



# NEWS RELEASE

## Women live healthier, longer and more independently in countries with higher levels of economic freedom

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For immediate release

**TORONTO**—Higher levels of economic freedom—the ability of individuals to make their own decisions about what to buy, where to work, whether to start a business or engage in trade—dramatically improve women’s lives around the world, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

The study is being released on International Women’s Day.

“Economic freedom promotes more robust economies, higher incomes, less poverty and improvements in health and education,” said Rosemarie Fike, economics instructor at Texas Christian University and author of the Fraser Institute’s *Women and Progress: Impact of Economic Freedom and Women’s Well-Being*.

“Yet in many countries, since the institutions that protect economic freedom are not equally shared between men and women, it’s more difficult—sometimes impossible—for women to enjoy those benefits.”

For example, in some parts of the world, women face barriers to owning property. They can’t register a business or enter into contracts the same way as men. Women are also sometimes barred from opening bank accounts or obtaining loans. They face restrictions on the type of profession they can pursue. In fact, in 19 countries, women need the permission of their husbands to simply get a job.

The Fraser Institute’s internationally renowned *Economic Freedom of the World Index* was recently adjusted for gender equality which resulted in lower scores for countries where women are less economically free than men.

When women are afforded higher levels of economic freedom, their lives markedly improve in several important ways:

- **Life expectancy:** Women live more than 15 years longer in countries with higher levels of economic freedom—82 years compared to 65 years.
- **Workforce participation:** In countries where women enjoy higher levels of economic freedom, they’re nearly twice as likely to have a job—45 per cent compared to 24 per cent in countries with low levels of economic freedom.
- **Financial independence:** More than 80 per cent of women have bank accounts in economically free countries, compared to just 25 per cent in countries with low levels of economic freedom.
- **Adult literacy:** More than nine-in-10 (94 per cent) women can read in countries with high levels of economic freedom, compared to just 60 per cent in countries with low levels of economic freedom.

“This International Women’s Day, let’s truly help improve the lives of women and girls everywhere by encouraging equal access to the institutions that help protect economic freedom and allow women worldwide the ability to make their own economic decisions,” Fike said.

For a free PDF download and more information, visit [www.womenandprogress.org](http://www.womenandprogress.org).

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