

The scale of invisible work

Capitalism and neoliberalism

Capitalism: an economic system that is dependent on the work of people who do not have access to the means of production used to create wealth.

Neoliberalism: an ideology which promotes the idea that the state should not intervene unless absolutely necessary, putting responsibility on the individual instead.

Both of these depend on privatization and the free market and contribute to the deterioration of the social safety net.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy: a form of social organization in which men hold power or a dominant role over women.

Patriarchy explains why jobs that are traditionally considered “women’s work” – in health care, social services, and education, for example – remain undervalued and underpaid compared to jobs that are traditionally considered “men’s work”. Fields considered “women’s work” are often subject to budget cuts; their lack of funds contributes to the undervaluing of these professions, creating labour shortages which, in turn, contribute to the deterioration of working conditions...

Privatization is used in order to repair these gaps in the system; as a result, the social safety net becomes more and more damaged.

Social safety net

Social safety net: made up of the measures that a society puts in place to ensure that people and families can meet their basic needs and improve their living conditions: for instance, public services, social policies and community organizations.

Often, women do not have access to these measures and end up taking on the unpaid work of ensuring that these needs are met in addition to their paid work. **That’s why we say that invisible work is used to make up for the failures of the social safety net.**

What is invisible work?

Invisible work describes any work that is not officially recognized as “work” and which is not counted when talking about the creation of a country’s wealth.

It is the work of homemakers, of caregivers, of volunteers, etc. It requires the person performing the invisible work to take on a mental load which prevents the person from taking on other responsibilities which are more valued by society – both in terms of attitudes and in terms of the remuneration given – or prevents them from resting.

From May 1st to October 1st, L’R des centres de femmes put an “invisible work calculator” on its website. Almost 5000 women used it. Respondents are estimated to have done 26.5 hours of invisible work per week. If this work were paid the minimum wage, it would be worth a total of \$1.7 million of free work EACH WEEK).





Why are we telling you all this?

Because each decision made by the government impacts men and women differently. Cuts to health services and social services, for instance, impact women more because women are more likely to work in these fields. Also, the resulting erosion of the social safety net increases the amount of time that women have to spend doing invisible work, which has a negative impact on their economic equality because they either have to reduce the hours they spend doing paid work or quit their paid work entirely.

These cuts increase pressure on community organizations, where women fill 80% of jobs. They are rarely accompanied by an increase in financing for these organizations. As a result, waiting lists get longer and working conditions get worse for these community workers, who are already paid less than those employed in the public sector...

In short, when cuts are made to the social safety net, the amount of unpaid work done by women increases. That's why the political decisions that you make weigh so heavily on women's physical and mental health, as well as on their opportunities for equality.

What you can do

In light of these facts, we invite you to consult with us so that we can weigh in on decisions that may have an effect on women's lives.

Women's centres know what women's lives are like in our region. We not only see hundreds of women on a daily basis, but we also work with other women's centres in Quebec to analyze the impacts of laws and government policies on women's lives and find solutions to the inequities we face.

Call us, talk to us, visit us.

By working together, we have so much to gain.

Name: _____

Contact information: _____

Share your commitment to not forgetting women in your decision-making on social media with the hashtags #centresdefemmesenaction #CAPturquoise



L'R des centres
de femmes
du Québec

A women's centre is a judgement-free zone, by and for women, where they can learn, get involved, and receive free services. There are 86 women's centres that belong to L'R des femmes in Quebec's 17 administrative regions.

To learn more, visit www.rcentres.qc.ca