

SUBMISSION FROM CLOSE THE GAP

Close the Gap is a partnership initiative whose project partners include Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

Close the Gap works with employers, economic development agencies and employees. The breadth of partnership recognises that equal pay is a productivity issue as well as an issue of fairness and equality, and that narrowing the gender pay gap would return aggregate productivity gains to the Scottish economy.

Close the Gap works with a range of organisations that are stakeholders in women's employment, including directly with employers and employer representative bodies. The project is exposed to a breadth of thinking on the part of policymakers and employers about women and the labour market, including perspectives on the regulatory context and interventions that have been designed to tackle the causes of the pay gap. It also works with policymakers across a range of issues, including occupational segregation, care, and women's entrepreneurship.

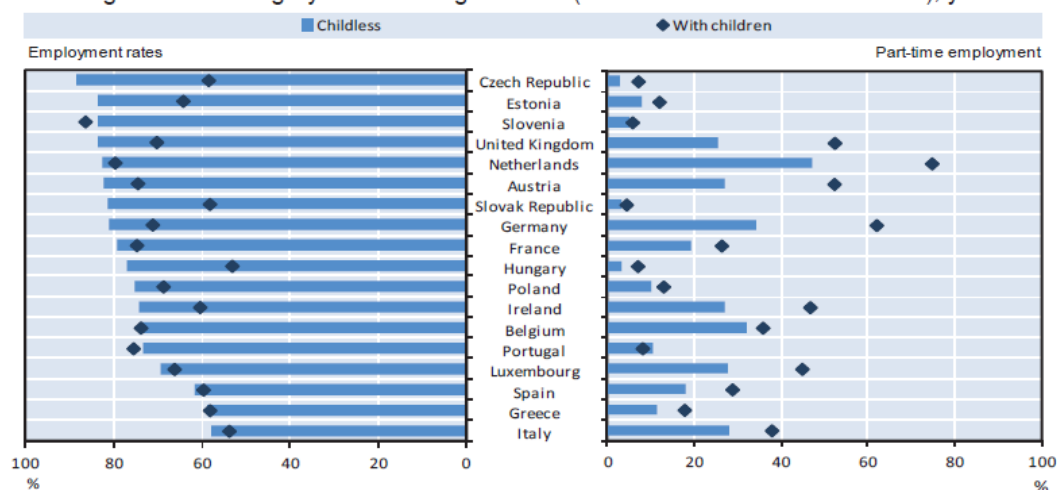
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1.0 Flexible working

Flexible working is a gendered issue because it is principally used as a method to reconcile work and family life. Women in Scotland, as elsewhere in Europe and across the world, still retain principal responsibility for care for children, sick people, and older people, and for most domestic labour.

The most common type of flexible working is part-time working, which is strongly associated with motherhood across most of the OECD countries.

Figure 3.2.2. Motherhood makes part-time work much more likely
Percentage in each category of women aged 25-54 (childless/with children under 15), year 2009

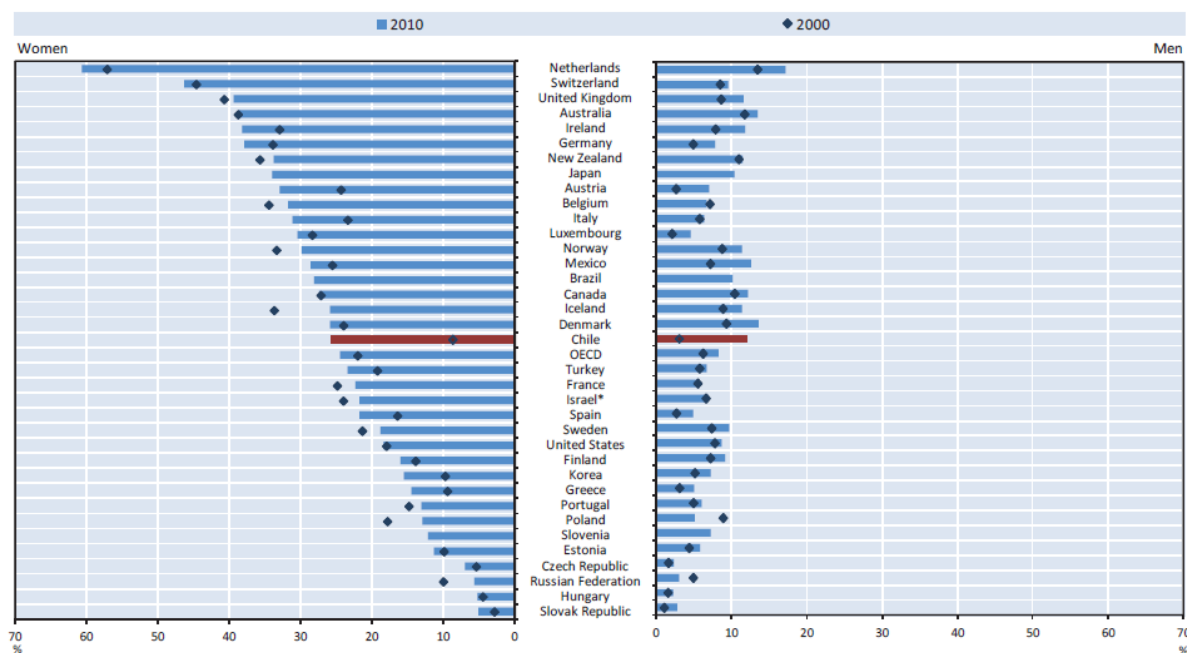


Taken from: OECD (2012) *Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship: Final Report to the MCM 2012* OECD: Paris

Patterns of participation in the formal labour market by mothers are influenced by a number of factors, including the shape of the school day (in many European countries there is a long break in the middle of the day); childcare provision (there are significantly lower rates of part-time working in countries which provide universal access to childcare); men’s engagement in domestic labour; and cultural norms around work.

Figure 3.2.1. There are large gender gaps in part-time work^a and full-time equivalent employment rates^b

Panel A. Percentage of men and women in part-time employment^a, 2000 and 2010



Across Europe, part-time work is more commonly found in certain occupational groups, including professional, services and sales, and unskilled workers. It is rare in senior managers, skilled workers, and machine operators¹.

Analysis of the prevalence of flexible working in the UK (often captured within other measures under the rubric ‘family friendly practices’) suggests that there has been a shift over time towards *formal* provision of flexibility². Over 95 per cent of employers in the UK offer at least one flexible working practice³, with three or more types of flexible working being offered by 97 per cent of public sector employers and 66 per cent of private sector employers⁴. The increase in the number of organisations with formal

¹ European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2007) *Gender and Working Conditions in the European Union* Eurofound, Dublin

² Department for Business, Enterprise, and Regulatory Reform (2007) *Reassessing the ‘Family-friendly Workplace’: Trends and Influences in Britain, 1998-2004* London: HMSO

³ Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills (2011) *Consultation on Modern Workplaces* London: HMSO

⁴ CBI/Harvey Nash (2011) *Navigating Choppy Waters: CBI/Harvey Nash Employment Trends Survey 2011* CBI: London.

flexible working policies, however, has not altered the part-time pay gap, or the proportion of women working part-time⁵.

Table 1: Numbers of men and women working part-time and full time in the UK

	MEN				WOMEN			
	Full-time	%	Part-time	%	Full-time	%	Part-time	%
Aug – Oct 2012	13,780	87	2,121	13	7,702	56	5,998	44
June – Aug 2012	13,733	86	2,142	14	7,729	56	5,986	44
March - May 2012	13,648	86	2,122	14	7,719	57	5,865	43
Dec – Feb 2012	13,565	87	2,074	13	7,668	57	5,865	43
Sept – Nov 2011	13,574	87	2,014	13	7,686	57	5,845	43
June – Aug 2011	13,620	87	1,958	13	7,698	57	5,825	43
March – May 2011	13,660	87	2,052	13	7,660	56	5,907	44

Source: ONS, Labour Market Statistics www.ons.gov.uk

This suggests that there has not been an increase in ‘good quality’, or higher paid, jobs being offered on a part-time basis, and that full-time work is still insufficiently flexible to enable women to work full-time. Close the Gap’s work with employers, including speaking to hundreds of women across the private and public sector about their own experience of work, suggests a gap between practice within organisations and the contents of formal equalities or flexible working policies.

2.1 Current challenges

Part-time working is widely used across Scotland as a way in which women can balance work and family life, and particularly their disproportionate share of care. 17 per cent of working women work part-time, compared with 4 per cent of working men⁶.

There is anecdotal evidence that flexible working arrangements, including part-time work, are less likely to be agreed as a result of labour shedding across the public and private sectors. Efficiency savings appear to have placed significant pressure on individual employees to deliver public services with reducing resources. Close the Gap carried out a piece of work with the STUC Women’s Committee to look at the impact of public sector spending cuts on the workforce⁷. This work, which included submitting freedom of information requests to every local authority in Scotland, revealed that local authorities generally do not keep centralised records on flexible working, and so

⁵ When comparing the part-time and full-time working figures in Table 1 to those in Grant, L., Yeandle, S., and L. Buckner (2005) *Working Below Potential: Women and Part-Time Work* EOC: Manchester

⁶ Scottish Government (2012) *Scotland's People Annual Report: Results from 2011 Scottish Household Survey* Scottish Government: Edinburgh

⁷ Close the Gap (2012) *Invisible Women: Employment Data Collection In Scottish Local Government* Close the Gap: Glasgow

cannot provide information on whether flexible working arrangements are decreasing or increasing in number. This aligns with Close the Gap's experience of working with individual public sector employers.

Within the private sector, there are a range of attitudes to part-time working at the enterprise level. Close the Gap has worked with large private sector companies in which only a tiny proportion of employees work part-time, and there is a strong cultural presumption against part-time working. Others are more positive about part-time working, and in which there is also more flexibility around work in other ways, for example homeworking. Although the challenge is smaller in the second type of organisation, progression is problematic for part-time workers. Despite most organisations having some kind of commitment in policy to part-time working, this rarely translates into the suite of measures that would encourage and enable part-time workers to apply for, and be appointed to, promoted posts. Employers appear to view part-time working as an accommodation to encourage retention, rather than as something positive that may attract talent. The lack of a quality part-time work recruitment market in London has been the recent subject of an investigation by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation⁸, and there is no reason to suppose that the quality part-time labour market in Scotland is more buoyant.

Joseph Rowntree did identify some evidence of a virtuous cycle, in which employers who have benefited from skilled and talented part-time workers are more positive about recruiting part-time workers. However, progress is painfully slow.

Current UK Government policy, including Universal Credit, describes itself as 'making work pay' for lower-skilled mothers. (This paper does not assess whether that is an accurate description of welfare reform.) There has been no focus on supporting mothers with skills that are not currently being utilised by quality part-time work.

2.2 Solutions

One of the final pieces of work undertaken by the Equal Opportunities Commission before its functions were included as part of the new Equality and Human Rights Commission, was an investigation into the transformation of work. Identifying that the UK was lagging international comparators in flexible working, it suggested that stakeholders reflect on the ways that work could be transformed, giving workers autonomy, and flexibility in time and space.

Currently, there is no mechanism by which employers can be required to offer work on a part-time basis, although many employees have legal rights to request to work flexibly. In practise, employers are able to deny such requests on a variety of grounds. In the absence of a better lever, solutions to the lack of part-time working may have a focus on persuading employers of the business case for employing people part-time; in supporting employers to design part-time jobs appropriately; in linking part-time

⁸ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2012) *Building a Sustainable Quality Part-Time Recruitment Market* JRF: London

working in the public sector to compliance with the public sector equality duty; and in building an evidence base of the benefits to an increase in quality part-time work to individual employers, specific economic sectors, and the economy as a whole.

Consideration could also be given to including issues around part-time and flexible working within public sector contracts, and within any investment made by Scotland's economic development agencies and other public investment in individual enterprises.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission, and any audit and scrutiny body that looks at equalities performance, or compliance with the public sector equality duty, may wish to consider whether the arrangements for approving, monitoring, and facilitating part-time working are adequate.

Universal childcare, available at low or no cost to families has the potential to transform women's participation in the labour market. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, there are a range of models of childcare that would substantially reduce the constraints on women's choice of paid work.

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