

International Women’s Day – Gender Differences and Income Inequality in the Basin-Boundary



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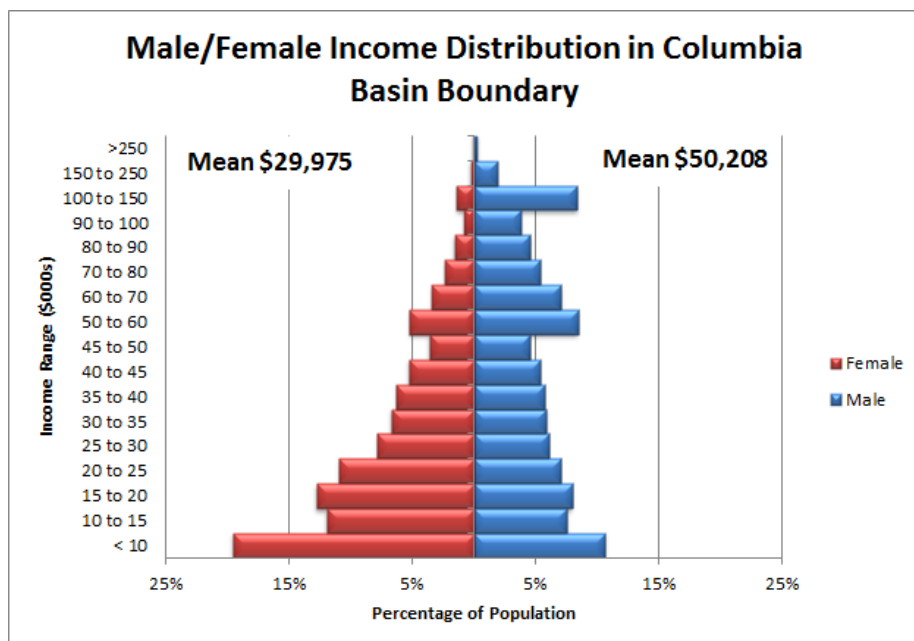
In honour of International Women’s Day, we are taking a look at gender-based differences in Columbia Basin-Boundary incomes. Pre-tax income distribution is an indicator of the earning opportunities and potential within our society. Examining the differences in the distribution of income between males and females sheds light on earning potential related to gender.

Demonstrated through the vast statistical research of Richard Wilkinson, Professor Emeritus of Social Epidemiology at the University of Nottingham, income inequality is an important contributing factor to a host of social problems. Wilkinson’s research shows that societies with more unequal distribution of income tend to have more issues with: life expectancy, math and reading skills, mental illness, obesity, infant mortality, and criminal activity. These problems affect **all income levels** within a society. Wilkinson has found that social stresses (where we feel we are being comparatively judged – such as with income inequality issues) cause up to twice the hormonal stress response compared to performance stresses or physical stresses.

Examining Canada’s tax-filer data (data produced by the Canada Revenue Agency, based on individual tax returns) shows a significant difference between male and female earnings. The average Canadian male earns \$51,741, compared to the average Canadian female who earns \$32,387 – a difference of \$19,354. This difference is similar for BC, although the gap is slightly smaller.

	Male	Female	Gap
Canada	\$51,741	\$32,387	\$19,354
British Columbia	\$51,818	\$33,864	\$17,954
Basin-Boundary	\$50,208	\$29,975	\$20,233

In the Columbia Basin-Boundary region, earnings were generally lower than the Canadian average, but the earnings gap is bigger. The average male earns \$50,208, while the average female earns \$29,975 – an earnings gap of \$20,233.



The graph on the left shows the distribution of Columbia Basin-Boundary incomes of males and females. There is a far higher proportion of females earning low incomes (bottom bars, in red) than males (bottom bars, in blue). And, there is a far higher proportion of males earning high incomes (top bars, in blue) than females (top bars, in red). This pattern is comparable to typical resource based economies, where the male tends to be the person who earns

money to support a family, while the women focus on caring for children.

Research by Irene Ip, at the Bank of Canada, shows that more women have entered the labour force over the last 60 years. This is largely attributed to: (1) society being increasingly accepting of working women, (2) the availability and use of family planning which can delay the decision to have children, (3) increasing rates of separation and divorce inducing women into the labour force, and (4) higher levels of education and earning potential which increases the opportunity cost (income sacrificed by leaving the workforce) of having children.

Despite these gains, the percentage of Canadian men in the labour force is roughly 10% higher than Canadian women. Both male and female labour force participation rates in the Basin-Boundary are 5% lower than the Canadian rates. Further, the Globe and Mail recently highlighted Statistics Canada research showing that female full-time wages are only 73.5% of that of males. Clearly, there are persistent inequalities in wages, income and opportunities for women. This is true in the Basin-Boundary and in Canada.