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and Gaelic
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Dear Convener,

FURTHER EVIDENCE AND FOLLOW UP INFORMATION

I am writing to provide the committee with the further information I offered to share when I appeared before you on 01 October.

Data Disaggregation

Under the Scottish Government's mainstreaming approach, and in alignment with the Equality Outcomes for 2025 to 2029, Scottish Government and its Agencies continue to improve the collection, analysis and publication of equality evidence. Much of the equality evidence collected across policy areas is published on the Scottish Government's '[Equality Evidence Finder](#)' website: equalityevidence.scot. This includes data, where available, on the protected characteristics (age, disability, ethnicity, sex, religion, sexual orientation and transgender status), as well as socio-economic status.

The Scottish Government's [Equality Evidence strategy](#) sets out our approach to improving and strengthening Scotland's equality evidence base over a three-year period to the end of 2025. As part of the work being done to improve the equality evidence base, in October 2021 an Equality Data Audit was undertaken within the Scottish Government. The purpose of this audit was to identify where evidence gaps existed across analytical areas (e.g. health, justice) and across characteristics. A total of 199 datasets were included in returns across 10 analytical areas, of these age and sex (or gender) were collected in over 6 in 10 datasets, and breakdowns by these characteristics published from around 5 in 10 datasets. This Equality Data Audit will be re-run in early 2026 to aid the development of the next Equality Evidence Strategy and give an up-to-date view of how thoroughly disaggregated equalities data is being collected and where gaps remain.

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NSET Annual Report granular data

Specifically, the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) reports on a range of measures in order to evidence our progress towards transforming the Scottish economy. These are fully sourced within the Annual Report and links provided to the publications which provide further detail. The table below summarises where these sources include further disaggregation, either by personal characteristics, geography or business information. This wider evidence is helping us to measure impact and understand what works.

National Strategy Indicator	Sub-Scotland disaggregation published
Early-stage entrepreneurial activity	Gender, ethnicity, geography
Number of high growth registered businesses	Gender, ethnicity, geography
Level of capital investment	Sector, occupation
Number of planned inward investment jobs	Sector, geography
Exports as a share of GDP	Sector
Digital skills in business	Sector, geography, size
Skills shortage vacancy rate	Sector, size
Participation rate	Gender, age, geography, ethnicity, disability
Percentage of adults with low/no qualifications	Gender, age, geography
Skills under-utilisation	Sector, size
Percentage of people in employment receiving job related training	Gender, geography, age, sector
Percentage of employees 18+ earning the real living wage or more	Age, sector, geography
Employment rate	Gender, geography
Median gender pay gap	Age, sector, occupation, geography
Employee voice	Gender, age, size, sector, occupation
Proportion of employees in contractually secure employment	Gender, age
Economic inactivity rate	Gender, geography

With regard to employability support, we routinely publish statistics for No One Left Behind which includes the number of participants supported and the outcomes they have achieved. These are disaggregated for males and females. Data are also available for participants who are parents, also disaggregated for males and females. Statistics for No One Left Behind and Fair Start Scotland are available at:

<https://www.gov.scot/collections/scotlands-devolved-employment-services-statistics/>

Examples of Disaggregated Data

The [Gender Export Gap report](#), published on 7 February 2025, includes gender segregated data on Scottish women-led SMEs in relation to exporting. The report also provides a series

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of recommendations for the Scottish Government, which includes an important recommendation on collating gender segregated data for exporting. The Scottish Government has established the [Gender Export Gap Working Group](#) with delivery partners and stakeholders, which is taking forward the report's recommendations. Progress on implementing the recommendations will be set out in the next Vision for Trade Annual Report.

In entrepreneurship, the Scottish Small Business Survey contains official statistics on small businesses in Scotland and is now disaggregated by gender - [Small Business Survey Scotland: 2023-2024 - gov.scot](#). Furthermore, the independent Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Survey, which is used as a National Performance Framework measure, contains data disaggregated by gender, age and location - [GEM Global Entrepreneurship Monitor](#).

Within Regional Economic Development, the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal's Integrated Regional Employability and Skills (IRES) Programme has data which contains gender breakdowns for three of the six workstreams. The IRES dashboard giving project data up to 9 October 2025 is available to view:

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrljoiMGYxZTg4MjMtYjAwNS00ODQ4LWI1NzctY2U2YjMxMzA2NDVliiwidCI6ImUyYjExM2NjLTBiOTAtdmFjYi04MmQwLWRjNmJiOTA1Y2JhYiJ9>

Across the Scottish Government work is being undertaken to collect gender disaggregated data. As part of the application process, the Scottish Proof of Concept Fund applicants were asked to provide diversity data. This was collected on a voluntary basis and held separately to the main application questions, so the diversity data did not impact decision making on funding. The data collected includes information on gender, as well as ethnicity, age and socio-economic status. The intention is to publish this data but in the meantime the application form shows which diversity questions applicants were asked (Section 3):

[Supporting documents - Research commercialisation - Proof of Concept Fund: guidance - gov.scot](#) and the data protection impact assessment was published showing the intention to collect and publish diversity data: [Scotland's Proof of Concept Fund: data protection impact assessment \(DPIA\) - gov.scot](#).

In addition, the Scottish Government has commissioned an independent evaluation of our Fair Work First conditionality policy which will provide an opportunity to look closely at how effectively Fair Work First is delivering our policy intent, and to consider what more we can do to strengthen our approach. The evaluation aims to assess Fair Work First implementation, impact on organisations and workers, and differences before and after conditionality, while identifying good practices and challenges such as organisational changes and barriers. The evaluation will conclude in summer 2026 and will include information on the disaggregated impacts of the application of Fair Work First.

Scotland's workforce composition (SME vs larger businesses)

The latest data is for 2024 and shows that, for the workforce as a whole (including both public and private sectors) large employers accounted for 56.1% of the total workforce in Scotland, compared to 43.9% in SMEs. However, when considering just the private sector,

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large employers accounted for 44.1% of the private sector workforce compared to 55.9% in SMEs.

Measuring productivity

The productivity figures included in the NSET Annual Progress Report (£42.50 per hour for 2023 and £40.50 per hour for 2022) were in nominal terms. Stripping out the effects of inflation, this was equivalent to a fall of 1.1% in output per hour worked in 2023 compared to the previous year. This comes after strong growth of 3.8% in 2022 compared to 2021.¹

As the committee highlighted, productivity statistics for 2024 are now available and the latest data reports that Scottish output per hour worked is provisionally estimated to have fallen by 1.5% in real terms compared to 2023.²

Despite this volatility, over the longer term since the financial crisis, between 2008 and 2024, productivity in Scotland has increased by an average of 0.8% per year in real terms. This compares to average annual growth of 0.4% for the UK as a whole, and 0.8% per year for the EU as a whole.

Productivity is a key measure for assessing the performance of the Scottish economy and more detailed analysis will be included in future reports, including analysis in real terms as well as comparisons with other parts of the UK and other countries where available.

AI Strategy for Scotland

As discussed with Committee, work on Scotland's new AI Strategy is in train. The new Strategy is expected to be published in the Spring of 2026, and the Scottish Government would be happy to assist Committee with any enquiries it may have, from that point on.

I trust that this additional evidence is useful for the committee's scrutiny, and I look forward to further discussion as part of your Budget scrutiny work in January.

Yours sincerely,



KATE FORBES

¹ <https://data.gov.scot/labour-productivity-2023/>

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/labour-productivity-statistics-2024/pages/key-points/>

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