



IMPROVING
GENDER
BALANCE &
EQUALITIES

Data guide

Primary schools and
early learning and
childcare settings

“Using performance
data is one of the
most powerful ways
of improving gender-
equitable outcomes
for all pupils”

Taylor (2007) ^[1]

Introduction

About this guide

Outcomes for young people in terms of employment and mental and physical health are still too often linked to gender. The aim of this guide is to help practitioners gather and analyse a range of data to support planning approaches to address these persistent gender imbalances. This includes disaggregating data that educational settings will already be gathering such as that relating to choice, attainment, attendance, learner pathways and health and wellbeing. We also suggest looking at data relating to the wider ethos of the setting such as learner perceptions, behaviour, and opportunities for personal development (and the value placed on these).

Things to bear in mind

- Data about gender should be looked at in conjunction with other key characteristics including, but not limited to, race, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and prior attainment.
- Qualitative data (including learner voice) as well as quantitative data should be examined.
- Caution should be taken when interpreting small samples in order to avoid unrepresentative generalisations.
- Ensure marginalised voices are heard and not lost. Care should be taken not to *just* represent the most 'common' themes in a data sample as this can drown out minority voices.
- Remember that boys and girls do not make up two distinct, homogenous groups. It is important to consider *which* boys and *which* girls each issue will affect the most. This might involve consideration of: which end of the attainment spectrum? Which SIMD quintile or free school meal entitlement (FME)? Which stage in the curriculum? Which area of the curriculum?

Please note:
We refer to 'girls' and 'boys' in this guide in order to allow discussion of the impacts of gender stereotypes on all learners. This is not to imply that gender categories are binary or fixed.

The story behind the data

Data, of course, does not in itself improve outcomes. Careful interrogation of the data can be used to identify underlying patterns and, crucially, to inform dialogue

about what is creating and upholding those patterns. Those deeper improvement questions are likely to include reflections on unconscious gendered expectations.

As a starting point you might wish to consider the following questions:

- To what extent do we have a shared understanding of the importance of disaggregating data by gender?
- How well do we involve a range of perspectives (including a balance of genders) when considering the implications of the data?
- How does the setting support parents/carers in understanding gendered patterns in data?

Choice and self-selection

- **Stereotypes influence the activities children engage in, and therefore shape their emerging interests and skills and, ultimately, the roles they take in society as adults [2].**
- **The pervasiveness of gendered messages is likely to result in children selecting stereotypical aspects of provision irrespective of their experiences outside nursery [3].**
- **Engagement with specific out of class opportunities is often gendered. This is often particularly stark in ASN settings [4].**

- At early and first level, examine your 'follow a child' data for free play. Do children of different genders access certain activities and resources more? Do children of different genders use areas differently?
- For older learners, monitor the activities pupils choose when 'free time' is allocated. Reflect as above.
- Investigate learners' perceptions and assumptions about curricular areas as well as their experience of topics and contexts for learning. This might include which words they associate with the curricular area, which jobs they link to the curricular area.
- Investigate the future intentions of learners in more depth. What sectors of employment are they interested in? What roles? What aspirations?
- Examine which opportunities for personal achievement are on offer and who leads them. Is this challenging or supporting gender assumptions?
- Examine who participates in out-of-class opportunities. This might include clubs, sports, or volunteering. Do these opportunities succeed in broadening outlook for a range of learners?
- Examine who is represented on pupil voice groups - is there diversity in terms of gender, SIMD, race etc. ?

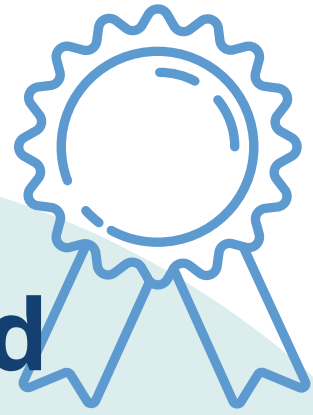
Children's ideas of jobs for women and men



Reflect

- o How might teachers' unconscious perceptions and assumptions about an area or topic (including how 'difficult' it is) influence learners' perceptions?
- o If there are differences in the areas learners see as being 'for them', how is this explored?
- o Are there any gender stereotypical images/phrases in the marketing of different employment pathways and sectors that could contribute to gender differences in future intentions?
- o Consider the priority given to different out of class activities. Does one group tend to get preferential access to space e.g. netball vs football? Are any activities perceived as having a greater value in terms of personal achievement?
- o To what extent do family members influence the choices children make? How could discussion with parents (particularly fathers) be instigated?

Girls cited reasons for not speaking up on an issue as: concerns about how they could do so, lack of confidence, fear of not being taken seriously, and worries about the negative consequences of speaking out [15].



Attainment and self-efficacy

- **There are gender gaps in reaching developmental milestones and in attainment. Under-performance can negatively impact boys or girls in different areas** [5,6].
- **In schools where gender constructions are less accentuated, boys tend to attain better** [7].
- **Significantly more girls than boys in Scotland agreed with the statement 'when I am failing, this makes me doubt my plans for the future'** [8].
- **Boys and younger age groups have consistently reported higher levels of confidence than older girls** [9].

For the following suggestions, consider disaggregating by gender, race, SIMD and/or free meal entitlement (FME).

- Examine attainment by curricular area, achievement of a curriculum for excellence level (ACEL) data and Scottish National Standardised Assessment (SNSA) data. Where relevant, examine milestone data.
- Examine who receives targeted support. What does this reveal about learning needs, behaviour patterns, wellbeing?
- Examine progression data. It might be useful to do this for individual stages and also collate to provide a whole setting overview. Are there any groups that are more likely than others to encounter unsuccessful progression through broad general education (BGE)?
 - In skills profiling, are there any differences in the skills that are suggested?
 - Consider gathering data that could illustrate the self-efficacy of learners by curricular area.
 - Consider gathering data around who is asked to represent the setting.

Reflect

- o How might unconscious bias feed into any assumptions and expectations about who might attain highly and who might need more support?
- o How might this bias impact interactions, marking decisions, advice offered and so on?
- o How might this in turn affect a learner's self-belief, confidence and attainment long term?
- o How might unconscious bias influence whose voice is heard and who is selected to represent the school or setting?



Self-efficacy is the belief we have in our own abilities, specifically our ability to meet the challenges ahead and complete a task successfully

[16]

Health, wellbeing and behaviour



- **In a study looking at nurture data, primary-aged boys were three times more likely to experience high social, emotional, behavioural and/or mental health needs compared to girls** ^[10].
- **Children whose friendship groups emphasise traditional gender stereotypes tend to have lower overall wellbeing** ^[11].
- **Differences in how behaviour is sanctioned or rewarded can be influenced by gendered expectations** ^[12].
- **Where learners felt they were shouted at, only boys concluded that this led them to hate school. The girls tended to make excuses for the teachers and blame themselves to some degree for being shouted at** ^[13].
- **In 2018/ 19 boys in Scotland accounted for 79% of total exclusions** ^[14].

- Collect and examine data relating to health and wellbeing, disaggregated by gender, race and/or SIMD. This might include nurture data, involvement/engagement data, data relating to mental wellbeing, mental health or support plans.
- Are there aspects of Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included (SHANARRI) that are more commonly assessed to be lower for one gender?
- Examine trends in factors that relate to mental wellbeing, such as participation in physical activity and/or how pressure of schoolwork is experienced.
- Examine your behaviour referral and attendance data. Are there any differences or similarities in the nature and number of referrals by gender? Do attendance patterns vary by gender?

Reflect

o How might unconscious expectations about emotional literacy impact interactions with individuals, and advice given?

o Is there potential (due to unconscious bias) for expecting and accepting, and therefore driving different behaviours from girls and boys?

o How well are all learners encouraged to participate in physical activity and develop habits of an active lifestyle and/or self-care?

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For further information and support please get in touch:

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