Strengthening Canada’s Research Capacity: The Gender Dimension

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Strengthening Canada’s Research Capacity: The Gender Dimension

- Developed in conjunction with a 15-member expert panel.
- Assesses the factors that influence the university research careers of women in Canada.
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)
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% women as full professor</th>
<th>% women as assoc. prof.</th>
<th>% women as asst. prof.</th>
<th>% women lecturers/instructors</th>
<th>all (2008/09)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>32.6</td>
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• 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).