

**Are salaries  
still based on  
gender?**

Québec 



# A fresh look at jobs

Does your field of study destine you for a predominantly female job? Then yes, your salary might be influenced by your gender.

Still today, when jobs are more particularly associated with women, certain characteristics of these jobs are not taken into account by employers, which translates into an insufficient salary.

Why does this situation continue to prevail?



tradition

# Salaries: a matter of tradition...

On the labour market, the lowest-paying jobs are often those associated with work performed by women.

We notice that part of their work remains disregarded, therefore valueless as far as salary is concerned.

The heritage of the past, of practices and values wrongly based on the traditional role of women in society, explain in part the lower salaries paid to women.

# examples

- Because they arrived on the labour market after men, women ended up in **sectors associated with services** (retail sales, office work, personal care, etc.), where salaries are generally lower.
- Salaries paid to mothers or wives working outside the home were long considered **extra incomes**, which could therefore be lower than those of men, who were seen as the breadwinners.
- Certain jobs or professions engaged in by women often require skills that were considered an extension of the work done by women in the home: helping others, availability, meticulousness, etc. Because these aspects of the work were seen as **“innately” female**, they were ignored when came time to determine the women's salaries.



# ... and a matter of **bias**

The lack of knowledge of women's work can cause employers to undervalue female jobs and therefore underpay the women who hold these jobs. This lack of knowledge can even lead women to underestimate their work, resulting in the acceptance of lower salaries.

Disregarding less visible characteristics of women's work can generate differences in compensation between female jobs and male jobs.





# example

## Secretary-Receptionist

### What is frequently overlooked:

- Listening skills, diplomacy
- Concentration required to alternate rapidly between several tasks: looking at the screen, consulting documents, answering the telephone and a client at the counter, etc.
- Protection of confidentiality pertaining to different matters, including personal information, etc.

### What is known:

- Greeting the public
- Working on a computer
- Managing files

# example

## Hairstylist

### What is frequently overlooked:

- Stress related to clients' demands and work pace
- Discretion and diplomacy
- Fatigue caused by uncomfortable working positions; repeated use of a small number of muscles
- Presence of chemical products irritant to the skin and to the mucous membranes

### What is known:

- Suggesting hairstyles
- Cutting hair, giving perms and hair treatments

# example

## Patient Care Attendant

### What is frequently overlooked:

- Exertion required to move patients
- Presence of blood, vomit
- Presence of dying, mentally impaired or hostile patients

### What is known:

- Distributing meals, attending to patient hygiene

- For the female job of secretary-receptionist, the listening skills and diplomacy required when interacting with dissatisfied customers and impatient people might be disregarded (therefore not paid).  
For the male job of collection officer, the same listening skills and patience would be considered part of the job and would be paid accordingly.
- For the female job of cashier, the physical effort put into constantly lifting light weights might be disregarded.  
For the male job of packer, the effort put into lifting heavy weights, even occasionally, would be taken into account in determining wage.

**How can this situation be corrected?**

**Here are two examples  
to partly explain differences  
in compensation between  
men and women**

# Pay equity for recognition of women's work

Québec's decision-makers agreed that a law was needed to ensure that frequently disregarded aspects of female jobs are taken into account by employers.

The Pay Equity Act, in force since 1997, redefines the rules for determining workers' salaries.

Under the Act, employers have the obligation to ensure pay equity within their enterprise.

They must compare the jobs held by women with those held by men to determine whether characteristics of female jobs have been disregarded, which diminishes the value of the women's jobs and results in women being underpaid.

Within a given enterprise, all female jobs must be...

- **compared** with male jobs to ensure that those of **same value** are paid the same salary.

In order to do this comparison, all female and male jobs must be...

- **valuated** according to four factors:  
required qualifications, undertaken responsibilities,  
physical and mental efforts required and  
working conditions,
  - by giving them points;
  - by ensuring that the characteristics of female jobs receive the same recognition as those of male jobs.

Depending on the type of enterprise, the comparison could result in a secretary's position being considered the same in value to male jobs that are different:

At a car dealership, a **secretary's** position could be the same in value to a **mechanic's**.

In a factory, a **secretary's** position could be the same in value to a **foreman's**.

When the comparison shows that female jobs are less paid than the equivalent male jobs in the enterprise, the salaries for female jobs must be adjusted accordingly.

# Soon to be on the job market?

Pay equity is a right for all working women throughout Québec.

Exercising this right means that people occupying female jobs must adopt certain attitudes.





# Take up the challenge

Learn the new rules of the game.  
Employers must take measures to ensure  
pay equity within their enterprise.

It is a major challenge because pay equity  
involves changing mentalities and coming up  
with new practices to eliminate discrimination.

**Help change the mindset.**

# Keep your eyes open

Once on the labour market, check out the situation where you work.

## Is pay equity applied?

Ask your union or colleagues about it. It is important to be in the know and to plan strategies for the recognition of women's work.





## Know the value of your work

Be able to describe your work properly so that the aptitudes, qualifications and skills needed in your job are taken into account and fairly paid.

**Give all aspects of your job their due  
and make them known.**

# Ask the Commission de l'équité salariale for help

The Commission de l'équité salariale can help you exercise your rights and recourses under the Act.

Contact the Commission for answers to your questions about pay equity and for advice and explanations if you wish to file a complaint.



# Benefits for

An enterprise draws concrete benefits from achieving pay equity. Furthermore, working for such an enterprise offers advantages for all employees as well.

# all

Pay equity leads employers to adopt new, profitable practices in human resources management.

Employers have better knowledge of the jobs in their workplaces and have salary policies which, because of job comparison, acknowledge the contribution of their staff.

Pay equity contributes to develop more harmonious work relations and a healthier working climate.

For more information, visit the  
Commission de l'équité salariale's Website,  
or contact us by phone or e-mail.

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