

*A summary and discussion of the implications of data from the Gender Audit of Statistics [Breitenbach, E. and Wasoff, F. Scottish Executive Social Research 2007] relating to care and caring prepared by S. Macpherson, Engender Associate and E. Thomson.*

## **Gender Audit Findings**

### Population:

- Women outnumber men in the general population by about 7%, with the gender gap predicted to increase slightly to nearer 9% by 2036.
- Men make up more of the population in the 0-29 age groups, while women make up more of the population in the older age groups.
- Women's life expectancy at birth in 2003-2005 is 5 years longer than men's.
- Scotland's population is ageing; with females making up large numbers of the older age groups

### Migration:

- Historically Scotland has experienced population loss through outward migration. In recent years this trend has changed to one of net inward migration. There are few gender disaggregated statistics available on migration trends.
- Younger people (in their late teens and early twenties) are the most likely to be migrants. GROS data shows that there is more female than male inward and outward migration.

### Household Formation:

- Men are more likely than women to either be single, married or cohabiting, while women are far more likely to be formerly married, either through being widowed, separated or divorced. This reflects the higher proportion of women in the older age groups.
- There are approximately 11,000 divorces in Scotland every year. Most (approximately 80%) are raised on the grounds of separation. Women however are far more likely than men (20% compared with 6%) to raise divorce action on grounds of 'fault' by the partner.

- Same sex relationships are now far more visible. Census data from 2001 indicated that approximately 2% of the cohabiting couples in Scotland were same sex couples (although there was no reporting of whether they were male or female households).

#### Households:

- In 2005, in the where more women are reported to be the highest income householder working age population men were more likely than women to live alone (13% compared with 8%) or with only with one other adult (20% compared with 17%). Women were more likely than men to live in single parent households (6% compared with 1%).
- Above working age, women are more than twice as likely to live alone (14% compared with 6%).
- In 2005, in around three quarters of households containing more than one adult, men continued to be the highest income earners. As women make up most lone parent and older single person households, it is in these households.

#### Fertility:

- The number of births to unmarried parents has increased more than five-fold over the period from 1971 to 2005, from 8.1% in 1971 to 47.1% in 2005. Slightly more than half of all babies born each year are boys (51-52% compared with 48-49% girls).
- The general fertility rate (the number of births per 1000 women aged 15-44 years) has dropped significantly since the 1960s. The average age at which women have children has also increased, with more women having children in their late twenties and thirties. Scotland has seen a sharp decline in fertility since the mid-1960s. reducing from nearly 87 thousand in 1971 to just over 51 thousand in 2002 (a decline of almost 40%).
- There are no data on male fertility i.e. how many children men have fathered, or their age at the time of fathering. This means that it is not possible to make comparisons between men and women regarding fertility patterns or to discuss issues relating to men's fertility.

### **Discussion**

These data are important for a range of policy and practice issues. For example:

- Economic development – with women making up an increasing proportion of the working age population, national and local economic development strategies should give consideration to how to facilitate women's labour market participation.

- Pensions – as the number of older people in the population increases more attention should be given to ensuring that people are able to provide financially for their retirement. Currently women are far more likely to experience poverty in old age due to their poorer connections with the labour market and the links with pension provision and NI contributions. Many women lose out on gaining access to a contributory based state pension due to time taken out of the labour market when undertaking unpaid caring for family members. Women are not rewarded for this work and suffer in their older years as a result. Supporting women to participate effectively in the labour market is one route to ensuring that they are able to build their pension and reduce the risk of poverty in older age.
- Social care – with more women participating in the labour market there is in future going to be a reduced capacity for women to take on informal, unpaid caring roles. This has implications for the level of formal care that is likely to be needed. There is also a need to develop a varied package of support for informal carers as well as facilitating greater opportunities for men to take more responsibility for caring.
- Housing policy – changes in household structure have implications for future housing need. For example, there is greater need for single person accommodation, notably for older and disabled people who may require adaptations to allow them to live in their own homes with or without social support.

With women a larger proportion of the overall population, notably in their older years, there is a need for explicit recognition of their needs in relation to employment, social care, income, health, housing, transport etc. With women living longer than men, their needs in older years specifically relating to supporting them to live independently is a key area of concern.

Women are now participating in the labour market more than ever. However, we know that there remains significant divisions between the employment roles undertaken by men and by women. By and large, women remain in the lower paid jobs in the labour market, significant numbers work part-time, and they continue to provide significant levels of unpaid care for family and neighbours. All of this means that women's labour market position continues to require further attention to ensure that girls and women gain access to the appropriate opportunities that will allow them to make the most of their potential within the labour market. One solution might be to increase opportunities for part-time working in more senior positions that would allow women to progress in the labour market in combination with raising children. Continuing and further developing opportunities for men to work more flexibly would also mean men could play a more significant role in caring.

Women are far more likely than men to be raising children in lone parent households. There needs therefore to be explicit attention given to the gendered nature of this issue. For example, policy measures to encourage lone

parents into the labour market have to take account not just of the need for appropriate childcare that can support women and children, but also ensure that suitable financial packages are available to recognise the costs of employment in terms of lost welfare benefits (especially as many women with children are working in low paid part time jobs so may not be much better off in work than when on benefits). It is important that policy attention is given to the difficulties faced by women in relation to navigating both working and parenting roles, especially when, for so many, there is little financial reward (and significant personal loss in terms of time spent with children) from taking part in the labour market.

Transport infrastructures also play an important role in limiting or facilitating women's participation in the labour market. Current public transport provision is set up to meet the needs of the 9 to 5 worker. Those who work outside the Monday to Friday 9-5 framework encounter a more limited bus and train service. Women commonly work variable hours (and have less access to cars than men) so to participate in employment often requires having access to safe, reliable public transport that facilitates movement between caring and employment roles as well as allowing those who live away from urban and industrial centres, where employment is clustered, to access available employment opportunities.