

# Pension plans in Canada, as of January 1, 2015

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Membership in registered pension plans (RPPs) in Canada totalled 6,257,000 people in 2014, an increase of 72,000 or 1.2% over 2013.

Membership in public sector pension plans rose 0.9% to 3,213,000, while the number of members in private sector plans increased 1.4% to 3,044,000. The public sector accounted for 51.3% of total RPP membership.

Membership among both men and women in RPPs increased 1.2% from 2013. As a result, male membership reached its highest level since 1982 at over 3,144,000, while female membership hit a new all-time high, surpassing 3,100,000 for the first time.

The majority of the increase for men was in the private sector, while women experienced gains in both sectors. Women represented 63.0% of membership in public sector plans in 2014, and 35.8% in the private sector.

The pension coverage rate, the proportion of all employees covered by an RPP, was 38.1% in 2014, up slightly from 37.9% the previous year.

In 2014, just over 4,380,000 employees were in defined benefit pension plans, down 0.5% from 2013, and down 8.3% from a high of 4,776,000 in 1992. Defined benefit plans accounted for 70.0% of employees belonging to an RPP in 2014, a drop from 71.2% in 2013, and down from over 90% in the 1980s.

Membership in defined contribution plans, the other most common type of plan, increased 5.8% in 2014 to 1,097,000, accounting for 17.5% of all RPP membership. Nearly 87% of members in defined contribution plans worked in the private sector.

Other plan types, such as hybrid or composite plans, continued to grow in 2014, with more than 779,000 employees belonging to these types of plans. Membership in these types of plans was up 4.4% from 2013, and has tripled in the past decade.

Total employer and employee contributions to RPPs fell to \$63.4 billion in 2014, down from \$66.7 billion in 2013. Employer contributions for unfunded liabilities accounted for \$10.2 billion of the total, down from \$15.1 billion in 2013. When payments for unfunded liabilities are excluded, employers contributed 60.2% of the total, while employees contributed the remaining 39.8%.

The market value of assets in RPPs totalled \$1.7 trillion in 2014, up 9.9% from the previous year.

## Note to readers

*Registered pension plans are established by employers or unions for employees. These data come from the Pension Plans in Canada Survey as of January 1, 2015.*

*A **defined benefit plan** defines the benefits to be paid according to the terms and conditions of the plan. The employer's contributions are not predetermined, but are a function of the cost of providing the promised pension.*

*A **defined contribution plan** specifies the contributions made by the employer, as well as by the employee if the plan is contributory. Pension benefits paid are a function of accumulated contributions and investment returns.*

***Other plans** include those having a hybrid, composite, defined benefit / defined contribution or other component.*

***Membership** is defined as active members of the pension plan currently making contributions to the pension plan or for whom contributions are being made.*

*An **unfunded liability** generally corresponds to any amount by which the assets of a pension plan are less than its liabilities.*



**Table 1**  
**Registered pension plan membership, by sector and type of plan**

	2013	2014	2013 to 2014	2013 to 2014
	number		net change	% change
<b>Total, all sectors</b>	<b>6,185,159</b>	<b>6,256,920</b>	<b>71,761</b>	<b>1.2</b>
<b>Males</b>	<b>3,108,762</b>	<b>3,144,586</b>	<b>35,824</b>	<b>1.2</b>
<b>Females</b>	<b>3,076,397</b>	<b>3,112,334</b>	<b>35,937</b>	<b>1.2</b>
Defined benefit plans	4,401,970	4,380,386	-21,584	-0.5
Males	2,044,367	2,013,876	-30,491	-1.5
Females	2,357,603	2,366,510	8,907	0.4
Defined contribution plans	1,036,747	1,097,211	60,464	5.8
Males	625,165	668,135	42,970	6.9
Females	411,582	429,076	17,494	4.3
Other plans <sup>1</sup>	746,442	779,323	32,881	4.4
Males	439,230	462,575	23,345	5.3
Females	307,212	316,748	9,536	3.1
<b>Public sector</b>	<b>3,184,276</b>	<b>3,212,885</b>	<b>28,609</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<b>Males</b>	<b>1,185,486</b>	<b>1,189,037</b>	<b>3,551</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b>Females</b>	<b>1,998,790</b>	<b>2,023,848</b>	<b>25,058</b>	<b>1.3</b>
Defined benefit plans	3,002,068	3,010,597	8,529	0.3
Males	1,107,382	1,101,541	-5,841	-0.5
Females	1,894,686	1,909,056	14,370	0.8
Defined contribution plans	143,034	144,581	1,547	1.1
Males	59,493	59,861	368	0.6
Females	83,541	84,720	1,179	1.4
Other plans <sup>1</sup>	39,174	57,707	18,533	47.3
Males	18,611	27,635	9,024	48.5
Females	20,563	30,072	9,509	46.2
<b>Private sector</b>	<b>3,000,883</b>	<b>3,044,035</b>	<b>43,152</b>	<b>1.4</b>
<b>Males</b>	<b>1,923,276</b>	<b>1,955,549</b>	<b>32,273</b>	<b>1.7</b>
<b>Females</b>	<b>1,077,607</b>	<b>1,088,486</b>	<b>10,879</b>	<b>1.0</b>
Defined benefit plans	1,399,902	1,369,789	-30,113	-2.2
Males	936,985	912,335	-24,650	-2.6
Females	462,917	457,454	-5,463	-1.2
Defined contribution plans	893,713	952,630	58,917	6.6
Males	565,672	608,274	42,602	7.5
Females	328,041	344,356	16,315	5.0
Other plans <sup>1</sup>	707,268	721,616	14,348	2.0
Males	420,619	434,940	14,321	3.4
Females	286,649	286,676	27	0.0

1. Other plans include plans having a hybrid, composite, defined benefit / defined contribution or other component.

Source(s): CANSIM table [280-0016](#).

Available in CANSIM: tables [280-0008 to 280-0014](#) and [280-0016 to 280-0027](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [2609](#).

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