

THE GENDER PAY GAP AMONG ACADEMIC ECONOMISTS IN THE UK: New survey evidence

A new survey of UK economics departments finds that there continues to be a substantial pay gap between men and women. The study by **Karen Mumford** and **Cristina Sechel**, to be presented at the annual congress of the European Economic Association in Manchester in August 2019, reveals that job rank is an important determinant of the gender pay gap.

Roughly half of the gender pay gap is related to within-rank pay differences and the other half due to differences in the probability for women of promotion into higher ranks. Men are 11% more likely than women to be a Professor and 7.2% less likely to be a Lecturer, and male Professors earn 11.5% more than do female Professors.

Among Professors, the rewards associated with individual productivity characteristics and promotion are typically twice as high for men as women. While men who have received an outside offer in the previous five years are 50% more likely to be a Professor than are women who have.

More...

Although the relative position of women in UK academic economics has increased dramatically over the last two decades, in 2016 women held only 16% of the Chairs. Unlike the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) disciplines with similarly low female participation rates, economics has attracted very little attention from university governing bodies or publicly funded institutions seeking to address potential gender inequities and facilitate female engagement.

The researchers surveyed UK academic economists, collecting information on individual characteristics and the workplaces in which they are employed to explore the current determinants of pay and job rank.

They find a substantial raw (unconditional) gender pay gap of 15.1% and an unexplained (conditional) gap of 12.7%. The great majority of the gap is related to men receiving higher returns from being older or married; and from workplace characteristics.

There is little explanation of the gap from measures of individual productivity, although men (positively) and women (negatively) are rewarded very differently for having excellent teaching evaluations.

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In contrast to national gender pay gaps, and evidence from other disciplines, the gender pay gap among academic economists in the UK has not fallen since the turn of the century. The gap is substantial, and it is strongly influenced by the relative concentration of men among Professors where the unexplained gender pay differential is considerable.

From 2017, organisations in the UK with 250 or more employees are legally required to publish their gender pay gap annually (<https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/actions-to-close-the-gap>) and the Equality Challenge Unit provides advice on how to go about reducing these gaps at the institutional level (Government Equalities Office, 2016).

The extension of the Athena SWAN (AS) Charter beyond STEM disciplines from 2015 should help to provide greater awareness of equity at the department and the institutional (University) level for academic Economists.

Furthermore, the specific commitment in the AS Charter to ‘tackling the gender pay gap’ should increase institutional awareness of within-department gender pay gaps.

This study shows that men and women receive substantially different rewards for the same characteristics; detailed pay and promotion reviews at the institution level for the senior rank holders would help to reveal this differential treatment and indicate appropriate adjustments.

Adjusting the salary of female Professors in a one-off uplift (as the well intentioned Vice Chancellor at the University of Essex did in 2016) to close the Professorial pay gap will be of limited effect, not least because these results suggest that women are 11% less likely to be promoted to Professor.

Implementing pay and promotion reviews, however, without recognising the unconscious bias and institutional cultures that have led to the current outcomes will also be of limited use. These results imply that universities need to reconsider the implementation of their equal pay policies in economics departments, especially in the old universities.

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