

**CROSSING THE TRACKS?
MORE ON TRENDS IN THE TRAINING OF MALE AND FEMALE
WORKERS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM**

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Conventional wisdom predicts the incidence of training should be higher among men than women, and this has largely been confirmed in empirical studies. Recently however, a small number of studies have reported the intriguing finding that the 'advantage' previously enjoyed by men and reported in the earlier work in the literature¹ may have been reversed, and that women are now more likely to participate in training than their male counterparts (Green and Zanchi, 1997 for the U.K.; Miller, 1994 and Wooden and VandenHeuvel, 1997 for Australia; Simpson and Stroh, 2002 for the U.S.). In the U.K. this phenomenon was first explicitly recognised by Greenhalgh and Mavrotas (1994) and by Gibbins (1994), albeit the differentials at the time to which their data relate were small.

The reasons for the above phenomenon are however unclear, and several, mutually admissible factors have been proposed. These include, *inter alia*, increased labour force participation among women (Green and Zanchi, 1997; Wooden and VandenHeuvel, 1997), and the associated possibility of a 'new entrants' effect among labour market returners (Green, 1991: 296); technological/labour demand changes by employers coinciding with occupational segregation by gender (Simpson and Stroh, 2002); and superior endowments/characteristics (qualifications) (Wooden and VandenHeuvel, 1997). Changes in the nature of training itself, such as moves to more on-the-job training, may also play a role.

The aim of the present paper is to explore the sources of the gender differential in training incidence using *Labour Force Survey* data, updating previous U.K. studies and providing further insights into the above phenomenon identified above. The empirical section will therefore report logit models for the incidence of training among male and female employees estimated separately for males and females (and possibly also for full-time and part-time workers) at two points in time – 1995 and 2003. Several definitions of training will be considered, including on-the-job and off-the-job, and exploring the issue of who pays for the training. Using decomposition analysis, we then propose to examine the contributions of characteristics and coefficients (i) to the gender differential at each date; (ii) to the changes in the incidence for males and females between the two dates; and (iii) to the change in the differential itself between the two dates. Given the reversal of the earlier gender gap in training receipt reported in the U.K. by earlier studies, which was sometimes cited as an example of discriminatory behaviour on the part of employers, together with the widening of the gap in favour of women in the last few years, we believe the paper addresses an important feature of the U.K. labour market, with relevance also to other economies.