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Citigroup accused of sacking female staff... to save jobs of less-qualified men

By [Paul Thompson](#)

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Cover girls: The women's case features on the front of Forbes magazine

Bosses at one of America's biggest banks have been accused of sacking female staff to save the jobs of less-qualified men.

A group of women working for banking giant Citigroup have filed a class action lawsuit claiming the bank is effectively run as a 'boy's club'.

The five former employees and one current employee claimed less qualified men kept their jobs during a mass round of redundancies while they were fired or demoted.

The lawsuit alleges the bank used the economic downturn and financial meltdown, which saw banks shed thousands of jobs, to purge its workforce of female employees while retaining less qualified men.

They also claim that women working at the bank have a 'glass ceiling', are paid less than their male counterparts and sexist comments are rife.

One example given in paperwork filed in the District Court in Manhattan said a female employee faced 'inappropriate and offensive' comments based on her gender.

It said when she returned from maternity leave, she was demoted.

Citigroup was at the centre of sex discrimination claim earlier this year when Debrahelee Lorenzana claimed she was fired for being 'too sexy'.

The single mum claimed bosses at her branch in New York said her curvy figure was too distracting to other men and she was told not to wear figure hugging clothes.

When she refused she was sacked. Citibank claimed she was dismissed for her poor performance and not her sultry looks.

The six women were named in the lawsuit are Amy Bartoletti and Brittany Sharpton of New York City, Chia Siu of Long Island City, New York, Nadine Mentor of Orlando, Florida, and Lisa Conley of Chicago.



Under female fire: Citigroup is being sued over sexism allegations by five former employees and one current worker

They were all employed in the Public Finance Department within Citigroup's Municipal Services Division.

The sixth plaintiff, Dorly Hazan-Amir of Hoboken, New Jersey, is currently employed by Citigroup in the Asset Finance Group, according to court documents.

The lawsuit says there is an outdated 'boys club' mentality at the bank.

It says this 'filters down through the management ranks to affect all senior and junior level professional positions at Citigroup,' resulting in 'systematic and pervasive discrimination and retaliation' against women across the bank, from managing directors to analysts.

The complaint says Citigroup's 44-member senior leadership committee includes only five women, and that its 19-member executive committee is composed entirely of men.

It claims women are unable to break into the ranks of senior management.

'As a result of this companywide discrimination, there is a glass ceiling adversely affecting female employees, especially those female employees who become pregnant, take a maternity leave, or have childcare obligations, at Citigroup in all facets of their employment,' the lawsuit said.

It says the number of women and men laid off in the November 2008 cuts 'was unlikely to have occurred by chance, and instead was the result of intentional gender discrimination.'

Citigroup axed a tenth of its workforce in November 2008.

The complaint is the latest in a series of lawsuits accusing Wall Street banks of favouring men over women, or fostering a culture in

which female employees did not have the same opportunities as men to advance to more senior positions.

Last month, three former female employees at Goldman Sachs filed their own bias lawsuit claiming systematic gender discrimination.

Earlier this year three investment advisers who worked at Bank of America Merrill Lynch filed a lawsuit citing gender bias. Both Goldman and Bank of America have denied the accusations.

A spokeswoman for Citigroup, Danielle Romero-Apsilos, said the bank had not yet been served with the suit.

'We will respond to the specifics when we have a chance to review the allegations. Citi has a long-standing commitment to equal employment practices and to provide a professional and respectful workplace free of unlawful discrimination.'

Citigroup suffered huge losses during the global financial crisis of 2008 and was rescued in November 2008 in a massive bailout by the U.S. government who now own a 27 per cent stake in the company.

It employs more than 250,000 people worldwide and is one of the 'Big Four' banks in the US along with along with Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase and Wells Fargo.

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If women does the same job as men then they should be paid the same salary.

Can you imagine the outcry if women were paid more than men.

It really is a mans world.

- Sandy, Lancashire, 14/10/2010 18:01

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It doesn't matter a fig what qualifications you have, they only get you through the door. Its how you perform once given your chance that counts.

Any given company wants to make money and they will favour those that make the most money. It's not rocket science.

- Trudi, Worcester, 14/10/2010 17:49

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How many of the men are liable to take a year off,paid,leaving them to pay someone else then maybe or maybe not come back insisting on only working short hours and not rolling in for a day every two weeks because the baby is ill?