: 18 months after the disaster, 37% of Grade 7-12 students met criteria for probable PTSD.²¹



Gender equality & energy projects

In rural and remote communities with a high presence of resource extraction industries, what are the impacts on women?

Women can benefit from increased economic opportunities such as jobs in remote regions.²² But extractive industries offer fewer skilled and high-paying jobs for women than men.²³

Human rights, Indigenous and women’s organizations have expressed concerns about the transitory, mostly young male workforce brought into remote regions. There is a reported increased rate of violence against women, sexually transmitted diseases and drug and alcohol abuse around resource extraction projects.²⁴⁻²⁸ Women affected by violence may include local women and those who are victims of human trafficking.

Impacts on populations in the most vulnerable situations

PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

People with disabilities experience a higher risk of being abandoned, neglected or killed during natural disasters and migration.²⁹ They also face greater barriers to accessing transportation and healthcare during evacuations.³⁰

SENIORS

Canadian seniors are at greater risk of experiencing negative impacts of climate change than younger people. We know that people over 80 years old are more likely to be women.

The population of seniors (over 80 years old) is growing in Canada. This means there are growing numbers of individuals who are frail and in a state of increased vulnerability and functional decline. People who are frail are at increased risk during climate-related disasters. They may:

- Have more trouble regulating their body temperatures when it is very hot or very cold.
- Be more susceptible to infections, dehydration and respiratory and cardiac problems.
- Require more assistance and have greater difficulty looking after their medical needs such as medication during an evacuation.³¹

PREGNANT PEOPLE AND YOUNG CHILDREN

Canadian research finds that pregnancy, birth and newborns are also uniquely impacted by climate-related weather crises such as heat waves and intense storms.

- High temperatures (4 to 7 days of maximum temperature of at least 32°C) in the days preceding birth increase the risk of premature delivery.³²
- Exposure to high temperatures during the first trimester of pregnancy increases the risk of certain types of congenital heart defects in babies (11% more likely for those exposed to 10 days or more of 30°C+ compared to those exposed to 0 days).³³
- A longitudinal study of people pregnant in Quebec during the severe 1998 ice storm, which left millions without electricity for up to 45 days, found higher levels of maternal stress immediately following the disaster³⁴ and adverse child health outcomes for babies born in the aftermath, including higher levels of eating disorders,³⁵ autism traits³⁶ and lower levels of cognitive functioning.^{37,38}

“Climate change impacts on health will disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, including the poor, elderly, and the young and those who are chronically ill. Also included are the socially disadvantaged and people living in vulnerable geographical areas [such as the] North.”³⁹

— PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA

RACIALIZED COMMUNITIES

In Toronto, low-income neighbourhoods with a high proportion of people of colour have a higher rate of water contamination due to corrosive and dirty water pipes.⁴⁰

Neighbourhoods with a higher proportion of low-income people of colour also tend to have higher amounts of toxic chemicals in the environment, released by industries outside of the urban core.⁴¹

Indigenous Communities

Gender equality, Indigeneity and the fragile state of the environment are all closely linked.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change has an adverse effect on Inuit women in the north. Community experts are no longer confident in their ability to predict the weather or rely on their traditional knowledge of ice and snow conditions. This puts a strain on the whole community as travel for hunting, mainly a male responsibility, becomes more dangerous and rescues more frequent. Changes to animal health and migration patterns are making it difficult to find quality skins to make weatherproof clothing, while nutritious country food is more difficult to acquire, leading to an increased reliance on imports from the south.⁴²

WATER QUALITY

Water quality in Indigenous communities is a widespread concern and climate change is a significant threat to water systems.^{43,44} First Nations women often carry the responsibility of being water protectors in their communities and their jobs are harder than ever.^{45,46}

73% of water systems in First Nations communities are at a high or medium risk of contamination.⁴⁷

About 100 First Nations communities in Canada are under a boil water advisory at any given time.⁴⁸

“When you ask the question about why is the water so sacred, it’s not just because we need it, and nothing can survive without water. It’s because for years and years our ancestors have passed on traditional oral knowledge that our water is alive, and our water has a spirit. Our first water teaching comes from within our own mother. We literally live in water for nine months... Flowing within us is original water, lifeblood of Mother Earth that sustains us, as we come from this land... Mother Earth has the power to destroy us all, and if we keep harming her, one day she may decide to destroy everything.

No one should have to worry if the water is clean or if they will run out of water. No child should grow up not knowing what clean water is or never know what running water is. One day I will be an ancestor, and I want my great-grandchildren to know I tried hard to fight so they can have clean drinking water... We have this one last chance to save our planet. Let’s do this for our great-great-grandchildren.”⁴⁹

— AUTUMN PELTIER

Chief Water Commissioner Anishinabek Nation

“Inuit women have a very unique place in our culture and always have. We have a severe housing crisis, virtual homelessness and a changing climate. These issues affect all Inuit, but Inuit women in particular. Inuit women have a close relationship with food security. For example, it is a woman’s responsibility to clean and dry animal skins to clothe their families. Many women have said they’ve noticed a change in the skins, and climate change plays a role in this... That impacts how we are able to feed our families. Also, when hunters go missing on the sea ice because of the changing environment, there’s a burden placed on women who now have to care for their families alone. Those numbers are increasing.”⁵⁰

— MAATALII OKALI
Inuk

POLLUTION AND HEALTH IN FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

Aamjiwnaang First Nation near Sarnia is located in an area which has become known as Chemical Valley due to the presence of 63 petrochemical facilities located on the First Nation’s traditional territory. Its residents breathe some of Canada’s most polluted air and suffer from a range of health afflictions including high rates of miscarriages, learning difficulties and cancer. The area even has the first documented case of endocrine disruption, where the water supply is so contaminated that babies are twice as likely to be born female than male. Efforts to decommission pipelines, prevent new pollution permits from being created and recognize Indigenous land title and water rights have so far been unsuccessful.⁵¹

In Fort Chipewyan, a predominantly Indigenous community located in northern Alberta, the risk of cancer from inorganic arsenic, which is associated with nearby oil sands projects, is 450 times higher than the level considered acceptable by public health officials. Despite this, a new oil sands mine was approved after a joint report from the National Energy Board and Ministry of the Environment was released that gave very little weight to health concerns expressed by the community.⁵²



Photo credit:
— AMANDA FOLLETT HOSGOOD
The Tyee

Women on the frontlines

In the winter of 2020, headlines exploded with the news that the RCMP would forcibly remove the Wet’suwet’en checkpoints along the construction path of the 670 km Coastal GasLink pipeline. In February, the hereditary chiefs filed a request for judicial review of the decision made by the B.C. Environmental Assessment Office to issue the environmental certificate. The [findings](#) of the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women found that there is “substantial evidence” that natural resource projects increase violence against Indigenous women, children and Two-Spirit people.⁵³

Work camps or “man camps,” which would populate the tract of Wet’suwet’en land during construction, are associated with higher rates of gender-based violence against Indigenous women.⁵⁴

Tsake’ze Howilhat, also known as Freda Huson, founder of the Unist’ot’en camp (pictured in the image above)

expressed frustration in an [interview with *The Narwhal*](#). She is “angry the RCMP will deploy enormous resources to enforce an injunction against Indigenous people defending their territory but not to investigate the murder of Indigenous women or locate missing women or their remains.”

On February 10, the RCMP dismantled the Unist’ot’en camp and removed the red dresses that were hung to memorialize missing and murdered Indigenous Women. Tsake’ze Howilhat, along with other women, sang as they were arrested.⁵⁵

→ **READ:** Learn more about gender-based violence against Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people in the [Vital Signs Peace](#) report.

Gender Equality Is an Environmental Issue

The leadership of women, Two-Spirit people and gender-diverse people is important for creating more sustainable communities.

Concern about climate change is higher among women and young adults.

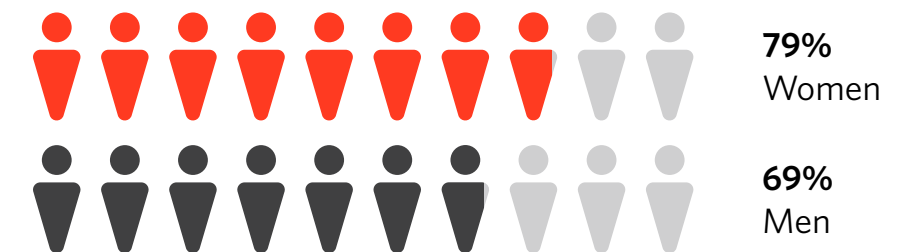
Data shows that moving towards gender parity in leadership roles affects how decisions are made and even favours policies for sustainability.

Long-term thinking, listening and respect for multiple voices, concern for future generations, seeing the interconnections between issues and systems—leaders who are able to bring these qualities, sometimes thought of as “feminine leadership,” are better placed to solve the major problems facing our planet and communities.⁵⁶ Competition, profit-before-all-else, power-seeking, bigger-is-better, exploitation and efficiency at the cost of care—these characteristics of leadership are now becoming outmoded as we realize the environment cannot sustain constant growth and inequalities are exacerbated.

72% of Canadian women vs. 59% of men believe global climate change is a major threat to our country.⁵⁷

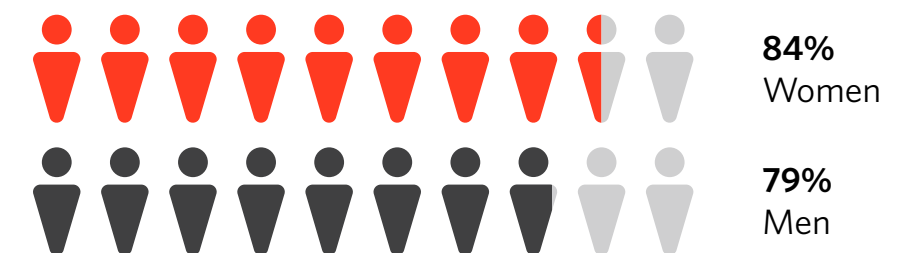
40% of 18–34-year-olds believe that “we need to do everything we can to fight climate change immediately, even if the economy slows as a result and jobs are lost” (vs. 31% of Canadians of all ages).⁵⁸

WORRIED ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE



• **81%** of 18–29-year-olds vs. **72%** of 60+-year-olds

BELIEVE THAT CLIMATE CHANGE REPRESENTS A MAJOR THREAT TO THE FUTURE OF OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN



• **87%** of 18–29-year-olds vs. **81%** of 60+-year-olds⁵⁹

→ **READ:** Learn more about women, girls, Two-Spirit people and gender-diverse people who are decision makers in the [Vital Signs Power](#) report.

Women’s leadership for a healthy environment

Data shows it is important to have active involvement of women creating policy solutions to our environmental challenges.

- A comparison of 130 countries found that national parliaments with greater representation of women also had higher rates of ratification of environmental treaties.^{60, 61}
- A study of 90 nations found that countries with higher female parliamentary representation were more likely to set aside land as protected ecological areas.⁶²

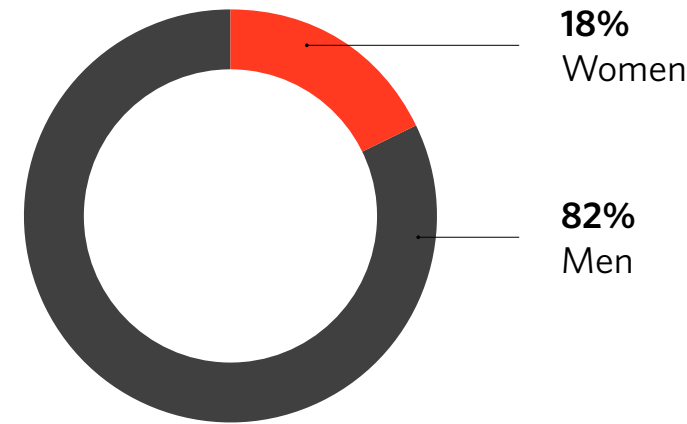
Around the world, women have been substantially underrepresented in climate policymaking.⁶³

“We have no hope of realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development without the full participation and leadership of women. We cannot take for granted the gains we have made. The pushback is real. And women on the ground are working hard—under duress and at great personal risk—to push back against it. They need our support.”⁶⁴

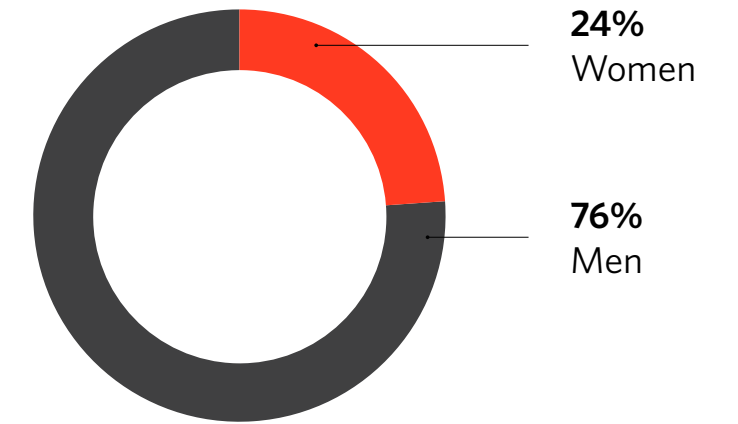
— **MARÍA FERNANDA ESPINOSA GARCÉS**
President of the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly

*The majority of sources quoted in global media coverage on climate change are men.*⁶⁵

CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES RELATED TO THE ENERGY SECTOR⁶⁶



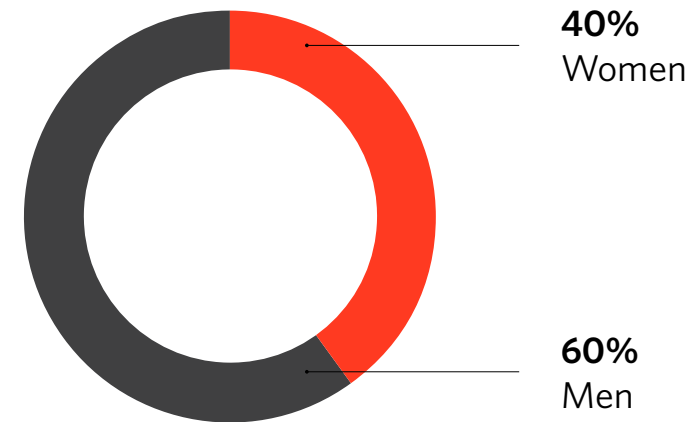
ENERGY-RELATED FEDERAL MINISTERS IN CANADA (1980–2017)⁶⁷



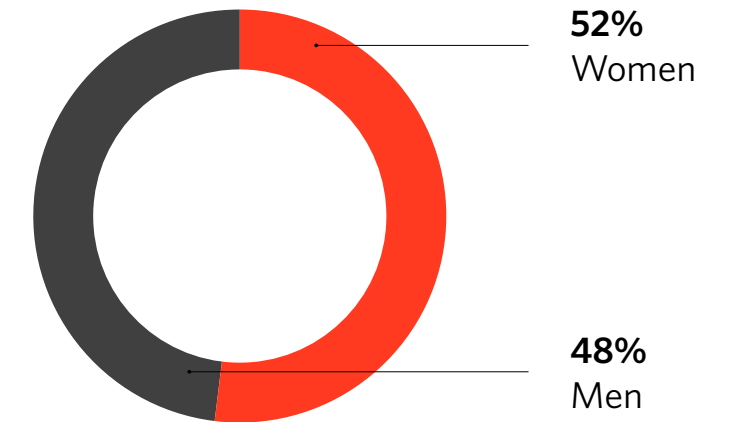
The representation of women in international climate policy meetings is improving.

At COP25, the most recent UN climate negotiations, in December 2019:

AVERAGE OF ALL COUNTRIES’ DELEGATIONS



CANADA’S DELEGATION⁶⁸





Is gender equality part of environmental policies?

GLOBAL

At COP25—the 2019 United Nations summit on climate change—governments adopted a new five-year Gender Action Plan (GAP).

“The GAP is a tool to advance progress on both gender equality and effective climate solutions. Gender equality... is realized through just and bold climate action. We move forward boldly to lift up women’s rights and the voices of women and gender advocates everywhere, as we know that real climate action can only be achieved when these voices and leadership are centered and heeded.”⁶⁹

— WOMEN’S ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

CANADA

As of March 2020, no Canadian federal, provincial or territorial climate action plans contain any mention of gender in how they will tackle climate change.⁷⁰ However, in 1995, the Government of Canada made a commitment to using Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to advance gender equality and, in December 2019, the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change received instructions to apply GBA+ to all of the ministry’s decisions.⁷¹

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

As of June 2019, the Government of Canada requires new resource extraction or energy project proposals to assess the impacts on women and gender-diverse people.⁷²

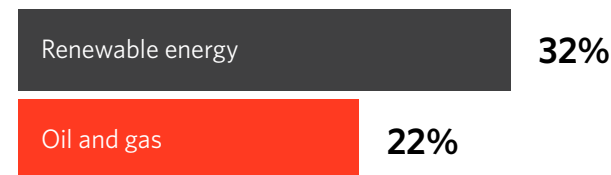
Will a green economy = a gender equal economy?

As communities adapt to the climate crisis, the world is transitioning towards renewable energy, and businesses and jobs that produce less pollution. But the green economy is, so far, a male-dominated sector.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Globally, women have much stronger representation in the renewable energy workforce than in oil and gas.^{73,74}

SHARE OF FEMALE FULL-TIME WORKFORCE⁷⁵



In renewable energy, women are more likely to be employed in non-technical occupations such as sales and administration, a trend seen in both Canada and other countries.⁷⁶

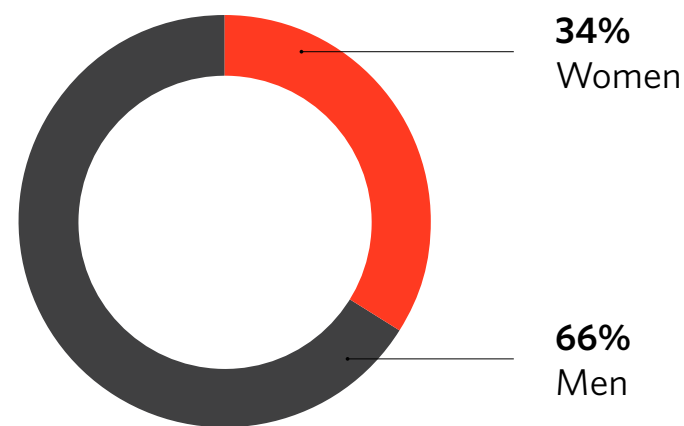
CANADA'S WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

Women are significantly and systematically underrepresented in high-paying and fast-growing sectors essential for a green economy including the trades, STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and energy.

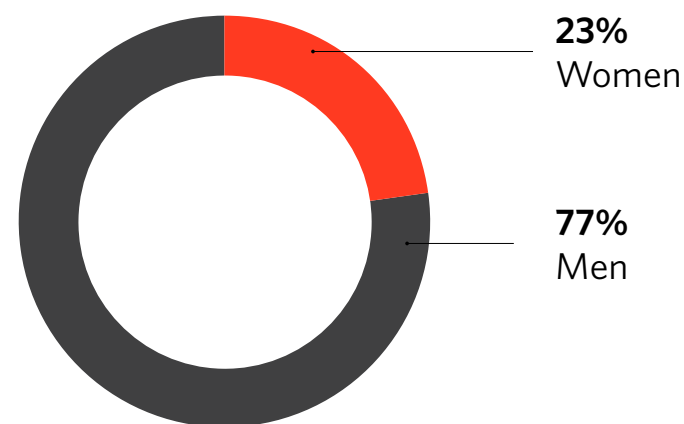
5% of Canadian tech companies are founded by women.⁷⁷

As the green economy develops in Canada, what do we want it to look like? Will it improve or exacerbate gender inequality?

STEM BACHELOR'S DEGREE HOLDERS⁷⁸



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WORKERS⁷⁹



1 in 4 workers in artificial intelligence,⁸⁰ utilities⁸¹ and environmental professions⁸² are women.

JUST RECOVERY

In light of the pandemic, UN Women and W20 have urged G20 finance ministers and central bank governors to guide sectoral ministries to invest in women. One of the recommendations is to create sustainable employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, specifically to “preserve women’s jobs and generate new, decent and environmentally sustainable jobs.”⁸³

[Green Strings](#), a report by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) presented to the Canadian government in June 2020, contains key principles and criteria that should be applied to government measures for economic recovery from COVID-19 to ensure a green recovery. The recommendation to “support a just transition that prepares workers for green jobs” specifically cites the fact that women have the majority of job losses. IISD advocates for “green jobs” that are not only in energy and manufacturing, but also women-dominated fields like care and service.⁸⁴

RACE AND GENDER DIVERSITY IN CANADA'S ENERGY INDUSTRIES IS LOW

RACIALIZED WOMEN

4.2% of the labour force in utilities.

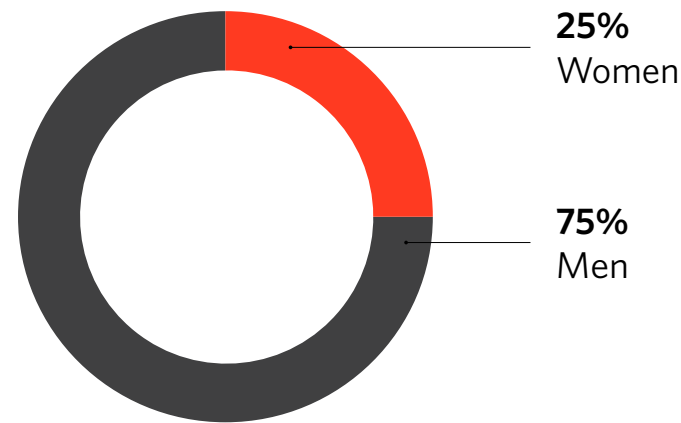
2.8% of the labour force in mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction.⁸⁵

INDIGENOUS WOMEN

1.1% in utilities.

1.4% in mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction.⁸⁶

CANADA HAS 258,724 ENVIRONMENTAL PROFESSIONALS⁹⁰



- 6.3% are Indigenous
- 2.8% are recent immigrants

AN EQUITABLE TRANSITION?

The transition required to meet Canada's emissions targets under the [Paris Agreement](#) will require government programs and training to ease the impact on communities dependent on carbon-intensive industries. Currently, transition programs are narrowly focused on addressing the needs of workers directly employed in the coal industry, which predominantly employs Canadian-born white men. There is no transition funding available for the rest of the community, which is just as affected by the closure of a mine or power plant, but is more likely to be composed of women and people from marginalized groups. Unless this changes, they will be left behind in the shift to a green economy.⁸⁷

3.9 million construction jobs will be created if Canada is to transition to a net-zero carbon emission economy by 2050.⁸⁸

10% of apprentices in construction trades are women.⁸⁹

Canada's greenhouse gas emissions targets

2015 PARIS AGREEMENT

30% below 2005 levels by 2030.

2009 COPENHAGEN ACCORD

17% below 2005 by 2020. In 2017, the most recent year with data, Canada had reduced emissions by only 2% compared to 2005.

1997 KYOTO PROTOCOL

6% below 1990 levels by 2012. Canada withdrew in 2008. 2012 emissions were 18% higher than 1990.⁹¹

Designing Communities Accessible to All

Can we design our communities with gender in mind?

Many parts of our communities have gender biases built right into their physical design. This affects how and when diverse women, men and non-binary people move around, which has repercussions on both gender equality and sustainability.

Paying attention to the needs and priorities of women, non-binary people and other underrepresented groups can produce a built environment that not only reduces environmental impacts, but is fundamentally fairer. The more that communities encourage the participation of women and non-binary people in the planning process, the better we can create communities where everyone belongs.⁹²

ROADS

- ✦ **Challenge:** Construction and even snow clearing typically prioritizes highways and streets used by rush hour in cars, which are primarily driven by men, over sidewalks and public transit, which are used more by women.⁹³
- ⚡ **Action:** Stockholm recently instituted a gender-equal snow plowing strategy that clears sidewalks and bus routes before car lanes and highways.⁹⁴

TRANSIT SCHEDULES

- ✦ **Challenge:** Service focuses on commuters early and late in the day instead of mid-day users, which are more likely to be women.⁹⁵
- ⚡ **Action:** Los Angeles's transit agency is currently developing their Gender Action Plan to improve its level of service based on women's experiences.⁹⁶

SAFETY

- ✦ **Challenge:** Poor lighting and empty streets discourage women from using public places after dark.⁹⁷
- ⚡ **Action:** Vancouver's Women's Equity Strategy is bringing safety considerations into the city's urban planning department by adopting principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design to build welcoming public spaces and make streets safe and well used by all.⁹⁸

PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

- ✦ **Challenge:** Park benches and bus seats are usually designed to fit the dimensions of an average-sized, able-bodied man, and sidewalks, if they are even there, might not be wide enough for strollers or wheelchairs.⁹⁹
- ⚡ **Action:** Vienna has been recognized as a world leader for its approach to gender mainstreaming in urban planning, which considers how different people experience the city, from including lower water fountains that children and the elderly can use, to designing entire districts from a woman's perspective.^{100,101}

→ **READ:** The intersection of gender and race and how it impacts public safety in the [Vital Signs Peace](#) report.

WOMEN AND MEN TEND TO MOVE AROUND IN THEIR COMMUNITIES IN DIFFERENT WAYS

- On average, women in Canada take 1,200 fewer steps each day than men, equivalent to a 10- to 15-minute walk. There are many reasons for this “activity inequality,” but an important one is how communities are designed—in cities that are more walkable, there is less of a gender difference.¹⁰²
- Women are nearly half as likely to bike to work as men, safety being the biggest concern.^{103,104} If cities had proper and safe cycling infrastructure, more than half of the trips women take every day could be done on a bicycle.¹⁰⁵

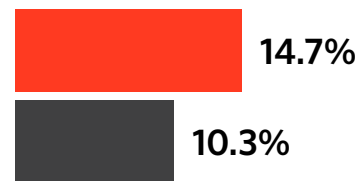
To get to work, women are more likely to walk and use public transit than men, and less likely to use a car or bicycle.

COMMUTE TO WORK¹⁰⁶

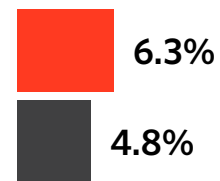
Automobile



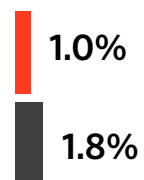
Transit



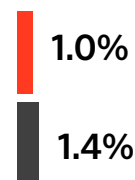
Walking



Bicycle



Other



■ Women
■ Men

JUST RECOVERY

[A Call to Courage](#) written by urban planner Jay Pitter and published by Canadian Urban Institute is a call to action for planners in response to COVID-19 health outcomes for Black Canadians and anti-Black racism. She makes eight recommendations for urbanists to consider social equity in and by design.

Community foundation leadership: Empowering women as donors

A growing number of community foundations are creating donor programs to engage women in local philanthropy.

- Through Vancouver Foundation’s [Giving Well](#), women donors are invited to learn about gender equity projects and collectively choose recipients of their donations.
- In addition to pooling their funds and granting, the volunteers of [Women 4 Change](#) at Hamilton Community Foundation conduct research on gender equity issues and develop relationships with women’s organizations in the area.
- Toronto Foundation’s Trust Collective has created a multi-year learning journey in which women donors deepen their engagement with gender equity issues. Financial support and capacity building through Toronto Foundation benefit local women-led and serving organizations.

Other community foundations supporting women’s philanthropy include:

- [Morden Area Foundation](#): Women’s Endowment Fund
- [Brandon Area Community Foundation](#): Women’s Giving Circle
- [The Steinbach Community Foundation](#): The Chrysalis Fund

“Women’s approaches to philanthropy tend to be very well aligned to how community foundations do their work, including the local focus and supporting collaborative efforts for solutions.”

— **SHEREE MEREDITH**
Principal at Sheree Meredith Consulting

JUST RECOVERY

The [2020 Declaration for Resilience in Canadian Cities](#) is a call to kickstart the journey towards more accessible, equitable, sustainable and resilient cities post-COVID-19. The Declaration signed by over 100 urban leaders calls for the “decarbonization of our transportation systems,” specifically “as permanent measures by adding additional space that meets the needs of pedestrians, individuals with mobility challenges such as the elderly and people with disabilities, and cyclists.”¹⁰⁷ As an alternative to public transit, Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Kitchener, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Moncton have already extended their cycling networks. In time, these temporary measures may become the catalyst to more sustainable active transportation.

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Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) is the national network for 191 community foundations from coast to coast to coast, driving local solutions and national systems-level change on the issues that matter most. Together we are relentlessly pursuing a future where everyone belongs.

VitalSigns

Vital Signs is a national program led by community foundations and coordinated by Community Foundations of Canada that leverages community knowledge to measure the vitality of our communities and support action towards improving our quality of life.

Collaborating partner:



This project is funded in part by:



The national management of the *Vital Signs* program is supported by:



Within each report—Power, Peace and Planet—we explore how different dimensions of inequality and privilege intersect and interact in people's lives and identities.

- Read the [Vital Signs Power](#) report to learn more about how women, girls, Two-Spirit people and gender-diverse people face obstacles building economic power and are leading on the frontlines.
- Read the [Vital Signs Peace](#) report to learn more about how safety and violence is experienced by women, girls, Two-Spirit people and gender-diverse people.



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