



Gender Budget Watchdog Network

for a gender equal region



Austrian
Development
Agency



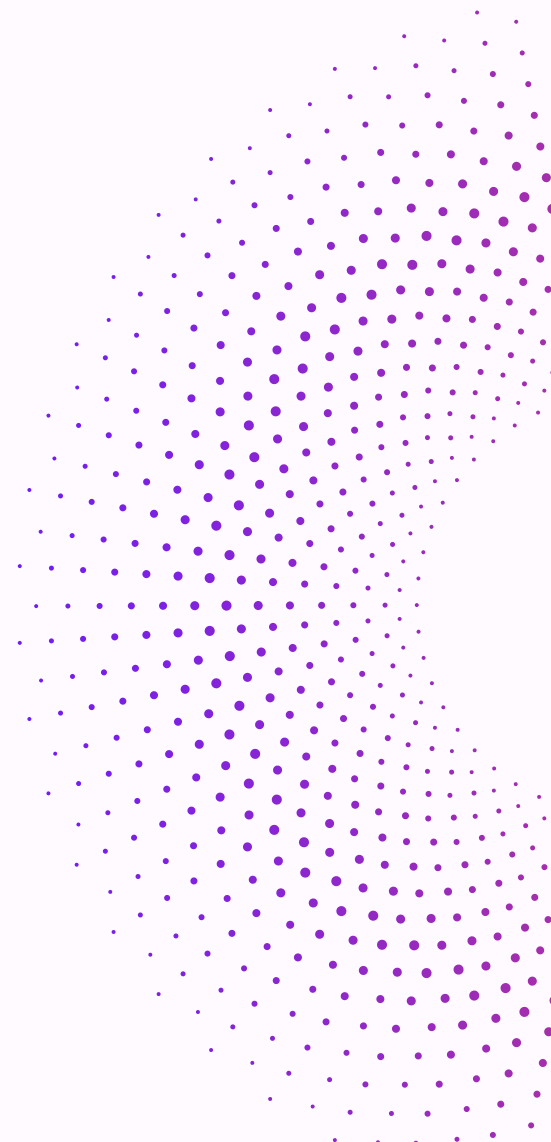
Sverige

Webinar Report

Mind the gap: GRB as the key to equal pay

The webinar, which brought together experts, activists, and thought leaders, focused on the persistent and complex issue of gender inequality, particularly the gender pay gap. The discussion was framed by diverse national experiences, with a specific focus on the United Kingdom's policy landscape and its implications for women's rights. The key issues raised revolved around the inadequacy of the gender pay gap as a metric for addressing broader gender inequalities, the intersectionality of gender issues, and the systemic barriers that continue to undermine women's economic independence.

The participants emphasized that while the gender pay gap is a widely discussed statistic, it does not capture the full spectrum of gender-based inequalities in the workforce and the wider economy. This report seeks to synthesize the main points raised during the webinar, while also highlighting the urgent need for more comprehensive measures to address the systemic disadvantages faced by women globally.





Key Insights and Issues Addressed

1. Limitations of the Gender Pay Gap Statistic

A significant portion of the discussion centered on the limitations of the gender pay gap as a reliable and comprehensive measure of gender inequality. The gender pay gap is traditionally defined as the difference in average hourly pay (including overtime and bonuses) between men and women. However, the speakers noted that this statistic fails to capture a variety of critical factors, including:

Unpaid Care Work: The contributions women make to unpaid care work, such as childcare, eldercare, and household tasks, are not reflected in the gender pay gap statistic. These responsibilities often limit women's ability to work full-time or pursue high-paying careers, yet they are not accounted for in standard income metrics.

Part-time and Self-employment Disparities: Women are more likely than men to be engaged in part-time or self-employed work, often due to caregiving responsibilities. However, these work arrangements are not typically included in official gender pay gap data, despite the fact that part-time and self-employed women face significant pay disparities.

Overtime and Bonus Pay: Women are less likely to be assigned overtime hours or to receive bonuses, which contribute to a substantial portion of income for many workers. These gendered differences in access to overtime pay and bonuses are largely ignored when calculating the gender pay gap.

Distribution Issues: The gender pay gap statistic, especially when presented as a median, may obscure the underlying distributional problems. For instance, even if the median gender pay gap is narrow, there may still be significant gendered inequalities in higher-paying sectors, with men disproportionately occupying the highest-paying positions.

In light of these limitations, the speakers argued that the gender pay gap statistic cannot be relied upon as the sole metric for evaluating gender inequality. It is necessary to adopt a more nuanced approach that incorporates a wider range of factors affecting women's economic status.

2. Gender Pay Gap versus Equal Pay for Equal Work

Another key point raised was the distinction between the gender pay gap and the concept of equal pay for equal work. While the principle of equal pay for equal work is enshrined in law in many countries, including the UK, the gender pay gap statistic often becomes conflated with this concept. This confusion undermines efforts to address deeper structural issues of gender inequality. Equal pay for equal work aims to ensure that men and women are paid the same for performing the same tasks under similar conditions, but it does not address the broader disparities in career opportunities, work hours, and access to higher-paying jobs that contribute to the overall gender pay gap.



Moreover, the focus on equal pay for equal work often neglects issues like the "glass ceiling" and the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, which perpetuate gendered income disparities across industries.

Critical Gaps and Overlooked Issues

Intersectionality: Understanding Diverse Women's Experiences

Intersectionality emerged as a central theme in the discussion. The speakers underscored the need to move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach to gender equality and instead consider how other factors—such as race, disability, age, and socioeconomic status—intersect with gender to shape women's experiences in the workforce and beyond.

For example, disabled women often face compounded challenges, both in terms of access to employment and workplace accommodations, as well as in terms of pay disparities. Similarly, women from minority ethnic backgrounds often experience additional barriers to career advancement, leading to even greater pay gaps compared to their white counterparts. Without collecting and analyzing intersectional data, policymakers will be unable to design targeted interventions that address the specific needs of these groups.

t

Broader Economic Factors Beyond Pay

The discussion also illuminated the fact that the gender pay gap statistic does not address other critical economic factors that disproportionately affect women:

- **Housing Affordability:** It was noted that no woman in the UK earning a median salary can afford to rent a two-bedroom property alone. This highlights the broader economic pressures that women face, particularly single mothers, and underscores the need for affordable housing policies that consider the unique economic challenges women face.
- **Healthcare Inequities:** Women's health is another area where gendered disparities persist. Studies show that women often experience different health outcomes compared to men, which in turn impacts their ability to participate in the workforce. These health disparities, if left unaddressed, further widen the economic divide between men and women.
- **Caregiving Responsibilities:** Women remain the primary caregivers in most societies, and caregiving duties are often not recognized or compensated. The speakers pointed out that cuts to support for caregivers—particularly in the form of benefits—disproportionately affect women, as they are more likely to take on caregiving responsibilities. This lack of support not only reinforces gender inequality but also impacts women's ability to participate fully in the labor market.



3. Policy and Advocacy for Structural Change

The conversation also delved into the need for comprehensive policy interventions to address these issues. In the UK, the government has committed to devolving powers to local authorities, which presents a significant opportunity for gender-sensitive policymaking at the local level. The list of priorities for devolution includes transport, employment support, housing, economic development, and health and well-being—all areas where gender inequalities are deeply entrenched.

Key policy recommendations included:

- **Gender-Sensitive Transport Systems:** Transport infrastructure should be designed with the needs of women in mind, particularly those who are caregivers. Policies should ensure that women have access to affordable and reliable transportation, especially for care-related journeys.
- **Affordable Housing Initiatives:** Women should have access to affordable housing that allows them to live near their places of work. This is particularly important for single mothers who may be financially strained and unable to relocate for work opportunities.
- **Investment in Women's Health:** There needs to be greater investment in women's health, with an emphasis on addressing the specific health challenges that women face. Gender-sensitive healthcare policies can improve women's ability to participate in the workforce and achieve economic independence.
- **Reforming Carers' Support Systems:** Advocacy for increased support for caregivers was a significant point of discussion. The lack of adequate support for women who perform unpaid caregiving work contributes to their exclusion from the formal workforce and exacerbates the gender pay gap.

4. The Importance of Data Collection and Advocacy

A notable example from North Macedonia highlighted the gendered nature of car ownership and transportation. In North Macedonia, 85% of all cars are owned by men, which has profound implications for women's mobility and access to economic opportunities.

The speakers stressed the importance of advocating for better data collection on gendered disparities, as such data can help inform policy decisions and drive systemic change.

Additionally, they discussed the need for more accurate and inclusive data on other aspects of women's lives, such as caregiving responsibilities, health outcomes, and employment patterns. Without this data, policymakers are unable to design policies that genuinely address the needs of women.



Gender Budget Watchdog Network

for a gender equal region



Austrian
Development
Agency



Sverige

Conclusion

The webinar underscored the pressing need to move beyond the gender pay gap statistic and adopt a more holistic and intersectional approach to addressing gender inequality. The gender pay gap, while an important starting point, fails to capture the full range of factors that affect women's economic independence and quality of life. Issues such as unpaid care work, part-time employment, and access to affordable housing and healthcare must be incorporated into broader discussions about gender equality.

To achieve meaningful change, policymakers must consider the unique needs of women, particularly those from marginalized groups, and ensure that gender-sensitive data is collected and analyzed. The ultimate goal should be the creation of an inclusive economy that supports women in all aspects of their lives, from the workplace to the home. This report reflects the need for continued advocacy, improved data collection, and the implementation of policies that will lead to a more equitable society where women are empowered to thrive.