

Focus: Representation of Women at Banks in Canada



Focus Sheet

FAST FACTS


- Banks are leaders in building representative workforces. As of 2022, women occupied 39.4 per cent of senior management positions and 48.5 per cent of all middle management positions at Canada's six largest banks (excluding subsidiaries), exceeding the Federal government's benchmarks at both levels.
- As of 2023, the boards of directors of Canada's six largest banks constitute, on average, 43 per cent women.

The Bottom Line

Banks are leaders in the representation of women at several levels, including executive and middle management and on their boards of directors.

Greater representation of women in the workplace, particularly in senior roles, is fundamentally a question of equality. Organizations that achieve gender diversity also outperform by almost any measure those that don't. Banks know this and are working to increase the representation of women in senior roles by:

- Adopting board diversity policies that include gender diversity targets and programs to accelerate gender diversity in senior management;
- Training for employees on combatting unconscious bias to address subtle barriers that may prevent inclusion;
- Identifying the levels at which women are exiting the leadership pipeline and creating programs to mitigate potential trends;
- Ensuring development plans are in place for women who are not chosen during the final selection process



for executive roles to improve the prospect of promotion at the next opportunity.

Employment Equity

Not only is building a diverse workforce the right thing to do, it also broadens a bank's ability to compete for top talent and respond to rapidly changing markets.

Banks were among the first organizations to grasp the long-term demographic and labour market significance of Canada's *Employment Equity Act*, in addition to valuing its human rights aspects. They quickly became leaders in the ongoing effort to build representative workforces and were among the first to articulate the business case for equity and inclusion in the workplace.

As of 2022, women constitute 54.5 per cent (134,921) of the workforce at Canada's six largest banks (excluding subsidiaries), substantially more than any other federally regulated sector. Women occupied 39.4 per cent of senior management positions and 48.5 per cent of all middle management positions, exceeding the Federal government's benchmarks at both levels. In total, 46.8 per cent of all professional jobs in banks are held by women.

Representation on Boards

It is a given that achieving equal representation on boards of directors contributes to better governance and board performance. Now, the goal for companies is to accelerate progress in this area. As of 2023, the boards of directors of Canada's six largest banks constitute, on average, 43 per cent women.



Commitment to Equal Pay for Equal Work

Canada's banks have been committed to the principle of equal pay for equal work for more than 35 years. Banks have refined their job evaluation and compensation systems to ensure they are gender-neutral and compliant with the *Equal Wages Guidelines*, which provide guidance on the application of the pay equity provisions in the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.

In order to ensure that compensation is gender neutral, banks have established internal pay equity plans and have implemented a number of policies and procedures to ensure equitable compensation for both men and women. This includes:

- undertaking regular audits to identify pay differences,
- requiring that compensation decisions be based on gender-neutral factors,
- conducting spot checks to ensure there are no biases in compensation decisions, and
- conducting pay equity maintenance exercises to correct any salary gaps.

Formalized Inclusion and Diversity Strategies

Canada's largest banks have formalized Inclusion and Diversity Strategies with dedicated staff to support their execution. Examples of bank programs include:

- RBC's *Women in Leadership* Program that supports the development and advancement of women through a 10-month extended development and targeted networking program.



Read the CBA's remarks regarding legislation on ending harassment and violence in the workplace in [Remarks to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities re Bill C-65](#)

- CIBC offers *Disrupting Unconscious Bias* training, and partnered with Catalyst to bring the first *Men Advocating for Real Change (MARC)* program to Canada.
- TD Bank Group leverages specialized industry partnerships and sponsorships to encourage more women to consider a career in STEM related fields. Programs which TD has been instrumental in developing and partnering on include: Rotman Back to Work and Women in Capital Markets (WCM) Return to Bay St. to help women successfully re enter the workforce, as well as Access Employment Empowering Women for professional women who are new to Canada.
- BMO's *Enterprise Sponsorship Program* which launched in 2014, pairs senior leaders with diverse protégés, including diverse women, who have the potential for more senior opportunities. The program goes beyond mentoring; sponsors advocate for protégés to obtain exposure and forge connections that open doors to development opportunities. The program has since been replicated in business groups across the bank in order to deepen the pipeline of diverse talent.
- Recognizing that technology is fundamentally changing banking, Scotiabank's IgnITe! initiative encourages and develops women leaders in technology.
- National Bank's *Project Invisible* initiative, a collaborative effort among ten Montreal businesses, was designed to shed light on the unconscious biases that exist in workplaces and organizations.

And that programming extends beyond employee engagement to broader bank initiatives that help clients and communities prosper. Examples include publication of commitments to supplier diversity, championing of programs to help newcomer women and others realize leadership potential, and community mentorship programs.

Advocating for Change

The CBA has been an active participant in government consultations on issues such as preventing workplace violence and harassment, pay equity, and flexible work. The Association also supports the work of organizations like Catalyst Canada and the Association of Quebec Women in Finance and the work they do to champion gender diversity.

The Canadian Bankers Association is the voice of more than 60 domestic and foreign banks that help drive Canada's economic growth and prosperity. The CBA advocates for public policies that contribute to a sound, thriving banking system to ensure Canadians can succeed in their financial goals.

Canadian Bankers Association www.cba.ca

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