Gender Pay Gap

Equate Scotland

Please note: Equate Scotland has responded only to those questions where we have direct experience and expertise.

About Equate Scotland

Equate Scotland is the national expert on women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and the built environment. We have been leading in this area for 10 years and work with women, students, employers and further and higher education institutions to increase the recruitment, retention and progression of women in these industries.

Our work is informed through our partners and stakeholders. We work with a number of organisations, in particular relevance to this submission, is our work with the leading organisation working on the gender pay gap in Scotland; Close the Gap.

Scotland has only 9% women in engineering, 18% women in technology and 1% in construction. This overwhelming occupational segregation is a key cause of the stubbornness of the gender pay gap.

What are the strengths and limitations of the different definitions of the gender pay gap?

The variety of different definitions of the gender pay gap creates confusion around the extent of the problem and creates a disparity between organisations and commentators when analysing the problem. When discussing these issues with employers, Equate Scotland refers to the preferred definition by Close the Gap which is the mean average of hourly earnings between men and women rather than the median. We refer to this definition as we believe it provides the most comprehensive analysis and takes into account the impact of occupational segregation; where men are more likely to be in higher paid roles (e.g. STEM sectors) and women are more likely to be in under-valued, lower paid roles (e.g. the care sector).

Are current Scottish Government and Office for National Statistics statistics adequate for policy making and scrutiny in this area?

The current available data on the Scottish Labour Market whilst helpful, is not adequate and does not provide enough detail on two fronts which are of relevance to Equate Scotland’s work:
1. Occupational data

Equate Scotland works with the STEM sector, however data available is based on broad categories where many of the STEM sectors are encompassed for example “professional, scientific and technical activities”, which includes data relevant to two out of the four sectors we work with. Data which drills further down and can provide more specifics on sectors (particularly growing industries), would allow us to take forward these issues and discuss them with employers more competently. There is a key issue with having this data available for only full time employees. As the vast majority of women work part time, and as an organisation encouraging flexibility in the workplace, we need data which illustrates the part-time gender pay gap.

2. Intersectional data

The data available for Scotland does not reflect the intersectional identities of women; e.g. there is no data available on the pay gap experienced by black and minority ethnic women, LGBT women, women of different ages and disabled women. This is significant as women under these protected characteristics are more likely to experience inequality in the workplace and be the furthest away from opportunity.

Is the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework indicator based on the most appropriate measurement of gender pay?

Scottish Government’s National Performance indicator is based on median, hourly earnings between men and women working full-time in Scotland. This measure is not competent as it does not include the majority of women who work part-time (as mentioned above). The majority of part-time employees are women (76%) and just less than half of women are working part-time, 42 %. As an organisation which is encouraging employers in STEM to create quality part-time and flexible roles to increase the number of women in STEM, it is problematic for these potential roles to not be included in future analysis. Continuing with the current indicator data will not fully reflect the realities of inequality in the workplace, as more part-time and flexible posts become available.

What reasons are there for the existence of the gender pay gap?

There are multiple and complex reasons for the gender pay gap and they relate directly to the “leaky pipeline” of women in STEM which is covered below:

1. Gender stereotyping and attitudes towards girls/women

From birth, the stereotypes across society on the differences in interests and competencies of boys and girls creates an environment in which we encourage girls to play with toys which reflect caring or beauty, whilst boys are encouraged to pursue creativity, construction and leadership. These stereotypes contribute to children growing up with assumptions about their own capabilities and has a direct consequence on the subjects they pursue at school. Only 23% of pupils studying SCQF level 6-7 physics were girls and only 18% of pupils in computing were girls. From the age of 14 girls subject choices are narrowing their options in the workplace and already steering them towards female dominated, undervalued roles and currently, less pay.

2. Occupational segregation

The stereotyping as explained above consequently means that men are more likely to be in higher paid and senior positions and women in lower paid sectors and/or less senior roles. Within STEM, we find that women may be working in the sector but will not be in senior roles or will be in administrative roles rather than those dependent on STEM skills, which are lower paid. In Scotland, only 12% of STEM industry managers, directors and senior officials are women. Furthermore, particularly in STEM, the lack of women in these sectors and the lack of career progress for women, contributes to 73% of women graduating in these subject not remaining in the STEM industries, compounding the issue of occupational segregation further.

3. Childcare responsibilities and quality part-time/flexible work

Women currently take on the vast majority of caring responsibilities. This is a key factor in the gender pay gap as it means women are more likely to be seeking part-time or flexible work which is currently not as readily available and often less well paid. Quality, senior part-time roles in STEM are crucial to overcome gender inequality in these industries. In Equate Scotland’s recent research “Rising to the Challenge” 68% of over 1100 respondents stated that they wanted to see flexible working

---

options as a standard practice across STEM and believed this was the most impactful way to increase the number of women in STEM.\(^5\)

**What are the wider economic and social benefits of closing the gender pay gap?**

The social and economic benefits of closing the gender pay gap have been made clear, particularly by Close the Gap’s report\(^6\) which illustrates the positive impact to society, the economy and business performance of overcoming the gender pay gap. This economic need is being recognised more by employers in STEM as the business case for increased productivity, performance and retention has become a staple part of Equate Scotland’s conversations with employers. Overcoming occupational segregation in STEM is worth £170 million per annum to the Scottish economy\(^7\) and tackling the gender pay gap across all industries in Scotland is estimated to be worth over £17 billion to the economy\(^8\).

**Are there specific issues with gender pay within the Scottish public and private sectors?**

Equate Scotland works with women directly through our career development services and our research (mainly in the private sector) and their experiences tell us that biases in promotion opportunities, language biases and unconscious bias in recruitment, lack of flexibility, exclusionary male dominated working environments and micro-aggressions\(^9\) in the workplace, contribute to the continuation of the gender pay gap. The impact these experiences have are either women not entering higher paid, male dominated STEM sectors or leaving the sector after a short time.

**To what extent has the Scottish Business Pledge changed employment practices as regards gender pay?**

The Scottish Business Pledge is not a tool referred to widely in the STEM sector and there is currently no evidence that we can point to which states that employment practice has changed as a result of it in STEM.

---


\(^6\) Close the Gap (2016) Gender Equality Pays: The economic case for addressing women’s labour market inequality [https://www.closethegap.org.uk/content/resources/Gender-Equality-Pays.pdf](https://www.closethegap.org.uk/content/resources/Gender-Equality-Pays.pdf)


\(^8\) Close the Gap (2016) Gender Equality Pays: The economic case for addressing women’s labour market inequality [https://www.closethegap.org.uk/content/resources/Gender-Equality-Pays.pdf](https://www.closethegap.org.uk/content/resources/Gender-Equality-Pays.pdf)

\(^9\) Barthelemy et al (2016); Gender discrimination in physics and astronomy: Graduate student experiences of sexism and gender microaggressions
The only aspect of the Scottish Business Pledge which relates to gender is “achieving a balanced workforce”. Whilst the idea of the business pledge is welcome, this part of the pledge dismisses the issue of occupational segregation; for instance a STEM employer can have a 50/50 workforce, but this will go no way to overcome the gender pay gap if all of the women are in lower paid, gender stereotyped, part-time roles and all the men are in higher paid, full-time senior roles. The business pledge as it stands is no more than a soft introduction to the issue of equality in the workplace.

Can more be done to promote equal pay through the Scottish Business Pledge and the Fair Work Convention?

Yes. The Scottish Business Pledge can become a tool which is less of a “signing up to equality” and more of a means to monitor and evaluate businesses progress in this area. Currently, after a commitment to pursue the pledge has been made by a business there is little follow up to identify how they are working on it, what targets they have set (which can and should be made public) and how they are including women’s experiences in the delivery of their commitment. There is space for the pledge and the Fair Work Convention to have a bigger impact by being more specific on what it expects of employers and critically, provide more explicit information and target setting to help businesses understand and take action on occupational segregation.

Equate Scotland