



FACT SHEET MOVING WOMEN INTO LEADERSHIP

Women make up just over half of the Canadian population, yet continue to be underrepresented in political and professional leadership positions.

When more women ascend to leadership roles, they become role models to girls and to other women. More women leaders will also influence the high-level decision-making that will pave the way toward gender equality.

Why is it urgent to support women in leadership?

- Although Canada's federal cabinet is now evenly split between men and women, only 27% of the seats in the House of Commons belong to women.¹
- Women comprise 19.5% of the board members for Canada's top 500 companies.²
- Just 8.5% of the highest-paid positions in Canada's top 100 listed companies are held by women.³

What we're doing to advance women's leadership:

The Foundation supports programs that provide opportunities for women and girls to recognize their leadership potential, to practice using leadership skills, and to understand that there is more than one way to lead. We advocate for a broader perception of leadership, which we call **inclusive leadership**.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP IN CANADA

1. Many women now hold leadership roles. Isn't there *almost* an equal number of women leaders?

- Although 82% of women aged 25 to 54 now participate in Canada's workforce⁴, they are still underrepresented in leadership roles.
- Women hold only 25% of vice-president positions, and 15% of CEO positions.⁵
- Women tend to work in industries that reflect traditional gender roles, specifically healthcare and social assistance, educational services, accommodation and food services.⁶ Even in female-dominated industries, women tend to occupy lower-level jobs. In the food-services industry, for example, nearly 60% of chefs were men while 71% of servers were women in 2015.⁷

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- Out of the top 500 companies and organizations in Canada, 109 do not have any women on their board of directors.⁸
- This number remains low despite the fact that provinces and territories (with the exception of BC, Alberta, Prince Edward Island, and Yukon) have agreed to follow a protocol that requires companies to report what steps they are taking to increase female representation on boards and in senior management.⁹

Women are also underrepresented in Canadian government.

- Women currently make up 27% of the House of Commons, which is the highest percentage in Canada's history. However, that number should be at least 50% to be considered a true representation of our population.¹⁰
- A 2017 global ranking of gender equality in National Parliaments placed Canada at #63, falling behind Rwanda, Mexico, Afghanistan, and South Sudan.¹¹

2. Shouldn't the most qualified person get the job, regardless of gender?

Some people argue that more men hold leadership roles because of their qualifications, but women are just as qualified as men in terms of education and experience.

- As of 2015, 35% of Canadian women had a university certificate or degree, compared to 30% of men.¹²
- Women and men also tend to have nearly equivalent job tenure. In a national study, both women and men report having worked for their current employer for an average of just under eight years.¹³

Research suggests that other factors, including gender stereotypes and biases, may be at play.

- For example, despite spending equivalent time at a job, women are significantly less likely than men to be promoted. Women are 30% less likely than men to get promoted out of an entry-level position, and 60% less likely to move from middle management into the executive ranks.¹⁴
- This may have a negative impact on how women view their own potential to lead. While six out of 10 professional women in the U.S. aspire to be a senior leader in their company or organization, the same number find it hard to see themselves as leaders.¹⁵

Additionally, many women take primary responsibility for home-based labour and childcare. These responsibilities may create work/life conflict and reinforce negative stereotypes, which are both barriers to accessing leadership roles.

- Three quarters (75.8%) of part-time workers in Canada are women. The top reason women gave for working part-time was a need to care for children. Only 3.3% of men who work part-time cite the same reason.¹⁶

- The high cost of childcare may cause mothers to quit their jobs in order to take care of the children themselves. In Canada, the gender-employment gap is largest in cities where daycare costs are highest.¹⁷
- Interruptions to women's careers tend to be longer and more frequent than those experienced by men. Women also report more spontaneous, short-term absences than men, such as staying home to care for a sick child or deal with a home-repair.¹⁸
- Both short- and long-term absences are stigmatized in the workplace, and have been linked to fewer promotions and salary increases.¹⁹

3. Why is it so important to have more women in leadership roles?

Having more women in leadership will help Canada to achieve gender equality. Women leaders in Canada will not only help influence decision-making around policies, laws, and management, but they will also act as role models and mentors for young women.

A KPMG study about women's leadership found that:

- 67% of women reported they had learned the most important lessons about leadership from other women.
- 82% of professional working women believe access to and networking with female leaders will help them advance in their career.
- 86% of women report that when they see more women in leadership, they are encouraged they can get there themselves.
- 91% of working women indicated that it is important to them to be a positive role model for younger female colleagues in the workplace.²⁰

4. How does it benefit companies and organizations to foster women's leadership?

- A 2017 report suggests that steps to decrease gender inequality in the workplace may benefit Canada's economy by as much as \$150 billion by 2026. If the gender gap was eliminated entirely, that number could rise to as high as \$420 billion.²¹
- High-performing businesses tend to have more women in leadership roles: 37% of leaders in higher-performing companies are women, compared to 19% of leaders in lower-ranked companies.²²
- Companies with the highest levels of diversity (either gender, ethnic, or racial) are anywhere from 15-35% more likely to have financial returns above their industry's national average.²³

5. What is inclusive leadership?

In order to foster diversity in leadership, we need to broaden our perception of what makes a good leader.

Traditionally there has been a narrow definition of leadership, which influences who is chosen for these roles, and who aspires to take them on.

The Canadian Women's Foundation advocates for inclusive leadership, a style that:

- Collaborates
- Respects non-traditional ways of leading
- Embraces diversity and includes the most marginalized voices
- Shares knowledge and empowers those around them
- Emphasizes "power with" rather than "power over"

6. What can we do to encourage more women toward leadership roles?

In a KPMG study, women said that leadership training (57%), confidence-building (56%), decision-making (48%), networking (47%), and critical-thinking (46%) are the most important aspects of supporting and preparing women to pursue leadership roles.²⁴

Three in four (76%) women wish they would have learned more about leadership when they were growing up, and that they had more opportunities to learn how to lead when they were growing up.²⁵

Eighty-six per cent of women remember being taught to be nice to others growing up, but only 44% remember being taught to be a good leader and only 34% were taught to share their point of view.²⁶

Through the programs we fund, the Canadian Women's Foundation promotes leadership skills in the following ways:

The Canadian Women's Foundation Leadership Institute

More than 70 mid-career women in the non-profit sector have received leadership training through this pilot project. The Leadership Institute, established in partnership with the Coady Institute at St. Francis Xavier University, was designed to ensure that the next generation of female leaders in Canada's nonprofit sector has the leadership skills they need to effectively manage change, build the sector, and become a force of change for women and girls.

Mentorship

Many of the girls' programs funded by the Foundation have a mentorship component, providing younger girls access to mentors, and training older girls to become mentors. We also fund violence prevention and economic development programs for women that provide participants opportunities to become a mentor or work with a mentor.

Women- and girl-led programs

We invest in community programs that encourage women and girls to help shape the programs they attend. This helps participants develop leadership skills and become role models in their communities.

Amplifying the voices of women and girls

We invest in programs that help women and girls to find their voices, speak their minds, challenge gender stereotypes, and discover and celebrate their strengths.

Inclusive leadership

Women are often overlooked for leadership roles because they do not fit the mold of an “ideal leader.” That’s why the Foundation advocates for inclusive leadership, which is collaborative and welcomes the most marginalized voices.

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