



Standards Council of Canada
Conseil canadien des normes

Gender and Standardization Strategy

2019-2025





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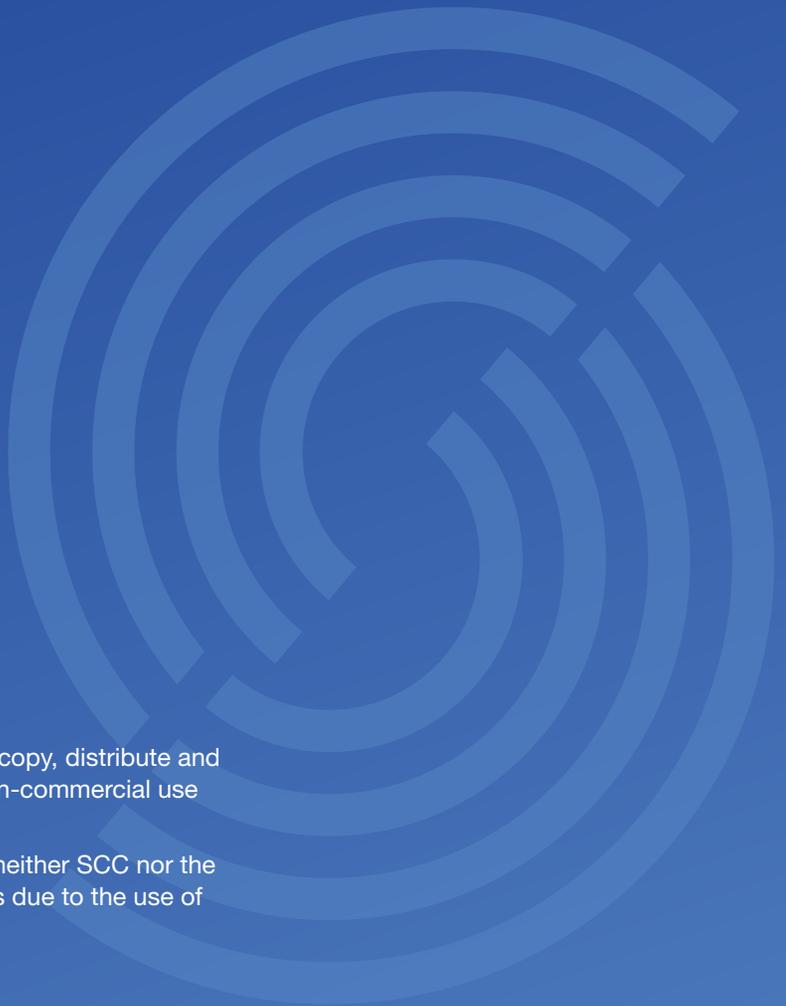
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Overview

Standards are not neutral. The sentiment is so ubiquitous that it has been expressed by National Standards Bodies, like the Standards Council of Canada (SCC), as well as professionals in disciplines ranging from medicine¹ to accounting.² Standards are set by those who participate in their development. Discussions about the non-neutrality of standards have tended to focus on the advantage (or disadvantage) this could create for industries or businesses.



Historically, little consideration has been given to the personal attributes of those who develop standards and the potential implications. Standards development is male-dominated. Given that standards are not neutral, what does this mean in terms of the impact of standards on women?

Globally, there is a growing recognition that standards may be experienced differently by women and men. This prompted the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to author a Declaration for Gender Responsive Standards. On May 14th, 2019, SCC, along with over 50 other international, regional and national standards bodies, signed the Declaration.³ It calls on standards bodies like SCC to acknowledge the pervasive and influential role of standards in society and in turn, to develop and implement a gender action plan that enhances expertise and advances gender inclusivity. This document outlines SCC's strategy and work plan to fulfill the obligations under the declaration.

1. Croft, P., & Porcheret, M. Standardised consultations in primary care. *BMJ*, 2009: 338. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.b152>.

2. Collett, P. Standard setting and economic consequences: an ethical issue. *Abacus*, 31(1), 1995, 18-30.

3. UNECE, UNECE and over 50 standards bodies sign Declaration on Gender Responsive Standards, May 14, 2019. <http://www.unece.org/info/media/presscurrent-press-h/trade/2019/unece-and-over-50-standards-bodies-sign-declaration-on-gender-responsive-standards/doc.html>

Context

Inequality is costly. The McKinsey Global Institute estimates that the global economy could be \$28 trillion higher in 2025 if the gender gap was fully closed.⁴ When we think about engaging women in the labour force, one area that is underexplored is the involvement of women in standardization. This is a significant gap given that standards are tied to increased labour productivity and economic growth.⁵

Internationally, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) estimates the participation of women in the standards development process at 20-25%.⁶ For the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) the figure is 14%, but given that the estimate is based on incomplete data it could change.⁷ To the best of our knowledge, Canada is one of the first countries to quantify the participation of women on SCC's ISO/IEC mirror committees. Currently, women account for 25% of ISO mirror committee participants, and 9% for IEC, even though they account for 47% of the labour market from which participants are drawn.⁸

While it is obvious that women are under-represented in standardization, the implications are less clear. As a result, SCC is implementing a work plan on gender and standardization to ensure that Canada is well positioned to address the gender gap in standardization and understand both the causes and effects of such a gap.

This Strategy draws on principles of Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+). GBA+ is an analytical tool that examines identity factors such as sex, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability so that we can take actions to promote equality. Through

the corporate plan, SCC reports on our GBA+ initiatives to Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS). SCC is also engaged in implementing an employment equity program to review policies and practices related to employment. The work outlined in this Strategy will certainly support SCC GBA+ obligations, however we will be putting more focus on gender. As others around the world are directing their efforts towards gender, we are also aligning our strategy to other's around the world.

Stakeholder Engagement

We can't do it alone. The success of this Strategy will depend on engaging key stakeholders in the Canadian standardization network and partnering with other champions of this cause. Of particular note, SCC's accredited SDOs will play an important role as purveyors of standards development in Canada. As a starting point, a thematic session on gender and standardization with the Standards Development Organizations Advisory Committee (SDOAC) will highlight work underway and identify opportunities for growth and collaboration.

SCC will also leverage and support the work of other bodies working towards gender inclusivity and equality in the standardization community. These organizations include Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Réseau Normalisation et Francophonie (RNF), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). SCC will seek opportunities to engage with these organizations as feasible, leveraging existing and ongoing engagement opportunities.

4. Woetzel, J. and colleagues. The Power of Parity: How Advancing Women's Equality can add \$12 Trillion to Global Growth. McKinsey Global Institute: 2015.

5. The Conference Board of Canada. Getting Aligned. How Adopting Standards Affects Canada's Productivity and Growth. [online]. Standards Council of Canada: October 2015. [Accessed September 28]. Available from: <https://www.scc.ca/en/about-scc/publications/general/getting-aligned-how-adopting-standards-affects-canadas-productivity-and-growth>

6. https://www.unece.org/.../wp6/.../Minutes_from_the_May_10_Gender_Group_call.pdf

7. https://www.unece.org/.../wp6/.../Minutes_from_the_May_10_Gender_Group_call.pdf

8. Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, CANSIM table 282-0002 and custom tabulations



Next Steps

This strategy and work plan outlines SCC's commitment to a standardization system that is inclusive and equal, regardless of gender. The current plan covers a five-year period (FY 2019/20 to 2024/25). The strategy will be reviewed and updated, as appropriate, on at least an annual basis. As opportunities arise, and as this body of work grows, the work plan will be updated accordingly.

It is important to recognize the nascence of this issue and the means that are available to SCC to advance gender equality as Canada's National Standards Body. That is why this strategy is focused on building knowledge and capacity, committing to further research on the topic to better inform our own policies and procedures, while also joining forces with other partners who are equally invested in this issue.

SCC is proactively taking steps to increase the representation of women in standardization and to ensure that standards are gender neutral.

These are important actions to ensure that standardization works for all Canadians.



THE STRATEGY AND WORK PLAN

SCC can be a catalyst for change. In our role as Canada's National Standards Body, facilitating Canada's National Committee, and our international engagement and leadership, SCC can demonstrate significant value to Canada by improving the representation of women in standardization, as well as ensuring our programs and policies support the development of gender responsive standards. The goal of the strategy and work plan is threefold:

- **Improving gender representation** in standards development SCC will assess the gender balance of its mirror committees to determine where there are opportunities to improve. Included in this analysis will be a comparison with labour market demographics to ensure our targets are informed and feasible.
- **Building gender expertise into the standardization system** through the development of a guidance document that describes how to effectively consider gender in the development of a standard to create a voluntary standardization system that is more gender responsive. This will include engagement with SCC's accredited Standards Development Organizations (SDOs) and member program to ensure the document is practicable. Increased gender responsiveness in standards development will result in more relevant and effective standards.
- **Contributing sound research** to demonstrate leadership in a burgeoning field within standardization. There is currently a lack of research and literature on the impact of gender on standards. SCC can influence the future of gender policies and strategies of other standardization bodies by contributing robust research and analysis to this field of work.