

## Materials for A-level Citizenship Studies

# Activity 3: Gender and discrimination

### Background, organisation and resources

The 1960s and 1970s challenged the traditional role of woman in society in Europe and the UK. The introduction of sex discrimination legislation in the workplace in the UK was, in part, the result of a long struggle by both feminists and the trade union movement leading to the Equal Pay Act 1970 and Sex Discrimination Act 1975. There are also recent developments in gender equality (Gender Equality Duty 2007) requiring public authorities, which include schools and colleges, to promote gender equality and counteract sex discrimination.

In this activity learners will investigate how gender affects one's position in modern society. They will examine gender equality from the female perspective and discover what lies beneath the surface. This activity will create a debate over the claim that we have won equality for women in Britain and will lead on to the main issue that women are still discriminated against in every institution and area of life. For the activity students will need to read the *Guardian* article (12.8.2008) written by Larry Elliot 'Equal rights: Prejudice contributes to women earning less, says ONS study,' Included as a handout with this activity.

### Link to AQA specification

This topic links directly to the AQA specification Unit 1 key question: *Are we all equal citizens?*

### Aims of the activity

- To examine the effect of gender on life chances in modern Britain
- To encourage students to consider the obstacles preventing women participating in society as a full citizens
- To familiarise students with the legal changes relating to gender and sexual equality over the past 30 years in Britain.

### QCA post-16 citizenship learning objectives

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of citizenship issues
- Analyse source of information and draw conclusions
- Discuss and debate citizenship issues.

## Tasks

### **Stage 1 - Veil of ignorance exercise**

This exercise can be used as an opener activity to introduce why inequality might exist in a society, and as a preparation for learners in understanding why some groups may want an unequal society and an introduction to what sort of society they would desire for themselves. This activity can also be used to encourage discussion on individual needs and equality.

- Organise learners in groups of four. Tell them they live in an imaginary world where their race, ethnicity, gender, sex, age, religion, class are not known to them. Their only knowledge about themselves is that they are human and are part of a group that is going to decide the basic principles of the society in which they live.
- Ask them to come up with some basic principles for the people in their society and how they should relate to each other; At first they may look confused and may argue about their own existence; they may say that it is impossible to imagine you don't know your race, gender, etc. Explain the importance of being able to 'step outside' their experience and view issues objectively.
- Ask the groups to put their findings on a flip chart. Display them in the room and find the similarities. Most groups should come up with terms such as equality, fairness, non-discriminatory behaviour. Pick up the similarities and facilitate a short discussion about gender discrimination.
- Ask students to think about jobs that both women and men do. Then ask them what would be the salaries for these jobs.

### **Stage 2 - Gender pay gap**

In this activity learners will read a newspaper article. Ask participants to work in small groups (the article should be read individually). Hand out copies of the article from the *Guardian*. Students should summarise the author's view and give their own viewpoint about the issues discussed in the article. Then each group will give their opinion about the source. Facilitate a short discussion on the gender pay gap.

The 'Winning Equal' Pay TUC website developed by London Metropolitan University has several short films in which women talk about their struggle to achieve equal pay in the past 50 years (visit [www.unionhistory.info/equalpay/](http://www.unionhistory.info/equalpay/)).

### **Stage 3 - Consequences of inequality for citizenship**

Give participants a number from 1 to 3. Then ask them to form groups (1s and 2s and 3s get together). Learners work in their groups (1s, 2s and 3s) using a flipchart and marker pens. They should consider the impact of inequalities raised in the article on women and their participation in society as full citizens by looking at the aspects below. Each group's findings are passed around the groups so everybody gets some idea about the other groups' work and contributes to it.

- Group 1 will focus on the social aspect of inequality, i.e. women's role in society, sexism and how gender roles were formed within society.
- Group 2 will focus on the political aspect of inequality, i.e. women's representation in Parliament and its consequences.
- Group 3 will focus on the economic aspect of inequality, i.e. women's contribution to the national economy through part-time and full-time work and their share of the wealth in general.

Give the learners enough time to think and put their ideas on paper. Once they have finished share the completed pieces of work between the groups (group 1's work goes to group 2, group 2's work goes to 3 and so on). Allow about five minutes for each round so everybody gets a change to contribute to the work. Once everybody has had their turn, display the work in the room and ask participants to comment on their work.

If possible, each group can prepare a PowerPoint presentation for the whole group.

### **Stage 4**

At this stage the participants can work independently, either in a lesson or in their own time, to research the gender pay gap within the different sectors of jobs in England by using the web addresses given below. Once they have completed the research, it can be displayed for their peers to highlight the gender pay gap issue.

#### **Some useful websites**

##### **Government equality site**

<http://www.equalities.gov.uk/>

[http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality\\_bill.aspx](http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_bill.aspx)

##### **TUC Equality site**

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/index.cfm>

##### **Equality and Human rights**

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/Pages/default.aspx>

##### **Fawcett Society**

<http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/index.asp>

##### **The Hunger Project**

[http://www.thp.org/what\\_we\\_do/program\\_overview/empowering\\_women?gclid=CPLrg6ztIzgFUsa3godNDPOIA](http://www.thp.org/what_we_do/program_overview/empowering_women?gclid=CPLrg6ztIzgFUsa3godNDPOIA)

##### **Vital Voices**

[http://www.vitalvoices.org/desktopdefault.aspx?page\\_id=734](http://www.vitalvoices.org/desktopdefault.aspx?page_id=734)

**European Commission Gender Equality page**

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/gender\\_equality/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/gender_equality/index_en.html)

**Oxfam**

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/learning/gender/index.html>

**Assessment opportunities**

This topic can be used to complete the Active Citizenship Profile. Students can take action to investigate gender equality issues in their institution. This could involve investigating the proportion of females within the part-time workforce, or the gender profile of their institution. They could then put on a display or make a presentation about their findings to influence college management.

# Equal rights: Prejudice contributes to women earning less, says ONS study<sup>1</sup>

By Larry Elliott, Economics Editor

Two-thirds of the earnings divide between men and women is due to "unobservable factors" including discrimination and has nothing to do with lower skills or productivity, according to a government study released yesterday.

More than 30 years after the passing of the Equal Pay Act, a report from Andrew Barnard of the Office for National Statistics concluded that prejudice still meant women were taking home smaller pay packets than men doing the same job, despite a shift towards a fairer labour market over the past decade.

Barnard said that according to his model based on payroll records from Britain's employers "almost two-thirds of the wage gap is because of reasons unexplained and one-third is for reasons explained". Discrimination was only one of the "unexplained" factors resulting in women earning less than men. Other influences might include educational qualifications and motivation.

The study found that the gender hourly wage gap fell from 19% to 16% between 1998 and 2006 and that the unexplained segment of the differential had also fallen. Barnard said this could have been the result of a reduction in workplace discrimination but that it was difficult to say given the limitations in the data available to the ONS.

The report found that the gender pay gap was wider outside London. Wages in the capital tend to be higher, but the effect of not working in London is greater for women. In the south-east, for example, men earn 4% less than in London whereas women earn 7% less.

The ONS study also found a larger wage premium for men in manufacturing. "This could be a result of women working in less skilled manufacturing positions, or could be evidence of discrimination in that sector."

Barnard said the argument that men were benefiting in industry from being in the better paid jobs was supported by the fact that women made up 25% of those reading manufacturing-related degrees, 3% of modern apprentices in manufacturing and engineering, and 6% of professional engineers.

There was also a larger wage premium for males in finance, mining and quarrying, energy and water, and agriculture and fishing.

The one area where there was a female wage premium was in the public sector.

<sup>1</sup>Equal rights: Prejudice contributes to women earning less, says ONS study, from The Guardian, 12th August 2008

