

# **Gender Diversity in the School Workforce across the UK home nations†**

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Due to the budgetary pressures of the 2008 financial crisis the then UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborn, announced a public sector pay freeze in 2010. In 2013 the pay freeze was replaced by a 1 percent cap on public sector pay that remained in place until 2018.

As a consequence of the 2010 public sector pay freeze more experienced teachers' salaries have fallen by more than 9 percent (Sibieta 2022). Not only has this made teaching less attractive to prospective entrants – the Department for Education have consistently missed recruitment targets since 2013 – but there are also concerns over the implications for the composition of the school workforce. [My latest research](#) investigates how the composition of the school workforce has changed in England, over the last decade, and contrast these changes with the other UK home nations (Fullard 2022).

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## **Teacher diversity in England**

Teaching is a female dominated occupation across the OECD (Fullard 2020). While men have, historically, been overrepresented in senior positions, the school workforce in England is no different. The latest data shows that the school workforce is becoming even more female dominated in England. The proportion of male secondary school teachers is at a record low (35 percent) and has stagnated in primary schools since 2016 (14 percent).

Looking at gender representation at the school level we find that 24 percent of state-funded schools in England do not have a single male classroom teacher and 47 percent of state schools do not have a male in the senior leadership team.

## **Comparisons across the home nations**

While there is a striking lack of gender diversity in England, [my latest research shows](#) that the situation is more acute in Wales where 30 percent of schools do not have a male classroom teacher. This is higher than England (24 percent) and every region in England apart from the East Midlands (also 30 percent).

Norther Ireland has generally had the lowest proportion of schools without a male teacher among the home nations (28 percent vs 39 percent in Wales and 32 percent in England in 2010). However, the proportion of schools without a male teacher has fallen significantly more in Wales (9.4 percentage points) and England (8.3 percentage points) compared to Northern Ireland (3 percentage points) over the last decade. As a consequence, the proportion of schools without a male teacher in Northern Ireland is marginally higher than in England today (25 percent vs 24 percent).

## **Representation and pupil attainment**

The gender differences in school representation we observe across the home nations might, at least partially, explain the [differences in cognitive attainment](#). Specifically, boys in Wales generally have lower levels of cognitive attainment compared to their English counterparts and they are more likely to be in a school without a male teacher. Similarly, boys in Northern Ireland generally outperform their English counterparts and they are more likely to be in a school with a male teacher (Sibieta and Fullard 2021).

While this is not intended to be interpreted as causal, it supports an empirical literature that shows that teacher diversity influences pupil attainment and

seems like a promising area of future research (Ammermüller and Dolton 2006, Dee 2005, Hermann 2017).

## **Concluding remarks**

While attracting men into teaching is important for purposes of diversity and representation well as meeting recruitment targets in STEM subjects, at least in the short run, this highlights a wider issue facing the school workforce – teaching has become less attractive over the last decade. Indeed, Fullard (2021) suggests that 3 in 10 classroom teachers would be financially better off if they left the profession. Combine the decline in pay with the pressures of teaching during the pandemic - it is no surprise that policymakers are struggling to recruit and retain the quantity, quality and composition of teachers required.

We are very fortunate that personal motivations ensure that there are enough professionals willing to do this critically important job. We might not be so lucky in the future.

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