

Since the Second World War, advances in medicine and technology, the development of mass communications, growing urbanization and wider educational opportunities have had an important effect on the lives of Canadian men and women.

Women represent just over 50 per cent of the population of Canada, which is over 24 million.

Women in rural and urban areas

Canada covers an area of over 9.9 million square kilometres, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west and, in the north, extending as far as the Arctic Ocean. This vast region includes mountains and wooded areas, broad plains where cereals are the main crop, areas that are highly industrialized and others that are almost uninhabited.

Most of Canada's population lives in a corridor 160 to 320 kilometres wide along its southern border. Five hundred kilometres to the north are isolated centres, most of whose inhabitants are engaged in mining, lumbering or energy development.

On the whole, the social and material conditions of rural women are similar to those of city women. Nearly all Canadian families have electricity, running water, radio, telephone, television, an electric or gas cooker and a refrigerator. About three-quarters have a car and about two-thirds own their own homes.

In addition, now that new highways and improved means of transportation have made travel easier, contact between the country and the city is more frequent than it was in the past and, thanks to radio and television, women in rural areas are much less isolated than before, except in very remote regions.

Education

For several decades it has been compulsory for boys and girls to attend primary and secondary school until the age of 15 or 16, depending on the province in which they live. However, a considerable increase in the number of women entering university has been observed in recent years. In 1973, women received 39.8 per cent of all bachelor degrees granted in Canada. In 1977 this figure rose to 47.7 per cent. During the same period, the percentage of women granted master's degrees increased from 26.8 per cent to 31.3 per cent. At the doctoral level, the percentage of women graduates increased from 11.2 per cent to 17.9 per cent.

In 1978, women were granted 48.5 per cent of the bachelor and first professional degrees earned in Canada. During the same year, women earned 32.8 per cent of the master's degrees and 22.4 per cent of the doctorates granted.

In addition to the increase in the number of women graduating with degrees and diplomas from institutions