

When it comes to health, it matters whether you are a man or a woman. Here are ten good reasons why gender matters:

1. Because of wage gaps, low occupational status, and work interruptions to bear and raise children, **women consistently have a lower socio-economic status than men.** With economic security identified as a key health determinant, women automatically experience a major disadvantage. (*Women's Health Strategy*, Women's Health Bureau 2000.) While it is true that Island women have a higher participation in the labour force than women in the rest of the country, they are concentrated in a narrow range of low-paying occupations with over half working in clerical, administrative, and medical/health jobs. (*Women on Prince Edward Island, A Statistical Profile*, 1996.)
2. Also as a result of economic realities, women, as a group, are less likely to be employed full-time. Therefore, they are **more likely to experience the stress related to job insecurity and they are less likely to have access to services such as drug plans.** (*Women's Health Strategy*, Women's Health Bureau, 2000.)
3. Women are disadvantaged relative to men in terms of job satisfaction because they are **more likely to work in situations affording them little control over the pace and content of their tasks and more likely to be poorly paid.** (*What Makes a Woman Healthy or Unhealthy?*, National Forum on Health, 2000.) This is particularly true here in Prince Edward Island where the majority of women work in occupations that pay less than \$20,000 and offer little power or authority. (*Women on Prince Edward Island, A Statistical Profile*, 1996.)
4. **Women work the equivalent of two jobs.** Women's increased participation in the labour force overlaps with their extensive involvement in caregiving, adding considerable strain to their lives. (*What Makes a Woman Healthy or Unhealthy?*, National Forum on Health, 2000.) Again, considering the high rate of labour force participation for Island women, double duty is a particularly important issue here on Prince Edward Island. (*Women on Prince Edward Island, A Statistical Profile*, Canada, 1996)
5. Women are **more likely to experience workplace harassment**, especially sexual harassment, thus adding to their stress levels. Various studies estimate that between 42% to 80% of women will be sexually harassed at some time in their working lives. (*What Makes a Woman Healthy or Unhealthy?*, National Forum on Health, 2000.)

6. **Single women who are not working for pay must depend upon an inadequate social support system** that provides income at approximately 30% below the poverty line. Eighty-three percent of Island women in this situation who were surveyed in 1999 reported that they were either in poor health or had some significant health problems. Most of these health problems were directly related to the deprivation and stress arising from depending on such low incomes to provide for themselves and their children. (*Single Mothers Surviving Below the Poverty Line, Assessing the Impact of Social Policy Reform on Women's Health*, PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1999.)
7. Women who receive social assistance feel **frustrated with and humiliated by a system** that they feel dehumanizes them by giving them little control over their own lives and little opportunity to make choices for themselves and their children. (*Single Mothers Surviving Below the Poverty Line, Assessing the Impact of Social Policy Reform on Women's Health*, PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1999.)
8. Women are **most often the victims of violence**. A 1993 study showed that half of Canadian women reported violence at the hands of an intimate partner at one point during their lives. Women who are assaulted often suffer from severe psychological and physical health conditions. And, women who are poor are more likely to be battered than women in general. (*Statistics Canada*, 1993.)
9. Women are **more often the victims of childhood sexual abuse**. Such violence during childhood interferes with early learning and development and impedes complete health and wellness in adulthood. Most experts estimate that the recovery period for a sexual abuse survivor in concentrated treatment is three to five years. For those who do not receive support and treatment, the aftereffects are lifelong. (*United Nations*, 1995, Kinnon and Harvey, 1996.)
10. Social supports have been shown to be extremely important to all women but **finding such support becomes more difficult when the woman is a single parent or a senior woman who has caregiving responsibilities**. (*What Makes a Woman Healthy or Unhealthy?*, National Forum on Health, 2000.)