

Scotland's female STEM struggle revealed

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The SNP need to do more to encourage females into participating in STEM subjects, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The calls come after latest figures from the SQA show that girls are significantly underrepresented in STEM subjects at Higher and National 5 level.

Of those taking Higher exams, only 9 per cent of engineering science, 27 per cent of physics and 17 per cent of computing students were female.

National 5 level also revealed a lack of female participation – 7 per cent of engineering, 27 per cent of physics and 18 per cent of computing examinees being girls.

Those girls who did take STEM subjects were shown to have performed better than boys – 81 per cent of girls achieving grades A to C compared to 72 per cent of boys.

Scottish Conservative shadow secretary for education, Liz Smith MSP said:

“These statistics are further proof of the extent of the STEM challenge facing the Scottish Government.

“The number of female students entering key subjects is only a very small fraction of the total entries from their male counterparts.

“Therefore, it begs the question about the effectiveness of the Scottish Government’s STEM strategy – a strategy that is already facing criticism from some academic bodies like the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

“Those female students who do enter for STEM subjects generally perform very well indeed, so it is even more disappointing that there are such low entries.

“Almost every report published by the science and technology industries tell us how important STEM subjects are to the future of the Scottish economy and how important women are to these new employment opportunities.

“The Scottish Government has much to do to address these concerns. Scotland needs many more graduates skilled in STEM subjects and women must be a very important part of that.”

Statistics were taken from SQA's Annual Statistical Report 2016 available via this link: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/63001.html>