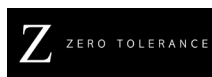




Close the Gap



John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3 DG

11th October 2022

Dear Mr Swinney,

Gender Budget Analysis in Budgetary Reviews

Our organisations, all of whom work for gender equality in Scotland, want to emphasise the importance of incorporating robust and intersectional gender budget analysis into the Emergency Budget Review and other cost crisis budget packages.

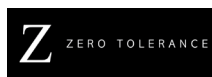
The cost-of-living crisis is gendered and impacts will not be felt equally. Those on the lowest incomes will be hardest hit by the cost-of-living crisis and women are more likely to be poor, have lower levels of savings and wealth and be less able to increase paid work than men. This is due to systemic inequalities that include women's unpaid care work and gendered experiences of ill health and men's violence. Particular groups of women will be hardest hit with poverty rates higher for Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black ethnic groups, disabled people, single parents, unpaid carers, young women, women who are pensioners, survivors of abuse, women with insecure immigration status, including those with no recourse to public funds, women in the criminal justice system and care-experienced women and girls.

The disastrous forecast for the rate of inflation and rising costs cannot be divorced from the egregious impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on equality, which has already placed women at greater risk of economic insecurity. Against this baseline, the current cost-of-living crisis will further exacerbate women's economic inequality, pushing many into deeper poverty. This will have far-reaching and prolonged implications for women and those for whom they provide care.

- Soaring energy bills will have an enormous impact on women; women make up the majority of many groups with high energy needs, including older people, disabled people, unpaid carers, and those looking after children in the home.
- Single parents, 92% of whom are women, are set to experience the steepest hikes as a proportion of disposable income and are amongst those at the sharpest end of rising fuel insecurity. Research from One Parent Family Scotland found that spiralling energy, food and fuel costs "are leaving many single parent households destitute."



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- As the Scottish Government's own strategy, Equally Safe, acknowledges, men's violence is a direct consequence of gender inequality and so without mitigating measures rising inequality will lead to an increase in all forms of men's violence against women. Financial abuse is a common experience of domestic abuse which exacerbates women's poverty and diminishes their resilience and options in the face of violence and abuse. 73% of survivors said the cost of living crisis had prevented them from leaving their abusive partner or would make it harder to do so.
- Women are the majority of those in temporary work and on zero-hours contracts in Scotland. BME women, disabled women and young women are particularly over-represented in insecure work. Women in insecure work face additional costs of organising childcare and transport around uncertain and last-minute work schedules, adding to their financial precarity.
- As a result of their caring responsibilities, women face barriers to increasing their working hours and earnings in response to the crisis. For example, the prohibitive cost of childcare and the lack of high-quality flexible working opportunities trap women in low-paid, part-time work.
- Women are also often the 'shock absorbers of poverty', tending to have the main responsibility for the purchase and preparation of food for their children and families and for the management of budgets in poor households. Research by the Living Wage Foundation found that women were considerably more likely to have fallen behind with bills and to have skipped meals due to rising costs.
- Mental health organisations report a gendered crisis in mental health for women and girls, for whom the pandemic has had a "harrowing" and disproportionate impact. Disabled women and young women have been particularly affected. Statistics from the ONS show that 81% of women (compared with 73% of men) are "very or somewhat worried about the rising costs of living".

The starkly gendered dimensions of the cost of the cost of living crisis is clear. Scottish Government's response to the crisis must include a comprehensive intersectional gender analysis of budget proposals to understand how they affect women and men differently. Where possible this analysis should be intersectional, meaning the experiences of women who face multiple discrimination due to race, disability, age, and other marginalised identities are also considered where evidence allows. This requires that the diverse realities of women's lives are considered in budgeting processes, such that funds are targeted where needed most.

In 2020, the First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls called on Scottish Government to integrate intersectional gender budget analysis into the Scottish



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budget process. In response the Scottish Government committed to improving its approach, and the Advisory Council is currently examining progress on implementation as part of its scrutiny work.

With the forthcoming Emergency Budget Review we recognise that the Scottish Government is facing difficult decisions and pressures. **This makes the use of gender budget analysis tools and consideration of equality dimensions within the decision making even more critical.** If this analysis is not used to inform and frame budgetary decision making, then the Emergency Budget Review runs the very real risk of upholding systemic biases in how our public services are designed and delivered and the outcomes they achieve, further entrenching existing inequalities. As such we want to underline that gender budget analysis should not be considered optional in budget processes but rather as foundational and essential for equitable decision making.

The Scottish Government's Emergency Budget Review, and wider responses to the cost of living crisis, must apply intersectional gender budget analysis to allocate spending across portfolios to prevent poverty, destitution and insecurity for women, children and other marginalised groups. This established methodology helps to ensure that funds are targeted to those most in need of support. This analysis should be published to build transparency and accountability, in line with the recommendations from the Scottish Government's Equality Budget Advisory Group.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Ritchie Allan, Executive Director, **Close the Gap**

Catherine Murphy, Executive Director, **Engender**

Sara Cowan, Coordinator, **Scottish Women's Budget Group**

Mariam Ahmed, Chief Executive Officer, **Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre**

Marsha Scott, Chief Executive Officer, **Scottish Women's Aid**

Agnes Tomie, Chair, **Scottish Women's Convention**

Carolyn Currie, Chief Executive, **Women's Enterprise Scotland**

Jennie Snell, Chief Executive Officer, **Young Women's Movement Scotland**

Laura Tomson, Co-Director, **Zero Tolerance**

Shared alongside this letter are:

[Women's Experience of the Cost-of-Living Crisis Research Briefing](#), *Scottish Women's Budget Group and the Poverty Alliance*

[Women and the cost of living: A crisis of deepening inequality](#), *Engender*

[Briefing for Scottish Government Debate: Programme for Government - Cost of living](#)
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