

Q & A with ESRI – Unanswered Questions

Pre-submitted questions

Pre-meeting questions (with draft answers from Helen)

- **Are there studies on people's attitudes to their work? Studies that answers questions around how people feel about their work/what motivates them/what are the challenges, etc. Maybe women are generally less financially motivated than men and there's perhaps too much focus on paying people rather than other forms of compensation?**

There is a body of research around work values and attitudes. These do show gender differences but values are multi-dimensional. Workers can be motivated by intrinsic rewards e.g. job interest, social value of work, opportunity to use skills or more extrinsic – security, pay, opportunities for advancement. They may also place more value on convenience factors or the social aspect of work.

It's very unlikely that anyone wants to be low paid but there is some evidence that men put a somewhat higher value on "high pay" and women are more likely to say they value flexibility (Redmond & McGuinness 2018)¹. But even when this was taken into account there was a large unexplained gender pay gap.

Another key issue is that **attitudes to work are not independent of the environment**, in other words, workers' attitudes and values are influenced by social norms and their working conditions. This means that we cannot necessarily "read off" people's preference from their behaviour. Take the example of working hours, is this a signal that women value paid work differently than men? If we compare across countries we find that "choice" to work part-time is shaped by the context e.g. cost of child care (eg Gash 2008)². Similarly, we cannot assume men prefer to work longer hours. When asked about preferred hours men are more likely to say they want to reduce hours than women.

Preferences are also likely to be shaped by current job conditions and economic security (e.g. Gallie et al find that those who are better paid and secure are more likely to value intrinsic aspects of work i.e. work that is interesting or meaningful (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0950017012451633>))

¹ <https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/10933/the-gender-wage-gap-in-europe-job-preferences-gender-convergence-and-distributional-effects>

² Preference or constraint? Part-time workers' transitions in Denmark, France and the United Kingdom <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0950017008096741>

- **If women have different work values, will positive discrimination counter that?** Insofar as people's preferences are shaped by their opportunities, positive discrimination may increase women's ambitions. Affirmative action in access to senior positions in management or on boards can also provide role models. In research we carried out in the civil service we found that in departments with more female leaders, women were more likely to feel positive about promotion opportunities.

Gender pay gap

- **The gender pay gap is explained well however I am wondering. Are there situations where a man and a woman are doing the exact same number of hours in a job, have the same experience and education but yet are paid differently?**

Cases where women are doing the same job hours etc for the same employer and being paid differently are likely to be rare as this would be a very obvious case of gender discrimination though it is not unheard of particularly where discretionary bonuses etc are involved. More generally, studies often examine the size of the pay gap that exists when men and women in the same occupational groups, with the same education. This is what is known as the **adjusted pay gap**. Generally, studies find there is still a gap even when all these factors are held constant.

A number of cross national studies found that in Ireland the adjusted pay gap is wider than the raw pay gap because women in the labour market have higher levels of education and other relevant characteristics (partly because less educated women are more likely to be involved in full-time caring and not in the labour market).³

- **I would like to hear Helen's views on why she thinks the government are so slow in rectifying the gender pay gap?**
- **How can the Assembly influence Government policy on pay equality for Women and men in a meaningful way?**

Reducing the pay gap is a complex problem involving multiple actors – govt is only one of the actors and interventions in the labour market can have unintended consequences; for example, long parental leave can contribute to a widening gender pay gap if the leave is mainly taken by women. The range of measures outlined in my second presentation are those that are known to influence the gender pay gap (see also Damian Grimshaw's presentation).

³Boll et al 2016; Christofides et al. (2013)
<https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/36970/1/631486976.pdf>

- **How can women be attracted to areas of work where they are currently under-represented?**

Breaking down stereotypes around gender appropriate subjects and occupations needs to start with early socialisation, and involve parents, schools' timetabling of subjects etc (See presentation by Sheila Greene from weekend 1). Other important issues include:

- Availability of training opportunities for women returning to work.
- Formal recruitment procedures in the workplace
- Equality and diversity policies in the workplace
- Changes in workplace cultures
- Role models, networking and mentoring opportunities

- **How long do you think that it will take for pay disparity be addressed in workplace?**

- **(Addressed to Pauline Cullen) How did gender pay gap get so wide for women? How have women been so let down in work promotions. We in the Citizens Assembly with The Government, HR institutions & Unions will have to make everyone more aware of women's worth to society in life and work. Women have been taken for granted & left to pick up the pieces in family care, childcare and elderly care and part-time work to fit in with family care and have no time for themselves to study or have some self-worth.**

The gender pay gap has narrowed over time if we look back since the 70s; however, this seems to have stalled in recent years (England and Privalko, 2020). Hopefully the work of the Assembly can contribute to getting this moving again.

I would agree with assessment of job to be done in increasing recognition of the women's contribution in life and work and on the issue of time. Evidence shows that there are gender inequalities in men and women's uncommitted time, that is, time not spent on paid or unpaid work/care (McGinnity et al 2008)⁴. Unfortunately, information on women and men's time-use is not regularly collected in Ireland, though most other EU and developed countries do so.

Industry/profession

⁴ <https://www.esri.ie/publications/gender-inequalities-in-time-use-the-distribution-of-caring-housework-and-employment>

- **What is the productiveness of women in the workplace- do women do the same work as men in less time, therefore, less time in the office leading to less pay? What are the industries that are the best paying- we know men tend to be more into STEM what impact does this have? What is the gender pay gap comparing like with like- both a male and female director- is there a gender pay gap there? If so how much?**

We tend not to have direct measure of productivity but studies of the pay gap control for productivity-relevant characteristics i.e. education, skills, experience, working hours. The adjusted pay gap is the gap between men and women's pay when these are taken into account (see above).

The recent Higher Education Authority study showed that there were strong gender differences in Field of Study at third level:

“Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction is the most male dominated field of study with males comprising over 90 percent of some graduates. ICT and Agriculture subjects (excluding Veterinary) are also heavily male dominated where around three-quarters of graduates are male. Other subjects with large proportions of male graduates include Physics (80 percent), Finance, Banking & Insurance (69 percent), Economics (65 percent), Statistics (65 percent), Other Mathematics (63 percent) and Sports (63 percent). Meanwhile females account for the vast majority (around 95 percent) of graduates in Training for Pre-school Teachers, Child Care & Youth Services and Nursing & Midwifery. Around 7 in 10 graduates from Education courses are female. Other fields of study such as Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences (excluding Economics), Biology, Veterinary and Welfare are also predominantly comprised of females.”⁵

It also finds that pay levels are significantly higher in the male dominated fields three to eight years after graduation (especially ICT). Earnings in Education, health and welfare which have higher proportions of female graduates, are high in the first year after graduation but are gradually overtaken.

The returns to field of study will be influenced by whether the jobs are mostly in the public and private, sector, sectoral profitability etc. but also by the societal valuation of jobs.

- **In Ireland where does pay inequality mainly happen, in the public or private sectors**

The gap is wider in the private sector.

⁵ <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2019/12/Higher-Education-Earnings-Report-Dec-19.pdf>

- **Is there a breakdown of the professions & other areas of work for the 1950-2000? It's not possible to glean the very few opportunities there were for women to go to college then as opposed to the last 30 years. Can you break this down for transparency please?**

The following paper has some further information about changes in education by gender over the last 50 years <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/media/file-uploads/2017-12/JA201752.pdf>.

- **(Addressed to Pauline Cullen): How can the Assembly ensure better pay and conditions for low paid part time jobs that in the main are done by women**

Previous research in Ireland has shown there is pay penalty for those working part-time but this is not inevitable as the size of the penalty for part-time differs across countries. One issue is the part-time opportunities are not extended to higher level jobs, this might be addressed by greater statutory entitlements to work part-time in certain circumstances. Greater employment protection for low paid part-time workers is important e.g. through greater worker organisation (unions) or centralised bargaining. Minimum wage levels are also important for this group as covered in the videos.

Definitions

- **1. What are the factors that create; A. "the glass ceiling?" B. " the sticky floor?"**

Many of the same factors operate (as outlined in video 2). In the case of sticky floors there is an additional issue that women can be in jobs or roles where there are few promotional opportunities i.e. only a very short ladder. Barriers in promotion to senior grades are particularly important for the glass ceiling; these include gender stereotypes, long hours culture, exclusion from networks and inequality in access to high profile assignments.

Sticky floors and glass ceiling are sometimes used to refer to whether the pay gap is wider at the bottom or the top of the earnings distribution compared to at the middle. The national minimum wage has reduced the gender pay gap at the lower part of the earnings distribution (Bargain, Doorley et al⁶). However, it is still a problem that women are over-represented in low paid jobs and among those on the minimum wage (Maitre et al 2018)⁷.

- **(Addressed to Pauline Cullen): Could you elaborate on the concept of "wage floor"?**

⁶ <https://www.esri.ie/publications/minimum-wages-and-the-gender-gap-in-pay>; <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/media/file-uploads/2018-06/OPEA163.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.esri.ie/publications/a-study-of-minimum-wage-employment-in-ireland-the-role-of-worker-household-and-job-characteristics>

A wage floor is a pay which the employer cannot legally or contractually go below. In Ireland the national minimum wage is a wage floor. Wage floors can also be agreed within industries between unions and employers.

Caring

- **Early years parenting has a big influence on the working lives of women especially. Does any country recognise the value of parenting in society by financially supporting parents to parent? The choice to work outside the home or not is only available to more affluent women.**

Will be returning to the issue of financial supports for carers in later sessions. Of most relevance here for Gender Pay Gap are leave for caring (including enhanced temporary leave for caring for sick children and availability of flexible work options). The cost of childcare influences the number of hours that women work (in paid work) (Russell et al 2018) and financial necessity is a key reason for women to return to employment after they have children (McGinnity et al. 2013).⁸ However, women also return because they value employment and wish to use their skills. Women with lower earnings are more likely to return to paid employment early or not at all so enhanced **paid** parental leave is important for these families to reduce social class inequalities.

- **Do we collect data on the economic value of unpaid care and household services to Irish national economic activity; and is there a way of economically calculating, from this, how women subsidise the national economy each year (and especially during something like this pandemic)? Is there a way of tracing the link between women's low pay; the gender pay gap, and gender segregation, and economic development levels etc.?**

Good question. Putting an economic value on care work has been carried out in some countries, and is an important exercise for valuing (women's) unpaid work, this short piece by Nancy Folbre⁹ sets out the arguments very well.

There is some research for Ireland that estimates the value of informal elder care in Ireland. Hanly and Sheerin (2017) estimate that the value of informal adult care is between €2.1 billion and €5.5 billion depending on the valuation method used. They also note that both estimates are significantly higher than the budget for formal care, both long-term care and formal community-based packages.¹⁰

⁸ <https://www.esri.ie/publications/growing-up-in-ireland-mothers-return-to-work-and-childcare-choices-for-infants-in-ireland>

⁹ http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/folbre_hdr_2015_final_0.pdf

¹⁰ Hanly, P. and C. Sheerin (2017). 'Valuing Informal Care in Ireland: Beyond the Traditional Production Boundary', *The Economic and Social Review*, 48(3, Autumn), 337-364.

In Ireland we need to invest in collecting regular detailed **time use surveys** which would allow us to make these assessments. As researchers in this area we've been calling for this for a long time. The National Women's Council has also recommended that this is done.

We do know that there is very substantial amount of time spent on caring on housework and that women spend almost double the time spent by men on these tasks.¹¹

The second part of the question is addressed in the second video and in Damian Grimshaw's presentation. We did not cover the research that addresses the links women's low pay with economic development though UNWomen may be a good place to start for further reading.¹²

Other questions

- **Does she agree that the issue of the influence of religious organisations on equal employment rights is one which cannot be overlooked?**

Historically the church played a significant part in defining the role of women, and this influence is still apparent in Article 41 of the Constitution. This topic received some attention in the opening session of the assembly. The influence of religious organisations has declined significantly, though they may still play a role in shaping attitudes of some and the influence on social policy remains through their involvement in education and health provision. At the same time, in the early to middle twentieth century, nuns were often the only women in senior management roles in education, health and other service sectors in Ireland. So, the impact is complex.

Helen Russell 2nd Video

- **Are any of the ESRI statistics and findings used to inform the curriculum at second level?**

A good deal of research at the ESRI has been used to inform the nature of the second-level curriculum. Longitudinal research informed the direction of junior cycle reform and, more recently, researchers at the ESRI analysed responses from the consultation with teachers, students and parents about senior cycle reform. The Growing Up in Ireland longitudinal study has also pointed to important issues for educational policy. This research has tended to focus on potential changes that could improve teaching and learning for all students as well as on factors that shape socio-economic inequality in educational outcomes. However, the findings also have implications for understanding

¹¹ Russell et al 2019 <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/BKMNEXT382.pdf>

¹² <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

gender inequality. In particular, research has shown that young men from working-class backgrounds are more likely to become disengaged over the course of second-level education, often 'acting up' at school and therefore getting into trouble with teachers and underperforming academically. On the other hand, young women are found to be much more likely to report exam-related stress, losing sleep over worry about exams. Existing ESRI research shows significant differences in the type of second-level subjects taken by males and females, with males more likely to take technological subjects (such as Engineering) and females more likely to take cultural subjects (such as Art and Music). Whether a school provides certain subjects varies by gender. But even where a subject is provided, males and females in the same school tend to have very different take-up patterns. There is no evidence that gender stereotyping in subject take-up is more evident in single-sex than in coeducational schools (or vice versa).

- **Is there a possibility that the unexplained gap in female/male pay for people with similar qualifications and experience is due to men being more aggressive (not in every case, but in a huge majority of cases (as can be seen by the huge majority of men convicted for violent crimes compared to women)) and more confrontational than most women and may bring these traits into wage negotiations?**

We are not aware of much research on this topic. However, one UK study showed that men with higher levels of aggression (measured when they were children) were no more likely than men with lower levels to enter higher status (salaried) jobs by age 42 (Jackson, 2006). Using the same dataset, Groves (2006) found that among women, higher levels of aggression were associated with lower pay levels.

- **Do we know why women don't have the same training opportunities as men? Is it simply because there are more women in part-time roles and there seems to be no progression available**

The picture is quite complex. Using the CSO Adult Education Survey of 2017, women are slightly more likely than men to have engaged in some lifelong learning in the previous year (this includes but is broader than workplace training). However, women are more likely to report unmet demand (partially or wholly) for lifelong learning and that family responsibilities are a constraint on access.

Questions asked during Meeting

Unions

- **How unionised are sectors that have a predominantly female workforce?**

In Ireland, union membership is much higher in the public sector (health, education, civil service etc) where women are over-represented.

Unionisation is low in low paid, private sectors jobs (e.g. accommodation/food sectors, retail, childcare) some of which are female-dominated. Union membership is also much lower among temporary workers, though this latter group is not predominantly female

- **Unions always push for better pay and conditions for members but the power of unions has been less in recent years**

Change in union power depends on how you measure it. National household surveys show that the proportion of workers who are members of trade unions has declined significantly from a peak of 45% in 1994 to 23% in 2017 (Visser database, also see Geary 2016).¹³

If we change the measure to union coverage¹⁴, which is the number of employees who work in workplaces that are covered by union agreements the proportion declined from 50% in 2003 to 47% in 2009, though this doesn't capture the collapse in social partnership (Visser Database). Adjusting for the possibility that some sectors or occupations are excluded from the right to bargain, union coverage declines from 44% in 2000, to 32% in 2014. There are also large public and private splits in this rate. The fall in coverage has mostly occurred in the private sector, see also Geary (2016).

Other researchers have tried to measure the amount of power that unions have in terms of influencing wage setting¹⁵. Their estimates suggest that union power over wage bargaining in Ireland has changed little since 1970 (an index of 0.29) when compared to their power in 2017 (an index of 0.31).

Legislation

- **Surely legislation can be directed to negate any gender-based disparity?**

The presentations have also highlighted that the gender inequalities in employment persists despite having robust equality legislation in place in Ireland that prohibits discrimination including equal pay for work of equal value, which extends coverage to those in different occupations working for the same employer, who exercise the same

¹³ <https://www.ictwss.org/downloads>. John Geary 2016 Economic-crisis-austerity-and-trade-union-responses-The-Irish-case in-comparative-perspective *European-Journal-of-Industrial-Relations*.

¹⁴ <https://www.ictwss.org/downloads>

¹⁵ <https://www.ictwss.org/downloads> CENTconf: Summary measure of formal authority of unions regarding wage setting at peak and sectoral level

level of skill, mental or physical effort, and responsibility in their jobs and work in the same conditions

Equality legislation provides a means for prosecuting breaches and provide general code of what is acceptable but existence of legislation itself does not ensure compliance. Taking a legal case in relation to discrimination is dependent upon an individual and there are many barriers to doing so – there are significant emotional, time and financial costs to the individual. Therefore, legal cases are seen as the tip of the iceberg.

Encouraging and supporting compliance is probably even more important than the threat of prosecution, this includes education, guidance for employers etc.

Legislation around pay transparency could encourage compliance, provide an insight into pay practices, and highlight disparities. It would also provide information that might be useful for taking legal cases.

However, there are many other factors involved that are important to reducing the gender pay gap e.g. gender stereotypes, occupational segregation, family policies, leave schemes, so a wide range of responses is needed.

- **Can legislation be introduced which makes it compulsory to have a trained Gender Equality Officer within every organisation that can intervene where inequalities appear to exist? Could this combined with guided collective bargaining particularly in low paid female dominated sectors be effective in closing the gender pay gap?**

As discussed above, many of the disparities in pay between women and men arise between occupations and organisations. Thus, while a Gender Equality Officer could influence work practices, they are unlikely to reduce pay disparities in isolation.

Minimum wage/living wage

- **The increase in the minimum I know for a fact that in the hospitality sector people do not get the minimum wage in fact I and millions of others have to fight for it. Why isn't it enforced that the company HAS TO GIVE IT? Also, if you increase the minimum wage small businesses will suffer how do you suggest to tackle this?**

I agree that ensuring compliance with minimum wage legislation is very important and that unions and the labour inspectorate play a key role here.

Options here include

- Enhancing the Trade Union rights
- Increased inspections of sectors where non-compliance is an issue and where bogus self-employment is more common (e.g. construction)
- Increased penalties through Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) - financial and reputational – any companies found in breach should be well publicised

There is a study of non-compliance based on the labour force survey by McGuinness et al 2020, but those who are most exploited (e.g. migrant workers from non-Eu countries) are unlikely to be picked up in the survey.

Compared to other minimum wage workers, non-compliance is greater for workers who are male, Irish, aged over 35, on temporary contracts and work on their own. Non-compliant minimum wage workers are also more likely to work in the domestic personnel sector and to hold childcare, personal care or agricultural occupations.¹⁶

Roles/Low Pay

- **Has the job classification system used in Ireland been examined for pay equity purposes?**

Job classification/evaluations are mostly carried within organisations and the methods used or results aren't available publicly. They are most common in the public sector, especially the HSE and are often supported by trade unions.

The public/private pay benchmarking body developed their own job evaluation scheme <https://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/benchmark.pdf> but this was not done for gender equality purposes.

Cases taken under equality legislation to establish work of equal value have considered skills, responsibilities, mental and physical effort.

It's very important that the classification systems themselves don't build in gender biases. ICTU (2004) provided some guidance on how to develop a gender sensitive job classification system https://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/gap_toolkit.pdf as did the European Commission (1996). Both documents stress the importance of including a range of job features/demands which capture the content of both predominantly male and predominantly female jobs so that both can be evaluated using a common standard, they also emphasize the need to give due credit to traditionally "female skills" such as caring, human relations skills, and manual dexterity.

¹⁶

<https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/VHSSYRANQFJAJGEED89/full?target=10.1080/13504851.2020.1711503>

A recent report on Pay Transparency within the EU <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/329c3e47-2bd8-11e7-9412-01aa75ed71a1> shows Ireland as a country in which the implementation of job evaluations systems in both private and public sectors is at a low level. The Netherlands and Sweden seem to have a high level of implementation.

In short, the job classification system in Ireland has not been subject to a critical gender-informed analysis and assessment and that would be quite an undertaking.

- **How does these figures effect parents who find themselves in a care position, from having a child with disabilities, many who weren't in low paid jobs, are there even figures on these numbers??**

The issue of those caring full time for those with disabilities will be discussed at the citizens assembly session in January. There is some information in Russell et al 2019 <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/BKMNEXT382.pdf>