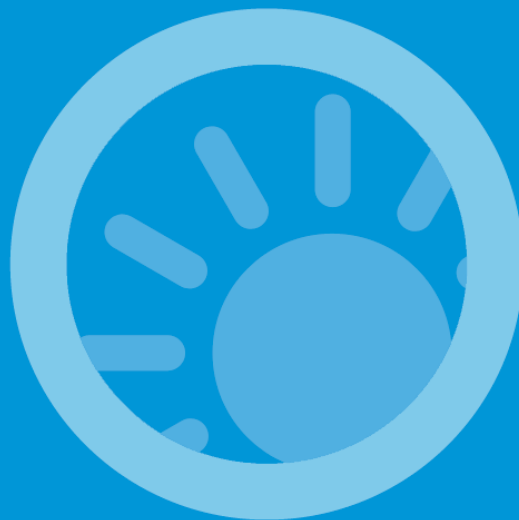


What About **Women?**



ELECTION 2010 - WHAT ABOUT WOMEN?

WORK AND FAMILY LIFE BRIEFING



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1866

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Work and Family Life

What About Women is a Fawcett led coalition of over forty organisations and thousands of individual women and men that have come together for the General Election to ask the political parties '*what about women?*'

Purpose of this briefing

This briefing gives some background information on the issues behind the *What About Women* questions on **work and family life**. It also includes a number of policy options from Fawcett and other *What About Women* campaign partners working on work and family life. Links to further information can be found at the end of this briefing along with details of our partner organisations.

Women are not a homogeneous group and women's situation at work and home will depend on a wide range of factors including social class, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion and caring responsibilities.

The questions

Women employees have the right to be free from unfair discrimination in accessing employment and once employed. Family friendly workplaces make for more effective employees and support stronger families.

- **How will you ensure that women are paid the same as men for work of equal value?**
- **How will you improve the availability, quality and pay of part-time work?**
- **How will you support women who are also parents or carers to balance work and family life?**

Some key issues for women

Patterns of work and caring are changing for women, who are entering the workplace in larger numbers than ever before. But the experience of too many women at work is one of low pay, unequal pay or discrimination. Women are the majority of the lowest paid and are still under-represented in senior positions.

Motherhood, in particular, has a direct and dramatic influence on women's employment prospects and pay which typically lasts a lifetime. Many women return to work part-time after having children, but most part-time work is characterised by low pay with few prospects for training and promotion. The pay gap, combined with dramatically different leave entitlements for mothers and fathers when a child is born (one year for the mother, two weeks for the father) means that in most cases women continue to be primary carers for children. There is little support or encouragement for men to spend more time caring. This is bad for both fathers and children who would benefit if care was shared more equally but is also a key factor in the discrimination faced by women at work.



Tackling these issues could have major benefits not only for women and their families but for the wider economy. Removing barriers to women working in occupations traditionally done by men and increasing women's participation in the labour market could be worth between £15 and £23 billion or 1.3 to 2% of GDP.¹

Why tackle unequal pay?

Forty years after the Equal Pay Act the pay gap between men and women persists. Undervaluation of women's work, an employment penalty for mothers, occupational segregation and direct discrimination against women all contribute to the problem. 64% of low paid workers are women.² This contributes not only to women's poverty but to the poverty of their children.

- *The gender pay gap is 16.4% for full-time work and 35% for part-time work*³
- *In 2006, 29% of female workers were low paid compared with 16.1% of male workers.*⁴
- *In 2009, around 4 million employees aged 22 to retirement were paid less than £7 per hour. Two-thirds were women.*⁵
- *Interruptions to employment due to caring work account for 14% of the gender pay gap.*⁶
- *Nine out of ten lone parents are women. The median gross weekly earnings for male lone parents is £346 and the figure for female lone parents is £194.*⁷
- *36% of the gender pay gap cannot be explained by sex segregation of job choices, for example, different industries in which men and women work, differences in years of experience or part-time/time out for child-rearing.*⁸
- *The gender gap amongst young people taking part in apprenticeships is 21%.*⁹
- *Disabled women are paid 22% less than non-disabled men.*¹⁰
- *Partnered women with no dependent children earn an average 9% less than men. For mothers working full-time with two children at home, the gap rises to 21.6%.*¹¹

Why improve the availability, quality and pay of part-time work?

Part-time jobs are typically low paid and with fewer prospects for promotion and access to training. Part-time work is more likely to be available in lower paid jobs; for example in catering, caring, retail and in the low-skill occupations in any sector. It is also more likely to be available in smaller, less unionised workplaces where wages and conditions are weaker. It is the interaction between low pay, part-time work, and occupational segregation which hits women hard.

¹ Women and Work Commission, *Shaping a Fairer Future*, 2006

² Working Out of Poverty: A study of the low paid and the working poor, IPPR, 2008

³ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

⁴ Working Out of Poverty. A study of the low paid and the working poor, Cooke and Lawton, IPPR, 2008

⁵ <http://www.poverty.org.uk/51/index.shtml#def>

⁶ Wendy Olsen & Sylvia Walby, *Modelling Gender Pay Gaps*, Equal Opportunities Commission 2004.

⁷ www.gingerbread.org.uk/policy

⁸ GEO, *The Gender Pay Gap in the UK: 1995 to 2007, Research Findings no. 2010/2*, Feb 2010

⁹ Barry Fong and Andrew Felps, Apprenticeship pay: 2007 survey of earnings by sector, DIUS Research Report 08 05, 2008.

¹⁰ Civil Service Employment Survey, 2007

¹¹ Wendy Olsen & Sylvia Walby, *Modelling Gender Pay Gaps*, Equal Opportunities Commission 2004.

Work and Family Life

- *Women are four times as likely as men to work in part-time jobs and more than three quarters of all workers in part-time jobs are women.*¹²
- *A decade of working part-time rather than full-time will reduce women's relative hourly wages by a third.*¹³
- *Almost half of women professionals (44%) who take up part-time employment move into low-skill jobs where the average employee does not have A-levels.*¹⁴
- *One third of female corporate managers moved down the career ladder after having a child: two-thirds of those took clerical positions and the remainder moved into other low-skill jobs.*¹⁵

Why support women who are parents or carers balance work and family life?

Women still do the bulk of the caring work in the UK. Factors such as a lack of flexible working, the high costs of childcare and the culture of long working hours mean women pay a penalty at work for their caring role. Meanwhile, there is little support or encouragement for fathers to spend more time caring. This is bad for fathers and children who would benefit if care was shared for equally but is also a key factor in the discrimination faced by women at work.

- *48 % of parents feel they do not have a choice about whether to spend their time with their children or at work.*¹⁶
- *Of women caring for 50 hours or more each week, 13% are working full-time and 18% are working part-time.*¹⁷
- *Of the 662,000 carers who work part-time, 89% are women*¹⁸
- *Few jobs are advertised flexibly even in organisations with good flexible working policies.*¹⁹
- *Across England, the average nursery place for a child under the age of two is now £167 a week. This represents a 5% rise on the figure for 2008.*²⁰
- *Even before the recession it was estimated that 30,000 women lose their jobs each year as a result of being pregnant.*²¹
- *42% of fathers think they spend too little time with their children. Two in five fathers thought that requesting flexible working would negatively affect their chances of promotion. Although flexible working is available to almost half of fathers, only 30% of these are actually using it.*²²

¹² Closing the Pay Gap: An Update report for the 2008 TUC Women's Conference

¹³ *Not Having it All: How motherhood reduces women's pay and employment prospects*, Fawcett Society, July 2009.

¹⁴ "The price of reconciliation: part-time work, families and women's satisfaction", *the Economic Journal* Vol 118, issue 526

¹⁵ "The price of reconciliation: part-time work, families and women's satisfaction", *the Economic Journal* Vol 118, issue 526

¹⁶ *Working Better: Meeting the changing needs of families, workers and employers in the 21st century*, EHRC, March 2009.

¹⁷ Sue Yeandle et al, *Who Cares Wins* Statistical Analysis, Sheffield Hallam University, Carers UK, 2006

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ *Working Families, We need to talk about...hours. Job Advertising in the Civil Service*, 2009

²⁰ *Childcare costs survey 2009*, Daycare Trust, January 2009.

²¹ *Greater Expectations: Final Report of EOC investigation into discrimination against new and expectant mothers in the workplace*, Equal Opportunities Commission, June 2005.

²² *Working Better: Fathers, family and work – contemporary perspectives*, EHRC Research Summary 41, October 2009.



Policies that could make a difference

Policies proposed by Fawcett and other *What About Women* campaign partner organisations to improve the ability of all women to balance their work and family life in the way that suits them and their families include:

Equal pay

- Ensure that employers conduct pay audits to promote transparency and as a tool to tackle pay inequalities.
- Allow women to bring equal pay claims as a group to reduce the burden and risk of stigmatisation on individuals.
- Set target dates to end the gender pay gap.
- Tackle occupational segregation through the education system, encouraging schools to actively break down gender stereotypes in careers advice. Include “gender stereotyping” as a measure in OFSTED inspection.
- Target attitudes and the barriers women and men face accessing training including apprenticeships.
- Pay statutory maternity pay at minimum wage levels to ensure a decent income for new mothers.
- Homeworkers should be granted full employment rights to prevent employers exploiting uncertainty over their employment status.
- Further examination should be undertaken into how piece-rate work regularly leads to a failure to meet the minimum wage standards.
- The Government should take forward the recommendations of the Women and Work Commission on setting targets to get women, especially ethnic minority women, back into sustainable jobs and on targeting enforcement of the minimum wage to sectors employing large numbers of women.

Improved part-time working

- Additional support should be given to low paid workers to stay in work, and progress. In particular this will require training for part-time workers that fits around childcare responsibilities.
- Additional support and guidance should be given to businesses who want to make part-time and flexible work available.
- Offer all jobs on a flexible or part-time basis to help prevent the “occupational downgrading” that often comes with moving from full time to part-time work.
- Extend to the right to request flexible working to all workers.
- Increase the availability of quality flexible and part-time jobs in the public sector.

Balancing work and caring

- The provision of adequate and affordable childcare – the Daycare Trust recommends that free entitlement to early year's education should be extended to 20 hours a week for 48 weeks of the year, with further investigation into care in school holidays and atypical hours.
- Encourage fathers to share care by offering improved paternity rights with at least a month of paid parental leave reserved for fathers.
- Establish how far flexible working is being promoted to both men and women and investigate whether both men and women are discriminated against as a result of their flexible working patterns.
- Provide early years support on a universal basis.
- Financial support to families should be based on clear evidence as to their individual needs.
- Reduce the costs of childcare – the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit should be increased to meet 100 % of childcare costs.
- Support with job applications and training for returning mothers – access to support for getting back to work should be based on childcare responsibilities.
- Make the support systems – tax, benefits and childcare – simpler for families and ensure that work pays.
- Ensure that there is substantial and sustainable investment in social care to enable women to juggle work with care.
- Introduce a short period of paid leave to help with caring situations
- Ensure teenage mothers receive adequate incomes to lift them out of poverty and support them into education/training that will improve their life chances.

Article 11 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women states:

of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women states: In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measuresto prohibit...dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave... to introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances... to encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable pa



Further information and resources:

[The Fawcett Society](#)

www.fawcettsociety.org.uk

[Engender](#)

www.engender.org.uk

[Wales Women's National Coalition](#)

<http://www.wales-womens-national-coalition.org.uk/>

[Carers UK](#)

www.carersuk.org

[YWCA](#)

www.ywca.org.uk/resources

[Working Families](#)

www.workingfamilies.org.uk

[Working Families Manifesto](#)

http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/index.php?view=article&id=434&Itemid=717&option=com_content
TUC - <http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/index.cfm?mins=383>

[Gingerbread](#)

www.gingerbread.org.uk/policy

http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/portal/pls/portal/!PORTAL.wwpob_page.show?_docname=524170.pdf

[Fair Play South West: regional gender equality network](#)

<http://www.fairplaysw.org.uk/>

[Radar](#)

www.radar.org.uk

[Fatherhood Institute](#)

<http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/>

[Grandparents Plus](#)

<http://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/>

[Daycare Trust](#)

<http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/>

Links to further information and resources can be found on the *What about Women* pages of the Fawcett Society website www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/whataboutwomen