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The Most Important Tool to Tackle Gender Inequality

An interview with University of Toronto researchers:

Sarah Kaplan, Director, Institute for Gender and the Economy — Rotman

Carmina Ravanera, Research Associate

Sarah Kaplan

The unique contribution of the Institute for Gender and the Economy and the work we're doing here is this idea that we can use innovation to change the conversation on gender equality. The challenge that we have in society is that despite all of the efforts that have been made, there's still a gender wage gap. There's still a career gap where women are not reaching into the upper echelons of the corporate world nor the policy world.

We have only between two and six percent of all the venture capital money going to women-led businesses. So I felt like we needed to have a different angle on achieving equality using that basis of rigorous research to translate that into policy and practice, because clearly what we've been doing up until now hasn't worked.

We're trying to really uncover the underlying dynamics so that we can come up with policy and practice solutions that are smarter and that could actually close the gender wage gap.



What is the role of your research in society?

Carmina Ravanera

People get bombarded every day with things to do with gender equality in the media, but they don't fully understand what's going on. They don't know what the evidence is out there, and they really don't know how to approach those sorts of topics. So what we have the answer to, we're really trying to do is bring that good, solid evidence to people so that they can know how to have conversations. There are a lot of common gender myths that are out there. We have evidence for why those myths are not true. We're really at this unique point where I feel like change really can be made.

Sarah Kaplan

I want to be able to know that we've made enough progress that the work that we're doing here at the Institute for Gender and the Economy has actually moved the needle. Not just this tiny little dial where we've gone from 12 percent to 15 percent or something like that, but where we look across the tables where decisions are made - whether it's corporate boards, policymakers, the Premiers of our provinces - and we see the entire society of Canada represented. That's when we're really going to have made progress.