

INTRODUCTION

The Government of Canada uses Gender-Based Analysis+ (GBA+) as a tool to advance equality for women and men in Canada, and as a way to respond more efficiently to Canada's diverse population. GBA+ is employed throughout the policy development cycle to examine the impacts of policies, programs and other initiatives on a variety of different groups of women and men. This tool helps us ask important questions about the particular realities and specific circumstances of women and men in rural and remote contexts. For example, are there important differences between rural women and urban women that we need to consider before implementing a new program? Are rural women less likely to benefit from a proposed policy change than rural men? If yes, what are the barriers and how might they be addressed?

This Canadian information kit, which brings together information on women and girls in rural and remote areas, can be used to inform the development of policy, program and other initiatives. It contains two sections:

1. A fact sheet on women and girls living in rural and remote communities; and
2. Examples from across Canada of projects that contribute to the empowerment of rural women and girls.

The fact sheet draws on gender-based data from Statistics Canada to provide a statistical profile of women and girls living in rural and remote communities in Canada. It includes information on a number of key factors of interest in the policy development process – including employment, education, income and Aboriginal identity – and underscores the importance of having gender-disaggregated data to inform our understanding of some of the challenges, needs and realities associated with being a woman or girl in a rural or remote region. It also brings attention to where more or better data is needed to support policy and program development work.

Overwhelmingly, the statistics show that women living in rural and remote areas have lower labour force participation rates, lower employment rates and are over-represented in low-income situations. These challenges are particularly pronounced for Aboriginal women, who make up a large part of the rural and remote population in Canada.

In the area of non-traditional occupations, rural women are vastly under-represented compared to rural men. This is evidence of the entrenchment of traditional gender roles and the need to focus increased efforts on promoting training, educational and career opportunities for women in these sectors.

In some cases, the statistics point to areas of success as well as highlight the specific barriers that remain for women living in rural and remote communities. For example, increased educational attainment among young women has been a significant Canada-wide social trend over the past two decades. Canadian women, including Aboriginal women, also surpass men in undergraduate university enrolment. In rural and remote areas, women are slightly more likely than men to have attained a certificate, diploma or degree, but fewer Canadians, in general, attain this level of education as one moves from urban, to rural, to remote areas. Moreover, women living in rural and remote communities are the least likely to have a Master's or doctorate degree compared to both their rural male counterparts and their urban female counterparts.

The project examples illuminate the diversity in the experiences of rural women and girls, and some of the initiatives and supports that exist to meet their particular needs. In these examples, we can see initiatives that address the three priority areas for Status of Women Canada: leadership, violence against women and girls, and economic security and prosperity.

Initiatives for advancing **leadership** opportunities for women and girls in rural and remote areas can be found across the country. For example, One project is providing opportunities for girls from across rural Canada to engage in community development; another, in Quebec, is providing women farmers with leadership training to be more effective in their farm operations and communities.

Violence against women and girls is a continuing problem in Canada, including in rural and remote areas, and there are often unique challenges in these areas related to confidentiality and access to services and support.

Projects include a woman's centre in Nova Scotia engaging directly with women to determine their needs and then develop a relevant service framework. In Ontario, there is a project supporting teen boys and girls to be engaged, through social media, in preventing violence against women and girls and promoting healthy relationships.

The **economic security and prosperity** of women and girls in rural and remote communities is being supported through innovative projects, such as a business network created for Inuit women entrepreneurs in Nunavut, and training for women living in the Northwest Territories in non-traditional occupations in the mining, gas and oil sectors.

Overall, the information contained in this kit on the situation of women and girls living in rural and remote communities in Canada reinforces the need for policies, programs and legislation must take into account how factors such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, ability, sexual orientation, migration status, age, faith, and geography interact with sex and gender resulting in different experiences for girls and boys, women and men.