



# **Close the Gap response to the Scottish Government consultation on the review of the National Performance Framework National Outcomes June 2023**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Close the Gap is Scotland's policy advocacy organisation working on women's labour market participation. We have been working with policymakers, employers and unions for more than two decades to influence and enable action that will address the causes of women's labour market inequality. Much of our work is directed at gendering Scottish Government policy development so that women's experiences are visible and the inequalities they face addressed. We welcome Scottish Government's broadly good intentions on gender equality, but there is a lack of gender mainstreaming in policy development which prevents progress on women's equality and rights. This is compounded by a lack of good quality intersectional gender-sensitive, sex-disaggregated data, and where this is available it is often not used in policy development, and measurement and evaluation. We therefore welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the review of the National Performance Framework (NPF) national outcomes.

## **2. ANSWERS TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS**

### **Q3: Are there any changes you would propose to the wider National Performance Framework or set of National Indicators?**

Close the Gap's primary critique of the National Performance Framework (NPF) is that it is not well-gendered. It contains no metric which specifically relates to

gender equality.<sup>1</sup> Only two of the 81 indicators in the NPF relate specifically to women and girls<sup>2</sup>, and to view sex-disaggregated data about individual indicators requires a visit to the separate Equality Evidence Finder website.<sup>3</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are mapped onto the NPF outcomes, and while SDG5 focuses on gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, there is no read across to the NPF. It is not clear how commitments on SDG5 are influencing progress towards national outcomes. An academic analysis of SDG activity in Scotland also found the link between NPF and SDGs to be weak in relation to gender equality and its indicators.<sup>4</sup>

Scottish Government uses the NPF to focus its activities and spending in order to help meet national outcomes. It also works with the wider public sector to support it to work towards meeting the outcomes. Despite this focus on public sector delivery, the NPF does not engage with the public sector equality duty. The duty is the key legal framework for advancing equality in Scotland in Scotland's public sector. However, over the course of its 10 years in operation, it has failed to deliver the transformational change that was envisaged.<sup>5</sup> An important driver of the duty's ineffectiveness is the lack of strategic alignment to other national policies and frameworks such as the NPF. Performance assessments of the duty have highlighted the failure to implement the duty to mainstream gender<sup>6</sup>, and this is especially evident in the NPF in which consideration of gender is marginal. Inadequate data gathering and use by public bodies, which is necessary to inform service delivery and employment in the sector, has also been identified as a critical weakness.<sup>7</sup> Inadequate gender-sensitive, sex-disaggregated data, and intersectional analysis is a feature of the NPF indicators which is described in more detail below.

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<sup>1</sup> Long G (2019) *The SDGs and Scotland: a discussion paper and initial analysis*, available at:

<https://globalgoals.scot/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/SDG-Discussion-paper-February-2019.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> These are the gender pay gap and the difference between women's and men's labour market participation rates (called 'organisational gender balance').

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Government (2019) "Equality National Performance Framework Dashboard", available at

<https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-equality-evidence-finder/#equality-npf-top>

<sup>4</sup> Long, Graham et al (2019) *The SDGs and Scotland: A discussion paper and initial analysis*, available at:

<https://globalgoals.scot/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/SDG-Discussion-paper-February-2019.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Close the Gap (2022) *Response to Scottish Government consultation on the review of the operation of the public sector equality duty in Scotland*, available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Close-the-Gap-submission-to-the-SG-consultation-on-the-review-of-the-operation-of-the-PSED-in-Scotland.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Engender (2020) *What Works for Women: Improving gender mainstreaming in Scotland*, available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/WHAT-WORKS-FOR-WOMEN---improving-gender-mainstreaming-in-Scotland.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Coalition of Racial Equality and Rights (2018) *Effectiveness of the PSED Specific Duties in Scotland*, Equality and Human Rights Commission

There are clear consequences for the lack of gender mainstreaming in the NPF, and the lack of data which measures progress on women's equality. Without integrating a gender analysis, and improving the availability and use of intersectional data, it is likely that progress towards meeting NPF national outcomes will also exacerbate women's inequality. For example, the indicator on skill profile of the population is the proportion of adults aged 16-64 with low or no qualifications at SCQF level 4 or below. Modern Apprenticeships are an intermediate skills programme that acts as a key entry point to the labour market but spend on this programme is currently widening the gender pay gap because of the starkly different experiences for women and men.<sup>8</sup> If action to reduce the proportion of adults with low or no qualifications involve expansion of existing skills programmes, then these may intensify the occupational segregation that characterises Scotland's labour market.

There are a number of changes that Close the Gap would like to see in relation to the national indicators used within the NPF. In our response, we highlight cross-cutting challenges the national indicators which need to be addressed, and we also identify specific changes to individual indicators.

#### 1. Cross-cutting issues

There are a range of cross-cutting issues that prevent the national indicators from effectively measuring progress from a gendered perspective.

##### *a) Lack of gender and intersectional considerations*

It is evident that the current indicators are not well-gendered as there is a significant lack of recognition of gendered differences which shape women's lives and influence progress towards meeting national outcomes. This is both evident in the framing of indicators, for example, indicators relating to poverty do not recognise the gendered nature of poverty<sup>9</sup> and also in the lack of gender-sensitive, sex-disaggregated data across the indicators. As a result, the national indicators do not capture women's experiences, nor the inequalities

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<sup>8</sup> Close the Gap (2015) *Case Study: Modern Apprenticeships*, available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/GBA-Case-Study.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Close the Gap (2023) *Submission to the Social Justice and Social Security Committee inquiry into child poverty and parental employment*, available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/CtG-submission-SJSS-Committee-inquiry-into-child-poverty-and-parental-employment.pdf>

they face which need to be tackled in order to meet the national outcomes. This means that the NPF in its current form, and the set of indicators used, cannot account for gender inequalities.

Data for several of the indicators can be disaggregated by sex which is important for highlighting some gendered differences and measuring whether women are making progress to a similar extent to that of men. However, sex disaggregated data is not available for all the indicators meaning there can be no assessment of the gendered differences in participation and outcomes and the progress towards addressing this. There is also a lack of gender-sensitive data, for example around women's caring roles and their experiences of men's violence, which means that even where there is sex-disaggregated data for example, on the headline economic participation rate, this does not fully reflect how women engage with the economy.

In addition, there is a significant lack of intersectional data. This is a critical concern as it means the different experiences of women are not recognised or tracked in the national indicators or the wider framework. Intersectional data is vital as women are not a homogenous group, and their experiences are shaped by the intersecting and compounding inequalities that they face. The lack of intersectional gender-sensitive, sex-disaggregated data means that the indicators cannot provide an accurate picture of how progress is being made within Scotland. It is vital that nuanced information in relation to different groups of women is gathered in order to fully understand the challenges they face and how policy can be used to tackle this. As currently conceived the national indicators do not provide an accurate picture of women's diverse experiences. Intersectional gender analysis needs to be integrated into the identification of national indicators so women's experiences are taken into account when measuring progress.

In its 2019 report, the First Minister's National Advisory Council on women and girls recommended that Scottish Government allocate adequate resourcing to enable the collection and analysis of robust intersectional data.<sup>10</sup> Scottish Government accepted this recommendation in 2021 citing planned work to develop an equality and human rights mainstreaming strategy, which will be

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<sup>10</sup> National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (2019) *2019 Report and Recommendations*, available at: <https://www.generationequal.scot/app/uploads/2022/03/2019report.pdf>

underpinned by improvements in data collection and analysis.<sup>11</sup> Scottish Government's recently published equality evidence strategy 2025-2026<sup>12</sup> identifies "More robust and comprehensive data and evidence will be gathered on the intersecting characteristics of people in Scotland across a range of outcomes" as the first principle of the strategy. It makes commitments to enable the gathering and use of new intersectional data:

*"The Scottish Government and its partners already publish a range of equality evidence, but significant gaps remain. Throughout the period of this strategy, organisations will be supported to gather and publish new robust intersectional equality evidence in accordance with best practice. Actions will also be undertaken to strengthen the equality evidence base through the publication of more robust and comprehensive equality data from existing datasets. Additional research and data gathering will be carried out where evidence broken down by equality variables cannot be produced from existing datasets. The evidence collected will be proportional and fit for purpose, with priorities guided by user need."*

The review of the national outcomes and indicators should be aligned with, and informed by, Scottish Government commitments and ongoing work to improve the use of equality evidence and intersectional data. This policy coherence is critical to ensure that Scottish Government's wider ambitions on women's equality are not undermined.

*b) Unpaid care is not valued or recognised*

Women carry out the majority of unpaid work within the household which restricts their labour market opportunities<sup>13</sup>, contributes to the gender pay

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<sup>11</sup> Scottish Government (2021) *National Advisory Council on Women and Girls 2019 report and recommendations: Scottish Government response*, available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-governments-response-first-ministers-national-advisory-council-women-girls-nacwg-2019-report-recommendations/documents/>

<sup>12</sup> Scottish Government (2023) *Scotland's Equality Evidence Strategy*, available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-equality-evidence-strategy-2023-2025/documents/>

<sup>13</sup> Close the Gap (2018) *The Gender Penalty: Exploring the causes and solutions to Scotland's gender pay gap*, available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/The-Gender-Penalty-Feb-2018.pdf>

gap<sup>14</sup>, sustains gendered norms, and drives women's higher levels of poverty.<sup>15</sup> As such, it is a key cause of gender inequality<sup>16</sup>. Despite this, unpaid work does not feature within any of the national indicators, rendering it invisible in measurements of progress. It is vital that this is reflected and recognised within the national indicators, so that effective actions can be taken to reduce and redistribute unpaid work. The gendered nature of unpaid care is recognised in the Gender Equality Index, and this should inform the national indicators and wider framework.

That unpaid care is not included speaks to a broader problem around the invisibility of care within the traditional economy. It is not counted or valued when it is done in the home, and it is undervalued with care work is done in the labour market.<sup>17</sup> The invisibility of women's unpaid work, and the undervaluation of women's work in the NPF and its indicators is an indicator of policy incoherence which undermines Scottish Government commitments on tackling the gender pay gap.<sup>18</sup>

### c) Household measurements of poverty

The indicators use household measurements of poverty which mask gendered inequalities within households. Evidence has shown household measures of poverty are likely to hide the unequal distribution of income within a household, the significance of women's roles as money managers, and the known understanding that mothers will forgo their own needs in favour of their children.<sup>19,20</sup> Therefore, by using household measures, the indicators fail to capture women's experiences within households, which results in an inaccurate measure on the extent of poverty overall. Action to address poverty

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid*

<sup>15</sup> Close the Gap (2023) *Submission to the Social Justice and Social Security Committee inquiry into child poverty and parental employment*, available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/CtG-submission-SJSS-Committee-inquiry-into-child-poverty-and-parental-employment.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Elson, D. (2017) Recognize, Reduce and Redistribute Unpaid Care Work: How to Close the Gender Gap, *New Labour Forum*, **26**(2), pp.52-61.

<sup>17</sup> Grimshaw, D., and Rubery, J. (2007) *Undervaluing Women's Work*. European Work and Employment Research Centre, available at: [http://www.njl.nu/uploads/Paper\\_2007\\_Jill\\_Rubery.pdf](http://www.njl.nu/uploads/Paper_2007_Jill_Rubery.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Scottish Government (2019) *A Fairer Scotland for Women: Scotland's gender pay gap action plan*, available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-women-gender-pay-gap-action-plan/>

<sup>19</sup> Daly, M., Kelly, G., Dermott, E., and Pantazis, C. (2012). *Intra-Household Poverty*. PSE UK, available at: [file:///C:/Users/ibrown/Downloads/Conceptual%20note%20No.5%20-%20Intra%20Household%20Issues%20\(Daly%20et%20al,%20April%202012\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/ibrown/Downloads/Conceptual%20note%20No.5%20-%20Intra%20Household%20Issues%20(Daly%20et%20al,%20April%202012).pdf)

<sup>20</sup> James, C. (2018) *Hidden Women: A Feminist Critique of Poverty Measurements*, available at: <https://www.ppesydney.net/hidden-women-a-feminist-critique-of-poverty-measurement/>

that is measured using these indicators will therefore be inadequate to determine progress on women's poverty.

Intra-household measures of poverty are important as they recognise the gendered power dynamics that place women at a disadvantage due to an unequal sharing of resources. Women are less likely to have an independent income and more likely to be on a lower income than a male partner. This power dynamic needs to be considered in measures of poverty, as it drives women's financial dependence, and makes it more difficult for women to leave abusive relationships. As such, Close the Gap recommends the use of poverty measurement metrics that are based on individuals rather than households.

## 2. Children and Young People

The Child Material Deprivation indicator measures the percentage of children in combined material deprivation and low income after housing costs. This is an important measure of poverty as it goes beyond simply looking at income measures and includes material aspects of poverty, thus providing a more in-depth picture of children's deprivation. There are several disaggregations available for this indicator, including ethnicity, disability of a household member and age of children. However, it does not include sex as this is viewed as not relevant. This is concerning as without gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data there is no way of understanding the gendered differences in children and young people's lives.

The indicator does include a disaggregation by household type, which includes data breakdowns for lone-parent or not lone-parent households, however again, it does not identify whether these are male or female-headed households. Considering women comprise 90% of lone parents in Scotland, and women's poverty is inextricably linked to children's poverty<sup>21</sup>, the data gaps data are concerning. The challenges faced by lone parents are particularly acute for lone mothers who face a set of compounding inequalities which exacerbates their experiences of poverty. In addition, research has shown that targeting mothers through poverty alleviating policies has a significant (positive) impact on children. Therefore, tackling women's poverty is key to

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<sup>21</sup> Close the Gap (2023) *Submission to the Social Justice and Social Security Committee inquiry into child poverty and parental employment*, available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/CtG-submission-SJSS-Committee-inquiry-into-child-poverty-and-parental-employment.pdf>

tackling children's poverty. It is therefore crucial that measures to tackle child material deprivation should be developed with a gendered lens. As such, this indicator could be improved by embedding gender considerations fully, and by providing intersectional gender-sensitive, sex-disaggregated data.

### 3. Economy

There are several indicators within the national outcome for the economy that need to take account of women's experiences. There is a lack of gender considerations across economic indicators, which obscures gender inequalities within these areas, and therefore reinforces them.

#### *a) Productivity*

The productivity indicator measures the rank of Scotland's productivity against other OECD countries. This is a standardised measurement, and as such, cannot be disaggregated by any protected characteristics. However, measures of productivity do not take unpaid care or the care economy into account.<sup>22</sup> As unpaid care is predominately carried out by women, this lack of recognition has a gendered impact. Recognising the care economy as productive labour would increase levels of national productivity.<sup>23</sup> Although it is not possible to introduce unpaid work into measures of productivity due to the standardised formula, Scottish Government should integrate a recognition of unpaid care into indicators and the wider framework. Recognising the productivity output of unpaid care is essential to revaluing care work and recognise its economic value.

#### *b) Economic Growth*

The economic growth indicator uses GDP to measure the growth rate against previous years. Like that of productivity, it is a globally standardised measure, and therefore cannot be disaggregated by any protected characteristics. However, GDP has been extensively critiqued for ignoring women's unpaid work and their contributions to the economy, as it lies outside the boundary of

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<sup>22</sup> Rojas-Ortiz, A, J, J. (2022) *Care economy: an opportunity to create jobs and close the gender gap*, available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/05/care-economy-gender-gap-davos22/>

<sup>23</sup> Akram-Lodhi, A. H. (2023) *What's love got to do with it: Gender and the productivity paradox in Scotland*. 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Ailsa McKay Memorial Lecture



production.<sup>24</sup> GDP calculations do not include any measure of unpaid work, which renders much of the work done by women invisible and reinforces the undervaluation of care work. This in turn can reinforce gender inequalities in care and proliferate gendered norms and expectations. Feminist economists have long argued that care is an important part of the economy and should be measured.<sup>25</sup> Whilst the Scottish Government may not be able to change the methodology used to calculate GDP, it can and should recognise the economic value of unpaid care, and how it supports the wider economy.

### *c) Income Inequality*

The indicator for income inequality is measured using the Palma Ratio (income share of the top 10% divided by the income share of the bottom 40%). Again, as this is an internationally used measurement, there is a limited number of disaggregations available. In its current formulation, data is disaggregated at the household level. This is problematic as it hides gendered differences within households in relation to distribution of income and resources, as well as inequalities between women and men more generally. Income inequality is strongly associated with gender inequality and is driven by unequal labour force participation and the subsequent lower earnings for women associated with this.<sup>26</sup> Without using a gender lens to develop measures of income inequality, gendered differentials are likely to be hidden, which obscures the extent of the problem, failing to provide an accurate picture on progress. The design of measures of income inequality need to better engage with gender, in order that gender differences are being fully captured and monitored.

## 4. Education

Education indicators capture data across various aspects of the education system, including educational attainment and in skill profiles. The indicators

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<sup>24</sup> Close the Gap and Engender (2020) *Gender and Economic Recovery*, available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Gender--Economic-Recovery---Engender-and-Close-the-Gap.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Thomson, E. (2020) *Gender and Inclusive Growth – Making Inclusive Growth Work for Women in Scotland*, Close the Gap, available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Gender-and-Inclusive-Growth---Making-inclusive-growth-work-for-women-in-Scotland.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> International Monetary Fund (2015) *Gender and Income Inequality* available at: [https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2015/sdn1520\\_info.pdf](https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2015/sdn1520_info.pdf)

within this category are not well-gendered and overall do not consider gendered differences within educational settings.

#### *a) Educational Attainment*

The educational attainment indicator is made up of seven sub-indicators relating to key stages in primary and secondary education. This indicator can be disaggregated by ethnic group, SIMD quintile and urban/rural divide, but not sex. This is a concern as gendered differences in education are well-known.<sup>27</sup> The indicator does not provide information on differences in attainment between boys and girls, which is an issue as girls tend to have higher educational attainment than boys, however, these do not translate into better labour market prospects.<sup>28</sup> Of particular concern is the lack of recognition of gender segregation in subject choice, which is driven by gender stereotypes and norms. Monitoring and addressing subject segregation is crucial, as it reflects and reinforces patterns of occupational segregation and gender inequality within the labour market, which have long-term impacts on women.

#### *b) Young People's Participation*

The young people's participation indicator measures the percentage of 16-19 years olds that are currently in education, employment or training. Data for this indicator can be disaggregated by sex, which is important as it shows gendered differences in participation. However, this high-level measure only provides a partial view of young women's experiences. Additionally, data can also be disaggregated by ethnic group and disability, but these disaggregations cannot be combined with the sex disaggregated data, meaning there is no intersectional data available. As already mentioned, this is concerning, as the lack of intersectional data means challenges to participation faced by specific groups of women (e.g. young disabled women, or young Black women) are not visible.

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<sup>27</sup> NACWG (2019) National Advisory Council on Women and Girls: Monthly Spotlight: Women and Girls in Education, available at:

<https://onescotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NACWG-Education-ASD-content.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

Headline participation data also masks gendered differences in the types of education, employment or training young women and men are undertaking. Evidence has shown young women are more likely to be in education, whilst young men are more likely to be in training or employment<sup>29</sup> and that education, employment and training opportunities are characterised by occupational segregation. The indicators should take account of occupational segregation in education, employment and training as this is directly relevant to gendered differences in labour market outcomes, income inequality, and poverty.

### *c) Skill Profile of the Population*

The skill profile of the population indicator measures the proportion of adults (aged 16-64) with low or no qualifications at SCQF level 4 or below. Data can be disaggregated by sex, as well as age, disability, SIMD quintile and ethnic group. However, like other indicators, there is no intersectional data available. This is problematic as it means there can be no comparison of the skill profiles of different groups of women, meaning there is only a partial picture of the of the population available. In addition, the indicator does not take account of gendered differences in skills profiles, or why there has been a faster rate of decline for women in recent years. Integrating intersectional data into this indicator would address this.

### *d) Skills Underutilisation*

The skills underutilisation indicator measures the proportion of establishments with at least one employee with skills and qualifications more advanced than required for their current role. Currently, there is no gender-sensitive, sex-disaggregated data on this which is a concern, as it is well-recorded that a high proportion of women are underemployed.<sup>30</sup> Due to their role as primary caregivers, the lack of affordable and accessible childcare, their experience of men's violence, and the lack of good-quality part-time work, women often end

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<sup>29</sup> NACWG (2019) National Advisory Council on Women and Girls: Monthly Spotlight: Women and Girls in Education, available at:

<https://onescotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NACWG-Education-ASD-content.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Close the Gap (2023) *Submission to the Social Justice and Social Security Committee inquiry into child poverty and parental employment*, available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/CtG-submission-SJSS-Committee-inquiry-into-child-poverty-and-parental-employment.pdf>

up taking jobs that are below their skill and qualification level.<sup>31</sup> Without including gender-sensitive, sex-disaggregated data within this indicator, the underutilisation of women's skills will not be recognised, and will sustain gendered labour market inequalities. Intersectional data should also be made available for skills underutilisation, as research has shown disabled<sup>32</sup> and racially minoritised women<sup>33</sup> are more likely to be in roles that underutilise their skills.

## 5. Fair Work and Business

### a) *Economic Participation*

The economic participation indicator measures the gap between Scotland's employment rate and the rate of the top performing country in the UK. There is sex-disaggregated data available for this indicator, however, there is no intersectional data available. This is a concern, as it means there is no way of measuring the economic participation of different groups of women, who may experience intersecting and compounding inequalities which constrains their participation. For example, UK level data has shown that racially minoritised<sup>34</sup> and disabled women<sup>35</sup> have lower employment rates. In addition, this indicator compares Scotland's employment rate to that of the top performing country in the UK.

The headline employment rate is a poor measure of women's economic participation as it does not reflect the constraints around their engagement with the labour market. There is no data on type of participation, for example part-time or full-time employment. Considering women in Scotland make up

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<sup>31</sup> Close the Gap (2023) *Close the Gap briefing for Members' Business on Increasing the Participation of Women and Girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics*, available at:

<https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Close-the-Gap-briefing-for-Members-Business---Increasing-Women-and-Girls-Participation-in-STEM-June-2023.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Women's Budget Group (2018) *Disabled Women and Austerity*, available at: <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Disabled-women-October-2018-w-cover-2.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Close the Gap (2019) *Still Not Visible. Research on Black and minority ethnic women's experience of employment in Scotland*, available at: [https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/1557499847\\_Still-Not-Visible.pdf](https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/1557499847_Still-Not-Visible.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2017) *Poverty and Ethnicity in the Labour Market*, available at: [https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/files-research/web\\_poverty\\_ethnicity\\_round\\_up\\_amend.pdf](https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/files-research/web_poverty_ethnicity_round_up_amend.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> TUC (2020) *Disability pay and employability gaps 2020*, available at: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/disability-pay-and-employment-gaps-2020>

three-quarters of part-time workers,<sup>36</sup> and part-time work is a known driver of gender inequality, not including this breakdown in the indicator hides the extent of labour market inequalities. In order to have an accurate and representative picture of labour market participation, it is crucial that data on full-time and part-time work be included.

#### *b) Employees on the Living Wage*

This indicator measures the percentage of workers who earn less than the living wage and includes sex-disaggregated data. This is important because women are the majority of low-paid workers and workers earning below the living wage. There is however no intersectional data available for this indicator, and no breakdown of the pattern of work for those earning less than the living wage, for example part-time employees. This is particularly important as disabled women, racially minoritised women, and women who are single parents are more likely to be paid below the living wage, and part-time work is typically characterised by low pay. Research from Living Wage Scotland has shown women in part-time roles are most likely to benefit from a pay increase to the Living Wage.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, it is crucial that this indicator includes intersectional data and further disaggregates by type of work (part-time and full-time) to provide accurate and representative information.

#### *c) Gender Pay Gap*

The measure of the gender pay gap uses the full-time hourly pay gap. This is not the most accurate measure of gender differences in pay, as it ignores the experiences of around 40% of women in the labour market, women who work part-time, often in low-paid jobs. It is therefore an unhelpful measure of the gender pay gap, and masks the extent of women's labour market inequality.

In addition, while there is age-disaggregated data available, which shows the difference in the pay gap across age groups, there is a significant lack of intersectional data. Therefore, the data and subsequent analysis does not

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<sup>36</sup> Brett, M., and Macfarlane, L. (2022) *Women, Work and Wealth in Scotland's changing economy 2022*. Scottish Women's Budget Group, available at: <https://www.swbg.org.uk/content/publications/Women-Work-Wealth-in-a-changing-economy-report.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Jones, G. (2019) *Women benefit from Living Wage Expansion*, available at: <https://tfn.scot/news/women-benefit-from-living-wage-expansion>

consider or acknowledge how the gender pay gap is different for racially minoritised<sup>38</sup> and disabled women<sup>39</sup>. Intersectional pay gap data is only available at the UK level but shows the pay gap is typically wider for women with intersecting inequalities.<sup>40</sup> Without intersectional data, the pay gap indicator cannot show a representative picture of the extent of the pay gap in Scotland, which hinders the ability to accurately measure progress in tackling it.

#### *d) Contractually Secure Work*

The contractually secure work indicator measures the proportion of employees (aged 16-64) who have a permanent contract. This indicator can be broken down by various protected characteristics, including gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion and SIMD quintile. Despite these disaggregations, there are no intersectional breakdowns available, which is a concern as it obscures how contractually secure work varies between groups of women. For example, disabled women<sup>41</sup> and racially minoritised women<sup>42</sup> who are more likely to be in insecure work. Without this intersectional data, the measure of secure work is not providing an accurate picture of women's experiences.

#### *e) Gender Balance in Organisations*

The name of this indicator is misleading as it suggests the tracking of what is happening at the organisational level. It is however focussed on gendered differences in employment rates which in itself is a flawed measure of women's equality in the labour market. This is because it fails to recognise the various factors that influence gendered patterns of employment, such as

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<sup>38</sup> Close the Gap (2019) *Still Not Visible. Research on Black and minority ethnic women's experience of employment in Scotland*, available at: [https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/1557499847\\_Still-Not-Visible.pdf](https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/1557499847_Still-Not-Visible.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> Women's Budget Group (2018) *Disabled Women and Austerity*, available at: <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Disabled-women-October-2018-w-cover-2.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Close the Gap (2022) *Gender Pay Gap Statistics, March 2022*, available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Gender-pay-gap-statistics-paper-2022.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Close the Gap (2018) *Close the Gap response to the Scottish Government's consultation on Increasing the Employment of Disabled People in the Public Sector*, available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Close-the-Gap-Response-to-Consultation-on-Increasing-Employment-of-Disabled-People.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> Close the Gap (2019) *Still Not Visible: Research on Black and minority ethnic women's experiences of employment in Scotland*, available at: [https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/1557499847\\_Still-Not-Visible.pdf](https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/1557499847_Still-Not-Visible.pdf)

occupational segregation, inflexible work, and women's caring responsibilities.<sup>43</sup> Headline employment rate data provides a very limited understanding of women's equality, and masks the experiences of disabled women and racially minoritised women who are less likely to be employed. In addition, disaggregations are available for age, disability, ethnicity, SIMD quintile and religion, meaning there is some intersectional data available, which provides a somewhat better understanding of employment gaps. However, from the analysis it is not entirely clear what the comparator group is for each group, i.e. whether the employment gap for disabled women is that compared with disabled men, non-disabled women or non-disabled men.

## 6. Poverty

The poverty outcomes measure the progress being made in tackling various elements of poverty in Scotland. The indicators used only provide a narrow look at poverty, as the majority focus on income measures of poverty. Whilst these are important, in order to have an in-depth understanding of the extent of poverty there needs to be non-income dimensions of poverty included, such as measures of general health, living standards and housing deprivation.<sup>44</sup>

### *a) Relative Poverty (after housing costs)*

The relative poverty (after housing costs) indicator measures the proportion of individuals living in private households with equivalised income of less than 60% of the UK median after housing costs – this is the standard UK measure of relative poverty (after housing costs). Data can be disaggregated by sex, age, disability and urban/rural classification, however, like other indicators they cannot be combined to provide an intersectional view. This is concerning as women do not experience poverty in the same way, and an intersectional perspective is required to provide a full understanding of the ways in which different groups of women are experiencing poverty.

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<sup>43</sup> Close the Gap (2017) *Submission to the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee inquiry into the gender pay gap*, available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Close-the-Gap-submission-to-pay-gap-inquiry.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> Vieira, H (2018) *How poor is poor? The many dimensions of poverty in the UK*. London School of Economics, available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/businessreview/2018/03/19/how-poor-is-poor-the-many-dimensions-of-poverty-in-the-uk/>

Gender is disaggregated along household make up, which includes lone fathers and mothers, single female and male pensioners, and single working-age men and women with no dependents. Despite data showing clear gendered differences in poverty across these categories, there does not appear to be any substantial recognition of the gendered nature of poverty. This is highly concerning as women experience higher levels of poverty, and women's poverty is interlinked with child poverty.<sup>45</sup> Without recognising the gendered nature of poverty, actions to address poverty will reinforce women's inequalities and further entrench them in poverty. Addressing poverty requires a gender-lens to ensure women are not left behind and actions to address poverty must tackle women's low pay, the undervaluation of women's work, inflexible work, gender norms around caring roles, and violence against women.

### *b) Cost of Living*

Cost of living measures the percentage of net income spent on housing, fuel and food by households in Scotland, and is measured using a three-year rolling average. It can be disaggregated by sex, SIMD quintile, marital status, households with children, ethnicity, household make up, and age. However, there is no intersectional data available. This is deeply concerning as the cost of living crisis is hitting women from marginalised communities, such as disabled women, single parents and racially minoritised women the hardest.<sup>46</sup> Although the indicator does include sex-disaggregated data, there is an overall lack of gender considerations of the cost of living. It does not recognise women face greater constraints in managing their living costs due to their lower incomes, higher instances of poverty and greater levels of economic inactivity due to caring responsibilities. This has driven the disproportionate impact of the cost of living crisis on women.<sup>47</sup> There needs to be a gender analysis of the cost of living measure to ensure that women's experiences are measured, and action is taken to address the inequality they face.

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<sup>45</sup> Close the Gap (2023) *Submission to the Social Justice and Social Security Committee inquiry into child poverty and parental employment*. Available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/CtG-submission-SJSS-Committee-inquiry-into-child-poverty-and-parental-employment.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Engender (2022) *Women & the Cost of Living. A Crisis of Deepening Inequality*. Available at:

<https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/Women-and-the-cost-of-living---updated-copy.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Close the Gap (2023) *Briefing for Scottish Government Debate: Supporting Scotland with Cost of Living and Reducing Child Poverty*. Available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Close-the-Gap-briefing-for-Scottish-Government-Debate---Cost-of-living-and-child-poverty-April-2023.pdf>



### *c) Persistent Poverty*

The persistent poverty indicator measures the proportion of people in Scotland living in relative poverty (after housing costs) for three out of the last four years. Data within this indicator can only be broken down by age (children, pensioners, and working-age adults) and is not gendered. This means there is no recognition of the gendered nature of poverty, that female pensioners have higher instances of poverty than male pensioners, or that children's poverty is inextricably linked to women's poverty.<sup>48</sup>

This then hides the full extent of poverty in Scotland. A gendered lens must be applied to analysis of, and action on, persistent poverty. Recognising the feminisation of poverty is key to solving it, as women in poverty face different challenges and barriers than men. Accounting for these differences is important in order to create gender-sensitive approaches to solving poverty.

There is no intersectional data available within this measure, which means the experience of persistent poverty for different groups of women is not visible. This is concerning as racially minoritised women, older women and disabled women are more likely to be living in poverty than other groups,<sup>49</sup> and their experience of poverty is compounded by their intersecting inequalities. An intersectional gendered lens is required to recognise these differences.

#### **Q4: What impact does the current National Outcomes have on your work?**

The intention of the national outcomes is to describe the kind of Scotland the NPF aims to create. There is one outcome that speaks to women's equality and rights: "We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination". This siloing of equality and human rights in the national outcomes exemplifies the failure to mainstream gender in the NPF. It replicates other flawed approaches to equality, whereby the inclusion of equality is an addendum rather than an integrated element which both has a

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<sup>48</sup> Close the Gap (2023) *Submission to the Social Justice and Social Security Committee inquiry into child poverty and parental employment*, available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/CtG-submission-SJSS-Committee-inquiry-into-child-poverty-and-parental-employment.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> Close the Gap (2023) *Briefing for Scottish Government Debate: Supporting Scotland with Cost of Living and Reducing Child Poverty*, available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Close-the-Gap-briefing-for-Scottish-Government-Debate---Cost-of-living-and-child-poverty-April-2023.pdf>

specific focus and is also weaved throughout.

Scottish Government has broadly good intentions around women's equality. However, this bolt-on approach to equality in the NPF compounds the lack of gender analysis in policy development by Government and its delivery agencies. Priorities for policy focus and investment reflect the design of the national outcomes, which means that action on women's equality in many areas becomes marginalised. The lack of policy coherence is a critical challenge for women's equality in Scotland.

In 2018, a new budget review process was agreed following recommendations from the Budget Process Review Group. The group recommended that the NPF "is used more widely by Parliament and its committees in evaluating the impact of previous budgets" and in particular that subject committees should revisit budget documents and assess the extent to which previous spending plans are delivering the national outcomes"<sup>50</sup>. The Finance and Constitution Committee developed budget guidance for the Parliament's subject committees emphasising the importance of performance information to effective budget scrutiny.<sup>51</sup> There is one question on equality impact assessment during the decision-making process, but there are no specific questions or focus on whether budget decisions are advancing women's equality. This is not an unexpected given that the NPF is weak on gender equality, and reinforces the need for gender to be integrated into outcomes and indicators.

Close the Gap works to influence Scottish Government policy around women's labour market equality. Since Scottish Government policy is designed to meet national outcomes, and success is measured using the national indicators, the NPF has an impact on Close the Gap's work. That women's equality is restricted to a wider outcomes on equality and human rights is problematic. Gender needs to be mainstreamed in the national outcomes, so that the experiences of women are visible, and action to progress gender equality is prioritised. The current set of indicators is entirely insufficient to measure

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<sup>50</sup> Scottish Parliament (2017) *Budget Process Review Group: Final report 20 June 2017*, available at: [https://archive2021.parliament.scot/S5\\_Finance/Reports/BPRG\\_-\\_Final\\_Report\\_30.06.17.pdf](https://archive2021.parliament.scot/S5_Finance/Reports/BPRG_-_Final_Report_30.06.17.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Scottish Parliament (2019) *The National Performance Framework and budget scrutiny*, available at: <https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdnep.azureedge.net/published/2019/6/21/The-National-Performance-Framework-and-budget-scrutiny-2/SB%2019-43.pdf>

progress on women's equality. The indicators do not adequately take account of the inequalities women face, and there is a significant lack of intersectional gender-sensitive, sex-disaggregated data to track change. The outcomes and indicators need to be redeveloped with a gender lens, and action taken to ensure that those used are accurately capturing women's lived experience. If this is not done, gender will continue to be a marginal consideration, with policy development happening that does not meet women's diverse needs.