

23.02.28

5 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Chief Minister regarding actions to address gender income inequality (OQ.28/2023)

Following the publication of the median earnings report, will the Chief Minister outline what actions, if any, are being taken by Government to address gender income inequality, which now appears to be at its highest level in recent history?

Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter (The Chief Minister):

As a result of additional investment into Statistics Jersey since the beginning of this Government, it is now possible to use administrative data that is already held by Government to produce this median earnings report. By using such data, Statistics Jersey have been able to publish experimental, all economy gender pay-gap data for Jersey for the very first time from June 2016 to June 2022 with detailed breakdowns by both industry and age. This report indeed shows that the gender pay gap is at 12 per cent, and that is its highest in 2022. Although international comparisons show that it is lower than the O.E.C.D. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) average and lower than the U.K. (United Kingdom), I do not believe that it is acceptable for us to have a gap of that size or indeed of any size in Jersey. Within the public sector we have been seeking to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds and to support talent at all levels. Recent changes in family friendly employment and benefit legislation which apply across the economy have improved support to working parents, equally available to all parents irrespective of gender. Many organisations in the private sector are also supplementing those family friendly employment practices with their own practices and policies to address gender inequality at the recruitment and talent development phases. At present, mandatory reporting on gender inequality for such companies is not required but we will keep this under review.

3.5.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Again, I know we have reports, that is why I am asking the question, and we have had reports and we have got data. The question is: there seems to be a cultural embeddedness of this inequality and I would like to know what the Government is doing to address that cultural embeddedness and the opportunity to physically - and that is the wrong word but it is the only one I can think of - reduce that inequality in our economy and in our workforce because there are lots of reports. There are only few actions and I just want to know actions are going to be done.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I am grateful to the Deputy for raising this question in this forum. It is absolutely the right thing to do.

[10:30]

Of course, across the public sector I think we are countercyclical, if the Deputy is of the view that there is a cultural embeddedness, because all 3 of the key leadership roles in and across the public sector, both the Greffier, the chief executive and of course the Chief Minister are all females in those roles, which is something that we celebrate. Across the whole of the Island we have to firstly recognise that our gender pay gap is lower than the O.E.C.D. average and the U.K., as I said in my initial response. We are all, as a community, seeking to reduce it further because it is something that we want to see lower still. We can always do better. We are addressing the matters that cause it. But just today I think it was interesting to hear that in the United Kingdom the representation of women at board level has now reached in excess of 40 per cent, and that was achieved without

having to impose mandatory quotas. I think it is a good example of how, without having to achieve mandatory rules and regulations, good things can be achieved.

3.5.2 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The Chief Minister will recall the fantastic time that her and I had together working on the Gender Pay Gap Review Panel in the previous term of office, which examined this very subject and produced an excellent report and recommendations. That report has not yet been given an official response by the Government. Could the Chief Minister indicate when her Government is likely to publish such a response?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Thank you for the question and I do recall fondly that experience. It was an important piece of work and I think the first response is now out and the second response is being worked on as we speak.

3.5.3 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Given that the Chief Minister would have played a role herself in establishing some of the recommendations that were in that body's report for how the gender pay gap can be addressed, could she treat us to an indication in this Assembly about whether she will be accepting her own recommendations?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I should imagine that would be the case.

3.5.4 Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Will the Chief Minister ensure that gender pay reporting is explicitly stated in future publications, starting from 2024 across the Government?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Apologies, I missed the beginning of that question. Could the Deputy repeat it?

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Indeed. Will the Chief Minister ensure that gender pay inequality is published across salary bands for each government department, starting from 2024?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I will indeed endeavour to find out whether that is an achievable request before committing to do so but I see that that is a sensible suggestion and I am grateful to the Deputy.

3.5.5 Deputy M.R. Scott of St. Brelade:

The Chief Minister mentioned that the findings were the result of experimental data produced by Statistics Jersey. I just wondered if she could outline the process by which that was produced and how that compares to the way in which data is normally produced by that department.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

This was a result of some additional resource that was provided to Statistics Jersey; I think they have offered States Members a technical briefing. I would not wish to enter into that myself because I would leave that to our independent statisticians who have much greater knowledge of their area than I do.

3.5.6 Deputy R.J. Ward:

It is obviously pleasing to hear that women are taking the top jobs but let us talk about working-class women who are taking perhaps more than one job, are balancing family and all sorts of other demands: high rents, low rights, low security in the workforce. What is the Government going to do to reduce the inequality among working people, those who are not at the top of the pile when it comes to economic achievements? That is the real sense of achievement that can be made in income inequality and if we do not do that we have not achieved.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Well of course the Deputy is right but we are all balancing many demands whatever our gender and whatever our position in life, and of course there are always things that we can do to enable that. As a Government we are currently looking at the causes of the shortage we have in childcare at the moment and the high cost of childcare, and that is one route to certainly supporting families and people to become more economically active. It was also interesting to note in the pay gap statistics that in 2020 during COVID and lockdown the gap was narrower than it is currently, or than it was last year, and I think that is certainly an area that we would like to understand better, to understand how the changes to work during that year impacted upon people differently in terms of pay.