

FACT SHEET: FEMALE LEADERSHIP & SOLIDARITY

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.

“Seeing women in leadership positions in any organization or any capacity is empowering.”

FIRST VOICE ACCOUNTS

- *“In each job I’ve had, there’s always been a pivotal woman who’s a little bit older who has supported me and really helped me out, and that’s been huge. Now I’m trying to do the same because I think it’s super important.”*
- *“Seeing a successful founder who’s a female, and getting paired with them as your mentor – you’re more likely to stick with it, or take the next step.”*
- *“Seeing a woman who is in higher up positions is empowering, seeing them speak and how they present themselves. So many have had to change the way they speak, their mannerisms, to fit that male-dominated ideology that we have. [...] So whenever I see a woman kind of break another chip off that glass ceiling, it’s nice to feel like, “OK, we’re still here.””*

WOMEN SUPPORTING WOMEN

- *“When I first started in my professional career, women were very underrepresented. [...] But even having just the one person that you can look up to and get feedback from and have that kind of bond was really helpful for me. [...] So even in underrepresented professions, even just having one woman leader that you can look up to can make a really big difference.”*
- *“I think that’s an important part of my success story – having a super intelligent, encouraging woman at the helm who said, “You know what? You’re good at this. If you want to make a career out of this, we can do it.””*
- *Being able to help other people achieve their goals is probably one of the most empowering things I can think of.”*

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.

SOLIDARITY: Unity between women (and female identifying persons) can go a long way to supporting the eradication of gender inequality. When women stand together they can better challenge the status quo. Both social and formal environments often perpetuate barriers to female solidarity. Therefore, it is important to confront barriers, and create safe spaces that foster trust.

WAYS TO HELP

- Create or nurture spaces for women to develop a sense of community, such as affinity or networking groups.
- Develop and or share communal resources.
- Combat division, stigma, stereotypes and barriers in social and formal environments.
- Foster inter-generational dialogue.
- Promote female representation.



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.