



# CWEC/CFEC and CWEN/RFE

Canadian Women Economists Network/Réseau de Femmes Économistes  
and

Canadian Women Economists Committee / Comité des Femmes  
Économistes Canadiennes



# CWEN/RFE Mission

CWEN/RFE addresses the networking needs of women economists and promotes the advancement of women in the economics profession. Objectives of CWEN/RFE are:

1. To create an opportunity for women economists to meet and discuss issues of common interest at the CEA meetings.
2. To ensure appropriate representation of women economists and their interests in professional activities and forums.
3. To improve employment opportunities for Canadian women economists.



# Beginnings of CWEN/REF



- CWEN/REF was founded in 1990 by a group of women led by Roberta Robb and Lorraine Eden.
- In the words of Roberta Robb (served as President from 1997-1999)
- “[...] in June of 1990, I joined with a group of some two dozen women economists at a breakfast at the University of Victoria and CWEN – The Canadian Women Economists Network was formed. That began a period of individual and collective activism by both senior and some wonderful junior economists (for whom the costs of speaking out were clearly higher) to restructure the economics profession and the academy in terms of gender equality which continues to this day. We worked on a number of fronts – networking, organizing CEA sessions of interest to women, initiating challenges to sexist policies and procedures, etc. - but one of the key characteristics of the approach was mentoring – a passionate commitment to making it easier for those who came behind us.”

# First Status of Women in Economics Report

- The first report conducted by CWEN/RFE jointly with the CEA came out in 2001, known as the 2001 Report of the Special Committee on Women in Economics”
- “There is a significant and pronounced gender imbalance in university economics. In 1999, women comprised 12.7 per cent of all full-time, tenured or tenure stream, economics faculty. Representation of women is higher the lower the rank. Women at the full professor rank comprise 5.4 per cent of all senior economics faculty, 10.9 per cent of associate professors, and 31.3 per cent of junior, tenure-track, assistant professors.”

# Transition from CWEN/RFE to CWEC/CFEC

- Under Anke Kessler (2015 to 2016) steps were taken to turn CWEN/REF into a standing committee of the CEA.
- This vision was realized under Elizabeth Dhuey who oversaw the transition and served as CWEN/RFE's last president and as CWEC/CFEC's first chair (2017-2022).
- CWEC/CFEC was founded in 2017 after the dissolution of CWEN/RFE.



# The Role of the Canadian Women Economists Committee / Comité des Femmes Économistes Canadiennes

is to support and promote the advancement of women in the Canadian economics profession. On behalf of the Canadian Economic Association, it undertakes to

- ensure appropriate representation of women economists and their interests in professional activities and forums
- improve women economists' employment opportunities and monitor their progress
- provide a forum for raising, discussing and addressing issues of concern to women in the Canadian Economic Association



# Mentoring Workshops



- Mentoring had always been a focus of CWEN/RFE, but the first workshop at the CEA was held in 2016.
- Modelled after the immensely popular mentoring breakfast at the AEA meetings organized by our U.S. sister organization CSWEP, the event is an informal meet and great affair, in which junior economists are paired with senior economists (predominantly senior women) to provide mentoring and network opportunities.
- This model has been tweaked and expanded over the years, but it is an essential regular activity of CWEC/CFEC.



# Expanded Newsletter



- First in Fall 2015
- Once or twice a year
- Reports on organization's activities
- Announcements/call for nominations
- Interviews with inspiring women economists from academia and elsewhere
- Articles relevant to profession and women (gender bias in evaluations, childcare at conferences, unconscious bias in committees etc)





# Ongoing Activities



- As part of our mission, CWEC/CFEC **organizes professional development sessions** and a luncheon at the annual CEA meetings.
- Every two years, alternating, we either conduct a survey and compile a report on the gender composition of faculty and students in academic economics departments in Canada or award the Young Researcher Award and Service Award.

We also

1. maintain a web page for publication of news of activities, opportunities (including job opportunities) and resources of interest to women economists.
2. advise and offer recommendations to the CEA on matters relating to the status of women in economics in Canada.
3. continuously consider and explore new ways to facilitate and promote the goal of gender equity in the Canadian economics profession.
4. pursue and maintain active connections to sister organizations within Canada and internationally.

# Major Activities



- Workplace Climate Survey
- Mentoring Workshops
- Collecting data on Women Economists in degree programs in Economics and related disciplines and as academic staff.
- Newsletters: highlighting research by women economists, reflecting on issues that women economists face in the profession, celebrating Women economists achievements
- Panels/sessions at the CEA meetings
- CWEC/CFEC luncheon speaker
- Awards for service, early in career research

# Statistics – Women Economists in Academia

- Improvements in female representation at the associate and full professor levels over the past few years with women still representing only 15.4% of all full professors and 27.7% of associate professors in 2018-19.
- The proportion of female assistant professors seems to have been levelling off, which could dampen female representation in more senior ranks in the coming years.



# Statistics – Women Economists in Academia

- For business and policy departments, the proportion of female professors drops as they progress through the academic ranks. For economics departments, female representation improves slightly at the associate level, then drops by about half at the full professor level.
- In all provinces, there was a fall in female representation from associate to full professor. Only in Quebec was there only a slight difference between female representation of associate and full professors. In Ontario, the Maritimes and Quebec, female representation was similar for assistant and associate professors, whereas for British Columbia and the Prairies, female representation increased from assistant to associate professor.

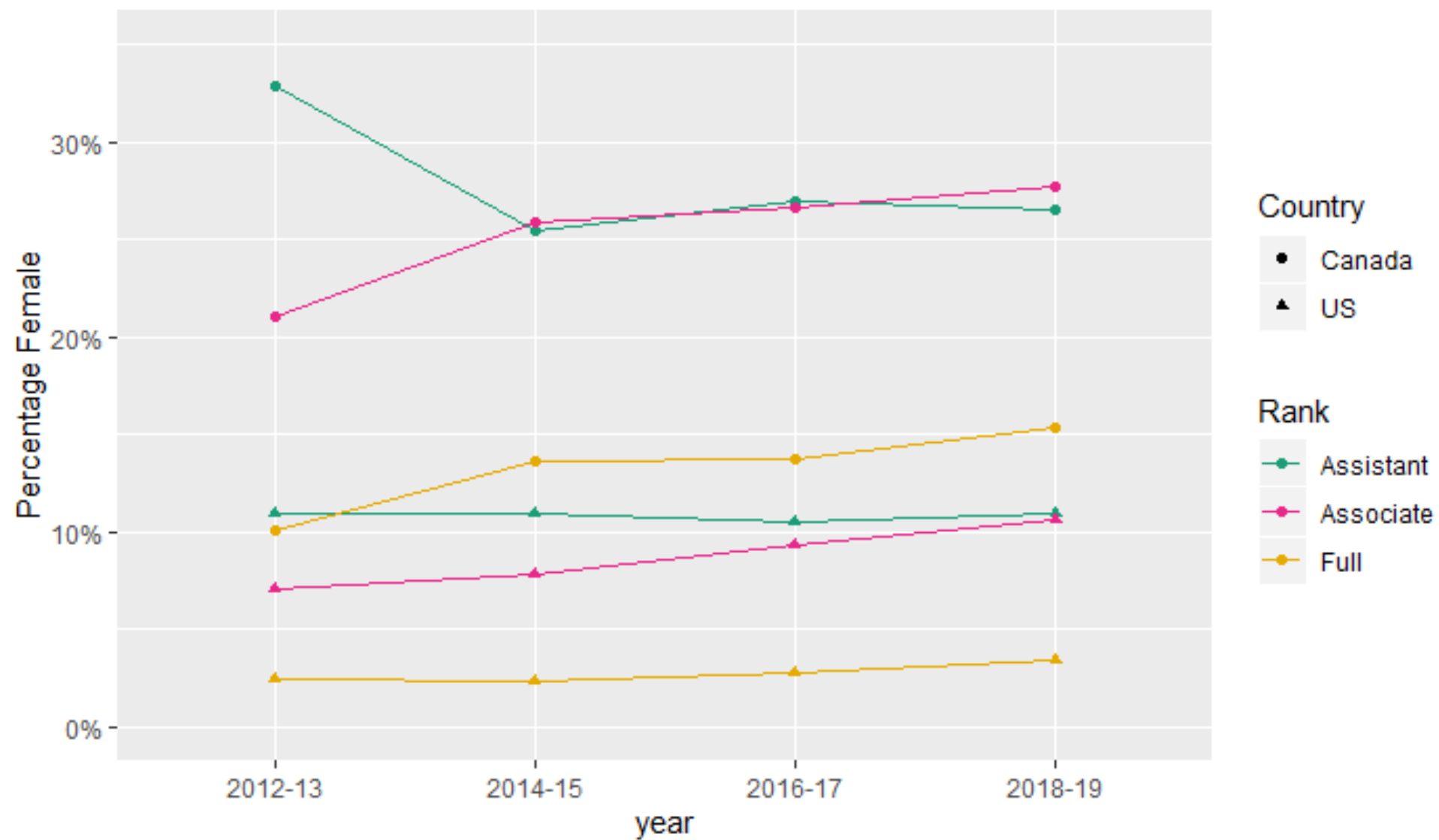


# Status of Women Economists- Students

In 2018-19, female economics students were underrepresented at all stages of their education. Female enrolment is stable throughout the undergraduate and master's, and weakest at the later stages of the PhD. This indicates that women drop out as they go through the academic pipeline. Surprisingly, 1<sup>st</sup> year PhDs had the strongest female enrolment at 45.0%, surpassing that of undergraduates (43.3%) and master's (43.2%). It is possible that the latest cohort of incoming PhDs was more female than previous cohorts. Women might also face a variety of gender-specific challenges as they go through the PhD which might make them more likely to drop out than men. Another potential explanation is that women may be more likely to pursue opportunities outside of academia and interrupt their PhD.



Percentage of women in full-time academic economics positions in Canada and the US, by rank





# Impetus for the climate survey

- In March 2019, the American Economic Association released results from its survey of current and former members about the professional climate in economics.
- The Canadian Women Economists Committee (CWEC/CFEC) used the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago to administer a similar survey for economists in Canada in Fall 2019.

# In a nutshell



“Being a woman is still a difficult barrier - prejudices, old ideas and judgment of our role, seriousness in the research, and career trajectory are still held strongly. Social situations are still “old boy” focused even when there are newer males in the realm - they are so much more easily accepted in the ranks and listened to at meetings.”

“There are certain people who are -in plain English-creeps. Their creepiness is treated as a joke, but little is done to protect women against their advances. They should not be invited to conferences even if their research and presentation skills are excellent.”

“My experience shows that although an honest effort, such initiatives sometimes lead to creative ways to hide discrimination rather than mitigate it. For the discrimination is not often in the open, the classroom, the departmental meeting, but in a more intimate meeting of an all-white group, sometimes without ever uttering a slur, but as silently as playing bridge.”



# Upcoming Event

The theme for IWD this year is #EmbraceEquity. We believe it is important to more fully understand the situations that women face around the world. This year in particular, the discrimination endured by women in Iran must be better understood by all. Through knowledge and community we can help those who struggle. We are pleased to have Dr. Soodeh Saberian, from the University of Manitoba, present a portrait of Iranian women and their struggle for gender equality.

**Date: Wednesday, March 8**

**Time: 2PM-3:15PM EST**

**Speaker: Dr. Soodeh Saberian**

**Topic: Iranian Women in the Year 2023: The Struggle for Equal Rights**