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**ECONOMIC INDICATORS FOR GENDER ANALYSIS**

**Gender and Economic Statistics**

Note by the Statistics Canada

Summary

This document addresses the need for data to understand gender and the economy. It is particularly important since women typically lag behind men and studies show that improving women's economic opportunities leads to higher rates of economic growth in general. As a case study, the author presents useful data sources available in Canada. A set of data to better understand the issues of gender and the economy are suggested.

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. 'Almost everything we do every day is linked to the economy—we go to work, buy goods and services, pay taxes, accumulate wealth and make investments.'<sup>1</sup>
2. Generally, when we think of gender and economic statistics, we think of labour force participation, income gaps and some measure of empowerment. These are key indicators that reflect the day to day lives of women and men. Significant work has already been done to develop indices or measures that assess economic and social inequalities between women and men<sup>2</sup> related to labour and income. The purpose of this paper is to highlight other types of economic statistics where a gender breakdown has not typically been available. The paper is not meant to provide answers, but rather to pose some questions that might help the UNECE Group of Experts on Gender Statistics think about whether a gender breakdown or analysis of these economic statistics might be useful.
3. Why is this important? The World Economic Forum in their publication *The Global Gender Gap Report 2006* noted:

'One particular societal and economic challenge is the persistent gap between women and men in their access to resources and opportunities. This gap not only undermines the quality of life of one half of the world's population but also poses a significant risk to the long-term growth and well-being of nations: countries that do not capitalize on the full potential of one half of their human resources may compromise their competitive potential.'<sup>3</sup>
4. The cutting edge gender and economic statistics work to date, then, primarily focuses on the social side of the economy to do with work (and empowerment), income or earnings and savings. There have been some attempts to move gender and economic statistics further though, including activities in Canada and some other countries related to gender budgeting<sup>4</sup>, and the development of a satellite account for unpaid work associated with the System of National Accounts. Nevertheless, a discussion of what data are really needed to understand gender and the economy would be useful, particularly since women typically lag behind on known indicators<sup>5</sup> and studies show that improving women's economic opportunities leads to higher rates of economic growth generally<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> From 'Economic Accounts,' Statistics Canada.

[http://www41.statcan.ca/2007/3764/ceb3764\\_000\\_e.htm](http://www41.statcan.ca/2007/3764/ceb3764_000_e.htm) Accessed June 22, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Gender-Related Development Index (GDI), Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), and OECD's Social Institutions Indicator.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/report2006.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> "Gender budgeting," which refers to the systematic examination of budget programs and policies for their impact on women" and men. Stotsky, J.G. (2006) *Gender Budgeting*. Working paper, International Monetary Fund.

<sup>5</sup> (2006). *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division. United Nations: New York.

<sup>6</sup> Stotsky, J.G. 2006. (see above).

5. There are several reasons why gender statistics are necessary outputs of national statistical offices. Gender statistics are required to understand social and economic outcomes, to monitor the performance of government programs or the fulfilment of government commitments, and to identify trends or changes in gender equality. One of the well-known requirements of collecting gender statistics is to study and consult with data users to identify gender issues and then to ensure that data addressing these issues are collected and made available. Gender experts have typically been fairly good at this process when it comes to social concerns such as those to do with health, poverty, violence, families and so on. When it comes to gender and economic statistics there is still much to understand.

6. The first question to ask in order to help statistical offices know what gender statistics to produce about the economy is: 'What do we need to know?' This is a critical first question, and the answer will not necessarily be the same in all countries. It requires some thinking about what the gender issues are when it comes to economic statistics. The first aim of this paper, then, is to put forward some ideas about the role of economic statistics in the overall framework of national statistics, and then explore where considerations of gender may result in 'better' information.

7. In many countries, potentially useful data sources already exist that have not been adequately analyzed in relation to gender and the economy. This paper will highlight some of these data sources that are available in Canada.

8. Finally, after looking at the data already available and thinking about what we need to know when it comes to gender and economic statistics, the paper will provide some suggestions about where there are information gaps.

## II. WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

9. The economic statistics program in most national statistical offices is designed to do a number of things, including:

- (a) Evaluate the performance of an economy
- (b) Monitor economic stock and flows
- (c) Analyze macroeconomic trends
- (d) Inform economic policies and decisions
- (e) Compare performance internationally<sup>7</sup>

10. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) "reflects the total value of all goods and services produced by a nation"<sup>8</sup>. Appendix 1 provides a more detailed definition and lists components that go into the calculation of the GDP. With a high level indicator such as the GDP the gender questions are not clear. Nevertheless, some important questions were raised recently at a

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<sup>7</sup> Corner, Lorraine (2003) 'From Margins to Mainstream: From Gender Statistics to Engendering Statistical Systems' UNIFEM in Asia-Pacific & Arab States

<sup>8</sup> From 'Economic Accounts,' Statistics Canada.

[http://www41.statcan.ca/2007/3764/ceb3764\\_000\\_e.htm](http://www41.statcan.ca/2007/3764/ceb3764_000_e.htm) Accessed June 22, 2008.

Canadian Parliamentary Standing Committee meeting about the components. These questions have potential implications for the production of sex-disaggregated expenditure and revenue data.

“How are spending and revenue distributed between men and women?

What are some of the long- and short-term implications for gender distribution of resources?

Are the provisions adequate for the needs of both men and women?”<sup>9</sup>

11. The OECD’s publication *Main Economic Indicators* lists a series of indicators (Appendix 2) which could be examined keeping in mind the following question: If we had these data disaggregated by sex, what kinds of research questions (Gender Based Analysis) would we ask?

12. One limitation for many economic statistics is the unit of collection. For example, in Canada the Business Register, which is the frame for many economic indicators, is not at person level and does not have information on the sex of the owner/manager of the business. Similarly, housing information is often at the household, not the individual level, building permits are at the municipal level, and so on.

13. What may be more useful for governments is drawing analytic links between already existing gender statistics and some of the key economic data. For example, economic stock and flows include production, household consumption, government consumption, capital formation, exports, imports, wages, profits, lending and borrowing, and so on. It may not be as important to try to understand men’s and women’s export activity, but to understand how changes in these export estimates may be affecting women and men. A hypothetical example would be if exports were declining due to the high value of the Canadian dollar, one might ask if this decline is affecting wages in specific industries, and whether those industries are dominated by men or by women. In that case, data on industries disaggregated by sex would be required.

14. Some links between gender and the economy are clear. For example, it is important to know both women’s and men’s contributions to the economy, and to understand this we need to know about such things as:

- (a) Labour force participation (full time/part time, full year/part year);
- (b) Self-employment:
  - (i) Entrepreneurship,
  - (ii) Number of employees,
  - (iii) Company growth;
- (c) Unionization;
- (d) Value of unpaid work.

15. In addition, it may be useful to think of factors affecting productivity which may differ for women and men, including:

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<sup>9</sup> Beckton, C. in minutes of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, 10 December 2007.

- (a) Work absences,
- (b) Contingent work,
- (c) Unemployment,
- (d) Underemployment,
- (e) Occupational segregation.

16. Most work on gender and economic indicators<sup>10</sup> present analysis of income, including:

- (a) The gender wage gap,
- (b) Rates of low income,
- (c) Income security.

### III. WHAT DATA ARE ALREADY THERE?

17. In Canada there is a wealth of economic statistics already available. Some of the important recent findings are summarized briefly below as examples of the kinds of research already possible for gender and economic statistics.<sup>11</sup>

(a) Labour Force Survey:

- (i) Increased participation of women in the paid work force in Canada.
- (ii) Increase in paid employment of women with young children.
- (iii) Absences from work because of personal or family responsibilities (women have more).
- (iv) Women more likely to work part-time.
- (v) Men more likely than women to be self-employed.
- (vi) Self-employed men more likely than self-employed women to run an incorporated business.

(b) Census of Agriculture:

- (i) Women currently make up about one in four farm operators in Canada.
- (ii) The large majority of female farm operators share the responsibilities of management with at least one partner.

(c) Occupational data in many social surveys, including the Labour Force Survey:

- (i) Distribution of men and women.
- (ii) Occupational sex-segregation – ‘In 2004, 67% of all employed women were working in teaching, nursing and related health occupations, clerical or other administrative positions, and sales and service occupations. This compared with just 30% of employed men.’<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Stone, L. and S. Regehr. (1997). *Economic Gender Equality Indicators*. Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women.

<sup>11</sup> Examples drawn from: Lindsay, C. (ed) (2006). *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report (5<sup>th</sup> edition)*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 89-503-XIE. <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-503-XIE/0010589-503-XIE.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, p. 14.

- (d) Human Resources and Social Development Canada and the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto, Status of Child Care in Canada:
  - (i) Number of child-care spaces, registered and non-registered
  
- (e) Time Use Surveys:
  - (i) Unpaid work.
  - (ii) Volunteer work.
  - (iii) Domestic work.
  - (iv) Care giving.
  
- (f) Beneficiaries of Employment Insurance:
  - (i) Work interruptions – the number of women Employment Insurance beneficiaries has increased in the 2000s, whereas for men it has been mostly stable.
  - (ii) Increases in the number of women receiving benefits have been accounted for largely by those receiving maternity or parental benefits.
  
- (g) Tax data:
  - (i) Contributions to pension plans.
  - (ii) Government transfer payments.
  
- (h) Income data:
  - (i) Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics – income gaps between women and men remain: Female to male earnings ratio of full-time workers is 70% (2004).
  - (ii) Census of Population – income of population subgroups: Senior women are much more likely to be living with low incomes than men, and that increases with age (2001 Census of Canada).

#### **IV. WHERE ARE THE INFORMATION GAPS?**

18. International organizations that are either compiling databases or using the data may be well-placed to suggest where the international gaps are. From the point of view of Canada, there are a few things to consider when looking at the gaps.

19. As mentioned earlier, in some cases where one might want to look at sex-disaggregated data, there is no 'sex' variable. In other cases, the data simply do not exist. For example, information on intra-family resource transfers may be important to understanding the well-being of women and men, but this kind of information is difficult to collect. Likewise, not enough is known about informal markets, where women and men may participate in very different ways.

20. When thinking of the key economic indicators – those produced through the System of National Accounts - it would be useful to ask: Do the data sources (all the information sources that flow into the system of national accounts) measure both men's and women's work and reality? This has been a concern in some countries such as India, where the household head

reporting for the family on labour force participation (usually the man) does not perceive the women's activities as work<sup>13</sup>.

21. A second useful question for key economic indicators is: Would sex disaggregated data help identify possibly useful information for policy makers? If women's and men's work and reality are not well represented, would sex-disaggregation wherever possible increase knowledge of gaps? Would it be useful for policy departments to know economic flows disaggregated by sex? Or not? What are the gender issues when it comes to the System of National Accounts?

22. Finally, it may be important to think about what data are required for the performance management of government programs and policies. Although gender budgeting is one example that has implications for departments charged with the financial responsibilities for government, all Canadian government departments are mandated to conduct gender-based analysis on their programs and policies.<sup>14</sup> The production of gender statistics is therefore essential to the fulfilment of each department's commitment to do gender-based analysis.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

23. The challenge of this article is to look with fresh eyes at economic statistics that are collected and disseminated by national statistical offices, to consider whether or not they are fully addressing the situations of women and men and if sex-disaggregation of any of these economic data would be useful for understanding the wellbeing of both men and women. As a starting point, I suggest we need to begin to identify what it is we need to know. Do our economic data account for the work and activity of both men and women?

24. Early in the thinking process it will be important to take stock of the information that is already available, but perhaps not being fully used. In light of that stock-taking it will then be possible to identify data gaps that could be filled through modifications to current data collection, special surveys, or through analysis that brings already existing information together with new information.

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<sup>13</sup> Corner, Lorraine (2003) 'From Margins to Mainstream: From Gender Statistics to Engendering Statistical Systems' UNIFEM in Asia-Pacific & Arab States.

<sup>14</sup> "In Canada's 1995 action plan for implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, known as the *Federal Plan for Gender Equality*, the Canadian government adopted a policy requiring federal departments and agencies to conduct gender-based analysis of policies and legislation." (2005. *Gender-Based Analysis: Building Blocks for Success*. Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women)

## APPENDIX 1: GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

**Defined:** (<http://www.statcan.ca/english/nea-cen/gloss/iea.htm#gdp>)

“The total unduplicated value of the goods and services produced in the economic territory of a country or region during a given period. GDP can be measured three ways: as total incomes earned in current production (income approach), as total final sales of current production (expenditure approach), or as total net values added in current production (value added approach). It can be valued either at basic prices or at market prices. In the income and expenditure accounts, gross domestic product is measured by the income and expenditure approach.”

**Income-based GDP** (<http://www.statcan.ca/english/nea-cen/about/ieainc.htm>)

	Wages, salaries and supplementary labour income
+	Corporation profits before taxes
+	Government business enterprise profits before taxes
+	Interest and miscellaneous investment income
+	Accrued net income of farm operators from farm production
+	Net income of non-farm unincorporated business, including rent
+	Inventory valuation adjustment
+	Taxes less subsidies
+	Capital consumption allowances
+	Statistical discrepancy
=	Gross domestic product at market prices

**Expenditure-based GDP** (<http://www.statcan.ca/english/nea-cen/about/ieaexp.htm>)

	Personal expenditure on consumer goods and services
+	Government current expenditure on goods and services
+	Government gross fixed capital formation
+	Government investment in inventories
+	Business gross fixed capital formation
+	Business investment in inventories
+	Exports of goods and services
-	Deduct: Imports of goods and services
-	Statistical discrepancy
=	<b>Gross domestic product at market prices</b>



**APPENDIX 2: OECD INDICATORS FROM MAIN ECONOMIC INDICATORS<sup>15</sup>**

Gross Domestic Product  
Private Consumption  
Government Consumption  
Gross Fixed Capital Formation  
Exports of Goods and Services  
Imports of Goods and Services  
Industrial production  
Composite leading indicators  
Construction and Passenger cars  
Retail trade  
Consumer price indices  
Producer price indices  
Hourly earnings  
Standardised unemployment rates  
Civilian employment  
Short-term interest rates  
Long-term interest rates  
Share prices  
Monetary aggregates  
Real effective exchange rates  
World trade  
International trade  
Current balance  
Exchange rates

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<sup>15</sup> 2004. *Main Economic Indicators*. OECD