

Why is Gender Equality Important

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Gender Equality is a part of human rights, including the right to be free from coercion, intimidation, and violence at work and at home.

Inequalities that exclude or disadvantage women in decision-making and access to economic and social resources (e.g., education, health services) are linked to historical patterns of gender inequality, including the devaluing of women⁽²⁾.

Gendered violence is rooted in gender inequalities and other systems of oppression. Intimate partner and sexual violence are disproportionately perpetrated against women and violate their right to live free from abuse and violence.

Patterns of gender inequality constrain the progress of a society by limiting the opportunities available to fully one-half of its population ± that is, women and girls. When women are constrained from reaching their full potential, this potential is lost to the society as a whole, resulting in decreased levels of education, lower economic/workforce participation, and lower gross domestic product (GDP). This loss affects every member of society. For instance, estimates indicate ^aviolence against women costs Canada more than \$9.3 billion a year and if the gap between men's and women's employment continues at its present rate, Canada could lose as much as 8% in GDP growth over the next twenty years⁽³⁾.

Consider Kate McInturff's analysis⁽⁴⁾ using Canadian data:

To put this in perspective, consider this:

- Estimated cost of spousal violence and sexual assault \$334/person
- Estimated cost of use and misuse of illegal drugs \$262/person

Yet, our investment as a society to prevent violence against women and support victims is only a fraction of the costs of this violence in Canada. The federal government spending in the 2011/12 fiscal year on programs and services related to spousal violence and sexual assault was approximately \$80 million:

- Estimated spending for spousal violence and sexual assault \$2.77/person
- Estimated spending for substance use and misuse \$4.27/person