Out of a total Canadian population of 36 million people, 9 million are working women ages 15 and older (Statistics Canada, 2018c). Working women and their dependents are strongly impacted by labour conditions such as salary, work hours, benefits, promotions, employment insurance, discriminatory hiring practices, harassment, and many other workplace issues as well as federal and provincial policies that regulate work. Given that working women make up such a large proportion of the population, it is vital to have a full picture of the role of work in their lives and how gender affects their work experience.

The experience of work is not the same for everyone. Two individuals, even if they perform the same type of work, can have very different experiences in the labour market depending on their gender, age, class, race, ethnicity, disability, and other social categories. These categories and social conditions intersect—that is, they operate together—to improve or worsen women’s working lives and their ability to care for themselves and their families. Using an intersectional approach, this book investigates how Canadian women experience work by taking these categories and conditions into account and observing how they work together. The rationale for focusing on gender is that women and men experience work differently. For example, men and women tend to have different educational paths, leading to different career paths. Women’s engagement in the labour force is also greatly impacted by their role in bearing
and raising children and their unpaid domestic labour, which are still socially reinforced today
despite more than a century of Canadian women working to achieve equality in all spheres of
life. This book explores the many implications of these gender differences for women in their
paid and unpaid labour.

We begin by trying to differentiate between gender and sex, which is more complex than
might appear on the surface. Sex is biologically determined, while gender is a social construct
created by a variety of socialization agents such as family, friends, schools, the media, and
religion. The traditional belief was that sex and gender were one and the same, with no
ambiguity. There were just two genders, male and female, with biological traits and behavioural
norms established for each for physical makeup, appearance, speech, demeanour, and many life
choices related to partners, sexual relationships, family, and work. Individuals who did not
conform to those norms were viewed as outliers and were often ostracized. But with the political,
sexual, and cultural revolution of the 1960s, sociologists, psychologists, and advocates of
oppressed groups began to broaden the definitions of gender. For example, the Bem Sex Role
Inventory Test (Bem, 1974) clusters personality traits in four rather than just two groups: (1)
androgynous (high levels of femininity and masculinity), (2) feminine, (3) masculine, and (4)
undifferentiated (low levels of both femininity and masculinity). On the biological side, scientists
have now identified at least six different combinations of X and Y chromosomes that determine
sex, meaning that many millions of people—referred to as intersex individuals—do not have the
typical XY (male) and XX (female) chromosomes. Moreover, it is now known that the brain may
identify with one sex when the body has characteristics of the opposite sex, confirming
transgenderism.
Recently there has been a growing movement among social groups and scholars to advocate for a more inclusive perspective on both sex and gender that takes into account the widely divergent ways that they are manifested across the human spectrum. Individuals who don’t conform to traditional biological sex and gender norms are increasingly becoming viewed not as deviant outliers but as part of a broad continuum of biological and behavioural traits. These present-day trends grew out of liberation movements that developed in the mid-20th century, including the women’s movement, the US civil rights movement, and the LGBTQ movement. The goal of these efforts is to create greater equality and freedom of choice for all individuals in society, free of confining stereotypes, and to lessen social stigmatizing and discrimination, which have major impacts in the area of work.

This book focuses specifically on working women in Canada from historical and contemporary perspectives. To maintain that focus, and for simplicity, we use the terms men and women to differentiate two basic sexes and genders, while acknowledging that the range of sexes and genders cannot be fully captured by two categories. Most people continue to think and act in a binary (male and female) fashion, and most research, including official statistics issued by the government of Canada, continues to be based on these two categories. Thus, work tends to also be considered in a binary fashion as male and female employment or male and female gender roles and tasks in the workplace and at home. This approach excludes transsexual and intersex people, and it is hoped that future research will investigate the workplace experiences of these groups.

Gender as it has been traditionally understood had led to enduring, limiting stereotypes of women as dependent, emotional, nurturing, and impractical while men have been viewed as
loyal, strong, adventurous, and logical. These gender stereotypes influence women’s daily tasks and roles in society, including the type of work they do, where and how much they work, how much they earn, and how others relate to them in the workplace. Viewing women as natural caregivers and men as providers (Nelson, 2010) immediately classifies men as workers and women as nonworkers. These notions of gender must be uncovered and questioned because they have such a large impact on women’s position in the labour market and the messages conveyed to young girls as they imagine their future possibilities.

Work is an inherently human activity that is the root of survival for both individuals and society. Our quality of life and our social status are directly connected to work. Both paid and unpaid work, whether manufacturing cars or caring for a family, provide value for the economy and for the advancement of society. But in order to be considered part of the official labour force, one must be doing paid work or searching for paid work. This book will use the term *work* in the broader sense to include paid and unpaid work to explore how women engage with work in Canada.

**Intersectional Approach to Understanding Women and Work**

Approaches to studying gender differences in employment have been based largely on three different understandings of those differences as caused by (1) women’s lower education and skills due to their role in bearing children, (2) discriminatory preferences of individual employers, and (3) employers’ generalizations about male and female job candidates, arrived at without having met the candidates (Kabeer, 2012). Beginning in the 1980s feminist scholars found these explanations unsatisfactory. They pointed instead to structural factors in the labour
market that ensured that women occupied an inferior position. In their view, both employers and male employees, especially those who are unionized, seek to exclude women from high-paying jobs. Employers exploit gender differences to reduce class solidarity and gain a reserve army of labour, while male workers have a stake in protecting their privileges as the core of the labour force, relegating women to a marginal position (Folbre, 1994). Feminist economists explain that while women make choices and exercise agency in their lives, they do so within structural constraints, including barriers and preferences maintained by employers and institutions as well as those enforced by social norms (Kabeer, 2012).

These discriminatory practices have been well documented over time. Regarding the placement of women in different occupations, Bergmann’s (1974) concept of crowding has been influential. He asserted that certain marginal groups, including women and black people, were excluded from many occupations, limiting their choices to a relatively small cluster of jobs with the ultimate goal of insulating privileged workers from competition from outside groups. Regarding wages, Treiman and Hartmann (1981) were among the first scholars to show that the larger the percentage of women in an occupation, the lower the average wages of that occupation were. Phillips and Taylor (1980) asserted that the wages of an occupation are not based on the complexity of the job or the skill required to do it, but on the identity of the individual doing the job. This means that women’s work is considered inferior not because their occupations are inferior or require less skill, but because women as a group are considered inferior.

Studying women’s experiences in the labour market by focusing only on gender is problematic because people, their life circumstances, and relationships among social groups are very complex and cannot be captured by investigating a single variable. Two women—one
white, age 25, Canadian born, with a university degree, and one an African immigrant to Canada, age 46, without a university education and with no English skills—will have dramatically different experiences looking for and securing work and negotiating for raises and promotions.

Race, gender, class, location, family status, education, language, and ethnicity—singly and combined together—give rise to a vast number of different pictures of individuals’ lives, each with a different outcome in the workplace. It is difficult to examine gender without simultaneously examining these many other factors that impact women and how these variables interact. Ultimately, we study women’s lives in order to create greater equality via laws, policies, and assistance programs such as job training. Prioritizing one social condition and excluding others results in an incomplete and inaccurate understanding that may lead to inequitable social policies that don’t match the reality of women’s lives.

But how can all of these dimensions of identity and social conditions be taken into account simultaneously? To meet this challenge, feminist scholars developed intersectionality, which is both a theory and a methodology that can be applied to specific studies. The main argument of intersectionality is that it is not solely gender that leads to social inequality for women; rather, inequality results from the impact of a number of overlapping (intersecting) basic traits (such as race and gender) and social conditions (such as poverty and education).

These traits and conditions are created by overlapping systems of power, status, and privilege designed to benefit specific groups (such as white upper-class males) to the detriment of others (such as poor women of colour). For example, dividing people into a gender binary of male and female and attempting to align sex, gender, gender roles, sexuality, and behaviours with this strict division allows males to benefit from privileges associated with maleness.
Dividing people into racial categories creates a dominant white social group that contrasts with all other racial identities. These divisions are taught and enforced by powerful social forces such as religion and schools.

Social categories then become controlling forces in the labour market that lead to different results for individuals based on their social identities rather than their skills. Intersectional scholars study the factors that create these power relations in order to understand oppression and marginalization, inclusion and exclusion, in social locations such as the workplace (Hankivsky, 2007). This approach also helps to understand the choices that people make—why, for example, a single mother with three children might feel forced to work part-time instead of full-time.

Intersectionality has its roots in black feminist scholarship (Combahee River Collective, 1977). The term was coined by US legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. As a theory and research method it has now expanded beyond feminist studies and is used in sociology, anthropology, social justice, demography, education, health care, and employment (Christensen & Jensen, 2012). Intersectionality is more than exploring “individual factors such as biology, socioeconomic status, sex, gender, and race. Instead, it focuses on the relationships and interactions between such factors, and across multiple levels of society” (Kapilashrami & Hankivsky, 2018, p. 2589). This book adopts an intersectional approach in order to render an account of women’s working lives that is both broad and detailed.

Intersectionality is a tool for studying diversity (Rodriguez, 2018), but some scholars question whether it is a theory or a method. Intersectionality as a theory has been well developed and is a popular approach among feminist scholars (Hillsburg, 2013). Intersectionality as a
method is less well developed, resulting in trial and error for researchers attempting to use it (Hillsburg, 2013). Key intersectionality scholars Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013, p. 788) refer to intersectionality as the “field of intersectionality studies” rather than a method or concept. As this debate continues to unfold, in this book intersectionality will be applied as a theory.

**Globalization and Women’s Work**

While the focus of this book is Canada, a good starting point is to situate the experience of work in the global context. Rather than dividing the world into four geographical hemispheres, economists now divide the globe into two economic regions. The Global North includes the United States, Canada, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and the developed parts of Asia such as Japan and Israel. The Global South includes Africa, Latin America, and developing countries in Asia, including the Middle East. In general the Global North is much more prosperous and developed than the Global South. While only one-quarter of the world’s population lives in the Global North, the vast majority of industries are owned by the Global North and the majority of income is earned by residents of the North. The economic divide between the North and South is in part a product of history, as many countries in the South were colonized and controlled by the North from the 16th to the mid-20th century. As during the colonial period, the South continues to provide the raw materials that support Northern prosperity. Due to lack of development and the flow of wealth to the North, countries in the Global South suffer higher levels of extreme poverty, hunger, child mortality, and disease and have lower levels of education. Women’s equality is very problematic in many countries in the Global South.
In the economic sphere globalization is broadly defined by (1) an increasing interrelationship between national economies, (2) an increase of international trade, (3) the free flow of direct investments between countries, (4) the globalization of financial markets as markets around the world open up to competition from other countries, and (5) the flow of technology between nations (Reinecke, 2006). Examples of globalization are the outsourcing of cheap labour in the Global South by companies located in the Global North, the ease with which Western consumers purchase goods from China via Amazon, and the movement of people from the Global South to the Global North to escape poverty, political instability, and war.

Those who advocate for globalization point to the benefits it offers for advancements in technology and the economic market, particularly for reducing the gap of inequality between developed and developing countries (Shin, 2009). But opponents believe that globalization has actually increased inequality between countries (Banerjee & Linstead, 2001; Shin, 2009).

As manufacturing has moved to the Global South, women there have become a source of cheap labour, benefitting companies in the Global North (Bair, 2010; Caraway, 2007; Desai & Rinaldo, 2016). Other Southern women have moved to the North to take on low-paid, often undocumented domestic positions as housekeepers and nannies for wealthy Northerners (Desai & Rinaldo, 2016). Thus, the emancipation of women in the North is connected with reinforcing inequality for women in the South.

**Indigenous Women in Canada**
There are 1.7 million Indigenous people in Canada, making up 4.9%\(^1\) of the population, including 860,265 women (Statistics Canada, 2017a, 2018a). The status of Indigenous women in Canada’s workforce today cannot be understood without understanding their history of oppression dating to the country’s beginnings. Colonialism did not only occur in the Global South. Canada’s colonization by France and Britain has left a legacy of violence, exploitation, and marginalization for Indigenous Peoples, particularly women. *Settler colonialism* allowed large numbers of Europeans to seize Indigenous lands for their own use until Europeans outnumbered Indigenous Peoples and forced cultural assimilation on them. Their subjugation was codified in laws such as the Gradual Civilization Act (1857), which aimed to remove Indian status from Indigenous people and turn them into British subjects. The Indian Act of 1876, still in force today with amendments, defined relations between the government of Canada and Indigenous Peoples, including many aspects of life on reserves such as education, land use, health care, and governance. Although the act was based on previous treaties, it was not a mutual agreement between the government and Indigenous Peoples, but rather imposed by the government. Legal discrimination against Indigenous women that was built into the original Indian Act continues today despite amendments to the act (Smiley, 2016).

Violence against Indigenous women is so widespread that in 2015 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau ordered the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to investigate more than 1,000 cases that occurred between 1980 and 2012. A 2014 analysis of

\(^1\) Percentages in this book are rounded to the nearest 1/10 of 1%. In some cases, this may mean that totals don’t add up to exactly 100%.
these cases by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police concluded that Indigenous women make up
4.3% of the population of Canada but 16% of murdered women and 11.3% of those reported
missing (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014).

The high incidence of violence against Indigenous women stems from their historical and
current socioeconomic and political marginalization and gender discrimination, as well as abuse
in residential schools that 150,000 Indigenous children were forced to attend from the late 1800s
to 1990 under Canada’s assimilation project. The schools were funded by the government and
run by churches. In 2008 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was established to
investigate the history of the Indian residential school system. In its final report (2015) it
described the schools as “badly constructed, poorly maintained, overcrowded, unsanitary fire
traps. Many children were fed a substandard diet and given a substandard education, and worked
too hard. For far too long, they died in tragically high numbers. Discipline was harsh and
unregulated; abuse was rife and unreported. It was, at best, institutionalized child neglect” (p.
46). As many as 6,000 children died in these schools and one in five were sexually abused
(Naumetz, 2009) in a pattern that has been repeated from one generation to the next in
Indigenous communities as those who were victimized as children go on to become victimizers.
Present-day mental health problems, suicide, and alcohol and substance abuse in these
communities are considered to be directly linked to the residential schools.

As a direct result of oppression and violence, many Indigenous women today struggle
with poverty, unemployment, substandard housing, and raising children as single mothers. While
individual women and grassroots movements work to gain political power for Indigenous women,
they continue to face obstacles to equality in the workforce even at the highest levels. Strongly
embedded cultural prejudices, legal codes, and institutional practices continue to marginalize them in both the workforce and society.

Women and Work in Canada: General Trends

In the Global North, including Canada, neocolonialism is accompanied by pressure to diminish the role of the state in remedying income inequality and the ill effects of changing economies. From the end of World War II until the 1980s, Canada was developing as a social welfare state guided by a commitment to the well-being of all citizens and shared responsibility for caring for people who needed assistance in major life areas such as employment, financial security, health, housing, and childcare. While these programs did not cover all needs in all areas, especially housing and childcare, prosperity during the postwar economic boom supported the expansion of social welfare programs. In the 1970s many Western countries went through an economic recession caused in part by a steep rise in the price of oil during an oil embargo enacted by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) against the United States during the Arab-Israeli War. The recession became the impetus for a return to 19th-century laissez-faire capitalism—the doctrine that the economy should be free of government interference—and a retreat from the commitment to national responsibility for the social welfare of citizens under criticisms of excessive government spending. By the 1980s the social and economic ideology of neoliberalism came to replace the social welfare ideology across the West with the support of world leaders like US President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Neoliberalism holds individuals, rather than the government, responsible for their own well-being—a dramatic change from the social thinking that had dominated Canadian
government policies since the 1940s. In the neoliberal paradigm, the adverse effects of events and social conditions that can befall virtually anyone—illness, accidents, loss of a job for whatever reason, divorce, disability, poverty—as well as the burdens of parenting are borne by individuals, not the state. The priority under neoliberalism is no longer the welfare of citizens but economic profit, leading to a new view of work and workers. The model of full-time permanent jobs and associated benefits that fulfilled the economic and social needs of workers and their families, along with the belief that workers deserved stable full-time employment, gave way to an increase in part-time, temporary jobs (referred to as precarious employment) that serve corporate profit without regard for the needs of workers and families. Under neoliberal policies, social services are reduced or rescinded while labour laws and labour organizations are weakened (Pulkingham & Ternowetsky, 2006).

The neoliberal approach to work and the economy has resulted in financial hardship and insecurity for Canadians, accompanied by a reduction in social services to assist people during periods of hardship. It has also led to high rates of unemployment, causing workers to move from job to job and to emigrate to other countries in search of work. These pressures have undermined family stability (Pupo, Duffy, & Glenday, 2017).

At the same time, the economy has been shifting from a manufacturing and resource base to a knowledge base, in which value is created by the availability of information. This “new economy” has moved from industrial jobs to service-sector jobs (Pupo et al., 2017). At the beginning of the industrial age in the mid-18th century, few women worked in the paid labour market, a trend that continued until the cultural revolution and women’s liberation movement in the late 1960s. It can be difficult to compare early 20th-century employment to today, because
methods of measuring employment were less sophisticated than today and inconsistent from year to year, but the following figures convey an idea of the large discrepancy between the numbers of female and male workers. It is estimated that in 1911, about 13% of gainfully employed people were women and 86% were men (Denton, 1999). Most of these women were single and left the labour market once they married (Pupo et al., 2017). In 1941, 19.8% of women were gainfully employed (Denton, 1999). This low percentage of women workers may have been related to efforts to separate women from the public sphere and paid labour. For example, female teachers were expected to resign when they got married (Ontario Federation of Labour, 2007). World War II propelled women into the labour market as factories retooled to produce weapons and materials to support the war effort. The total labour force is now defined by Statistics Canada as the number of people who are employed plus those who are unemployed, available for work, and searching for work. The proportion of women in the labour force increased dramatically from 22% in 1951 to 47.5% in 2018 (Denton, 1999; Statistics Canada, 2018b). Today dual-earner households are the norm (Pupo et al., 2017).

Historically, in both the industrial and service economies, all members of the family have had to work, whether at paid or unpaid work. Most people must work to survive. During the early industrial age, women of the lower socioeconomic classes often took in other families’ laundry for a wage (Krahn, Lowe, & Hughes, 2015). The choice to engage in paid work has never been a real one for women, except for those of the wealthier classes.

During the 19th century women’s work was mostly household labour, that is, in the private sphere, while men worked in the public sphere. The gendered division of labour was based on a belief that men should be supporting the family (even though often they did not earn
enough money to do so) while women were responsible for the reproduction and raising of children that was essential to ensure the availability of future labourers (Krahn et al., 2015). A century later, during the era of economic globalization, Western industries were able to obtain cheaper labour by moving production overseas. Deindustrialization brought deep social changes as stable jobs with high wages and good benefits were lost and replaced with insecure temporary and part-time service-sector jobs (Pupo et al., 2017).

Women are overrepresented in the service sector, sometimes referred to as the *female job ghetto*, that grew during the onset of neoliberalism and globalization. These jobs offer little economic security or opportunities for promotion because they are usually precarious low-wage, temporary, or part-time positions. They are also often unpleasant, physically demanding, and repetitive. The nature of these jobs reflects social values about femininity and masculinity, resulting in gender labelling of jobs (Pupo et al., 2017). Thus, although neoliberalism and globalization of the Canadian labour market have impacted both women and men, women continue to carry an added burden of being consigned to lower-status jobs.

**The Paid/Unpaid Labour Divide**

Domestic work and social reproduction are unpaid labour, which includes (1) household labour—cooking, cleaning, and laundry; (2) care work, including bearing and rearing children, caring for elders, and tending to family members’ emotional needs; and (3) kin and community work—communicating and maintaining a network with extended family and neighbours. Traditionally these tasks were deemed women’s work, and that norm has been maintained to the present day as women now do both unpaid domestic work and paid work, termed women’s
double day or second shift. Time-use studies find that women with young children do more household labour, which diminishes as the children grow older. University-educated and younger couples tend to favour more egalitarian relations (Krahn et al., 2015). Despite this, overall Canadian women spend 38% more time on unpaid labour compared to men. Women work 3.9 hours per day in the household, compared to men’s 2.4 hours, which amounts to a difference of 10.5 hours per week—the equivalent of more than a full work day each week or 52 extra days per year that women are doing household work (Moyser & Burlock, 2018).

As women have increased their paid work hours, some dual-earner couples are paying for household services such as food preparation, caring for children, and cleaning that were previously done without pay by mothers and wives (Krahn at al., 2015). However, even here a gendered labour division is in force: the majority of hired household labourers are women and they are paid low wages due to the social devaluation of this type of work. This has given rise to a class of women household labourers who serve wealthier women, marked by a racial divide as this is a work niche for racialized women and those from the Global South. But most women cannot afford to hire household help and they do both paid and unpaid labour.

It is important to acknowledge that although household labour is in a sense invisible—because it is taken for granted and unpaid—it is labour nonetheless. Moreover, although the fact that it is unpaid reflects the low value that society places on this work, it is essential for the maintenance of society. It has been argued that if women went on strike worldwide, the consequences would be devastating since women perform the majority of both paid and unpaid labour (Tuttle, 2017).
Overview of Work Experiences of Diverse Canadian Women

Impact of Diversity on Women’s Employment Rate

The jobs that women do, their work hours, salary, benefits, and other working conditions are impacted by a number of traits and social conditions. Data provided by Statistics Canada allows us to detect patterns of differential treatment and outcomes for women in the labour market with respect to factors such as age, race, ethnicity, and immigration status. The main guiding principle of this book is that when we make arguments about the status of all women, these must always be qualified by bringing attention to differences in experience that result from belonging to different social categories.

Age

Official statistics show that in 2015, 77.5% of women and 85.3% of men of the core working age worked, reflecting a narrowing gender gap in the labour force. The gap is greater among older workers: 40.8% of men 55 years and older are employed while 30% of women in that age group are employed. By contrast, in the 15- to 24-year-old group, more women (57.2%) are employed than men (54.4%) showing the growing trend of young women joining the work force (Moyser, 2017).

Age impacts women workers in the form of discrimination in hiring, sexual harassment, and sexual assault on the job, pay, and devaluing of older women due to a double standard regarding aging (Ainsworth, 2002; Nelson, 2010). Older women are vulnerable to poverty after a lifetime of caring for children and the household, which makes it difficult for them to develop financially rewarding careers (Nelson, 2010). They may find themselves relegated to low-skilled,
low-wage jobs that leave them with insufficient retirement funds, particularly if they are widowed, divorced, or single (Nelson, 2010; Satter, 2017).

Race

Race as a social category has a significant impact on employment. While race may seem like a simple concept on the surface, attempting to define it reveals its complexities. In the 18th century race was thought of as an obvious division of people by colour, facial features, hair type, and other physical attributes into five main groups (white, black, yellow, red, and brown). This simplistic definition is problematic for several reasons: First, it is based on perceptions, which may be subjective. Second, since the original racial categories were conceived, large-scale migration of people around the globe has resulted in racial intermarriage and mixing, so that it is no longer possible to divide people into five distinct races. As the lines between the races become blurred, the biological classification of races becomes less valid and less useful. Third, a simplistic definition of race does not take into consideration how people identify themselves. People of mixed-race heritage may choose a racial identity that is different from the one ascribed to them by others, or they may favour one racial identity over the other. A well-known example of this is former US President Barack Obama, who is of equal black and white heritage but is universally identified and self-identifies as black, pointing less to his biological race and more to sociological factors that govern racial identification.

These complexities of external perceptions and self-identification show that race is as much a *social construct* as a biological category. The scientific and biological bases of racial categorization are weakening. There is evidence that there are greater differences between
individuals of the same race than between people of difference races, and all humans share 99.9% of their DNA regardless of their race (National Human Genome Research Institute, 2018). It is important to recognize the social origins of race because subjective perceptions of race that claim superiority of one race over another are used to justify racism such as white supremacy and to portray social inequalities like poverty as arising naturally from racial differences.

Understanding patterns of racialized women’s employment relies heavily on the Canadian census, which uses the term *visible minority* rather than *race* in its questions. The census uses the definition of *visible minority* expressed in the Employment Equity Act: “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.” The 13 visible minorities on the census are South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, Japanese, Visible minority, n.i.e. (not included elsewhere), and Multiple visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2017b).

Race impacts women significantly more than men in the job market (table 1.1; Statistics Canada, 2018d). Racialized women have an employment rate of 56, compared to 65% for racialized men. The impact of race is particularly strong for women in the 15 to 44 age group, where there is a difference of 10% to 16% (depending on age) in the employment rates of racialized and nonracialized women. Younger racialized women (15 to 24) experience a particularly large employment gap with their nonracialized peers. The effect of race on employment appears to be less important for women over 65.

**Table 1.1.** Employment Rate by Race, Immigrant Status, Age, and Gender, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Canadian-born</th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>15 and over</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Racialized</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>61.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nonracialized</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>58.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15–24</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Racialized</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>44.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nonracialized</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>58.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>25–34</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racialized</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>79.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonracialized</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>83.4</td>
<td>78.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>35–44</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Racialized</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>81.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nonracialized</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>81.7</td>
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<td><strong>45–54</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Racialized</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>78.8</td>
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<td>Nonracialized</td>
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<td>83.5</td>
<td>79.6</td>
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<td><strong>55–64</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racialized</td>
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<td>70.9</td>
<td>60.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonracialized</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>65–74</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racialized</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonracialized</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>75 and over</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racialized</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonracialized</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada, 2018d.

**Immigrant Status**

Immigrant status may create a greater disadvantage for women than for men—there is a difference of 11.7% in their employment rates—and for racialized versus nonracialized women across all age groups. The employment rate also varies across different national origins. Filipino women in the core working group of 25 to 64 years of age had an employment rate of 84.5% in 2016—even higher than nonracialized immigrant women at 70%. Arab, Korean, South Asian,
and West Asian women 25 to 64 were least likely to be employed. Racialized women were more likely to be employed if they were Canadian born (Statistics Canada, 2018d).

**Full-Time versus Part-Time Employment**

Overall, women’s full-time employment rate has increased dramatically in the last 40 years. In 1976, 38% of women worked full-time, compared to 89.8% of men. In 2014, 64.2% of women and 82% of men worked full-time (table 1.2). This is consistent with the growth of dual-earner households and the loss of manufacturing jobs traditionally held by men.

There are a variety of reasons why workers may choose part-time jobs, including attending school, having to care for children or elders, illness or disability, or inability to find full-time work. Women predominate in part-time employment for a combination of these reasons. In 2015, 18.9% of women compared to 5.5% of men worked part-time (Moyser, 2017). Racialized women were slightly less likely to engage in part-time work than nonracialized women (27.7% compared to 29.5%; Hudon, 2016).

**Table 1.2.** Full-time employment rate by gender, ages 25–54, 1976–2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Both genders</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>54.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td>82.0</td>
<td>64.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note. Employment rate includes self-employed. Adapted from Morissette, Hou, & Schellenberg, 2015.

Unemployment and Underemployment

Unemployment is an increasing concern in the new economy as many jobs lack long-term security. The unemployment rate for all workers in late 2018 was 5.6%. By gender it was 6% for men and 5.3% for women (Statistics Canada, 2018e). Women bear a large burden of the loss of full-time permanent jobs and of being forced into underemployment, suffering disproportionate financial hardship and impacts to their physical and mental health when they become unemployed. How women are impacted by unemployment varies among different social categories, depending on their degree of marginalization, social supports, and financial resources to weather a job loss. Their vulnerability increases with the addition of more than one of these social categories, and their hardship is compounded by federal employment insurance policies that disadvantage them.

Occupations of Canadian Women

In Canada, women commonly work in the service sector, such as retail, real estate, education, health care, and food services. Only 10% of women worked in the goods-producing sector compared to 90% in services in 2015. Men more commonly work in the goods-producing sector, such as agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining, construction, and manufacturing (Moyser, 2017).

More than half (56%) of women work in what is called the “5Cs”: caring, clerical, catering, cashiering, and cleaning. There has been little change in this pattern in the last 30
years—in 1987 59.2% of women worked in the 5Cs (table 1.3; Moyser, 2017). The 5Cs have considerably lower status and salaries than the occupations that men tend to work in, including natural and applied sciences, in which only 24.4% of employees are women (Moyser, 2017). The dearth of women in the sciences begins with the education of young girls, when gender stereotypes steer them away from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs. Women’s absence from these well-paid fields increases the gender wage gap, and progress toward bringing more women into STEM professions has been slow: from 1987 to 2015, female employment in this sector grew by only 7% (table 1.3 Moyser, 2017).

Racialized women have been even more likely to be employed in traditionally male occupations. This may be the result of their higher educational attainment: 38% of racialized women have a university degree, compared to 25.8% of nonracialized women (Hudon, 2016).

Table 1.3. Top 20 occupations by gender, ages 25–54

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total (percentage)</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary &amp; elementary school teachers, educational counsellors</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessional occupations in legal, social, community, &amp; education services</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative &amp; regulatory</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General office workers</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing professionals</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Base 1</td>
<td>Base 2</td>
<td>Base 3</td>
<td>Base 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing assistants</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditors, accountants, &amp; investment professionals</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial, insurance, &amp; related administrative support workers</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaners</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home care providers &amp; educational support</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail salespersons</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resources &amp; business service professionals</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer &amp; information services</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances, insurance, &amp; related business administrative occupations</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office administrative assistants—general, legal, &amp; medical</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and community services professionals</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashiers</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and beverage services</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy &amp; program researchers, consultants, and officers</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other technical occupations in health care</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Adapted from Moyser, 2017.
Regardless of what occupation women work in, they experience discrimination and inequality. On the one hand, men who work in female-dominated occupations may experience the “glass escalator,” receiving preferential treatment in hiring, promotion, access to desirable work assignments, and higher wages. On the other hand, women and minorities often experience the “glass ceiling,” an invisible socially created barrier that prevents them from accessing positions with high status and wages (Nelson, 2010). Both the glass escalator and the glass ceiling are maintained by gender stereotypes, namely that men are innately more qualified for higher administrative and leadership positions.

**Conclusion: The Future for Women and Work in Canada**

The new economy has changed the way that many Canadians work, and women have been uniquely impacted by this change due to the persistence of traditional gender inequalities, norms, and stereotypes. Despite their advancement in some areas over the years, women have lost ground in others. Their rate of precarious employment is higher than men’s. Older women have been pushed out of the long-term job market and lost their union representation, while younger women deal with a perpetual cycle of precarious work arrangements (Khosla, 2014). Women’s wages have stagnated or fallen. Women in administrative positions are trapped in a “pink ghetto” with low wages, status, and benefits. Further inequities can be seen in the work experiences of younger and older women; Indigenous, racialized, and immigrant women; and women with disabilities, as will be shown in more detail in the chapters of this book.

There is a pressing need to move beyond traditional gender norms and their impact on occupational choices, for example by encouraging girls and young women in STEM programs.
and then supporting gender equality in STEM and other nontraditionally female occupations in the workplace. Glass ceilings that prevent women’s advancement need to be removed, women’s labour rights need protection, and workplaces need to adopt policies like on-site childcare and flexible work schedules that support women’s dual roles as workers and mothers. All policies need to become sensitive to differences among women in order to do justice to claims for equitable treatment.

If precarious employment is inevitable in the new economy, the social infrastructure must be redesigned to meet the needs of all precarious workers, including women and their families. This implies united efforts by employers, unions, community advocates, and governments and acknowledgement that as the nature of labour and production are reorganized in order to benefit employers, it is still workers who make profits possible, whether they work part-time or full-time, and whether their work is paid or unpaid.

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Statistics Canada. (2018d). Labour force status (8), visible minority (15), immigrant status and period of immigration (11), highest certificate, diploma or degree (7), age (13a) and sex (3) for the population aged 15 years and over in private households of Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations, 2016 census—25% sample data. Retrieved from https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/dt-td/Rp-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=110692&PRID=10&PTYPE=109445&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2017&THEME=124&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=


