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# The Impact of Institutional Barriers on Greater Female Representation in the Canadian Armed Forces

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**THE IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS ON GREATER FEMALE  
REPRESENTATION IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES**

By Major Monica Bradley-Kuhn

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## ABSTRACT

The inclusion and integration of females in the Canadian Armed Forces has been a long and challenging process. With its beginnings in the creation of the female force in 1941-42, to the last military occupation (submariner) opening up to females in 2001, and finally to the first female Vice-Chief of Defence Staff being announced in 2021.<sup>1</sup> Institutional barriers have been broken down over the last 80 years, which has given women the opportunity to serve their country and enjoy fulfilling and noble careers. Canada's Defence Policy: *Strong Secure Engaged* (SSE) has committed to the goal of increasing female representation in the CAF to 25.1% by 2026.<sup>2</sup> However, there are still institutional barriers within the CAF hindering the growth of the female population, and jeopardizing the SSE goal of a military that is one quarter female. This manuscript will identify the institutional barriers present in the recruitment of females and in the retention of women already serving with the Canadian military.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of National Defence, "Promotions and Senior Appointments 2021 - General and Flag Officers."

<sup>2</sup> Government of Canada, "Strong Secured Engaged Canada's Defence Policy," 2017, 12.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTIONS

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) employs thousands of Canadians in 106 different occupations.<sup>3</sup> The men and women in uniform perform a vital role in defending the Nation's sovereignty and representing Canadian interests across the globe. The defence of one's country is noble work, fulfilling work, and yet, it is work that fails to be desirable to some Canadians. The CAF is struggling to be an employer of choice for Canadian women. The current female representation in the military as of March 2021 is 16%.<sup>4</sup> There has been acknowledgment from the CAF and the Government of Canada of the requirement to increase the number of women in the Forces, and this was formally communicated in Canada's Defence Policy. In 2017 Canada's Defence Policy: *Strong Secure Engaged* (SSE) was published and committed to the goal of increasing female representation in the CAF to 25.1% by 2026.<sup>5</sup> There are institutional barriers within the CAF hindering the growth of the female population, and jeopardizing the SSE goal of a military that is one quarter female. This manuscript will identify the institutional barriers present in the recruitment of females and in the retention of women already serving with the Canadian military.

The CAF is struggling to be a competitive employer for Canadian women despite the long history of women serving in the defence of Canada. A brief history of women's involvement in the Canadian military will be outlined to provide an appreciation for the barriers and obstacles that have been overcome. Examining the historical events relevant

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<sup>3</sup> Government of Canada, "The Canadian Armed Forces, Browse Careers," accessed February 2, 2021, <https://forces.ca/en/careers/#:~:text=Currently%20displaying%20101%20of%20101%20careers.>

<sup>4</sup> Directorate of Human Rights and Diversity, "Canadian Armed Forces Employment Equity Statistics" (Department of National Defence, March 2021).

<sup>5</sup> Government of Canada, "Strong Secured Engaged Canada's Defence Policy," 12.

to military women will also highlight the CAF's attempted commitment to the evolution of a force that is more inclusive to women.

## **HISTORY: CANADIAN WOMEN AND MILITARY SERVICE**

Women have completed acts of service for Canada for over 130 years, and their participation in a military force can be dated back to the North-West Rebellion of 1885.<sup>6</sup> The First World War resulted in the requirement to deploy nurses quickly, and thousands of women volunteered to fulfill this role for Canada.<sup>7</sup> The eruption of the Second World War saw changes to the military structure, and a women's force was created in 1941-42.<sup>8</sup> During the World War years approximately 50,000 women were in uniform serving Canada.<sup>9</sup> As World War II was ending in 1945 the military recognized the requirement to maintain a small number of females in uniform, but the Canadian government opposed it.<sup>10</sup> Service women were released from duty, however, nurses were exempt from this policy as care for injured veterans was still required.<sup>11</sup> It was not long before the Canadian government rescinded on this policy, as the 1950s were a tumultuous time with the Cold War beginning and conflict exploding in Korea.<sup>12</sup> The female service within the Canadian military was re-established in response to these global hostilities. The restoration of a women's force however did not equate to equality among military members. There was a limit to the number of women allowed in the military, terms of service were shorter for women compared to their male colleagues, and women were

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<sup>6</sup> Barbara T. Waruszynski et al., "Women Serving in the Canadian Armed Forces: Strengthening Military Capabilities and Operational Effectiveness," *Canadian Military Journal* 19, no. 2 (2019): 25.

<sup>7</sup> Waruszynski et al., *Women Serving in the Canadian Armed Forces...*, 26.

<sup>8</sup> Veterans Affairs Canada, "Women at War," February 14, 2019, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/historical-sheets/women>.

<sup>9</sup> Waruszynski et al., *Women Serving in the Canadian Armed Forces...*, 27.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

restricted to occupations with training periods of less than 16 weeks, resulting in lower paid occupations.<sup>13</sup> However, there was an advancement in women's pay during this period; for the first time, women received the same pay as their male coworkers.<sup>14</sup>

### **National and International Governing Instruments: Assist in Female Equality**

The evolution of women's integration and equality within the CAF is linked to certain national governing instruments. For example, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women made recommendations in order to accomplish a climate of equal opportunity for Canadian women.<sup>15</sup> In 1970 the Royal Commission on the Status of Women made six recommendations for the CAF that would improve gender equality: standardize enrolment criteria, equal pension benefits for both genders, opportunity for female attendance at the Royal Military College of Canada, opening of all occupations to women, the termination of regulations prohibiting married women to enroll, and finally abolishing the requirement of release of a military woman once a child was born.<sup>16</sup> The following year, 1971, saw significant advancements for women as five of the six recommendations were implemented by the CAF. The recommendation to open all occupations to women was not supported, it was believed (at the time) that only men should fulfill certain positions for operational reasons.<sup>17</sup>

A subsequent governing instrument that has helped shape Canadian equality policies is that of the 1977 Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA). The Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) and the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) were

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Government of Canada, "Women in the Canadian Forces (CF)," December 10, 2010, <https://www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2010/12/women-canadian-forces-cf-.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Government of Canada, Women in the Canadian Forces (CF).

<sup>17</sup> Waruszynski et al., Women Serving in the Canadian Armed Forces..., 27.



legislated from the CHRA, and they work together to resolve discrimination and human rights complaints.<sup>18</sup> Further equality advancements came in 1982 when the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was signed, and when the Equality Rights Section (Section 15) came into effect in 1985.<sup>19</sup> This resulted in the CAF starting the Combat Related Employment of Women (CREW) trials from 1987-1989, which were to evaluate the operational effectiveness of having females and males in combat units.<sup>20</sup> In 1989 a case was brought to the CHRT involving three female complainants on the grounds that the CAF's employment opportunity policy was discriminatory.<sup>21</sup> Women were not eligible to serve in certain combat trades, and women were not permitted the same training opportunities as their male counterparts.<sup>22</sup> The CAF's position on excluding females was that of operational effectiveness. The matter to be addressed by the CHRT was whether the CAF's requirement of *operational effectiveness* constituted a legitimate reason for excluding women, and if it justified the discrimination.<sup>23</sup> The CHRT ruling was in favour of the complainants and concluded that the "CAF policy and practice of excluding women from combat duty is discriminatory on the grounds of sex under the Act."<sup>24</sup> This CHRT ruling was revolutionary for female integration into the Canadian military. Based on the CHRT decision, the CAF chose to use the CREW research design to inform implementation plans to achieve the requirement for complete female

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<sup>18</sup> Teresa Brown, "Changing the Unchangeable: Recruitment and Retention of Women in the Canadian Military" (Toronto, Ont: Canadian Forces College, 2015), 4.

<sup>19</sup> Government of Canada, "Minister of Justice Marks the 20th Anniversary of Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms," April 14, 2005. <https://www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2005/04/minister-justice-marks-20th-anniversary-section-15-canadian-charter-rights-freedoms.html>

<sup>20</sup> Waruszynski et al., Women Serving in the Canadian Armed Forces..., 28.

<sup>21</sup> Nicolas Cliche, Jane Banfield, and Sidney Lederman, *Brown v. Canadian Armed Forces*, No. D.T. 3/89 (Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, February 20, 1989).

<sup>22</sup> Brown, *Changing the Unchangeable...*, 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Cliche, Banfield, and Lederman, *Brown v. Canadian Armed Forces*.

integration within ten years.<sup>25</sup> At the completion of the CREW trials, Canadian women were eligible to apply to all military occupations with the exception of submariner, and the CAF was to plan for complete female integration within ten years.<sup>26</sup>

The Employment Equity Act (EEA) was an additional governing instrument that furthered equality for Canadians. The EEA became a federal law in 1986 and was revised in 1996, and it was under the revised Act that the CAF and the Department of National Defence (DND) were identified as employers for the first time.<sup>27</sup> The purpose of the EEA is “to achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability.”<sup>28</sup> Employment equity is legislated in Canada through the EEA whereby public sector employers (CAF/DND) are to “eliminate employment barriers, institute positive policies and practices and make reasonable accommodations to ensure that designated group members (DGM) achieve representation in the employer’s workforce.”<sup>29</sup> The CAF recognizes four DGM: women, Aboriginal peoples, visible minorities, and persons with disabilities.<sup>30</sup> To ensure compliance with the EEA the CAF Employment Equity Regulations were created in 2002, and from that the CAF formed the Defence Employment Equity Advisory Groups (DEEAG).<sup>31</sup> The DEEAG are to “provide advice and insight to the leadership on issues relevant to their membership and implementation of employment equity.”<sup>32</sup> The

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<sup>25</sup> Karen D. Davis and Royal Military College of Canada, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces, 1970-1999: Négociation Entre Les Sexes Dans Les Forces Canadiennes, 1970-1999” (2013).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Department of National Defence, “Employment Equity Officer Guidelines” (2015), 6.

<sup>28</sup> Government of Canada, “Employment Equity Act” (1986), 1. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/E-5.401/index.html>.

<sup>29</sup> DND, Employment Equity Officer Guidelines..., 5.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>31</sup> Brown, Changing the Unchangeable..., 5.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 4–5.

Directorate of Human Rights and Diversity (DHRD) also employs people in dedicated EE roles, and DHRD publishes monthly statistics on the DGM representation in the CAF.

There are also a significant amount of international instruments that have been integral to evolving the role of women within society. In particular, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 has been essential at advancing women's involvement in global peace and security. Specifically stated, "UNSCR 1325 affirms that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts and in the forging of lasting peace."<sup>33</sup> UNSCR 1325 was established in October 2000, and since then it has been augmented by succeeding resolutions.<sup>34</sup> These subsequent resolutions (as a collective) have become known as the Women, Peace and Security agenda.<sup>35</sup> Resolution 1325 urged all member Nations and actors to grow the number of women participating in UN peace and security efforts, and to incorporate gender perspectives into all aspects of this work.<sup>36</sup> A global commitment is required in order to implement UNSCR 1325, and to address this requirement UN Member States created government-led National Action Plans (NAP). As of October 2020, 86 Nations had created NAPs for the Women Peace and Security Agenda.<sup>37</sup> The adoption of Resolution 1325 by the UN was revolutionary. It changed the

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<sup>33</sup> United States Institute of Peace, "What Is UNSCR 1325?," United States Institute of Peace, accessed March 16, 2021, [https://www.usip.org/gender\\_peacebuilding/about\\_UNSCR\\_1325](https://www.usip.org/gender_peacebuilding/about_UNSCR_1325).

<sup>34</sup> The United Nations Security Council Resolutions that make up the Women, Peace and Security Agenda include: 1325 (2000); 1820 (2008); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2009); 1960 (2010); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015); and 2467 (2019).

<sup>35</sup> Stephen Fuhr, "Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the Canadian Armed Forces," Report of the Standing Committee on National Defence, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session (Government of Canada, June 2019), 17.

<sup>36</sup> United Nations, "Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace and Security," Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, accessed March 16, 2021, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>.

<sup>37</sup> United Nations Office, "National Action Plans for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security," PeaceWomen, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, accessed March 16, 2021, <https://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>.

role women play in preventing, resolving, and recovering from conflict. UNSCR 1325 has also had a lasting impact on Canada, of which will be discussed next.

In 2010, the Government of Canada launched its first NAP for the Women Peace and Security agenda, and as of 2017 Canada is currently employing a second NAP.<sup>38</sup> The CAF has a role to play in Canada's NAP, and in January 2016, the CDS issued a directive for integrating UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions into CAF planning and operations. In 2017, the Government of Canada launched the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, with the goal of developing strategies to assist in breaking down barriers to the deployment of women.<sup>39</sup> The Elsie initiative is in support of UNSCR 2242 and "calls upon the Secretary-General to initiate, in collaboration with Member States, a revised strategy within existing resources, to double the number of women in military and police contingents of UN peacekeeping operations over the next five years."<sup>40</sup> The Elsie Initiative has great importance for the evolution of women's role in society and within defence and security forces as approximately five percent of uniformed personnel in UN peacekeeping forces are female.<sup>41</sup>

Advancements in equal opportunity have been made. The CAF, national governing instruments and international instruments have greatly contributed to this growth in gender equality. This has resulted in a military force that is in stark contrast to the original female force of 1941-42. The first female cadets graduated from the Royal Military College in 1984, the infantry saw its first female soldier in 1989, the first mixed-

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<sup>38</sup> United Nations Office, "National Action Plan: Canada," Peace Women, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, accessed March 17, 2021, <https://www.peacewomen.org/nap-canada>.

<sup>39</sup> Fuhr, *Improving Diversity...*, 18.

<sup>40</sup> United Nations, "The Elsie Initiative Fund Launched to Increase Uniformed Women in UN Peacekeeping.," UN Women, March 29, 2019, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/3/news-the-elsie-initiative-fund-launched-to-increase-uniformed-women-in-un-peacekeeping>.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

gender warship (HMCS NIPIGON) participated in NATO exercises in 1991, and 13 years later the first woman served as a captain of a Canadian warship in 2003.<sup>42</sup> Females were eligible to apply to the submariner occupation starting in 2001, and the first female submariners were qualified in 2003.<sup>43</sup> The opening of the submariner occupation now allows women to apply to every CAF occupation.<sup>44</sup> The CAF and the Government of Canada have come a long way in the last 80 years in terms of integrating females into the Armed Forces. Many institutionalized barriers have been broken down. Nevertheless, as stated previously, the CAF continues to struggle to be an employer of choice for Canadian women. The current percentage of female representation in the CAF is 16%,<sup>45</sup> which equates to 15,440 women in uniform out of 96,500 Regular Force and Primary Reserve Force members. A career in the CAF is unique, honourable, challenging, and rewarding, yet the percentage of female representation in the CAF has remained relatively consistent over the last five years at 15-16%.<sup>46</sup> The CAF is aware of this matter and a great deal of attention has been dedicated to increasing female representation. The following section will elaborate on the CAF's response to the importance of female representation within the forces.

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<sup>42</sup> Government of Canada, "Women in the Canadian Forces (CF)."

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Government of Canada, "Women in the Forces," accessed February 2, 2021, <https://forces.ca/en/women-in-caf/>.

<sup>45</sup> Directorate of Human Rights and Diversity, "Canadian Armed Forces Employment Equity Statistics" (Department of National Defence, March 2021).

<sup>46</sup> Government of Canada, "Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces Implementation of Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security," June 10, 2020, [https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/publications/cnap-pnac/implementation\\_plans-plans\\_mise\\_ceuvre-2017-2022-dnd.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/publications/cnap-pnac/implementation_plans-plans_mise_ceuvre-2017-2022-dnd.aspx?lang=eng).

## IMPORTANCE OF FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN THE CAF

The CAF has recognized that it is vitally important to focus on growing the number of women in the military and has communicated as such in the Defence Policy, SSE. The goal of increasing CAF female representation to 25.1% by 2026 is an objective motivated by several factors. Firstly, the CAF is a public institution and it must continuously strive to represent the Canadian people, and women comprise 50.4% of the population.<sup>47</sup> As stated by a former Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Thomas Lawson:

...The profession of arms within a democracy must embody the same values, beliefs, and cultures that it strives to defend. Only through the accurate reflection of its military personnel from society at large will the citizenry accept the CAF as a legitimate defence institution.<sup>48</sup>

Secondly, gender and cultural diversity increase operational effectiveness for the CAF. International operations are shifting away from the historical standard of high intensity warfighting in remote locations to “full spectrum operations.”<sup>49</sup> Females and other minority groups can (at times) better facilitate interfacing with non-governmental organizations and civilian populations, resulting in overall increased operational effectiveness.<sup>50</sup> Lastly, employment equity is legislated in Canada through the 1996 EEA, and the CAF is an active and compliant institution with this Act.

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<sup>47</sup> Statistics Canada, “Female Population,” accessed February 4, 2021, Stats Can, women living in Canada <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11475-eng.htm>.

<sup>48</sup> Department of National Defence, “Canadian Armed Forces Employment Equity Plan 2015-2020” (Government of Canada, 2015), 1.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

## **SUMMARY**

The initial chapter of this manuscript discussed women's historical role in the Canadian military. This was followed by a discussion on the various National and International governing instruments that contributed to female equality and integration into the Canadian military. The importance of having women serving in the Forces was outlined and why increasing female representation in the CAF is vital. The next chapter will focus on a statistical overview of female representation in the CAF since the publication of the Defence Policy, SSE. Following this, Chapter 3 will discuss institutional barriers impacting the recruitment of women into the CAF. Chapter 4 presents data on female attrition and retention, and elaborates on the reasons why women are leaving the military. Chapter 5 will focus on the institutional barriers that are still present in the CAF that are potentially hindering the retention of the talented and trained female uniformed members. The final chapter offers concluding statements to the research presented in this work.

## **CHAPTER 2: CAF FEMALE REPRESENTATION**

The CAF is comprised of the Regular Force (full time employment) and the Primary Reserve Force (various part time contracts). The total number of members in the CAF (Regular Force and Primary Reserve Force) is 96,500 with 16% of that number being female.<sup>51</sup> A CAF uniformed member who identifies as female does equate to that member being a minority within the Canadian military. There are 15,440 women in uniform, resulting in an approximate ratio of one female member for every six male members (1:6.25). The CAF can increase female representation by way of two

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<sup>51</sup> DHRD, CAF Employment Equity Statistics.

mechanisms: recruit new members and retain those already serving. This discussion will begin by presenting a statistical overview of female representation in the CAF since the publication of SSE. The focus will then shift to female representation at the senior ranks, and will close with a discussion on female representation on international and domestic operations. The information presented in this chapter will provide a contextual understanding of the current state of women in the Canadian military, and it will provide a baseline for which recruitment and retention initiatives can be focused.

## STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

The Defence Policy, SSE, was published in 2017 and the percentage of females in the CAF was 15.1% at that time.<sup>52</sup> Considering SSE's published goal of 25.1% female representation in the CAF by 2026 would necessitate a 1% annual increase of female representation in order for the CAF to reach a force that is one quarter female by 2026.<sup>53</sup> If this goal is on track, the current percentage of females would be 19% by the end of the fiscal year (FY) 2020-2021. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The March 2021 Employment Equity (EE) statistics has CAF female representation at 16% (Regular Force and Primary Reserve Force).<sup>54</sup> The CAF is deficient in the 1% annual growth of female representation, and is behind by almost 3%. The overall percentage of females in the CAF has increased from 15.1% in 2017, 15.4% in 2018, 15.7% in 2019, 15.8% in 2020, and is currently at 16%.<sup>55</sup> The overall growth from the last five years is 0.9%, and this is drastically different than the desired SSE goal of 1% *annual* growth. The annual growth

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<sup>52</sup> Government of Canada, "Strong Secured Engaged Canada's Defence Policy," 12.

<sup>53</sup> Government of Canada, SSE...,12.

<sup>54</sup> Directorate of Human Rights and Diversity, "Canadian Armed Forces Employment Equity Statistics" (Department of National Defence, March 2021).

<sup>55</sup> Government of Canada, "Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces Implementation of Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security."



of female representation in the CAF was 0.3% from 2017 to 2018, 0.3% for 2018 to 2019, and 0.1% from 2019 to 2020. The early estimate of annual growth for female representation in the CAF from 2020 to 2021 will be 0.2%. These values verify that the CAF is behind in the SSE goal of growing female representation by 1% annually. While these values do indicate that female representation in the CAF is trending upwards this is simply not at the desired rate set out in SSE.<sup>56</sup>

The Directorate of Human Rights and Diversity (DHRD) publishes data on female representation in the CAF by way of monthly EE statistics. One area that DHRD publishes information on is the percentage of females in each service branch: the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) is at 20.6%, the Canadian Army (CA) at 13.6% and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) at 20.0%. The lowest female representation is for Non-Commissioned Members (NCM) in the Army at 13.0%. The category that has the highest female representation is for Officers in the Navy at 22.5%.<sup>57</sup> A review of the DHRD EE data revealed that Officers have higher female representation than NCMs, and this is for all categories. For instance, the Regular Force has a female representation of 19.8% for Officers and 14.4% for NCM. The Primary Reserve Force has much closer values of female representation between their Officers and NCMs at 17% and 16.8%, respectively. The RCN has 22.5% of their Officers as females, and 19.8% female representation for NCMs. The RCAF has similar figures with female Officers at 21.2% and female NCMs at 19.3%. The greatest difference of female representation occurs in the Army; females account for 16.4% of Officers and 13.6% for NCM, resulting in a delta of 3.4%. As of

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<sup>56</sup> Government of Canada, SSE..., 12.

<sup>57</sup> Directorate of Human Rights and Diversity, "Canadian Armed Forces Employment Equity Statistics," January 2021.

March 2019, women's participation in the CAF Combat Arms was 2.9% for the Regular Force and 6.7% for the Primary Reserve, making the Combat Arms the most underrepresented organizational group in the CAF.<sup>58</sup> This information is relevant as a primary way to increase female representation in the CAF is to recruit more women. It is helpful to understand the dynamics of female representation between Officers and NCM as this can assist in attraction and recruitment initiatives.

There has been a recent accomplishment for the Regular Force in that female representation for Regular Force Officers has increased across almost every occupational group in 2018-2019.<sup>59</sup> Representation of women in the overall Regular Force has increased, but saw a decrease in the Primary Reserves. This may indicate that there was a large number of component transfers from the Primary Reserve to Regular Force.<sup>60</sup> Another notable accomplishment has been the increase in female enrollment at the Royal Military Colleges (RMC). The CAF has maintained this rise in female admission to RMC over the last few years: 17.1% in FY 2016-2017, 22.5% in FY 2017-2018 and 23.4% in FY 2018-2019.<sup>61</sup> This initiative was part of the 2016 CAF Action Plan in response to the 2016 Report of the Auditor General of Canada (Report 5) on Canadian Forces Recruiting and Retention.<sup>62</sup> More women attending RMC is a significant achievement, these women

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<sup>58</sup> Fuhr, *Improving Diversity...*, 9.

<sup>59</sup> Department of National Defence, "Canadian Armed Forces Employment Equity Report" (Canadian Armed Forces, 2019), 4.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Government of Canada, "2018-2019 Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces Departmental Progress Report for Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security," accessed February 2, 2021, [https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/publications/cnap-pnac/progress\\_reports-rapports\\_etapes-2018-2019-dnd.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/publications/cnap-pnac/progress_reports-rapports_etapes-2018-2019-dnd.aspx?lang=eng).

<sup>62</sup> Kevin Sorenson, *Report 5, Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention - National Defence, of the Fall 2016 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada*, Book, Whole (House of Commons, 2017), 5.34 .

will go on to meaningful careers as they graduate RMC, get commissioned and contribute to the defence of Canada.

## **SENIOR RANKS**

The SSE endeavor to increase female representation in the CAF has the added benefit of increasing the number of women available to be promoted to senior leadership positions, and the number of women available for operational deployments.<sup>63</sup> A report from the Standing Committee on National Defence (Report 17) provided statistics on Regular Force positions within the CAF and allowed for an opportunity to review gender representation at the senior ranks. The values provided are from February 2018 and reflect 129 General Officer Flag Officer (GOFO) positions. In 2018 the distribution of male and females at the most senior Officer ranks were as follows: Lieutenant General was 9% (11 male, 1 female), Major General was 3% (33 male, 1 female), and Brigadier General was 10.7% (84 male and 9 female). A comparison of the values published in Report 17 and the 2021 DHRD EE values for March 2021 indicate that the percentage of female representation at the GOFO level has increased in the last three years.

Specifically, there was a 2% increase at the Lieutenant General level, a 4.9% increase at the Major General level, and a 0.8% increase at the Brigadier General level.<sup>64</sup>

Furthermore, the first female Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, Lieutenant General Frances Allen, was appointed in March 2021.<sup>65</sup> There has been a similar upward trend in female representation for the NCM senior rank of Chief Warrant Officer/Chief Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class. (CWO/CPO1). Report 17 stated that there were 712 CWO/CPO1

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<sup>63</sup> Government of Canada, 2018-2019 DND and the CAF Departmental Progress Report.

<sup>64</sup> Directorate of Human Rights and Diversity, "Canadian Armed Forces Employment Equity Statistics," March 2021.

<sup>65</sup> Department National Defence, "Promotions and Senior Appointments 2021 - General and Flag Officers."

positions in the CAF in 2018, and 57 of those positions were occupied by females. This results in the most senior NCM rank having a female representation rate of 7.4%.<sup>66</sup> According to the DHRD EE statistics for March 2021, the percentage of female representation at the CWO/CPO1 level is currently at 9.5%, a 2.1% increase from 2018.<sup>67</sup> Also of note is the increase in the number of female Colonels in the CAF. In 2018 there were 406 Colonel (Captain Navy) positions, with 29 of the Colonels being female, representing 7.1%.<sup>68</sup> The March 2021 data has female Colonels at 10.2%, an increase of 3.1%.<sup>69</sup> These values are significant as the women fulfilling leadership positions are role models for new female CAF members, and could potentially act as mentors to the more junior women in uniform. The number of women at the senior ranks is trending upwards and demonstrates a positive change in the CAF. However, trending upwards does not equate to adequate representation. It is vital that the CAF organization is aware that women are still underrepresented in the senior appointments and leadership positions.

## **INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC OPERATIONS**

An important distinction needs to be made about the SSE's endeavour of 25.1% female representation by 2026. This a goal, and it is not a quota. The DND and CAF progress report for Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security explains, "quotas are arbitrary numbers that are filled without regard for qualifications or merit. Merit and ability remain at the cornerstone of all the CAF recruitment activities and all candidates must meet the minimal entry standards."<sup>70</sup> The Canadian Human

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<sup>66</sup> Fuhr, *Improving Diversity...*, 63–64.

<sup>67</sup> DHRD, *CAF Employment Equity Statistics*, March 2021.

<sup>68</sup> Fuhr, *Improving Diversity...*, 63–64.

<sup>69</sup> DHRD, *CAF Employment Equity Statistics*, March 2021.

<sup>70</sup> Government of Canada, *2018-2019 DND and the CAF Departmental Progress Report for Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.*"

Rights Act recognizes that there are Universality of Service requirements for the CAF, and applicants (male or female) must meet the minimum entry-level standards for enrolment. This includes medical, fitness and aptitude levels, and performance standards are not compromised for females in order to reach SSE goals.<sup>71</sup> As part of the 2018-2019 DND and CAF departmental progress report for Canada's National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security, Canada stated that it wanted to increase the representation of females deployed on international operations.<sup>72</sup> This statement followed the United Nations Security Council adopting Resolution 2242 in 2015, which called for the doubling of numbers of females in police and military contingents' on UN peacekeeping operations by 2020.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, the CAF has published a priority to increase representation of women deployed on International Operations, not only with the UN, but with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Coalition operations.<sup>74</sup> Information on how DND and the CAF plan to accomplish these goals, and some initial results, are discussed below.

Women have historically accounted for approximately 10% of deployed forces on international operations, and DND and the CAF are committed to increasing the number of female contributions to deployments.<sup>75</sup> In order to assess progress towards the goal of having more women deployed abroad, specific indicators will be monitored. The indicators are as follows: the number of senior women (Officer and NCMs) deployed on operations (international and domestic), the number of females attending foreign staff

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Department of Peace Operations, "Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028" (United Nations, n.d.), 2.

<sup>74</sup> Government of Canada, 2018-2019 DND and the CAF Departmental Progress Report for Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security."

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

colleges, and the number of females posted to the Outside Canada program (OUTCAN) positions.<sup>76</sup> Concerning the first indicator, the number of *senior* ranking females deployed on international operations for FY 2018-2019 was 56 and 6 for Officers and NCM respectively. Regarding domestic operations, 17 Senior Officers and 2 Senior NCMs (CWO and Master Warrant Officer (MWO)) were deployed within Canada during FY 2018-2019.<sup>77</sup> Data was also collected on the number of women deployed on technical and staff assistance visits (TAV/SAV), which are temporary deployments to monitor compliance with safety standards and directives.<sup>78</sup> TAV/SAVs are short in duration and caution needs to be applied when assessing their values as they may not be an accurate indication of female contribution to the deployed force.<sup>79</sup> For FY 2017-2018 there were 40 Senior Officers and 15 CWO/MWO deployed on TAV/SAV. When all categories are considered, the number of senior ranking female Officers deployed on TAVs, international operations, and domestic operations resulted in a 33.3% increase from FY 2017-2018.<sup>80</sup> There was also an increase in senior ranking female NCMs on all deployment categories with a 9.5% increase from the previous FY. For all Officers (senior and junior) the deployments for FY 2018-2019 were: 238 for expeditionary, 99 TAVs and 68 domestic operations.<sup>81</sup> This also represents an increase in the number of female Officers deployed on operations from the previous FY by 22.3%.<sup>82</sup> The situation

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Government of Canada, 2018-2019 DND and the CAF Departmental Progress Report for Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security."

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

differs for all female NCMs (senior and junior), whereas the number of female NCMs deployed in FY 2018-2019 was 11.7% less than FY 2017-2018.<sup>83</sup>

The second indicator used to measure women deployed abroad involved monitoring the number of women attending foreign staff colleges. For FY 2018-2019 only one female Officer attended a foreign staff college (Australian Defence Force).<sup>84</sup> Attendance at the Canadian Forces College (CFC) was much higher, and 33 women attended the Joint Command and Staff Program (JCSP), which is the Canadian equivalent of staff college.<sup>85</sup> That same year, seven women attended the Development Period 4, which is the training program that prepares military personnel to be promoted from Colonel/Captain (Navy) rank to Brigadier General/Commodore rank.<sup>86</sup> Five of these female Senior Officers attended the National Security Program at CFC for DP4. The remaining two women attended foreign staff colleges, one attended the NATO Staff College in Rome, and the other received their DP4 qualification through Distance Learning with the United States.<sup>87</sup> The last indicator used to measure women deployed abroad was the monitoring of the OUTCAN posting program. In 2018-2019 there were 212 women filling OUTCAN positions out of 1406 available positions, resulting in a 15.1% female representation rate.<sup>88</sup> A notable accomplishment is that the CAF also maintains a 15% female representation rate on all of Canada's contributions to UN Military Observer and Staff Officer deployments.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Government of Canada, 2018-2019 DND and the CAF Departmental Progress Report for Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.”.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

## SUMMARY

A statistical overview of female representation in the CAF was presented in this chapter. This data allows for an appreciation of the growth still required if the CAF is to accomplish the SSE goal of a military that is 25.1% female in the next 5 years.

Additionally, information regarding female representation at senior ranks was provided and highlighted recent growth accomplishments. This data also illuminated the fact that women are still under represented at the higher military ranks despite the recent growth accomplishments. This chapter also discussed female participation on international and domestic operations as Canada has published a priority to increase representation of women deployed on operations with both UN and NATO. The next chapter will discuss where CAF institutional barriers exist for the attraction and recruitment of females into the CAF.

## CHAPTER 3: RECRUITMENT INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

This chapter will examine CAF institutional barriers that hinder the recruitment of women into the Canadian military. For the purpose of this manuscript, an institutional barrier is defined as a policy, procedure, or situation that systematically disadvantages certain groups of people.<sup>90</sup> An inclusive and diverse culture within the CAF will only exist when these barriers are removed. Institutional barriers are often present in any majority-minority group situation, and when the initial population is quite homogenous.<sup>91</sup> This is often the case in male dominated professions, such as the CAF, which had adult

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<sup>90</sup> National Center for Women & Information Technology, "Institutional Barriers & Their Effects: How Can I Talk to Colleagues about These Issues?," May 6, 2009, <https://www.ncwit.org/resources/institutional-barriers-their-effects-how-can-i-talk-colleagues-about-these-issues>.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*



white males as its founding population.<sup>92</sup> Systems and policies naturally emerge to meet the needs of the dominate population, and if these systems to do not change and adjust to shifts in cultural and societal norms, then they can act as barriers to the success of new and/or minority members.<sup>93</sup> The SSE goal of growing female representation in the CAF to 25.1% by 2026 depends on the recruitment (and retention) of women. To begin this discussion, a description of how recruitment is accomplished within the CAF is explained in the below paragraph.

The Canadian Forces Recruiting Group Headquarters (CFRG HQ) is situated in Borden, Ontario. CFRG HQ is supported by six Canadian Forces Recruiting Centers (CFRC) and 26 recruiting detachments across Canada.<sup>94</sup> CFRG HQ has the primary role of supporting the operational capability of the CAF by recruiting and processing applications of Canadian citizens who desire to join the Canadian military.<sup>95</sup> CFRG and CFRC have four lines of operation for recruiting Canadian citizens: attraction, processing, selection and enrolment.<sup>96</sup> The process of Recruiting is accomplished by first attracting people to the organization and enticing them to submit an application. Enrolment into the CAF occurs once an offer has been given to an applicant (and if accepted) that individual will be sworn into the CAF to embark on their military career. There are institutional barriers involved in the recruiting process and this chapter will

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<sup>92</sup> Canadian War Museum, "Voluntary Recruitment," Canada and the First World War, accessed April 3, 2021, <https://www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/history/life-at-home-during-the-war/recruitment-and-conscription/voluntary-recruitment/>.

<sup>93</sup> National Center for Women & Information Technology, "Institutional Barriers & Their Effects: How Can I Talk to Colleagues about These Issues?"

<sup>94</sup> Department of National Defence, "Canadian Forces Recruiting Group HQ," Government of Canada, Canadian Forces Recruiting Group, March 30, 2021, <http://borden.mil.ca/33/10.aspx>.

<sup>95</sup> Canadian Armed Forces, "Canadian Armed Forces Recruiting Doctrine" (Department of National Defence), accessed April 3, 2021, <http://borden.mil.ca/33/30.aspx>.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

discuss the barriers involved in the *attraction* line of effort of Recruiting. The focus then shifts to institutional barriers within the CAF Recruiting center organizational design, and finally institutional barriers that exist within the current CAF Recruiting strategy are identified.

## **INSTITUTIONAL BARRIER: ATTRACTION LINE OF EFFORT**

### **Sexualized Culture**

A sexualized culture within the CAF is an institutional barrier impacting the attraction portion of the Recruiting process, and this may help to explain why females are not selecting the CAF as their employer of choice. To appreciate the seriousness and complexity of the military's sexualized culture it is necessary to discuss the history surrounding this matter. In 2014, Canadian media outlets reported significantly higher rates of sexual misconduct for the CAF than what had been formally published.<sup>97</sup> In 2012 the CAF conducted a survey of members to "examine how informed members are about the harassment policy, to obtain a measure of how often harassment occurs in the CAF and to explore the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of service members in relation to harassment in the CAF."<sup>98</sup> Of the 1705 Regular Force members who completed the survey, only 56 of the respondents indicated that they had experienced a sexual harassment incident in the previous year.<sup>99</sup> Around the same time that these survey results were published the military's Judge Advocate General (JAG) released their annual report for 2011-2012. According to the JAG report, the number of sexual assault charges

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<sup>97</sup> Noemi Mercier and Alec Castonguay, "Our Military's Disgrace," *MacLeans*, May 16, 2014, <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/our-militarys-disgrace/>.

<sup>98</sup> J Coulthard, "2012 Canadian Forces Workplace Harassment Survey," Survey (DND, 2013), 9.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

brought to court martial was nine.<sup>100</sup> These values differed dramatically from what the media was reporting. The data obtained by the media, through Canada's Access to Information Act, indicated that the military police receive an average of 178 sexual assault complaints annually since 2000.<sup>101</sup> This number is staggering, however, what is more alarming is that Statistics Canada estimates that only one in 10 cases of sexual assault is reported to authorities.<sup>102</sup> This translates to a figure that is closer to 1,780 sexual assaults per year for the CAF. That equates to 5 sexual assaults per day in the Armed Forces.<sup>103</sup>

The discrepancies between the media reports and the CAF data on sexual misconduct and harassment resulted in the CDS requesting an independent and external review of the Armed Forces' policies, programs and procedures concerning inappropriate sexualized behavior.<sup>104</sup> The CDS' request was approved and an external review was conducted, and led by former Supreme Court Justice Marie Deschamps. The external review authority (ERA) published their findings in March 2015, and will be referred to as the Deschamps report from this point forward. The Deschamps report concluded that inappropriate sexual behavior in the CAF was widespread and pervasive to its culture.<sup>105</sup> The consultations the ERA conducted with serving military members exposed a sexualized environment in the CAF, predominantly among NCM and recruits. The description of the sexualized environment involves the "frequent use of swear words and highly degrading expressions that reference women's bodies, sexual jokes, innuendos,

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<sup>100</sup> Deschamps, External Review into Sexual Misconduct..., 3.

<sup>101</sup> Noemi Mercier and Alec Castonguay, "Our Military's Disgrace," *MacLeans*, May 16, 2014, <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/our-militarys-disgrace/>.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Deschamps, External Review into Sexual Misconduct..., 3.

<sup>105</sup> Fuhr, *Improving Diversity...*, 36–37.

discriminatory comments with respect to the abilities of women, and unwelcome sexual touching.”<sup>106</sup> This behavior in aggregate creates a hostile environment for females and LGTBQ2 (Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, Queer, Two-Spirited) members, and is conducive to more serious occurrences of sexual misconduct, harassment and assault.<sup>107</sup> The Deschamps report found that CAF members appear to become habituated and desensitized to the sexualized culture as their career progresses and they move up in rank. Officers often excuse incidents of sexual misconduct on the grounds that the CAF is a reflection of Canadian civilian society.<sup>108</sup> Report findings also pointed to a perception that senior NCM are responsible for imposing a culture of silence, where no one is to speak up.<sup>109</sup> This subculture of silence in the CAF functions as a deterrence for victims of inappropriate sexual behavior to report. The lasting effect of such cultural dynamics is a widespread perception from the lower ranks that CAF leadership (chain of command) will either turn a blind-eye to sexual misconduct and harassment, or that the inappropriate behavior is condoned.<sup>110</sup>

Canadian soldiers face a hostile environment within the ranks, which impacts all uniformed members, but it particularly effects women and LGTBQ2 members.<sup>111</sup> The media coverage into the sexualized culture of the CAF, and the findings in the Deschamps report are concerning, and potentially damaging the Canadian military’s legitimacy. The CAF’s initial response to the Deschamps report was not well executed. The CDS at the time was General Lawson and he attempted to assign blame of the

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<sup>106</sup> Deschamps, External Review into Sexual Misconduct..., Executive Summary, ii.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Deschamps, External Review into Sexual Misconduct..., Executive Summary, i.

sexualized culture to a few people who were “biologically wired in a certain way.”<sup>112</sup> These remarks by General Lawson caused public outrage, and within a month General Lawson had resigned as CDS and was succeeded by General Jonathan Vance.<sup>113</sup> The newly appointed CDS’ response to the Deschamps report was to operationalize the efforts to eliminate harmful and inappropriate sexual behavior, and in 2015 General Vance signed and released Operation HONOUR. Operation HONOUR was a well-intended and necessary course of action to the Deschamps report, and it heavily focused on a members’ duty to report any inappropriate sexual behavior. However, Operation HONOUR did not succeed. A survey conducted in 2018 by Statistics Canada on sexual misconduct for Regular Force CAF members discovered that “the prevalence of sexual assault did not change between 2016 and 2018.”<sup>114</sup> Data from 2016 found that 8 out of 10 Regular Force members reported that they had experienced or witnessed inappropriate sexual behavior or discriminatory behavior in the previous 12 months.<sup>115</sup> This figure decreased in 2018 where 7 out of 10 members reported witnessing or experiencing sexualized or discriminatory behavior in the previous 12 months.<sup>116</sup> This translates to a 10% improvement for the CAF over a two year timeframe. Nonetheless, there is still a significant amount of meaningful work to be done in order to change this sexualized

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<sup>112</sup> CBC News Story, “Military Sexual Misconduct Due to ‘biological Wiring,’ Gen Tom Lawson Tells CBC News,” CBC, June 17, 2015, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/military-sexual-misconduct-due-to-biological-wiring-gen-tom-lawson-tells-cbc-news-1.3115993>.

<sup>113</sup> “Chief of the Defence Staff Change of Command Ceremony,” The Governor General of Canada, July 17, 2015, <https://www.gg.ca/en/media/news/2015/chief-defence-staff-change-command-ceremony>.

<sup>114</sup> Adam Cotter, “Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces Regular Force, 2018,” May 22, 2019, 13, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-603-x/85-603-x2019002-eng.pdf>.

<sup>115</sup> Statistics Canada, “Survey on Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces Regular Force 2018: Key Trends since 2016,” May 22, 2019, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2019038-eng.htm>.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

culture if 70% of Regular Force members are witnessing or experiencing inappropriate behavior, sexual or discriminatory.

One of the 10 recommendations in the Deschamps report (recommendation 2) was for the CAF to establish a comprehensive culture change strategy.<sup>117</sup> The intent of the culture change strategy is to eliminate the sexualized environment within the CAF, to better integrate women into the military and to appoint more females to senior leadership positions.<sup>118</sup> Dr Grazie Scoppio, Professor in the Department of Defence Studies at RMC, has stated that culture change is accelerated when there are more people in the CAF from designated minority groups.<sup>119</sup> Dr Scoppio has said that “as long as we don't have a critical mass of women or visible minorities or Indigenous members, it's very hard to change a culture.”<sup>120</sup> This illuminates the importance of the SSE goal of 25.1% female representation by 2026. Having more women in the Armed Forces not only increases operational effectiveness and better reflects Canadian society, but it also assists in obtaining the necessary culture change for the CAF. Until there are meaningful changes to the sexualized culture within the CAF, it will remain an institutional barrier for the attraction and recruitment of women.

The CAF is a male-dominated institution with a unique and demanding mandate of defending Canada, Canadian citizens and the country's national interests abroad. As mentioned in chapter 1, a military career is noble, fulfilling and rewarding, however, the fact that 84% of the CAF's members are male cannot be overlooked when attempting to understand the nuances of this organization. The majority/minority dynamic that exists

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<sup>117</sup> Deschamps, External Review into Sexual Misconduct..., Executive Summary, ix.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, iii.

<sup>119</sup> Fuhr, Improving Diversity..., 48.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

between the males and females is difficult to navigate in any organization and becomes more complex when factoring in the sexualized culture of the CAF. The unequal gender distribution and the sexualized culture of the CAF negatively impacts attraction and recruitment initiatives for Canada's military. Parents play a vital role in the decision making process for recruitment of new members, and young women are particularly influenced by their parents, friends and school councillors while making career decisions.<sup>121</sup> Concerning the attractiveness of the CAF as an employer of choice, Dr. Scoppio warned that "[the Deschamps report] may still be fresh in a lot of parents' minds when their kids are making a career choice."<sup>122</sup> The knowledge of the sexualized culture in the CAF and how it specifically impacts females (and LGBTQ2 members) could be a deterrent for parents if their daughters wanted to sign up for military service. The ERA conducted interviews at both Canadian military colleges, Collège militaire royal du Canada and the Royal Military College (RMC). Interview participants told the ERA that sexual harassment is considered a "passage oblige," that sexual assault is a constant risk, and one participant jokingly stated that sexual harassment is not reported because it happens all the time.<sup>123</sup> These comments are troubling as they speak to the fact that this sexualized harassment is woven into the very fabric of the organization's cultural norms. These alarming remarks would likely impact a parents' perception of the organization their daughters (and sons) may be joining, and therefore potentially negate any attraction efforts made by the CAF to recruit new female members.

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<sup>121</sup> Jenn Burford, *Challenges of Meeting Recruiting Targets for Women*, (Toronto, Ont.: Canadian Forces College, 2018), 6.

<sup>122</sup> Fuhr, *Improving Diversity...*, 38.

<sup>123</sup> Deschamps, *External Review into Sexual Misconduct...*, 14.

The requirement for a transformational culture change within the CAF is critical for a variety of reasons. A respectful and safe work environment would improve attractiveness for future members. Specifically for females and members of the LGBTQ community, and it would also assist in the overall recruitment of both males and females. Most of all, every person serving in the CAF deserves to be treated with respect and dignity. The Statement of Defence Ethics explains that DND and the CAF are responsible for the defence of Canada, its people and its democracy.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, to honor these responsibilities, DND and the CAF need to apply the utmost ethical standards in all decisions and in every action, be it at home or abroad.<sup>125</sup> To assist with these important responsibilities, the Statement of Defence Ethics provides members with three ethical principles, which are hierarchical in nature.<sup>126</sup> These tenets are; respect the dignity of all persons, serve Canada before self, and obey and support lawful authority.<sup>127</sup> One would assume that this primary tenet of *respect the dignity of all persons* should be extended to respecting fellow uniformed members. Furthermore, one would hope that this fundamental tenet would be a priority for the institution and vehemently enforced by all levels of the chain of command. This is the highest ranking ethical principle for DND and the CAF, and yet, it is the tenet the CAF is most at conflict with.

The Deschamps report was published six years ago and Operation HONOUR was published five years ago, and despite this timeline, there has been little progress made towards a culture change in the CAF. The matter of the CAF's sexualized culture and

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<sup>124</sup> Department of National Defence, "Statement of Defence Ethics," Government of Canada, March 9, 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/defence-ethics/about/statement.html>.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Deschamps, External Review into Sexual Misconduct..., 10–11.

<sup>127</sup> Department of National Defence, "Statement of Defence Ethics."



prevalence of sexual misconduct and harassment is currently in the news as the former CDS, General (Retired) Jonathan Vance is being investigated for inappropriate behaviour involving female subordinates.<sup>128</sup> Vance's successor, Admiral Art McDonald, stepped aside from his duties as CDS while an investigation into a sexual misconduct allegation against him is being conducted.<sup>129</sup> It should be noted that all CAF members are entitled to a fair investigation. The situation with both Vance and McDonald are currently allegations and the outcome is yet to be finalized. However, the damage of the most senior Officer in the CAF making headlines for inappropriate sexual behaviour may already be done. The impact of having one top Commander in the media for inappropriate sexual behavior allegations would be devastating to troop morale, but to have *two* consecutive Commanders under investigation has the potential to plummet troop morale, tarnish the CAF's reputation, and jeopardize its legitimacy to the Canadian public. The recovery for the institution over the Vance and McDonald sexual misconduct allegations will take time. An unsettling fact is that it was General (Retired) Vance who signed Operation HONOUR during his tenure as CDS. It is also worrisome that the hard work invested into these programs is now lost, as the Acting CDS, Lieutenant General Wayne Eyre, formally ended Operation HONOUR on 24 March 2021.<sup>130</sup> Lieutenant General Eyre stated that "the nearly six-year-old program is over, but the drive to find another way to end inappropriate behavior and sexual violence will continue." The

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<sup>128</sup> Murray Brewster, "Former Top Military Commander to Be Investigated over Allegations of Inappropriate Conduct," *CBC News*, February 3, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/vance-military-allegations-inappropriate-1.5899324>.

<sup>129</sup> Murray Brewster, Ashley Burke, and Kristen Everson, "Canada's Top Military Commander Steps aside Following Sexual Misconduct Claim," *CBC News*, February 25, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/mcdonald-misconduct-allegation-1.5927517>.

<sup>130</sup> Murray Brewster, "Campaign to End Sexual Harassment in Canadian Armed Forces Shut Down," *CBC News*, March 24, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/operation-honour-closed-down-1.5962978>.

credibility of Operation HONOUR could simply not survive the damage caused by two consecutive CDSs being investigated for inappropriate sexual behavior allegations.

It will be interesting to follow the recruitment trends over the coming years to witness if the media coverage of the top Canadian Military Commanders, Vance and McDonald, negatively impact female enrolment. It would be unfair to equate female enrolment trends directly with the current situation with Vance and McDonald, however, the impact of this on an already sexualized culture cannot be ignored. Alternatively, there may be an upward trend in female recruitment as the CAF offers challenging careers, secure employment, and financial stability, which are desirable factors as the world continues to be in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. What is fair to state is that there is a dire need for a culture change in the CAF and until this comes to fruition, the institutional barrier of the CAF sexualized culture will be a factor in attracting and enrolling females into the Armed Forces.

## **INSTITUTIONAL BARRIER: RECRUITING CENTER ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN**

### **Lack of a Gender Representation Policy for Canadian Forces Recruiting Centers**

Females who do become attracted to a career in the military may face additional institutional barriers with regards to the recruiting process. The recruiting center organizational design is an example of these such barriers. Evidence has shown that potential female recruits respond well to women recruiters.<sup>131</sup> A statement made by Lieutenant-General Lamarre at the Standing Committee for National Defence emphasized this point:

...we've found that when we have young women who are recruiting and appearing in some of our online videos ... or doing the chat rooms, which we do

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<sup>131</sup> Fuhr, *Improving Diversity...*, 25.

around the world, the reaction is very, very positive if people can see themselves, so we do emphasize the fact that we need to have more women and more visible minorities in recruiting.<sup>132</sup>

The CAF has not optimized on this information as there is currently no policy that supports having more women posted to recruiting centers. The recruiting center organizational design can (and does) act as an institutional barrier for female recruitment into the Forces. This is not always the case as females do work in CAF recruiting centers, and an interested female applicant may get to work with those uniformed women. Nevertheless, a significant amount of female applicants will not benefit from that experience. The Earncliffe Strategy Group conducted research in the field of recruitment and employment of women in the CAF, and their report indicated that the majority of civilian and serving women preferred face to face interaction with another female.<sup>133</sup> The reasoning behind this preference is that the surveyed women felt that female recruiters were better positioned to answer their questions and concerns from a female's perspective.<sup>134</sup> It is only reasonable that in a well-known male-dominated organization, female applicants would want to be informed about the perspectives of experienced females within the organization. The recruiting center organizational design currently utilized by the CAF does not specify gender representation in policy or practice. This will therefore continue to be an institutional barrier until a formal policy is implemented that supports more female representation at recruiting centers.

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Earncliffe Strategy Group, "Recruitment and Employment of Women in the Canadian Armed Forces," Research Report, January 2017.

<sup>134</sup> Barbara T. Waruszynski, "Female Regular Force Member's Perception on Recruitment and Employment of Women in the CAF Preliminary Findings," 3.

## **INSTITUTIONAL BARRIER: CAF RECRUITING STRATEGY**

### **Standard Recruiting Strategy**

The CAF recruiting strategy has been identified as an institutional barrier because there is no strategy specifically focused on the SSE ambition of having a military that is one quarter female by 2026. While there is a CAF Recruiting Doctrine document, however, a specific strategy for EE recruitment for the designated minority groups is not included.<sup>135</sup> The CAF has identified the requirement for further research into the attraction, recruitment, and retention of females, and established the Innovation for Defence Excellence and Security (IDEaS) Program in April 2018. The IDEaS Program challenged Canadian universities and innovators to submit proposals for a series of military and security challenges. One of the challenges presented was finding solutions for the recruitment and retention of females in the CAF in order to reach 25.1% representation by 2026.<sup>136</sup> The IDEaS program awarded contracts to SkyHive Technologies, University of Waterloo, University of Ottawa and Xtract AI.<sup>137</sup> A request by this author to the Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis (DGMPRA) to access the research and reports from these institutions was declined. The rationale for not releasing the reports (at this time) was due to contractual and intellectual

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<sup>135</sup> Canadian Armed Forces, “Canadian Armed Forces Recruiting Doctrine.”

<sup>136</sup> Department of National Defence, “IDEaS Awards Its First Innovation Contracts to Recruit, Retain, and Reach 25% Representation of Women in the CAF by 2026.,” Government of Canada, August 20, 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2018/08/ideas-awards-its-first-innovation-contracts-to-recruit-retain-and-reach-25-representation-of-women-in-the-caf-by-2026.html>.

<sup>137</sup> Department of National Defence, “First Innovation Contracts Awarded under the Innovation for Defence Excellence and Security (IDEaS) Program,” Government of Canada, August 20, 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2018/08/first-innovation-contracts-awarded-under-the-innovation-for-defence-excellence-and-security-ideas-program.html>.

property considerations.<sup>138</sup> It is encouraging that attention and research are being devoted to the challenge of recruiting and retaining females in the CAF. One would hope that out of this research a recruiting strategy will be developed that specifically targets the EE goal of higher female representation in the CAF. Nonetheless, the CAF's standard recruiting strategy will remain an institutional barrier until a specific EE recruiting strategy is developed and implemented that focuses on females and other designated minority groups.

The CAF is heavily focused on recruitment, of both females and males, as it is committed to the SSE goal of growing the organization from 96,500 personnel to 101,500.<sup>139</sup> To that end, the CDS issued Operation GENERATION in 2018. Operation GENERATION is a standing domestic operation to address issues with CAF attraction, recruitment and application processes.<sup>140</sup> The EE goals for the designated minority groups were highlighted in Op GENERATION, however, a strategy on how to accomplish these goals was absent from the directive. The attention given to recruitment by the CAF is encouraging, yet the efforts have yielded little success. Female enrolment rate for FY 2017-2018 was 17.2%, and enrollment rate decreased by 0.1% for FY 2018-2019 and was 17.1%.<sup>141</sup> Numerically speaking, 896 women joined the CAF in 2018-2019.<sup>142</sup> This data indicates that recruitment and enrollment of females into the CAF is still a challenge. The House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence (NDDN) also identified new recruiting strategies as an area of improvement in order for

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<sup>138</sup> "Personal Communication, Major Bradley-Kuhn and Tracey Aker, 22 March 2021..

<sup>139</sup> Government of Canada, SSE..., 13.

<sup>140</sup> Canadian Armed Forces Chief of Defence Staff, "Joint CDS/DM Directive: OPERATION GENERATION" (Department of National Defence, May 28, 2018).

<sup>141</sup> Department of National Defence, "Canadian Armed Forces Employment Equity Report," 6.

<sup>142</sup> Government of Canada, 2018-2019 DND and the CAF Departmental Progress Report for Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security."

the CAF to achieve greater female representation within its ranks.<sup>143</sup> The comment made by the NDDN was in 2019 (a year after Operation GENERATION was published) and it further highlights that the lack of a clear and published EE recruiting strategy focused on females (and all designated minority groups) is an institutional barrier.

### **Lack of an Occupation Based Recruiting Strategy**

An additional aspect of the CAF recruiting strategy that presents as an institutional barrier is the lack of an occupation based recruiting strategy with specific targets set for female representation in each military occupation. The 2016 Fall Reports of the Auditor General, Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention – National Defence (referred to as Report 5 from this point forward) found that “although the CAF had established a goal for the representation of women among its ranks, it set this overall goal with no specific targets by occupation.”<sup>144</sup> As mentioned in chapter 1, the CAF must comply with the Employment Equity Act (EEA), in addition to regulations that adapt the EEA for the CAF considering the nature of military operations. As explained in Report 5, “these regulations require establishing short- and long-term goals for increasing the representation of women in each occupational group, based on their availability in the Canadian workforce.”<sup>145</sup> This was the exact recommendations made in Report 5, that the CAF “should establish appropriate representation goals for women for each occupation. It should also develop and implement measures to achieve them.”<sup>146</sup> The response from DND did not acknowledge this recommendation whatsoever. Instead, DND commented

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<sup>143</sup> Fuhr, *Improving Diversity...*, 24.

<sup>144</sup> Kevin Sorenson, *Report 5, Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention - National Defence, of the Fall 2016 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada*. (House of Commons, 2017).

<sup>145</sup> Sorenson, Report 5.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

on other initiatives planned in order to meet the CDS' objectives for increased female representation in the CAF. The following paragraphs will expand on DND's response to Report 5 and discuss the specific initiatives the CAF embarked on to increase female representation.

The response from DND for Report 5 commented on the cultural shift that is under way in the CAF and how this would positively affect recruiting models. In reference to the earlier section focused on the CAF's sexualized culture, it is difficult to conclude that any transformational culture change has taken place within Canada's military. Thus, recruiting models have not been positively affected by this stated "culture shift". DND reported that they were going to give priority processing and enrolment to women, and this has occurred with positive results. The Canadian Forces Recruiting Group Headquarters (CFRG HQ) conducted priority processing and selection for female applicants.<sup>147</sup> CFRG HQ established EE specific processing control lines and female applicants receive priority booking for processing appointments. Regarding selection, CFRG HQ carried out priority selection of female applicants in the last few years.<sup>148</sup> This initiative resulted in an increase in female enrollments from 775 in FY 16-17, to 860 in FY 17-18, and 896 in FY 18-19.<sup>149</sup> This work is worthy of acknowledgement as these priority processing controls for female applicants have resulted in greater representation of women in the CAF, and are aiding in the SSE goal of 25.1% female representation in the CAF by 2026.

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

DND's response to Report 5 also focused on the investments made into marketing the CAF as an employer of choice, which resulted in an updated and more modern online presence for the CAF. Specifically, CFRG has updated the online presence of the CAF, which is significant because an online application process dominates CAF recruitment. Accordingly, the CAF recruiting website (Forces.ca) has been revitalized. The Assistant Deputy Minister (PA) developed occupational videos with a focus on EE to support the recruiting efforts of designated minority groups.<sup>150</sup> The Forces.ca website also features videos of women performing their jobs and providing testimonials as to why they love their work in the CAF.<sup>151</sup> Additionally, a 'Women in the CAF' page was added to the Forces.ca website and it highlights the history of females serving Canada.<sup>152</sup> The CAF participated in an "Ask Me Anything" campaign on the Forces.ca and Canada.ca websites. This digital engagement opportunity increased the visibility and awareness of the CAF being a realistic and appealing employer of choice for Canadian women.<sup>153</sup> These are all important improvements to the CAF's online presence, and it should aid in the SSE goal of increasing female representation. However, are these digital updates and modernization enough to increase female representation across all military occupations? The CAF did not acknowledge that specific recommendation in their response to Report 5 in 2016. It has been five years since the publication of Report 5, and the CAF is still lacking an occupation based recruiting strategy with specific targets for EE recruitment.

It is critical that the CAF remove the institutional barriers impacting female recruitment. There are positive outcomes that would result if the CAF developed and

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<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> Government of Canada, "Women in the Forces."

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*



implemented an occupation based recruiting strategy with specific targets for female representation. Firstly, female representation across military occupations would likely increase. Secondly, the CAF would be meeting all EEA regulations. Lastly, DND and the CAF would be meeting the recommendations of the 2016 Fall Reports of the Auditor General (Report 5). There appears to be organisational resistance to creating such a strategy, and until this is completed, the goal of obtaining an Armed Forces that is one quarter female will be difficult to obtain. Furthermore, a lack of an occupational based recruiting strategy could be hindering career progression of serving female members. In FY 2014-2015, statistics indicated that “about 50 percent of women in the CAF were concentrated in six occupations: resource management support clerks, supply technicians, logistics officers, medical technicians, nursing officers, and cooks.”<sup>154</sup> Defence scientist, Lynn Bradley, cautions that there may be negative consequences with concentrating females in only a few military occupations. For example, the promotion rate for women would suffer, and their opportunities to fulfill leadership roles would be limited as they would be competing against each other for senior appointments.<sup>155</sup> As of March 2019, the female representation within the Regular Force Combat Arms occupations (non-traditional trades) was only 2.9%.<sup>156</sup> This is an exceptionally low percentage of females, and the CAF does not have a specific and targeted recruiting strategy to improve the gender gap within the Combat Arms trades. If the CAF is serious about becoming a military that is 25.1% female in the next five years, it is critical that female representation

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<sup>154</sup> Sorenson, Report 5.

<sup>155</sup> Lynn Bradley, “Research and Evidence-Based Advice Ot the SOPG Recruiting,” August 16, 2017, 2.

<sup>156</sup> Fuhr, *Improving Diversity...*, 9.

be increased in all military occupations, to include the non-traditional trades.<sup>157</sup> This view was echoed in the NDDN Report where it was stated that “without a more concerted effort to attract women in occupations where they are under-represented, the Canadian Armed Forces will remain significantly short of its 25 percent employment equity goal.”<sup>158</sup> This highlights the importance of removing the institutional barrier of employing a standard recruiting strategy, as well as the importance of developing an occupation-based recruiting strategy with specific targets for female representation.

## **SUMMARY**

This chapter discussed various institutional barriers that remain in place in terms of the recruitment of women into the Canadian military. The attraction of females to the CAF will remain challenging until there is a transformational culture shift within the ranks, and the current sexualized culture is eradicated. The difficulty with increasing female representation in the CAF will continue so long as the institutional barriers within the recruiting center operational design, and the CAF recruiting strategy, remain unchanged. The development of policies that would ensure gender representation at recruiting centers would be of benefit for recruiting more women into the CAF. Additionally, the development and implementation of specific CAF recruiting strategies would aid in increasing the number of women in uniform and increase the percentage of women in the non-traditional trades. The next chapter will review the CAF Exit Survey and the CAF Retention Survey to explore why women are leaving the CAF, and why women decide to continue serving in the military. This information will provide insight

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<sup>157</sup> Alexandre Forest, *Securing Our Future: Recruiting and Retention of Women in the Canadian Armed Forces*. (Toronto, Ont.: Canadian Forces College, 2018), 2.

<sup>158</sup> Sorenson, Report 5.

into the areas in which the CAF can focus their retention initiatives with the hope of retaining more trained and talented women.

#### CHAPTER 4: CAF ATTRITION AND RETENTION

The discussion on female representation in the CAF has thus far concentrated on the current status of women in the Canadian military, the recruitment of women into the Forces and the institutional barriers that remain embedded in this process. The focus of this manuscript will now shift to attrition and retention, as these factors greatly impact the number of women in uniform. The United States Department of Defense (US DoD) defines *attrition* as “the reduction of the effectiveness of a force caused by loss of personnel and materiel.”<sup>159</sup> The term *retention* refers to the rate at which military personnel voluntarily choose to stay in the military after their obligated term of service has ended.<sup>160</sup> Retention of personnel is a great concern for the CAF as the inability to retain trained and talented members impacts organizational effectiveness. Additionally, the military cannot simply hire replacements for the personnel they failed to retain. It takes years of military training for a member to acquire occupation specific expertise and years of service to acquire corporate knowledge about the CAF. This is not only time consuming, but costly to the CAF. The SSE goal of increasing the CAF to 25.1% female representation by 2026 relies heavily on the retention of already serving female

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<sup>159</sup> “Attrition: United States Department of Defense Definition,” Military Factory, accessed March 28, 2021, [https://www.militaryfactory.com/dictionary/military-terms-defined.asp?term\\_id=575](https://www.militaryfactory.com/dictionary/military-terms-defined.asp?term_id=575).

<sup>160</sup> Congressional Research Service, “Defense Primer: Active Duty Enlisted Retention,” January 16, 2020, <https://crsreports.congress.gov>.

members.<sup>161</sup> In order to improve female retention it is necessary to discuss the attrition rate of women voluntarily leaving the military, and the underlying rationales for this. In FY 2017-2018 the attrition rate for females was 15.2% and was 12.8% the following year (2018-2019).<sup>162</sup> This decrease in attrition in FY 18-19 was evident in both Regular Force Officers and NCM, at a rate of 2% and 1% respectively.<sup>163</sup> Decreasing attrition rates aids in the SSE goal of increased female representation, and it behooves the CAF to closely review all information as it relates to attrition. The CAF Exit Survey (2013-2017) provides insight into why individuals (male and female) leave the military, and this chapter will identify the specific reasons why females decide to end their military service. This will be followed by a discussion on the CAF Retention Survey to explore why women decide to continue their military careers after their obligatory service has ended.

### **CAF EXIT SURVEY**

The CAF Exit Survey is offered to all Regular Force members who are voluntarily releasing from the military. It is not completed for members releasing for medical and disciplinary reasons, for members who have reached the compulsory retirement age of 60 (CRA 60), or for members belonging to the Reserve Force.<sup>164</sup> The CAF Exit Survey is a voluntary survey, and is therefore not mandatory for members to complete as part of the release process. It is a web-based survey and responsibility for administering the Exit Survey resides with the release section or the Base/Fleet/Wing Personnel Selection Officers (PSO).<sup>165</sup> Regular Force members being released will be

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<sup>161</sup> Government of Canada, SSE..., 12.

<sup>162</sup> Government of Canada, 2018-2019 DND and CAF Departmental Progress Report for Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security."

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> Nicholas Bremner, Kelsea Beadman, and Glenn Budgell, "CAF Exit Survey - Descriptive Analyses of 2013-2017 Data," October 2017, 14.

<sup>165</sup> Bremner et al, CAF Exit Survey..., 14.

informed about the opportunity to complete the CAF Exit Survey by a few different mechanisms. The Base/Fleet/Wing PSO or the release section can either “include the survey link in the release package (if one exists); insert the survey link on the release clearance sheet checklist (if one exists); hand out CAF Exit Survey cards containing the survey link; or email the survey link to departing members interested in receiving the link via email.”<sup>166</sup> The survey information collected from participants is anonymous and kept confidential, and survey results are reported collectively.<sup>167</sup>

The Exit Survey is a valuable tool for the CAF as it is a way to understand why Regular Force members decide to voluntarily release. The Exit Survey investigates releasing members’ satisfaction and dissatisfaction regarding work and institutional issues.<sup>168</sup> Specifically, matters of organization-related issues, family-related issues and work-life balance issues are surveyed. The information collected on these matters allow the CAF to analyze attrition factors, observe trends, and assist in the creation of retention strategies and initiatives for both male and female members. The Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) produced a descriptive analysis report for the CAF Exit Survey for the 2013-2017 timeframe.<sup>169</sup> The DRDC report summarizes participants’ reasons for voluntarily releasing, and the impact of each satisfier and dissatisfier on a participants’ decision to cease their military service.<sup>170</sup> Findings from the CAF Exit Survey were stratified across subgroups: rank, years of service (YOS), occupational authority (OA), gender, marital status, and parental status.<sup>171</sup> For the scope of this

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<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>169</sup> Bremner et al, “CAF Exit Survey - Descriptive Analyses of 2013-2017 Data.”

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

manuscript only the gender subgroup will be discussed. There were 8103 Regular Force releases from 2013-2017 with 630 members participating in the CAF Exit Survey, resulting in a low response rate of 7.8%.<sup>172</sup>

The DRDC descriptive analysis report for the CAF Exit Survey stated that “the vast majority of respondents were voluntarily releasing because they were eligible for immediate annuity (eligible for pension) (43.2%) or for other causes (46.5%).<sup>173</sup>

Numerically speaking, from the 630 CAF Exit Survey respondents, 293 members left for reasons other than annuity, and 272 members released from the CAF because they were pensionable. These figures are important as they demonstrate the missed opportunity to retain hundreds of trained CAF personnel, and in accordance with the US DoD definition of attrition, this loss of personnel risks the reduction of effectiveness of the CAF overall.

#### **CAF Exit Survey: Female Attrition Factors**

The results from the 2013-2017 CAF Exit Survey demonstrated that the top three internal reasons why females are leaving the CAF are as follows: job dissatisfaction at 40%, career progression at 24.6% and finally 24.6% of releasing Regular Force females indicated that “military lifestyle is not for me.”<sup>174</sup> It is important to note that there were differences between genders concerning their internal reasons for releasing. Males indicated geographical stability (33.2%) as a reason for releasing from the CAF more than females. Females rated geographical stability as an internal leave reason at 18.5%, resulting in a difference between genders of 15.1%. Females were more likely than males to list military lifestyle is not for me (24.6%), which DRDC describes as a lack of fit with

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<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

military lifestyle.<sup>175</sup> Males cited lack of fit with military lifestyle at 11%, equating to a difference of 13.6% between genders. This difference speaks volumes, and it may be a greater reflection of CAF gender integration. DRDC specifically states that “these differences suggest that special attention should be paid to the socialization and integration of women in the military such that they are able to adjust to the military lifestyle and feel a greater sense of belongingness.”<sup>176</sup> This suggestion illuminates the fact that gender integration and socialization is still an issue, even though females have been allowed to serve in every military occupation for the last 20 years.

The 2017 DRDC descriptive analysis report also provided the external leave reasons of survey participants who were voluntarily leaving the CAF. DRDC stated that a review of the results did not reveal any noteworthy differences.<sup>177</sup> However, there is a considerable difference between genders when examining the category of *personal health reasons*. Males cited *personal health reasons* as an external reason for voluntarily releasing at 7.4%, whereas females cited this reason at 12.3%. This is a 4.9% difference between genders without further exploration as to the reason why. It is known that medical attrition has been higher for women, and in the three-year period between 2017-2019 just over 50% of female releases have been for medical reasons.<sup>178</sup> Release for medical reasons is normally a 3B release, and as previously mentioned, the Exit Survey is not offered to CAF members medically releasing. Therefore, the category of *personal health reasons* being offered as an option for external leave reason is perplexing. The

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<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, 72.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, 100.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>178</sup> Government of Canada, 2018-2019 DND and the CAF Departmental Progress Report for Canada’s National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.”

survey participants did not qualify for a medical release, which presents questions as to what are the *personal health reasons* that influenced these members' voluntary departure from the military. The gender difference for this category (4.9%) requires further investigation as it would benefit the CAF to understand why females are releasing for *personal health reasons*. This knowledge can assist the CAF in better understanding the health needs of their female members and in turn could assist in obtaining a force that is one quarter female. As presented in Chapter 3 of this manuscript, it is known that there is a sexualized culture in the CAF that unequivocally impacts females more than males. An area of valuable research would be to investigate if the negative impacts of this sexualized culture are being captured under the theme of *personal health reasons* in the Exit Survey.

The CAF Exit Survey assesses respondents' satisfaction or dissatisfaction on various matters, and the influence level of these satisfiers or dissatisfiers on a members' decision to voluntarily release. The most influential factors for males voluntarily releasing from the CAF were: work-life balance at 40.6%, postings at 39.8%, career management at 36.9%, career progression at 35.7% and training at 34%.<sup>179</sup> The most influential factors impacting females' release decision were: work-life balance at 47%, postings 36.9%, career management 33.8%, job dissatisfaction at 31.3% and military occupation fit at 27%.<sup>180</sup> This data reveals similarities between genders, both male and female members named work-life balance, postings and career management as the top three factors influencing their decision to voluntarily release. Women are reporting job dissatisfaction and military occupation fit as dissatisfiers at higher rates than men. A

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<sup>179</sup> Bremner et al, "CAF Exit Survey - Descriptive Analyses of 2013-2017 Data," 87.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*



possible explanation for this difference may be rooted in the historical context of the military. The Canadian military was “conceptualized, designed and controlled by men”<sup>181</sup> Women have participated in military service since the North-West Rebellion in 1885, yet female integration into the CAF is still ongoing. Females are not represented in every CAF military occupation, and the representation rate for the Combat Arms is low at 2.9%.<sup>182</sup> The CAF organization supports equality for all members, however, perhaps the difficulty in obtaining equality is reflected in the Exit Survey dissatisfier results.

Friedman et al summarizes the complexity of gender equality and the CAF:

... the context of the organization, its history, structure, hierarchy, culture, and jobs have not fundamentally changed. Individuals are assigned positions based on their ability to do the job, but the job itself was originally created for a man. The Canadian Forces is not really a gender neutral organization, but a male gendered organization that has a long history of male orientation which has continually reproduced and recreated itself over the years.<sup>183</sup>

The DRDC descriptive analysis report for the CAF Exit Survey (2013-2017) has allowed for the organization to learn the most influential factors impacting females’ release decisions. This knowledge is valuable as it provides insight into why the CAF is losing female members, and why the CAF is struggling to meet the SSE goal of 1% annual growth of female representation.

### **CAF Exit Survey: Summary**

Understanding female attrition is an important aspect of increasing women in the CAF and meeting the SSE goal of a Force where one in four members is female by 2026.

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<sup>181</sup> Perley-Ann Friedman, Linda Schweitzer, and Leanne Karoles, “The Gender Neutral Approach of the Canadian Forces: Integrating Women into the Military,” *International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations* 8, no. 4 (2008): 73, <https://doi.org/10.18848/1447-9532/CGP/v08i04/39633>.

<sup>182</sup> Fuhr, “Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the Canadian Armed Forces,” 9.

<sup>183</sup> Friedman, Schweitzer, and Karoles, “The Gender Neutral Approach of the Canadian Forces: Integrating Women into the Military,” 73.

Males and females have similar attrition rates throughout their careers, however, at 20 years of service and beyond the attrition rate for women is noticeably higher.<sup>184</sup> To achieve a military where there is a higher representation of women, further research is required into this matter. The organization needs to know why women leave at 20 years of service, and what could be done to persuade those members to continue serving in the CAF. In addition to further research, there still needs to be a strategy to prevent attrition and retain the already trained and talented women in uniform. The last Retention Strategy was published in 2009,<sup>185</sup> and SSE communicated an initiative to develop and implement a comprehensive Retention Strategy.<sup>186</sup> SSE was published in 2017, and unfortunately, the updated CAF Retention Strategy has yet to be released and is projected to be published in the 2021 timeframe. In the absence of a formalized and implemented retention strategy, the CAF does regularly survey its members on the topic of retention. The second section of this chapter will discuss the CAF Retention Survey.

### **CAF RETENTION SURVEY**

The first section of this chapter presented reasons why personnel are leaving the military as captured in the DRDC descriptive analysis report on the CAF Exit Survey 2013-2017. The following section will discuss why personnel decide to stay in the CAF and continue their military service. Retention of personnel is extremely important to the CAF as it is an organization that invests specific resources (and time) into personnel. The CAF provides personnel with extensive training on specialized skills that are required for

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<sup>184</sup> Government of Canada, 2018-2019 DND and the CAF Departmental Progress Report for Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security."

<sup>185</sup> Bremner et al, CAF Exit Survey.

<sup>186</sup> Government of Canada, SSE..., 22.

members' military occupation.<sup>187</sup> Additionally, retention is a matter of importance to the CAF as training personnel is costly, the CAF spends more than half of its defence budget on personnel.<sup>188</sup> Retaining trained members benefits the CAF financially, and operationally. A common retention concern is that too few people will stay in an organization creating a shortage of experienced leaders and declining operational effectiveness.<sup>189</sup> A reduction in the qualified members available to execute the CAF's missions and deliver on Canada's Defence Policy (SSE) strategic vision of "Strong at home, Secure in North America, and Engaged in the world"<sup>190</sup> puts retention as one of CAF's strategic priorities.<sup>191</sup> In response to this strategic priority the CAF conducts retention surveys every two years to capture members' views on organizational factors that are related to member retention.<sup>192</sup> The CAF Regular Force Retention Survey will be discussed next with a focus on the retention factors specific to females.

Keeping members in uniform, male and female, is vital to the CAF organization. Consequently, the CAF Retention Survey is administered biennially to uncover why members continue their service in the Forces. The target population for the retention survey was all Regular Force members with an active military email account. A stratified random sampling method, based on occupation authority and rank, was utilized to select members for participation in the retention survey.<sup>193</sup> A total of 4,719 Regular Force members were invited to participate in the last retention survey with 2495 members

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<sup>187</sup> Rebecca Lee, Emrah Eren, and Glen Budgell, "2016 CAF Retention Survey: Qualitative Analysis" (Director General Military Personnel Research & Analysis, March 2017), 17.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> Congressional Research Service, "Defense Primer: Active Duty Enlisted Retention."

<sup>190</sup> Government of Canada, SSE..., 14.

<sup>191</sup> Lee et al, CAF Retention Survey...,17.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

completing the survey, resulting in a 52.9% response rate.<sup>194</sup> The 2495 figure can be broken down further into sex representation of survey participants: there were 1885 males, 369 females and 241 participants with missing sex identification.<sup>195</sup> There are quantitative questions and open-ended questions contained in the Retention Survey. The first two open-ended questions relate to the organizational level, and the last two questions relate to the occupational level.<sup>196</sup> The first open-ended question allowed participants to explain what factors contributed to their decision to continue serving in the CAF. The second open-ended question inquired about what the CAF could do to encourage members to stay if they were thinking of leaving the organization. The third question requested that participants list the aspects of their occupation that they are most satisfied with, and to rate the influence level of these aspects on their decision to stay in the military. The last open-ended question allowed participants to list the aspects of their trade that they are least satisfied with, and to rate the extent to which this impacted their decision to remain in the Forces.<sup>197</sup> Similar to the CAF Exit Survey, DRDC has produced a qualitative analysis report for the 2016 CAF Retention Survey. The DRDC report aims to identify what factors influence members' decision to stay in the military, and what changes the CAF could focus on to persuade members (who are contemplating releasing) to stay in the Forces and continue their service. The DRDC qualitative analysis report for the 2016 CAF Exit Survey is further explored below, with specific attention paid to female member retention matters.

### **CAF Retention Survey: Open-Ended Questions (Organizational)**

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<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 17–18.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

The first open-ended question in the CAF Retention Survey was “If you have no current intentions to leave the CAF, what factors are contributing to your decision to stay?”<sup>198</sup> The participant responses are categorized into themes, and there were similarities between males and females in response to this question. Both males and females, 13.1% and 13.2 respectively, listed *job satisfaction* most frequently as a factor contributing to their decision to remain in the military.<sup>199</sup> Males at 3.8% and females at 4.0% listed *limited opportunities* least frequently as a contributing factor in their decision to continue serving in the Forces.<sup>200</sup> There are noteworthy differences between men and women on contributing factors influencing the decision to stay in the CAF. Men cited *job security and financial security* as a contributing factor for staying in the CAF more than women, 11.0% and 7.7% respectively. Women cited *satisfaction with benefits* (8.8%) as a contributing factor for staying in the CAF more than men (6.5%).

The second open-ended question asked respondents, “If you are considering leaving the CAF within the next five years for reasons other than retirement, what changes could the CAF make to persuade you to stay?”<sup>201</sup> A review of the data revealed similarities among gender as to what the CAF could improve on in order to increase retention and decrease attrition. Both men and women identified *postings, benefits, organizational efficiency, advancements and promotions* and *geographical stability* as areas the CAF could change in order to persuade them to stay in the military.<sup>202</sup> Men were twice as likely to cite *pay* as a retention factor at 11.7%, whereas women’s cited pay

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<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid*, 37.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid*, 44.

at 5.8%. The category of *workload and demands* was identified more by women than men as a retention factor at 7.8% and 5.3% respectively.<sup>203</sup> These last two categories provide insight into what a female-focused retention strategy may want to concentrate on. *Pay* is not being listed as a retention factor as often for women as it is for men. Offering more money may not necessarily equate to more years of service from trained uniformed women. The retention factor women are reporting at a higher rate than men is that of *workload and demand*. This result indicates that women could be persuaded to stay in the CAF longer if changes to *workload and demands* were made. To revisit the CAF Exit Survey data, women reported the most influential factors impacting their release decision was *work-life balance* at 47%. There is a possible connection between why women are leaving the CAF (*work-life balance*), and what the CAF could improve on to get women to stay (*workload and demands*), and that connection is unpaid work. Research has shown that women spend 50% more time than men doing unpaid work.<sup>204</sup> Unpaid work is defined as “any work that women do in homes, communities, and workplaces that contributes to those environments and the people within them but which does not result in financial remuneration.”<sup>205</sup> Therefore, women may choose to leave the military due to this disparity in unpaid work and the challenge of balancing the demands of a CAF career.<sup>206</sup> If such is the case, it is imperative that the CAF acknowledges this dynamic and

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<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> Robson Fletcher, “Women Spend 50% More Time Doing Unpaid Work than Men: Statistics Canada,” CBC News, June 1, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/men-women-housework-unpaid-statistics-canada-1.4141367>.

<sup>205</sup> Government of Prince Edward Island, “Policy Guide: Women and Unpaid Work,” January 2003, , [http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/acsw\\_paid\\_full.pdf](http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/acsw_paid_full.pdf).

<sup>206</sup> A. N. Comisso, *Impediments and Solutions to Retaining Women in the Canadian Armed Forces*. (Toronto, Ont.: Canadian Forces College, 2019), 4.

develops initiatives in the CAF Retention Strategy to enhance *work-life balance* and *workload and demands* for uniformed women.

### **CAF Retention Survey: Open-Ended Questions (Occupational)**

Survey participants were asked open-ended questions regarding their occupation, the first question being “Reflecting on your occupation in the CAF, please list and discuss the aspects you are most satisfied with in respect to your CAF occupation.”<sup>207</sup>

The most significant difference between genders for occupational satisfaction was that of *job variety*. Females were more likely than males to state that they were satisfied with occupational job variety, 11.2% for females and 7.5% for men.<sup>208</sup> Another category where females were more likely than males to identify as an occupational satisfier was that of *pay*. Females cited 10.0% satisfaction with occupational pay compared to males at 8.6%.<sup>209</sup> Women cited training and development opportunities more than men as occupational satisfiers, 14.0% and 12.6% respectively.<sup>210</sup> Two categories where women rated less satisfaction than men were in *satisfaction with people* and *satisfaction with job/trade/occupation/branch*. Women indicated 12.2% *satisfaction with people*, whereas men’s satisfaction was higher at 13.3%. Lastly, women cited a 10.7% *satisfaction with job/trade/occupation/branch* compared to the higher satisfaction rating of men at 13.2%.<sup>211</sup>

The final open-ended question for the CAF Retention Survey asked the participants “Reflecting on your occupation in the CAF, please list and discuss the

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<sup>207</sup> Lee et al, CAF Retention Survey..., 48.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid*, 58.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid*.

aspects you are most dissatisfied with in respect to your CAF occupation.”<sup>212</sup> The greatest difference between genders for the CAF Retention Survey is found in the occupation dissatisfiers grouping. The two categories that are rated as high dissatisfiers for females and not their male counterparts are *leadership* and *workload and demands*.<sup>213</sup> Women were dissatisfied with *occupational leadership* at 13.1% and men rated this category at 9.6%, creating a 3.5% difference in *occupational leadership* dissatisfaction between genders.<sup>214</sup> Women also cited *workload and demands* as a dissatisfier for their occupation at 12.7% compared to the 9.5% rating given by men, resulting in a dissatisfaction difference of 3.2%.<sup>215</sup> Men had higher occupational dissatisfaction concerning *postings* and *PER (personal evaluation report) and promotion process*. Males named postings as a dissatisfier 3.8% more than females (8.8% for men and 5% for women).<sup>216</sup> There was a 2.8% difference among genders regarding the *PER and promotion process* category, men’s occupational dissatisfaction was 8.6% while women’s was 5.8%.<sup>217</sup>

### **CAF Retention Survey Summary**

There are differences between women and men and the reasons why they continue serving in the CAF. As evidence by the CAF Retention Survey, females were more likely than males to cite satisfaction with benefits as a contributing factor for continued service. Males were much more likely than females to cite job security and financial security as a

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<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*



contributing factor in their decision to remain in the military.<sup>218</sup> Women and men also noted different aspects the CAF could change to persuade them to stay in the military. For instance, females identified advancements and promotion improvements, and changes to workload and demands as factors that could persuade them to serve longer in the CAF. Males, however, were more likely than women to cite changes to pay as a persuasion factor.<sup>219</sup> This trend of retention differences between genders were also present in the occupational specific data. Women's occupational satisfiers included job variety, training and development, and pay. Conversely, men identified the nature of their job/trade as a primary occupational satisfier.<sup>220</sup> The responses for occupational dissatisfaction were also quite different among gender. Women indicated dissatisfaction with workload and demands, and occupational leadership. However, men cited postings and PER/promotion process as their main occupational dissatisfiers.<sup>221</sup>

## **SUMMARY**

Overall, the qualitative analysis of the CAF Exit Survey and the CAF Retention Survey suggest that there are a number of differences between females and males in their decisions to leave the CAF or continue serving in the military. It is vital that the CAF consider all factors impacting member (female and male) attrition and retention. However, it is essential that the CAF focus on the specific factors cited by females when implementing the retention strategy if the SSE goal of increased female representation is to be accomplished. The next chapter of this manuscript will cover the institutional

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<sup>218</sup> Lee et al, CAF Retention Survey..., Executive Summary, v.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid*, v-vi.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid*, v-vi.

barriers that still exist in the CAF and how they impact the retention of women in military.

## **CHAPTER 5: RETENTION INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS**

The information related to the CAF Regular Force Exit Survey on why women are leaving the military was outlined above. Conversely, the CAF Retention Strategy provided insight as to why women choose to remain in the military, and areas in which the military could improve on to persuade women to remain in the military. This chapter will discuss further institutional barriers that remain in the CAF that are impeding the retention of women. There are several barriers still in existence in the CAF, and if these barriers can be removed, or their impacts lessened, then the creation of a military with a higher female population becomes more feasible. Furthermore, addressing the CAF's institutional barriers impacting female retention would have the secondary effect of improving female recruitment and helping the CAF become an employer of choice for Canadian women. The first institutional barrier to be discussed is the inconsistencies and impediments of data collection for the CAF Exit Survey, and the release process for the Canadian military.

### **DATA COLLECTION INCONSISTENCIES AND IMPEDIMENTS**

#### **CAF Exit Survey**

The CAF puts effort and resources into data collection; surveys are conducted in order to gather information on attrition and retention. However, inconsistencies exist in the data collection that preclude the CAF from having a comprehensive understanding about female attrition and retention. For instance, the CAF Exit Survey has several inconsistencies that impact data collection on females and males releasing. First, the

method in which the Exit Survey is administered to releasing members is flawed. As previously mentioned in Chapter 4, the method for Exit Survey administration is not standardized. The release section or the Base/Fleet/Wing PSO are responsible for administering the Exit Survey. Having this administrative responsibility shared across two different entities may create confusion for members, and present circumstances where some Regular Force members willing to participate in the survey are missed. Another inconsistency is that Regular Force members can be informed about the Exit Survey through various mechanisms. The release section or local PSO can either “include the survey link in the release package (if one exists); insert the survey link on the release clearance sheet checklist (if one exists); hand out CAF Exit Survey cards containing the survey link; or email the survey link to departing members interested in receiving the link via email.”<sup>222</sup> Again, the various ways in which members are informed about the Exit Survey create situations where people could be missed, and results in members being unaware that there was the possibility of participating in the Exit Survey. This deduction is echoed in the DRDC descriptive analysis report for the 2013-2017 CAF Exit Survey, “as survey completion is anonymous and survey administration procedures vary slightly across the CAF, it is unlikely that all 8,103 voluntarily releasing members were offered the CAF Exit Survey.”<sup>223</sup> The Exit Survey inconsistencies impact data collection for all releasing Regular Force members, not just females. However, the current initiative to increase female representation to 25.1% by 2026, and the fact that the CAF is not meeting the annual growth targets for this goal, lends support to the importance of offering the Exit Survey to every releasing female member. It is imperative that the CAF

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<sup>222</sup> Bremner et al, CAF Exit Survey..., 14.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

attempts to capture the majority of releasing female members to document their rationale for leaving, and what the CAF can do differently to prevent future releases. In addition to Exit Survey data collection inconsistencies, there are also impediments in the structure of the CAF Exit Survey. These impediments hinder data collection on releasing female members, and the follow section will elaborate on this.

The structure of the CAF Exit Survey does not have open ended questions like the CAF Retention Survey. This is an opportunity lost for members to communicate in their own words why they are leaving the Forces. Moreover, it is an opportunity lost for the CAF to collect data on the important matter of female attrition. An additional impediment of the Exit Survey structure is the audience to which it is offered. The CAF Exit Survey is offered to all Regular Force members who are voluntarily releasing from the military, but it is not offered to members belonging to the Reserve Force.<sup>224</sup> The Reserve Force has higher female representation compared to the Regular Force, 16.8% and 16% respectively.<sup>225</sup> The CAF is missing a significant amount of attrition data by not offering the Exit Survey to voluntarily releasing female members from the Reserve Force. The Reserve Force is included in the Employment Equity statistics when the CAF communicates the representation of females in the military. Therefore, the CAF should also be accountable for researching why these women leave the military.

### **CAF Release Process**

The CAF does not conduct exit interviews with members releasing from the Forces, and this presents an institutional barrier for increasing female representation in the Canadian military. The population of females in the CAF has hovered between

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<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> DHRD, "Canadian Armed Forces Employment Equity Statistics," March 2021.

14.7%-16% over the last two decades,<sup>226</sup> and dedicated efforts to recruit more females to the Forces has yielded minimal improvements. As stated in Chapter 1, the defence of one's Nation is noble and fulfilling work, yet the CAF struggles to be an employer of choice for Canadian women. The CAF needs to understand why such is the case. Why is the CAF not a desirable employer of women? The answer to this question does not solely reside in a lack of knowledge about the CAF as resources and efforts to attract and recruit more women have been allocated since the publication of the 2017 Defence Policy.<sup>227</sup> This emphasizes the importance of conducting exit interviews on releasing female members to gather critical information as to why they are leaving the military. The recommendation for exit interviews was discussed at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament (1<sup>st</sup> Session) in June 2019, and further captured in the Standing Committee for National Defence's report for Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the Canadian Armed Forces.<sup>228</sup> A number of witnesses proposed exit interview as a way of collecting relevant information, with one witness expressing amazement that exit interviews were not formalized as part of the release process.<sup>229</sup> Sandra Perron (retired Major) proposed that women should have exit interviews when they leave the CAF to "find out what their experiences are, and we should learn from them."<sup>230</sup> Lieutenant-General Lamarre, who was Chief of Military Personnel and the Defence Champion for Visible Minority at the time of 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament Session in June 2019, stated that some exit interviews are being conducted for members whose trade is in high demand.<sup>231</sup> Lieutenant General Lamarre also commented that the

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<sup>226</sup> Jungwee Park, "A Profile of the Canadian Forces" (Statistics Canada, July 2008), 18.

<sup>227</sup> Government of Canada, "Women in the Canadian Forces (CF)."

<sup>228</sup> Fuhr, *Improving Diversity...*, 55.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*

CAF is considering whether to conduct such interviews each time someone leaves the CAF.<sup>232</sup> Ideally, exit interview would be conducted on all members releasing from the CAF, male and female. However, that would be a large endeavour for the CAF to implement (at this time). If exit interviews are already happening for trades that are in high demand, then this same effort should be extended to women releasing from the Forces as CAF female representation is in high demand, and there is an SSE goal to achieve by 2026.

The institutional barriers concerning the CAF Exit Survey need to be addressed to allow the CAF to gather thorough and accurate data on why females are leaving the military. Adding in open ended questions to the Exit Survey would benefit research into why both males and females are leaving the CAF. Additionally, the implementation of exit interviews for females (and all members if possible) would aid in breaking down the barrier to data collection concerning female attrition, and tackling the matters impacting women staying in uniform. The 2017 Defence Policy states “People are at the core of everything the Canadian Armed Forces does to deliver on its mandate.”<sup>233</sup> There is truth to that statement, and the CAF has a responsibility to converse with the members leaving the organization. The CAF should conduct the exit interviews, not only to find out why people are leaving or what the CAF could improve on, but to hear what the organization is doing well and to gather the positive feedback. There is knowledge to be gained by conducting exit interviews, and until they are implemented, an institutional barrier to increased female representation will remain. Another method of increasing female

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<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>233</sup> Government of Canada, SSE..., 19.

representation in the CAF is retaining the trained and talented women, and the absence of a CAF retention strategy as an institutional barrier will be discussed next.

### **CAF RETENTION STRATEGY**

The CAF Retention Strategy is categorized as an institutional barrier to increased female representation in the Canadian military for several reasons. First, there is no current CAF Retention Strategy; therefore, specific efforts to retain uniformed women are presently not being employed. It is acknowledged that a Retention Strategy is to be released in the 2021 timeframe.<sup>234</sup> However, until a national retention strategy is published (and implemented) the CAF is losing members to unhealthy attrition on a regular basis.<sup>235</sup> The last CAF Retention Strategy was published 12 years ago in 2009.<sup>236</sup> The Fall 2016 Report of the Auditor General of Canada on Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention (Report 5) found that the CAF had not implemented the 2009 Retention Strategy, and that retention plans for specific occupations did not exist.<sup>237</sup> A recommendation from Report 5 was that the “Canadian Armed Forces should develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate measures to optimize retention for each occupation.”<sup>238</sup> The response from National Defence stated that the CAF will develop a Retention Strategy in FY 2017-2018, which has yet to be published five years later. Furthermore, National Defence’s response to Report 5’s recommendation commented that the retention strategy (to be developed) would continue to focus on overall retention, and that occupational health would be managed by “implementing tailored retention strategies as

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<sup>234</sup> National Defence, “CAF Retention Strategy Draft” (Canadian Armed Forces, 2021).

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>236</sup> Bremner et al, CAF Exit Survey.

<sup>237</sup> Kevin Sorenson, *Report 5, Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention - National Defence, of the Fall 2016 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada*, Book, Whole (House of Commons, 2017),

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

required.”<sup>239</sup> This then leads to the second reason why the CAF Retention Strategy is categorized as an institutional barrier, it is too universal. A review of the draft 2021 CAF Retention Strategy reveals that the strategy is not specific to occupations, nor is it specific to females or other designated minority groups. The particularly useful and relevant data collected in the CAF Exit Surveys and CAF Retention Surveys about female attrition and retention are not being applied for retention purposes. Dr Andrea Charron, Director of the Centre for Defence and Security Studies stated that “[i]n the absence of a retention strategy designed to keep women and minorities in the CAF, a successful diversity recruitment strategy may only create a CAF that appears at a macro level to be a reflection of Canadian society.”<sup>240</sup> In the absence of a focused retention strategy for females, it is unlikely that the SSE goal of 25.1% female representation in the CAF will be accomplished by 2026. Nevertheless, the 2021 CAF Retention Strategy has yet to be formally released and this information could change before publication, and perhaps a focused-female retention strategy will be in existence.

### **CAF MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**

The CAF is lacking a formal mentorship program, and this is an institutional barrier to increased female representation in the military. The CAF’s current approach to mentoring has been ad hoc and informal.<sup>241</sup> In the author’s experience, the organization will identify someone as having leadership potential and indicate to them that they should seek out a mentor. Guidance is not given on how to do this, and the onus is left to the member to find a mentor. This approach is problematic as the military organization is

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<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>240</sup> Fuhr, *Improving Diversity...*, 30.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.



hierarchical and it can be an awkward dynamic for a member to approach a more senior military member. Additionally, if the member is female or belongs to a designated minority group, they then may have a difficult time seeking out a mentor that they inherently relate to. Mentorship was discussed at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament (1<sup>st</sup> Session) in June 2019, and several witnesses agreed that a formal mentorship program in the CAF could encourage females (and members with diverse backgrounds) to succeed, and aid in long-term commitment to the CAF.<sup>242</sup> A significant amount of literature has shown that mentorship programs increase employee retention, and their long-term commitment to organizations.<sup>243</sup> The CAF Exit Survey data revealed that within the top five factors influencing females leave decision was *military occupation fit*.<sup>244</sup> A formal and female-focused retention strategy has the potential to help guide women to other military occupations that would be a better fit and assist in retaining those female members. There is agreement within the literature that when employees recognize that their institution is supporting their development and growth, then they are much more likely to reciprocate that support and remain with that institution.<sup>245</sup> Female retention is important to the CAF as it assists in accomplishing the SSE goal of creating a Force that is 25.1% female in the next five years. Therefore, if mentorship programs have demonstrated increased employee retention, then it behooves the CAF to implement a formal mentorship program for women. Simply put, more women staying in the military aids in the efforts to increase female representation in the CAF.

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<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>243</sup> Twiladawn Stonefish et al., "Personnel Retention Strategies, Policies and Practices," Literature Review (Defence Research and Development Canada, August 2019), 19.

<sup>244</sup> Bremner et al, CAF Exit Survey..., 87.

<sup>245</sup> Stonefish et al., "Personnel Retention Strategies, Policies and Practices," 19.

A female focused CAF mentorship program has importance beyond the SSE goal of increasing female representation. The definition of mentorship is “a relationship between a senior mentor and a more junior protégé for the purpose of guiding and supporting the protégé in their career or personal development.”<sup>246</sup> The mentorship relationship is part of career development, but it is also part of the socialization process for new members to the organization.<sup>247</sup> This secondary aspect, the socialization process of new female members to the CAF organization is exceedingly important in today’s environment. It is known that the CAF currently has a sexualized culture,<sup>248</sup> and new female members having a female mentor to learn from, to confide in, would be of benefit to the members. A female-focused CAF mentorship program would have the added benefit of helping in recruiting efforts. If women interested in a military career knew that they would be connected to an experienced female military member for mentorship, then this may aid in addressing hesitations about joining the CAF.

## **MICROAGGRESSIONS**

Prior to discussing why microaggressions are categorized as an institutional barrier to increased female representation in the CAF, it is necessary to define what microaggressions are. The definition of a microaggression is as follows: “a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority.”<sup>249</sup> The term microaggression originated in the 1970s and was devised by a

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<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid* 19-20.

<sup>248</sup> Deschamps, "External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces."

<sup>249</sup> Directorate of Human Rights and Diversity, “Microaggression Is Harassment: A Toolkit for Resolution and Prevention,” 2021, 3.

Harvard psychiatrist, Chester M. Pierce.<sup>250</sup> It is Dr Derald Wing Sue, a professor of counseling psychology at Columbia University who has developed a modern definition of microaggression. Dr Sue describes microaggressions as the “everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.”<sup>251</sup> Dr Sue discusses how these hidden messages (microaggressions) could invalidate or demean an individual on a personal or group level.<sup>252</sup> Microaggressions can communicate that an individual does not belong with the majority group, threaten and intimidate that individual, or assign them an inferior status.<sup>253</sup> Microaggressions are discrimination, and the accumulation of these “everyday slights, snubs, and insults” have consequences on a victim’s mental and physical health.<sup>254</sup> The hidden messages contained in microaggressions may be subtle, but they hold significant power. Microaggressions can lower a victim’s self-esteem, sense of morale, and engagement.<sup>255</sup> Additionally, microaggressions lead to feelings of being repeatedly dismissed, alienated, and insulted, as well as create disparities in employment, a non-inclusive environment, and psychological dilemmas for the victim.<sup>256</sup> In the context of this manuscript, the discussion of microaggressions will focus on CAF female members as the marginalized group.

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<sup>250</sup> Hahna Yoon, “How to Respond to Microaggressions,” *The New York Times*, March 3, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/03/smarter-living/how-to-respond-to-microaggressions.html>.

<sup>251</sup> Derald Wing Sue and David Rivera, “Microaggressions: More Than Just Race,” *Psychology Today*, November 17, 2010, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201011/microaggressions-more-just-race>.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> Yoon, “How to Respond to Microaggressions.”

<sup>255</sup> DHRD, “Microaggression Is Harassment: A Toolkit for Resolution and Prevention.”

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

Microaggressions are institutional barriers to increased female representation in the CAF for two principal reasons. Firstly, the CAF does not specifically train personnel on the topic of microaggressions, and secondly, the CAF does not conduct research into microaggressions or their prevalence within the organization. The following paragraphs will expand on these reasons in further detail.

The Defence Team (CAF and DND personnel) has a Defence Administrative Order and Directive (DAOD) that deals with harassment, DAOD 5012-0 Harassment Prevention and Resolution.<sup>257</sup> This policy has been implemented since December 2000 and emphasizes harassment prevention and early resolution measures.<sup>258</sup> However, specific attention to microaggressions is not included in DAOD 5012-0. Additionally, the CAF does not conduct specific training on gendered microaggressions, the everyday indignities experienced by females in the CAF and the negative consequences that follow. In light of current events such as the investigations into the former and current CDS (General [Retired] Vance and Admiral McDonald), and the cancelling of Operation Honour by the Acting CDS, Lieutenant General Eyre, this is an opportune time to implement training on gendered microaggressions. There has been a new course developed that is mandatory for CAF personnel to take, “New Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Training” and this training is to be completed by 31 Dec 2021.<sup>259</sup> The author has yet to take this training, and the course material has not been made available. Therefore, it is unknown if microaggressions are covered in this course,

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<sup>257</sup> Department of National Defence, “Harassment Prevention and Resolution,” Defence Administrative Order and Directive (DAOD) 5012-0 (Canadian Armed Forces, December 12, 2000), <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5012/5012-0-harassment-prevention-and-resolution.html>.

<sup>258</sup> DHRD, “Microaggression Is Harassment: A Toolkit for Resolution and Prevention,” 6.

<sup>259</sup> Department of National Defence, “New Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Training,” Department of National Defence Intranet, accessed April 27, 2021.

and if they are discussed through a gendered lens. This new course does show promise, and if gendered microaggressions are not covered, it presents an opportunity for this training to evolve to include the topic.

While mandatory training for gendered microaggression is lacking in the CAF, there is content material for microaggressions, and these resources are found on the Directorate of Human Rights and Diversity (DHRD) website. These resources are valuable, however, CAF personnel would not know these existed unless they specifically accessed the DHRD website and searched for these. Additionally, these resources are not accessible unless accessed through the DND intranet. One of the DHRD resources available for the Defence Team is a document titled “Microaggression is Harassment: A Toolkit for Resolution and Prevention.”<sup>260</sup> This document has useful information that would benefit CAF and DND personnel, yet this material is not mandated as part of any training. Therefore, the concern is that individuals are not learning about microaggressions and the damaging effects they can have. Furthermore, this toolkit offered by DHRD for the resolution and prevention of microaggressions does not discuss microaggressions with a gendered lens, and how microaggressions impact the female population in the CAF. The second resource on the DHRD website that discusses microaggressions is a PowerPoint presentation titled “Understanding Conscious and Unconscious Bias.”<sup>261</sup> This presentation does discuss microaggressions with a more female focused perspective. One example given of a gendered microaggression is the “you run like a girl” phrase being used in a military unit that has a couple of female

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<sup>260</sup> DHRD, “Microaggression Is Harassment: A Toolkit for Resolution and Prevention.”

<sup>261</sup> Directorate of Human Rights and Diversity, “Understanding Conscious and Unconscious Bias,” [http://cmp-cpm.mil.ca/assets/CMP\\_Intranet/docs/en/support/military-personnel/bias-and-microaggression-en-revised.pptx](http://cmp-cpm.mil.ca/assets/CMP_Intranet/docs/en/support/military-personnel/bias-and-microaggression-en-revised.pptx).

members.<sup>262</sup> This presentation also explains that microaggressions do equal harassment and discrimination, and it breaks down microaggressions into the categories of micro-assaults, micro-insults, and micro-invalidations.<sup>263</sup> Micro-assaults are racism, they are more uncommon, deliberate, and explicit. Micro-insults are insensitive, rude and demean a person's identity or heritage. Lastly, micro-invalidations are exclusionary and nullify a person's feelings or thoughts.<sup>264</sup>

There is an organizational responsibility to educate all members about what microaggressions are, and the impact they have on people. This is especially true as often the act of a microaggression is committed by someone unintentionally. However, this does not negate the harmful impact microaggressions have on individuals (uniformed women in this context). Dr Sue comments that when discussing microaggressions with a large audience (women and people of color) that he is not telling audience members anything new, but it provides them with a language to describe the experiences.<sup>265</sup> The onus is with the organization to give female members the language to describe what they may have experienced and felt throughout their careers. Formal training on gendered microaggressions for the Defence Team would also allow personnel who have committed unintended offences to be more self-aware and hopefully correct that behaviour in the future.

The second reason that microaggressions are considered an institutional barrier to accomplishing a larger female population in the CAF is the lack of research into microaggressions. Lack of research can be broken down into two different categories.

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<sup>262</sup> DHRD, Understanding Conscious and Unconscious Bias..., slide 16.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid*, slide 19.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>265</sup> Yoon, "How to Respond to Microaggressions."

First, there is not enough information available about what gendered microaggressions in the military context look like. More information is required as to how microaggressions present themselves. There are commonly understood occurrences such as being talked over in a meeting, or the use of language equating weakness with female fitness, such as “run like a girl”, or push-ups being completed on your knees as “girl push-ups”.

However, there could be numerous nuanced ways that female members are experiencing microaggressions in the day-to-day interactions within the CAF. Moreover, as discussed above, without mandatory training on microaggressions, and due to their subtle nature, many women may not have a language for their experience of microaggressions, making it further difficult to research and document the varied ways these present. Further research is certainly required to investigate this. The CAF Exit Survey results showed that 24.6% of females are releasing because of *lack of fit with military lifestyle*.<sup>266</sup> This is a vague reason and perhaps microaggressions play a role in this. Additionally, as previously discussed in chapter 4, women have a higher attrition rate at 20 years of service and an explanation is not given for this.<sup>267</sup> Microaggressions have been described colloquially as “death by a thousand cuts,”<sup>268</sup> and perhaps microaggressions play a role in a female’s decision to voluntarily leave the military, or perhaps microaggressions are negatively impacting a female’s health. The answers to these questions are unknown, and microaggression being a factor in female attrition is a theory worthy of future research. Secondly, beyond documenting the nature of microaggression, the prevalence of them in the Canadian military is unknown. The CAF does not conduct surveys into women’s

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<sup>266</sup> Bremner et al, CAF Exit Survey..., 79.

<sup>267</sup> Government of Canada, 2018-2019 DND and the CAF Departmental Progress Report for Canada’s National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.”

<sup>268</sup> Yoon, “How to Respond to Microaggressions.”

experiences with microaggressions, there are not specific questions on microaggressions on the Exit Survey or Retention Survey, and exit interviews are not being conducted with females when they leave the military. Microaggressions will continue to act as an institutional barrier to increased female retention until the CAF conducts training into this topic, researches the subject matter, and surveys its female members on the prevalence of microaggressions.

The lack of formal training on microaggressions, the lack of knowledge about gendered microaggressions in a military context, and the absence of research into microaggression prevalence in Canada's military are all factors contributing to microaggressions being an institutional barrier to increased female representation in the CAF. Addressing these factors would assist in breaking down the microaggression institutional barrier, and aid in the SSE goal of a military that has more female representation in it.

## **SUMMARY**

The healthy retention of military personnel, male and female, is critical for the CAF as the inability to retain trained and talented members impacts operational effectiveness. Retention of females is especially important for the CAF as it is essential in accomplishing the SSE goal of a military where one in four members is female. In this chapter a variety of CAF institutional barriers influencing female retention were covered: the CAF exit survey data collection inconsistencies and impediments, the CAF release process and the absence of exit interviews, Retention Strategy delayed publication and lack of EE specific strategies, the absence of a formal mentorship program or specific gender considerations in this, and finally the lack of training, knowledge and research



into microaggressions. Addressing these institutional barriers would be of benefit to the CAF and would assist in creating a military that has a greater proportion of females.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The inclusion and integration of females in the Canadian military has been a long and challenging process. With its beginnings in the creation of the female force in 1941-42, to the last military occupation (submariner) opening up to females in 2001, and finally the first female Vice CDS being announced in 2021.<sup>269</sup> Institutional barriers have been broken down over the last 80 years, which has given women the opportunity to serve their country and enjoy fulfilling and noble careers. However, the work is not done. There are still institutional barriers in place preventing increased female representation in the military.

This manuscript outlined the institutional barriers remaining in the CAF for both the recruitment and retention of females in the Canadian military. The pervasive sexualized culture in the CAF is a significant factor impacting the recruitment of women. Additionally, the retention of females in the military is influenced by the sexualized culture, and this is evidenced by the recent release of a senior female Officer over her disgust of the CAF culture.<sup>270</sup> The recruiting model utilized by the CAF contains institutional barriers impacting the growth of female representation in the Forces. Specifically, it does not have a policy for employing females at recruiting centers, or a female-focused recruitment strategy. Retention of uniformed women can also help with increasing the overall number of females in the Forces. However, research into why

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<sup>269</sup> Department of National Defence, “Promotions and Senior Appointments 2021 - General and Flag Officers.”

<sup>270</sup> David Pugliese, “Senior Female Canadian Forces Officer Quits Military in Disgust over Sexual Misconduct Allegations,” Ottawa Citizen, March 16, 2021, <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/senior-female-canadian-forces-officer-quits-military-in-disgust-over-sexual-misconduct-allegations>.

women leave the military is lacking and currently contains inconsistencies. The CAF Exit survey does not have open ended questions asking women why they are leaving their military careers, and the organization is not conducting exit interviews with women as they depart. These interviews not being completed for releasing females is an opportunity lost by the CAF to gather relevant data that could assist in developing retention strategies. Furthermore, the informal nature of the CAF mentorship program, as well as the organization failing to offer a female-focused mentorship program is an institutional barrier to greater female representation in the Forces. Finally, microaggressions represent a significant institutional barrier for the CAF. There is a lack of awareness of these microaggressions, their prevalence, and there is a dearth of education on microaggressions for military members.

It is imperative that these institutional barriers are acknowledged and addressed within the CAF. The removal of such barriers would aid in accomplishing the SSE goal of a military that is 25.1% female by 2026. A higher female representation will lead to a CAF that has enhanced operational effectiveness in today's unconventional warfare environment, will create a work environment that is more respectful and inclusive to the currently serving female members, and most fundamentally will better reflect the Canadian society.

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