

**Joint ECE/UNDP Workshop on
Gender Statistics for Policy Monitoring and Benchmarking
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UNITED KINGDOM

THE USER'S VIEW

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This report has been prepared by the EOC's Statistician, and therefore represents the views of an 'expert' user. It deals primarily with the situation in Great Britain and hence comments may not apply to Northern Ireland.

Institutional Mechanisms

Two public bodies deal with sex equality in the UK. The Equal Opportunities Commission is the expert body on equality between women and men in Great Britain (i.e. England, Scotland and Wales), whilst the equivalent body in Northern Ireland is the Sex Equality Directorate of the Equality Commission.

The EOC was created by Parliament in 1975 with three main tasks:

- working to end sex discrimination;
- promoting equal opportunities for women and men;
- reviewing and suggesting improvements to the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act.

The EOC specialises in gender equality issues, and does not deal with discrimination on the basis of race, age, disability or other grounds.

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The EOC works with the Northern Ireland Equality Commission and with the other equality commissions in Great Britain: the Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Rights Commission. It also works with the Women's Unit in the UK Government Cabinet Office.

Goals for Equal Opportunity and Gender Issues and Concerns

The EOC's goals are summed up in its vision and mission statements:

The EOC's vision is for a society and an economy that enable women and men to fulfill their potential and have their contributions to work and home life equally valued and respected free from assumptions based on their sex. We want a society that guarantees equality for women and for men.

The EOC's mission is to challenge discrimination, to champion equality and to act as a catalyst for change.

To achieve these, the EOC is working on six priority themes over a three year period. These are described in the following extract from the EOC's Corporate Plan 2000/01 to 2002/03.

Equal Pay

Our aim is for the income gap caused by sex discrimination to be eliminated within 10 years.

Our objectives over the next three years are to:

- raise awareness of the Pay Gap
- engage key organisations - employers, trade unions and Government decision-makers - with the issue of equal pay, so that they themselves take action to achieve change

The Equal Pay campaign will run for three years. In the first year we will focus on fact-finding and general awareness raising, and on responding to the Equal Pay Task Force. In the second and third years of the campaign we will work with employers and trade unions in key sectors to make practical changes to ensure equal pay. As part of the campaign, we will highlight the links between equal pay and other policy developments such as social inclusion; the National Minimum Wage; and work/life balance.

Sex Stereotyping

Our aim is a society in which people are free from assumptions based on their sex.

Our objectives over the next three years are to:

- raise awareness of the pervasive nature of sex stereotyping and the social and economic damage it causes

- contribute to increasing the range of options that school age children aspire to and expect to be able to enter
- bring about a reduction in occupational segregation in targeted sectors.

Over the coming year we will focus on the impact of sex stereotyping on pay and pensions, building on the EOC's equal pay campaign. In 2002 and 2003 we will focus on education and employability as they relate to sex stereotyping.

Work/Life Balance

Our aim is a society in which women and men are able to make personal choices about caring and work roles, regardless of their sex.

Our objectives over the next three years are to:

- stimulate a national debate on work/life balance
- support legislative and cultural change so that individuals can balance work with other aspects of their lives.

Work/life balance is currently being addressed by a number of agencies on many different fronts; for example, through the national childcare strategies in England, Scotland and Wales, through the new European directives on parental leave and part-time work, and through the Millennium Childcare Commission. The EOC will keep these developments under review and work in partnership with other lead agencies to support of our objectives. In the coming year, we will focus on developing a three year action plan.

Women's Participation In Political And Public Life

Our aim is a society with balanced representation of women and men, including disabled people and people from ethnic minorities, in all political and public institutions.

Our objective over the next three years is to:

- identify and work to remove the barriers to women's participation in political and public life in the new national and regional institutions.

In the coming year we will review progress made with the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales and draw on this experience to influence political structures in the UK's national, regional and local institutions.

Legal Framework And Legislative Amendments

Our aim is clear and effective laws which provide access to justice and a framework of fundamental human rights between women and men.

Our objective over the next three years is to:

- work with partners, including the Government, to promote harmonious approaches to the law in keeping with EU and domestic legislation.

The coming year we will review the EOC's current legislative amendment proposals in light of recent developments and develop a strategic approach to further work in this area.

Mainstreaming Equality At National, Regional And Local Levels

Our aim is public policy-making processes which automatically consider equality issues from the outset, at all levels of government and in all public services.

Our objectives over the next three years are to :

- build a greater understanding of the “mainstreaming” approach
- persuade key organisations in the public sector to use the EOC guidance on mainstreaming.

In the coming year we will focus on promoting mainstreaming in the structures and working methods of the new political institutions in Wales, Scotland, London and the English regions. We will also work to ensure mainstreaming is applied to changes to the European Structural Funds and to the Boards of public bodies.

Equal Opportunities Legislation

There are two acts of Parliament which relate directly to gender equality in Great Britain. The Sex Discrimination Act sets out the basic principle that men and women should not receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of their sex or because they are married. Then in addition the Equal Pay Act aims to eliminate discrimination between women and men in the same employment, in pay and other terms and conditions of their contracts of employment such as piecework. Both the Sex Discrimination Act and Equal Pay Act came into force in 1975.

Role of Gender Statistics

Within the EOC a wide range of gender statistics are used to inform both its legal and policy work. Outside the EOC, mainstreaming work seeks the development of public policy-making processes which automatically consider equality issues from the outset, at all levels of government and in all public services.

Part of this mainstreaming work is aimed at encouraging producers of statistics to disaggregate statistics by gender and to make them easily accessible to users. The EOC has contributed to the setting up of the Gender Statistics Users' Group, which is described below.

Gender Statistics and Indicators

Although the EOC has not compiled a list of statistics and indicators needed to address gender issues, statistics are regularly published comparing the situation of women and men with regards to particular issues. Current statistics publications include:

- 'Facts about women and men in Great Britain/Scotland/Wales', an annual series of three booklets which aims to bring together a range of gender statistics in a convenient and accessible format.
- 'Women and Men in Britain', a set of 8-page briefings on specific topics which are being published between 1999 and 2001. Titles of briefings published up until August 2000 are: Pay and Income; the Labour Market; at the Millennium; Work/Life Balance.
- 'Sectoral Briefing on Pay: Undervaluing Women'. Which was produced to inform the EOC's equal pay campaign 'Valuing Women'.

ies of the above publications are available on the EOC's website www.eoc.org.uk.

Accessibility, availability and timeliness of statistics

Several recent changes have already had an impact on gender statistics in the UK, and will continue to do so in the near future. In 1999, the newly-elected Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales took on devolved powers, including responsibility for some areas of statistics. Then this year has seen major changes with the introduction of National Statistics. This comprises the establishment of a Statistics Commission, which will advise Ministers on statistical integrity issue; the appointment of a National Statistician; and publication of a Framework for National Statistics.

Accessibility of statistics is generally improving in the UK, particularly for those with internet access as many official publications are now available via this medium. Increasingly statistics publications are available without charge on the government websites. However, it is often difficult to access non-government statistics, where high charges may be made for reports or results may simply not be released.

There is great variability in the extent to which statistics are available published in gender-disaggregated form, in some sources most or all tables include a gender breakdown and in others there are no gender-disaggregated statistics. In the latter case it may be because the source data are not collected by gender or that the analyses have not included gender.

Timeliness is also extremely variable. Whilst some analyses appear a few months after the completion of data collection, there are other survey reports which first appear several years after the data were collected.

Statistics on parts of Great Britain, e.g. regions or local authorities, are generally less likely to be available by gender than national statistics.

Statistical outputs available

'A Brief Guide to Gender Statistics', produced jointly by the Office for National Statistics and the EOC in 1998, identified the main sources of gender statistics in the UK. This was followed later in the same year by 'Social Focus on Women and Men', a compendium of gender statistics.

Generally published sources are well presented. There has been criticism in the past of the high prices charged for government statistics publications. For example, Social Focus on Women and Men cost £30. This is less valid now that many publications are available without charge from the internet.

Co-operation and communication mechanism with data producers

Developing communication between users and producers of gender statistics is the role of the Gender Statistics Users' Group (GSUG). This was established in 1998, following a very successful conference 'Making Gender Count'. The aim of the GSUG is:

To improve the production and reporting of statistics contributing both to the understanding of gender differences and inequalities in the UK and to the development and evaluation of policies related to those differences and inequalities, by

- identifying those issues and those aspects of the production and reporting of statistics where improvements are required;
- developing and carrying out a Programme of Work to discuss and promote measures to achieve the required improvements;
- keeping developments under review that may affect requirements for such statistics;
- developing and maintaining close liaison between users and producers of gender statistics, especially to represent the interests of users to the Government Statistical Service and other producers of statistics;
- promoting the exchange of information and of good statistical practice between users.

The GSUG is currently planning a programme of work for the next two years, which is expected to include an annual conference and two or three meetings each year to discuss particular topics.

What is most needed to strengthen the cooperation and communication among ECE countries?

The following information on each country is suggested for inclusion in an ECE gender statistics website:

- Who is active in the field of gender statistics and in what capacity?
- What gender statistics are being produced?
- What methods of dissemination are used, and at which users are they targeted?
- What methods have been successful in increasing availability of gender statistics and visibility of gender issues?