

Scottish Parliament debate on Increasing Opportunities for Women

ENGENDER BRIEFING

Women are more than half of people. Women's work, whether unpaid or paid, is critical to Scotland's productivity and wellbeing. Engender would like to see a Scotland that values women's talents, and counts all of the unpaid work that enables Scotland to flourish.

1. A DIVIDED LABOUR MARKET

Scotland's labour market is starkly segregated. Men and women are clustered into different occupational and industrial sectors, as seen in the table below, which was excerpted from a Close the Gap publication on occupational segregation¹.

Table 1: Employment in occupational sector, by gender

| Occupational sector | Percentage of men | Percentage of women |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|
| Agriculture, forestry and fishing | 82.2 | 17.8 |
| Energy and water | 77.3 | 22.7 |
| Manufacturing | 77.7 | 22.3 |
| Construction | 82.6 | 17.4 |
| Transport and communication | 73.1 | 26.9 |
| Public administration, education and health | 27.0 | 73.0 |

Source: ONS data from 2009 cited in Scottish Government (2010)

This segregation impacts on Scotland's economic growth in the following ways:

- Investment in male-dominated industrial sectors disproportionately benefits men, and risks widening the gender pay gap. This has impacts on women's lifetime economic inequality.
- Some economic sectors could grow, or grow faster, if they were able to use the skills of women who are prevented from working in the sectors for which they are qualified by inflexible working practices. Professor of Economics at Glasgow Caledonian University,

¹ Close the Gap (February 2013) *Shifting the Balance: Exploring the trade union responses to tackling occupational segregation* Close the Gap Working Paper 8

Ailsa McKay, estimated the lack of women in science and engineering occupations represents a loss of £170 million per year to the Scottish Economy.²

- There is a disconnect between the industry demand statements produced by the economic development agencies, skills forecasts, skills utilisation work, and our collective knowledge about gender and skills.

2. COUNTING WOMEN'S WORK

There is a management aphorism that says you can't manage what you can't measure. This is a simplistic assessment, but it's undoubtedly true that failing to count unpaid work means that economic policy is curiously unbalanced.

Key facts about counting women's work:

- GDP only measures the monetary value of goods and services and considers where money is being generated and spent without taking into account the value that unpaid work, usually done by women, contributes.
- Caring for children, sick people and older people; shopping for groceries; cooking dinner; making packed lunches; doing laundry; baking for a school cake stall; volunteering as a rape crisis worker; taking messages to a housebound neighbour; cleaning; and serving on a school PTA are all economically unproductive. All are essential to the wellbeing of people, families, communities, and the economy.
- Policy that is developed using GDP as data, but without considering unpaid work or other measures of wellbeing, will not take account of women's lives.
- Many other countries have used methods like time-use surveys to measure unpaid work. This data has been related to budget processes, and to wider policymaking.

3. INCREASING WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

Men are overrepresented in decision-making roles in Scotland, in all sectors of the economy. Persistent gender segregation in the labour market means that this leads to a cadre of senior economic policymakers that is most familiar with a relatively small range of industrial and occupational sectors and narrow approaches to growth.

Key facts about women's representation:

- Having women around the table changes the conversations that take place in boardrooms. Having women on public sector boards is about ensuring that public bodies meet the needs of women and men.
- Increasing the number of women in the boardroom increases the number of women in senior executive roles, helping to break the glass ceiling in those companies. Companies with 30 percent women board directors in 2001 had, on average, 45 percent more women corporate officers by 2006, compared to companies with no

² Royal Society of Edinburgh (2012) *Tapping all our Talents*

women board members. Companies with the highest percentages of women board directors in 2001 had, on average, 33 percent more corporate officers in 2006 than companies with the lowest percentages.³

- Having women in the boardroom increases the quality of corporate governance, and ethical behaviour.⁴

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact Emma Ritch, Director, Engender

Email: emma.ritch@engender.org.uk

Mobile: 07889 805790

ABOUT ENGENDER

Engender has a vision for a Scotland in which women and men have equal opportunities in life, equal access to resources and power, and are equally safe and secure from harm.

We are a feminist organisation that has worked in Scotland for 20 years to advance equality between women and men.

³ Catalyst (2008) *The Bottom Line: Corporate Performance and Women's Representation on Boards*

⁴ The Conference Board of Canada (2002) *Not Just the Right Thing but the Bright Thing*