

FACT SHEET: SELFEMPOWERMENT

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS: We spoke to women leaders across Canada about gender barriers in the workplace, how these barriers show up and continue to persist, and what supports and conditions empowered them to challenge gender discrimination. Our participants included 21 women leaders working in a variety of sectors including finance, health care, technology, fisheries, pharmaceuticals, biotech, applied research, international business, media, supply chain management, ecosystem development, innovation and more. The barriers they experienced were often taken for granted as the nature of the work, the culture of the industry or profession, or just acceptable practice within workspaces.

“I like to ask myself a question: “If not you, then who? Why aren't you good enough for this role?””

FIRST VOICE ACCOUNTS

- *“the “imposter syndrome” is very real. So I combat that by saying, “You have all the tools and things that you need to do this. And if you don't speak up, somebody else will.””*
- *“Hold leadership accountable. If you're in a company that doesn't really seem to acknowledge or value you [...], don't automatically jump to the assumption that it's you that needs to change[...].”*
- *“Instead of just doing the job that you're doing, look outside to see what other things you can get involved in to build that skill set, or just engage yourself in other things.”*
- *“I would definitely recommend finding a champion wherever you are. [...] Ask them, “I saw you do this. You're really good at that. Can you show me how you do that?””*

HOW TO EMPOWER YOURSELF

- *“I think I've always been quite aware of my learning style, and I know I learn best from conversations, so I have actively sought out people who can become my mentors.”*
- *“I wish I did a little bit more in the past to expand my horizons and talk to people in other areas, [and] understand what those roles [...].”*
- *“I think it's also about leadership, not just within your role but outside. You don't necessarily have to be a leader in your professional life. You can be a leader outside, like serve on a community organization board. It's about diversify, diversify.”*
- *“For me, empowerment is more like an internal process. [...] I think it's more like how you feel when you've achieved something or when you're proud of yourself or your work.”*

Discrimination based on gender is the leading form of discrimination reported in Canada. After decades of progress on gender equity, the barriers that continue to exist are systemic, deeply rooted in cultural norms, and often hard to identify. Our findings point to durable and self-perpetuating nature of systemic gender barriers.

SELF EMPOWERMENT: Some of the gender barriers women face are self-imposed. Systemic discrimination shapes our ideas about “appropriate” female behaviour, competence and confidence. Learning to speak up, share ideas, take on challenges and claim a full share of opportunity and recognition can be a learning curve for many women.

HOW TO EMPOWER YOURSELF

- Make connections and build a network of support. Find your champions and mentors!
- Take advantage of new opportunities to learn and grow and gain new experiences.
- Believe in yourself and your right to participate. Don't be afraid to dream big.
- Hold others accountable for power imbalances and exclusionary practices.



Prudentia Institute is a purpose driven, charitable research and development organization with a mission to empower and develop youth in Atlantic Canada. The institute supports the inclusive development and empowerment of youth through research and knowledge mobilization. To learn more, visit www.prudentia institute.ca or email info@prudentia institute.ca.