

Appendix 14: Women's unemployment (See Article 11)

Where action has been taken by Government to boost growth and to create jobs in the labour market, very little concerted action has been taken to ensure that women are able to benefit from such measures. In the first phase of the economic crisis, men were losing jobs at a greater rate than women. However, since the 'great' recession ended in 2010 the picture for men's unemployment has steadily improved, whilst the situation has worsened for women.

Overall, since the first quarter of 2010 to the third quarter of 2012, men's unemployment has fallen by 7.3 % and women's risen by 11.9%. In real terms, over this period women's unemployment has increased by 114,000 to 1,076,000 - a 25 year high - whereas conversely men's unemployment has fallen by 112,000 to 1,413,000.¹

Access to the jobs market has been the single greatest factor in securing economic autonomy for women and has been instrumental in reducing women's economic inequality. Any significant reduction in the numbers of women in employment threatens this progress.

Both women and men are also affected by long-term unemployment - that is those who have been unemployed for 12 months or more. Overall, men are affected to a greater extent: Office for National Statistics figures for Aug – Oct 2012 showed that 39.1% of unemployed men are long-term unemployed, compared with 31.5% for women. However, the gap between women and men's long-term unemployment has been closing particularly over the past two-and-a-half years where, from Jan – Mar 2010 to Aug – Oct 2012 the number of men long-term unemployed increased by around 37,000 (7.2%), whereas the number of women long-term unemployed increased by around 103,000 (43.4%).²

Case study:³

"I've been unemployed before and it's only ever taken three months to find work. Now, I've been looking for full-time work for ten months. It took me a long time to even get any interviews."

Christina, Bradford

There are two key reasons for the declining position of women in the UK labour market: deep and sustained cuts to the public sector and increasing numbers of

¹ The Fawcett Society (2013) *The changing labour market: Delivering for women; delivering for growth* <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Fawcett-The-changing-labour-market.pdf>

² The Fawcett Society (2013) *The changing labour market: Delivering for women; delivering for growth* <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Fawcett-The-changing-labour-market.pdf>

³ Oxfam (2012) *The Perfect Storm: Economic stagnation, the rising cost of living, public spending cuts, and the impact on UK poverty*. Oxfam: Oxford <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-perfect-storm-economic-stagnation-the-rising-cost-of-living-public-spending-228591>

women being classified as unemployed due to changes in benefit conditions for single parents (the vast majority of whom are women) which mean that single mothers whose youngest child is five or older now have to actively seek work. (See Appendix: 15)

However, the rising levels of female unemployment have not been addressed in Budget statements and the Government's proposed policies to stimulate job creation and private sector growth will not improve employment for women unless specific action is taken to ensure women can benefit and take up job opportunities created. For example, within engineering women make up only 6% of professional engineers.⁴ While a significant number of women study science, engineering and technology (SET) subjects at graduate level, few go on to enter SET professions and, of those who do end up working in SET sectors, they are less likely to progress than their male counterparts as many find it hard to return to work after maternity leave if they have children.

Research suggests that women face a wide range of barriers throughout the pipeline, from a lack of role models and the influence of gender stereotypes on girls' career choices, through to sexist workplace cultures and a lack of support and flexible working opportunities for women with caring responsibilities.⁵

Recommendation:

Introduce measures to promote women's equal opportunities in employment and pay in the provision of physical infrastructure (roads, rail and digital) including investment in social infrastructure (education, care and health services) as well as physical infrastructure as this generates jobs for women

Youth unemployment

Unemployment among young people is far higher than among the rest of the population, with one in five 16 to 24 year olds out of work.⁶ Measures to promote creation of good quality jobs for young people are urgently needed. The Youth Contract,⁷ to promote apprenticeships and employment for young people in the private sector, is underfunded and the large gender gap in employment and pay in the private sector will mean that young women will not enjoy the same opportunities and benefits as their male counterparts.⁸

Recommendation:

Ensure that young women benefit equally from the Youth Contract, in terms of jobs and pay

⁴ Onwurah, C. MP (2012) 'Engineering's gender balance still stuck in the past', Politics Home, 8th August 2012 <http://centrallobby.politicshome.com/latestnews/article-detail/newsarticle/chi-onwurah-mp-engineerings-gender-balance-still-stuck-in-the-past>

⁵ Prospect (2012) *Submission to the Science, Engineering and Sustainability Advisory Committee*, July 2012

⁶ BBC News (2011) 'Youth unemployment: fears over record figures', BBC News Business, 16th February 2011 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12482018>

⁷ Department for Work and Pensions, Youth Contract <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/youth-contract/> Accessed: 17/05/13

⁸ Women's Budget Group (2012) *The Impact on Women of the Autumn Financial Statement 2011*. WBG: London <http://wbg.org.uk/pdfs/The-Impact-on-Women-of-the-AFS-2011.pdf>