

# **Sex Equality** ▶▶

# **State of the Nation 2016**

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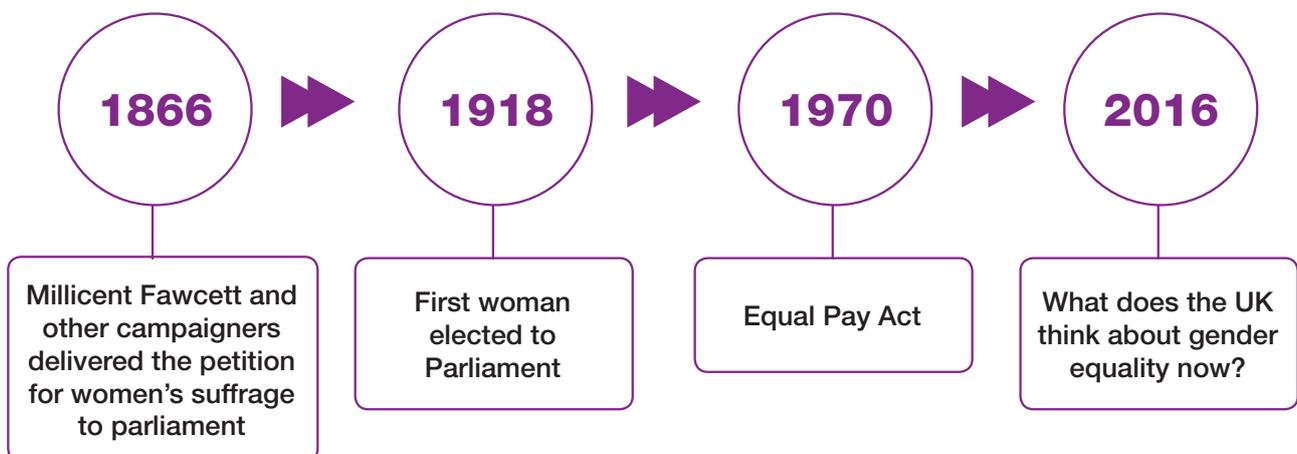
# Introduction

It's 2016, 150 years since Millicent Fawcett and other campaigners delivered the petition for women's suffrage to parliament, 98 years since the first woman in parliament and 46 years since the Equal Pay Act. So what does the UK think about gender equality now?

In this report The Fawcett Society reveals initial findings from our biggest ever survey of women and men's attitudes. The 'State of the Nation' poll, conducted by Survation, has revealed good news when it comes to the attitudes of men and women to gender equality. From the impact of gender equality on the economy to the importance of equality for society as a whole – there is broad support across ages and genders.

Over 8000 people were asked about their beliefs on a wide range of issues from gender identity and men in positions of power to support for women's equality. The survey includes 1400 respondents who make decisions about recruitment and interviewing in their role at work. This means that we are able to explore the attitudes and beliefs of the gate keepers to employment and progression. The size of our sample also allows comparisons of views across the nations and regions of the UK.

There is a strong bedrock of support for equality between men and women – in 2016 it's time to speed up the pace of change and ensure we aren't waiting another 150 years to achieve it.



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# Executive Summary

Fawcett Society's state of the nation poll has good news in terms of support for gender equality across the UK. Our research reveals a 'pro-equality majority', with most people supporting equality of opportunity for women with men. Perhaps most surprisingly, that support is highest amongst men. Elsewhere, the poll also reveals that the majority of people in the UK believe that equality for women and men would be good for the economy and that many – including a high proportion of men – believe they would personally benefit from equality.

Interestingly, most people believe that more needs to be done to achieve equality for women and men. However, despite widespread support for the principles of feminism the poll confirms that very few people use the term 'feminist' to describe themselves, although this varies considerably across age ranges. Fawcett has also found that there is a significant minority of people who are opposed to feminism. Young people are particularly divided on this issue: whilst those under 35 are most likely to identify themselves as feminist, overall sympathy for feminism is also lowest in this group.<sup>1</sup>

One important segment of the population we polled were those with responsibility for recruitment decisions. In general this group are less likely to believe in equality of opportunity for women and men and more likely to oppose feminism than the population overall. These people are the gate keepers of women's progression and may represent a small but powerful group of 'barrier bosses'. The Government favours voluntary measures to ensure women are given fair access to jobs at the top, such as the approach recommended by the Davies Report.<sup>2</sup> However our research reveals a widespread belief that men in top jobs won't make room for women unless they have to. Achieving the equality that the mainstream wants and believes will benefit the economy will require work to challenge gatekeepers with responsibility for women's progression, including men at the top.

The profile of transgender issues has risen significantly in recent years with high profile women such as Kellie Maloney and Caitlyn Jenner talking publicly about their experiences of gender transition. Our survey reveals that whilst the majority of people continue to believe that there are just two genders, a significant proportion of the population see it as far more fluid. Fawcett recognises gender as a social construct often used to constrain and oppress women. Nevertheless it is a concept with widespread purchase. It is important to recognise and explore the changing ways it is understood by the public. We believe these findings also have wider implications for old but persistent gender stereotypes. Many people do not want to be boxed in by rigid ideas about what counts as 'male' or 'female' or expectations about how someone of a particular gender should behave.

## About the survey

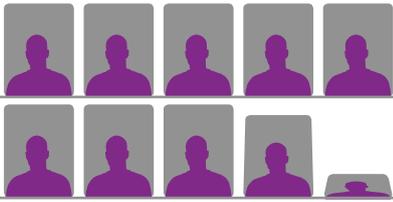
Survation polled 8165 UK residents aged 18+ between 30<sup>th</sup> November and 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015. The survey was conducted via online panel. Differential response rates from different groups were taken into account. Data were analysed and weighted by Survation to the profile of all UK adults aged 18+. Data were weighted by age, sex, region, household income, education and past vote. Targets for the weighted data were derived from Office for National Statistics 2011 Census data and the results of the 2015 General Election.

Because only a sample of the full population were interviewed, all results are subject to a margin of error, meaning that not all differences are statistically significant. For the whole sample (8165 respondents) it is 95% certain that the 'true' value will fall within the range of 1.1% from the sample result. Subsamples will be subject to higher margins of error.

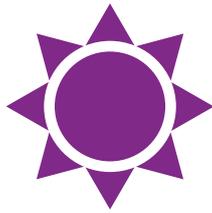
1 Respondents were asked to choose between seven statements: 1) 'I describe myself as a feminist', 2) 'I believe in equality for women and men but I don't describe myself as a feminist', 3) 'I feel excluded by feminism', 4) 'I think feminism is irrelevant', 5) 'I am opposed to feminism', 6) 'I don't know what feminism stands for' or 7) 'none of the above'. All those who selected options 1) and 2) are described as believing in equality for women and men as feminism entails this belief. This group is also described as sympathetic to feminism as they support the key principle of gender equality. Those who selected options 4), 5) and 6) are described as 'unsympathetic'.

2 Department for Education, Government Equalities Office, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2015) *Lord Davies: FTSE 350 boards should be 33% female by 2020*, gov.uk, 29th October 2015 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lord-davies-ftse-350-boards-should-be-33-female-by-2020>

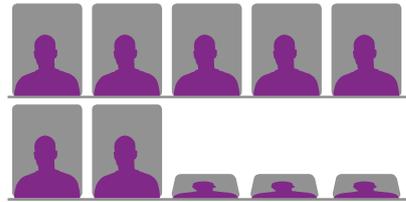
## Key findings<sup>3</sup>



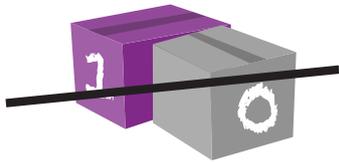
**Nearly 9 in 10** men want the women in their lives to have equality of opportunity with men. **Support for equality of opportunity is higher amongst older men**



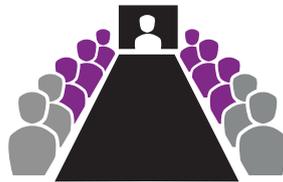
**39%** – over a third of men believe that they would benefit if we had a society where men and women are more equal



**7 in 10** men believe a more equal society between women and men would be better for the economy



**44%** of people believe that gender can be expressed as a range of identities. **Women and those aged 18-34 are most likely to support this statement**



**6 in 10** people believe that men in top jobs won't make room for women unless they have to



Whilst over two thirds of people (67%) support equality for women and men, only 7% actually describe themselves as feminist<sup>4</sup>

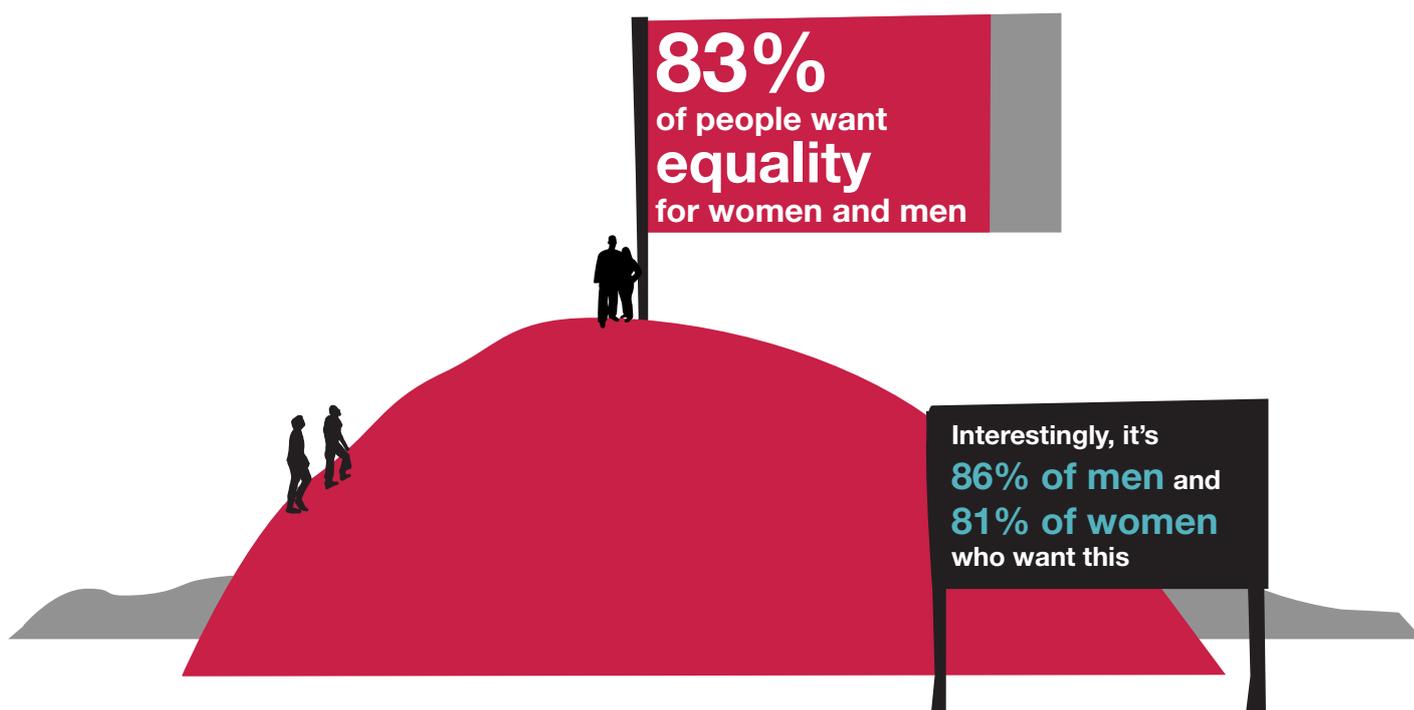
<sup>3</sup> Statistics are rounded to nearest percentage point

<sup>4</sup> Respondents were asked to choose between seven statements: 1) 'I describe myself as a feminist', 2) 'I believe in equality for women and men but I don't describe myself as a feminist', 3) 'I feel excluded by feminism', 4) 'I think feminism is irrelevant', 5) 'I am opposed to feminism', 6) 'I don't know what feminism stands for' or 7) 'none of the above'. All those who selected options 1) and 2) are described as believing in equality for women and men as feminism entails this belief. This group is also described as sympathetic to feminism as they support the key principle of gender equality. Those who selected options 4), 5) and 6) are described as 'unsympathetic'.

# People want equality for women and men

Our state of the nation poll tested levels of support for a key principle of feminism – equality of opportunity for women and men. Men were asked whether this was something they want for the women in their life whilst women were asked if it's something they want for themselves.

- ▶ A resounding 83% of people want equality of opportunity for women and men
- ▶ A surprise result was that overall men are **more** likely to support equality of opportunity for women than women themselves with 86% of men wanting this for women in their lives, compared to 81% wanting it for themselves
- ▶ The research reveals that this is not because women are more likely to oppose equality of opportunity but because they are more likely to express uncertainty about it. While 12% of women responded 'don't know', only 7% of men offered this answer. This is surprisingly high given that it is a question about personal preference that relates directly to your own experiences
- ▶ Support for equality of opportunity increases with age: 78% of those aged 18-34 support it whilst 87% of those over 55 do
- ▶ Whilst around 80% of women consistently agree that they want equality of opportunity for themselves, men's views alter significantly across the age ranges. Broadly, support increases with age, with 79% of men aged 18-24 supporting equality of opportunity, increasing to 92% for those over 65
- ▶ Importantly the survey reveals resistance to women's equality amongst a small but powerful group of those who make recruitment and interviewing decisions. This group are more than twice as likely (16%) as the overall population (7%) to be against equality of opportunity for the sexes. Within this group, men were most likely to be opposed with 17% of male recruitment decision makers being against equality of opportunity
- ▶ Support for equality of opportunity is consistent across the UK, except in London where people are more likely to oppose it (11%) and less likely to support it than the overall average to support it (79% as compared to 83% nationwide) Surprisingly, opposition to equality of opportunity is almost identical for men and women in London: 12% and 11% respectively



## Equality and the economy

From across the business community there is good evidence that gender equality is good for decision making and for profits,<sup>5</sup> and our poll reveals this view is shared by the majority of people in the UK.

- ▶ 7 in 10 men believe a more equal society between women and men would be good for the economy
- ▶ 73% overall believe a more equal society for women and men would be better for the economy
- ▶ Belief in a positive relationship between gender equality and a strong economy increases with age: 69% of 18-34 years olds believe in this, rising to 77% for those over 55
- ▶ The majority of recruitment decision makers believe that equality is good for the economy (65%.) But once again they are less likely to believe this than those who are not involved in recruitment (76%.) A quarter of recruitment decision makers believe that a more equal society would not be better for the economy as compared to 9% not involved in recruitment decision making
- ▶ People who define as feminist are much more likely than the population overall to believe in a positive relationship between gender equality and the economy – 86% compared to 73%. And, perhaps unsurprisingly, those unsympathetic to feminism are much less likely to believe this. Yet, even amongst these groups large numbers still believe a more equal society would be better for the economy. 46% of those who feel excluded by feminism agree with this statement, 57% of those who believe feminism is irrelevant and 49% of those who oppose feminism believe in the positive relationship

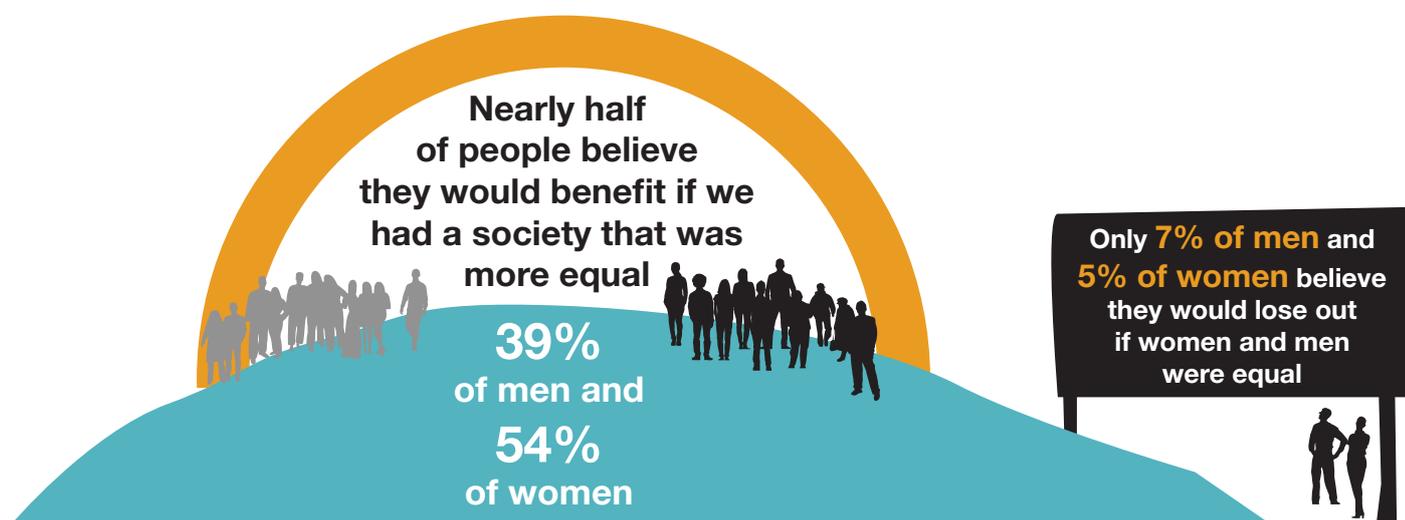


<sup>5</sup> Hunt V., Layton D. and Prince S. (2015) *Why Diversity Matters*, [http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/why\\_diversity\\_matters](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/why_diversity_matters), accessed 21st December 2015

## Who benefits?

Gender equality is often presented as a zero sum game with some fearing that better outcomes for women must mean men lose out. But this poll reveals not only that people believe gender equality is good for the economy, they believe it's in their own interests too.

- ▶ Nearly half (47%) of people believe that they would benefit if we had a society where men and women are more equal. This figure includes 39% of men. Only 7% of men believe they would lose out if men and women were more equal in society
- ▶ Over half of women (54%) believe they would benefit if we had a society where women and men were more equal. Only 5% believe that they would lose out
- ▶ There is a mixed picture for those under 34. Whilst men aged 18-24 are slightly less likely than overall to believe they would be disadvantaged by equality (4% compared to 7% for all men) this increases substantially for men aged 25-34. 17% of this group believe they would lose out if women and men were more equal
- ▶ Younger women are more likely to believe they would benefit if women and men were more equal: 75% of those aged 18-24 believe this, but only 32% of those over 65
- ▶ The responses of recruitment decision makers reveal some cause for concern. Whilst nearly half believe they would benefit from equality (49%,) they are much more likely than others groups to believe they would be disadvantaged. 14% believe they would lose out if men and women were more equal; that's more than twice the proportion of the overall population (6%) and three and a half times the proportion of those not involved in recruitment (4%)
- ▶ The findings suggest that women in positions of power may not always be allies in gender equality. 12% of female recruitment decision makers believe they would lose out if we achieved more equality
- ▶ There are some variations in beliefs on this issue across the regions and nations of the UK. There is a split picture in London. Those living in the capital are more likely to believe they would benefit than the UK as a whole (53% in London compared to 47% across the UK.) But 10% of Londoners believe they would lose out. Interestingly, women in London are also more likely than those elsewhere to believe they would be disadvantaged by equality, with 7% believing this, compared to only 2% in Northern Ireland and 3% in Wales
- ▶ These figures are much lower elsewhere in the UK. Only 6% of men and women in England overall believe they'd lose out, 5% of those in Scotland and 4% of those in Northern Ireland. The lowest concern about this is found in Wales, where just 3% of people believe they stand to lose from gender equality



# But more needs to be done

Even though there is widespread support for a society where women and men are equal the majority believe that more must be done to achieve it.

- ▶ 62% of people believe more needs to be done to achieve equality between men and women, including over half of men and 68% of women
- ▶ However 32% of men believe that men and women are already equal – only 21% of women believe that to be the case
- ▶ Younger people are more likely to believe no more work is needed. 37% of men aged 18-34 believe we're already equal but only 26% of those aged over 55 agree. A quarter of women aged 18-24 believe women and men are already equal, decreasing to 17% for those aged over 65

Although women working full time earn on average 13.9% less than men<sup>6</sup>, less than a third of members of parliament are women<sup>7</sup> and 1.4 million women a year experience domestic abuse<sup>8</sup> there is still a significant minority of people who believe that women's equality has gone too far.

- ▶ More than 1 in 10 people believe women's equality has gone too far. There is very little difference between men and women on this with 13% of men agreeing it has gone too far and 11% of women
- ▶ Those aged 25-34 emerge as most sceptical – 11% of women in this age group believe equality has gone too far. 20%, or 1 in 5 of men in this age group share this belief
- ▶ Those with responsibility for recruitment decisions are less likely to believe there is more to do (only 51%) and more likely to believe equality has gone too far, 16% as compared to 10% of those not involved in recruitment
- ▶ There are variations in attitudes across the UK. Those in Scotland and Northern Ireland are more likely than the UK population as a whole to believe that more needs to be done. 66% of those in Scotland and 70% of those in Northern Ireland agree with that statement compared to 62% overall
- ▶ Londoners are the most likely to believe that equality has gone too far – 14% of people living in the capital believe that, compared to 10% in Northern Ireland and Scotland. 12% of women in London believe that women's equality has gone too far



6 ONS ASHE 2015 (provisional) Table 1.6a <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-400803>

7 Counting Women In (2015) *Sex and Power; Who runs Britain? 2015*

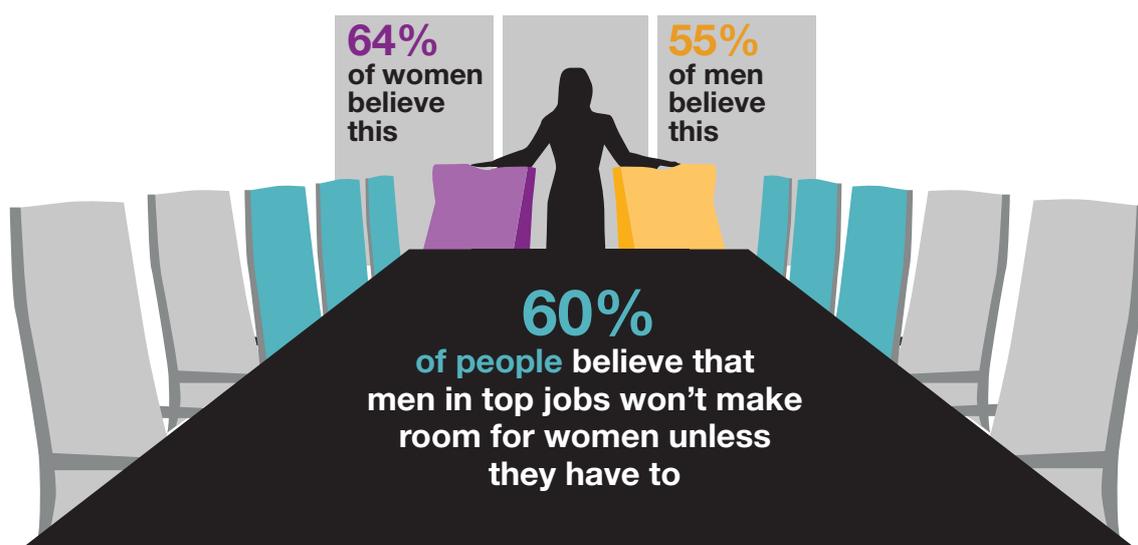
8 Office for National Statistics (2015) *Violent Crime and Sexual Offences – Intimate Personal Violence and Serious Sexual Assault*, February 2015 [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_394500.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_394500.pdf)

## A case for quotas?

The government currently favours voluntary measures to increase female representation in top jobs and positions of power – for instance there is a voluntary target for FTSE 350 companies to reach 33% of women on their boards by 2020.<sup>9</sup> However, our survey reveals consensus that men in positions of power won't hand power to women.

Respondents were asked which of the following statements best describes their view: 'men in top jobs won't make room for women unless they have to' or 'men in top jobs are willing to make room for women.' Respondents were also given a 'Don't know' option

- ▶ In each group broken out in the survey those who believe men won't make room outnumber those who believe they will
- ▶ Overall 60% of people believe that men in top jobs won't make room for women unless they have to. 64% of women believe this compared to 55% of men
- ▶ Agreement with this statement increases with age: 49% of 18-34 years olds believe men won't make room unless they have to, 60% of 35-54 years olds and 68% of those over 55
- ▶ Recruitment decision makers are slightly less likely than overall to believe men won't make room for women but 49% of them still believe this to be the case
- ▶ Those living in Scotland are most likely to believe men in top jobs won't make room – two thirds of Scots believe this to be the case
- ▶ Those in London are slightly more optimistic than the population as a whole – 23% believe men in top jobs will make room for women, compared to 19% of people nationwide



<sup>9</sup> Department for Education, Government Equalities Office, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2015) *Lord Davies: FTSE 350 boards should be 33% female by 2020*, gov.uk, 29th October 2015 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lord-davies-ftse-350-boards-should-be-33-female-by-2020>

## A pro-equality majority

There is a pro-equality majority in the UK today, including amongst men. These ‘hidden feminists’ don’t necessarily use the term to describe themselves but support the key principle of feminism that there should be equality for women and men.

- ▶ 67% of people are sympathetic to feminism<sup>10</sup>, including 60% of men
- ▶ However, the survey reveals that whilst most people are happy to support gender equality they are much more resistant to using the word ‘feminist’. Only 7% of people across the UK would describe themselves as feminist
- ▶ Despite the high levels of support for gender equality from men, the poll reveals only 4% of men would identify as feminist
- ▶ Women are more likely to be sympathetic to feminism (74%) and to identify as feminist (9%)
- ▶ Over half of men say they believe in equality for women and men (56%.) But they are slightly more likely than women to describe themselves as opposed to feminism (5% for men and 3% for women)
- ▶ The proportions of those unsympathetic to feminism – for men and women – are small with only 3% saying they feel excluded by feminism, 9% describing it as irrelevant and 4% outright opposing feminism
- ▶ The young are divided in their attitudes to feminism and gender equality. Those aged 18-34 are more likely to describe themselves as feminist. 19% of women aged 18-24 and 13% of those 25-34 describe themselves in this way. 11% of 18-24 year old men and 9% of men aged 25-34 call themselves feminist



<sup>10</sup> Respondents were asked to choose between seven statements: 1) ‘I describe myself as a feminist’, 2) ‘I believe in equality for women and men but I don’t describe myself as a feminist’, 3) ‘I feel excluded by feminism’, 4) ‘I think feminism is irrelevant’, 5) ‘I am opposed to feminism’, 6) ‘I don’t know what feminism stands for’ or 7) ‘none of the above’. All those who selected options 1) and 2) are described as believing in equality for women and men as feminism entails this belief. This group is also described as sympathetic to feminism as they support the key principle of gender equality. Those who selected options 4), 5) and 6) are described as ‘unsympathetic’.

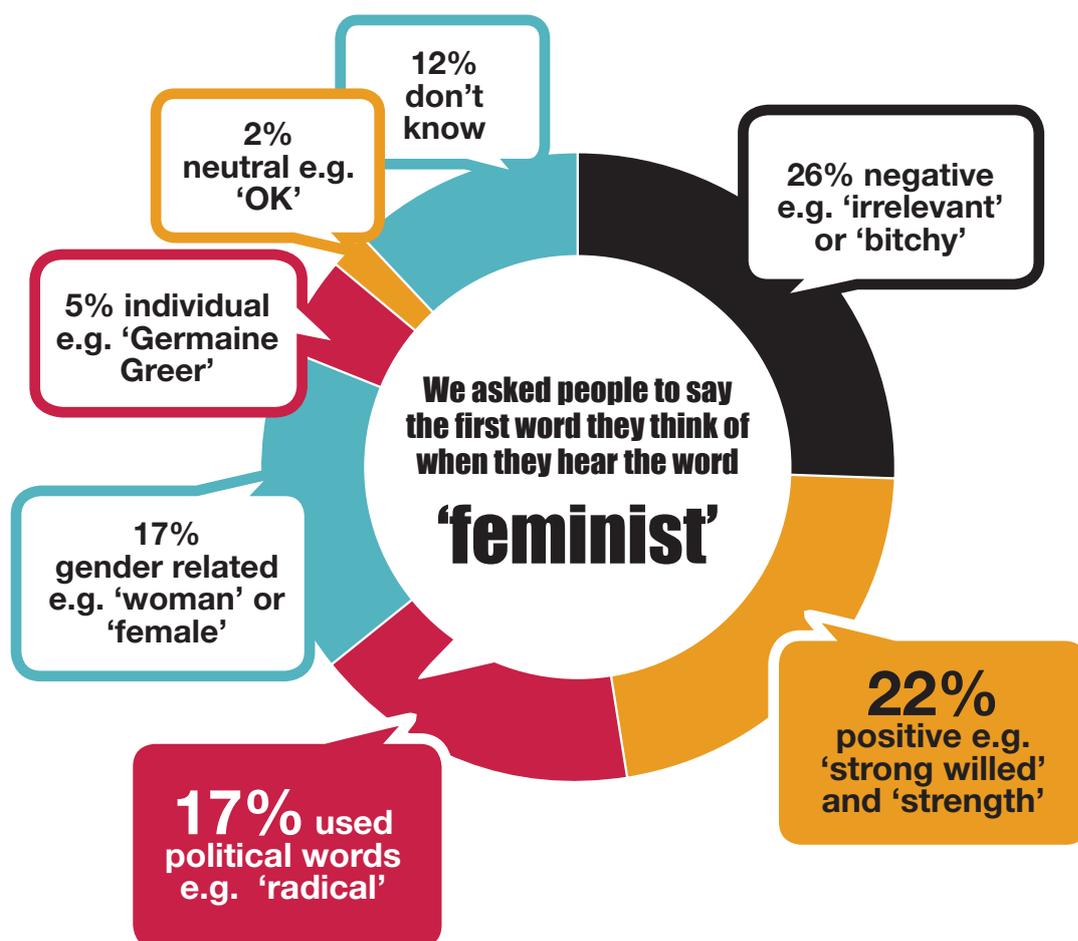
- ▶ But young people are also more likely to oppose feminism – 7% describe themselves in this way as compared to 3% of the general population
- ▶ Those aged 25-34 are most likely to oppose feminism. 5% of women in this group are opposed and 10% of men
- ▶ Whilst younger people are more likely to self identify as feminist, overall sympathy with feminism is lower amongst the young at 61% for those aged 18-34. For those aged 35-54 the figure climbs to 68%. For the over 55s the figure reaches 72%. Yet this corresponds to a decline in the proportion of people who actually identify themselves as feminist: 6% for 35-54 year olds and only 3% of the over 55s
- ▶ Identification with feminism is low across the board, but those belonging to more affluent social classes are slightly more likely to use the label for themselves. 9% of those in social class AB identify as feminist but only 5% of DEs do. This supports a widely held concern that feminism as a movement must do more to engage those on lower incomes
- ▶ Those responsible for recruitment decisions are divided in their attitudes to this issue. Over half (55%) of those responsible for recruitment decisions in their organisations are sympathetic to feminism. Whilst this figure is lower than overall sympathy with feminism, this group is also more likely at nearly 1 in 10 to identify as feminist. At the same time just over 1 in 10 are opposed to feminism
- ▶ Female recruitment decision makers are more likely than women overall to describe themselves as feminist: 13% use the term compared to 9% of all women. Yet 11% are opposed to feminism, compared to only 3% of women overall

## Do labels matter?

We asked people to say the first word they think of when they hear the word 'feminist'. Responses were sorted into seven broad categories of response:

- ▶ 26% of the words used were classified as negative such as 'irrelevant' or 'bitchy'
- ▶ 22% of the words used were positive, for instance 'strong willed' and 'strength'
- ▶ 17% of people used political words such as 'radical' or 'political movement'
- ▶ 17% used words related to gender such as 'woman' or 'female'
- ▶ 5% of people named an individual – Germaine Greer and Hillary Clinton were the most common
- ▶ 2% of people used neutral words such as 'OK'
- ▶ 12% of people were unable to think of a word and responded 'don't know'

It's clear that there is a large minority of people who have strong views against feminism – this is a larger group than those who go as far as describing themselves as 'opposed' to feminism. But this question also reveals a large pool of people who respond positively to feminism. The Fawcett Society will undertake further work to understand the barriers to this group identifying as feminist but also to understand how far this is or is not a barrier to achieving gender equality.



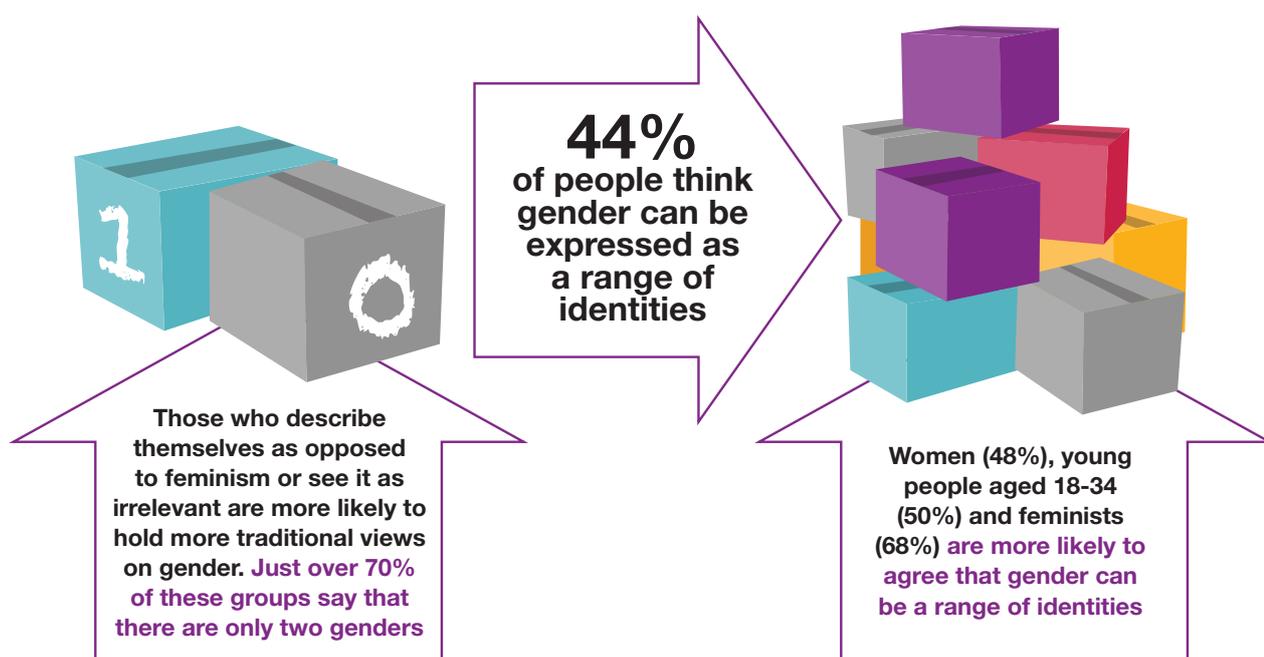
# Perceptions of gender identity

Our survey asked people their thoughts on whether gender identity is confined to two genders – male and female (gender binary) or whether gender is more fluid, encompassing a range of identities. Responses suggest there is widespread acceptance across the nation that people may not fit neatly into two gender categories or adhere to stereotypes of ‘male’ and ‘female’.

- ▶ Whilst 56% of people believe that there are only two genders, 44% believe gender can be a range of identities
- ▶ Women are more likely to see gender as a range of identities than men, despite the fact that they are no more likely to express a gender identity different to their biological sex. 48% of women agree that gender is a range of identities as opposed to 39% of men
- ▶ Overall, 96% of respondents identify with a gender the same as their biological sex and 2% identify as the opposite gender to their sex, as transgender or transsexual. The remaining two percent identified with a range of categories such as transvestite or intersex
- ▶ Young people are most likely to see gender as non-binary. 50% of 18-34 year olds believe that whilst only 39% of those over 55 do

The Fawcett Society believes that gender is a construct, often used to oppress and constrain women. However, we also recognise that it holds widespread purchase and informs many people’s ideas about equality between women and men. When almost half of people think that we should not be confined to narrow categories of ‘male’ and ‘female’ then it’s time to stop relying on outdated gender stereotypes. For instance, many retailers needlessly market products as being ‘for women’ or ‘for men’. This can be particularly harmful in the case of children’s toys. This research shows that many retailers need to wake up to the reality of public opinion. People do not want to be ‘boxed in’. 2015 saw increased profile for transgender issues and debate amongst feminists as to whether the concept of gender transition should be accepted. Our research suggests that majority of feminists see gender as fluid; 68 of this group agree gender can be a range of identities.

- ▶ Those who describe themselves as opposed to feminism or see it as irrelevant are more likely to hold more traditional views on gender. Just over 70% of these groups say that there are only two genders



# Conclusions

This analysis makes clear that there is a large pool of support for gender equality with the majority of people supportive of women's equality and optimistic about its impact on the economy. Men emerge as important allies, more likely to advocate equality of opportunity and with a large proportion viewing equality as in their own interests.

The survey reveals shifting attitudes to gender identity, with many rejecting the idea that we all fit into neat categories of 'male' or 'female'. However, alongside a pro-equality majority of 'hidden feminists' the research also highlights pockets of resistance, particularly amongst those with decision making powers in recruitment. Whilst there are allies in this group, it seems likely that many of these gatekeepers retain traditional attitudes and may reflect these in their employment decisions – even if they are unaware that they do so.

Whilst there has been a resurgence in feminism amongst young people and young people are amongst the most likely to reject traditional ideas of gender, this poll makes clear that these are by no means universal phenomena. In fact many young people are more conservative on gender equality and more concerned that they may lose out as a result – including young women. There are high proportions of people who oppose feminism in this group as well as higher numbers who identify as feminist suggesting a more politicised and polarised approach to gender equality amongst the young.

Fawcett's research demonstrates that there are large pools of potential support for feminism but it also points to important questions about why the majority of those who are pro-equality prefer not to use the word 'feminist'. The Fawcett Society is committed to doing more to reach this group and overcome barriers to their engagement in campaigns for equality. Our analysis of responses to the word feminism provides useful insights about the perceptions that may need to be overcome. Perhaps it is time to make the case that it doesn't matter what you call yourself; if you want to achieve a society where women and men are equal we can and must work together to speed up the pace of change.

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The Fawcett Society is the UK's leading campaign for equality between women and men. We trace our roots back to 1866, when Millicent Fawcett began her lifetime's work leading the peaceful campaign for women's votes. Today we remain the most authoritative, independent advocate for women's rights in the UK.

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