

Strengthening Canada's Research Capacity: The Gender Dimension

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European Gender Summit 2012
Café Scientifique #1 - The Leaky Pipeline and Age Discrimination

Strengthening Canada's Research Capacity: The Gender Dimension

- Report released by the Council of Canadian Academies in November 2012.
- Developed in conjunction with a 15-member expert panel.
- Assesses the factors that influence the university research careers of women in Canada.
- Available in English and French at:
[www.scienceadvice.ca /](http://www.scienceadvice.ca/)
<http://sciencepourlepublic.ca/fr/default.aspx>

Expert panel members

- Lorna R. Marsden (Chair)
(Canada)
- Janice G. Dodd (Canada)
- Nadia Ghazzali (Canada)
- Alison M. Konrad (Canada)
- Yvonne A. Lefebvre (Canada)
- Geoffrey Oldham (UK)
- Lynne-Marie Postovit
(Canada)
- Luisa Prista (Belgium)
- Wendy J. Robbins (Canada)
- Pamela Robinson (Canada)
- Rima Rozen (Canada)
- Karen Sobel (Canada)
- Veronica Strong-Boag
(Canada)
- Lorna Williams (Canada)
- Michael C. Wolfson (Canada)

Context

- 2008: no female candidates among 36 researchers nominated for Canada Excellent Research Chairs program (world-class research awards worth \$10M)
 - So, of course, there were no female candidates among the 19 winners...
- *"It was a combination of factors,"* (Federal Minister of Industry) Tony Clement said in an interview. *"We didn't know we had a problem. It just never occurred to us that it would be 19 men and zero women. I've got to say it was a total shock to me."*

Context, continued

- 2010: Federal Minister of Industry strikes ad hoc panel to examine the chair selection process
 - Panel recommends further examination of gender equity in the university context and talent pool
- 2010: Council of Canadian Academies/expert panel tasked with examining these issues
- 2012: report released
 - *Strengthening Canada's Research Capacity: The Gender Dimension*

Main findings

- Similar enrollment patterns at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels; similar distribution across disciplines.
- At higher academic ranks, fewer women are present in comparison to men:

% women as full professor	% women as assoc. prof.	% women as asst. prof.	% women lecturers/ instructors	all (2008/09)
21.7	36.2	42.6	44.9	32.6

- Canada's distribution of women researchers, associate and full professors is similar to the EU average (as well as the US, UK and Australia).

Main factors

- Canada could be doing more to fulfill its **national and international commitments to women's rights** (e.g., gender equity goals in the *Employment Equity Act*).
- It is important to take a **life course perspective** when understanding career trajectories:
 - The pathway to becoming a researcher is laid before university.
 - Young Canadians lack knowledge about educational requirements for future careers as well as understanding of what careers in the physical sciences, computer science, engineering and mathematics entail.

Main factors, continued

- The **paucity of women in leadership positions** makes it difficult for other women to envision themselves as leaders.
- **Institutional practices** can negatively influence the career trajectories of women researchers (implications of implicit bias).
- For women, a small but persistent university **salary gap** can have significant financial effects over the long term.
- The **paid work-family life balance** is a particular challenge for women researchers with families.

Data gaps and illustrative practices

- The Expert Panel identified data gaps (e.g., lack of longitudinal data on university researchers, lack of comprehensive qualitative data on the experience of women in university research, etc.).
- Canada must look to the EU and the US for best practices in benchmarking and tracking the progress of women researchers.
- The report identifies a number of illustrative (best) practices (at a range of levels – institutional, regional, national; both domestic and international).