

WE ARE ALL SEXES (Men/Women)

Even though we are all from the same Earth, sometimes it feels like “Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus”. Within The City of Calgary, just as in society, there are differences between men and women in our workplace that we must acknowledge, such as the way we think, communicate and behave. Despite all the ways we seem to differ, there are more commonalities between men and women than differences. One recent research [study](#), from the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, indicates that the sexes are more alike than different and that the differences we observe amongst men and women are not necessarily based on sex, but largely due to other factors. As individuals, we each bring our strengths and different perspectives resulting in a more holistic and diverse workplace.

Gender Differences and Commonalities

Historically, gender refers to sex (male or female), although recently it has been expanded to include gender identity or gender expression. According to Merriam-Websters dictionary, gender refers to characteristics of femininity and masculinity defined as the “behaviour, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex”.

Gender differences between men and women can involve physical and emotional factors which can influence male and female behaviour in the workplace. These influences could stem from biological factors (e.g. height, strength, spatial sense, language processing), psycho-social factors (e.g. upbringing) and stereotypes such as traditional roles associated with being male or female. Men and women may also have different perceptions, working and communication styles. By grouping people into stereotypical gender categories, we simplify the complexities of an individual, as opposed to dealing with each individual as a unique case. As we have a diverse workforce, each individual brings a unique perspective stemming from many factors, such as culture, religion, learning style and age.

At the City of Calgary, we look for commonalities amongst our workforce, no matter our gender or our differences. We want to be able to remove barriers to inclusion for both men and women, and provide equal opportunity for all individuals to contribute to the workplace. For example, as individuals we seek a work environment that is respectful, positive and supportive. As a result, the way we work with each other should be collaborative and open to hearing other’s ideas and perspectives.

Women in the Workplace

Over the past several decades, women have entered the workforce in significant numbers. For example, [Statistics Canada](#) indicates that in 2009, 58.3% of women were employed in the workforce as compared to 41.9% in 1976. From the total workforce, a relatively large portion work part-time, e.g. in 2009, 26% of women in the workforce work 30 hours or less. This can be due to a number of reasons including, childcare, family or personal responsibilities.¹

In management, women have increased their employment in managerial positions in 2009 to 37%, up from 31% in 1987.² Women tend to be better represented in lower-level managerial positions as compared to senior levels. According to the Conference Board of Canada, while the number of women entering middle management and professional positions has risen, women are still not reaching senior management positions in significant numbers. In 2009, 32% of senior managers in Canada were women.³ Many women encounter a labyrinth of barriers in order to move into senior management

¹ Women in Canada: Work Chapter Updates (Statistics Canada, 2006)

² Women in Canada: Paid Work (Statistics Canada, 2009)

³ Women in Canada: Paid Work (Statistics Canada, 2009)

positions, including conflicting gender stereotypes and leadership expectations, discomfort with self promotion and finding themselves in high profile positions with inadequate preparation.⁴ Other [major barriers](#) cited for women advancing into senior management roles include a lack of female role models, lack of significant general management or line experience, a commitment to family or personal responsibilities, and a lack of mentoring.⁵ Having women in leadership roles encourages greater participation of women to move into leadership, provides an inclusive work environment, brings life experiences and perspectives that can differ from men and provides different approaches and solutions in the workplace.

Men in the Workplace

The roles of men in the workplace and in the community have changed over the past few decades. Where as in the past, there used to be solely male dominated fields of work, women have increased their presence within these areas. Most research focuses on women in the workplace moving into non traditional roles. However, there has also been an increase of men moving into positions traditionally defined as “women’s jobs”. Within female dominated industries, such as nursing, social work and elementary school education, men find themselves in the minority and face several challenges. Some of the difficulties of working in female dominated industries or roles, include being defined as “less masculine”, having their gender identity questioned and other forms of harassment.⁶

Both men and women share many of the same behaviours that are prescribed for members of the opposite gender. For men, however, there may be a price of compliance with gender norms, such as placing a priority on career advancement and sacrificing relationships that can support them in times of stress or conformity to masculine norms, (e.g. over achievement, emotional control or toughness).⁷

In Our Workplace

Having men and women in the workplace provides a balance of ideas and perspectives that contribute to a diverse workforce. At The City of Calgary, our culture incorporates the values of work-life balance, which is displayed through our various programs and policies established to support both men and women in the workplace, including:

- Flexible work options, i.e. telecommuting, job share arrangements, compressed work week, Rearranged Work Week Days
- Employee Family Assistance program

To create a safe and respectful working environment for all individuals, the Respectful Workplace policy is part of the Code of Conduct defining appropriate and inappropriate behaviours within the workplace.

At The City of Calgary we sanction pay equity, and gender equality in workforce composition and leadership. From a recruitment and attraction perspective, our goal is to hire the best qualified person for the job, regardless of gender, background, or other unrelated characteristics. We aim to attract the best qualified candidates from a range of diverse backgrounds.

Tips for Inclusive Behaviours

Employees and leadership:

- Be aware and avoid gender bias or stereotypes of men and women.
- As each employee is different, have a conversation with your colleagues to find out their preferred communication and work style, while maintaining flexibility with your own style – this can help to reduce assumptions based on gender.

⁴ Women in Senior Management – Where Are They? (Conference Board of Canada, 2011)

⁵ Women Advance Slowly but Surely in Top Management Ranks (Conference Board of Canada, 2003)

⁶ Men, Masculinity and Non-Traditional Occupations (Gender, Work and Organization, 2002)

⁷ Engaging Men in Gender Initiatives (Catalyst, 2009)

- Refer to the “We are ALL” pages for additional information on learning styles (We are ALL Learners) and talents (We are ALL Talented) that can help increase understanding amongst your colleagues in the workplace.
- If you are encountering challenges in balancing your work and family obligations, please speak with your manager or supervisor to discuss possible options, e.g. flexible work options (telecommuting, compressed work week and/or job share arrangements).
- Review The City of Calgary’s Respectful Workplace policy to ensure that the language and behaviour displayed is respectful of all employees.

Managers or supervisors:

- Employees with supportive leadership and work environments tend to be more productive, have higher morale and a good work-life balance. Be open to having a career dialogue with your employees and discuss what you can do together to support their professional development. Regardless of their gender, employees should have equal opportunity for a meaningful work experience at The City.
- Recognize that both men and women have needs in the workplace for flexibility and work-life balance.
- Where possible, within union collective agreements, look at options for work scheduling flexibility for individuals with family obligations that may require their involvement during work hours to tend to medical appointments, volunteering at their children’s school or unexpected situations.
- Enforce zero-tolerance of discrimination or harassment and help connect all employees with organizational programs and policies.
- Think of your business needs and whether part-time positions or alternative arrangements can be an option to target a skilled workforce that may be seeking work-life balance.

More information?

City of Calgary links:

[Respectful Workplace policy](#) –The City of Calgary’s Respectful Workplace policy including appropriate and inappropriate behaviours in the workplace and information for situations of sexual harassment and/or discrimination

External resources:

[Work-Life: Prevalence, Utilization and Benefits](#) (Catalyst) – statistics on work-life balance and options (flexibility, elder care, child care) to promote more inclusive work environments for men and women and the impact on retention

[Men and Women Share Cognitive Skills](#) (American Psychological Association) – research on myths about cognitive differences between men and women