



International Women's Day: Steps Being Taken to Press for Gender Equality Globally Debate on 8 March 2018

Summary

This Briefing has been produced for the debate taking place in the House of Lords on 8 March 2018, to mark International Women's Day, on "the steps being taken to press for progress on gender equality globally".

Gender disparities continue to exist globally, including in the UK. A World Economic Forum analysis of the global gender gap, taking into account economic participation, education, health and political participation, found that weighted by population, the average progress on closing the global gender gap stood at 68 percent in 2017. The UK had a gender gap of 33 percent, and was ranked 15th out of 144 countries for overall gender parity. The top three countries were Iceland, Norway and Finland, and the USA was ranked 49th.

In the UK in 2017, 71 percent of women aged 16 to 64 were in work compared to 80 percent of men, and women were significantly more likely to be in part-time employment. The gap between the average hourly pay for women and average hourly pay for men was 18.4 percent in favour of men.

A UN report highlighted that one in four women aged 20 to 24 were married before age 18 in 2015; in 30 countries where the practice of female genital mutilation is concentrated 35 per cent of girls between the ages of 15 and 19 had been subjected to the procedure; and on average women spent almost triple the amount of time on unpaid domestic and care work as men.

The UK has adopted the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, which include the goal of achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. In order to accomplish this the Government is implementing policies in developing countries, including initiatives to increase education opportunities for girls, improve women's economic participation, and prevent violence against women and girls.

In the UK, the 2015 Conservative Government brought in legislation to require certain organisations to publish information on their gender pay gap. Policy recommendations to close the gender pay gap by the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee and the consultancy PwC include measures to encourage more fathers to take parental leave, more availability of flexible working, and more affordable childcare.

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I. International Situation

Globally, women face disadvantages in relation to men. The World Economic Forum estimated that, in 2017, 68 percent of the global gender gap had been closed, with no country having closed the gap completely.¹ UN Women, a section of the United Nations (UN) which works for the advancement of women, summarised the ways in which women can be disadvantaged:

Women lack access to decent work and face occupational segregation and gender wage gaps. They are too often denied access to basic education and health care. Women in all parts of the world suffer violence and discrimination. They are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes.

I.1 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index

The World Economic Forum, an international organisation for public-private cooperation based in Geneva, Switzerland, publishes an annual report which examines the magnitude of gender-based disparities and tracks their progress over time. The 2017 Global Gender Gap Index used data from 144 countries and analysed their progress towards gender parity in the areas of economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. It also ranked countries by their overall gender parity score.

The 2017 report found that “globally, gender parity is shifting into reverse this year for the first time since the World Economic Forum started measuring it [in 2006]”.² According to the report, an average gap of 32 percent remains to be closed to achieve universal gender parity, compared to 31.7 percent the previous year.³

Across the four areas covered by the report, health outcomes had the smallest gender gap, with the 144 countries included in the report having closed 96 percent of the gap on average.⁴ However, this was unchanged on the previous year and the gap was larger in 2017 than in 2006.⁵ In educational attainment, 95 percent of the gap had been closed, a slight decrease compared to the previous year.⁶ Regarding economic participation, the gap widened for the second consecutive year and was the largest value measured by the Index since 2008, with 58 percent of the gap having been closed.⁷ Political participation showed the largest gap; 23 percent had been

¹ World Economic Forum, [Global Gender Gap Report](#), 2017, p vii.

² *ibid*, p v.

³ *ibid*, p vii.

⁴ *ibid*, p 7.

⁵ *ibid*, p 25.

⁶ *ibid*, p 7.

⁷ *ibid*, p 8.

closed, which the report stated was “unchanged since last year against a long-term trend of slow but steady improvement”.⁸

At a regional level the World Economic Forum found that Western Europe had the smallest remaining gender gap, and the Middle East and North Africa had the largest:

Western Europe records a remaining gender gap of 25 percent, placing it ahead of North America, with a gap of 28 percent, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, with a gap of 29 percent, and Latin America and the Caribbean, with a gap of 29.8 percent. The East Asia and the Pacific region ranks ahead of Sub-Saharan Africa, with a remaining gender gap of 31.7 percent and 32.4 percent, respectively, and South Asia, with a gap of 34 percent. The Middle East and North Africa region, for the first time this year, crosses the threshold of having a remaining gender gap of slightly less than 40 percent.⁹

1.2 United Nations Human Development Report

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) produces an annual Human Development Report, which examines the extent to which people around the world are able to acquire capabilities and enjoy opportunities.¹⁰ This is partly measured by the Human Development Index (HDI), an indicator which includes life expectancy at birth, mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling, and gross national income per capita.¹¹ UNDP also produces a Gender Development Index (GDI), which captures the HDI for men and women separately, and a Gender Inequality Index (GII), which is based on measures of reproductive health (maternal mortality ratio, adolescent birth rate), empowerment (share of seats in parliament, population with some secondary education) and economic status (labour force participation).¹²

The 2016 *Human Development Report* found that “women consistently have a lower HDI value than do men”.¹³ The largest differences captured by the GDI were in South Asia, where the HDI value for women was 17.8 percent lower than the HDI value for men, followed by the Arab States with a 14.4 percent difference and Sub-Saharan Africa with 12.3 percent. The *Human Development Report* found that a large proportion of the variation in HDI between men and women was due to women having lower incomes and lower educational attainment. However, life expectancy was higher for women than men in all regions, and in most regions the expected number of years of schooling for girls was similar to that for boys.

⁸ World Economic Forum, [Global Gender Gap Report](#), 2017, p 8.

⁹ *ibid*, p vii.

¹⁰ United Nations Development Programme, [Human Development Report](#), 2016, p 25.

¹¹ *ibid*, p 198.

¹² *ibid*, p 214.

¹³ *ibid*, p 54.

2. Gender Equality in the UK

2.1 Global Position

The World Economic Forum found that in 2017 the UK had a gender gap of 33 percent overall, and was ranked 15th out of 144 countries for overall gender parity, taking into account disparities in health, educational attainment, economic participation and political participation.¹⁴ This represents a drop in the UK's position since the first edition in 2006, when the UK was ranked 9th.¹⁵ In 2017 the top three countries were Iceland, Norway and Finland, and the USA was ranked 49th. In the 2017 World Economic Forum report, the UK had its highest ranking for political empowerment, at 17th, and its lowest for health and survival, at 100th.

The 2015 UNDP Gender Inequality Index put the UK 28th out of 159 countries, with a score of 0.131 (where 0 is parity and 1 is total inequality).¹⁶

2.2 Economic Participation

The World Economic Forum ranked the UK 53rd in its subindex of economic empowerment and opportunity, which includes the difference between women and men in labour force participation rates; differences in remuneration; the ratio of women to men among legislators, senior officials and managers; and the ratio of women to men among technical and professional workers.¹⁷ Among these indicators, the UK had the smallest gap in the ratio of women to men among technical and professional workers, and the largest gaps were in the ratio of women to men among legislators, senior officials and managers, and in income.¹⁸ The UK's overall score for economic empowerment and opportunity showed a remaining gap of 29.5 percent.

Employment

According to figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), between September and November 2017, 80 percent of men aged 16 to 64 were in work, compared to 71 percent of women.¹⁹ Women were more likely to work part-time, with 42 percent of all women in employment, and 13 percent of men in employment, working part-time.²⁰ A 2017 report by the consultancy firm PwC argued that if the female employment in the UK

¹⁴ World Economic Forum, [Global Gender Gap Report](#), 2017, p 10.

¹⁵ *ibid*, p 332.

¹⁶ United Nations Development Programme, [Human Development Report](#), 2016, p 214.

¹⁷ World Economic Forum, [Global Gender Gap Report](#), 2017, pp 5 and 12.

¹⁸ *ibid*, p 332.

¹⁹ Office for National Statistics, [UK Labour Market: January 2018](#), 24 January 2018, p 8.

²⁰ Office for National Statistics, [EMP01 SA: Full-Time, Part-Time and Temporary Workers \(Seasonally Adjusted\)](#), 24 January 2018.

increased to match that of Sweden, where 80 percent of women are in employment and 82 percent of all women in employment work full-time, this would boost the UK's GDP by £170 billion.²¹

Pay

The ONS uses data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings to analyse the gender pay gap.²² According to this data, in the UK in 2017, the gender pay gap was 18.4 percent in favour of men, compared to a gap of 21.9 percent in 2007.²³ The gap is partly explained by women being more likely to work part-time than men, as median hourly pay was higher for both men and women if they worked full-time, compared with part-time workers.²⁴ However, the gender pay gap persists when looking only at full-time work, where the pay gap in 2017 was 9.1 percent.²⁵

Occupation can also affect the gender pay gap; for example, more than 70 percent of chief executives and senior officials, and managers and directors—the highest paid categories—were men.²⁶ In addition, within these groups women were paid less; median hourly pay for men amongst chief executives and senior officials was £48.53, whereas for women it was £36.54.

Analysis of the gender pay gap across age categories showed that for full-time workers the proportion by which women earned less than men was small (never more than 2.4 percent) for those aged 16 to 39, and for part-time workers the gap is in favour of women.²⁷ However, in the older age categories the pay gap increases significantly and is always more than 10 percent in favour of men for full-time workers. Examining why this gap exists, the ONS postulated that caring for children results in lower average pay for women:

The increased gap for ages 40 to 49 and 50 to 59 may capture the differential impact of taking time out of the labour market. One possible reason for taking time out is having children; between April and June 2017, the employment rate for women with dependent children is 73.7 percent with 51.8 percent of the jobs being part-time whilst the employment rate for men with dependent children is 92.4 percent with 90.1 percent of these jobs being full-time.

The consultancy firm PwC also produces an annual analysis of the UK's gender pay gap, using data from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation

²¹ PwC, [Women in Work Index](#), February 2017, p 4.

²² Office for National Statistics, [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings](#), 26 October 2017.

²³ *ibid*, p 12.

²⁴ Office for National Statistics, [Understanding the Gender Pay Gap](#), 17 January 2018, p 4.

²⁵ *ibid*, p 3.

²⁶ *ibid*, p 8.

²⁷ *ibid*, p 10.

and Development. The most recent report at the time of publication, which uses data from 2015, found that the UK had a gender pay gap of 17 percent (including both full and part-time workers).²⁸ PwC estimated that closing this gap could bring benefits to the UK economy of £85 billion.

In its report, PwC argued that the fact that women take more time out of work to care for children or other family members was partly responsible for the gender pay gap, as it results in women losing out on pay progression over the long-term.²⁹ The report concluded that “this factor explains more than one-third of the pay gap in the UK”. PwC also cited the fact that women are more likely to work in lower-paying sectors and occupations, partly because these offer greater flexibility, as a reason for the gender pay gap. It estimated that this accounted for one-fifth of the gender pay gap in 2015.

2.3 Education

The World Economic Forum ranked the UK 36th for educational attainment.³⁰ While it was ranked first, with a score of 1 (perfect parity), for literacy rate, enrolment in secondary education and enrolment in tertiary education, it was ranked 70th for enrolment in primary education, with a score of 0.999. For overall educational attainment, 27 countries, including the USA, Lesotho and Cuba, were ranked joint first with scores of perfect parity.

Early Years and Primary

According to the most recent statistics from the Department for Education, “girls outperformed boys in all key measures” in early years.³¹ For example, in 2017, 76.5 percent of girls achieved at least the expected level in all early learning goals compared to 61.8 percent of boys. By the end of Key Stage 2, when children are typically eleven years old, girls continued to outperform boys; in 2017, 65 percent of girls achieved the expected standard in all of reading, writing and mathematics compared to 57 percent of boys.³² The only subject area in which girls did not outperform boys was mathematics, where attainment at the expected standard was 75 percent for both boys and girls.

²⁸ PwC, [Women in Work Index](#), February 2017, p 11.

²⁹ *ibid*, p 16.

³⁰ World Economic Forum, [Global Gender Gap Report](#), 2017, p 332.

³¹ Department for Education, [Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Results in England](#), 2017, p 5.

³² Department for Education, [National Curriculum Assessments at Key Stage 2 in England, 2017 \(revised\)](#), 14 December 2017, p 14.

Secondary and Post-16 Qualifications

In 2017, the attainment gap persisted at GCSE.³³ These examinations are scored on a scale of 1 to 9, where 9 is the highest possible score. In 2017, in an average measure of eight subjects, which includes English and mathematics, girls achieved an average score of 48.7 while boys achieved an average of 43.4, a gap of 5.3 points. This represented an increase in the achievement gap from 2016, when it stood at 4.6 points.³⁴

More girls pursued a level 3 qualification (including A levels, other academic qualifications such as the International Baccalaureate, applied general qualifications and tech level qualifications) than boys; in 2017, 52.5 percent of level 3 students were female.³⁵ A higher percentage of male students entered maths and science subjects than female students, with the exception of biology.³⁶

In 2017, female students achieved a higher average points score (APS) per entry in A levels, but a higher proportion of male students achieved top grades.³⁷ Female students achieved higher grades for the 'best 3' measure—which represents average attainment across a student's best 3 A levels—compared to male students. However, a higher proportion of male students achieved 3 A*–A grades or better (14.5 percent) and AAB grades or better (22.8 percent) compared to female students, at 11.8 percent and 21.1 percent respectively. The gender gap in these measures increased to 2.7 percentage points and 1.7 percentage points in 2017, compared to 1.9 percentage points and 0.8 percentage points in 2016 respectively. Female students also achieved a higher APS per entry for both applied general and tech levels, although the gap was less significant for tech levels.³⁸

2.4 Political Participation

The World Economic Forum ranked the UK 17th on its political empowerment subindex; this is a composite measure comprising women in parliament (in which the UK was ranked 38th), women in ministerial positions (in which the UK was ranked 23rd) and number of years with female head of state or government (in which the UK was ranked 8th).³⁹

³³ Department for Education, [Provisional GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2016 to 2017](#), 2 October 2017, p 20.

³⁴ Department for Education, [Revised GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2015 to 2016](#), 19 January 2017, p 24.

³⁵ Department for Education, [Provisional A Level and Other 16–18 Results in England, 2016/2017](#), 12 October 2017, p 5.

³⁶ *ibid*, p 6.

³⁷ *ibid*, p 9.

³⁸ *ibid*, p 10.

³⁹ World Economic Forum, [Global Gender Gap Report](#), 2017, p 332.

A recent House of Commons Library briefing summarised the representation of women in Parliament, devolved legislatures and local councils:

Parliament

208 female MPs were elected during the 2017 general election—a record high and 32 percent of all MPs. This is up from 191 in the 2015 election and the highest proportion of any UK election to date. There are 206 female peers, making up 26 percent of Members of the House of Lords.

Devolved Legislatures and UK MEPs

Just over one-third (36 percent) of members in the Scottish Parliament are women, compared to just over two-fifths (42 percent) of members of the National Assembly for Wales and 30 percent of Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Following the 2014 European Parliament elections, 41 percent of UK MEPs are women.

Local Government Councillors

32 percent of local authority councillors in England are women, as of 2013. In Scotland, 24 percent of councillors are women. Women hold 26 percent of council seats in Wales. In Northern Ireland 25 percent of councillors are women.⁴⁰

In the UK Government, at the time of publication there were six female cabinet ministers, including the Prime Minister, out of a total of 23.⁴¹

3. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

3.1 Background

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 goals adopted by the UN in September 2015.⁴² These goals set targets for all member states for the next 15 years in the areas of poverty, inequality and climate change. The UK Government adopted the SDGs and has stated that it is “firmly committed to delivering the Goals both at home and around the world”.⁴³

The SDGs are a successor to the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which spanned the period 2000 to 2015. These goals included

⁴⁰ House of Commons Library, [Women in Parliament and Government](#), 12 February 2018, p 3.

⁴¹ HM Government, [Ministers](#), accessed 21 February 2018.

⁴² United Nations, [The Sustainable Development Agenda](#), accessed 19 February 2018.

⁴³ Department for International Development, [Agenda 2030: Delivering the Global Goals](#), 28 March 2017.

targets to eliminate gender disparity in education, reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters and achieve universal access to reproductive health.⁴⁴ A report published in 2015 on progress towards meeting the goals found that despite significant progress, disparities still remained in education, the scale of reduction in maternal mortality was not achieved and “only half of pregnant women receive the recommended amount of antenatal care”.⁴⁵

The SDGs inform the work of the Department for International Development (DFID), the annual report of which sets out how its work supports the achievement of the SDGs.⁴⁶

3.2 Goal Five

Goal Five of the SDGs is to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. This goal contains nine targets, which are to:

- end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere;
- eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation;
- eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation;
- recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate;
- ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life;
- ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences;
- undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws;

⁴⁴ United Nations, ‘[Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2015](#)’, accessed 19 February 2018.

⁴⁵ United Nations, [Millennium Development Goals Report](#), 2015, pp 29, 39 and 41.

⁴⁶ Department for International Development, [Annual Report and Accounts 2016–17](#), July 2017, HC 8 of session 2017–19.

- enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women; and
- adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.⁴⁷

In 2017, a report was published by the UN on the SDGs. This report found that “gender inequality persists worldwide, depriving women and girls of their basic rights and opportunities”.⁴⁸ It concluded that “achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will require more vigorous efforts, including legal frameworks, to counter deeply-rooted gender-based discrimination often resulting from patriarchal attitudes and related social norms”.

The 2017 report highlighted the following facts regarding gender equality worldwide:

- One in five girls and women (aged 15 to 49) who have ever been married or in a union reported they had been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the previous twelve months, according to surveys undertaken between 2005 and 2016 in 87 countries.
- Around 2000, nearly one in three women between 20 and 24 years of age reported that they were married before age 18; around 2015, the ratio had declined to roughly one in four.
- According to surveys undertaken around 2015 in 30 countries where the practice of female genital mutilation is concentrated, over a third (35 per cent) of girls between the ages of 15 and 19 had been subjected to the procedure.
- On average, women spent almost triple the amount of time on unpaid domestic and care work as men, based on data from 2000 to 2016.
- Women’s participation in single or lower houses of national parliaments worldwide reached only 23.4 percent in 2017. In the majority of the 67 countries with data from 2009 to 2015, fewer than a third of senior-management and middle-management positions were held by women.

4. UK Government Policies: International

The UK Government’s efforts to promote gender equality abroad, and to help the global effort to achieve the SDGs, are undertaken by DFID and the

⁴⁷ United Nations, ‘[Goal 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls](#)’, accessed 19 February 2018.

⁴⁸ United Nations, [The Sustainable Development Goals Report](#), 2017, p 5.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

4.1 Economic Empowerment

In January 2017, DFID published its *Economic Development Strategy*. In this document the Government stated that “all our economic development work will tackle gender discrimination and work to deliver safer, more secure and higher-return work for women”.⁴⁹ To achieve this, DFID aims to tackle the specific barriers faced by girls and women, such as “lower human capital and access to assets; discriminatory behaviours and laws; and the unequal distribution of care work”.⁵⁰ Examples of this work include supporting research on the obstacles that prevent women entrepreneurs from crossing over into more profitable male-dominated sectors, and implementing the Arab Women’s Enterprise Fund, a market-development programme that addresses gender barriers to poor women’s access to markets, including discriminatory attitudes.

In September 2016, DFID announced a new programme entitled *Work and Opportunities for Women*. The programme, which has been allocated £12.8 million and will be delivered over five years, aims to “help women around the world to get jobs, overcome discriminatory laws and reduce the burden of unpaid domestic work”.⁵¹ Specific actions announced at its launch included:

- help 300,000 women get more productive jobs and higher incomes, with better working conditions; and
- improve data on where women work in supply chains and identify barriers, which currently prevent women from being a part of the supply chain.

The UK also participates in the UN High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment, which it co-sponsors with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (UN Women).⁵²

4.2 Education

The Girls’ Education Challenge, launched in 2012, was a DFID programme which supported organisations to “find better ways of getting girls in school and ensuring they receive a quality of education to transform their future”.⁵³

⁴⁹ Department for International Development, [Economic Development Strategy: Prosperity, Poverty and Meeting Global Challenges](#), January 2017, p 21.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ Department for International Development, [‘UK and Private Sector to Help the World’s Poorest Women into Better Jobs’](#), 22 September 2016.

⁵² UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment, [‘About the Panel’](#), accessed 22 February 2018.

⁵³ Department for International Development, [‘Girls’ Education Challenge \(GEC\)—Help 1 Million Disadvantaged Girls Go to Primary and Secondary School’](#), 28 January 2018.

By the end of the 2016/17 financial year this initiative had reached 2.2 million girls by providing textbooks and “student kits”, building and renovating classrooms and training teachers.⁵⁴ A second phase of the Girls’ Education Challenge is currently in operation, running from April 2017 to March 2025, supporting girls who benefitted from the first phase to continue their education, transition to the work place, or undertake other income-generating activities.⁵⁵ The second phase also includes a new programme to test new ways of supporting highly marginalised out-of-school girls to go back to school, gain new skills and competences out of school, or access jobs and other income-generating activities.

DFID also supports education through its country programmes, often with an explicit focus on girls.⁵⁶

In December 2016, the Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI) reviewed the Government’s work supporting marginalised girls to pursue an education. This report found that “DFID does not have a coherent strategy for addressing girls’ marginalisation in education, and that its various activities are not well joined up”.⁵⁷ It further stated that it had “identified a clear pattern of DFID programmes losing their focus on marginalised girls through the implementation process, leading to disappointing results”, and gave the Department an amber-red score for its performance in addressing the marginalisation of girls in education, indicating that significant improvement would be required for DFID to achieve its ambitions.

In its response to the ICAI’s review, the Government stated that “over the past eleven months since the reporting period we have taken action on a number of the issues ICAI have raised, so that the recommendations in this review now largely align with current DFID practice”.⁵⁸ It fully accepted one of ICAI’s recommendations, and partially accepted two further recommendations.

4.3 Violence against Women and Girls

In its *Annual Report and Accounts 2016–17*, DFID highlighted its work to combat violence against women and girls.⁵⁹ In 2016, DFID had

⁵⁴ Department for International Development, [Annual Report and Accounts 2016–17](#), July 2017, HC 8 of session 2017–19, p 33.

⁵⁵ Department for International Development, [Girls’ Education Challenge: Annual Review Summary Sheet](#), January 2017, p ii.

⁵⁶ Department for International Development, [Annual Report and Accounts 2016–17](#), July 2017, HC 8 of session 2017–19, p 33.

⁵⁷ Independent Commission on Aid Impact, ‘[Accessing, Staying and Succeeding in Basic Education—UK Aid’s Support to Marginalised Girls](#)’, 16 December 2016.

⁵⁸ Department for International Development, [DFID Response to the Independent Commission for Aid Impact \(ICAI\) Recommendations on: “Accessing, Staying and Succeeding in Basic Education—UK Aid’s Support to Marginalised Girls. December 2016”](#), January 2017, p 1.

⁵⁹ Department for International Development, [Annual Report and Accounts 2016–17](#), July 2017, HC 8 of session 2017–19, p 35.

23 programmes dedicated to addressing violence against women and girls with a total budget of £184 million, and more than 100 other programmes with one or more elements addressing this issue.⁶⁰ The UK Government also provides support to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Amplify Change, a multi-donor fund working for universal sexual and reproductive health and rights.⁶¹

The UK also leads the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI), which aims to “raise awareness of the extent of sexual violence against women, men, girls and boys in situations of armed conflict and rally global action to end it”.⁶² The UK’s work under this programme includes:

[...] 60 deployments by the UK Team of PSVI Experts to a wide range of countries to help train health, legal and law enforcement professionals to investigate sexual violence crimes through the documentation, collection and preservation of forensic evidence; working with human rights defenders and NGOs on projects to help survivors access justice, legal advice and psychosocial support as well as to challenge the stigma associated with being a victim of these crimes; and developing and providing training on the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict—a set of practical guidelines for actors working to document incidents of sexual violence in conflict-affected areas.⁶³

In its review of DFID’s work on combatting violence against women and girls, ICAI concluded that DFID had made “a strong start in a challenging area”, and awarded it a green light.⁶⁴ It stated that:

When it comes to turning knowledge into credible programming, DFID has done reasonably well to date. Much of its programming is innovative and well designed. However, there are still difficult issues to resolve about how to turn a young portfolio into a large-scale, sustained engagement that can deliver transformative impact. Central to this is the need for a more considered approach to scaling up.

5. UK Government Policies: Domestic

Working towards achieving the SDGs also requires the Government to take action to improve gender equality domestically.

⁶⁰ Independent Commission on Aid Impact, ‘[DFID’s Efforts to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls](#)’, 17 May 2016.

⁶¹ Department for International Development, [Agenda 2030](#), March 2017, p 14.

⁶² HM Government, ‘[Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative: About Us](#)’, accessed 22 February 2018.

⁶³ Department for International Development, [Agenda 2030](#), March 2017, p 14.

⁶⁴ Independent Commission on Aid Impact, ‘[DFID’s Efforts to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls](#)’, 17 May 2016.

5.1 Gender Pay Gap

Policy

The Conservative Party manifesto published ahead of the 2015 general election stated that the Party would require companies with more than 250 employees to publish the difference between the average pay of their male and female employees.⁶⁵ This commitment was given effect by the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017, which came into force on 6 April 2017 and require all relevant organisations to publish this information as at 31 March (for public sector organisations) or 6 April (for businesses and charities) within one year.⁶⁶ The first deadlines for this reporting will fall on 30 March 2018 and 5 April 2018.

The Conservative Party's 2017 general election manifesto stated that the Party would "require companies with more than 250 employees to publish more data on the pay gap between men and women".⁶⁷ In response to a question from Alex Sobel (Labour Co-operative MP for Leeds North West) on the Government's actions to address the gender pay gap, on 22 February 2018, the Home Secretary Amber Rudd, who is also Minister for Women and Equalities, said that the Government remained committed to closing the gender pay gap:

It is incredibly important that we do address closing the gender pay gap. Transparency is one of the key ways that we will achieve that. Having this compulsion of reporting on gender pay is an important first step, but we will take it further. We will engage with businesses to see what measures they will be putting in place to address the gender pay gap. My experience, when I talk to businesses about this, is that when they realise that they have such a gender pay gap—to some, it is a revelation—they are moving to put in training and other measures to address it.⁶⁸

House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee Gender Pay Gap Report

In November 2015, the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee launched an inquiry into the gender pay gap.⁶⁹ This inquiry examined the reasons for the discrepancy between men's pay and women's pay and the Government's policies to close the gap, and made recommendations to the Government concerning how this could be achieved more quickly.

⁶⁵ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2015](#), April 2015, p 19.

⁶⁶ The Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017.

⁶⁷ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2017](#), 18 May 2017, p 56.

⁶⁸ [HC Hansard, 22 February 2018, col 322](#).

⁶⁹ UK Parliament website, ['Gender Pay Gap Inquiry Launched'](#), 4 November 2015.

The report concluded that “a large part of the gender pay gap is down to women’s concentration in part-time work [...] this is partly due to women’s disproportionate responsibility for unpaid caring, but also because many of the sectors women work in, like retail and care, offer predominantly low-paid, part-time work”.⁷⁰ The Committee concluded that “flexible working for all lies at the heart of addressing the gender pay gap”, and emphasised that “this does not mean part-time work, which we know is underpaid and limits career progression. Flexible working is much broader and includes jobs shares, late starts, early finishes, term time working and working from home”. The Committee also argued that addressing the pay gap requires family responsibilities to be divided more equally, stating that “as long as women continue to take the majority of responsibility for childcare and other forms of unpaid caring, pay differentials will persist”.

Examining the Government’s actions to eliminate the pay gap, the Committee stated:

We have found a lack of effective Government policy in many of the areas that contribute to the gap. Reporting regulations do not go far enough to make a real difference. Women who wish to return to work after a break are not being supported to do so—even in areas like teaching where staff shortages are well documented. Aside from increasing the National Minimum Wage, there has been no co-ordinated attempt to address the issues faced by the many women working in low paid sectors.⁷¹

The Committee made 16 recommendations to the Government on ways it could more effectively reduce the gender pay gap, including that the Government should:

- make all jobs flexible by default from the outset unless there is a strong and continuing business case for them not to be;
- bring in non-transferrable leave for fathers and second parents to allow men and women to share care more equally;
- establish industrial strategies for low paid, highly feminised sectors to improve productivity and pay levels; and
- create a National Pathways to Work scheme that will support women to return to employment after time out of the labour market.⁷²

⁷⁰ House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, [Gender Pay Gap](#), 22 March 2016, HC 584 of session 2015–16, p 5.

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² *ibid.*, p 6.

In its response to the Committee, the Government highlighted existing policies to increase opportunities for flexible working, such as the 'Right to Request Flexible Working'.⁷³ Regarding the Committee's proposed changes to shared parental leave, including paid days that must be taken by the father or second parent, the Government said it did not propose to pursue these policies.⁷⁴ The Government also said it did not intend to implement the Committee's recommendation to create a new scheme to help women back into employment after caring for children.⁷⁵

PwC Women in Work Policy Recommendations

The 2017 *Women in Work Index* report by the consultancy PwC recommended policies which could decrease the gender pay gap. These included introducing "use-it-or-lose-it" quotas for fathers, to increase the take-up of shared parental leave, and increasing the availability of affordable childcare.⁷⁶ PwC also recommended that employers eliminate bias from recruitment policies, set up programmes to help women back into work, assess employees based on outcomes rather than hours worked and provide opportunities for flexible working.⁷⁷

5.2 Women on Boards and in FTSE Leadership

In 2010, 12.5 percent of board members of FTSE 100 companies were women.⁷⁸ A voluntary target of 25 percent female representation on FTSE 100 boards was recommended in a 2011 report by Lord Davies of Abersoch, who at that time was a Labour Peer (currently non-affiliated). A 2015 follow-up report by Lord Davies found that the proportion of women had increased to 26.1 percent.⁷⁹

In 2016, a review led by Sir Philip Hampton and Dame Helen Alexander recommended a further target of 33 percent female representation on FTSE 350 Boards and in FTSE 100 leadership teams (defined as members of the Executive Committee and those senior leaders who report directly to Executive Committee members) by 2020.⁸⁰ A report published in November 2017 found that FTSE 100 boards were 27.7 percent female, and 25.2 percent of members of leadership teams were female.⁸¹

⁷³ House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, [Gender Pay Gap: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2015–16](#), 21 February 2017, HC 963 of session 2016–17, pp 4–8.

⁷⁴ *ibid*, pp 8–10.

⁷⁵ *ibid*, pp 13–14.

⁷⁶ PwC, [Women in Work Index](#), February 2017, p 21.

⁷⁷ *ibid*, p 22.

⁷⁸ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, [Women on Boards](#), February 2011, p 4.

⁷⁹ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, [Women on Boards Davies Review Five Year Summary](#), October 2015, p 2.

⁸⁰ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, [Hampton-Alexander Review: FTSE Women Leaders](#), November 2017, p 8.

⁸¹ *ibid*, pp 8 and 11.

Between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2017, 68.1 percent of new appointments to FTSE 100 leadership teams were male.⁸² In 2017, over a third of the FTSE 350 had at least 33 percent female representation on their boards or were “on track” to do so by 2020.⁸³

6. Opposition Policies

In its manifesto published ahead of the 2017 general election, the Labour Party argued that “under the Conservatives, progress is being rolled back for women”, stating that:

Cuts to public services and social security are landing disproportionately on women and ethnic minorities, with 86 percent of the money raised from the Tories’ tax and social security changes coming from women’s pockets.⁸⁴

The Labour Party said that if elected it would:

- gender audit all policy and legislation for its impact on women before implementation;
- appoint a new commissioner to enforce minimum standards in tackling domestic and sexual violence;
- reverse employment tribunal fees and extend the time period for applying to the employment tribunal for maternity discrimination from three to six months;
- make mandatory a workplace risk assessment for pregnant women so necessary adaptations could be made; and
- review support for women who have miscarriages.⁸⁵

⁸² Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, [Hampton-Alexander Review: FTSE Women Leaders](#), November 2017, p 11.

⁸³ *ibid*, p 9.

⁸⁴ Labour Party, [The Labour Party Manifesto 2017](#), 16 May 2017, p 108.

⁸⁵ *ibid*, pp 109–10.