
The significant volume of separations related to voluntary quits, contract work and casual labour are indicative of the initiative and ability of women to respond to changes in employment and income opportunities, and the overall dynamic nature of the Canadian labour market.

Women as Entrepreneurs

Although statistics on women entrepreneurs are sketchy at best, it is apparent from the data available that women own and operate more small businesses than ever before. Revenue Canada taxation data indicate that, between 1975 and 1985, the number of women business proprietors more than doubled from 74,819 to 170,075. The majority of women-owned businesses are in the service sector, particularly in community, business and personal services, and in retail trade.

Recent Statistics Canada data show that, in the last decade, the number of self-employed women increased by 118 per cent from 191,000 in 1975 to 415,000 in 1986. In comparison, the number of self-employed men increased by 39 per cent during this period.

Women as Consumers

All Canadian women and men are consumers. The costs of Canadian customs tariffs and other trade barriers are borne by all Canadian consumers through higher prices. Trade barriers raise consumer prices and lower the standard of living for all Canadians since, as consumers, they

must devote more of their income to pay for the goods and services they require. Trade barriers also limit consumer choice by restricting access to items available in the international marketplace. The benefits to consumers due to tariff reductions will differ among Canadians because of variations in income and expenditure patterns and because of differences in tariff rates on various product categories.

According to Statistics Canada, the majority of Canadians — 22.1 million people or 85.1 per cent of the population in 1986 — belong to middle- or high-income households. Women represent roughly half of this group, which includes both families and unattached individuals. The average household in this group consists of 2.84 persons, with an estimated average annual income of \$42,850.

In 1986, Statistics Canada classified 3.7 million Canadians as living in low-income households. Women represent over half of this group. The average low-income household consists of 2.14 persons, with an estimated average annual income of \$10,725.