

The importance of considering gender in waste behaviours and waste management

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Why waste is a gendered issue

In the waste management industry
In waste jobs
In waste management behaviours
In consumption



In the waste management industry

- Considered an 'engineering' issue demanding 'hard' solutions;
- Dominated by men, with solutions modelled on perceived needs;
- Sector in UK employs 141,000 - 18% of employees are women:
 - 72% of all administrative and secretarial staff
 - 15% of all professionals

Table 1: Percentage distribution of men and women in academic research posts in the EU, 2010

(Derived from data presented in Eurostat – Statistics on research and development (online data code: rd_p_persocc) in EC, 2013)

	Male All	Female All	Male S&E	Female S&E
PhD students	51	49	62	38
PhD graduates	54	46	65	35
Grade C	56	44	67	33
Grade B	63	37	77	23
Grade A	80	20	89	11

In the waste management industry: impacts

- Where waste management draws mainly on engineering for the career route, will perpetuate gender imbalance;
- Decisions made will favour both the technical, and disposal;
- Narrow experience and failure to understand different waste behaviours and what to do about them;
- Persistent failure to understand the importance of gender

'This is extra terrestrial for us'

In waste management behaviours



- Women take most of the home recycling decisions...and decisions on buying food, clothing, cleaning products etc, therefore waste disposal/reduction strategies need to be in tune with their needs;
- women's lives expose them more directly to environmental problems via poverty, role & biology;
- women's concern about the environment is generally revealed as greater than men's
- women's profile in decision making is low therefore lack of involvement in developing strategies

Food, clothing, nappies

- In 2012, WRAP research reported 7m tonnes of food were being wasted in households (15% reduction from 2007, even though 4% rise in number of households; 21% reduction of avoidable food waste)
- Global footprint of UK clothing consumption:
 - 1.8m tonnes of material
 - 5% of weight of household waste collected by local authorities/year
 - 70kg/household/year = >100 pairs of jeans
 - 'Blink and you miss it fashion'
- Disposable nappies constitute c3% of UK's waste stream.



EU gender mainstreaming MWM



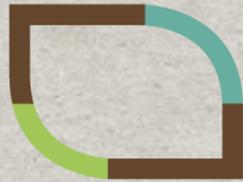
- To assess the extent to which national waste plans incorporate gender mainstreaming as an integral component of planning and implementation.
- To compare waste management strategies of local authorities in **UK, Ireland** and **Portugal** to analyse respective gender-differentiated impacts and the extent to which these are considered.
- Prepare model guidelines so that women's and men's relative concerns, needs and aspirations re waste management are taken into account.

EU gender mainstreaming MWM: key findings

- Waste management is a highly masculinised policy area in all three case study countries
- Officers, elected representatives and the public are generally unaware of the likely gendered impact of waste management & avoid 'favouring' one particular group
- There are gendered impacts of local waste management planning
- Gendered impacts not consistently taken into account in waste plans
- Current frameworks for waste management are not suited to take into account effects on the relative situation of women and men
- Where equal opportunities expertise has been involved in decision making, there was greater gender sensitivity (and often more effective waste management) Often good practice in gender sensitivity in other areas which is not transferred, e.g. in race awareness
- Strong statements/policy at national and transnational levels have no mechanism for being devolved to local level.

Ways forward

- Implement **gender+** balance in MWM at all levels
- Consider broadening mix of skills in MWM
- Ensure public participation involves men and women from different backgrounds and with different experiences
- Assess gender impacts of all MWM policies



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