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Definitions and Origins of Gender Budgeting

What it is: about integrating gender analysis into economic policy, government spending and revenue proposals – essentially a tool to bring about change by policy-makers (government, parliament, civil servants) to think about what impact spending and revenue raising decisions will have on gender equalities and to adopt policies that will bring about greater equality between women and men.

What it is not: separate budgets for women and men

Gender budgeting is political

“The budget reflects the values of a country – who it values, whose work it values and who it rewards ... and who and what and whose work it doesn’t”
(Govender, 1996 in Budlender and Hewitt, 2003)

It politicises macroeconomic policies and the budget by showing that the budget is *not a technical exercise* but a political one

The theoretical weight underpinning gender budgeting as a concept is feminist economics - economics needs to be about:

- not only paid employment but **unpaid domestic work too**
- not only production for the market but for **direct use within families and communities too**
- not only the production of material goods, but everything that people need to grow and flourish, including the ***provision of care***

Gender budgeting is good budgeting

Gender budgeting is not just a battle being fought by feminists but promoted as **good practice** by supra national institutions.

Key principles underpinning gender budgeting:

- Accountable
- Democratic
- Transparent
- Accessible
- Evidence based
- Performance based
- Participative

Budgetary process should be *Transformational*

Gender Budgeting in GB, NI and Ireland

Scotland: Initially presented GB as a strategic form of feminist policy

- consistent with the desire for a 'new politics' & material change in financial responsibility of Scottish government
- SWBG (since 1999)
- Equality Budgetary Advisory Group
- Equality and Fairer Scotland statement (2022) (replaced Equality Budget Statement)
- National Advisory Council on Women and Girls

Ireland: *Equality Budgeting* piloted 2018 - used gender as a primary axis of equality then extended to other dimensions

- Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory Group (2018)
- OECD review
- Contained in PfG
- Inter-departmental network (2021)
- Integrated into Performance Budgeting Framework
- No overall equality strategy – but National Strategy for Women and Girls

Wales: political commitment to embed gender budgeting as part of the budgeting processes in PfG

- Government vision and principles for gender equality in Wales
- PfG contains commitment to implement targets around gender budgeting
- Wales Women's Budget Group
- Gender budgeting pilots

England: No strong political commitment to gender budgeting

- Resistance to gender impact analysis of fiscal expenditure
- Strong UK WBG
- Some positive input from Treasury Committee re need for the Budget to include quantitative analysis of equalities impact of individual tax and welfare measures in

N.Ireland: no high level political commitment to gender equality or gender budgeting

- NI Women's Budget Group
- No current gender equality strategy – work ongoing on new gender equality strategy

Favourable Conditions for Gender Budgeting

OECD (Downes and Nicol, 2020) set out three elements for designing and implementing gender budgeting:

- Strong strategic framework
- Effective tools of implementation
- A supportive and enabling environment

O'Hagan (2015) describes a set of **favourable conditions** covering three stages of gender budgeting:

- Advocacy and agenda setting
- Formal adoption
- Implementation

Favourable Conditions for Gender Budgeting

Phase 1 Advocacy and agenda setting	Ireland	N.I	Scot	England	Wales
Pro-equality climate	✓	-/+	✓	-/+	✓
Commitment to gender mainstreaming in policy analysis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pressure from engaged CSOs (WBGs)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gender equality architecture	✓	-/+	✓	-/+	✓
Response to external drivers	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+
Political change opportunity structures	-/+	-/+	✓	-/+	✓
Positive approach to governance	✓	-/+	✓	-/+	✓
Understanding of budgetary processes	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+
Clear conceptual framework for gender budgeting	-/+	-/+	✓	-/+	✓
Engaged actors: officials, politicians, CSOs	✓	-/+	✓	-/+	✓

Favourable Conditions for Gender Budgeting

Phase 2 Formal Adoption	Ireland	N.I	Scot	England	Wales
Political will and leadership	✓	-/+	✓	-/+	✓
Clear conceptual framework for GB	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+
Positive Institutional Arrangements	✓	-/+	✓	-/+	✓
Phase 3 Implementation					
Gender analysis in government processes	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+
Gender aware budget documentation	-/+	x	-/+	x	-/+

Implementation

Countries practicing gender budgeting generally incorporate a number of tools

Tools can be used at different stages of the process:

- Ex-ante gender impact assessment of policies (before they are set)
- Applying gender perspective in performance setting
- Applying gender perspective in resource allocation
- Ex-post gender impact assessment

Issues of implementation – separation of ideological from practice?

Over half of OECD members have planned to or were actively considering the introduction of *gender budgeting tools in 2016* (Downes et al, 2017) - *but very diverse approaches* and, varying levels of commitment and depth.

IMF (2021) - a number of countries have enacted gender focused fiscal policies but the operationalisation of these is far less established. Development of tools evident but the level of **gender budgeting practice is low among G20 countries**.

Bureaucratic desire to separate the ideological from the practice of doing?

What does evidence suggest?

- Policy makers want to know ‘*how to do*’ gender budgeting
- Desire for objective, quantifiable measures.

But the ‘*how*’ by necessity includes understanding of inequality and equality – *how it arises and what to do about it - tension and dilemmas*

The Governance Context

- At the basis of much public management and administration is the neo-liberal reforms of the 1980s/90s and the creation of managerial governance informed by the New Public Management of the 1990s (Newman and Clarke, 1997)
- Governance should be more effective and more strategic - the tools and techniques of managerialism— audits, indicators, impact assessments
- But -- managerial governance is deeply entrenched within a process of depoliticisation. Not just gender but broader shifts / denial of political interests (see in OBA approach adopted in NI). Managerialism portrayed as rational, value neutral 'common sense'

- Common to ***screen out policy*** or use high level impact assessments with ***little evidence that significant budget decisions have been made or adjusted as a result of identified gender impacts*** (ECNI, 2017; Rouse, 2016)
- Analyses have also found ***procedural or ‘thin’ compliance***, with equality impact assessments ***largely undertaken as ex-post paper processes*** (Smith and McLaughlin, 2010, Chaney and Rees, 2004)
- Deficiencies in implementation of NI Section 75 obligations have recently been highlighted (ECNI, 2020), in particular DoF’s failure to consult on spending proposals.

Does this help explain limitations and limited progress?

Eg 1. *Equality Impact Assessments as a budgeting tool* – not done well, not done at the right time, if retrospective – what can be done except to tweak existing policies

NI - *Section 75 and Equality Mainstreaming*

- Section 75 of NI Act provides **existing architecture** for gender budgeting but
- Has been **incorrectly interpreted** to mean treating all groups equally resulting in **gender neutrality**

“Section 75 does not prevent difficult decisions being taken, nor does it stop decisions which will affect one group more than another. It enables financial decisions which are informed by evidence of the impact they are likely to have, where mitigation and alternative policies have been considered, and which are transparent and accountable.” (Equality Commission, 2015)

Eg 2 Performance management processes, including performance budgeting

- Need quantifiable measures but risk of over simplifying
 - most political goals, including gender equality, are complex, - trying to reduce them to the above means that they can take on a narrower and perhaps different meaning than intended. [OBA in NI; National Performance Framework Scotland)
- Association with objectivity is problematic (output indicators selected (or not))
- Data - deficits in current arrangements in terms of responsibility and accountability for production of sex disaggregated data.

The Problem of Gender Neutrality

- The issue of gender neutrality in policy making has been identified as problematic in NI
- Rouse (2020) found evidence of equality duties operationalised as symmetrical treatment. For example:
 - *'... if I applied Section 75 to the letter, I would just treat everybody exactly the same'*
 - **We are obsessed with a community background perspective. We are absolutely *obsessed with treating everybody the same* and we are *paralysed with fear* that you might think I favoured your community over somebody else's community. So, from a community background perspective, it makes sense that given our background and our history, that we might have gotten ourselves into that way, but then we apply it to everything'**

Its worth doing gender budgeting: the case of apprenticeships

- Apprenticeships: mainstay of policy for vocational education & training, providing social mobility & workforce upskilling
 - **Employees:** improved employment prospects, higher earnings over lifetime and greater occupational mobility.
 - **Employers:** increased and steady supply of skilled labour, improved recruitment and retention
- Our analysis indicates that *apprenticeship programmes reflect existing inequalities in labour market participation* and, as a policy intervention which establishes career paths and trajectories, *may serve to consolidate and reinforce gendered inequalities*
- Conversely, *well targeted interventions offer the prospect of offsetting and disrupting gender differentials* which result in locking in lower pay, gendered occupational segregation and unequal labour market participation.

Apprenticeships: policy commitments

- Twenty policy commitments and an associated implementation plan.

Policy commitment 11: *"include a range of measures to support the participation by both genders across occupations, and to address other equality issues, such as encouraging the participation of people with disabilities"* p.8).

- The Department will adopt a *'twin track approach of addressing the existing gender imbalances within the traditional sectors, whilst also aiming to ensure that a gender balance is instilled in the new apprenticeship areas, from their commencement'*.

Policy commitment 14: *"a skills barometer mechanism will be established to support the better matching of apprenticeship supply and demand"* (p.9).

- The skills barometer (now operational) is used to identify and prioritise training in line with forecasting of key skills required for economic growth.

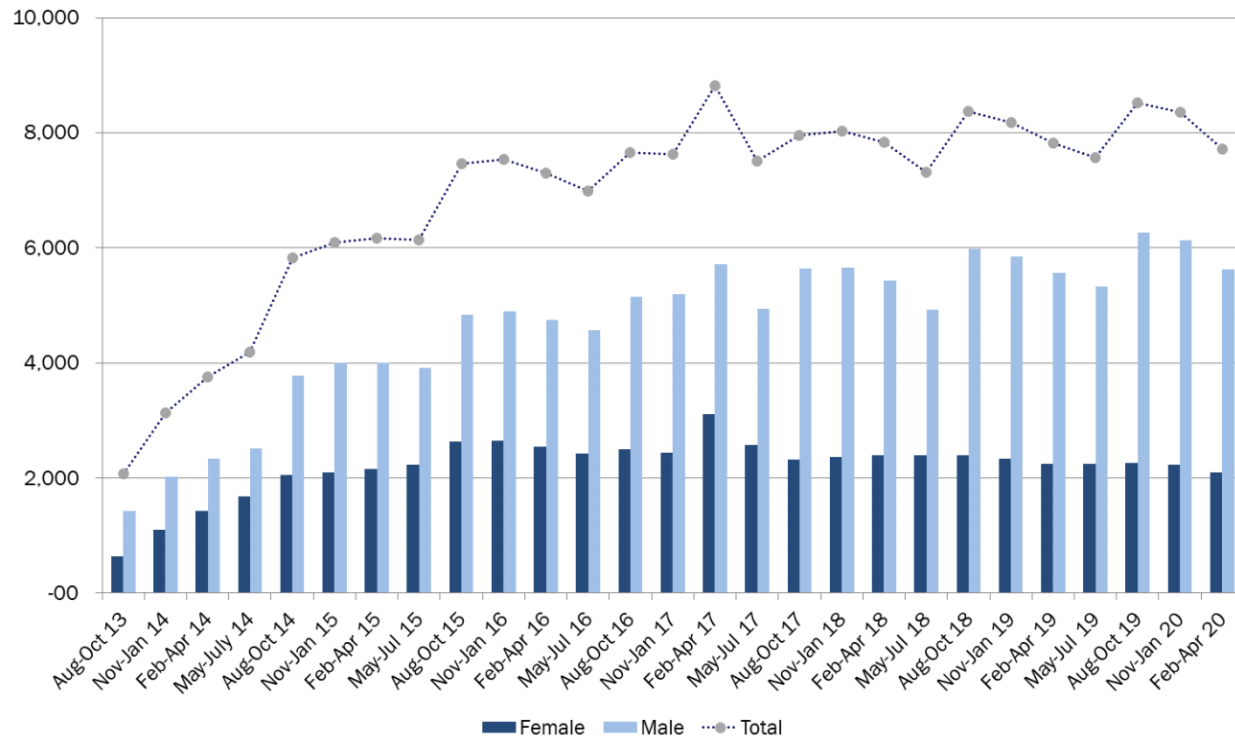
Apprenticeships: what data did we use?

Two sources, published by the Department for the Economy (DfE) as statistical bulletins:

- 1) participants undertaking a Level 2, 2/3 or 3 apprenticeship, published on a biannual basis and available since 2012-2013.
 - 2) participants undertaking a HLAs (Level 4 & above), data available for 2017/18 and 2018/19 only.
- Where gender disaggregated data was not available, these were requested from DfE.
 - ***Although gender disaggregated data was collected and made available to us, it did not form part of the data routinely published***
 - Statistical and departmental data were ***augmented by modelling and analysis*** commissioned from the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre in relation to productivity and Gross Value Added (GVA)
 - In contextualising the analysis, we ***benchmarked gender outcomes against policy commitments/intent*** as explicated in the *Strategy on Apprenticeships*

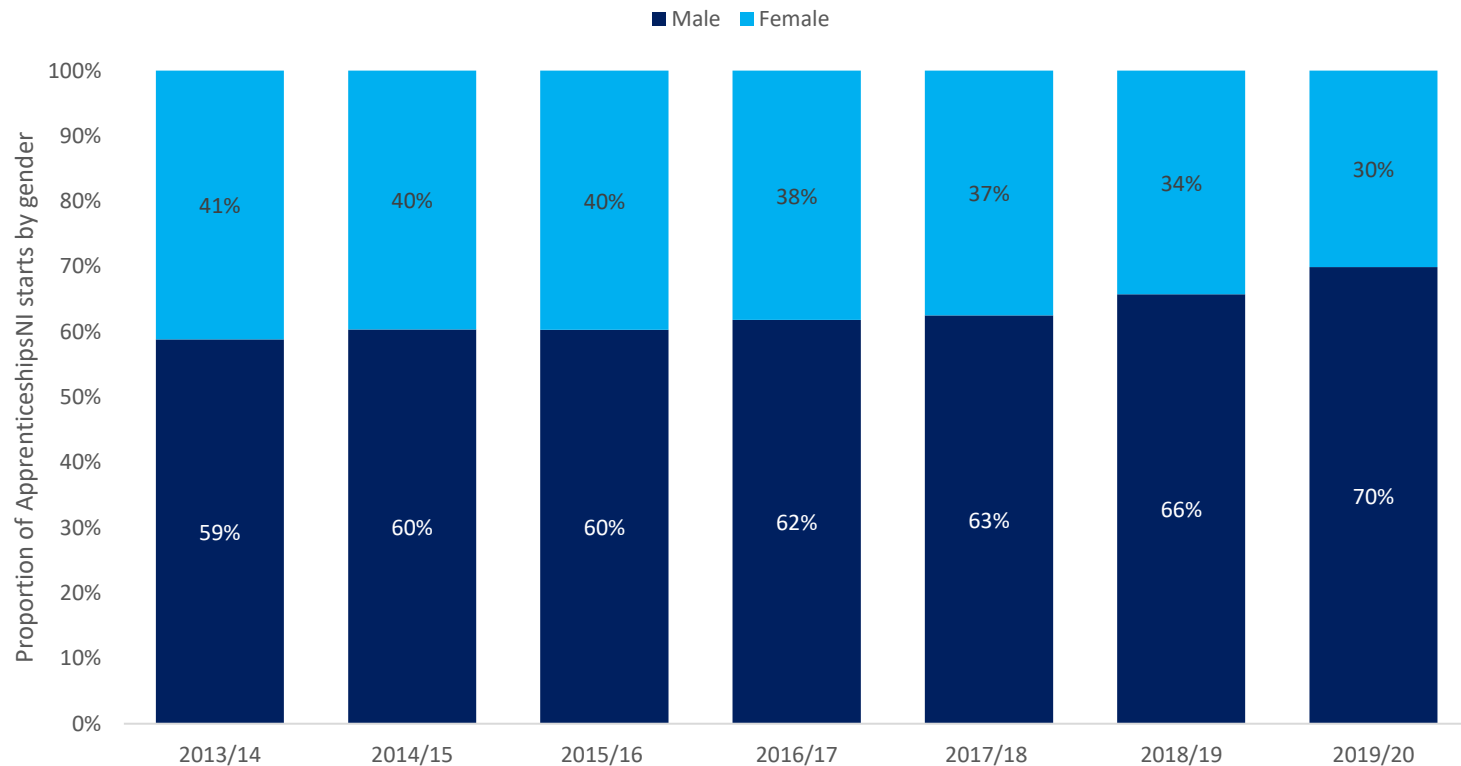
Apprenticeships: what does the data tell us?

- **Males have represented the majority of participants** on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme (Levels 2, 2/3, 3) since its inception.
- **Securing Our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships as a policy presents with an extensive and persistent gender imbalance.**



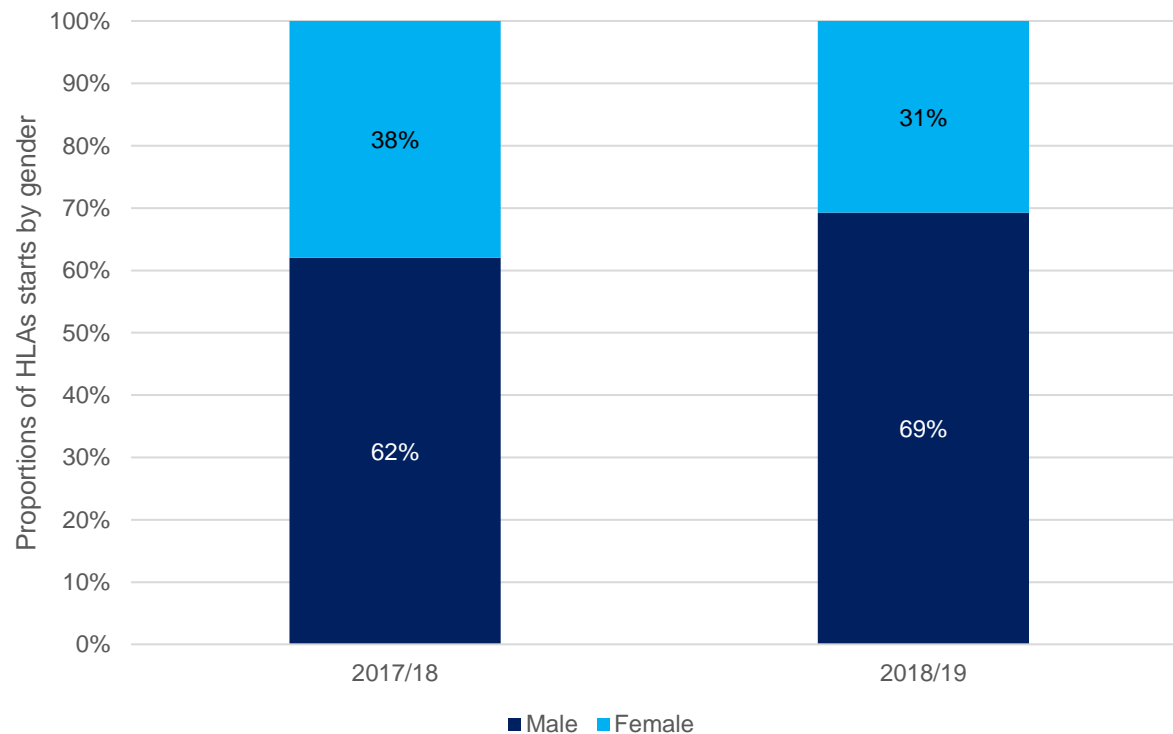
Apprenticeships: what does the data tell us?

- **Male representation** on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme (Levels 2, 2/3, 3) has been **increasing year on year**, as a percentage of total participants, since 2013/14.



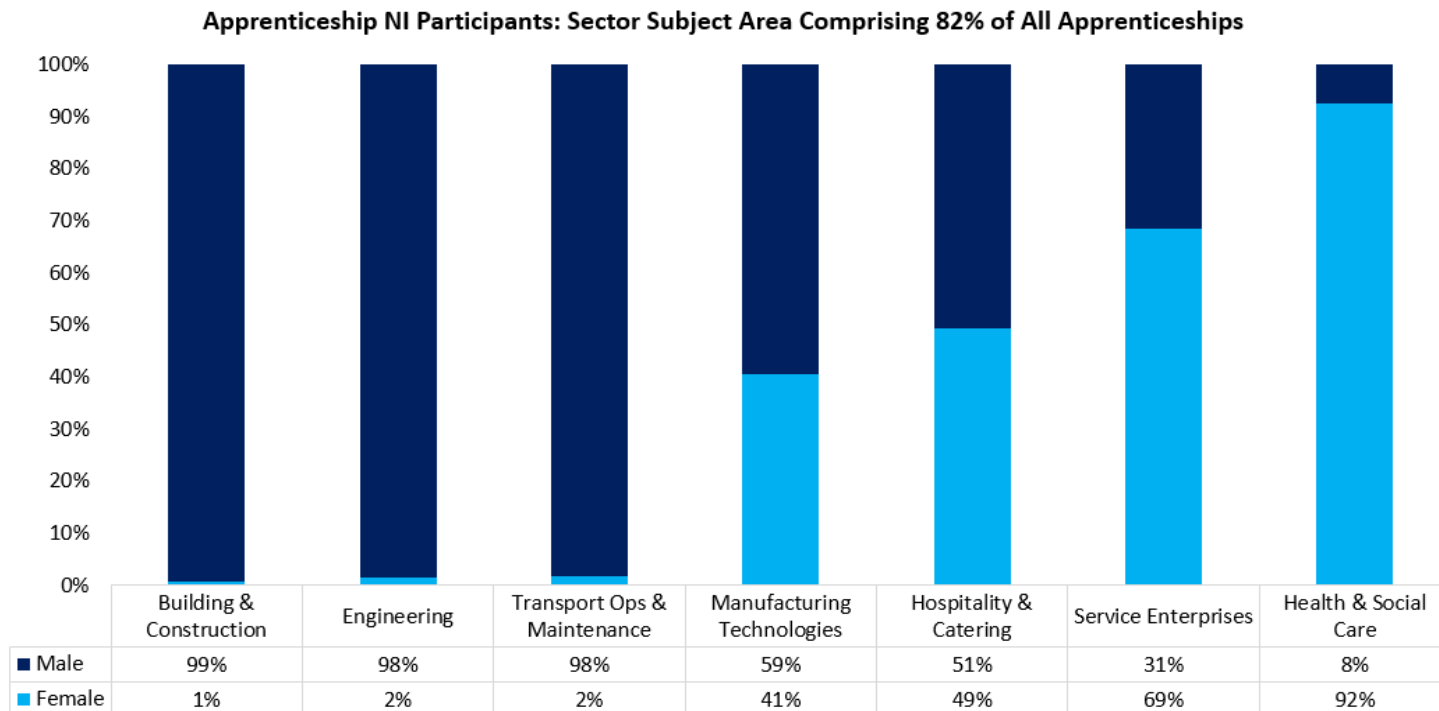
Apprenticeships: what does the data tell us?

- HLAs are also dominated by males at a rate of 2:1 in both years of operation
- Trend is worsening over time and identified by DfE's: ***“a trend is emerging showing that more males participants are entering HLA programmes compared to females”*** (Department for the Economy, 2020, p.12)



Apprenticeships: what does the data tell us?

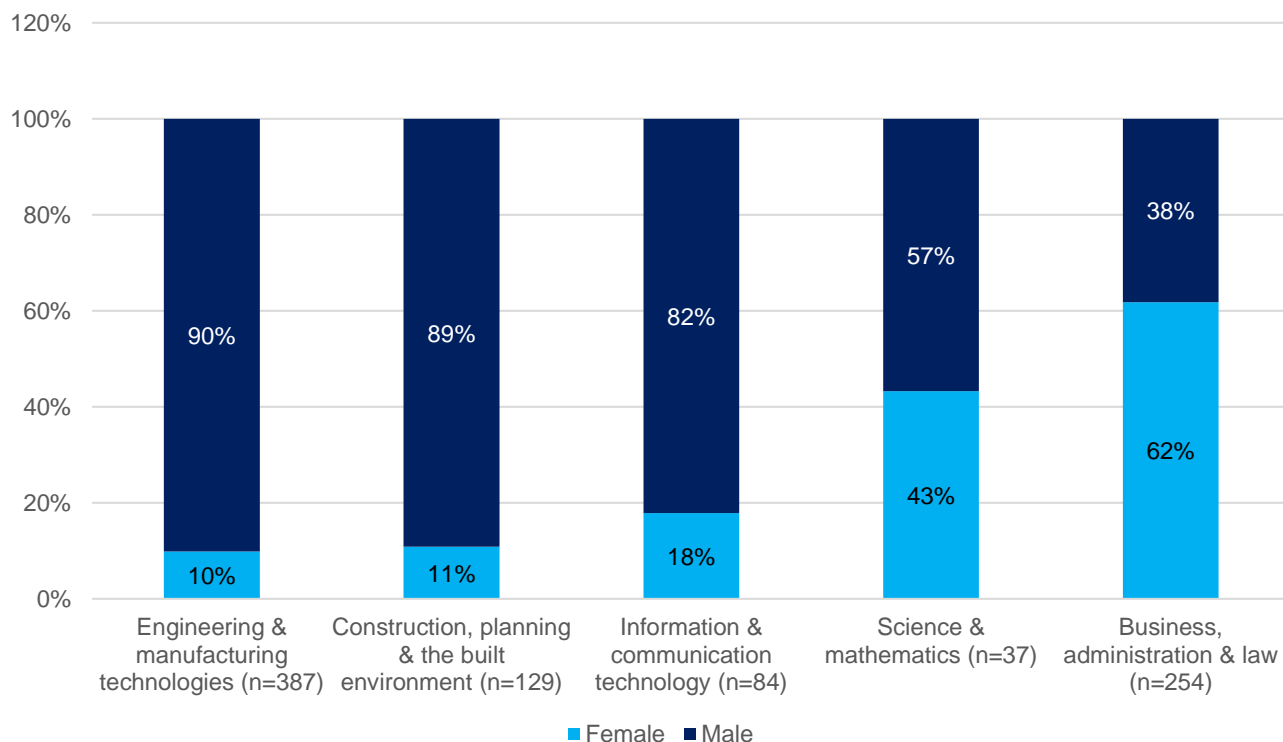
- Stark occupational segregation is prevalent in Apprenticeships at Level 2, 2/3 and 3
- Males dominate traditional sectors such as building and construction and engineering while females dominate health & social care and child development & wellbeing



Apprenticeships: what does the data tell us?

- Occupational segregation is also prevalent in HLAs
- Males dominate traditional sectors such as engineering & manufacturing, construction/planning while females dominate business, administration and law

HLA Participation by Sector Subject Area and Gender
(2017-18 & 2018-19 Combined)



Apprenticeships: Total Output & GVA

- ***Public expenditure disproportionately favours male participants who will reap the benefits over the course of their lifetime.***
- Economic analysis reveals significant differences in estimated Gross Value Added (GVA) for males and females (GVA = contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector in the UK and is equivalent to GDP).
- ***Total output*** (based on no. of participants, the sector of the framework, and the average productivity of the sector)
 - **Males = £493m**
 - **Females = £92m**
- **GVA**
 - **Male apprentice = £78,400,**
 - **Female apprentice = £35,900**
- ***Males study subjects linked to higher productivity*** sectors in comparison to females.

Apprenticeships: Funding Model

Disproportionate spend on men (levels 2, 2/3, 3)

- ***male over-representation on apprentices***; and
- ***male clustering in the most cost intensive categories.***
- Finding consistent with data from Scotland which has shown similar trends in occupational segregation (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2014).

HLA Funding: A Similar Picture

- ***Level 5 Funding:*** ranges from £8,400 to £11,400 (***a difference of 36%***), depending on the subject being studied.
- ***Level 6 Funding:*** ranges from £12,400 to £23,400 (***a difference of 89%***).
- As with funding for Levels 2, 2/3, 3, funding at the higher end of HLA levels 5 and 6 represent traditional male dominated areas of study.

Securing Our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships - the gendered policy/practice gap

(1) The strategy notes occupational segregation as problematic from the outset

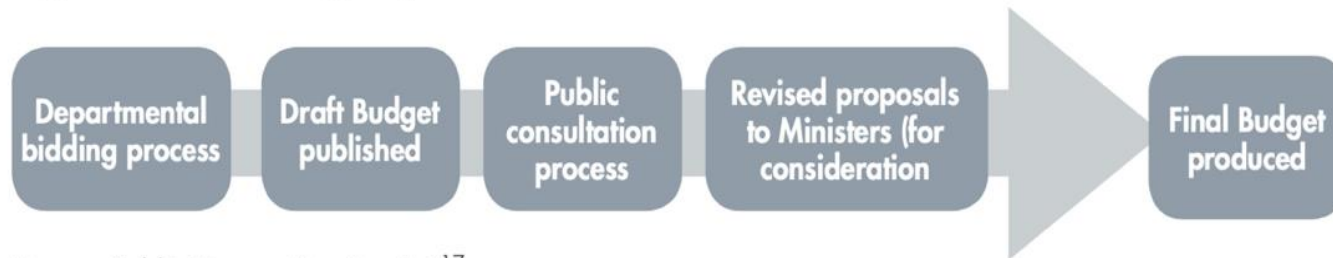
- ***Policy Commitment 11: ‘apprenticeships will include a range of measures to support the participation by both genders across occupations’***
- However, ***no targets or performance indicators accompany these commitments, rendering them largely aspirational***
- In contrast, targets have been attached to other objectives (e.g. completion of qualification frameworks)
- **Scotland (like NI)** notes gender segregation of apprenticeship frameworks as problematic and sets two objectives:
 - to ***reduce gender stereotyping and gender segregation in career choices***; and
 - to ***reduce gender segregation in occupational routes selected by young people***.
- **Scotland sets a specific target against the realisation of these objectives**, which is to reduce to 60% the percentage of Modern Apprenticeship frameworks where the gender balance is 75:25 or greater (Skills Development Scotland, 2015). These objectives are also reinforced through complementary action in other policy areas (i.e., education, childcare).

Lessons?

- **Evidence** – we are in a supposed era of evidence informed policy. Expert knowledge has identified and illustrated policy impacts. If judgements are made on knowledge then decision makers are prioritising one group or one policy area over another. Ignoring of ‘inconvenient’ knowledge
- Arrangements for effective **scrutiny** – requires transparency and accessibility of budget process
- Shortcomings of depoliticisation and technocratic approach - means GB can be implemented in such a way that does not question core macro economic assumptions and gendered understanding of the economy.
- Understanding of **equality** – substantive not formal
- Performance frameworks have a role – but policy context critical
- Political will

The Budget Process (NI)

Figure 4. NI budget process between 2008 and 2016



Source: *Public Finance Scrutiny Unit*¹⁷
NIAO (2021)

- Between 2016 and 2020, draft budgets and public consultation stages were **removed** from the budget process.
- Draft budgets and public consultation were **re-introduced** for the 2021-22 budget.
- Since 2008, timelines for stakeholder engagement on budgetary choices have been **steadily reducing**.