

# Why do we need a Canadian Women Economists Network?

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Sometimes people ask 'Why do we need a Canadian Women Economists Network?' For many years, we didn't. In the 1970s, and even the 1980s, there were so few women in the Canadian economics profession that it was easy for everyone to know everybody. The almost empty women's washrooms at CEA meetings were a friendly place to connect. But when the number of female economists in Canada began to grow in the late 80s and 1990s, we needed another way to network.

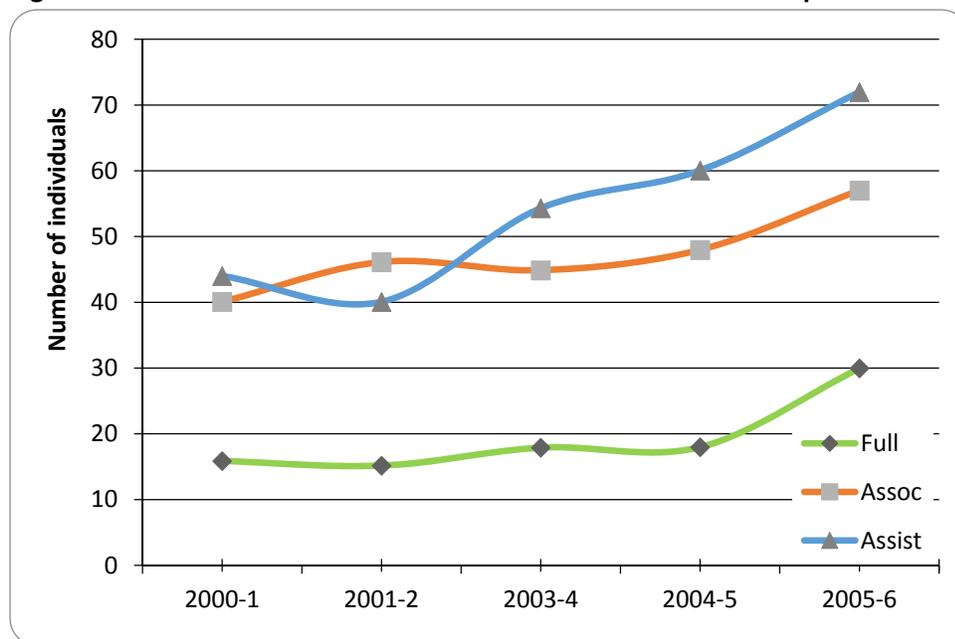
CWEN started at a breakfast meeting at the Victoria meetings in 1990. Lorraine Eden had just been elected as vice-president of the CEA, and she saw an opportunity to create a network that would parallel the AEA's Committee for the Status of Women in the Economics Profession, connecting women, monitoring women's progress in the profession, and raising women's issues. She mailed letters to 25 women economists inviting them to a breakfast meeting. All but one (who wasn't at the meetings that year) showed up.

It might be hard for today's PhD students and recent graduates to recognize how lonely it could be for female economists back then. CWEN's directory of women economists published in 1991 lists the number of women on faculty in each department. Some departments, such as Waterloo or McMaster, had no female faculty, most had one or two, more than that was relatively rare.

Being the only woman – or one of two or three women – gave one a certain freedom. Simply because you were not quite one of the guys, you were not bound by quite the same rules. But some things were more difficult – like asking a colleague to go for coffee or lunch. The women I met through CWEN, who I could contact with this relatively new thing called email, were a source of support and friendship. Having role models like Roberta Robb, who somehow managed to balance kids, career, marriage, and still be a sane and balanced person, helped too.

Almost twenty years after that first breakfast meeting, things are different. The hiring boom of the last few years has brought unprecedented numbers of women into the economics profession. Just how much things have changed can be seen in Figure 1, calculated from Statistics Canada data published each year in the CAUT almanac (see [www.caut.ca](http://www.caut.ca)). Less than a decade ago, there were just 15 female full professors in Canadian Economics departments, 40 Associates and 44 Assistants. In just six years, the number of women with full-time teaching positions in Canadian economics departments grew 60 percent.

**Figure 1: Number of Female Professors in Canadian Economics Departments**



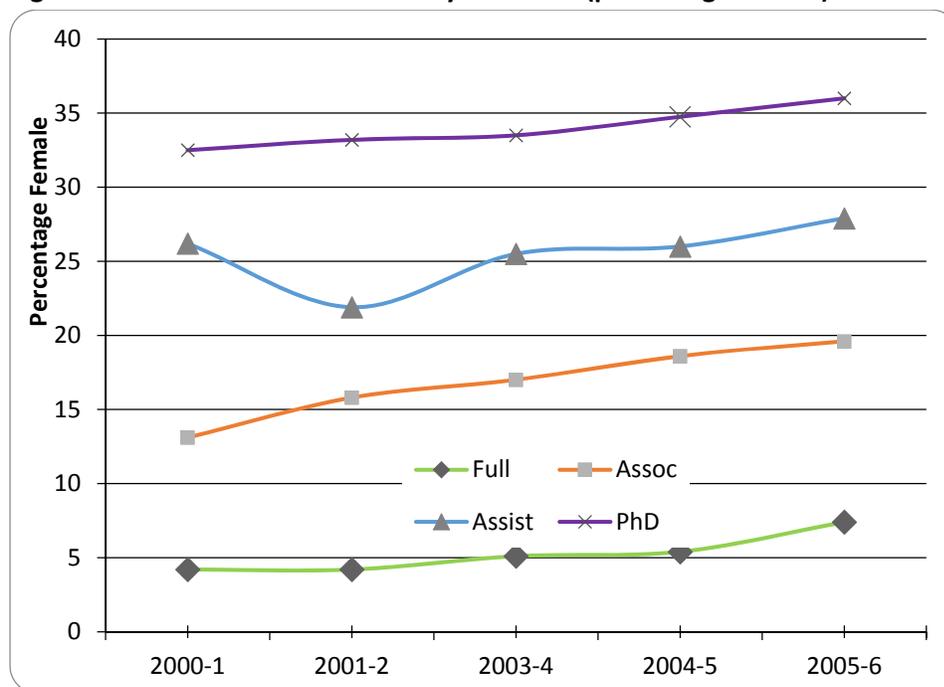
A more familiar way of showing women’s progress is the percentage of women in the “pipeline”. Figure 2 provides Canadian data that is roughly equivalent to the US pipeline numbers published annually by CSWEP. The faculty figures are based on the same Statistics Canada data as Figure 1; the PhD numbers are full time equivalent enrolments.<sup>1</sup> As Janice Compton and Christine Neill report in their talk, also summarized in this newsletter, women have been hired in even greater numbers in the last couple of years, so these figures may understate the number of women currently at the Assistant Professor level.

In Canada from 2000 to 2006 there were proportionately fewer female economists in academia than in US PhD-granting institutions.<sup>2</sup> The proportion female at the Assistant level varies but seems to trend upwards. The percentage female at Full and Associate is trending steadily upwards, in part because women hired in the 1980s and 1990s are moving up through the ranks, and in part because the mostly-male generation of academics hired in the 1960s and early 1970s has reached retirement age.

<sup>1</sup> Since the 2000-1 and 2003-4 doctoral enrollment data were missing from the CAUT publications, those numbers are an average the years immediately before and after.

<sup>2</sup> The Committee for the Status of Women in the Economics Profession reports are available at [http://www.cswep.org/annual\\_reports/2007\\_CSWEPA\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](http://www.cswep.org/annual_reports/2007_CSWEPA_Annual_Report.pdf).

**Figure 2: Canadian economics faculty and PhDs (percentage female)**



The idea of a pipeline is that, as women flow from undergraduate to graduate education, then through the professorial ranks, the Full, Associate and Assistant lines as shown in Figure 2 will trend upwards, until they converge with PhD enrollments in a gender-equitable steady state. But there are leaks in the pipeline.

As Figure 2 shows, the proportion of women at the assistant professor level is lower than the proportion of women in Canadian doctoral programs. One reason for the difference may be non-completion of doctorates. For the two years that I have CAUT almanac data on the number of doctorates in economics received by gender (1998-9 and 2000-1) the portion of doctorates received by women is lower than one would expect given the enrolment numbers (17.5% and 22.5% respectively). An alternative explanation is that women find government an attractive and collegial place to work. The culture of some academic economics departments— aggressive questioning during seminars, going down to the pub for a drink, the family/tenure conflict – may create particular challenges for women. Finally, graduate education is more like a sprinkler system than a pipeline. Canadian undergraduates are sprinkled across Canada, into the US and Europe. People from all over the world do graduate work in Canada. Some of those graduates go on to teach in Canadian universities, but at least half do not.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Unlike the AEA, the CEA does not collect information on what happens to Canadian PhD students. I researched the current status of doctoral graduates listed in the August 2006 and February 2007 CEA newsletter. Over half of the graduates are now in academic jobs. The men and women who had received all of their education in Canada did well on the job market, immigrant men did less well. I found three immigrant women in academic jobs, Christine Neill (now at Wilfrid Laurier), Kazuko Keno (University of Technology Sydney) and Cathy Ning (Ryerson).

Canadian economics departments recruit faculty internationally, so there is no necessary connection between Canadian doctoral enrollments and Canadian assistant professor hires.

What about the pipeline from assistant to associate, associate to full? Ten years ago, CWEN and the CEA struck a joint committee to examine the status of women in the Canadian economics profession. Their report, written by Brenda Spotton Visano, identified SSHRC success rates as one of the key gender disparities in economics. In 2001/2, women’s SSHRC success rate was 18.2%, men’s was 55.6%.<sup>4</sup> The figures in Table 1, provided by Nicolas Germain of SSHRC, shows that a gender disparity still exists.

**Table 1. SSHRC funding rates, by gender**

Scholar Type	Gender	2008			2009		
		All	Funded		All	Funded	
		N	n	%	n	n	%
New	Female	15	1	6.7%	26	4	15.4%
	Male	37	7	18.9%	37	6	16.2%
Regular	Female	8	4	50.0%	9	4	44.4%
	Male	80	37	46.3%	64	32	50.0%
Total	Female	23	5	21.7%	35	8	22.9%
	Male	117	44	37.6%	101	38	37.6%
Total		140	49	35.0%	136	46	33.8%

These statistics concern the applicants, not the collaborators and co-applicants. Regarding the definition of new scholar, see the SSHRC website ([www.sshrc.ca](http://www.sshrc.ca)).

SSHRC standard research grants are based on past research success. Women usually apply as new scholars, but new scholars typically don’t get funded, because they do not have strong enough track records. To be successful at SSHRC, you need to be a star with publications in top-ranked journals – which is generally taken to mean more international, less applied, less policy-oriented journals—and there are few female stars.

The value of CWEN is information. If you were unsuccessful in 2008 or 2009, you are not alone. You can explain to your Dean or Chair why your grant was not successful. And you can use this information to think strategically about how to apply for money from SSHRC. In your first year in a new appointment, you are probably better off concentrating on getting your thesis published, and waiting until you have a revise and resubmit or two before applying to SSHRC. Alternatively, consider other SSHRC competitions, or apply with another investigator.

Another gender inequality identified in the CWEN/CEA report was in salaries. Today the salary of any economist paid over \$100,000 per year is published in Ontario’s annual salary disclosure.<sup>5</sup> Anindya Sen, Hideki Ariizumi and Natasha De Sousa have gathered additional data which complements the salary

<sup>4</sup> The report is available at [http://www.cwen-rfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/SWECFINALREPORT\\_2001.pdf](http://www.cwen-rfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/SWECFINALREPORT_2001.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Available at <http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/english/publications/salarydisclosure/2009/>. These salary figures are based on actual amounts paid to the employee, so will be lower than the employee’s full salary for people on leave.

disclosure information. Using their data set, I was able to calculate both the percentage of Ontario economics faculty paid over \$100,000 by rank and gender, and average salaries paid for those earning over \$100,000. Table 2 shows that, in 2006, the average salary of a female academic economist in Ontario was lower than that of a male at the same rank.

**Table 2: 2006 Salary Information, Ontario Professors of Economics, by Rank and Gender**

	Assistant		Associate		Full	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Number	90	28	86	22	118	5
Percent earning over \$100,000	26	7	62	59	82	60
Average salaries (over \$100,000)	\$112,322	\$104,735	\$121,039	\$116,969	\$137,527	\$111,592

The disparities in SSHRC funding and salaries that still exist show why we still need CWEN. But what has been accomplished since the first breakfast meeting almost twenty years ago shows how far we have come.

- In 1991, Nancy Olewiler became the first woman to edit an association journal, becoming managing editor of Canadian Public Policy.
- In 1992, Margaret Slade joined Lise Salvat-Bronsard as Associate Editor of the Canadian Journal of Economics and so – very briefly – the CJE had an all-female AE team. Robin Boadway, the then editor, has mentored many female economists over the years.
- In 1993, Angela Redish was the first woman to give the CEA’s Innis lecture.
- In 1994 Alice Nakamura became the first female president of the CEA.
- In 2002, Karen Ruckman was the first woman – and the first person – to win the Mundell prize for the best paper in the CJE published by a young scholar. The Mundell Prize is noteworthy for being won by women more often than men through its history.
- In 2004, Barbara Spencer became the CEA’s second female president. Barbara was also the first woman to win the Harry Johnson prize in 1981.
- In 2008, Kari Polanyi Levitt was the inaugural winner (with Mel Watkins) of the Progressive Economics Forum's John Kenneth Galbraith Prize.

Many barriers have fallen for female economists. But there are still peaks for the next generation to climb. There has never been a female editor of the Canadian Journal of Economics. No woman has ever won the Association’s \$10,000 Rae Prize.

Being smart and hard working is generally a necessary, rather than a sufficient, condition for professional success. The editors of CJE and CPP are chosen by a committee selected by the Canadian Economics Association Executive Council and chaired by the previous-but-one editor – so Dwayne Benjamin will chair a committee to replace the current editor David Green, for example. The associate editors of the CJE are chosen by the current editor.

The members of the CEA Executive Council are chosen by a nominating committee. What is not generally known is that nominations of candidates may be made by any five members, submitting a

nomination paper signed by themselves and the nominee, to the Secretary-Treasurer no later than March 1 of the year of the election. (There has been only one contested election in CEA history). If you're not happy with the direction of the Association, nominate someone different – for Council or for President.

Although the aim of this talk has been to inspire you to go out and try to make the world a better place, I have to confess that for me the truly inspiring role models are people who enjoy their lives and follow their own path, with honesty and integrity. If you resist calls to sit on powerless committees, focus on your own research, and have fun in your life, you might end up promoting the status of one woman in the economics profession – yourself!