



NEWS RELEASE

Women less likely to flourish in countries where legal restrictions prevent them from freely participating in economy

August 15, 2019
For immediate release

TORONTO—In countries with legal restrictions that prevent women from freely engaging in economic activity (owning property, opening a bank account, obtaining a loan, choosing where to work or whether to start a business), women perform worse across a wide variety of measures of human flourishing, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“When women have the same legal rights as men, they are better able to enjoy the fruits of employment and live independently,” said Rosemarie Fike, economics instructor at Texas Christian University and author of the Fraser Institute’s [*Gender Disparity Under the Law and Women’s Well-Being*](#), part of the Fraser Institute’s ongoing research of women’s well-being worldwide.

In 2016, according to the study, 37 countries (including Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Iran and Qatar) had severe formal legal disparity between the economic rights of men and women—essentially, legal inequality—where women face barriers to owning property, registering businesses or entering into contracts the same way as men. And women are sometimes barred from opening bank accounts, obtaining loans and entering certain types of professions.

But in 48 countries including Canada, the United States and many European countries, which have no gender disparity under the law—and thus no legal inequality—women are better able to participate in economic activity and experience greater social progress. For example, women in such countries:

- live almost 10 years longer (on average) than countries with severe legal inequality—79.5 years compared to 70.2 years.
- are nearly twice as likely to have a job—65.9 per cent of women compared to 47.6 per cent in countries with severe legal inequality.
- are more financially independent—more than 76.9 per cent of women have bank accounts compared to just 29.8 per cent in countries with severe legal inequality.
- are more likely to be able to read (91.4 per cent) compared to 60.7 per cent in countries with severe legal inequality.
- and are less likely to work in unsafe workplace conditions (22.9 per cent) compared to 42.6 per cent in countries with severe legal inequality.

“To help women worldwide improve their ability to make economic decisions and improve their lives, governments in countries such as Canada and the United States should encourage equality under the law for all countries,” Fike said.

For more information on this study, see this [short video here](#) and free PDF download at www.womenandprogress.org.

(30)

MEDIA CONTACT:
Rosemarie Fike, Researcher
Fraser Institute

To arrange media interviews or for more information, please contact:
Mark Hasiuk, 604-688-0221 ext. 517, mark.hasiuk@fraserinstitute.org

Follow the Fraser Institute on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

The Fraser Institute is an independent Canadian public policy research and educational organization with offices in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, and Montreal and ties to a global network of think-tanks in 87 countries. Its mission is to improve the quality of life for Canadians, their families and future generations by studying, measuring and broadly communicating the effects of government policies, entrepreneurship and choice on their well-being. To protect the Institute's independence, it does not accept grants from governments or contracts for research. Visit www.fraserinstitute.org