



Trades Union Congress

Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE
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UK Statistics Authority
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date: 27th October 2014
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Dear Andrew

I am writing to draw your attention to a recent HMT announcement on women's employment. The full announcement can be seen here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/growing-female-employment-in-highly-skilled-jobs-across-the-economy> and is also enclosed. The Chancellor of the Exchequer welcomed the publication on twitter, remarking that 'new @hmtreasury research shows women playing ever larger role in economy. Female employment growing in highly skilled jobs in all sectors'.

The announcement says that 'HM Treasury's analysis showed that under this government female employment has increased in every sector of the economy with nearly 80 per cent of the increase being in highly skilled occupations.' No information is however provided on how this analysis was undertaken or where it could be accessed.

The TUC has however obtained a copy of the press release which was issued to support this statement, although as of the morning of 27th October 2014 this release was not yet available publically on the HMT website. For your information, a copy of the apparently private press release is enclosed.

The TUC believes that the release is at best partial in its analysis of trends in women's employment, and at worst is misleading. It also seems to us to fall well short of the standards that government statistical analysis and publications should aspire to meet. For example:

- The release presents women's employment growth by sector without providing any data on women's employment numbers or rates in those sectors. As a result of this, chart 1 in the release is arguably misleading, presenting significant percentage growth rates for the number of women employed in four headline sectors without any information on how many more women this means work in each area. It seems, for example, unlikely to the TUC that a 23% increase in the number of women working in agriculture and mining will have a particularly substantial impact on women's

employment levels overall. What's more, without access to the data tables or sources, it is impossible for us or anyone else to accurately check as to what the true meaning of this chart is.

- The release contains a pie chart which breaks down women's employment by whether it is 'highly skilled', 'medium skilled' or 'low skilled'. These are not ONS categories that the TUC recognises, and as no information is provided in the release as to how they have been compiled, it is impossible to understand which occupational groups have been included.
- The only labels on each of the charts say 'the last four years'. Without any information on the time periods used it is hard to properly assess the information provided in them.
- The phrase 'all sectors' appears to be used to describe services, agriculture, construction, and manufacturing. These are very high level sectoral classifications and there are many divergent employment trends in sectors beneath them. Using the fact of aggregate jobs growth in these four sectors to claim that 'female employment is growing in highly skilled jobs in all sectors' is, in our view, questionable.
- The TUC understands that the ONS recommends that analysis of this nature is based upon workforce jobs data, sourced from employers' surveys, as they provide a more reliable industrial breakdown than the Labour Force Survey. However HMT has chosen to use LFS data.

There are wider criticisms we could make of the release, but I hope these brief points serve to illustrate our concerns.

Incidentally, the TUC's own previous analysis of these trends suggests a very different picture to that the Treasury has presented. It seems to us that female employment growth in highly skilled areas has been driven in significant part by a rise in employment in sectors including health and education rather than in the areas of mining, agriculture and manufacturing suggested by HMT's presentation of the data.

Given the lack of publically available information to substantiate HMT's statements, and the limited and arguably misleading nature of the private press release issued to journalists, I would appreciate it if you could investigate whether HMT has, in this instance, adhered to the high standards of data presentation and analysis that your office asks government departments to meet. In particular, Protocol 2 of the Code of Practice for official statistics states that departments should:

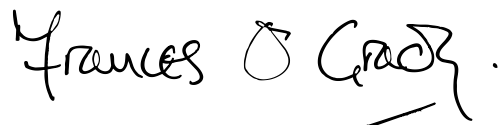
"Ensure that government statements issued alongside official statistics, and referring to, or based upon, them:

- a) contain a prominent link to the statistical release and clearly refer to the source of the statistics;
- b) are labelled clearly as policy statements (or ministerial statements) and are readily distinguished from a statistical release; and
- c) meet basic professional standards (for example, statistics should be cited accurately, and charts should be drawn in an accurate and impartial way)."

In the TUC's view, on this occasion HMT do not appear to have met this standard. The public statement on the analysis is not accompanied by a press release (which appears only to have been made privately available). In addition, the analysis in the private press release is, in our view, of questionable quality.

I very much look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Frances O'Grady'.

Frances O'Grady
General Secretary

Encs: HMT Analysis of Women in the Economy Press Release

Cc: Rt Hon George Osborne MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer