

Towards gender equality in a caring economy. What & Why

Jane Jenson

Département de science politique
et

Co-directrice par intérim, Centre Jean-Monnet Montréal
Université de Montréal

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A caring economy is:

- An economy in which access to high-quality care at all ages is a citizenship* right rather than a market good or a private, familial responsibility.
 - The citizenship regime ensures both access to and provision of care on the basis of equality as well as need.
- An economy in which the production of care and care work are valued:
 - Care work is recognised as having economic value
 - Care work is recognised as having traditionally reproduced gender inequalities and therefore requiring public interventions to create equal treatment and equal opportunities in: wages; employment status; citizenship rights.

* Citizenship in this presentation does not mean formal passport-holding, but rather membership in a society of shared responsibility and solidarity.

The pandemic revealed gender inequalities in a basic right of social citizenship – access to quality care

- Equality in access to care not yet a right of full citizenship and expression of social solidarity.
 - Inadequate staffing and PPE in institutions caring for the elderly, affecting a vast number of older women.
 - Shut-down of networks of personal care workers affected both women workers and those needing care, two groups that are overwhelmingly female.
 - Closure of childcare services had predictable consequences for mother's employment.

The pandemic revealed AGAIN that care work is undervalued

- For those doing care work, working conditions and status are often unequal and wages are low.
- Reliance on undervalued employees providing care yet again exposed long-standing patterns of gender inequalities, intersecting with other forms of inequality and disadvantage
 - The health sector relies on many women workers with precarious employment status – from doctors and nurses to cleaners and food service.
 - There is a massive reliance on women as personal care workers for the elderly & children
 - Care work is often the primary employment opportunity for newcomers to the EU – recent immigrants, migrants and refugees.
 - Workers of immigrant-origin – black, people of colour, linguistic and ethnic minorities – are also over-represented in care work.
- These are the groups that have suffered from the inequalities of status, conditions and wages and for whom there is an opportunity to do more.

A caring economy for the future would ensure

- (i) high-quality care is a right of citizenship and**
- (ii) care workers receive equal treatment**

- A caring economy guarantees high-quality care to all, as a citizenship right, with support from the state and provided in stable and respectful ways.
- A caring economy guarantees that care work is provided in accordance with principles of gender equality: equal wages; equal employment conditions; and equal rights.
- A caring economy after the COVID-19 pandemic recognises the contribution made to essential and frontline services by many women with precarious immigration status and intersectional disadvantage and provides policy tools to end them.

A caring economy with gender equality

- Let's seize this opportunity
- Let's do it

Thank you

jane.jenson@umontreal.ca