

Women

Women represent 47% of the labour force, but only 13% of the workforce in the mining industry.

Women represent 47% of the Canadian labour force but only 13% of the workforce in the mining industry and are therefore an important potential source of new talent. Generally, women seek a workplace that supports work-life balance, offers flexibility, is respectful of women, supports their advancement and professional growth, and respects family commitments and demands. Promoting the industry to women throughout their educational careers, providing flexible career paths that allow for variations in progression, and addressing their potential to contribute to the mining industry could open up a rich supply of skilled workers in a variety of occupations.

Profile

Labour force

- Women represent 47% of the total Canadian workforce; in 2006, 58% of women 15 or older were employed.
- In 2006, 73% of women with children under the age of 16 were employed compared with 80% of women without children.

- In 2006, 67% of employed women were in traditionally female-dominated occupations (teaching, nursing, clerical/administrative, service occupations).
- Women represent only 22% of employed professionals in natural sciences, engineering, and mathematics; 1% of industrial electricians; 2% of heavy equipment operators; and 5% of contractors, supervisors, and skilled trades workers.
- During the last decade, women accounted for greater than 50% of the growth in the labour force employed in occupations which usually require a university education.

Education and training

- In 2005, the number of new certificates in skilled trades issued to women ranged from zero in the Northwest Territories to 102 in Alberta, but the high of 102 represents just 2.7% of all newly licensed trades-people in the province. (Environmental Scan, Canadian Women's Foundation, November 2007).
- Women—along with Aboriginal people, visible minorities, and person with disabilities—are much more likely to drop out of apprenticeship programs than men, and often report discriminating hiring practices, negative perceptions of their abilities, isolation, and harassment in apprenticeship classrooms and on the job. (Accessing and Completing Apprenticeship Training in Canada: Perceptions of Barriers Report cited in Environmental Scan, CWF, November, 2007.)

In mining

- Women in mining are more likely to be employed in support staff roles, followed by professional occupations and technologist/technician roles; fewer women are found in skilled trades and miner/production worker roles.



Challenges identified by the mining industry

- Distance from home communities to the mine sites and lack of flexibility. Stress related to shift work or fly-in, fly-out rotations make it particularly difficult for women with family responsibilities to pursue a career in mining.
- Lack of awareness of the career opportunities for women in mining, a traditionally male-dominated industry.
- Small number of women pursuing educational programs that train them for employment in the mining industry (of particular note was a lack of women in training programs for skilled trades and technician job categories).
- Few female role models to encourage joining the mining industry.
- Many mining companies are successful in attracting and recruiting women, but have difficulty retaining them, particularly when they have a young family.

Top hints for attracting women

- Utilize the Explore for More brand (researched, tested, and available free through MiHR).
- Develop marketing and promotional activities targeted specifically to women that would encourage them to consider a career in the mining sector.
- Promote opportunities for women in mining in secondary and post-secondary educational institutions to encourage young women to consider a career in mining and help them learn about career path opportunities.
- Increase the profile of women in industry by showcasing women in leadership and non-traditional roles.
- Ensure the brand and value proposition is attractive to women; dispel the commonly held view that mining is “dark,” “dirty,” “low-tech,” with a culture that is closed to women.
- Improve work schedule flexibility and support for work-life balance.

(Data presented are based on 2006 Statistics Canada census data; data related specifically to mining are from the recent MiHR study, Prospecting the Future (2005); other sources are noted where applicable.)

Practices and tools related to women

Practice	Focus	Location in Guide
Community relations	Attraction	“Attraction Booklet” page 11
Modernizing and automating heavy labour processes	Recruitment	“Recruitment Booklet” page 13
Developing Women as Leaders	Retention	“Retention Booklet” pages 7 & 14
Women’s Council and mentorship program	Retention	“Retention Booklet” page 10
Respectful workplace	Attraction, recruitment, and retention	“Retention Booklet” page 14
Female team leaders	Retention	“Retention Booklet” page 14
Culture and accommodation for women	Retention	“Retention Booklet” page 16
Health and wellness programs	Retention	“Retention Booklet” page 18

Top hints for retaining women

- Provide programs to support work-life balance and career path planning that offer the flexibility necessary to attend to family responsibilities.
- Focus on women in succession planning and management development programs—strive for representation of women at all levels of leadership.
- Support both top-down and grass-roots initiated programs and supports for women.
- Increase opportunities for women to be heard and to network with each other to reduce a sense of isolation.
- Offer mentorship programs.
- Provide opportunities for young women to become accustomed to operating safely in rugged conditions and around heavy equipment.

Top resources related to women

Women in Mining Portal

www.womeninmining.net

A mining community portal, dedicated to all professional women in the natural resources sector. Offers news, events, seminars, jobs, who’s who, contacts, education in mining, links, library, and articles and research—such as women in fly-in fly-out operations, issues around attraction and retention for women in mining, and listings of jobs worldwide.

Women in Leadership Foundation

www.womeninleadership.ca

A national not-for-profit organization that focuses on advancing women in leadership roles and addresses general workplace inclusiveness issues related to women.