Newfoundland and Labrador Minimum Wage

Minimum Wage and Women in NL

WOMEN’S AND MEN’S labour market experiences are significantly different due to a range of factors such as occupational group, wages, access to education/training, geography, age, and immigration status. However, women’s continuing responsibility for unpaid work in the home and the lack of access to good quality affordable childcare and elder care lie at the heart of women’s labour force attachment. Without addressing these issues, women continue to be vulnerable to precarious low-wage work.

In 2017, women in NL made up 52% of the workforce. Women also make up 57% of minimum wage earners in the province. This means that 7900 women in our province work in minimum wage jobs.

The Labour Market Survey for 2017-2018 provides insight into where these women work. With 80% of minimum wage jobs being in the service sector, we know that women are greatly impacted because they make up 93% of workers in this sector. Women work in two main occupational groups in the sector: Health Care/Social Assistance where they make up 84% of workers, and Accommodation/Food Service where they make up 64% of workers. It makes good sense that a higher minimum wage would improve women’s economic stability.

Additionally, in 2018, women in NL made up 66% of part-time workers – a category of workers who are more and more likely to be found in minimum wage jobs. In the service sector, women made up 68% of part-time workers.

As minimum wages increased in Canada in 2017 and 2018, the composition of minimum wage employees shifted away from individuals under 25 years of age and towards older workers. In NL, age is a factor across the entire workforce but it is especially important among part-time workers.
Between 2013 and 2017 there was a 6% increase in minimum wage earners aged 55+, going from 1500 workers in 2013 to 2400 in 2017. Women currently make up 67% of part-time workers in that age group.

Recently released Tax Filer data for 2016 shows that women working in NL earned, on average, 63 cents for every dollar paid to men. A $15.00 minimum wage is a critical step toward fair pay and will help close this wage gap because women are the majority of workers who will see their pay go up. In short, a $15.00 minimum wage would help narrow the gender wage gap and improve women’s economic stability.

Women’s financial dependence on men can be a huge impediment to them leaving situations of intimate partner violence. Establishing a minimum wage of $15.00 provides women who work full-time with more ability to have a decent standard of living that does not depend as much on men's wages.

**Conclusion**

Minimum wage is a key factor that can influence earnings and help reduce the gender wage gap in NL. A more informed approach to setting minimum wage includes consideration of women’s roles in the workforce and the gendered effects of labour, employment and social programs (including child and elder care) on low wage work.

Even though minimum wage on its own cannot resolve social and gender inequalities, implementing fair inclusive processes that account for women's labour market experiences can provide the basis for setting the minimum wage at a level sufficient for workers to support themselves to a better standard of living and contribute to narrowing the gender wage gap in the province.

**References**

- Statistics Canada: Table 14-10-0063-01;
- Statistics Canada: Table: 14-10-0028-01;
- Statistics Canada: Table 11-10-0007-01: Tax filers and dependents with income by source of income.