

Fawcett Society
Analysis of the parties' manifestos
General Election 2015

Fawcett
closing the inequality gap
women since 1866 men

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1. Introduction

A hung parliament, coalition deals, economic recovery and the SNP. Is there anything else that has defined the run up to the 2015 general election?

For this 2015 General Election Fawcett has been closely scrutinising the parties' manifestos. We have already brought you the [key policies from each of the five parties](#) and now we delve a bit deeper to see just how each of the parties intends to close the inequality gap.

We maintain that there are no 'women's issues'. All areas of government policy and legislation affect the lives of women and their families. Research has shown that women do have slightly different priorities to men as highlighted by the recent [Woman's Hour](#), [ASDA Mumdex](#) and [Mumsnet](#) surveys.

Using these, as well as Fawcett's own priorities to close the power and income gap, we have examined in more detail the areas of **employment, housing, childcare, and democracy and representation.**

2. Childcare

Childcare is a competitive area between parties for the 2015 General Election. At present, all three and four-year-olds in England are entitled to 570 hours of free early education or childcare a year, which comprises 15 hours a week for 38 weeks. Over the coalition parliament this has extended to 40% most disadvantaged two-year-olds. Many women suffer from the 'motherhood penalty', which denotes the impact childcare responsibilities have on earnings and career prospects. While 1 in 12 women with children obtained food from food banks between August 2013 and August 2014, women without children averaged 1 in 25.¹

Key stats:

- There has been an increasing shift to full day rather than sessional care and after school providers, likely influenced by the rise of women in work;²
- The number of active childminders fell from 48,800 in 2011 to 46,100 in 2013, as part of a long term downwards trend;³
- The average cost of part-time care from a childminder has risen by 4.3% in the last year at £104.06 a week;⁴
- Average weekly cost for 25 hours (part-time) of nursery for a child age two and over is £109.83 a week;⁵ for children under two it has broken through the £6,000 a year barrier for the first time, averaging at £115.45 a week across Britain, a rise of 5.1% in just one year;⁶
- Only 1 in 172 fathers take additional paternity leave, which is under 1%,⁷ though the current system has just been replaced by Shared Parental Leave;
- Many parents pay more for childcare than they pay in mortgages, that is, £7,549 a year for one child in a part-time nursery and another in an after-school club, in contrast to £7,207 for mortgages.⁸
- The government currently spends £5.2bn annually in early education and childcare, set to rise to £6.4bn in the next Parliament due to the tax-free childcare scheme and roll-out of Universal Credit;⁹
- In 2014, there were 2 million lone parents with dependent children in the UK, 91% of whom were women.¹⁰

Though women are increasingly in the **workplace**, the majority of **childcare** and **custody rights** still falls to them. Though the gender pay gap has nearly closed among young people, it substantially increases above 30 years old, when women are likely to become mothers. Women therefore face the dual problem of low pay and childcare, as 62.8% women have main responsibility for day-to-day childcare (Opinion Matters Shared Parental Leave: Public Attitudes 2015).

¹ [Fawcett Society](#), 2014

² [DfE](#), 2014

³ [Ibid.](#)

⁴ [Family Childcare Trust](#) survey, 2015

⁵ [Ibid.](#)

⁶ [FCT](#), 2015

⁷ [TUC](#), 2013

⁸ [FCT](#), 2014

⁹ [Select Committee on Affordable Childcare](#), 2015

¹⁰ [ONS](#), 2014

Political Party	Policies
Conservatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend free childcare entitlement to 30 hours a week for 3-4 year-olds with working parents; • Bring in tax-free childcare to help parents return to work (already legislated).
Greens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free & voluntary universal childcare (and education) service from birth to compulsory education age; • Ensure children's centres are available for youngest children and their parents; • Ensure that parents receive greatly increased Child Benefit from 2016 and would continue to receive Statutory Maternity and Paternity Pay.
Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Extend free childcare from 15 to 25 hours for working parents with three and four-year-olds at a cost of £800 million annually"; • New National Primary Childcare Service and boosting Sure Start centres by at least 50,000 more places; • Double paid paternity leave for fathers from two to four weeks (helping more than 400,000 families a year), and raise paternity pay by more than £100 a week to at least £260 a week – the equivalent of the minimum wage.
Liberal Democrats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 hours a week free childcare for "working families" from end of maternity leave "right through to school"; • Extend the existing entitlement of 15 hours a week free childcare to all two-year-olds; Also pledging same amount of childcare for all children of working parents aged between nine months and two years; • Triple paid paternity leave and expand Shared Parental Leave; • The "long-term ambition" to increase free provision to 20 hours a week for all two, three and four-year-olds and for children aged between 9 months and two years of working parents.
UKIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there is an initial presumption of 50/50 shared parenting in child custody matters and grandparents will be given visitation rights; • Continue current childcare offer of 15 hours a week of free childcare at a nursery, pre-school, or for a childminder, for all 3 to 4 year-olds, and for all 2 year-olds whose parent are on a certain benefit; • Remove the need for a childminder to be Ofsted approved; • Include nursery provision in planning for big developments.

Context:

Though all parties are committed to increasing people's ability to pay for childcare, the cost of childcare is increasing. For instance, the cost of a part-time nursery place for a child under two has increased by an 'inflation-busting' 33% over this parliament (FCT 2015). The Select Committee on Affordable Childcare noted in their 2015 session that 'childcare costs, while important, are not the only factor influencing work decisions: quality, availability and flexibility of childcare are important; as is the availability of part-time and flexible work opportunities for parents to take up.' ONS statistics showed that as of 2015 42% working women were part-time, in contrast to 13% men. This is likely due to the expectation that women will be the primary child carer. In order for women to excel at work as well as maintain a good upbringing for their child, they require high quality, not just free, childcare.

In 2012 Vidhya Alakeson, Deputy Chief of the Resolution Foundation, claimed that tax free childcare does not tend to 'hold down prices which have risen greatly over the last decade.' Yet there is still a focus on this form of childcare support. Alakeson favours a system used in other countries that invests directly in subsidised places, which can deliver high quality and affordable childcare support.

The Select Committee on Affordable Childcare suggest that the new tax-free childcare scheme could be simplified by providing a 'single mechanism for childcare subsidy' which would support working parents, as there 'is evidence that the design of the current subsidy is confusing, leading to erroneous claims and under-claiming by those whom the policy was designed to support.'

A 2015 survey by Opinion Matters showed that 52.5% parents felt that childcare should be shared equally assuming money is not an issue, while 21.7% believed that women should take sole responsibility and 3.6% men. Of the men surveyed, the two main concerns about taking shared parental leave were being financially worse off (37.6%) and fearing the impact it would have on their career (31.7%). Of women asked the same question, 47.8% worry about being financially worse off with 24.9% concerned about the impact it would have on their career. That a higher proportion of women than men worry about the financial effect of parental leave shows that the incoming government should seek to bring greater equality between parents. Parenting is not a women's issue and should be legislated as such, as with greater equality at home it is likely that women will achieve greater equality in the workplace.

3. Democracy and Representation

Nancy Astor was the first woman to take her place as an MP in 1920. 95 years later there has undoubtedly been progress, with 148 out of 650 MPs being women, but it has been slow.

Key stats:

- The 2015 General Election saw an increase of women MPs in Parliament bringing the total number to 191, almost hitting 30 per cent, widely regarded as an important benchmark for women’s representation (also referred to as Critical Mass);
- Over the years the Conservatives have implemented **Priority A-lists** intended to broaden the intake from minority groups and women, though it was dropped for the selection of candidates in this General Election;
- The UK Parliament has fallen from 59th place, prior to the 2010 general election, to 64th in the world ranking of parliaments (**IPU and UN Women, 2015**).

Women and Power has long been one of Fawcett’s core campaigns, not only at a national level, but also in local government, where the numbers of women councillors are stagnating¹¹. The issue though is not simply about the barriers that discourage women from participating (sexism, working hours that are far from family friendly, lack of strong supportive networks), but the political system as a whole, built to favour “the male and pale”.

Political Party	Policies
Conservatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2010 15.5% of the Conservative’s 302 elected MPs were women. In this election 25.7% of their 648 candidates are women; • Increase the proportion of public appointments going to women in the next Parliament, as well as the number of female MPs; • Reduce the number of MPs to 600 to cut the cost of politics and make votes of more equal value; • Implement boundary reforms to deal with the fact that the current electoral layout over-represents parts of the country where populations have been falling and under-represents parts where populations have been rising;
Greens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38% of the 573 Green candidates in this 2015 election are women. In 2010 their only elected MP was a woman; • Aspire to a 50:50 Parliament by 2025 with equal numbers of women and men; • Bring in proportional representation (PR); • Reform the House of Lords to become a fully elected body chosen by PR;
Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2010 33.9% of Labour’s 256 elected MPs were women. In this election 34.1% of their 631 candidates are women; • Remain committed to achieving a better balance in Parliament, including through the use of all-women shortlists in Labour Party parliamentary selection contests; • Replace the House of Lords with an elected Senate of the Nations and Regions, to represent every part of the United Kingdom, and to improve the democratic legitimacy of the second chamber;

¹¹ You can read more about this in Fawcett’s Briefing Paper (May 2014) “Sexism and Local Government”: <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Fawcett-Society-Sexism-and-Local-Government.pdf>

Political Party	Policies
Liberal Democrats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2010 women represented only 12.3% of the Lib-Dem intake of candidates, with only 7 female MPs elected in the last Parliament. In this election 27% out of their 631 candidates are women; • Make Parliament more family-friendly, and establish a review to pave the way for MP job-sharing arrangements; • Reform the House of Lords with a proper democratic mandate; • Reform the voting systems for elections to local government and Westminster to ensure more proportional representation. Introduce the Single Transferable Vote for local government elections in England and for electing MPs across the UK;
UKIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of 624 UKIP candidates, 11.58% are women. This is a decrease from 2010 when 14.7% of candidates were women. • Introduce an Open Primaries Bill to enable any political parties that wished to do so to widen their selection process to include every local voter. • Campaign for a new, proportional voting system that delivers a Parliament truly reflective of the number of votes cast, while retaining a constituency link, so every vote really does count.

Most of the parties pledge that the next Parliament will improve the representation of women, and minority groups in general, however they fail to explain in any depth what they understand the equality target to be (30% or 50%?), how this will be achieved and what actions will be taken to ensure it is delivered.

Over the years feminist scholars and political researchers have offered some suggestions on what electoral systems and positive actions could be adopted in Britain by looking at what has worked outside of the UK. The Conservatives, unlike other parties, have promised to keep First Past the Post for election to the House of Commons. This has its pitfalls. Proportional representation (PR), as opposed to a plurality-majority system (such as the UK's First Past The Post system), undoubtedly offers more opportunities to implement and deliver equality strategies.

Cross-country comparisons have shown how women running for election in PR systems hold 25.2% of the seats compared with only 19.6% using the plurality-majority electoral system. Electoral systems, however, cannot deliver full equality and redress women's under-representation without adopting positive action measures. Quotas have proved to be highly successful in ensuring more women take their rightful place in public life and politics. There are currently three types of gender quotas: Reserved seats (constitutional and/or legislative); Legal candidate quotas (constitutional and/or legislative); and Political party quotas (voluntary) – the latter being the type currently used in Britain. Unless the Conservative Party pushes for positive action there will be slow progress in women's representation in politics.

Improving outreach and selection, however, is only the first step. There is still a need to tackle a political culture, both in Westminster and in local councils, that is still 'patriarchal' and often quite hostile to women. As the All Party Parliamentary Group on Women in Parliament Inquiry¹² suggested, women's representation may be jeopardised by:

¹² Read the full 2014 Report here: <http://appgimprovingparliamentreport.co.uk/download/APPG-Women-In-Parliament-Report-2014.pdf>

- The pressures of having to take part in aggressive parliamentary debates for fear of not having one's voice heard and endure quite intolerable levels of sexism;
- The long working hours and pressure of policy work in constituencies, worsened by the impossibility of any job share and the recently reduced family budget for MPs. It is hardly surprising that only 25% of women in Parliament have children, as opposed to 48% of men¹³ (2015 Childs, Where's mum?);
- Endless chauvinist and misogynistic reporting in the media, which Fawcett has held to account through its campaign #ViewsNotShoes.

Finally, the question of an elected House of Lords and how this would benefit women's representation should also be discussed in more detail and it is good that no decision will be made with regards to this in the next Parliament.

Research suggests that despite being marginally better than the House of Commons, with 23.5% female peers¹⁴, the Lords have a more egalitarian ethos¹⁵. Crewe suggests that this is partly because the women in the House of Lords have already had to fight their way up male-dominated organisations and their appointment (especially if independent members) circumvents the pitfalls of the Party selection processes.

¹³ CAMPBELL, R. and CHILDS, S. (2014), Parents in Parliament: 'Where's Mum?'. *The Political Quarterly*, 85: 487–492. doi: 10.1111/1467-923X.12092

¹⁴ Sex and Power Report (2014), <http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Sex-and-Power-2014.pdf>

¹⁵ Crewe, Emma (2015) *Commons and Lords. A Short Anthropology of Parliament*. London: Haus Publishing.

4. Employment

Government statistics have shown that there are 'more women in work than ever before'¹⁶, but as always the Fawcett Society has asked what type of work and for what pay? The overall gender pay gap remains at 19.1%¹⁷, the use of zero-hour contracts and women's under-employment is rife, and the care crisis continues unabated.

Key stats:

- The overall gender pay gap is at 19.1%
- Women make up a bigger proportion of those on zero hours contracts (55%)
- Sex discrimination cases have dropped by 80% since the introduction of tribunal fees
- The pay gap between BAME workers and white workers is 15%¹⁸
- Women make up 70% of part time workers in the UK¹⁹
- Part time work is paid 44% less per hour than full time work²⁰

Fawcett Society has long been campaigning for a society where the gender you are does not determine the life chances (and employment opportunities) you have. In the labour market this has specifically called for recommendations to improve accessibility, ensure greater flexibility, remove barriers preventing women returning from maternity leave or caring duties from rejoining the workplace, and encourage more women to take the lead in the private sector. This means intervening in the three main areas:

- **Participation**, as women's participation in the labour market is impacted by care services, which free them from care work and allow them to take paid work, and better employment laws;
- **Inequality and discrimination**, as inequality and discrimination create gender and motherhood pay gaps as well as under-employment and women's over representation in low- and part-time pay;
- **Under-representation** in key decision-making positions and job sectors.

¹⁶ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/more-women-are-in-work-in-britain-than-ever-before-9811845.html>

¹⁷ <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/gender-pay-gap/>

¹⁸ National research by Unite shows there is a 15% pay gap between BAME workers and their white colleagues

¹⁹ ONS data 2011

²⁰ ONS data 2013, media gross hourly wages http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_335027.pdf

Political Party	Policies
Conservatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support real term increases in the National Minimum Wage (NMW), which will be over £8 by the 2020; • Ensure the eradication of non-payment of NMW by employers; • Support the Living Wage and encourage businesses to adopt it, if they can afford it; • Eradicate exclusivity²¹ in zero-hour contracts; • Wants to see full, genuine gender equality. They will reduce the gender pay gap by requiring companies with more than 250 employees to publish the difference between the average pay of their male and female employees.
Greens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the National Minimum Wage (NMW) so that it is a Living Wage, with a target of £10 per hour by 2020; • Make the highest wage in any organisation no more than 10 times the lowest wage; • End exploitative zero-hour contracts; • Make equal pay for men and women a reality; • Reduce Employment Tribunal Fees so that tribunals are accessible to workers; • Require 40% of all members of public company and public sector boards to be women.
Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise the National Minimum Wage (NMW) to more than £8 an hour by October 2019; • Promote the Living Wage through Make Work Pay contracts (i.e. tax rebates for businesses that sign up to paying the Living Wage); • Devolving more power and control to local authorities in strengthening enforcement; • Banning exploitative zero-hour contracts and ensuring that those who work more than 12 hours for more than 12 weeks have a right to a regular contract; • Review the Employment Tribunal fees to ensure justice is affordable; • Reduce discrimination against women, requiring large companies to publish their gender pay gap and strengthening the law against maternity discrimination.
Liberal Democrats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the Low Pay Commission to look at ways of raising the National Minimum Wage (NMW), without damaging employment opportunities, and improve enforcement action; • Establish an independent review to consult on how to set a fair Living Wage, working with stakeholders such as the Living Wage Foundation. We will ensure this Living Wage is paid by all central government departments and executive agencies from April 2016 onwards, and encourage other public sector bodies including local authorities to do likewise; • Clamp down on any abusive practices in relation to zero hours contracts. • Continue the drive for diversity in business leadership towards at least 30% of board members being women and encouraging gender diversity among senior managers, too.

²¹ This is a contract clause that prevents workers from accepting shifts with more than one employer, even when there is no work.

Political Party	Policies
UKIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce the National Minimum Wage (NMW); • Businesses hiring 50 people or more must give worker on zero-hour contracts either a full or part-time secure contract after one year, if the workers request it. Remove exclusivity clauses and 12 hours advance notice of work, which must be paid regardless if they are actually needed;

Context:

As the Low Pay Commission has shown, raising the National Minimum Wage (NMW), the statutory entitlement for all employees to receive a minimum rate of pay (introduced in April 1999), will have a greater impact on raising women's earnings in comparison to those of men²² because of the prevalence of women in part-time roles as well as low-paying sectors. This, however, is relatively ineffective if it is the only solution to combat women's low-paid work.

Fawcett has already recommended that a rise, and the enforcement, of NMW should be matched by a greater focus on encouraging employers to adopt the Living Wage and promote flexible working practices - e.g. part-time working, compressed hours, job shares and working from home. While welcoming the recent progress made in getting more women on FTSE 100 and 250 boardrooms, the publication of the gender pay gap in large companies should be matched by a combination of enforcement and positive action to shorten the path towards full equality.

ONS statistics also show that women make up a bigger proportion of those working in 'zero-hours contracts' (55%) compared with other people in employment (47%), with under 25 year olds and over 65 worse off²³. While some might argue that flexible working conditions are preferred, these contracts can affect the worker's well-being without consideration for the long-term effects on household/personal budgeting, pension contributions and the covering of childcare costs, as NEF points out.²⁴ It also has more far-reaching consequences as one 'misses out on statutory redundancy pay, the right to return to a job after maternity leave and protection from unfair dismissal'²⁵. A survey by Survation for the Fawcett Society (June 2014) highlighted how 14% of women who are on the lowest pay are also on zero hours contracts – this means that 1 in 8 women in the UK are on a zero-hours contracts, with low paid women in London bearing the brunt: nearly 1 in 3!²⁶ Measures to ban exploitative contracts and exclusivity clauses are, therefore, an important first step towards a fairer use of these contracts.

The effects of implementing Employment Tribunal fees (introduced in July 2013 by the coalition government) must, however, be reviewed. A recent TUC Report (2014)²⁷ has highlighted the fact that women are among the biggest losers: 'between January and March 2014, just 1,222 sex

²² LPC Report 2015, p.7

²³ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lmac/contracts-with-no-guaranteed-hours/zero-hour-contracts--2014/analysis-of-employee-contracts-that-do-not-guarantee-a-minimum-number-of-hours.html#tab-4--What-are-the-characteristics-of-people-employed-on-'zero-hours-contracts'>

²⁴ <http://www.neweconomics.org/blog/entry/what-you-need-to-know-about-zero-hour-contracts>

²⁵ TUC Report, 2015

²⁶ <http://survation.com/women-on-low-paid-zero-hours-contracts-survation-for-fawcett-society/>;
<http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/2014/08/new-research-low-paid-women-firmly-shut-recovery/>;
<http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/latest/press-releases/new-fawcett-research-low-paid-women-london-much-likely-zero-hours-contracts/>

²⁷ TUC (June 2014) *At what price justice?*, Equality and Employment Rights Department

discrimination claims were made to an employment tribunal, compared to 6,017 in the same quarter in 2013. This represents a fall of 80%'. Once again low-paid workers are most affected by a system that 'prices them out of justice'. A fall in pregnancy-related, race discrimination and sexual orientation claims is also worrying. Despite the Equality Act prohibiting any discrimination on the base of gender, race and sexuality, the reality on ground can be very different, so the right to demand justice must be guaranteed.

5. Housing

Women are more likely to be in social housing and to claim housing benefits because they are more likely to be in **low-paid jobs**, to have **greater parental responsibility** or **custody rights**.²⁸

Key stats:

- By 2014, only 36% of people between 25 and 34 owned homes, compared to 59% the previous decade.²⁹
- In 2014, 210,000 new households were formed but only 145,174 new homes were registered.³⁰
- Women are more likely to be in social housing. Overall, 52% of housing benefits are claimed by **single** women and 23% by single women with child dependent(s), compared to 1% of single men with child dependents.³¹
- The 2011 census showed that 40% of people acting as the lead figure of each household was a woman.³²
- Of homeless groups given priority access to housing, 67% were with dependent children, 7% contain a pregnant inhabitant and 3% were homeless as a result of domestic violence.³³
- A total of 42,710 affordable homes were provided in England in 2013-14.³⁴ In 2014 there were 1,368,312 on housing waiting lists.³⁵

²⁸ [Women's Budget Group](#); [ONS](#), Families and Households, 2014; [ONS](#), UK Labour Market Statistics, March 2015; [Opinion Matters](#), January 2015.

²⁹ [DCLG](#), February 2015

³⁰ [ONS](#), 27 February 2015; [National House-Building Council](#), 2015.

³¹ [DWP](#), November 2014.

³² The Household Reference Person, who is the individual acting as a reference point based on age and economic activity. [Census 2011](#)

³³ [DCLG](#), *Households accepted by local authorities as owed a main homelessness duty by priority duty by priority need category*, 2014.

³⁴ [DCLG](#), October 2014

³⁵ [DCLG](#), *Rents, lettings and tenancies: numbers of households on local authorities' housing waiting lists: England*, 2010-14.

Political Party	Policies
Conservatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will build 200,000 new affordable homes for first time buyers under the age of 40 at a 20% discount, though with no clear time limit; • Ensure that 18-21 year-olds on JSA no longer have automatic entitlement to Housing Benefit;³⁶ • Ensure that no EU migrant can be considered for a council house unless they have been living in an area for 4 years; • Extend Help to Buy to cover another 120,000 homes. From autumn 2015 introduce a new Help to Buy ISA; • Extend Right to Buy to tenants in Housing Associations.
Greens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build 500,000 social rental homes by 2020; • Bring 350,000 empty homes back into use; • Cap rent and introduce 5-year tenancies to provide greater protection for renters; • Abolish the right to buy council homes.
Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure at least 200,000 new homes are built a year by 2020, implementing the recommendations of the Lyons review;³⁷ • Give local authorities the power to prioritise first time buyers on new homes; • Unlock a Future Homes Fund to use the money allocated for the Help-to-Buy ISA to build affordable homes; • End 6-12 month tenancies for renters and make 3 years the norm. Have a ceiling on rent increases; • Ban letting agents on charging fees to tenants;³⁸ • Mansion Tax for homes worth £2 million or more (threshold will rise in line with average rise in high-value property prices).
Liberal Democrats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase housebuilding to 300,000 a year; • Set in motion at least 10 new Garden Cities; • 30,000 Rent to Own homes a year by 2020 for first time buyers with monthly payments until they own the property after 30 years; • New Intermediate Housing Fund to fund temporary housing products, including Affordable Rent Homes, Shared Ownership homes, and the Rent to Own; • Ban landlords from letting out poorly insulated homes, cut Council Tax by £100 for 10 years if you insulate your home; • Encourage landlords to lower their rent by paying them Housing Benefit directly, with tenants' consent, in return for a fixed reduction.

³⁶ Jobless 18-21-year-olds are entitled to housing benefit and the Jobseekers Allowance (JSA). This policy will ban childless 18-21-year-olds from claiming housing benefit, and also remove their entitlement to the JSA after 6 months of failing to find a job.

³⁷ An independent review of housing by Sir Michael Lyons, commissioned by the Labour Party.

³⁸ Letting fees may cover administration, inventory, tenancy extension/ renewal, and exit. Labour claim this policy will save renters over £600.

Political Party	Policies
UKIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise social housing for people whose parents and grandparents were born locally; • Build a million homes on previously developed land by 2025; • Remove stamp duty on the first £250,000 of new homes built on previously developed land; • Protect the greenbelt; • Build 500 affordable rent homes every year and eight halfway house hostels for homeless veterans.

Context:

Inability to buy a home is a big problem for young people, as well as women. In 2014 the number of houses built by the private sector increased by 13% on the previous year,³⁹ while the public sector house building decreased by 4%.⁴⁰

Most young people between 16 and 34 rent.⁴¹ If nothing is done to control house prices, focusing on home ownership and the private sector will not benefit many women and low-paid workers who require affordable housing,

The Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and Labour do recognise the importance of increasing housebuilding including affordable homes,⁴² stressing that these need to be affordable homes. Currently the national waiting list for social housing in England is at 1.36 million, which covers approximately 3.4 million people.⁴³ The independent Lyons Review recommends that housing for the elderly and those looking to downsize should be prioritised for new homes, as should investment in more social and affordable homes. As women are more often in social housing, 54% housing benefits are claimed by single women and 22% are claimed by couples, the increase of affordable homes is crucial to ensure everyone is given access to good quality homes.

Of household types in temporary accommodation in England, 41% were single mothers (in contrast to 4% single fathers), 10% were single women (opposed to 13% men) while 25% were a couple with dependent children. Single mothers are often the victims of low-pay and primary childcare duties, which combined has driven them to impoverished housing conditions. To support the most vulnerable in society, the incoming government must focus on public sector support. As the [Women's Budget Group](#) state, 'meaningful investment in social housing would help create a housing policy that supports women.'

³⁹ From 97,399 to 110,403, NHBC, 2014.

⁴⁰ From 36,271 in 2013 to 34,771 in 2014. NHBC, 2014.

⁴¹ In the younger age groups of 16-24 and 25-34, the majority rent at 87% and 60% respectively, [Census 2011](#)

⁴² The National Housing Federation emphasise that the three major parties address housebuilding in their manifesto analysis, 21 April 2015.

⁴³ [DCLG 2015](#).