



Close the Gap briefing for Scottish Government Debate: Global Ambitions for COP26

October 2021

Close the Gap is Scotland's policy advocacy organisation working on women's labour market participation. We have been working with policymakers, employers and employees for 20 years to influence and enable action that will address the causes of women's labour market inequality.

1. Introduction

The climate crisis necessitates urgent action to transform Scotland's economy. COP26 is an important opportunity to promote policies that will assist Scotland's transition to net-zero while also addressing socio-economic inequality. Gender equality and intersectional approaches to policymaking should be core to the discussions at the COP26 summit. However, so far, gender equality has not been given sufficient focus in commitments on the climate crisis.

Green jobs and green skills are an integral aspect of Scottish Government's efforts to transition to a net zero economy and the promotion of a green economic recovery. To date, however, the potential impacts of the growth in green jobs on women's labour market participation and equality has not been a core consideration of a "just transition".¹ Within the current approach to green jobs, **Close the Gap has concerns around the conceptualisation of green jobs; women's under-representation in priority green sectors; and persistent barriers to women entering these sectors.**

A focus on a green economic recovery through the creation and development of green jobs will not necessarily mean a fairer economy for women. In order to transform the economy so that it is both greener and fairer, tackling occupational segregation and women's broader equality at work must be core to economic recovery policymaking. **We cannot have a "just transition" without enabling women and men to equally benefit from this labour market shift.** This requires concentrated action to tackle the structural barriers women face in entering green jobs. **Close the Gap have called for Scottish Government to take a gender-sensitive**

¹ Close the Gap (2021) 'Making sure a green economy also works for women' available at <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/news/blog/making-sure-a-green-economy-also-works-for-women/>

approach to green jobs in our advocacy around the National Strategy on Economic Transformation.² Forthcoming sectoral just transition plans must also take account of women's experiences of the labour market with strong actions to ensure women's access to green jobs while also tackling women's inequality at work. It is essential that the Scottish Government ensures that the transition to a net-zero economy will not leave women behind.

2. What is a green job?

While there is not a single agreed definition of green jobs, the Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland's Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan identified five broad areas of economic activity that are core to the net zero economy. The sectors are heavily male-dominated such as energy, transport, construction, agriculture, and manufacturing. Analysis by Close the Gap has found that **women account for less than one-quarter (22%) of people employed in these priority sectors in Scotland.**³ More specifically, women account for just 11.3% of engineering professionals, 16% of the engineering workforce and 25% of manufacturing workers.⁴

It is therefore essential that tackling occupational segregation and the development of gender-sensitive training and development programmes are central aims of the transition to a net zero economy. This is vital from an economic perspective, as occupational segregation is also correlated with sector skills shortages,⁵ and increasing the number of women entering these sectors is therefore necessary to meet demand for labour.

The identification of priority sectors also highlights that green infrastructure continues to be understood by the Scottish Government in traditional terms, focused on physical infrastructure such as transport and housing. However, **care jobs are also low carbon jobs**⁶ and data analysed by the Women's Budget Group suggests that **investment in the care industry is 30% less polluting than the equivalent investment in construction, and would also produce 2.7 times as many jobs.**⁷ As yet, however, little consideration has been afforded to the importance and opportunities of implementing large scale investment in all forms of green social infrastructure, including childcare and social care.

² Close the Gap and Engender (2021) Submission to the Advisory Council: Development of the National Strategy on Economic Transformation available at <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Close-the-Gap-and-Engender---Evidence-for-the-Advisory-Council-on-Economic-Transformation-August-2021.pdf>

³ Close the Gap (forthcoming) *Green jobs and skills: The implications for women's labour market equality*

⁴ NOMIS Official Labour Market Statistics, 2020, Workforce jobs by industry (SIC 2007) and sex

⁵ Close the Gap (2016) *Gender Equality Pays: The economic case for addressing women's labour market equality in Scotland* available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Gender-Equality-Pays.pdf>

⁶ Engender (2020) A recovery plan which works for women also works for the planet

⁷ Women's Budget Group (2020) *A Care-led Recovery from Coronavirus: The case for investment in care as a better post-pandemic economic stimulus than investment in construction* <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Care-led-recovery-final.pdf>

Increased policy focus and investment in male-dominated priority sectors, without action to reduce occupational segregation, will disadvantage women, worsen women's unemployment, and widen the gender pay gap. The failure to invest in green social infrastructure, such as childcare and social care, which is essential to enable women's labour market participation, also prevents progress on women's equality.

3. Gender-sensitive green upskilling and reskilling

The Scottish Government acknowledges that the move to a green economy requires the realignment of Scotland's investment in education, training and work-based learning towards green jobs.⁸ **Skills policy and interventions designed to promote green jobs and skills must be informed by evidence on women's access to skills acquisition and in-work training and development.** Gender-blind skills initiatives entrench the occupational segregation that characterises Scotland's education and skills pipeline, funnelling women into low-paid, undervalued jobs and sectors.

The 2021/22 Programme for Government includes commitments on the creation of a Green Workforce Academy and Green Jobs Fund. However, **there remains a lack of detail around how gender equality has been considered in the development of these initiatives.** A starting point in ensuring women's access to these programmes would be to ringfence a proportion of the Green Jobs Fund for women. The Social Renewal Advisory Board made a similar recommendation to address under-represented groups in these sectors. Intersectional gender-disaggregated data must also be gathered on participants to identify whether the Fund is benefiting women as well as men.

In addition to the development of new initiatives, the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan notes that access to green jobs will be supported by existing recovery skills programmes and Scottish Government action plans including the National Transition Training Fund, Young Person's Guarantee, Fair Start Scotland, No One Left Behind and the Future Skills Action Plan. However, some of these interventions and strategies, particularly the National Transition Training Fund and No One Left Behind, have afforded very little, if any, focus to gender equality. **It is therefore unlikely that these policies will enable women's access to green jobs and may actually further entrench their under-representation in priority green sectors.**

⁸ Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland (2020) *Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan 2020-2025: Key issues and priority actions*