



Government
Economic
Service

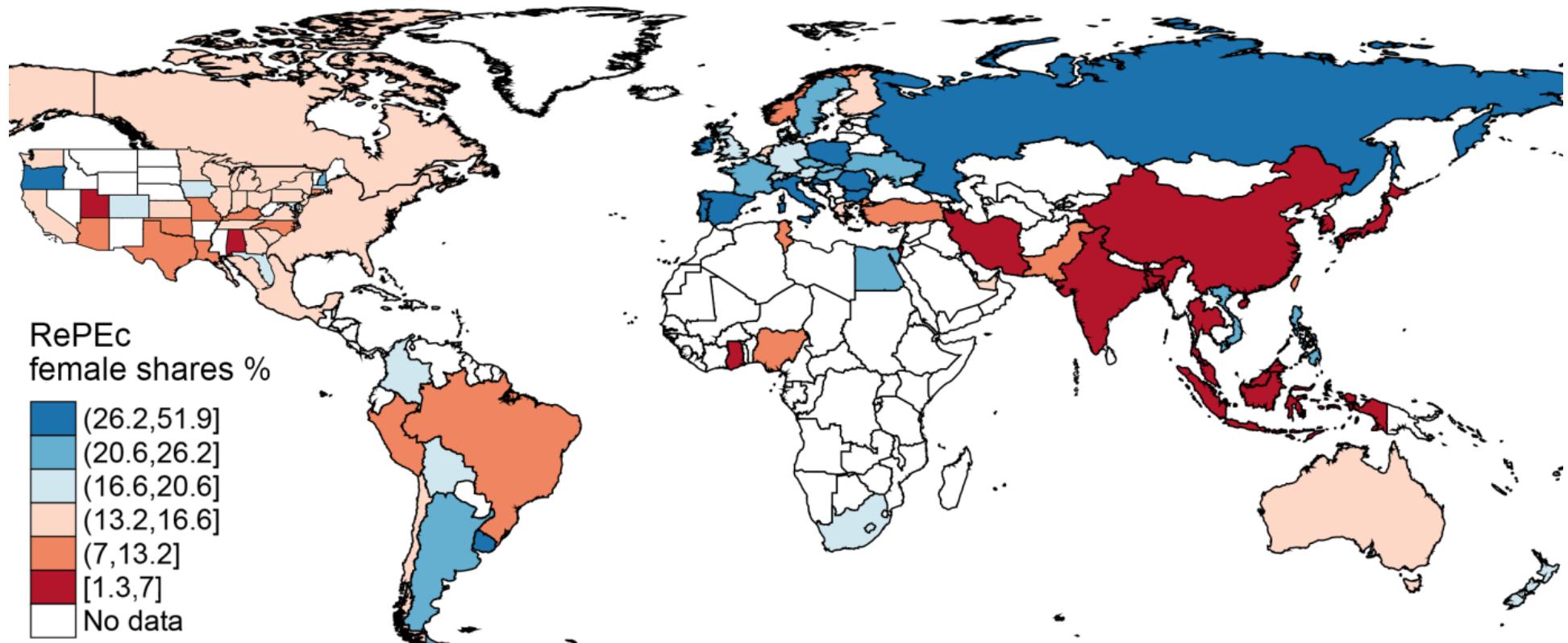
Gender in the GES

Jenny Bates
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial
Strategy (BEIS)

About the Government Economic Service

- Professional body for Economists in government – part of Analytical Profession
- Established in 1964 – one of the oldest professions in government
- More than 2,000 members across Whitehall departments, Devolved Administrations and public sector bodies (eg Office for National Statistics, Office for Budget Responsibility etc)
- Joint Heads: Sam Beckett (BEIS) and Clare Lombardelli (HM Treasury)
- **GES 2020 Strategy:** “*to champion economics in government, to ensure that policy is informed by the best possible economics analysis delivered by the best possible economists*”.

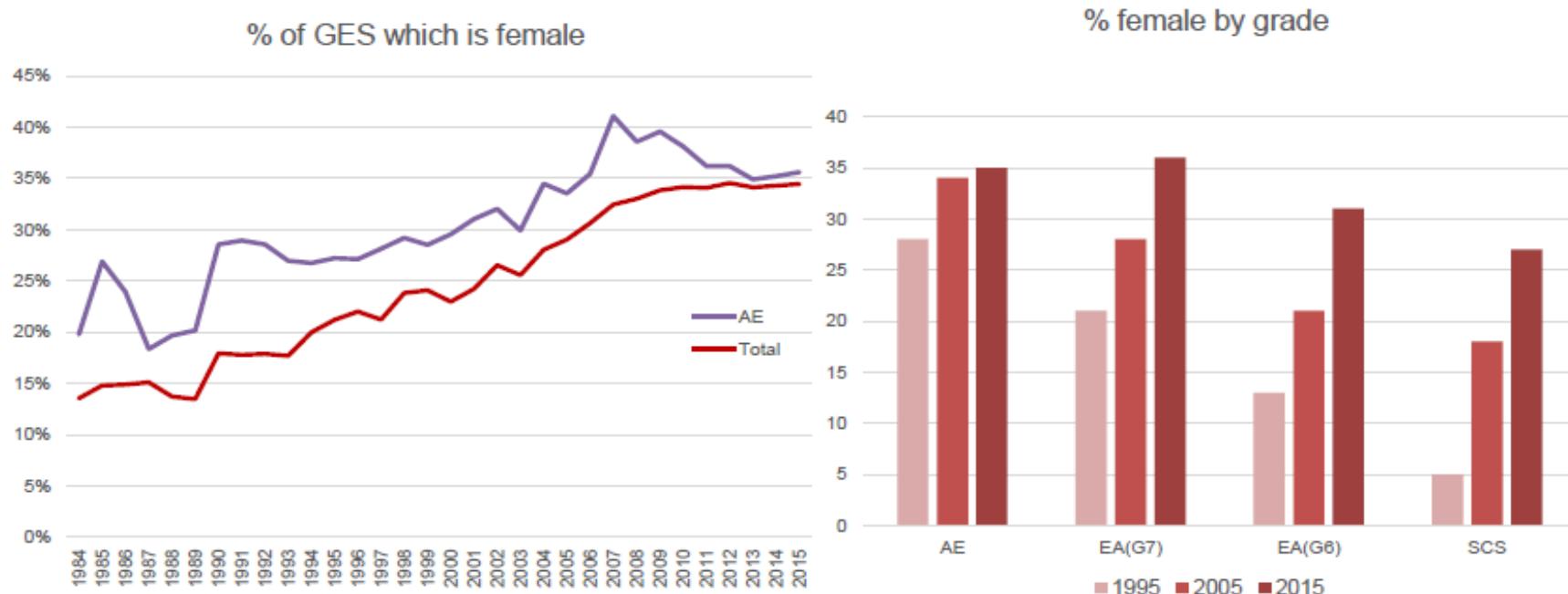
The Problem: Proportion of female economists by country



Source: Female representation in Economics, RePEc, January 2018

See: *Economics: where are the women?* Boring & Zignago (2018)

Do we have the same challenge in the GES?



Around 35% of GES staff at all levels are women. c27% female economists in SCS positions.

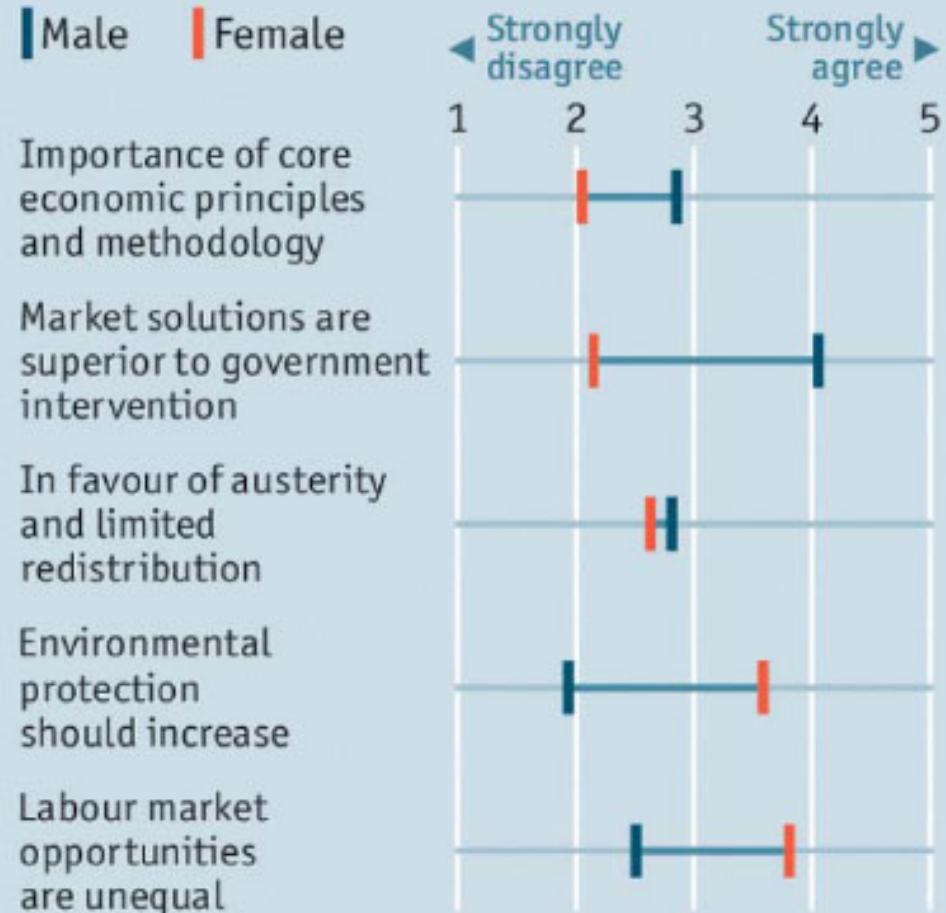
New Degree level Apprenticeship programme: c2,500 applications, more than a third women

Why is this important?

- Basic fairness and equity - Both for gender and the other protected characteristics.
- Performance of organisations - Organisations with diverse teams tend to perform better than their counterparts.
- Bias/Quality of advice – Economic analysis and policy advice being provided may suffer from implicit bias and/or lack of diversity may impact the questions being addressed: economics is a social science.
- Pay Equality - Under-representation in professions like economics is one factor behind civil service gender pay gap.

Different agendas

Economists' opinions, by sex

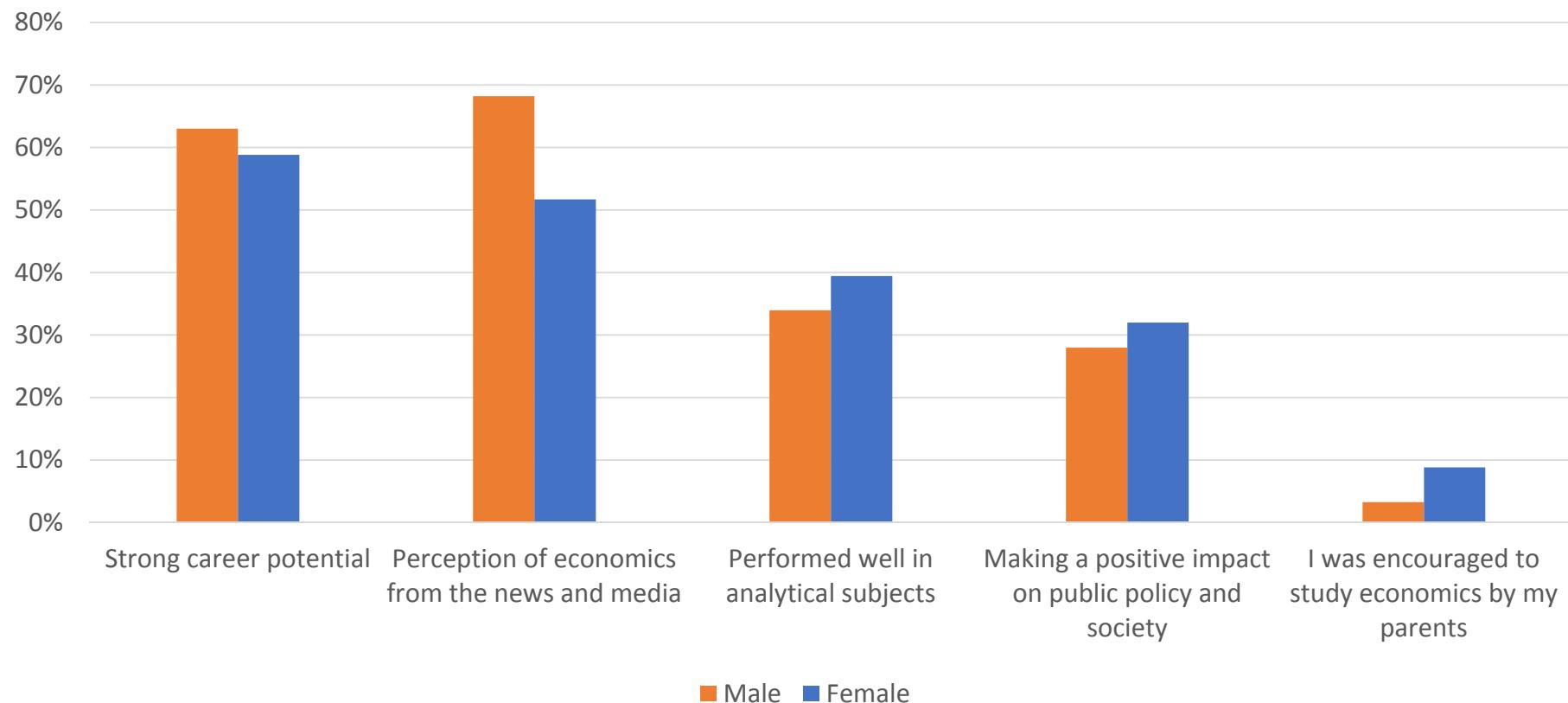


Source: "Gender and European Economic Policy", by A. May, M. McGarvey, D. Kucera, February 2018

Our research

- 2018 survey of gender in the economics profession in government looking at pathways into economics and attitudes to the subject
- GES and GESR members
- Over 800 responses among GES members— men (54%) and women (44%)
- Supplemented by focus groups on educational choices

What were the key factors in you deciding to study Economics at degree level?



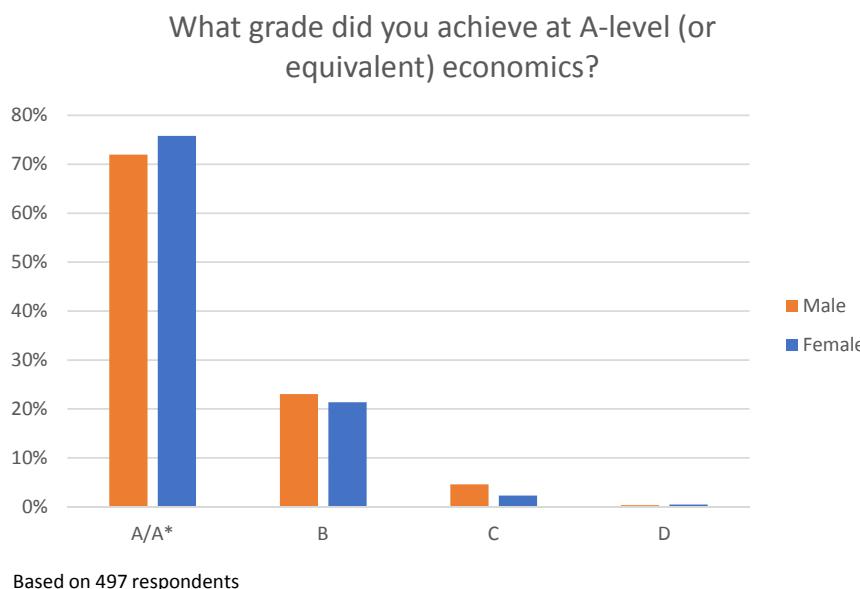
Based on 687 responses

What were the key factors in you deciding to study Economics at degree level?

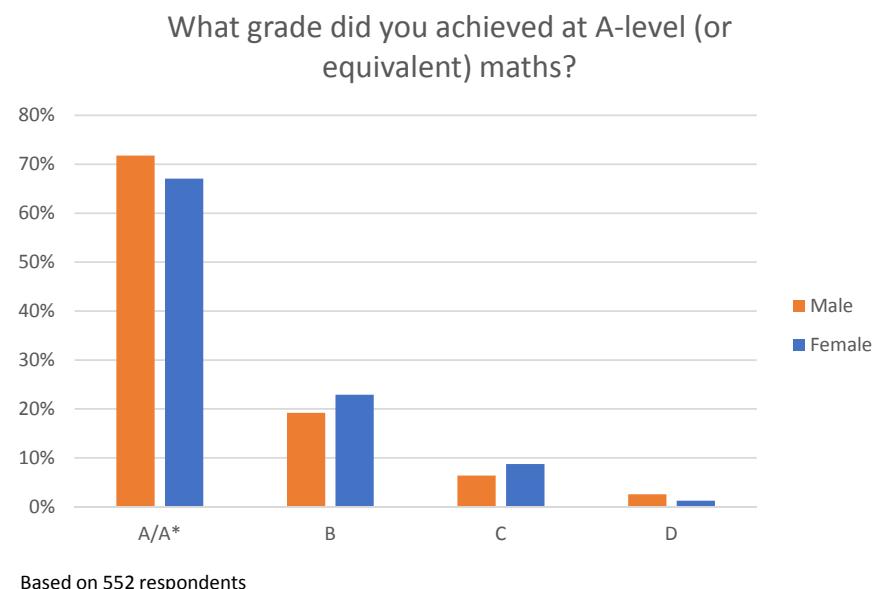
Results from the focus group conducted on a sample of GES placement students suggest that:

- Most students enjoyed studying economics at GCSE/A level
- Economics associated with finance and banking
- Economics/maths teachers often had an influential role
- As well as fathers, for the male subsample
- Some women ‘fell into Economics’

Most respondents achieved A/A* grades in A-level (or equivalent) economics and maths



Women were slightly more likely to achieve A/A* in **economics** than men (76% vs 72%)



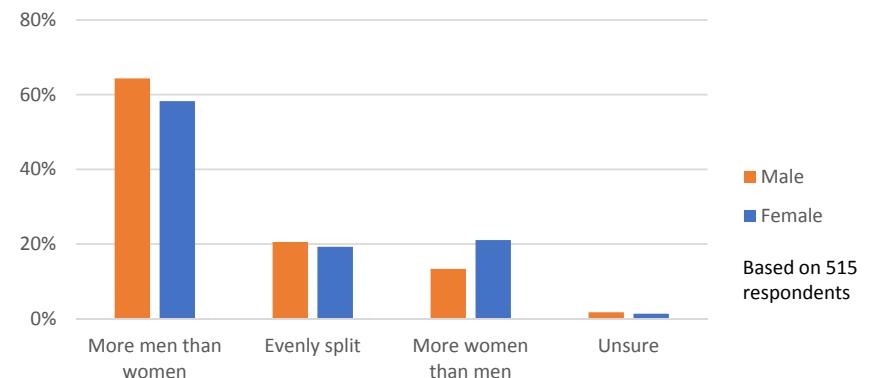
Men were slightly more likely to achieve A/A* in **maths** than women (72% vs 67%)

At both school and university, large majority of respondents were taught by more men than women

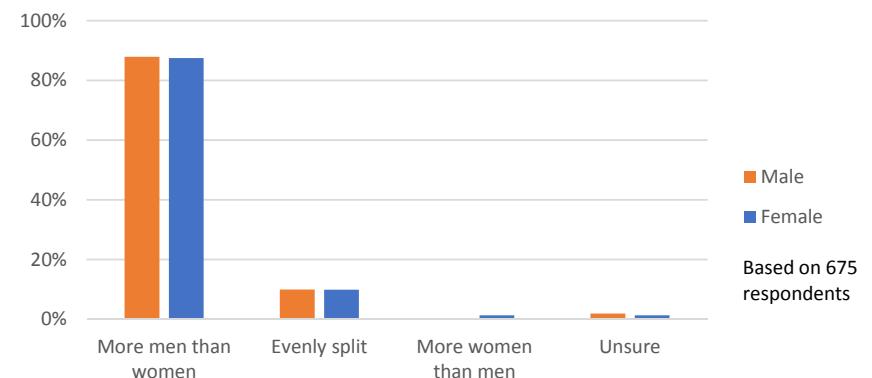
- This difference is larger at university where nearly 90% of all students were taught by more men than women
- At school, 41% of respondents were taught by **only men** (there may have been only 1 economics teacher, and many schools do not offer economics)
- At school, higher proportion of women report being taught by all women, and higher proportion of men report being taught by all men
 - Could indicate inspiring teachers or people having clearer memories of teachers of their own gender

"I was the only girl in my economics classes at school, so it really helped having a female teacher."

At post-16 school/college, what was the gender split of your economics teachers/tutors?



At university, what was the gender split of your economics lecturers/tutors?



At both school and university, large majority of respondents were taught by more men than women

The survey results are largely confirmed by the focus groups:

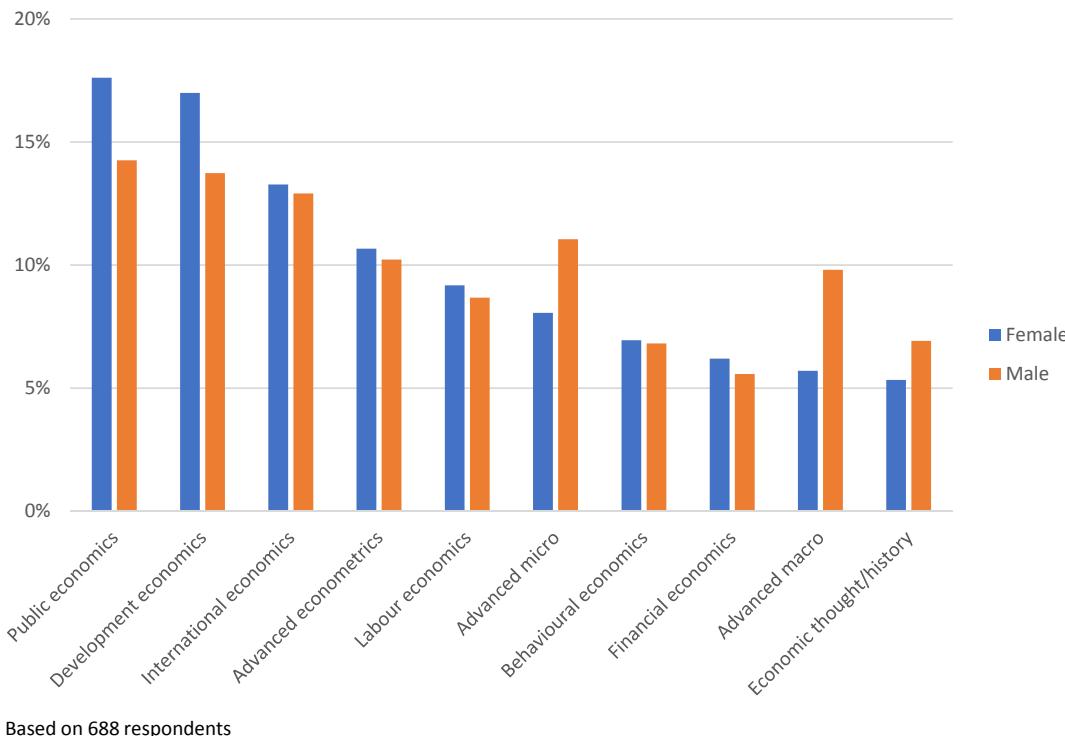
- Substantial gender imbalance both within students and lecturers
- Student gender balance varies by module, lecturer gender balance varies by university
- Higher proportion of women amongst international students than domestic students

Survey revealed small gender differences in choice of optional modules at university

- 3 most popular subject choices were same for men and women
- Women more likely to choose public economics and development economics than men
- Men were relatively likely to choose advanced microeconomics, advanced macroeconomics and economic thought/history than women
- Question: does GCSE/A-level syllabus reflect these differences?

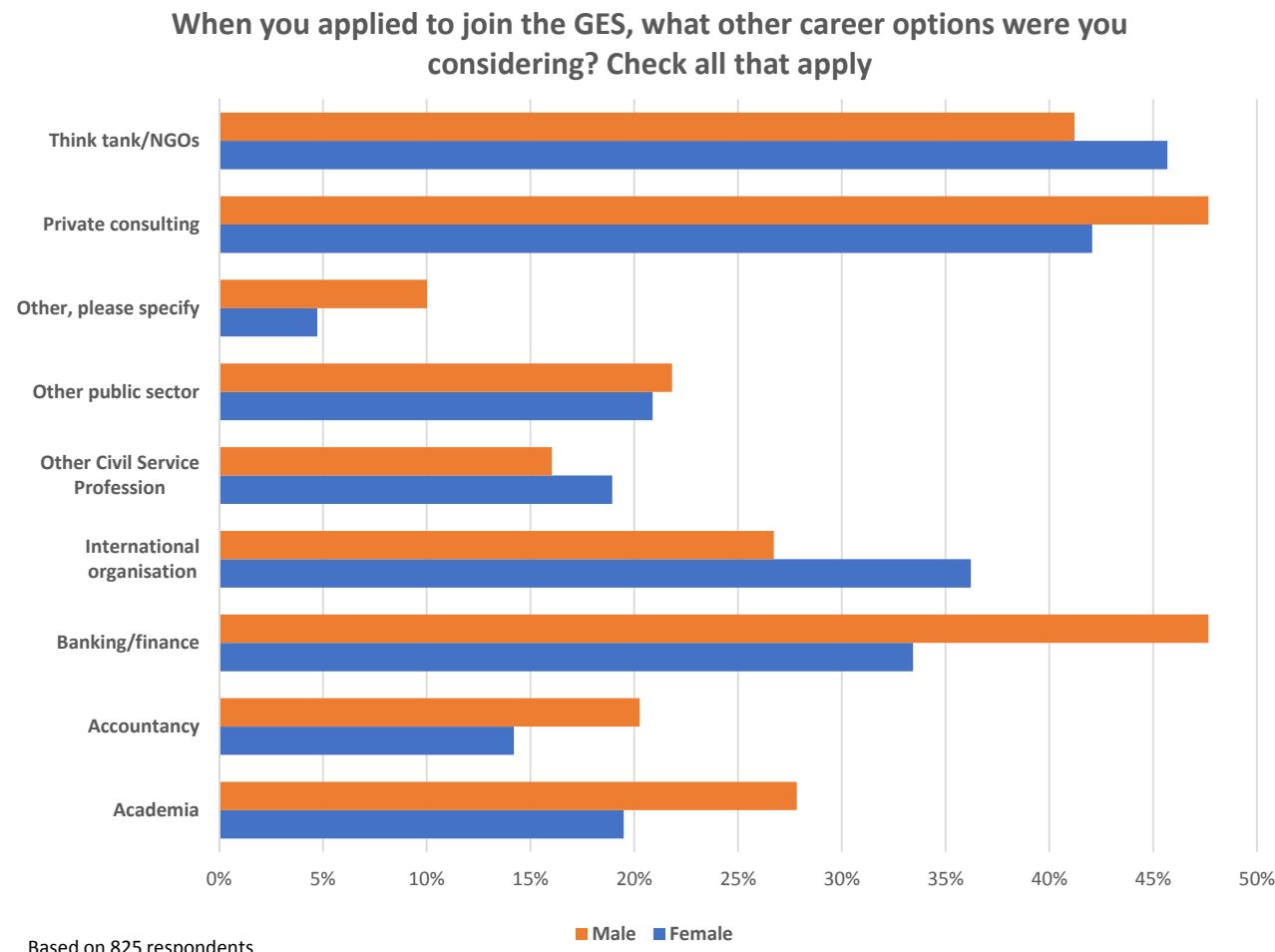
“Could do more to promote the more unusual/interesting areas of economics at GCSE/A-level, particularly those which female students tend to show a preference for”

Where you had some choice over modules studied, what area of economics did you choose? Choose up to 3 most relevant areas.

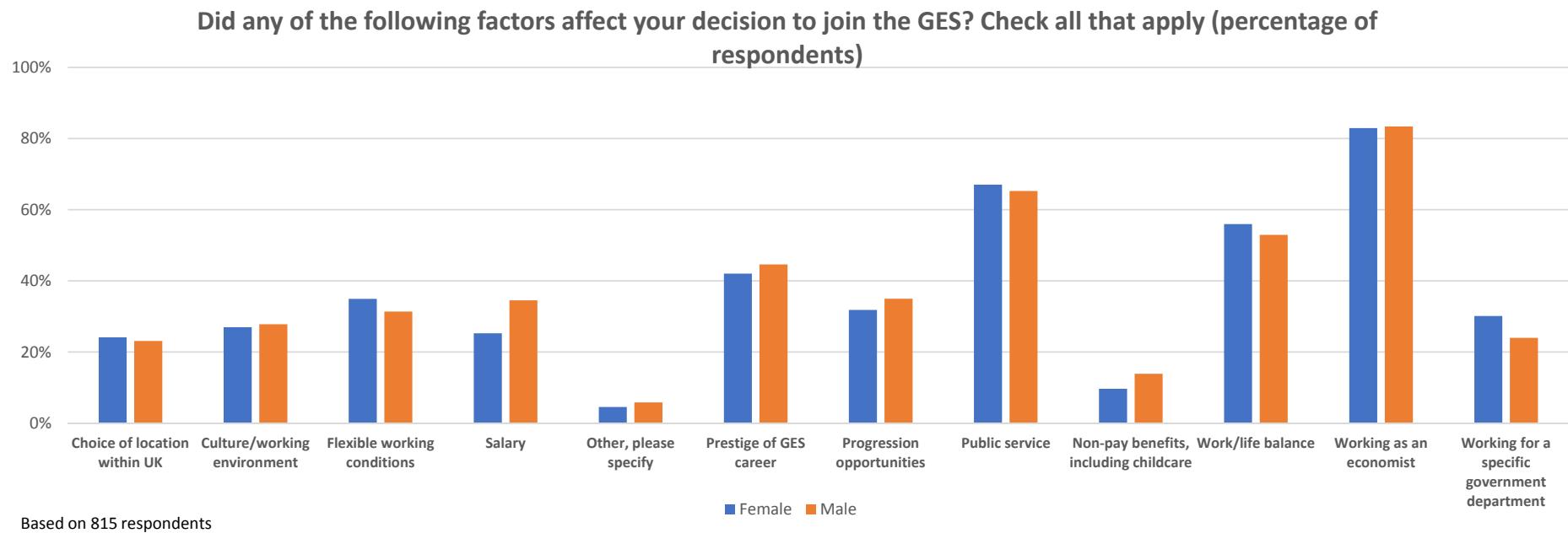


There were gender differences in the alternative careers considered when applying for the GES

- Almost half of men state they considered banking/finance or private consulting; for women the equivalent figures were 33% and 42% respectively
- Men are also more likely to have considered academia or accountancy
- Women are more likely to have considered an international organisation or a think tank/NGO



Both genders are influenced most by working as an economist and public service



- Women are more likely to seek out flexible working, a good work/life balance and a specific government department
- Men are more likely to have joined the GES as a result of salary or non-pay benefits

What can be done to encourage more women to take up economics and/or join the GES?

From focus groups:

- Role models especially explaining where economics can take you
- Teachers and career advice – Real world advice
- GES advertising campaign including women – Similar to Army campaign
- Redesigning recruitment and hiring practices
- Addressing workplace culture in the context of gender. E.g part-time workers

NB: Slight gender differences in responses, with women more likely to focus on role models and workplace culture.

What is the GES doing about this?

The ‘Gender in the GES’ initiative was launched in January this year with endorsement from the GES Board. The focus of the initiative is to tackle the issue of gender diversity within the GES, however we also care about the other protected characteristics.



Objective 1 – Girls studying economics:

Increase the share of women applying to study economics at university.

Objective 2 – GES Market Share:

Increase the share of female economists working in the GES, making the GES the employer of choice for female economists in the UK.

Objective 3 – GES Senior Women/progression:

Increase the share of GES female in the SCS positions.

GiG Workstreams: Overview

1. Research

2. Education

3. Outreach and marketing

4. Best Practice

5. Retention

Encouraging a deeper understanding of the root problem and solutions

Encouraging improvements in the teaching of economics, with a focus on making it more attractive to women

Encouraging women's interest in economics and a career within GES explicitly

Encouraging best practice across Government departments in the recruitment, retention and development of female economists

Encouraging and developing female talent within the GES

Thank You