[00:00:00.060] - Emma Ritch
Part of the work is gathering the information and making it visible, but also pushing policy and decision makers to analyse and use what the gender sensitive data we already have, to make decisions about things like what PPE to buy and then store.

[00:00:34.200] - Amanda Stanley
Hello and welcome to On the Engender, The Briefing. My name is Amanda Stanley and I am joined with my wonderful colleague, Alys Mumford.

[00:00:41.430] - Alys Mumford
Hello.

[00:00:42.240] - Amanda Stanley
To present this very exciting episode all about data. We have two exceptional guests joining us today. But before we introduce them, we want to talk a little bit about why we decided to talk about data on this episode.

[00:00:54.330] - Alys Mumford
We talk about data all the time at Engender. But I think with the Coronavirus pandemic and all of the numbers and the information and the stats that are being fired us all the time in government briefings, in the press, numbers of cases, numbers of avoidable deaths and numbers on the logarithmic scale, the all important 'R' number we've been hearing a lot about.

[00:01:17.250] - Alys Mumford
But we don't often sort of dig into those figures and those stats and look at what's behind those numbers. And of course, from Engender's point of view, we want to be knowing where are the women in those numbers? Today, as you said Amanda, we've got two people joining us. First off, the biggest data fan there is, Emma Ritch. Hi Emma.

[00:01:39.000] - Emma Ritch
Hello.

[00:01:39.000] - Alys Mumford
Emma is well known for talking about data so much that on our regular On the Engender episodes, we've considered introducing a data klaxon any time she mentions it.

[00:01:48.960] - Amanda Stanley
Suggestions should be open to that also as to what that klaxon should be.

[00:01:53.460] - Alys Mumford
That's very true. Suggestions on a postcard or probably Twitter, more realistically. And because, of course, data geekery loves a bit of company. We've also invited data enthusiast Lindsey Millen. Hi Lindsey.

[00:02:07.410] - Lindsey Millen
Hi.

[00:02:08.280] - Alys Mumford
Lindsey is from Scotland's expert organisation on women in the labour market, Close the Gap. Thanks so much for joining us you two. We're going to be talking all about data for the next 15 minutes or so. Emma, can you just kick us off by telling us why it's so important that we have data on women and Covid-19 specifically?

[00:02:26.730] - Emma Ritch
Sure. So, data is just information, but the way the information is collected and compiled and published and interpreted and used, is all influenced by the fact we live in a world shaped around men's lives, experiences and even anatomy.

[00:02:43.110] - Emma Ritch
And when laws and policies and public services and products are all designed using information that doesn't properly account for women's experiences, then we're even less likely to have our needs met and our rights realised. So in a crisis like Covid-19, there's a big risk that we rely even more on stereotypes and assumptions when governments and public bodies are rushing to try and meet urgent needs, for health care, for safety, for food, for heating. And in other epidemics, including Zika and SARS, there were some really bad decisions taken that ultimately harmed women's equality, based on a failure to use gender sensitive information to make those decisions.

[00:03:23.340] - Alys Mumford
You mentioned the phrase gender sensitive. Can you just explain for listeners that might not have come across that term, what that means?

[00:03:30.260] - Emma Ritch
Sure. So I really love that one of the reasons Engender exists at all is because women were frustrated the lack of collected information about women's lives in Scotland. And in our present day Engender we work in that spirit by encouraging Scottish government and public bodies to gather, analyse and use gender sensitive, sex-disaggregated data. And we do also, of course, use our own information gathering work to increase the understanding of issues to do with women's inequality, like the Sex and Power reports that chart how many women are in senior decision making roles in Scotland.

[00:04:04.830] - Emma Ritch
So, sex-disaggregated data is data that's broken down by sex, and that's whether you're a man or a woman, so that it's possible to compare and contrast the different experiences of men and women. Gender sensitive data are statistics and other information that reflects gender differences. So things that we understand as being related to socially constructed norms, to roles in relationships. And an example we often use to draw the distinction between those two things is transport. So to produce sex-disaggregated data, a transport survey would just have to ask whether the people completing it were women or men.

[00:04:45.300] - Emma Ritch
But to produce gender sensitive data, the survey would have to cover issues like trip chaining, because women are more likely to link multiple short journeys. For example, to drop children at nursery on the way to work. And it would also have to cover off topics like sexual harassment and women's safety.

[00:05:03.940] - Alys Mumford
Lindsey, for listeners that maybe aren't familiar with the work of Close the Gap. Can you just say a little bit about what you do, and about how data is important in the work that you do?

[00:05:14.940] - Lindsey Millen
So Close The Gap is Scotland's expert organisation on women in the labour market. And our primary role is as a policy advocacy organisation. We work closely with the government and other public bodies, on basically helping them to understand the causes of the pay gap and to take action to address it and make sure that their gendering the development of policy around that. We also work directly with employers, to help them to gather and use the data that they need to understand how the causes of the pay gap function in their own organisations, so that they are better able to take the right steps that they need to tackle the pay gap for them.

[00:05:59.120] - Lindsey Millen
And we also do work across the whole spectrum, really, of the cradle to the labour market cycle, as we like to call it. And that involves working with schools on how gender stereotyping affects children and young people's experiences of education and working all the way through that education pipeline to try and help to basically tackle the causes of gender stereotyping as well.

[00:06:26.750] - Alys Mumford

Brilliant thanks, Lindsey. And I think when we're talking about this stuff, I think the sort of gender pay gap, and the conversations around it are a really good illustration of that link between having the data and using it, you know, the pay gap is often seen as just numbers, or just about salary and misunderstood by people that wilfully or not, don't understand the complexities of it. And so I think that's a really nice shift into what I want to talk about next, which is about how we can, you know, use this gender sensitive, sex-disaggregated data to make policy better going forward.

[00:06:57.300] - Alys Mumford
Emma, have you got anything to chip in on that?

[00:07:00.920] - Emma Ritch
So, some of the data we want to see gathered on Covid-19 is going to help researchers understand its impact on health and well-being. So we know that there are a lot of social factors, including the demand on women to do childcare and care, that undermines women's recovery following something like a heart attack. And right now, women are doing an unprecedented amount of domestic and care work. And the early information suggests that Covid-19 may have long-term effects on health. So we really need to know what is going on in terms of the impact of the virus itself on women and men. Some of the other data we've called for is time use data, and that will get underneath who is doing all of the home schooling and childcare within the household.

[00:07:44.600] - Emma Ritch
And that will help us advocate for an approach to economic recovery post-Covid, that will see women's access to economic resources increase. Because if we see austerity in the way that we did following the 2008 financial crash, then what will happen is that we'll redistribute economic resources from women to men in a way that will roll back women's rights. And an example I think we've seen of that in terms of the immediate crisis response to Covid has been the furlough scheme that UK government developed, that really hasn't paid enough attention to women's caring roles, or maternal health.

[00:08:23.510] - Emma Ritch
And we have to do better in the next phase.

[00:08:26.330] - Alys Mumford
We're going to dig in a little bit more to that example you raised there of furlough, and there is a paper that Engender has written that will obviously be linked to in the show notes, which goes to this in more detail. But I'm just keen - we went through a little bit - the data we have, the data we need, and as you say, Emma, how that is then used to ensure that any measures put in place aren't entrenching women's inequality.

[00:08:48.050] - Alys Mumford
So can someone just tell me a little bit more about that?

[00:08:50.660] - Emma Ritch
We've heard from Scottish government off the back of the paper that you just mentioned Alys, on data. We've heard from them that they've asked for UK government for some of this information, but they're still waiting to see what UK government provide to them. But some of the questions we want answered are, and these are these are pretty basic things, how many men and women are benefiting from the Coronavirus job retention scheme? Which is furlough's proper name. How many men and women owned businesses are benefitting?

[00:09:20.150] - Emma Ritch
What's the value of the benefits to men and women owned businesses? How many childcare and care businesses are benefitting? And what proportion of different types of those businesses? So, are they in the private sector or the third sector? How many women and men are being furloughed as a result of caring responsibilities? And what is the mean and median value of the wages that are being paid to women and men who are being furloughed? And some of that is to get at the sustainability of the childcare and care sectors after Covid.

[00:09:51.830] - Emma Ritch
And some of that is just to see whether there are kind of jobs patterned across the sectors we more commonly find men and women in, that are benefitting from this scheme. Which would suggest that it hadn't been designed very well if the primary beneficiaries are men, or conversely although more unlikely, women.

[00:10:12.590] - Lindsey Millen
We know that data, when we're gathering data, it just illustrates something that we all know, and that's really important because like making the case for better gendered policy, and gendered responses to issues such as closing the pay gap involves like setting out the actual causes, and not just salary information set  out disaggregated by sex.

[00:10:33.490] - Lindsey Millen
Because so much of the gender pay gap goes beyond just pay - access to flexible working, women's disproportionate responsibility for caring roles, and occupational segregation, where men and women tend to do different types of work and different levels of work. All of these things that are issues that we know to be true, we know that all of these things happen, and that tackling them is intrinsically justified based on the just - on the basis of gender equality.

[00:10:59.470] - Lindsey Millen
But people take more convincing, unfortunately, and data enables us to provide the evidence for the problems and the solutions. I'm going to think in relation to to furlough, there's a number of really important things, I think, with child care.

[00:11:15.190] - Lindsey Millen
We've just recently started hearing about the UK government's approach to the transition from lockdown, and it really just shows that gender hasn't been considered at all. Because workers are going to be allowed and encouraged to return to work before school and childcare facilities open. And because of that, we're likely to see more men able to return to work more quickly than women because they're more likely to be stuck at home looking after children and doing home schooling. And this is just likely to further entrench gender stereotypes and the male breadwinner model.

[00:11:44.890] - Lindsey Millen
So also, when women do return to work, they'll be on the back foot and their experiences will be like absence from the spaces where decisions are being made around transitions back into the workplace. Another interesting thing about furlough is that we know different groups of women are impacted differently. Women are concentrated in the majority of jobs that have high exposure to disruption. And because of this, many women will face their roles being lost through redundancy, and find themselves pushed out of the labour market altogether.

[00:12:17.590] - Lindsey Millen
That's those women who have been able to access the furlough scheme at the moment.

[00:12:22.300] - Lindsey Millen
But different groups of women face different specific issues. And we know young women bear the brunt of economic impact of recession. And 75% of the women in the gig economy, perhaps where young women are concentrated, earn less than the taxable threshold. And they therefore don't have access to either of the government financial schemes. So they cannot access furlough, they're just facing a situation where they're just getting no hours and have no income. And migrant women as well, with No Recourse to Public Funds, who may have been made redundant or had their hours cut, basically faced destitution because they're not eligible for any support either.

[00:13:00.730] - Lindsey Millen
So these women have been left out in the cold because of a lack of consideration of gender and the development of the response to the virus.

[00:13:07.630] - Alys Mumford
Thanks Lindsey, that is infuriating and fascinating to hear about. And I think one of the things that struck with - you both touched on there is, that the data evidence is the things we already know. And some of it does seem that, yeah, if you just thought about it for two seconds, you would realise that not providing childcare will have huge impacts on of households and a women's ability to return to work. I mean, at Engender we produce a Sex and Power report which charts women in positions of power.

[00:13:40.900] - Alys Mumford
And again, it seems pretty obvious stuff. We would assume that the media is male dominated, we'd assume that the judiciary is male dominated. But having the figures is really helpful, partly because women's anecdotal evidence isn't valued as much. And one thing we've been doing Engender is trying to capture some of those women's stories to provide both sides of that. So we have the numbers to Emma mentioned that we're trying to ensure are gathered, and then we have, the sort of, the human side of it where women are telling us of the issues they're facing.

[00:14:12.760] - Alys Mumford
I'm keen to hear what in an ideal world, if those stories are listened to, if that data is gathered and used, what will our Covid response look like?

[00:14:21.190] - Emma Ritch
I mean, you're absolutely right, Alys, that much of the data, we suspect, will just paint a picture that organisations like Engender really familiar with. And so I think it would be really hard to find someone in Scotland that did not instinctively know that if you line up every woman in Scotland and then lined up every man in Scotland, then the woman in the middle of the women's line would be shorter than the man in the middle of the man's line.

[00:14:47.620] - Emma Ritch
And yet we've got a situation with Covid, in which Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has been designed around the average man's anatomy, which leaves women under-protected or unprotected. So you're quite right. I think that part of the work is gathering the information and making it visible, but also pushing policy and decision makers to analyse and use what the gender sensitive data we already have, to make decisions about things like what PPE to buy and then store. So in terms of the way forward, I think we'd be looking to evaluate what is happened in Covid.

[00:15:25.150] - Emma Ritch
So we'll want to look backwards after all of this is over, and figure out what worked and what didn't work. But we'll also want to know a lot, as we move into the recovery phase, about what men's and women's lives are looking like during this period of lockdown. Because, as Lindsey identified, so much of what happens next is going to be path dependent on what we have just been through. And what we've seen, I think, is a radical increase in the productivity that is being called on by women, because women are doing the majority of the home schooling and the childcare, as far as we can tell from the available data.

[00:16:02.820] - Emma Ritch
And those patterns of need are not going to shift very much unless all of the schools and nurseries open in one go, which seems vanishingly unlikely to happen. So we need to know what's happening now so we can plan for the medium term and then the long-term.

[00:16:19.680] - Alys Mumford
Lindsey, can you can you tell us a little bit about what Close The Gap will be doing? As you know, in the spirit of the work that Emma's talking about there, about looking back in order to look forward better.

[00:16:30.330] - Lindsey Millen
So we're going to be doing a range of things. One of the - we've been publishing some briefings already that have looked specifically at some of the gendered impacts of the Covid crisis, including

the paper that we developed with Engender on furlough. But we've got an upcoming briefing that look specifically at the impact of the crisis on women's labour market inequality, which will be using some of the data we have already about women's pre-existing inequality and layering on top of it, what we have been able to access on women's different experiences of the Covid crisis, to really highlight what the potential impact is going to be as we move into recovery.

[00:17:10.800] - Lindsey Millen
One of our priorities in the coming weeks and months will be to try and take advantage of the increased profile and public awareness of key workers and essential jobs. And this is a really good example of where data and gender sensitive data in particular is really crucial. And knowing what those gendered issues are that underpin the data that we have that enable us to kind of draw out the gendered impact of situations like the one we're currently in. So, as I said, there's this increased public awareness and it's great that we've seen such prolific and positive coverage of just how valuable key workers are, and how they deserve a pay rise.

[00:17:49.770] - Lindsey Millen
But almost none of this coverage points out the fact that the majority of these key workers are women, and that's precisely why they are so undervalued and underpaid. So we'll be taking the research that's available on this, including Jill Rubery's seminal work on undervaluation and using that data to show policymakers and the public what's at the root of low-pay and key worker roles. And try to build momentum for a radical shift in how we value and pay these roles. And we'll be looking to use as much data as we can get our hands on, on the undervaluation of women and just really updating that to make sure that it's accessible and understandable to members of the public, so we can work towards that.

[00:18:29.190] - Alys Mumford
I went there from feeling thoroughly disheartened at all of the excellent things you were saying about the impact on women, to feeling thoroughly encouraged about how how amazing all the work you're doing is. Can you tell us, Lindsey, where people can find out more info about Close the Gap? Should they want to, which they should.

[00:18:47.280] - Lindsey Millen
Close the Gap is on Twitter, at @closethepaygap. And our website is closethegap.org.uk and on there you can read our blog, which has bite-size information on the gender pay gap and all of its causes. And we also have a range of publications and briefings that just talk in more detail about some of the specific issues that we're working on, and set out what we think are the actions that need to happen to close the gender pay gap and advance gender equality.

[00:19:17.430] - Amanda Stanley
So is there anything else that anyone wants to add before we wrap up this episode?

[00:19:21.750] - Lindsey Millen
Yeah, one of the things that's interested me in terms of looking at the data that's discussed in the media is, we see quite a lot of chat about how the virus itself impacts disproportionately on men in terms of their likelihood of becoming seriously ill. And obviously, that's an absolutely legitimate concern. But it just reflects where the media prioritises its focus really, when we're discussing data. Yeah, and because there's been very little focus on the wider disproportionate impact on women.

[00:19:51.540] - Amanda Stanley
Definitely. Emma, is there anything else that you would like to add before we wrap up?

[00:19:55.500] - Emma Ritch
Yeah, I suppose just to draw attention to some of the calls that Engender is making on public bodies to do different stuff in response to this imperative on gender and data. So, Alys mentioned earlier that we produced a paper on data and Covid, and one of the things we ask for is for Scottish government and public bodies to use the international standards that were developed for the UN Gender Statistic Manual, which is a terrific read, if you're interested.

[00:20:24.510] - Emma Ritch
We also called for some other things - better survey questions, increased publication of sex-disaggregated information that's being currently gathered by the Office of National Statistics, but also wider calls for gender competence to be developed, in designing surveys and data collection tools and also modelling. So we really want to see public bodies and Scottish government step up to fill some of these data gaps. But there's also, I think, a role for data activists, some of whom work at Engender, in terms of feminists gathering our own data. As we've done throughout our history, to make visible the issues that matter most to us.

[00:21:04.820] - Amanda Stanley
Thank you both so much for taking the time to talk. Links to everything that Lindsey and Emma mentioned regarding the Engender paper and the work that Close the Gap is doing, will be linked to in our show notes. You can find out more about Engender by heading to engender.org.uk or following us on Twitter at @EngenderScot .Thank you again, Lindsey and Emma, and Alys also.

[00:21:27.500] - Alys Mumford
Thanks, Amanda.

[00:21:28.390] - Amanda Stanley
We'll be back in two weeks with another episode of The Briefing and until then, stay safe.