

Issues Associated with Increased Criminalization of Women

- 80% of women are imprisoned for economic related crimes. Moreover, the vast majority of property crimes for which women are charged involve either theft under \$5,000 or fraud.
- Women generally make up a greater share of those charged with property offences than violent offences, such as homicide, assault, sexual assault or robbery. This is an indicator that women are being criminalized for behaving in a way that ensures their economic survival.
- Women are generally involved in the criminal justice system as victims of crime rather than as perpetrators.
- In 2003, welfare rates for single parent families in Canada ranged anywhere from 48% of the poverty line in Alberta to 71% of the poverty line in Newfoundland and Labrador. For single employable people the rates were even lower at 20% of the poverty line in New Brunswick to 44% of the poverty line in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Statistics Canada has reported an increase in women lone-parent employment from below 50% in 1976 to 68% in 2004, indicating that social assistance is becoming increasingly insufficient to support families in need.
- Women account for 70% of all part-time employees and two-thirds of employed women are still found within traditionally women-dominated occupations. Women are also more likely to be multiple job holders, accounting for 55% of multiple job holders in 2004, rising from 42% in 1987.
- In 2001, the National Council of Welfare stated that 45.4% of children living with single-parent mothers live in poverty compared to 20.6% who live with single-parent fathers.
- The United Nations states that women and girls account for 70% of the poor populations.
- In 2003, the earnings of women who worked full-time for a full year averaged 70.5% of the average earnings of men working full-time for a full year.
- Men receive more income than women from all sources, including wages and salaries, investment, retirement, and other income. For example, women receive on average \$13,873 less than men in wages and salaries, and an average of \$7,463 less in retirement income per year.
- Three main factors have been identified as an explanation to the lower wage and rates of paid work for women. Discrimination against women in gaining access to paid work and a fair income as well as the sex-role stereotypes on women's involvement in paid work are the more obvious restraints women face toward unequal pay and access to paid work. Thirdly, women's high elasticity of attachment to the labour force renders them

susceptible to government policies that foster fiscal incentives to unpaid work and hidden penalties to paid work. These hidden fiscal incentives and penalties can be found in tax laws and other fiscal policies such as welfare rules, pension policies, child-care benefits and unemployment insurance schemes.

- In 2004, women who were unattached or single parents have long had higher poverty rates than men who are unattached or single parents.
- Traditionally, women have higher poverty rates than men. In 2003, the poverty rate for women 18 through 64 was 17.1%, and the comparable rate for men was 14.7%. Since the 1980s, this pattern of poverty among women has been longstanding.
- The 2003 Federal Budget provided the Department of National Defense with 1.6 billion in new funding for 2003-2005. At the same time in Canada, 41% of single women, 49% of unattached older women, 43% of Aboriginal women, and 37% of women of colour live in poverty.
- In the 2001 Census, more than 36% of Aboriginal women, compared to 17% of non-Aboriginal women, were living in poverty.
- In 2003, 1.5 million Canadian adult women were living in poverty. Women aged 18 and over accounted for 54% of persons in low income.
- In the 2001 Census, 29% of visible minority women were living in poverty. Among these minority groups, the poverty rate for foreign-born women was 23%, and 35% for immigrant women
- In the 2001 Census, 26% of women with disabilities were living in poverty.
- Only 40% of Canada's unemployed people receive employment insurance, compared with 80% in 1990¹

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¹ *National Council of Welfare Reports*. Winter 2007

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