

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

There is systemic inequality in how the work and contributions of people of different identities are valued, recognized, and paid.

Women and people who are marginalized based on their gender (trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people) earn less on average than cisgender men.

This inequality is much worse for people who are also Indigenous, racialized, disabled, or older; who are migrants or caregivers; or who face other types of marginalization.



What is the income gap?

Pay differences are not the only gap of concern. There is also a significant gap between people's incomes and the cost of living with security, dignity, and well-being. Many people do not earn a living wage: that is, the wage needed to cover basic expenses in the region they live in. Disability and income assistance rates are also grossly inadequate relative to people's essential needs. Large pay and income gaps worsen economic inequality.



British Columbia has one of the worst gender pay gaps in Canada. It is the fourth largest pay gap: only Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Newfoundland and Labrador are worse.

What is the gender pay gap?

The gender pay gap is the statistical difference in average annual earnings between men, women, and people of other genders. Sometimes these figures are "intersectional," comparing the earnings of people with overlapping identities such as Indigenous women, racialized women, or trans people.

These figures often exclude people in less visible economies shaped by criminal or immigration laws—like sex workers—as well as unpaid or unrecognized work such as caregiving or contributions by people with disabilities.

Although pay gap data are averages that don't show inequalities within specific workplaces, they are still a useful tool for tracking whether inequality is getting worse, staying the same, or decreasing.





Direct Discrimination

If people are doing the same or similar jobs as others and being paid less because of their gender, this is direct discrimination.

Section 12 of BC's Human Rights Code prohibits direct pay discrimination based on gender.



Systemic Discrimination

Women and people marginalized based on gender are more likely than men to work in caregiving, healthcare, and education—often called “feminized sectors.” These jobs are undervalued and underpaid despite the skill they require and their crucial role during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This devaluation is rooted in misogynistic and patriarchal norms, such as the belief that caregiving is natural for women and therefore not specialized or demanding work.

The gender pay gap is also systemic, built into workplace structures that shape starting salaries, wage negotiations, pay grades, and raises— affecting entire careers.



Caregiver Discrimination

Caregiving responsibilities are strongly gendered. People's unpaid roles as parents, kinship caregivers, or carers for elderly or disabled loved ones can impact their access to fair pay. Many caregivers are forced to accept part-time work which is often lower paying.



Racial Discrimination

Pay inequality exists across gender and racial lines. In 2024, Indigenous and racialized women in BC experienced one of the largest pay gaps, earning 19% less than men on average.



Migrant Discrimination

People who are migrants often earn less than non-migrant workers, even when differences in education level and work experience are considered.

Direct discrimination, precarious legal status, and systemic oppression such as racism and xenophobia all impact wages for migrants.



Discrimination Against Trans Women

One of the largest pay gaps is experienced by trans women in BC, who earn 52 cents for every dollar a man earns on average.



Disability Discrimination

In 2024, women with disabilities in BC earned 18% less than men on average. People with disabilities continue to be excluded, underpaid, and made invisible in our economy. The work and value they provide to our communities is often unrecognized.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

West Coast LEAF respectfully acknowledges that our office is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded homelands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, colonially identified as the City of Vancouver. Many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people from across Turtle Island reside on these lands and on lands across BC. We acknowledge Indigenous peoples on these lands hold distinct ancestral ways of knowing, being, and doing, including land-based practices, languages, legal orders, laws, and systems of governance and justice.

COMMUNITY PARTNER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge our community partners and their members who made this work possible: Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers' and Caregivers' Rights, Vancouver & Lower Mainland Family Support Services, and the Support Network for Indigenous Women & Women of Colour.