

Pension plans in Canada, As of January 1, 2016

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Membership in registered pension plans (RPPs) in Canada totalled 6,262,000 in 2015, up 4,900 members compared with 2014.

Membership in public sector pension plans increased by 16,500 to 3,229,000. Meanwhile, the number of members in private sector plans fell by 11,600 to 3,032,000. The public sector accounted for 51.6% of total RPP membership in 2015.

RPP membership moved closer to gender equality in 2015. The number of men with an RPP rose 3,500 to 3,141,000, representing 50.2% of the total, while the number of women with an RPP rose 8,400 to 3,121,000, a second consecutive record high.

Both men and women saw lower membership counts in the private sector, while there were gains in the public sector compared with a year earlier. Women accounted for 63.1% of the members in public sector plans in 2015 and 35.7% in the private sector.

The pension coverage rate, or the proportion of all employees covered by an RPP, edged down from 38.1% in 2014 to 37.8% in 2015. The pension coverage rate for women (39.5%) was higher than the rate for men (36.2%) in 2015, and these rates were both down slightly from a year earlier.

In 2015, 4,204,000 employees were members of defined benefit pension plans, down 4.0% from 2014. Defined benefit plans accounted for 67.1% of employees with an RPP in 2015, down from 70.0% in 2014 and down from a rate of over 90% in the 1980s.

Membership in defined contribution plans, the next most common type of plan, increased 2.8% to 1,128,000 in 2015, accounting for 18.0% of all RPP membership. Most members in defined contribution plans (87.1%) worked in the private sector.

Membership in other plan types, excluding defined benefit and defined contribution, such as hybrid, composite and defined benefit / defined contribution plans, grew 19.3% in 2015. There are now 930,000 people belonging to plans not classified as the conventional defined benefit or defined contribution models. Membership in these other plan types has more than quadrupled in the past decade.

Total employer and employee contributions to RPPs rose 5.9% from 2014 to \$67.2 billion in 2015. Employer contributions for unfunded liabilities accounted for \$11.4 billion of the total compared with \$10.2 billion in 2014. When payments for unfunded liabilities are excluded, employers contributed 60.0% of the total, while employee contributions accounted for the remaining 40.0%.

The market value of assets in RPPs rose 3.0% from 2014 to \$1.71 trillion in 2015. Of these assets, 55.2% were held in large plans with 30,000 or more members. There were 32 such plans in 2015, accounting for 50.0% of total membership.





In celebration of the country's 150th birthday, Statistics Canada is presenting snapshots from our rich statistical history.

In response to substantial growth in the number of pension plans in Canada in the 1940s and 1950s, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics conducted its first comprehensive Pension Plan Survey in 1960.

The survey collected data from 8,501 sources, including employers, provincial departments, pension committees and unions. Information was collected on 8,920 pension plans, with a total membership of 1,815,022. Over 50 years later, Statistics Canada's Pension Plans in Canada program collects information on nearly 17,000 registered pension plans (RPPs), mainly from 10 pension supervisory authorities. Total membership in 2015 was 6,261,820.

In 1960, 1,421,857 men were in a pension plan, accounting for 78.3% of the total, while women accounted for 393,165 or 21.7% of the total. RPP membership was split almost equally between men (50.2%) and women (49.8%) in 2015, a result of the considerable growth of women's participation in the labour force over this period.

Defined benefit plans were the dominant type of plan in 1960 with 84.4% of membership, followed by defined contribution plans (14.3%) and other plan types (1.3%). In 2015, defined benefit plans remained the most common type of plan with 66.9% of membership, followed by defined contribution plans (18.0%) and other plan types (15.1%).

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, 2016.

*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

	2014	2015	2014 to 2015	2014 to 2015
	number		net change	% change
Total, all sectors	6,256,920	6,261,820	4,900	0.1
Males	3,144,586	3,141,083	-3,503	-0.1
Females	3,112,334	3,120,737	8,403	0.3
Defined benefit plans	4,380,386	4,203,840	-176,546	-4.0
Males	2,013,876	1,922,872	-91,004	-4.5
Females	2,366,510	2,280,968	-85,542	-3.6
Defined contribution plans	1,097,211	1,128,397	31,186	2.8
Males	668,135	690,350	22,215	3.3
Females	429,076	438,047	8,971	2.1
Other plans ¹	779,323	929,583	150,260	19.3
Males	462,575	527,861	65,286	14.1
Females	316,748	401,722	84,974	26.8
Public sector	3,212,885	3,229,410	16,525	0.5
Males	1,189,037	1,190,351	1,314	0.1
Females	2,023,848	2,039,059	15,211	0.8
Defined benefit plans	3,010,597	2,939,459	-71,138	-2.4
Males	1,101,541	1,066,688	-34,853	-3.2
Females	1,909,056	1,872,771	-36,285	-1.9
Defined contribution plans	144,581	146,121	1,540	1.1
Males	59,861	60,243	382	0.6
Females	84,720	85,878	1,158	1.4
Other plans ¹	57,707	143,830	86,123	149.2
Males	27,635	63,420	35,785	129.5
Females	30,072	80,410	50,338	167.4
Private sector	3,044,035	3,032,410	-11,625	-0.4
Males	1,955,549	1,950,732	-4,817	-0.2
Females	1,088,486	1,081,678	-6,808	-0.6
Defined benefit plans	1,369,789	1,264,381	-105,408	-7.7
Males	912,335	856,184	-56,151	-6.2
Females	457,454	408,197	-49,257	-10.8
Defined contribution plans	952,630	982,276	29,646	3.1
Males	608,274	630,107	21,833	3.6
Females	344,356	352,169	7,813	2.3
Other plans ¹	721,616	785,753	64,137	8.9
Males	434,940	464,441	29,501	6.8
Females	286,676	321,312	34,636	12.1

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](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).