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**GENDER STATISTICS FOR THE 21st CENTURY:
CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Next year, 2005, will see at least two major anniversaries of relevance to work in gender statistics. Firstly in September it is the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995 and secondly, closer to home, in December it is the thirtieth anniversary of the British Sex Discrimination Act and Equal Pay Act coming into force. So it seems an appropriate time to take stock, and to consider whether the gender statistics we have today are those we need both today and in the future.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) in Great Britain was established by the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975. In the course of its work to challenge discrimination and promote sex equality, the EOC:

- Sets the agenda for decision makers across England, Scotland and Wales, and runs high profile campaigns to change public policy and public opinion as well as the law – for example on equal pay, the rights of pregnant women at work, and rights to flexible working.

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- Publishes research and statistics about women and men in Great Britain today, to show clearly where change is still needed.
- Uses its unique legal powers of enforcement, to investigate organisations or areas of life where sex discrimination is persistent or happens frequently.
- Takes landmark legal cases under the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act, to improve the situation for women and men in the future. These cases set legal precedents to secure equal treatment for women and men in areas as diverse as pay, recruitment, pensions, education and sport.

All these areas need gender statistics.

III. THE CHALLENGES FOR GENDER STATISTICS

3. The major challenge is that sex equality is a constantly changing field. New issues emerge continually, whilst old problems may be tackled in new ways.

4. Particular areas in which I have seen growing demand include:

- Statistics on double or multiple discrimination using comparisons of women and men broken down by other characteristics associated with discrimination. Following the European directive on equal treatment in employment and occupation, statistics are needed on six equality 'strands': sex, race/ethnic group, disability, religion, sexual orientation and age. A current project at the EOC is to produce a briefing on ethnic minority women and men. This draws on results from the UK 2001 Census and other sources to compare the situation of women and men in seven ethnic groups as regards education, training and employment.ⁱ
- Comparisons between Great Britain or the UK and other countries. Information on similarities and differences with respect to employment, pay, working arrangements, etc for different groups of women and men. The EOC has previously commissioned research including between country comparisons on: the gender pay gapⁱⁱ, working fathersⁱⁱⁱ, women in the workplace^{iv} and occupational segregation.^v
- Information on views, attitudes and intentions to help with understanding people's motivations and to demonstrate the level of support for change. The EOC's 2003-04 Annual Report brought together a range of statistics comparing women's and men's expectations with the reality in Britain today.^{vi}

5. In addition to these overarching demands, there are specific needs for gender statistics to inform work towards specific equality goals. Some of the 'gaps' in statistics for Britain are as follows, but most will be common to other countries:

- Women and men valued equally
6. Statistics are needed to monitor the continuing gaps between women's and men's pay, and to help identify ways of closing these. The following improvements are required:
- o Accurate estimates of women and men in low paid jobs by whether they earn below the National Minimum Wage, and the gender pay gap between low paid workers.
 - o Better quality estimates of the pay of women and men in different ethnic groups and by other individual characteristics.

- o Comparative pay data for different countries that covers all sectors and is published regularly and promptly.
 - o Statistics published on amount of state pension received by whether qualifying in own right or as a result of spouse's contributions, as well as on other sources of pensioner income.
 - o Better information on standard of living of individuals within households, based on individuals' income, household resources and level of income sharing.
- Fair treatment, not discrimination
7. An assessment of the effectiveness of the sex equality legislation needs far more statistical evidence than is currently available, particularly on:
- o Levels of discrimination in general, who experiences discrimination and what, if any, action is taken.
 - o Better information on applications to employment tribunals by issue, sex of applicant, representation and outcome. Compensation awards by issue, representation and sex of applicant.
- Caring roles shared
8. Parents' and carers' responsibilities provide particular barriers to their employment, as well as other activities. Statistics are needed to show:
- o Basic employment rates and hours of work of parents and carers.
 - o Detailed information on working patterns of parents and carers, particularly of part-time workers. E.g. number of days, hours per day, start and finish times.
 - o Time-related restrictions on the employment, education and leisure time of parents and carers.
- Equal choice, not stereotypes
9. Many jobs, and related training courses, are mainly taken by either women or men. Information is needed on who trains in which areas, on the jobs they go into and whether they stay in those jobs and progress. This requires:
- o Gender breakdowns of students and trainees on vocational courses and work-related training by subject.
 - o Good estimates for the gender balance and individual characteristics of workers in all occupations, but particularly those that are heavily segregated or with small numbers employed.
 - o Measures developed for classifying seniority, so that career progression (or lack of it) can be monitored.
- Different lives, equal services
10. In the UK, a public sector duty to promote gender equality will require public service providers to address how best to meet the differing needs of women and men. Statistics are needed on women's and men's use of, and unmet need for, public services:
- o In health services there needs to be greater disaggregation by gender of routine health and health care data in official statistical sources. More sensitive indicators are also needed to help in the understanding of differences in the health status of women and men and in their experiences of health care.^{vii}
 - o There is also a need in the UK for greater coordination between the different departments producing health statistics so that data for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can be compared and combined to produce GB and UK statistics.
 - o More transport statistics need to be disaggregated by gender in order to identify gendered differences in travel patterns, including travel difficulties associated with

travelling to work, shopping, health and disability, and low income households. There is also a lack of information on differences in purpose and mode of travel for women and men: with and without dependent children, by employment status and working time, by ethnic group, and by time of day.

- Equal power

11. Women are under-represented in many top jobs in Britain, which is demonstrated in the EOC's recent report 'Sex and power'.^{viii} There is a need for:

- o More data on women's representation in 'top jobs', such as more frequent statistics on local authority councillors and small business owners.
- o Regular monitoring of the short-listing and selection of political candidates.
- o Data collection on women and men in top jobs by ethnic group, disability and other individual characteristics.

IV. MORE ON COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE UK AND OTHER COUNTRIES

12. As stated above in section 3, comparisons between the UK and other countries can provide useful evidence as to likely influences on gender differences. The following areas are ones where comparable gender statistics are particularly required, and which are suggested as should be priority areas for development.

13. In all cases there is a need for gender statistics, which are timely (no more than two years old), appropriate in their coverage and definitions adopted, and harmonised between countries.

Occupational segregation in training and employment

14. A major cause of labour market inequalities between women and men is the extent to which they are employed in different jobs and different sectors of the labour market. Comparative information for different countries is needed on:

- o the level of gender segregation in different occupations using a common and detailed classification,
- o gender breakdown of young people training to enter different occupations, and whether they go on to work in those areas,
- o the extent to which particular groups of women or men are under-represented in particular occupations,
- o the levels of retention and advancement for such atypical employees, compared with other employees.

Work, parenting and caring

15. Both parenting and caring for elderly or disabled adults can have a major impact on opportunities to obtain and keep employment. Comparative information is needed on:

- o employment rates, hours of work and flexible working arrangements using harmonised definitions and survey questions,
- o comparisons of the above by age and number of children for mothers and fathers, and by level of caring responsibility of carers,
- o restrictions on parents and carers obtaining and retaining employment .

Pay and gender

16. The gender pay gaps have long been important indicators for the EOC. Recognising that hours of work differ between women and men, both from more women working part-time and working fewer hours on average when they work full-time, the headline indicators are based on hourly earnings. Comparative information is needed on:

- o average full-time hourly earnings of women and men,
- o average part-time hourly earnings of women (and men where possible),
- o average hourly earnings by occupation and industry, separately for male full-time employees and female full-time and part-time employees.

V. CONCLUSION

17. Whilst some statistics are available on the above topics, there is a clear need for international statistics to be collected, analysed and published that will inform progress towards gender equality today and in the future.

ⁱ EOC (2004) Ethnic minority women and men (Women and men in Britain series), to be published in November.

ⁱⁱ Grimshaw, D & Rubery, J (2001) The gender pay gap: a research review (EOC Research Discussion Series).

ⁱⁱⁱ O'Brien, M & Shemilt, I (2003) Working fathers: earning and caring (EOC Research Discussion Series).

^{iv} Thewlis, M et al (2004) Advancing women in the workplace: statistical analysis (EOC Working Papers Series no. 12).

^v Miller, L et al (2004) Occupational segregation, gender gaps and skills gaps (EOC Working Papers Series no. 15).

^{vi} EOC (2004) Talking about sex, EOC Annual Report 2003-04.

^{vii} Doyal, L et al (2003) Promoting gender equality in health (EOC Research Discussion Series).

^{viii} EOC (2004) Sex and power: who runs Britain?