



Evidence to Committee

Equality and Social Justice Committee: Follow up inquiry Childcare and Parental Employment

Evidence details

Nature of Enquiry: Follow up inquiry on childcare and parental employment.

Source of Evidence: Senedd Cymru

Date: 05 February 2023

For more information please contact

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About the Commission

1. The Equality and Human Rights Commission ('the Commission') is Great Britain's national equality body and has been awarded an 'A' status as a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) by the United Nations.
2. Our job is to help make Wales and Britain fairer. We do this by safeguarding and enforcing the laws that protect people's rights to fairness, dignity and respect. We use our unique powers to challenge discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights. We work with other organisations and individuals to achieve our aims, but are ready to take tough action against those who abuse the rights of others.
3. The Commission has been given powers to advise Governments and Parliaments across England, Scotland and Wales on the equality and human rights implications of legislation and policy. We can also publish information or provide advice, on any matter related to equality, diversity and human rights. We are here to offer our expert advice to support the work of the Equality and Social Justice Committee to ensure equality and human rights considerations are at the heart of the Sixth Senedd.

How we have approached this briefing

4. This short briefing builds on the evidence of our previous evidence submitted to the Committee on 15 November 2021.

5. We have submitted this response on 5 February 2024. Since our previous briefing we have published our Equality and Human Rights Monitor: Is Wales Fairer 2023¹ (IWF). Our evidence is taken from this report.

¹ Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) (2023), 'Equality and Human Rights Monitor: Is Wales Fairer' <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/our-work/equality-and-human-rights-monitor/equality-and-human-rights-monitor-2023-wales-fairer> [accessed: 29 January 2024]

Evidence

Equality and Human Rights Monitor; Is Wales Fairer? 2023 Findings

6. In the 2021 census there were 1,586,600 women and girls (51.1% of the population) and 1,521,000 men and boys (48.9%) in Wales².

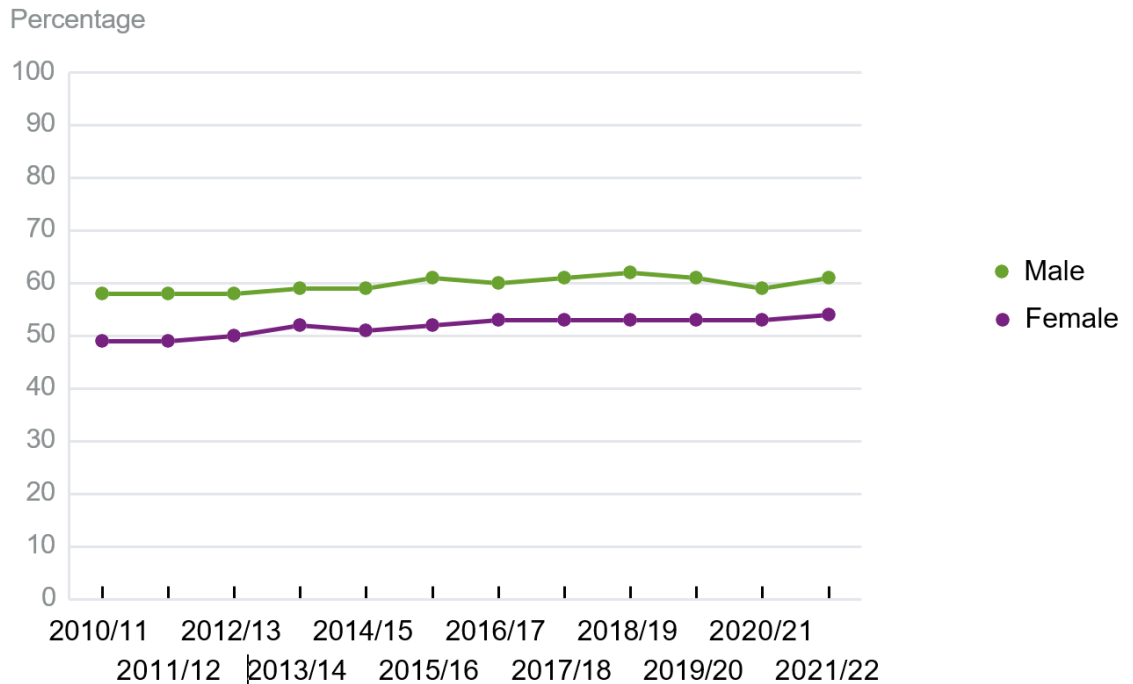
7. The £13.5 million Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE) programme is funded by the European Social Fund and Welsh Government, with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). PaCE is specifically aimed at parents who are out of work and cite childcare as their main barrier to accessing training or work opportunities. By October 2021, the project had engaged 6,535 participants (around 95% of them women) and supported 2,885 into work³.

² Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2022a), 'Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021'. Available at: [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/bulletins/ethnicgroupenglandandwales/census2021#:~:text=the%20%22Asian%2C%20Asian%20British%20or,was%2093.8%25%20\(2.9%20million](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/bulletins/ethnicgroupenglandandwales/census2021#:~:text=the%20%22Asian%2C%20Asian%20British%20or,was%2093.8%25%20(2.9%20million) [accessed: 11 August 2023]

³ Burrowes, E. and Davies, R. (2023), 'Evaluation of Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE) Impact: Counterfactual and Value for Money Evaluation Report. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2023-02/evaluationof-parents-childcare-and-employment-pace--impact-counterfactual-and-value-formoney-evaluation-report.pdf> [accessed 15 August 2023]

8. Recent research indicates that childcare remains a particular and unchanging barrier to accessing classes for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), particularly for female asylum seekers and refugees in Wales⁴. Further research highlights the impacts on mental health and well-being of exclusion from or inclusion in education and learning for women and mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales (Shobiye, 2022). This evidence is pertinent at a time when all local authorities in Wales are becoming asylum and refugee dispersal areas and in view of the Nation of Sanctuary plan.
9. Evidence shows that men remain consistently more likely to be employed than women. In 2019/20, 61.3% of all men aged 16 and over were in employment compared with 53.2% of women. This gap has not changed since 2010/11, as employment rates for men and women have been growing at a similar speed.
10. Employment rates by gender – Wales – 201/11-2021/22

⁴ Chick, M. and Hannagan-Lewis, I. (2019), 'Language education for forced migrants: Governance and approach, Languages', 4(3), p.74. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages4030074> [accessed: 14 August 2023].



(Source: EHRC analysis of Annual Population Survey)

11.

12. Employment rates for women from ethnic minority backgrounds have increased but they are still less likely to be employed than White and ethnic minority men and White women. Evidence from Chwarae Teg (a Welsh civil society organisation) shows employment rates for ethnic minority women aged 16–64 years increased from 48.2% in 2018 to 61.4% in 2022⁵. But the 2022 rates are below the relatively stable rates for White women (70.8%), White men (77.4%), and ethnic minority men (71.0%)⁶.

⁵ Chwarae Teg (2023a), 'State of the Nation Five-Year Review'. Available at: <https://chwaraeteg.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2023-State-of-the-Nation-five-year-review.pdf> [accessed: 14 August 2023].

⁶ Chwarae Teg (2023b), 'State of the Nation 2023'. Available at: <https://chwaraeteg.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/State-of-the-Nation-2023.pdf> [accessed: 14 August 2023].

13. Further evidence from Chwarae Teg⁷ shows that unemployment rates for disabled women have declined steadily from 8.0% in 2018 to 5.5% in 2022. By 2022 disabled men were more likely (9.0%) to be unemployed than disabled women (5.5%), with disabled men's unemployment rates fluctuating from 12% in 2018.
14. Analysis of APS data found that in 2019/20, women were more likely (44.8%) to be economically inactive than men (36.2%). The gap has narrowed between 2010/11 and 2019/20, and women have become less likely to be economically inactive (47.1% to 44.8%), while the figures for men have shown no significant change.
15. In 2022, men in Wales were more likely than women to be economically inactive because of long-term sickness, while women were more likely to be inactive due to looking after the family or home than men⁸. Recent research has suggested that childcare needs and caring responsibilities are the biggest barriers to equality in areas of life such as employment for women⁹.
16. The proportion of women working part-time in Wales remains far higher (39.0% in 2022) than the proportion of men (12.1%), though women's

⁷ Chwarae Teg (2023a), 'State of the Nation Five-Year Review'. Available at: <https://chwaraeteg.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2023-State-of-the-Nation-five-year-review.pdf> [accessed: 14 August 2023].

⁸ Welsh Government (2023c), 'Labour market statistics (Annual Population Survey): October 2021 to September 2022'. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/labour-market-statistics-annual-population-survey-october-2021-september-2022-html#:~:text=Reasons%20for%20economic%20inactivity&text=In%20the%20year%20ending%20September%202022%2C%20the%20most%20common%20reason,of%20all%20economically%20inactive%20males> [accessed: 19 July 2023].

⁹ Wen Wales and Oxfam Cymru (2022), 'Feminist Scorecard 2022: Tracking Welsh Government action to advance women's rights and gender equality'. Available at: <https://wenwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Feminist-Scorecard-Report-2022.pdf> [accessed: 14 August 2023].

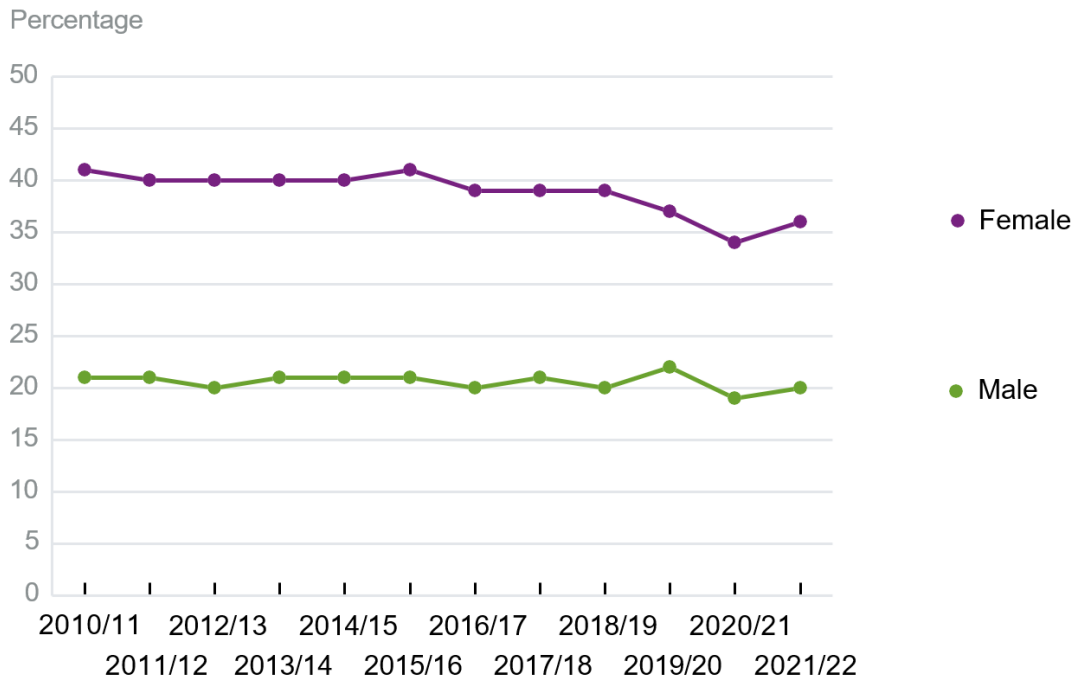
rates have fallen slightly from 42.0% in 2018, while men's have remained relatively stable (dropping from 12.7%)¹⁰.

17. Men in Wales are more likely to earn a higher hourly wage than women. The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), shows that the gap has significantly narrowed between 2010 and 2019.
18. According to ONS analysis of ASHE data, in Wales, women's median hourly earnings were 17.6% lower than men's in 2010. This gap narrowed to 14.1% by 2019/20¹¹¹².
19. Women are consistently more likely than men to be in a low-paid occupation (LPO). Analysis of the APS shows 37.4% of all working women and 21.8% of men were in an LPO in 2019/20. This gap remained stable between 2010/11 and 2018/19. The gap narrowed between 2018/19 and 2019/20 as the proportion of women in an LPO dropped, and this narrower gap was sustained from 2019/20 to 2021/22.
20. Men and women in low paid occupations, Wales, 2010/11 to 2021/22

¹⁰ Chwarae Teg (2023a), 'State of the Nation Five-Year Review'. Available at: <https://chwaraeteg.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2023-State-of-the-Nation-five-year-review.pdf> [accessed: 14 August 2023].

¹¹ Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2022c), 'Table 3.12 – Work Region Occupation SOC10 (2) Table 3.12 Gender pay gap 2019.xls'. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/annualsurveyofhoursandearningsashegenderpaygaptables> [accessed: 18 July 2023].

¹² Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2022d), 'Work Region Occupation (4) Table 15.12 Gender pay gap 2010.xls'. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/annualsurveyofhoursandearningsashegenderpaygaptables> [accessed: 18 July 2023].



21. (Source: EHRC analysis of Annual Population Survey)

22. Analysis found that, between 2010/11 and 2018/19, men and women in Wales were equally likely to be in a high-paid occupation (HPO). This changed in 2019/20, when the proportion of women in an HPO grew higher than the proportion of men in an HPO, though this gap was not sustained during the pandemic.

23. This contrasts with England, where men are more likely than women to work in an HPO. Though the gap is smaller in Wales, men and women in Wales are less likely to be in an HPO than men and women in England.

24. Chwarae Teg reports that women's average earnings of £22,041 in Wales do not meet the UK Minimum Income Standard of £25,000¹³¹⁴. While wages in Wales are lower for both men and women compared with other parts of the UK, median earnings for women in Wales were 15% lower than for men in 2019/20. Women are more likely to be second earners or primary carers, which may leave them at greater risk of falling into poverty in the event of a relationship breakdown ¹⁵. This evidence is consistent with evidence that single-parent households are most likely to be living in poverty.
25. One in five mothers said they had experienced harassment or negative comments related to pregnancy or flexible working from their employer and /or colleagues; if scaled up to the general population this could mean as many as 100,000 mothers a year.
26. In both England and Wales, most employment tribunal discrimination complaints and disposals are made on the grounds of sex discrimination, unfair dismissal due to pregnancy or equal pay cases related to sex. However, a limited number of complaints end in successful hearing outcomes.
27. The Commission still believes economic recovery plans and employer responses need to consider and address the specific economic constraints facing women. If the Government is genuinely committed to achieving the best possible recovery it can, it needs to address labour market inequality, remove the barriers facing women in employment and create conditions for better economic participation for women.

¹³ ¹³ Chwarae Teg (2023a), 'State of the Nation Five-Year Review'. Available at: <https://chwaraeteg.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2023-State-of-the-Nation-five-year-review.pdf> [accessed: 14 August 2023].

¹⁴ Chwarae Teg (2023b), 'State of the Nation 2023'. Available at: <https://chwaraeteg.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/State-of-the-Nation-2023.pdf> [accessed: 14 August 2023].

¹⁵ *ibid*

28. The Welsh Government should address the causes of the pay gap between men and women in Wales including sectoral and regional disparities. It should also evaluate current actions to address the pay gap between men and women, including its gender roadmap.

29. The Welsh Government should make a firm commitment to ensuring the provision of affordable, flexible childcare, stepping away from insecure employment and encouraging the creation of good work at real living wage levels, so that women are able to contribute their skills and experience to securing Wales's economic recovery.

Other sources of evidence the Committee may wish to consider

Human Rights Tracker

30. Our [human rights tracker](#) is one of the world's first online tools for monitoring human rights compliance. It is a searchable online tool to track how well the Welsh and UK Governments are putting its human rights duties into practice and contains all of the most recent recommendations made to the UK by the UN treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). We want the human rights tracker to raise awareness of the UK's human rights duties, to help you monitor how well they are being put into practice, and to support you in holding government to account.

31. You can use the tracker to:

- Review the progress the Welsh & UK governments have made towards fulfilling their international human rights obligations.
- Search by [UK](#) and [Wales](#) so you can see which government is responsible for implementing the recommendations.
- Find out what the UN has said about a particular human rights issue (such as education, living standards or work) or population group (such as disabled people or children) in the UK.
- Find dedicated pages on each of the UN human rights treaties the UK has agreed to follow, and on the UPR process.