

Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession

As in past years, this report contains both an assessment of trends in the status of women in the economics profession and a summary of the activities of the Committee.

The Changing Status of Women Economists. Last year I presented an analysis of trends in the status of women economists based on data from the Universal Academic Questionnaire. These data showed that an increasing proportion of women were obtaining B.A. and Ph.D. degrees in economics and were being hired at the Assistant Professor level. Progress into the higher ranks was less evident.

During the past year, the Committee followed a suggestion originally made by Alice Rivlin that we commission some more in-depth research on these trends. A research project has now been launched under the direction of Sue Berryman, a sociologist and Director of the new Center for Education and Work at Columbia University. The project is being funded by the Russell Sage Foundation and monitored by Alan Fechter, a member of the Committee. Alan has also helped us obtain access to data from the National Science Foundation's unpublished files and many of the preliminary tabulations provided here were graciously supplied by his staff.

The research project focuses on the career status of women with doctorates in economics relative to that of their male counterparts and on changes in that status over time. Specifically, it addresses five issues.

1) The mechanisms that underlie women's increasing shares of degrees in economics;

2) The nature and changes in the composition of the pool from which doctorates in economics ultimately emerge;

3) The nature and changes in the composition of successive cohorts of Ph.D. economists;

4) The dynamics that underlie new Ph.D. economists' entry into different employment sectors and activities; and

5) The extent to which and manner in which gender affects economists' careers within an employment sector and between sectors.

Although the analytical portions of the research are only now getting underway, and the findings will not be available until next year, we already have some interesting descriptive data on Ph.D. economists (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1 shows that over the past ten years, economists' salaries have risen substantially but have not kept pace with inflation, declining about 13 percent in real terms.¹ Men have done a little better than women, and women now earn about 86 percent as much as men.

Over this same period there has been a decline in the proportion of all economists employed in academia (and a corresponding rise in the proportion employed in business and industry) with the change for women being much sharper than the change for men.

Within the academic sector, a substantially higher proportion of faculty are tenured than was true ten years ago. Women have made gains relative to men, but are still considerably less likely to be tenured and much less likely to be full professors where there has been no progress in closing the gender gap.

Table 2 shows that women represent 15 percent of all new Ph.D.s awarded, up from 10 percent ten years ago.² The time it takes

¹The data in Table 1 are from the *Survey of Doctorate Recipients*, a "rolling" longitudinal survey begun in 1973. It is a one-eighth sample of all U.S. citizens with doctorates in economics, all foreign-born economists with doctorates who are working in the United States, and all those with doctorates in areas other than economics who are working as economists.

²The data in Table 2 are from the *Doctorate Records File*, a cross-sectional survey administered annually since 1920 to the universe of new Ph.D.s from American universities.

TABLE 1—SELECTED STATISTICS ON PH.D. ECONOMISTS

	1975	1985	Percentage Change 1975–85 ^a
Median Salary			
Male	\$26,855	\$46,740	74.0
Female	24,125	40,002	65.8
Total	26,721	46,300	73.3
Ratio (F/M)	0.90	0.86	-4.3
Proportion employed in Academia			
Male	0.71	0.67	-5.6
Female	0.73	0.58	-20.5
Total	0.71	0.66	-7.0
Ratio (F/M)	1.03	0.87	-15.8
Proportion of Academics Tenured			
Male	0.69	0.90	30.4
Female	0.47	0.78	66.0
Total	0.68	0.89	30.9
Ratio (F/M)	0.68	0.87	27.2
Proportion of Total Faculty who are Full Professors			
Male	0.47	0.50	6.4
Female	0.29	0.30	3.4
Total	0.46	0.47	2.2
Ratio (F/M)	0.62	0.60	-2.8

Source: Unpublished data from the National Science Foundation, *Survey of Doctorate Recipients*.

^aAdjusting for inflation (using the CPI) presents a very different picture. The real median salary declined 12.9 percent for males, 17.0 percent for females, and 13.3 percent for all Ph.D. economists.

TABLE 2—SELECTED STATISTICS ON NEW PH.D. ECONOMISTS

	1975	1985	Percentage Change 1975–85
Ph.D. Degrees Produced			
Male	809	688	-15.0
Female	86	124	44.2
Total	895	812	-9.3
Percent Female (F/T)	9.6	15.2	58.3
Median Years from B.A. to Ph.D. for New Ph.D.s			
Male	7.6	8.9	17.1
Female	7.7	8.4	9.1
Total	7.6	8.8	15.8
Ratio (F/M)	1.01	0.94	-6.8
Percent of New Ph.D.s Planning to Enter Academia			
Male	64.6	63.0	-2.5
Female	78.9	49.0	-37.9
Total	65.9	60.8	-7.7
Ratio (F/M)	1.22	0.78	-36.3

Source: Unpublished data from the National Science Foundation, *Doctorate Records File*.

to move from B.A. to Ph.D. has crept up over this period and is a little higher for men than for women. This trend may be related to the declining availability of government financial support and the rising proportion of graduate training being financed out of a student's own or his/her family's resources. (The latter proportion increased from 25 percent in 1977 to 30 percent in 1985). Consistent with the data for all Ph.D. economists cited above, there has been a decline in the proportion of new Ph.D.s planning to enter academia, and most of this decline is concentrated among women. Whereas in 1975, almost four-fifths of women Ph.D.s planned an academic career, the proportion is now only half.

Figure 1 shows the age-earnings profile for men and women economists (using cross-sectional data for 1985). The biggest salary gaps occur in the prime years (ages 40–60). Further analysis should show the extent to which this is related to women's late entry into the profession, their scholarly productivity, discrimination, or other factors.

Committee Activities. The Committee has had an extremely busy year. In addition to holding three Committee meetings and sponsoring numerous events at regional and national meetings, we updated and published a new roster of women economists, mailed out three issues of our *Newsletter* (all on time!) and obtained funding for the new research described earlier. None of this would have been possible without the dedicated efforts of the members of our Committee. I particularly want to thank Nancy Gordon for taking on the chores of editing the newsletter and Joan Haworth for maintaining our mailing list and updating the roster.

A number of issues have occupied our attention this year including: (1) the focus and organization of CSWEP-sponsored sessions at the AEA meetings (we decided to experiment with a somewhat broader definition of gender-related issues); (2) the desirability of publishing a roster, now that an AEA directory comes out regularly (we decided to continue to maintain our own lists but to publish a roster less frequently and move toward more cooperative arrangements with the AEA in the future); (3) the need for

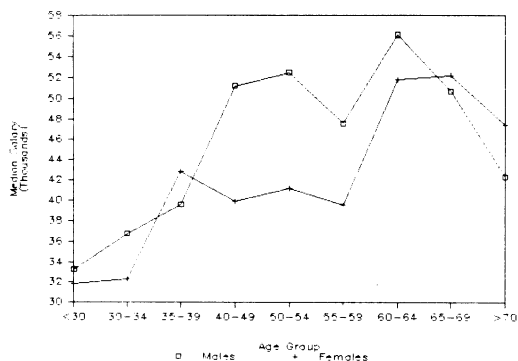


FIGURE 1. MEDIAN SALARIES OF PH.D. ECONOMISTS BY AGE AND GENDER, 1985

greater outreach, especially to students and younger members of the profession (a letter was sent out this year to our colleagues encouraging them to provide information about CSWEP to more junior faculty and students); and (4) the benefits and costs of blind-refereeing.

The last-mentioned issue surfaced very strongly at the open business meeting held in December 1985, and we published an article on the topic by Linda Edwards and Marianne Ferber in the fall issue of our *Newsletter*. As they note, research by psychologists has shown that people's assessment of the *same* manuscript is influenced by whether a male or female name appears on the cover, strongly suggesting that there is a bias against women authors. In addition, a study by Ferber and Michelle Teiman of 36 econo-

mics journals found that, when double-blind reviewing procedures were followed, articles authored by women were almost twice as likely to be accepted as articles authored by men, whereas when double-blind reviewing was not used, manuscripts submitted by men were somewhat more likely to be accepted. (As dramatic as these differences are, they were not statistically significant, primarily because of low sample sizes for women.)

Although some may not consider this evidence conclusive, the Committee believes that double-blind refereeing is strongly to be preferred as a matter of principle. It is likely to be perceived as fairer not only by women, but by less established members of the profession in general. As of 1986, of the 38 journals that provided information to Edwards and Ferber, only 14 practiced double-blind reviewing. We urge that all economics journals adopt this procedure and that the Executive Committee consider the appropriateness of current practices with respect to journals sponsored by the AEA.

Five members of the Committee completed their term this year: Lourdes Beneria, Bernadette Chachere, Mary Fish, Sharon Megdal, and Michelle White. I want to thank them for their service to the Committee and to make special note of the contributions of Fish, Megdal, and White who served as regional chairs and made major contributions to the Committee's work.

ISABEL V. SAWHILL, *Chair*