

United Kingdom

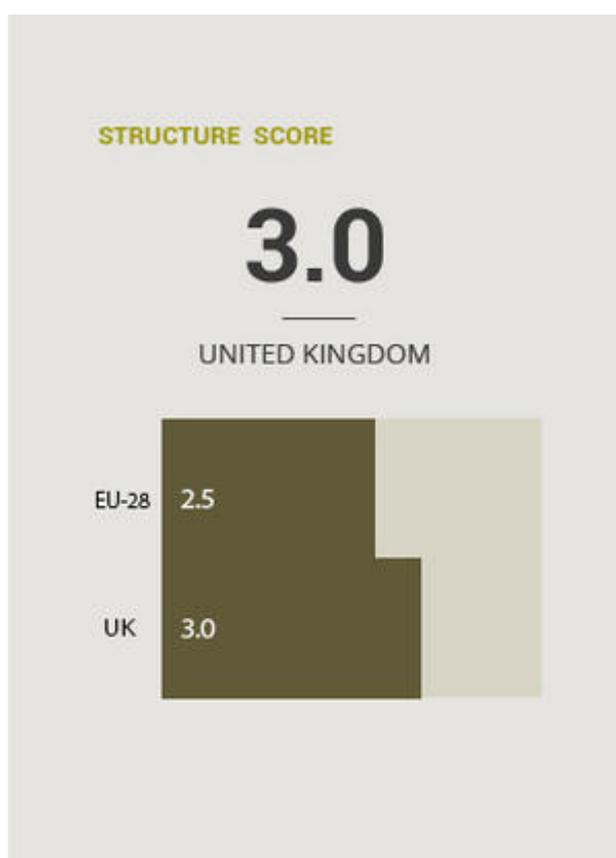
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The United Kingdom's gender equality and anti-discrimination legislation was revised in 2010 with the Equality Act, a landmark piece of legislation that overrode all previous gender-equality laws for England, Scotland and Wales. The act follows an innovative intersectional equalities approach, representing a shift in the policy priorities from gender equality to a concept of equality spanning all dimensions of discrimination. As such, findings on equality policies generally pertain to both gender and a host of other equality strands more broadly.

A key part of this legislation are the Public Sector Equality Duties (PSEDs), replacing the 2007 Gender Equality Duty. PSEDs address all public bodies and can be considered a way of regulating gender mainstreaming in the UK.

Structures



Central level: The Government Equalities Office (GEO) is the main structure for gender equality, with responsibility for the implementation of the equality strategy across the UK government, particularly on issues relating to women, sexual orientation and transgender equality. The GEO was established in 2007 as an independent department, replacing the Women and Equality Unit that had been set up in the 1970s. In 2012 the GEO moved to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport when the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport became the new Minister for Women and Equalities. Currently, the Secretary of State for Education is the Minister for Women and Equalities, so the GEO has moved to the Department of Education. The GEO is the sponsor department of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), a non-departmental public body (NDPB) established by the Equality Act in 2006 as a single body to replace various equality commissions. It has a statutory remit to protect, enforce and promote equality across nine grounds, including gender.

State level: In the UK, gender equality structures at the regional level are located in government

States level: In the UK, gender-equality structures at the regional level are located in government departments of the devolved governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Division, Welsh Government
- Gender Equality Team, Scottish Government's Equality Unit
- Childcare, Gender and Sexual Orientation Unit, Northern Ireland

In Wales, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Division (EDID) is responsible for mainstreaming equality, human rights, diversity and inclusion. It has responsibility for the successful delivery of key provisions under the Equality Act 2010, including leading the Welsh government's work in setting equality objectives intended to make a tangible difference to people's lives, ensuring that the three formal stages in the Welsh government's equality impact assessment process are published, publishing the Equality Objectives and the Strategic Equality Plan, and overseeing the cross-departmental delivery of the Equality Objectives. The EDID reports to the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, who has cross-cutting responsibility for a number of social issues including equality and equal opportunities.

In Scotland, the Gender Equality Team forms part of the Scottish government's Equality Unit, which provides support to officials dealing with equalities and undertaking equality impact assessments, offers training on a regular basis to staff, provides specialised support to officials, and holds responsibility for implementing the Equality Act. The unit reports to the Scottish government's Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport, who is responsible for issues of sport, the Commonwealth Games, obesity, physical activity and equality. The Scottish Women's Budget Group is actively involved in promoting gender-responsive budgeting and to this end is part of the Scottish government's Equality Proofing Budgets Advisory Group. It also provides evidence and guidance on gender-responsive budgeting to the Scottish parliamentary committees.

In Northern Ireland, the Childcare, Gender and Sexual Orientation Unit is responsible for implementing the Gender Equality Strategy and for supporting and coordinating actions across departments and their agencies. Despite the high levels of responsibility assigned to the unit, exceptionally little information is available with regard to its composition, specific functions, budget or how the unit communicates with national gender-equality structures. The unit reports to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, with responsibility for promoting and monitoring implementation of equality of opportunity/good relations, as well as a number of other areas, such as tackling poverty and social exclusion, issues concerning children and young people, victims and survivors, and sustainable development.

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Laws and policies

The UK's central legislation on equality is the Equality Act 2010, a modernised and harmonised version of previous equality and anti-discrimination legislation. The act takes an intersectional approach covering a number of equality strands, creating an overall approach within which all gender-equality policies are subsumed, and within which methods and tools exist to mainstream the gender-equality agenda in the work of public bodies. Thus, the focus in the UK has shifted from gender equality to a concept of equality spanning all dimensions of discrimination.

This is manifested in the change in terminology: the word 'equality' is used instead of 'gender'. For example, gender impact assessments have been replaced by equality impact assessments.

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the new PSEDs, replacing all previous separate Equality Duties and representing a significant development for the implementation of gender mainstreaming. These are positive duties concerned with institutional change, whereby systemic and structural inequalities are deconstructed, resulting in substantive equality.

Currently, equality legislation, including gender equality, is reserved to the UK government, with possible divergence in how gender equality is framed in statements of political commitment to the advancement of gender equality. In 2010, the government published the policy document Equality Strategy – Building a Fairer Britain, targeting businesses, the voluntary sector and wider civil society to create equal opportunities and embed equality considerations into government policies and programmes.

As for the States level, Wales and Scotland are covered by the Equality Act, and thus have mainstreaming arrangements and methods in place such as the PSEDs for Wales and Scotland respectively, whereas Northern Ireland has its own structures, arrangements and methods, notably its Gender Equality Strategy and the Statutory Duty on Equality mandated by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).

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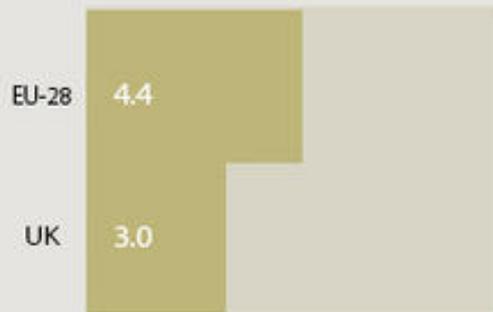


Methods and tools

COMMITMENT AND USE OF METHODS AND TOOLS FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

3.0

UNITED KINGDOM



The PSED may be regarded as both an arrangement and a method for equality mainstreaming. Previous separate Equality Duties had required all public bodies to conduct a gender impact assessment and placed a legal responsibility on them to demonstrate their fair treatment of both women and men. In the 2010 PSED, the mainstreaming methods entail publishing equality information and setting equality objectives. At the national level, gender impact assessments are no longer conducted by policymakers, having been replaced by equality impact assessments, which may not include a systematic review of gender issues.

At the States level, a broader, more systematic and more effective range of methods are deployed for mainstreaming equality, such as advisory groups formed to scrutinise regional budgets in terms of equality in Wales and Scotland. In Northern Ireland, gender-equality indicators and gender analysis have been deployed to uncover where structures, systems and society's stereotypical norms lead to disadvantage and discrimination on the grounds of gender. Regional commitments towards equality impact assessments far exceed those at the national level, and these are systematically conducted in all three regions of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Most recently, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland has begun work to pilot the introduction of equality-responsive budgeting, having developed a framework based on the approaches and methodologies of gender-responsive budgeting.

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Good practices

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