

*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**

### The Labour Force:

- In Scotland, the current labour force is evenly balanced between men and women, with women making up 51% of the labour force in 2005.
- Male and female workers are unevenly distributed across industrial categories. For example, in 2004, women made up 72% of employees in public administration, education and health, while men made up 89% of employees in construction, 82% in energy and water supply and three quarters of employees in agriculture, forestry and fishing industries.
- There is also a gender division in the occupational groups men and women are involved in. For example, in 2006, women made up the majority of the workforce in personal services (85%), administrative and secretarial occupations (81%) and sales and customer services occupations (71%). Men, on the other hand, made up the majority of managers and senior officials (64%), plant and machine operatives (86%) and skilled trades (92%).
- The public sector workforce is predominantly made up of female workers, notably in occupations within health (78% of NHS employees in 2005, education (93% of primary teachers and 58% of secondary teachers in 2004) and local government (67% in 2005). Women are however under-represented in the most senior positions in the public sector.
- Economic activity is a measure of the proportion of people of working age who are in work or actively seeking work. In 2006, 83% of working age men were classified as economically active in comparison with 76% of women.
- Economic inactivity is a measure of the proportion of people of working age who are not in work or seeking work (e.g. due to illness, participation in education, early retirement or domestic/caring responsibilities). Women's economic inactivity levels are higher than

men's due in large part to the caring responsibilities they undertake, while men's inactivity relates to their increased participation in higher education and early retirement.

#### Unemployment:

- There are two ways of measuring unemployment. The official claimant count includes only those people claiming unemployment related benefits. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition of unemployment includes a wider range of people: those who are out of work, who want work, have actively sought work in the previous four weeks, are available to start work in the next fortnight or are out of work and have accepted a job that will start in the next fortnight.
- Typically rates of unemployment based on the claimant count show men's unemployment as higher than women's unemployment; 5% compared with 2% in 2006. The ILO measure indicates higher unemployment rates for women (5%) and men (6%), while also reducing the difference in unemployment rates between women and men.
- In all age groups, there are more men than women who have been unemployed for more than a year (long term unemployed). For example, in 2006 there were 2,435 men aged 25-34 years who were long term unemployed and 395 women. In the 50 and over age group there were 4,010 men who were long term unemployed and 990 women.

#### Patterns of Work and Flexible Working:

- Part-time work is more prevalent among women than men in employment, with 41% of all female employees working part-time in 2005 compared with 10% of male employees.
- The presence of children in the household has an impact on the patterns of employment of parents, although this operates in different ways for men and women. For fathers in couples, employment rates are higher (83%) than the average male employment rate, while for mothers in couples, the rate of employment is lower (68%) than the average female employment rate.
- Just as the presence of children affects whether or not women are in employment, it also affects the number of hours they work if they are in employment. Those least likely to work full-time are women with pre-school children, with 24% of women with children aged 0-4 working full-time in 2004, compared with 52% of mothers of children aged 15 and over.
- Data on patterns of flexible working also indicate that it is primarily women with dependent children who make use of these arrangements,

though a significant proportion of women without dependent children also do so. Women are more likely to make use of part-time and flexible working arrangements than men, 55% compared to 22% in 2004.

Other issues:

- Patterns of self-employment among women and men in Scotland show that in 2006 men (13% of all men in employment) were more than twice as likely as women (6% of all women in employment) to be self-employed. These proportions have remained similar during the period 1996 to 2006.
- Analysis of the 2001 Census indicated that minority ethnic women and men were less likely to be in employment than white women and men. Of all people aged 16-74, minority ethnic women had an employment rate of 35% compared to a rate of 53% for white women, while ethnic minority men had an employment rate of 53% compared to a rate of 64% for white men. While in general, minority ethnic populations in Scotland are disadvantaged in terms of their participation in the labour market, with lower levels of employment and higher levels of unemployment, this disadvantage is experienced differentially by different minority ethnic groups and by women and men.
- In general disabled people are much less likely to be in work than non-disabled people,. In 2005, 45% of disabled women of working age were in employment compared to 79% of non-disabled women, and 48% of disabled men of working age were in employment compared to 86% of non-disabled men. Disabled people were also more likely than non-disabled people to be working part-time, and disabled people were more likely than non-disabled people to be unemployed.

## **Discussion**

The recent publication of the Women and Work Commission report has been a key policy driver in relation to measures to challenge labour market inequality in the UK, and to some extent Scotland. The focus of this work has been on addressing both horizontal and vertical occupational segregation, pay inequality, the undervaluing of 'women's work' and the disproportionate burden of care undertaken by women.

Under the previous political administration in Scotland, enhancing women's skills has been a key policy concern in Scotland through the 'Smart, Successful Scotland' agenda, which set out priorities for the Enterprise Networks to recognise the importance of equality in skills and training to support Scotland's productivity and competitiveness.

The approach being taken in the UK and Scotland is also influenced by the European Employment Strategy (the Lisbon Strategy) which set priorities for: reducing gender gaps in pay and employment rates, 'flexicurity' with flexible

labour markets supported by comprehensive social insurance policies, and the reform of tax and benefit systems to limit disincentives to work. These concerns have been further complemented by increasing provision of childcare places and promotion of work-life balance policies.

The government's overall approach, as presented in the Women and Work Commission report, places firm emphasis on enhancing the human capital of individual women and girls in order to facilitate their entry to male dominated professions, and to enhance their competitiveness in the labour market. While these are important concerns, this approach takes an individualist response to a largely structural problem. Women's uneven participation in the labour market can only be fully addressed by recognising the structural and/or cultural barriers that women face. These include, *but are not limited to*: the stereotyped views of women in employment; the unequal distribution of unpaid labour in the household; and the undervaluing of 'women's work' both their unpaid domestic labour (housework and caring roles) and the roles that they predominately undertake within the labour market. These issues play an important role in continuing the gender pay and income gaps.

Part-time work is the major form of flexible working currently used by employees to negotiate combining paid work and caring responsibilities, and is used primarily by women for this purpose. This may be temporary while children are of preschool age, or it may be on a long-term basis. The length of time that women work on a part-time basis, as well as the number of hours worked, are significant determinants of their levels of pay, their promotion prospects, and their income in retirement. Thus investigating patterns of part-time work over the course of women's working lives is important. The kind of part-time work, and the average hours worked, if few, can result in certain groups of women workers being confined to low skilled, low paid jobs, and therefore can reinforce their relative economic disadvantage over the longer term.

The approach being taken through the Gender Equality Duty in the public sector is to move towards ensuring that public sector employers are compelled to investigate and actively promote equality of opportunity between men and women in their workforces. This is a legislative imperative that should go some way to advancing women in public sector employment, which is in direct contrast to the voluntarist approach encouraged in the private sector. Some form of compulsion or incentive system for the private sector to promote gender equality in employment would offer particular benefits to women working in the private sector, particularly those working in small and medium enterprises where employers may need to be encouraged to ensure that they are offering women equal opportunities in employment.