



## Response to the UK Statistics Authority Inclusive Data Consultation

March 2021

### 1. INTRODUCTION

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.

Close the Gap is particularly interested in the work of the Data Taskforce in the realm of improving data holdings around protected characteristics and cross-cutting insights, including intersectionality. Inclusive labour market data is key to understanding and demonstrating women's and men's differing experiences of the employment and engaging with the labour market. The availability and accessibility of intersectional and gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data is therefore vital to the work of Close the Gap. At present, there remains a number of critical gender data gaps across labour market data making it difficult to make comprehensive conclusions and evidence-based policy recommendations on women's labour market equality. In addition, gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data is not consistently available at the Scottish-level. In particular, intersectional data relating to the experiences of Black and minoritised women, and disabled women in the labour market remains marginal at best.

The availability of gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data is particularly important in the context of the ongoing crisis. As women and men had different levels of economic wellbeing before COVID-19, that have subsequently been deepened by the crisis, the principle of equality and non-discrimination must be core to the economic recovery.<sup>1</sup> Responding to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis in a way that advances women's equality necessitates gathering, analysing and using gender-sensitive evidence and sex-disaggregated data. Gender-sensitive evidence and data is also essential in enabling the effective monitoring and evaluation of policy responses.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Close the Gap and Engender (2020) *Gender and Economic Recovery*

<sup>2</sup> Engender (2020) *COVID-19: Gathering and using data to ensure that the response integrates women's equality and rights* available at <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/Covid-19-Gathering-and-using-data-to-ensure-that-the-response-integrates-womens-equality-and-rights.pdf>

Close the Gap utilises a range of data sources in our work, with responsibility for the gathering and publication of this data sitting across the UK Government, Scottish Government, UK Statistics Authority and public bodies. A number of UK-wide surveys run by ONS are of particular interest to Close the Gap, including the Labour Force Survey and the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. Given the scope of this inquiry, our response focuses on those data sources which are within the remit of UK Statistics Authority.

## **2. Why is gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data important?**

Gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data is data that is broken down by sex, so that it is possible to compare and contrast differences between men and women. However, it is not merely about counting women and men, but also about utilising statistics and other information that adequately reflect gendered differences and inequalities in the situation of women and men.<sup>3</sup> In the context of women's employment, an example of gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data would not only present women's employment rate, but also integrate data that reflects why women's experience of employment is different from men's including, for example, women's greater responsibility for unpaid care. Gender-sensitive analysis and use of evidence must pay attention to gendered differences in lived experience. These gendered differences span labour market participation, occupational segregation, working patterns, unpaid caring responsibilities, and discrimination.

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to proactively embed gender analysis in all policy and legislative development. This gives gender concerns prominence throughout policymaking and facilitates policy coherence across the work of government departments. However, this is not yet visible in the work of the UK Government or Scottish Government, and we continue to see gender-blind policymaking that fails to take account of men's and women's differing needs and experiences. This is despite Scottish Government and Scottish public bodies being legally required to do gender mainstreaming, and gather and use employee data that is disaggregated by gender under the Scotland-specific duties of the public sector equality duty. While the general duty does not contain any explicit requirements of the UK Government with regards to data or gender mainstreaming, improving the range of data that is collected and utilised is necessary step in eliminating unlawful discrimination and advancing equality of opportunity.

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<sup>3</sup> Engender (2020) *COVID-19: Gathering and using data to ensure that the response integrates women's equality and rights*

## 2. CURRENT DATA AND EVIDENCE

Are there any questions you are currently unable to answer because of a lack of data or evidence? If there are any, please tell us what they are.

### **a. Intersectional data relating to women's employment and experiences of the labour market**

Intersectional gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data is essential to understanding women's labour market participation and experiences of the labour market across factors including pay, employment type, occupational segregation and working hours. This data is also a critical component of gender-sensitive policymaking that takes account of the needs of different groups of women. There remains a lack of data relating to Black and minority ethnic (BME) women's and disabled women's experiences of the labour market which makes it increasingly difficult to adopt an intersectional approach to analysis of the labour market. For example, there remains a lack of intersectional data pertaining to gender pay gaps to fully illustrate differences between specific groups of women as data relating to race, disability, gender and pay only available at a UK-level.<sup>4</sup> There is also a lack of intersectional data relating to workforce jobs by industry, and employment by occupation at the regional level. This means that the main source of data to measure and track occupational segregation by gender and race in Scotland is the census. As the census is only conducted every ten years, this quickly results in a lack of up-to-date intersectional data relating to occupational segregation.

In the context of COVID-19, there is a lack of intersectional data on experiences of furlough, and no publicly available data on furlough by gender and race or ethnicity, or gender and disability. This makes it difficult to make conclusions on the particular experiences of COVID-19 job disruption for BME and disabled women.

### **b. Gender-disaggregated data relating to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self-Employed Income Support Scheme**

A pertinent example of data gaps relates to the publicly available data on UK Government support programmes, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self-Employed Income Support Scheme. The majority of the publicly available data relating to the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme relates to UK-wide data that cannot be split by region which does not enable an understanding of self-employed women's experiences during COVID-19 in Scotland. More information on these gaps is available in section 4 of this response.

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<sup>4</sup> Close the Gap (2021) *Gender Pay Gap Statistics*

The publicly available data on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme provides a limited picture of women's experiences of furlough in Scotland as there is a lack of granular gender-disaggregated data, and some of the data is only available at the UK-level. For example, there is no gender-disaggregated data relating to partial furlough or furlough by sector and gender. There is also a lack of information around women's experiences of furlough including how requests to be furloughed for caring responsibilities have been handled by employers.

Gender-sensitive sex disaggregated data relating to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme should include data relating to how many women and men are being furloughed as a result of caring responsibilities; mean and median value of the 80% of the wages that are being respectively paid to women and men who are being furloughed as a result of their caring responsibilities; how many women and men are having their furloughed salary topped-up by their employer.<sup>5</sup> At present, this data is lacking which makes it difficult to get a granular image of how furlough has impacted women's employment, and how women's particular experiences of the labour market have affected their access to and experience of furlough.

### **c. Insecure work and gender**

Women's work is increasingly precarious, and women and men have different experiences of working within the gig economy. However, there is a lack of regional data to provide an understanding of the rates and types of insecure work for women. In addition, data relating to insecure work for specific groups of women in Scotland is almost entirely lacking. Data relating to insecure work, for example working contracts and use of zero-hour contracts, is currently available at the UK-level and is not disaggregated by region. There is also a lack of intersectional data relating to insecure work. UK-level data highlights that women are more likely to be in insecure work, with data from the Labour Force Survey highlighting that women account for 55% of those on zero-hour contracts<sup>6</sup> and other sources highlights that women are more likely to be on temporary contracts. However, there is insufficient regional data to demonstrate and track these trends at the Scottish-level.

Please tell us the reasons why you are unable to answer these questions.

### **Gaps in current data and level of detail available**

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<sup>5</sup> Engender (2020) *COVID-19: Gathering and using data to ensure that the response integrates women's equality and rights* available at <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/Covid-19-Gathering-and-using-data-to-ensure-that-the-response-integrates-womens-equality-and-rights.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> ONS (2017) *Labour Force Survey: Zero Hours Contracts Data Tables*

The questions highlighted above are difficult to answer because of the existence of gendered data gaps in the publicly available data. In addition, the data is often not sufficiently detailed in order to disaggregate by region and protected characteristic.

### **Something else**

These questions are also difficult to answer because of a lack of leadership on gender equality, and a consequent lack of gender competence within bodies responsible for gathering and analysing data, and specifically the teams which develop, publish and manage labour market data. Gender competence refers to the skills, knowledge and analytical capability to develop statistics, data, policy, or programmes that are well-gendered and take account of the socially constructed difference between men's and women's lives and experiences. The lack of gender competence within data functions, coupled with a lack of leadership on gender equality, means that improving the range of gender-sensitive, sex-disaggregated data is not identified as a key priority. As a result, there has been inadequate action to address long-standing issues with gendered data gaps. Close the Gap recommend that gender competence is developed, or brought-in, to those functions responsible for designing surveys and other data collection tools, recognising that gender analysis requires specific knowledge and skills.

### **3. DATA AND EVIDENCE ACCESSIBILITY**

Are you currently able to access the data you need for your purposes?

**Yes, some of it**

If you are not able to access all the data or evidence you need for your purposes, what data are you unable to access and what are the barriers to you accessing this data?

Some of the key data and evidence that Close the Gap has been unable to access as a result of pre-existing data gaps include:

- Gender pay gap information by ethnicity and disability at the Scottish-level;
- Gender pay gap information by age at the Scottish-level;
- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics relating to sector and gender at the Scottish-level;
- Workforce jobs by industry, sex and race and workforce jobs by industry, sex and disability;
- Employment by occupation, sex and race and employment by occupation, sex and disability;

- Gender pay gap reporting by region<sup>7</sup>;
- Data on flexible working by flexible working type, region and protected characteristic;
- Underemployment and skills utilisation by gender, race and disability and region;
- Data relating to insecure work by gender, race and disability by region;
- Self-Employed Income Support Scheme claims by gender and age at the Scottish-level;
- Self-Employed Income Support Scheme claims amount by gender at the Scottish-level;
- Self-Employed Income Support Scheme ineligible population by gender at the Scottish-level; and
- Self-Employed Income Support Scheme claims by total income and gender at the Scottish-level.

#### 4. MAKING IMPROVEMENTS

Thinking of all the issues you may have experienced with the data and evidence, which of the following improvements would you like to see? Please provide details.

##### **Fill gaps in the current data**

There may be examples where sex-disaggregated data is already gathered by the ONS, but not published. Where this is the case, efforts should be made to publish this data at the earliest opportunity. In addition, the UK Statistics Authority should consider new survey questions for existing National Statistics to increase the availability of sex-disaggregated and intersectional data.

Some ONS surveys are boosted by the Scottish Government to ensure adequate coverage in Scotland, enabling more robust detailed estimates for Scotland.<sup>8</sup> To address remaining data gaps, including those highlighted above, further action is required to ensure that data collection at the UK-level has a sufficient sample size to enable the publication of sex-disaggregated Scotland-only data.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Within the UK Government's Gender Pay Gap Service, it is not possible to browse or search reporting by all Scottish employers. In order to understand reporting by Scottish companies, it is necessary to search by individual company name. This significantly limits the usefulness of the service in Scotland.

<sup>8</sup> SPICe (2017) *Role of the ONS in Scotland* available at [https://www.parliament.scot/S5\\_EconomyJobsFairWork/Inquiries/201710-Role\\_of\\_ONS\\_in\\_Scotland.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/S5_EconomyJobsFairWork/Inquiries/201710-Role_of_ONS_in_Scotland.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Engender (2020) *COVID-19: Gathering and using data to ensure that the response integrates women's equality and rights* available at <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/Covid-19-Gathering-and-using-data-to-ensure-that-the-response-integrates-womens-equality-and-rights.pdf>

## **Improve the level of detail available**

As highlighted above, the lack of detail in publicly available data is a key barrier to understanding women's labour market experience and participation at the Scottish-level. This is particularly true for specific groups of women, including BME women and disabled women. Action and investment to improve survey sample sizes in a way that would enable Scottish-only data to be published across the protected characteristics is an important starting point. In addition, it is important that survey questions provide sufficient detail on protected characteristics, enabling an intersectional approach to be adopted in the analysis of results.

Please tell us about how important it is for your purposes that data or evidence are comparable across different geographies, for example, across the 4 countries of the UK, internationally or at a more local level? Please give details of what geographies you would like to be able to compare across.

Scottish-level data is vitally important in understanding the specific experiences of women in the Scottish labour market. It is therefore important to Close the Gap's policy and advocacy work that data is available at the level of the devolved nations wherever possible, enabling Scottish only analysis and comparison of Scottish and UK-level data.

Please tell us about any impacts you've experienced due to a lack of comparable data or evidence.

The data gaps and lack of detail highlighted in this response function as a barrier to better quality evidence on the experiences of different groups of women, and therefore exacerbates their inequality. The lack of data and evidence also entrenches women's inequality in the labour market because there is a lack of information to appropriately and comprehensively demonstrate the differences between women's and men's experiences of the labour market. The lack of data therefore fuels complacency in policy responses, and prevents the development of robust evidence-based policymaking.

Please tell us about any examples of inclusive data and evidence that you think work well. If relevant, please include a link.

The publication of the Scottish Government's Gender Equality Index in December 2020 is an important development in the presentation of and access to gender-sensitive, sex-disaggregated data.<sup>10</sup> The Gender Equality Index provides a centralised hub of gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data across a range of indicators including work, money, time and power. The Index does not merely count women, but also

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<sup>10</sup> Scottish Government (2020) *Scotland's Gender Equality Index* available at <https://data.gov.scot/genderindex/gender-equality-index-2020.html>

provides gender analysis to provide a greater understanding of the data and reflect the realities of women's lives. However, the process of developing the Gender Equality Index has also highlighted and reinforced some of the critical data gaps that exist, particularly with regards to gaps around the experiences of specific groups of women. It is therefore vital that the Gender Equality Index is not viewed as the end point in providing access to gender-sensitive sex disaggregated data. Instead, further work should be done to address the existence of data gaps and build upon the data that is available through the index.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Close the Gap welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation as inclusive data is of critical importance to our work and addressing gendered data gaps is a prerequisite to tackling women's labour market inequality.

The existence of the data gaps raised in this response are well-established and acknowledged, yet there has been very little meaningful action taken to address the problem. It is therefore vital that this consultation, and the broader work of the Inclusive Data Taskforce leads to substantive action to address the lack of inclusive data in Scotland and across the UK.