

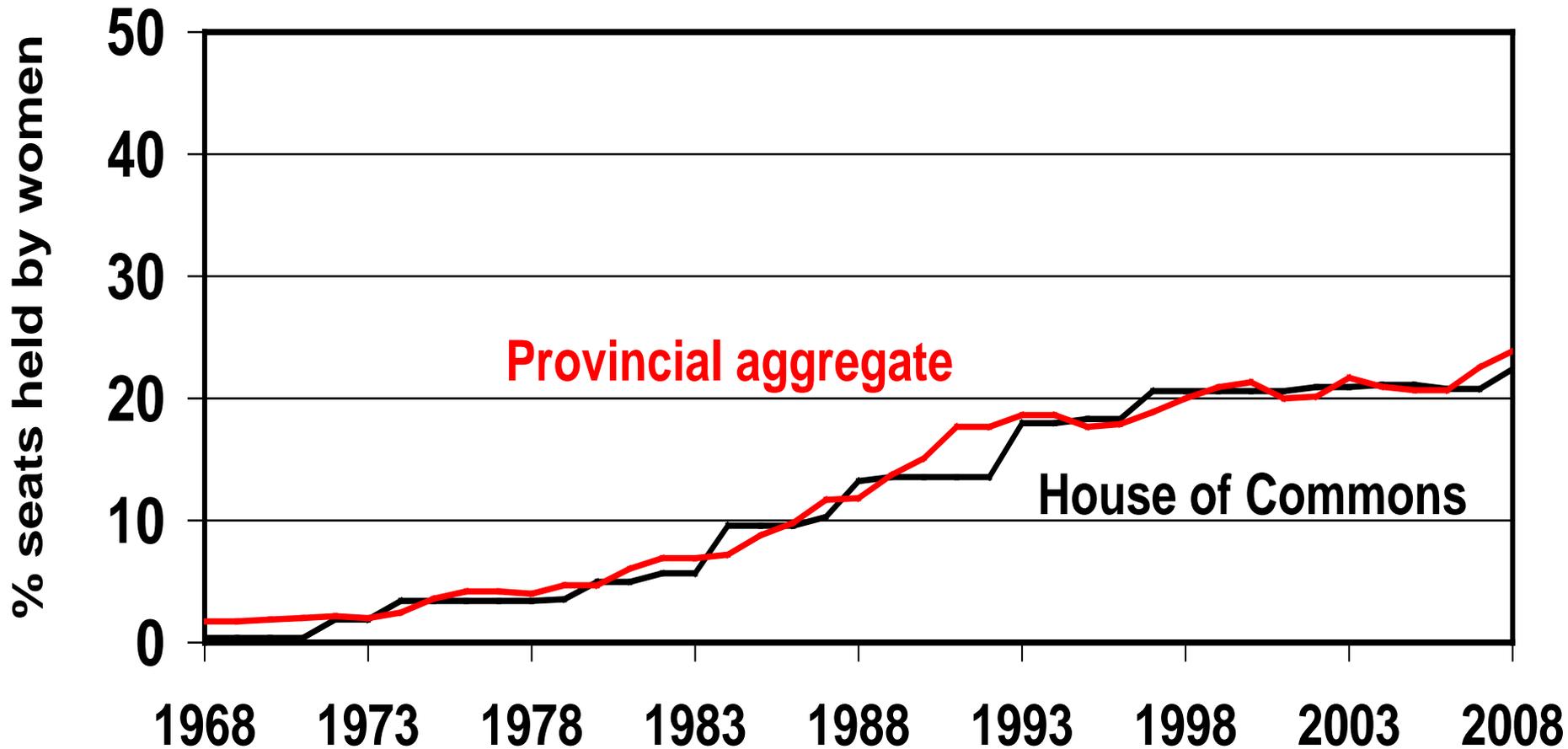


Rural / urban contrasts in the election of women

Louise Carbert
Dalhousie University

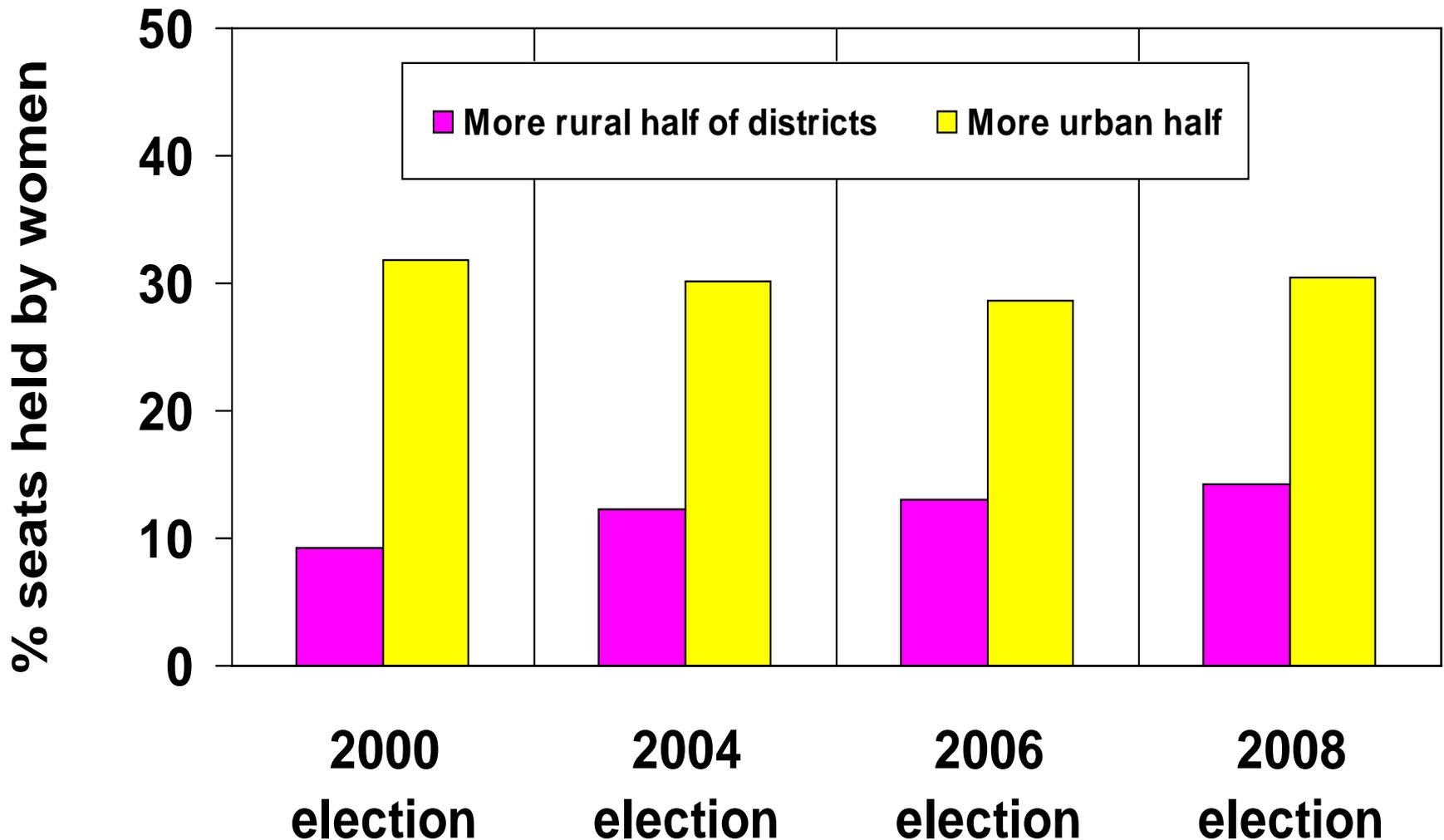


Proportions of women elected to Canada's legislatures, 1968-2008



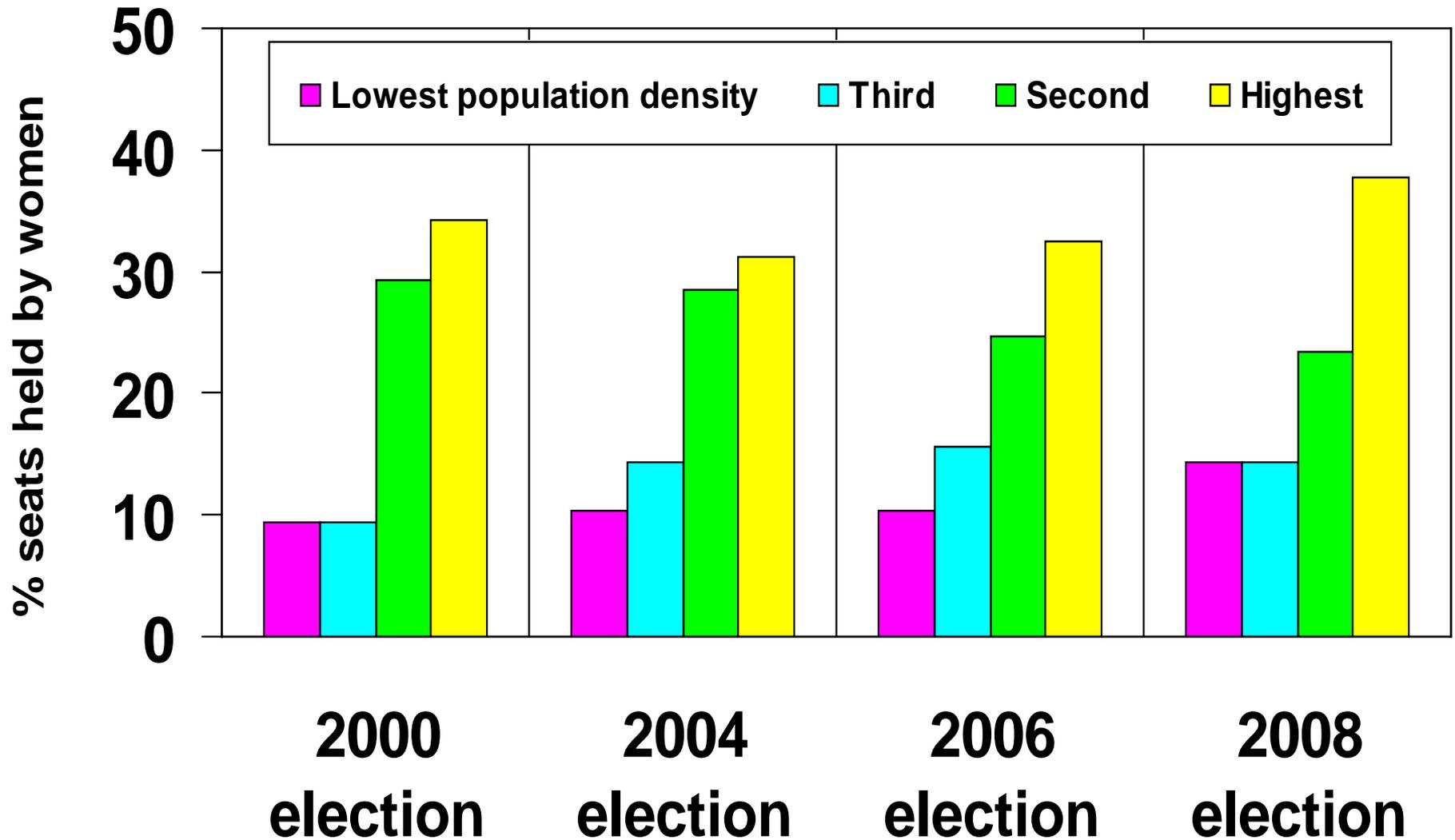
Deficit of women elected outside big cities

Districts divided into two equal groups by population density



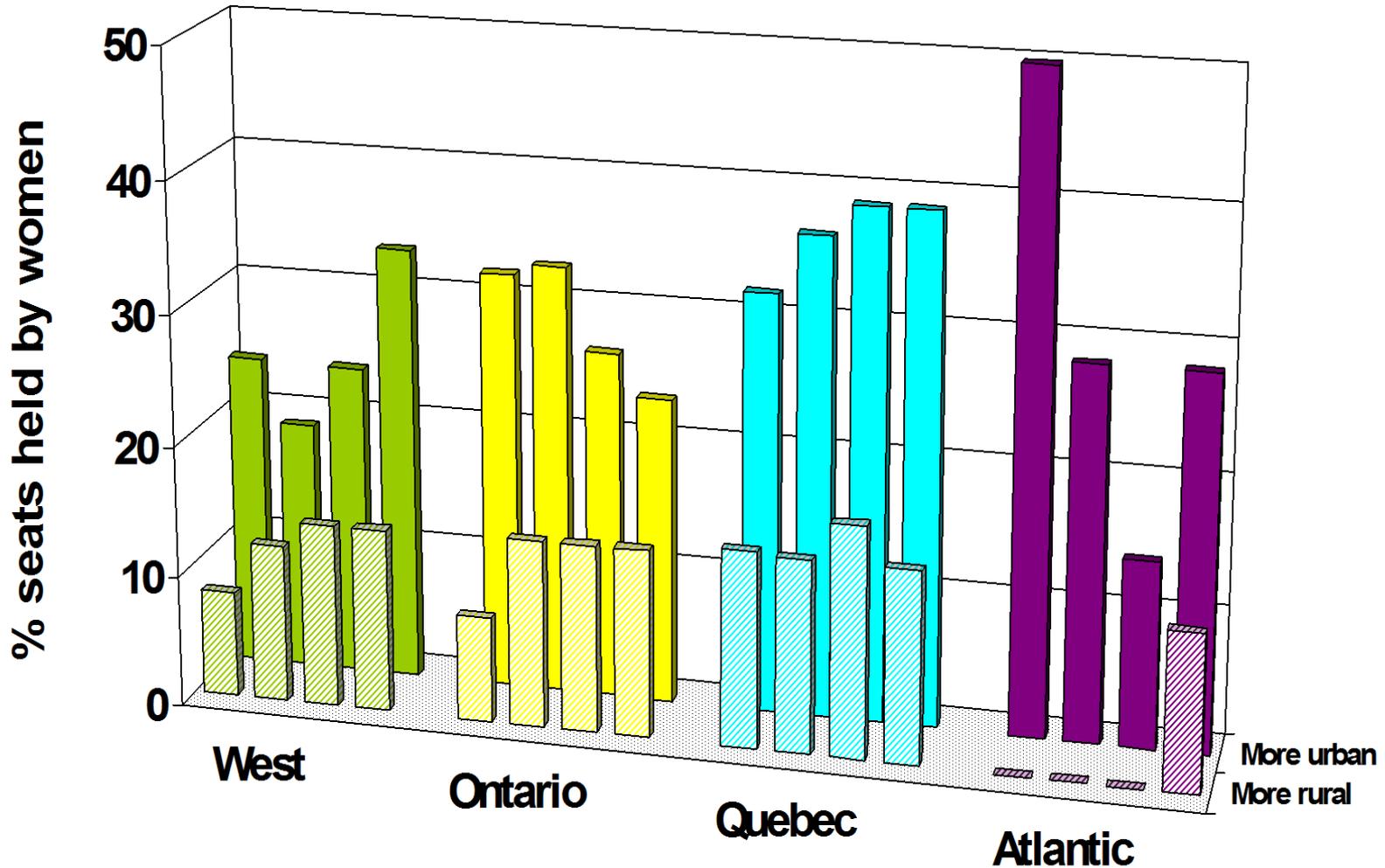
Rural-urban contrast

Districts divided into four equal groups by population density



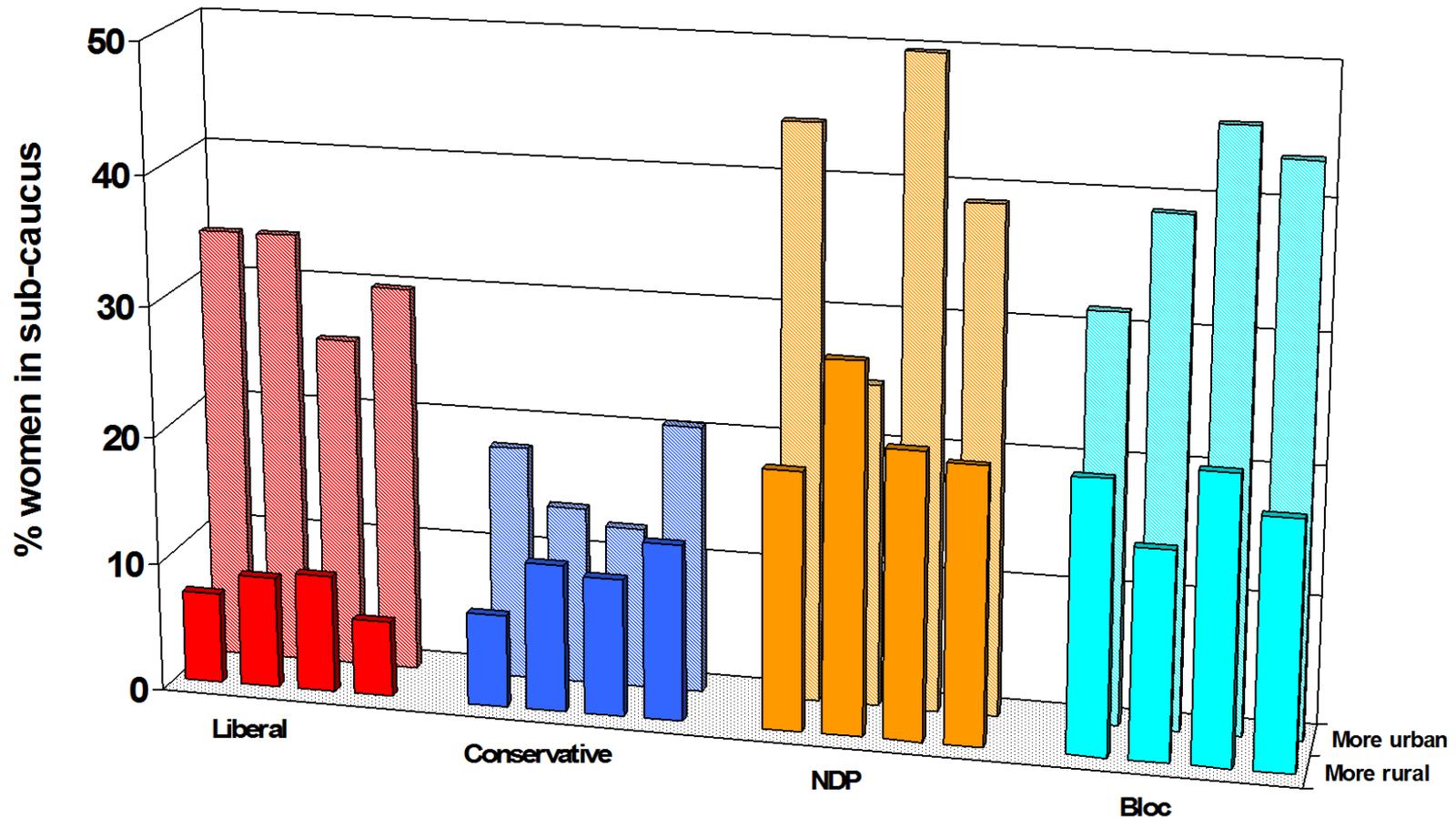
Rural deficit by region

Districts divided into two groups according to whether population density is above or below the national median



Rural deficit by party caucus

Districts divided into two groups according to whether population density is above or below the national median

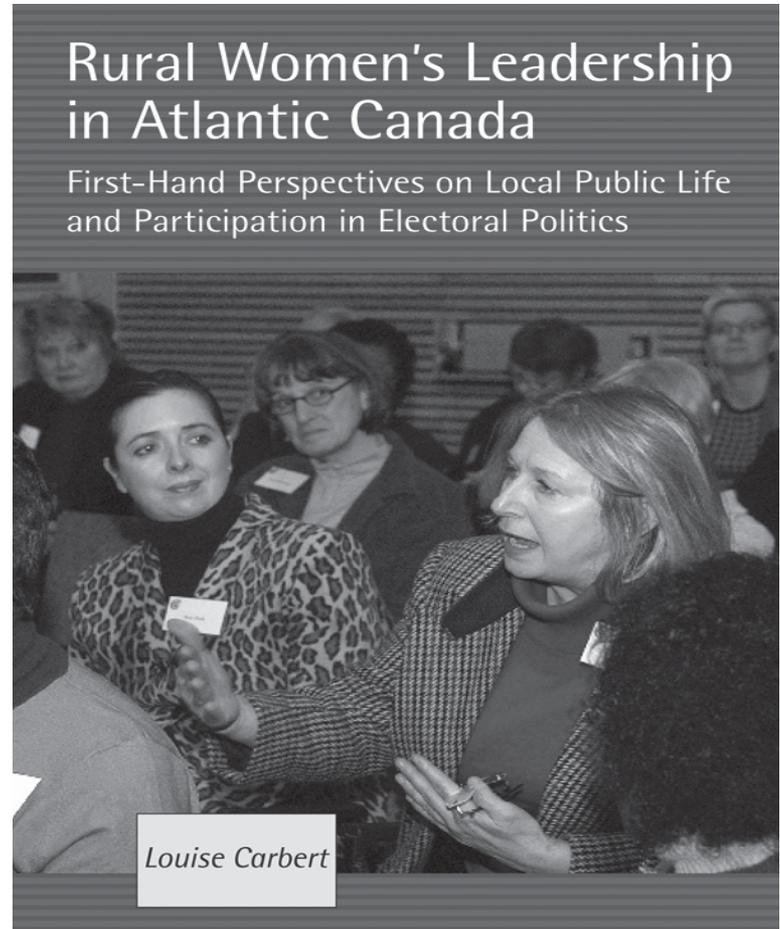


Empirical research:

In-person interviews with 228 rural women leaders across Atlantic and western provinces, 2000 - 2003.

Women with potential to stand as candidates are not hard to find.

Yet women's share of candidacies in winnable rural districts remains far below that in big cities.



I don't want to risk my job or family business by appearing to be in one party's pocket.

I have the time and freedom, but I don't want to run for office in a system of which I disapprove.

Many qualified potential candidates are deeply reluctant to put their names forward.



Louise Carbert

The rural politician as patron

- Many interviewees focused on the effects of fragile, undiversified economies.
- Securing and allocating public resources are vital functions for community survival.
- Local elites become averse to change, seek reliable candidates with established networks.
- In extreme cases, a politician's job is framed as that of a patron to dependent clients.
- Women leaders interviewed made it clear they do not want this role.



"ACOA is here to stay -
and it's here to pay."
Hon. Peter MacKay, 2006

"Do you want us to be
eunuchs in our jobs? We
have to do our jobs." Rt.
Hon. Jean Chrétien, 2002



Where the local economy is fragile, a politician's job takes on greater prestige

$$\frac{\textit{Economic development \$ to private sector}}{\textit{GDP of district}}$$

$$\frac{\textit{Labour force development \$ expended}}{\textit{GDP of district}}$$

$$\frac{\textit{Politician's salary}}{\textit{average salary in district}}$$

A staples analysis of rural women's leadership

The trade in staples ... has been responsible for various peculiar tendencies in Canadian development (1930).

Add: Framing the job of a politician in rural resource-reliant communities as patron.



Harold Innis
(1894-1952)

Resource-reliant \approx non-metropolitan

- Most non-metropolitan communities are substantially resource reliant.
- Most metropolitan centres not resource reliant.
 - Exceptions: Calgary, Hamilton, 3 others between 100K - 200K pop.
- 2nd-wave women's movement coincided with long slide (1970s - 1990s) in commodity prices.
- Economic fragility shaped rural politics across Canada in a way that inhibited change, including in the election of women.

When a politician's role is perceived as more of a patron, and less of an administrator:

1. Prospective women candidates are less eager to put their names forward,
2. Local elites are less open to change when recruiting candidates,
3. Male competitors find the job more desirable.

Are some rural districts more women-friendly?



Melissa Blake, Mayor
of Wood Buffalo
[Fort McMurray]

“It’s a relief to have this opportunity to move our infrastructure forward” now that falling oil prices have slowed the economic boom here (2009).

Struggling to keep public services in balance with rapid private-sector growth - a role that’s quite distinct from that of a patron.

Thriving local economy may be key to overcoming rural headwind

- Diminished expectations for politician to arrange direct support for local businesses and individuals
- Women leaders more eager to take on role of steward / administrator versus patron
- Local elites less intent to tap established networks
- Influx of newcomers disrupts local hierarchies, and upsets incumbency

(continued)

Thriving local economy may be key to overcoming rural headwind (continued)

- More private-sector jobs for women avoids the public-sector prohibition on partisanship
- Women who do volunteer more likely to meet with success and appreciation
- If the job is *relatively* less prestigious, competition may be less vigorous
 - The same amount of \$ makes less of a splash
 - Politician's salary relatively less impressive

Conclusion: a motivated party could make a real difference in thriving rural districts.