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## QUICK TAKES • Women in Law in Canada

- Lawyers wishing to practise law in Canada must be a member of one of the 14 law societies governed by the Federation of Law Societies of Canada. <sup>1,2\*</sup>
  - In 2005, there were 28,361 practising women lawyers and 48,915 practising men lawyers.
- Based on data collected from the top 10 law schools according to *Canadian Lawyer*, women in 2006 represented 52% of graduates. <sup>3</sup>
- For new lawyers practising 0-5 years, in many areas, women are the majority, and their numbers and percentages have increased since 1995: <sup>1\*\*</sup>
  - Manitoba: 51.7% of the newest lawyers are women, up from 41.4% in 1995
  - Saskatchewan: 50.5%, up from 46.6%
  - Ontario: 53.0%, up from 42.5%
  - Quebec: 60.4%, up from an already high 54.9%
- In 2005, women made up 61.6% of new lawyers in New Brunswick and 56.8% in Nova Scotia (data not available for 1995). <sup>1</sup>
- Areas where women were less than 50% of new lawyers in 2005 included Alberta (49.3%), Newfoundland (48.4%), Northwest Territories (35.3%) and Nunavut (29.4%). <sup>1</sup>
- Not as many women have been practising for a significant length of time: 10.2% of women in Ontario and 15.8% in Quebec have been members of the Societies for 26 years or more. <sup>1</sup>

### FLEXIBILITY IN CANADIAN LAW FIRMS

Catalyst conducted a nationwide survey of lawyers working in law firms across Canada and presented its findings in a series of reports. Some highlights include:

- Of the women lawyers in the study, 28% reported participating in a flexible work arrangement, compared to 21% of men. <sup>4</sup>
- 69% of lawyers expressed that they would like to use a flexible work arrangement, and 86% of those who had already used one stated they would like to use another. <sup>4</sup>
- 50% of lawyers said they felt their firms were doing “poorly” or “very poorly” in their provision of flexible work arrangements. <sup>4</sup>
- Women associates expressed they found it the most difficult to manage the demands of work and personal/family life, at 75%. <sup>5</sup>
  - 69% of women partners said the same, followed by 66% of men associates, and 46% of men partners. <sup>5</sup>
- The average cost to a law firm when an associate leaves—potentially because of work-life tension—is \$315,000. This includes both investment costs (i.e. upfront and annual investment in the recruitment, training and development of an associate) and separation costs. <sup>6</sup>

\* *The Federation collects information from 10 provinces and 3 territories, with Quebec reporting separate numbers for notarial professions (Chambre des notaires du Québec) and lawyers (Barreau du Québec).*

\*\*2005 data for British Columbia not available.

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## **Sources**

1. Federation of Law Societies of Canada, *2005 Law Societies Statistics*.
2. The Law Society of British Columbia: *2005 Annual Report*.
3. Catalyst research.
4. Catalyst, *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: Creating Opportunities for Better Balance* (2005).
5. Catalyst, *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: Lawyers State Their Case on Job Flexibility* (2006).
6. Catalyst, *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: Building the Business Case for Flexibility* (2005).

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