



**First Minister's National Advisory
Council on Women and Girls**

Website Summary

November 2018 Spotlight: Gender and STEM

OUR PURPOSE IS TO DRIVE
ACTION TO ENCOURAGE
**GENDER
EQUALITY
IN SCOTLAND**

**#GENERATION
EQUAL**



YOU SAID – WE LISTENED

In November 2018, we invited public feedback on the Spotlight topic of gender equality and STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths). We'd like to give a huge thank you to everyone who shared their experiences and ideas.

A full report has been given to the NACWG, and a summary version is shared below.

Please note: these reports summarise the responses received to this open call for submissions. They do not represent the views of the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (we are seeking feedback to gain more insight) nor do they represent a majority view or the view of the Scottish population. They represent the views of those organisations or individuals who have chosen, proactively, to respond.

Who did we hear from?

We had a great response and heard from both individuals and 'Wee Circle' discussions.

We heard from a range of genders, ethnicities, religions, ages, as well as from people with a disability.

WE ASKED THREE QUESTIONS:

- Q1. WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST EQUALITY ISSUES, IN SCOTLAND, AROUND WOMEN AND GIRLS IN STEM?**
- Q2. WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE, IN SCOTLAND, TO IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN STEM?**
- Q3. WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD NACWG RECOMMEND TO IMPROVE GENDER EQUALITY, IN STEM?**



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WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Feedback spanned the education and career journey, as shown below.





MAIN ISSUES



1.

EARLY YEARS AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Respondents highlighted how gender stereotyping of toys and job roles in society might affect children from the earliest years. Respondents also felt that more could be done in primary schools to tap into children's natural curiosity about STEM issues, and practical learning; also to emphasise the positive contribution STEM makes, improving lives, solving problems and helping people.



2. SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Several responses questioned allowing young people to drop science and technology subjects at the end of S2 (age 12-13). Respondents noted it's very hard to 're-enter' a STEM path if young people develop different interests and career ideas after S2; and questioned if the current approach put Scottish young people at a competitive disadvantage internationally. Other suggested actions included more female teaching staff; more support for girls without family experience in STEM; more sustained relationships between schools and universities; tackling the image of STEM subjects as 'too hard'; and re-framing STEM to appeal to what young women want to get out of a career.



3. UNIVERSITIES

Respondents felt increasing the 'pipeline' from schools was key, but wondered if this could be accelerated through actions like quotas and bursaries. Within Universities, respondents felt Equality and Diversity teams could be more visible and influential; that gendered systems and structures should be recognised and challenged (recognising the additional challenges faced by women of colour and women with a disability). Ongoing work was felt to be needed to tackle sexual harassment. Feedback suggested increased data sharing between Scottish universities might help build an evidence base of what works – to support more women into STEM courses and careers.



4.

ALTERNATIVE PATHS (APPRENTICESHIPS, COLLEGE, RE-TRAINING IN STEM)

Feedback suggested that better understanding and promotion is needed around STEM apprenticeships and college courses, and that the range could be expanded. Respondents also highlighted a role for re-imagining opportunities for re-training in STEM, as a career change, or later in life.



5. EMPLOYMENT

The feedback recognised that many of the issues here were not exclusive to employment in STEM fields – including the gender pay gap, childcare and flexible working. However, many people felt the fast-moving nature of much STEM work (as well as offshore work, and certain other environments) could compound these issues. Several respondents suggested building on the Royal Society’s ‘Tapping All Our Talents’ reports.



6.

OTHER SUGGESTED ACTIONS

Feedback suggested there's interest in more shared resources to encourage women into STEM, rather than duplication of effort. Respondents suggested connecting with existing initiatives e.g. Digital World (part of Skills Development Scotland), The Royal Society's Athena Swan Awards and Equate Scotland representatives. It was suggested a retrospective study might help identify what factors had encouraged or supported women currently working in STEM fields.

This is a summary of the response and can't highlight every individual point raised. However full feedback has been shared with the NACWG.



THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their feedback – it is valuable.

We'd love as many people as possible to share their ideas on our next Spotlight topic. We have a new one every month.