



## How will budget cuts impact women?

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### Introduction

**Public sector spending cuts will have a greater impact on women than men.** It is likely that they will cause **job losses in the public, voluntary and service sector**. Women account for the majority of employees in all of these sectors and so **unemployment amongst women is likely to increase disproportionately to men** over the coming months. As it is usually the women's wage that decides if a family lives in poverty or not, the cuts will cause a **rise in households living in poverty** and work against aims to reduce the number of children in such conditions. Finally, **women are more likely to use public services than men**. This means that any changes to service provision will affect them more than men.

**To what extent will the cuts impact women?**

**Employment**

- 47% of women work in the public sector. The public sector in Wales accounts for 1/3 of the economy and women make up around 70% of the public sector workforce. Any job cuts or pay freezes will affect them more than men.
- The volunteer and employed workforce in the third sector is predominantly female so job cuts in the sector will affect them more than men.
- Women make up 60% of the workforce in FE and are more vulnerable than men to the impact of public sector cuts.
- Past evidence has shown that where services are contracted out, women have suffered disproportionately as their pay and conditions have been cut.

**Employment related benefits**

- Women hold 2/3 of benefit schemes in the public sector so any cuts to pensions will disproportionately fall on them.

**Services**

- Women are more reliant on public services so any service cuts will impact women more than men. Services used primarily by women and children are already being targeted for cuts – libraries, leisure centres, children's centres and out of hours school clubs.

**Unpaid work and care**

- Women's unpaid work already fills many gaps in public services. If these services are cut then women may have to do more unpaid work. This will reduce the time available for paid work and risk tipping them further into poverty.
- 1 in 5 women act as unpaid carers for adult family members. Cuts in services mean this figure is almost certain to rise, with women's caring responsibilities being one of the major causes of the gender pay gap.

- Cuts have already been announced in daycare centres and increased care charges are being planned in many public authorities.

## Education

- There is a chance that adult education will face disproportionate cuts. Women make up 64% of learners over 25 and 60% of all women in FE are in this age group.

## Welfare

- Women will lose the most from cuts to welfare. For example, 1 million more women than men claim housing benefit.
- The combined average loss in income and services (including tax and benefit changes) will amount to almost 22% for the poorest households in the UK. This compares with just 1.6% in the richest households.
- Although the tax cuts were billed as helping the lower paid, the corresponding loss of services to fund those cuts mean that the poorest households will actually be worse off as a result.
- Voluntary sector and community projects supporting women will be particularly vulnerable to cuts. This includes women's advice centres and refuges – the majority of which are also staffed by women.
- Low incomes increase the risk of violence. Women in households with an income of less than £10,000 are 3.5 times more likely to experience domestic violence than those living in households with an income of over £20,000.

### Who will be hardest hit?

**Lone parents** will be hardest hit by the cuts. They will suffer service cuts equivalent to 18.4% of their income (£3,121 per year). A working lone parent with two children will suffer service cuts equivalent to 15.7% of their income, or £3,132 a year. Around half of lone-parent families are already defined as low-income – more than twice the rate for couples with children. Women head 9 out of 10 of these lone-parent families.

**Single pensioners:** Single pensioners will lose services worth 11% of their income on average (£1,305). The majority of single pensioners are women. A pensioner couple will lose the equivalent of £2,226 a year or 16.2% of their income.

**Low income families:** A family with two school-age children on modest earnings will lose 13.2% of their income, or £2,631 a year.

**Sources:**

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