

# National Call-to-Action for the Equity of Invisible Work in Canada

## Invisible Work Counts!



Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada

Women and Gender  
Equality Canada



# Introduction

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## **Invisible work is one of the fundamental pillars of our society.**

Whether it involves caring for children, accompanying an aging parent, supporting a loved one with a disability, performing domestic tasks, managing the mental and emotional load of a household, volunteering within a community organization, completing a mandatory unpaid internship, or contributing to a family business, this work is essential to collective well-being. Yet it remains largely unrecognized, unpaid, and undervalued.



Yet it remains largely unrecognized, unpaid, and undervalued. It is still carried out primarily by women, directly contributing to gender inequalities, income gaps, and women's economic insecurity throughout their lives. Moreover, an intersectional approach reveals that certain women—particularly racialized, Indigenous, disabled, immigrant, low-income, or rural women—are disproportionately affected and face additional structural barriers.



Recognizing and valuing invisible work must be at the heart of a new Canadian social contract rooted in true equity. This manifesto presents a shared vision and concrete demands to ensure that this essential work is recognized, supported, and shared more fairly.



# Definition of Invisible Work

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Invisible work refers to all essential tasks carried out without pay or with insufficient compensation:



- **Childcare:** caregiving, accompaniment, homework help, family organization, emotional and mental load.
- **Caregiving:** support for seniors, people who are ill, losing autonomy, or living with disabilities, including emotional and mental labour.
- **Work in family businesses:** unpaid or underpaid contribution to farms, shops, practices, or other enterprises belonging to a partner or a family member.
- **Volunteer work:** participation in community, humanitarian, cultural, or sports organizations delivering essential services.
- **Mandatory unpaid internships:** work required within training programs, often concentrated in traditionally feminized sectors (education, health, social services).
- **Household management:** home maintenance, meal preparation, laundry, errands, organization, and mental load.

# Why Act Now?

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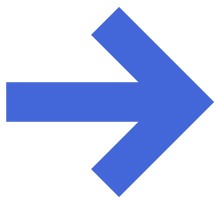
1. **A gender equality issue:** Invisible work is still performed primarily by women and people who identify as women. This unequal distribution perpetuates economic and social inequalities.
2. **A major unrecognized economic pillar:** The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that if the value of women's unpaid work were included in GDP, it could represent up to **40% of GDP** in some countries. Globally, women and girls spend on average 2.5 times more time than men on unpaid care work. In Canada, according to Statistics Canada, the contribution of invisible work to GDP is estimated between **25% and 37%**, depending on the calculation method. Across the country, this work enables the healthcare system, social services, families, and many businesses to operate at lower cost, and should therefore be counted in GDP.
3. **A growing burden on caregivers:** population aging and the insufficiency of public services are shifting a tremendous load onto families, particularly onto women.
4. **A barrier to full civic and professional participation:** The lack of recognition for invisible work limits women's access to the labour market, leadership positions, and long-term economic security.



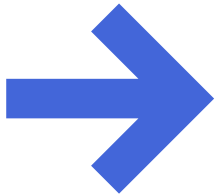
# A Shared Responsibility

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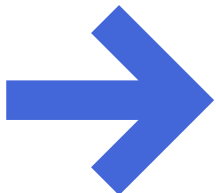
## RECOGNIZING INVISIBLE WORK REQUIRES THE MOBILIZATION OF ALL:



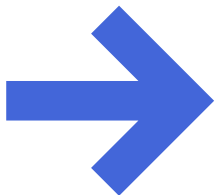
The federal government must implement **fiscal, social, and economic policies** that recognize the value of invisible work and support caregivers and families.



Provinces and territories must ensure accessible, high-quality **childcare, healthcare, and social support services**.



Municipalities and communities must develop **local services, appropriate infrastructure, and concrete supports**.



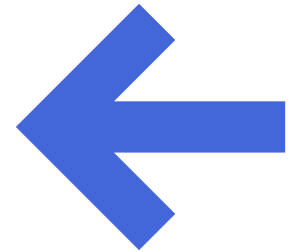
The private sector must contribute to better **work-family-study balance** and implement concrete measures to support employees in their caregiving responsibilities.

# Our Demands

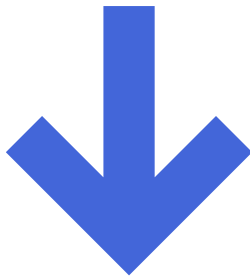
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## 1. Statistical and Economic Recognition

- Include a question on invisible work in the Canadian census.
- Account for the economic value of invisible work in GDP calculations.
- Quantify the unpaid work performed within family businesses so that these individuals can receive fair and equitable benefits from pension plans and other tax advantages.



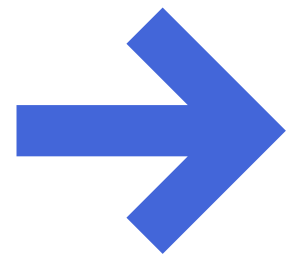
## 2. Support for Caregivers



- Create a national leave and benefits program for caregivers, complementary to provincial and territorial programs.
- Provide refundable and equitable tax credits for caregivers and parents.
- Adapt pension systems to account for periods spent performing invisible work.
- Develop accessible respite services and psychological support for caregivers.

## 3. Accessible and Universal Childcare Services

- Implement a pan-Canadian system of universal, affordable, accessible, high-quality childcare.
- Adapt childcare offerings to rural, remote, and northern realities and to the specific needs of Indigenous communities, including extended hours for atypical schedules.
- Invest in the training, wages, and working conditions of educators to ensure system quality and sustainability.

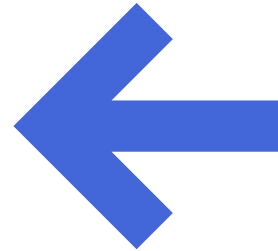


# Our demands

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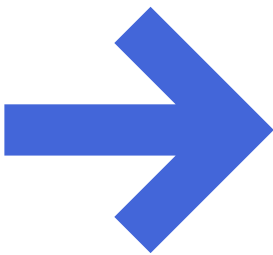
## 4. Work-Family-Study Balance

- Develop accessible work-family-study balance policies, including incentives encouraging men to take on a fair share of family responsibilities.
- Ensure compensation for all mandatory internships and recognize interns as full workers.



## 5. Awareness and Education

- Declare the first Tuesday in April as National Invisible Work Day and support its recognition by the UN as an International Day.
- Integrate the issue of invisible work into school curricula from the primary level onward to challenge gender stereotypes and promote a fair division of invisible work for future generations.
- Publicly promote the importance of invisible work and its role in reducing social and economic inequalities.



# Our Call-to-Action

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We, members of the National Coalition for the Equity of Invisible Work in Canada, affirm that invisible work is essential to the functioning of society and the economy and must be recognized as such.

We call on governments, businesses, institutions, and civil society to work together to:

- **Recognize and value invisible work** by applying a Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) and intersectional approach.
- **Ensure a more equitable sharing of responsibilities** between women and men.
- **Implement public policies** that provide real support to caregivers, parents, and people working in sectors heavily affected by invisible work, such as agriculture.



Without this work, no society can function. It is time to say it clearly and collectively:

**Invisible work matters across Canada**