

Gender Differences in Access to Coronavirus Government Support

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted women's employment and self-employment, exacerbating inequalities in the labour market.

The Government have put schemes in place to protect workers' earnings and jobs, but there have been clear differences between women and men in access, eligibility and the level of support received.

Women and 'furlough'

Across Yorkshire and the Humber region, women make up 52% of those on furlough, despite women being only 47.3% of the overall UK workforce. Data from HMRC show that 171,100 women were furloughed at the end of February 2021, compared to 158,200 men. The total number of people on furlough in the region at the end of February 2021 was 329,300.

In the parliamentary constituency of York Central the difference was even higher, with women making up 54% of those on furlough. This is due to the composition of the local labour market. More women than men work in sectors that were shut-down like retail and hospitality or accommodation and food services. The city's reliance on tourism means that women have been disproportionately impacted.

Local economic recovery plans must take a gendered approach to ensure they target those hardest hit by the pandemic.

Self-employed women and SEISS

By March 2020, there were 1.5 million self-employed women in the UK, who made up 34.8% of all self-employed workers (those whose main source of income came from being self-employed).

In the Yorkshire and the Humber region, by the end of January 2021 only 28% of all SEISS claims had been made by women (compared to the UK average of 28.8%). 44,000 self-employed women had made claims totalling just over £93 million. This compares with 112,000 claims made by men (totalling £319 million).

This figure is lower than the proportion of self-employed women, hinting at issues many women faced in accessing the self-employment income support scheme.

Of those eligible, fewer women than men made a SEISS claim in the Yorkshire and the Humber region: only 62% of eligible women claimed, compared to 67% of eligible men. The figures in the parliamentary constituency of York Central are even more stark, with only 60% of eligible women making claims, compared to 70% of eligible men.

Women also claimed smaller amounts, at an average of £2,100 for the region compared with £2,800 for men. These smaller claim amounts correspond to the fact that self-employed women's earnings are lower than men's.

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