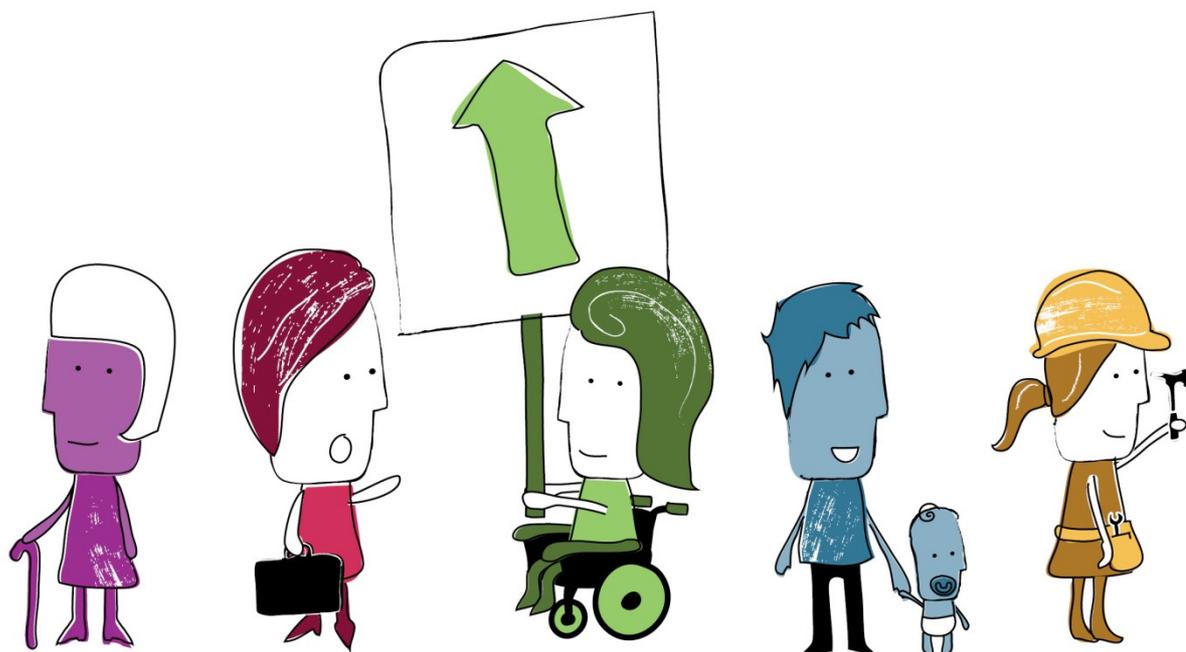


A woman's place...

A study of women's roles in the Welsh
workforce – the full report



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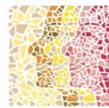


“As the Sector Skills Council and Industry Training Board for construction, we strive to attract and retain a diverse construction workforce, including increasing the number of women working in the sector. This is achieved through our Built Environment Fairness, Inclusion and Respect Framework (BE Fair) which assists employers in increasing diversity, as well as our Director, Wyn Prichard, sitting on the board of Chwarae Teg, illustrating our commitment to Wales’ diversity strategy.

“We welcome the progression of women in the workforce, but this research shows more must be done to encourage women into non-traditional roles and sectors like the construction industry – a sector of economic importance to Wales. We look forward to working with education and training providers, industry and the Welsh Government to ensure the future success of women in the workforce.”

Donna Griffiths, Skills Strategy Manager for CITB-ConstructionSkills Wales

The NHS Centre for Equality and Human Rights
Canolfan y GIG ar gyfer Cydraddoldeb a Hawliau Dynol



The NHS Centre for Equality and Human Rights (NHS CEHR) is an organisation that works to support NHS Wales to embed equality and human rights into employment practices and day-to-day service delivery.

Director, Paula Walters said:

“The Centre is delighted to support Chwarae Teg and the research on the role of women and their contribution to the Welsh workplace. The NHS is the largest employer in Wales, with an overall workforce of 83,075; women represent nearly 77% of this workforce.

We welcome the research from Chwarae Teg which looks to get to the heart of these statistics and highlight the valuable role women play in our economy. Discrimination law may help regulate unequal treatment in the workplace, but it can do nothing for women who are kept in their roles by the very lives they lead.”

For more information about equality and human rights issues, please visit our website at www.wales.nhs.uk/equality or contact us on 01443 233450.

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KEY FINDINGS

Chwarae Teg was established over 20 years ago to assist women overcome structural and personal barriers in order to maximise their contribution to the workforce. Over that time, the organisation has commissioned research to chart women's progress in the workforce within a changing socio-economic and political environment. Comparing this, our third piece of research, with those carried out previously, we are able to illustrate the progress made – women are more likely to be in the workforce than ever before, the gap in earnings between women and men has narrowed and women now occupy a few of Wales' top jobs. However, more needs to be done as, despite this progress, our research demonstrates that women are still less likely to work than men, there is an enduring gap between women's and men's earnings and we still need many more women to reach positions of influence.

This short report summarises the findings of this major and unique study. Findings are based on an extensive review of existing research, a survey of 600 women and 400 employers, plus an additional 25 in-depth interviews with women working in the Welsh Government's 'priority sectors'; that is, those sectors which have been identified by the Welsh Government for targeted intervention. Our findings show that although considerable progress has been made, gender inequality, stereotyping and segregation are still evident in the Welsh workplace.

Chwarae Teg would like to acknowledge the help of The Bevan Foundation and Ecorys for their assistance in carrying out this research and producing the report. A copy of the full report can be accessed by going to: www.chwaraeteg.com

WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

What is the position of women in the Welsh workplace today?

- Two-thirds of all women in Wales work, although they are less likely to work than men.
- According to the Annual Population Survey almost half of women who work (44%) do so part-time.
- With women's median hourly pay at 80% of men's, the gender pay gap persists although it is smaller than in the past. It exists at all earnings levels, occupations and levels of educational attainment.
- Generally, women and employers recognise the existence of the gender pay gap but interestingly, not in their own workplaces.
- There has been a marked increase in the proportion of women and especially part-time workers entitled to sick pay and a pension – in 1996 only 14% of women working part-time were entitled to sick pay compared with 80% now.

“The men get more. [It’s] always been like that. Not a lot more. They get a shift allowance and a ‘this and that’ allowance”

- Self-employment accounts for 1 in 13 working women, but few women access support when setting up their businesses.
- The main reasons why women are not working are ill-health / disability or their stage of life.

GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

What issues remain for gender equality in today’s workplace?

- Women continue to be concentrated into a small number of occupations and industries. Some workplaces are female dominated as a result. For example, more than half of women in the survey (59%) work in Public Administration, Education and Health.

“The women do the administrative jobs, men in sales and management. That’s just the history of this workplace”

- There are powerful stereotypes around what jobs are suitable for women and men: just under 80% of women surveyed said being a builder was more suitable for a man; around half said being a plumber or electrician was more suitable for a man; and a quarter said that administration work was more suitable for women.
- 77% of women and 56% of employers agreed the proportion of women in management roles is increasing. National figures show that 7% of employed women in Wales are in management or senior roles compared with 11% of men. Our survey findings suggest that many women feel that senior roles are not compatible with part-time working.

SKILLS AND PROGRESSION AT WORK

To what extent are women able to use and develop their skills?

- Women experience a skills squeeze – they are more highly qualified and more likely to receive in-work training than men yet they continue to work in lower skilled jobs and receive lower pay.
- A substantial minority of women (28%), especially those in lower level jobs and working part-time, feel that full use is not made of their skills and experience.

“I was actually told at a recent meeting by the CEO of the business that had I not got pregnant that I would have been in line for a promotion.”

- 59% of women would *not* be happy to stay in their current job, with one in 7 wanting promotion. Age

(even among relatively young women) and lack of jobs were seen as significant barriers to progression.

- One in ten women said that lack of childcare hindered their progression into more senior roles, and some women said they encountered gender discrimination. Some women said they did not want to 'upset' the work-life balance they had achieved.

BALANCING CARING AND WORKING

To what extent are women able to balance work and care?

Responsibility for looking after their families and home still has a much greater impact on women's working lives than on men's although progress has been made; in 1992 1 in 5 women didn't work because they were looking after their family or home whereas in 2010 the figure is 1 in 10.

- Women are much more likely to be employed up to the birth of their child and to have access to paid maternity leave than in the past. However most employers (81%) offer the statutory minimum maternity provision and a substantial minority of employers (more than a third) have no experience of an employee taking maternity leave.
- Informal childcare remains by far the most common way of caring for children while parents work, used by 40% of women. Lack of childcare was thought to affect women's ability to work full-time by the majority (78%) of employers, but was thought to affect men's ability to work full-time by just 48%.
- Availability of flexible working arrangements has increased and is available in some form to eight out of ten women working. Employers and employees agreed that flexible working offers considerable benefits. Three-quarters of women said they are satisfied with their work-life balance. However, levels of satisfaction varied by sector, job type and working hours.
- A sizeable minority of women (25%) appear not to have access to their statutory rights as parents, e.g. to take parental leave, and a sizeable minority of employers (15%) appear not to implement them.
- In general, large employers and employers in the public sector offer better maternity and paternity provision and are more likely to provide support with childcare and flexible working than others.

I am in a job with total flexibility and it makes such a difference. It works both ways, as I can adapt to the needs of the job and can also fit it around the needs of family, so my employer benefits and I do too'

ACTION ON GENDER EQUALITY

What are the perceptions of gender equality? What action could be taken to ensure progress continues?

- Two-thirds of women and almost all employers believe that equality of opportunity has increased in recent years, although only a very small number of respondents strongly agreed with this statement. Interestingly, more respondents working in the private sector strongly agreed that equality of opportunity had improved (22% compared with 11%). Disappointingly, 31% of respondents had seen no progress.
- A majority of employers (60%) think that further action by the State would help to achieve equality, in particular help with childcare. However a substantial minority (40%) do not want state intervention.

CONCLUSIONS

The 2012 survey of women and employers demonstrates that while women have made considerable progress in the Welsh workforce in the last sixteen years, there is a complex mix of barriers facing women that limit their contribution to the Welsh economy. The research shows that women want to progress in work yet inequality outside the workplace continues to shape inequality within it:

- Powerful stereotypes of the roles of men and women in society shape a woman's place in the workforce.
- Being in employment is the norm for the majority of women today although parity with men has yet to be reached. Enabling and supporting women to enter the workforce consequently remains important, but alongside this, encouraging women into non-traditional roles and removing barriers to career progression is equally vital.
- One of the most striking areas of improvement is in the terms and conditions of employment. However, the alarming finding that a quarter of respondents appeared not to have access to their statutory rights as parents demonstrates how vital it is that legislation continues to underpin women's employment, and we ensure that employers and employees are aware of their rights and obligations.
- A second area of considerable improvement has been in satisfaction levels with work-life balance and flexible working. Whilst welcoming this, we need to guard against complacency and take into consideration the report's findings regarding part-time work which is one of the most popular ways to balance home and work responsibilities. Often, where part-time work is available, it is in low-paid positions and public perception appears to be that working part-time is not compatible with the demands of senior roles. Consequently, this represents a significant barrier to women's career progression.
- Affordable and accessible childcare needs to be more available for women who want to balance child care responsibilities and work. This is particularly important as the

current economic context and changes to the benefit system may put pressure on the informal childcare most people depend on. However, we also need to challenge the assumption that women will take on the lead responsibility for caring for others and encourage a less gender stereotyped approach to balancing work and other responsibilities.

- Women who are disabled, have long term conditions and older women need more support to enter and progress in employment. This could be particularly important given the current economic climate, changes to the welfare system and the extension of the pension age for women.

There has been a great deal of social change in Wales over recent decades and to successfully compete on a global stage we need to make more of an under-utilised resource – the skills and experience of working women. With ambition, public and political support and action we can achieve a fairer society and ensure a woman's place in the workforce is best for her, her family and Wales as a whole.

1 INTRODUCTION

Women's position in the labour market in Wales has changed considerably in the last two decades. In the 1990s, when Chwarae Teg was established to promote gender equality at work, women were much less likely to work than men especially if they had children, earned substantially less than men if they did work, and were struggling to break into higher-level and non-stereotypical jobs.¹ Twenty years later, much has changed – women are more likely to be in the workforce than ever before, the gap in earnings between women and men is closing, and women now occupy some of Wales's top jobs for example Chief Constable, local authority Chief Executives, and Ministers in the Welsh Government.

Yet in many respects gender inequality has proved to be enduring. Although an unprecedented proportion of women are in the workforce, they are *still* less likely to work than men, the gap between women's and men's earnings persists, and women in top jobs are very much in the minority. In other words, gender inequality has changed and arguably diminished, but it has not disappeared.

As the Welsh labour market copes with the impact of recession, as it did in the 1990s, it is timely to take stock of the current position of women in the Welsh labour market, reflect on change in the last 20 years and identify the challenges ahead.

A great deal of information about women in the Welsh labour market can be gleaned from various sources of official statistics, which are very usefully analysed in some key reports.² But these sources do not cover all aspects of women's position at work, such as their terms and conditions, use of childcare, views about the gender pay gap, and their aspirations for the future.

In order to find out more about these aspects of women in the workforce, Chwarae Teg commissioned a major survey of women in Wales. The survey is the most up-to-date and comprehensive source of data on women in the workforce in Wales today. A total of 600 women were interviewed (500 by telephone and 100 by on-street interviews), including employed, unemployed and economically inactive women. A further 25 women, working in the Welsh Government's nine priority economic sectors, were interviewed in-depth and views of women were also sought via an online forum. Last, a total of 400 employers were interviewed by telephone, covering almost all economic sectors and types of employer in Wales. The research was

¹ Welsh Office (1998) A Statistical Focus on Wales: Women. Cardiff

² For example Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research Data and Methods (WISERD) (2011), *An anatomy of economic inequality in Wales*, EHRC, Cardiff

conducted by Ecorys during 2012. A technical appendix that provides further information about the methodology and profile of the samples is available.

The rest of this report sets out the main findings from this research and, where possible, makes comparisons with the findings of surveys commissioned by Chwarae Teg, in 1996 and 2002. Some areas of significant progress emerge, notably in the terms and conditions of employment especially of part-time employees. But the findings also reveal a Welsh workforce in which women still bear the brunt of responsibility for family and home, where the gender pay gap and gender stereotypes and barriers to progression are deeply entrenched, and in which women's talents and ambition are often thwarted.

Nobody can be complacent about the many challenges which so clearly remain for women in Wales. The economic and labour market climate is extremely tough, but this is no excuse for discrimination or failure to comply with employment legislation. Nor is pressure on budgets or the bottom line a reason for abandoning good practice in equality, be it flexible working or equality training. Indeed, the many skills and talents that women have to offer suggest that potential is being lost to the Welsh economy while deep inequalities remain.

This is a landmark report, which should – and indeed must – shape Welsh public policy for the next decade.

2 WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

Key points:

- **Two-thirds of all women in Wales work, although they are less likely to work than men.**
- **According to the Annual Population Survey almost half of women who work (44%) do so part-time.**
- **With women's median hourly pay at 80% of men's, the gender pay gap persists although it is smaller than in the past. It exists at all earnings levels, occupations and levels of educational attainment.**
- **Generally, women and employers recognise the existence of the gender pay gap but interestingly, not in their own workplaces.**
- **There has been a marked increase in the proportion of women and especially part-time workers entitled to sick pay and a pension – in 1996 only 14% of women working part-time were entitled to sick pay compared with 80% now.**
- **Self-employment accounts for 1 in 13 working women, but few women access help when setting up their businesses.**
- **The main reasons why women are not working are ill-health / disability or their stage of life.**

2.1 Women's Employment

In the last 20 years, the proportion of women in Wales who are in employment³ has risen by nearly 4 percentage points between 1996 and 2012, compared with a fall of 1.6 percentage points in male employment over the same period.⁴ Although the employment rate for women in Wales has increased, it is still lower than the employment rate of men, which was 79.7% in the year to September 2012.

There are marked differences between different groups of women. Women from ethnic minority groups, in particular those of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin, are much less likely to be employed than white women in Wales although the statistics

³ Including self-employment

⁴ Welsh Government *Stats Wales* Economic activity rate by Welsh local area, year and gender. Accessed 22nd January 2012.

suggest that the gap may have begun to close recently. Similarly, disabled women are much less likely to be in employment than non-disabled women – only 11% of women who are disabled according to the Disability Discrimination Act and who have a work-limiting disability are in full-time employment compared with 41% of non-disabled women.

2.1.1 Why Women Work

An indication of how much women's employment has changed since the mid 1990's is that the question of why women work now seems unusual – it is taken for granted that employment is the norm at most stages of a woman's life. Nevertheless, in order to have a comparison with the 1996 survey, women in the 2012 survey were asked why they work. The vast majority of women – more than three-quarters – said that they are in employment because they need the income, almost the same proportion as said this 18 years ago. Much smaller proportions of women say also that they work because they enjoy it, to have money of their own, for company or to feel useful, all of which are significantly lower than in 1996.

2.1.2 Patterns of Work

Women are significantly more likely to work part-time than men, and also comprise the vast majority of part-time workers. Almost half (44%) of employed women work part-time compared to just 12% of employed men. This pattern can also be observed in terms of average hours worked. The median number of hours worked by women in Wales is 32.5 hours per week, compared to 37.7 hours for men.

Most of the women interviewed in depth were aware that part-time workers in their organisation were mainly women. Part-time work was seen to enable women to combine paid work with care of children or other family members, or when approaching retirement. Some women said their organisations employed students who combined part-time work with studying, and some organisations only employed part-time workers on a shift basis. Part-time working was felt to be much more common amongst women working below management level and was relatively unusual in senior roles.

Only a small number of women referred to part-time work being an option for both men and women.

Irrespective of whether they were full-time or part-time, more than a third (37%) of women worked longer than their contracted hours of work, with nearly half (49%) of women aged 35-44 working longer hours than required. Women earning over £50,000 were also more likely to work more than their contracted hours.

2.1.3 Temporary/Permanent Employment

The vast majority of employed women responding to the survey were in permanent employment (93%). However, one in fifteen (7%) of women interviewed were in temporary employment. Women who worked part-time were more likely to have a temporary contract (11%) compared to women who worked full-time (4%). Women working in sales and customer services were also more likely to have temporary contracts (12%) than women working in other occupations.

2.2 Pay and Conditions

In 2012, median hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of all women (full-time and part-time) were £9.31. Women working full-time earn nearly one and a half times more per hour than women working part-time, with the highest-paid ten per cent of full-time female employees earning more than three times the hourly pay of the lowest-paid full-time employees (£21.43 an hour compared with £6.69).⁵

2.2.1 Gender Pay Gap

In 2012, the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings⁶ (ASHE) shows that women's median hourly pay was only 80% of men's, although the gap between women and men is slightly smaller amongst full-time workers (89%). The gender pay gap is evident throughout the income distribution, although it is slightly larger amongst the highest paid women full-time workers than amongst the lowest paid. In contrast, women part-time workers earn very slightly more than men part-time workers.

The ASHE data indicates that the gender pay gap has closed very slightly since 2002, and is smaller in Wales than in the rest of the UK. However, this is not because women's or men's earnings are doing well – both genders have amongst the lowest median earnings of all parts of the UK.

The difference in earnings is also evident amongst women and men with the same broad levels of education and similar occupations.⁷ In terms of education levels, the largest gap in earnings can be seen between men and women with educational qualifications to A-level. There is also a higher than average pay gap between men and women at managerial level.

Women surveyed had mixed views about the gender pay gap. While nearly two out of three women surveyed (65%) said that there is no gender pay gap *in their organisation*, less than half (47%) agreed that *in general* women now earn the same pay as men for doing the same job. In other words, they recognised that there

⁵ Accessed via www.nomisweb.co.uk, January 2013

⁶ Accessed via www.nomisweb.co.uk, January 2013

⁷ Accessed via www.nomisweb.co.uk, January 2013

was pay inequality but did not see it occurring in their own workplaces. Managers, professionals and associate professional / technical staff were more likely to say that there was no pay gap in their organisation than women in personal services or administrative or secretarial roles.

The vast majority of women interviewed in-depth felt that their employer treated men and women equally in terms of remuneration. Some noted that pay structures e.g. performance-related pay, shift allowances or commission paid extra and that the beneficiaries were almost always men:

'the men get more. Always been like that. Not a lot more. They get a shift allowance and a 'this and that' allowance'.

'Only the sales team have a pay structure with a very basic salary then a large commission. They're the ones that get paid the most, and they're all men'.

Women mostly attributed pay differences to women and men having different roles within their organisations, with jobs done by men 'happening' to have higher pay rather than there being overt gender discrimination. Most women saw this as:

'just the way things are'

or

'the way things have always been',

although two women interviewed and one who contributed to the online forum were less sanguine, one saying that her organisation was *'like the dark ages'*.

Employers also considered that the gender pay gap existed but not in their organisation. Nearly eight out of ten (79%) agreed that there is no gender pay gap at their workplace, but just over half (54%) of employers agreed that women earn the same pay as men for the same work in general. Small employers were much more likely to strongly agree with this statement than large employers – in fact, nearly a third (31%) of large employers strongly **disagreed** that there was no gender pay gap.

2.2.2 Pay Increases

About half of women surveyed in 2012 said their pay had increased in the last year, 5% said their pay had decreased and the rest said their pay had stayed the same. Women in managerial and professional jobs were nearly twice as likely to have had a pay rise than women in personal service jobs, and women in the private sector were more likely to have had a pay rise than women in the public sector.

In the in-depth interviews, some women said that the only employees receiving a pay increase were those that really pushed for it:

‘there isn’t a good structure to pay – it’s an ‘if you ask you get’ type approach.

2.2.3 Sick Pay

Eight out of ten women surveyed (83%) said they were entitled to sick pay (see Table 1). Sick pay entitlement was most common amongst full-timers, women in the public sector and those in associate professional / technical occupations. It was least common amongst part-timers, women in the third sector and women in elementary occupations where as many as one in three women do not get paid if they are sick.

The proportion of women workers getting sick pay has increased markedly since 1996, particularly for part-time workers. Sixteen years ago, the 1996 survey for Chwarae Teg showed that just 14% of part-time workers received sick pay compared with 80% now, whilst 80% of full-timers received sick pay compared with 88% today. The Part-Time Workers Regulations 2000, which require part-time workers to be offered the same benefits as full-timers, have undoubtedly played a part in this change.

2.2.4 Pension

Nearly two-thirds of women (63%) were part of a pension scheme with employer contributions (see Table 1). Women aged 35-44, women earning over £30,000 a year or in managerial / senior roles, women in the public sector and women working full-time are more likely to have a pension with employer contributions than younger women, lower-paid women or those in lower-level occupations, those in the private sector and part-time workers.

There has been a sharp increase in the proportion of women in occupational pension schemes since 1996 especially amongst part-timers – up from 74% to 78% of full-timers and from 44% to 69% of part-timers. Again, legislation on part-time workers’ rights has undoubtedly played a part.

Table 1 Entitlement to Sick Pay and Pension Contributions

	Percentage entitled to sick pay	Percentage entitled to a pension with employer contributions
All women	83	63
Full-time	88	74
Part-time	80	44
Public sector	90	77
Private sector	76	45
Third sector	64	-

Source: Ecorys survey of women, 2012

2.3 Self-Employment

Self-employment amongst women has increased rapidly in recent years although a much lower proportion of women than men are self-employed. Self-employment rates are higher amongst the Pakistani and Bangladeshi working age population and amongst disabled people than amongst the population as a whole.

A total of 44 (7%) women responding to the survey were self-employed, a similar distribution to the population as a whole. Of these, nearly one in five worked in elementary occupations⁸ whilst one in eight worked as associate professionals and in personal services, and the same proportion worked in sales and customer service.

The main reason that women were self-employed was that they wanted to have 'more control over their lives', said by four out of ten (41%) of self-employed women. Nearly a quarter (23%) said they 'wanted to be their own boss' and 16% responded to a demand or need for their services. Women in the 1996 survey gave similar reasons for being self-employed.

In terms of setting up, almost half of the self-employed women responding to the survey did not access advice or training at the time of becoming self-employed, a slightly lower proportion than in 1996. A high proportion (75%) of self-employed women financed their business through their own savings, whilst a smaller proportion (14%) received support from a bank or building society.

⁸ Elementary occupations are defined by the Office for National Statistics as, "jobs which require the knowledge and experience necessary to perform mostly routine tasks, often involving the use of simple hand held tools, and in some cases requiring a degree of physical effort."

More than two-thirds of self-employed women said they faced some challenges – the most common being unpredictability of working hours (23%), plus financial concerns, lack of free time and the burden of having the responsibility for making all business decisions, each of which was cited by 18% of respondents. Thirty per cent of women responding to the survey said that they did not face any challenges.

2.4 Women not currently working

In the survey, 37% of women were either unemployed (7%) or economically inactive (30%). Of the women who were not working (either economically inactive or unemployed), 74% had not worked in the previous 12 months; however, amongst women who were aged 45-54, this rose to 92% and, of women aged 16-24 not working, just over half (53%) had not worked in the previous 12 months.

Eighty per cent of women in the survey not currently working had not actively sought work in the last four weeks. However, this varied with age: 49% of women aged 16-24 had actively looked for work in the last four weeks, compared to 8% of women aged 45-54 and just 1% of women aged 55-65. The vast majority - 99% - of women aged 55-65 had not actively looked for work in the last four weeks.

2.4.1 Reasons for Not Working

The most common reason given by women for not working was ill health or disability (mentioned by nearly a quarter (25%) of respondents), followed by reasons associated with their stage of life: for example 16% said they were not working because of age/ retirement and a further 9% were in education.

Difficulties combining work with family and caring responsibilities accounted for a further 18% of women not being in employment, although only 3% specifically mentioned lack of suitable childcare. Just under one in eight women (12%) felt that there was a lack of suitable jobs, and 7% of women said the economic recession had stopped them looking for or finding work.

The 2012 position is slightly different to that found in 1996 and 2002. Then, women were most likely to say that they did not work because of a shortage of jobs in their area generally, and that the jobs available either did not have suitable hours or pay enough to cover childcare costs. Many women in these surveys said they were unable or unwilling to travel outside their areas to work, but this was not mentioned by women in the 2012 survey.

The shift in women's responses may be partly attributable to different research methodologies, but it may also reflect the greater availability of flexible working (especially part-time work) and the help with childcare costs available for low-income households (via Working Tax Credits).

2.4.2 Returning to Work

Of the women participating in the 2012 research who were not working, 16% said that a well-paid job would encourage them to take up paid work in the future (this was higher amongst 16-24 years olds at 30.6%) and 14% of women said that an interesting job would encourage them to take up work in the future.

29% of women would be willing to work either part-time or full-time, 31% wanted to work only part-time and 19% only wanted to work full-time. Again, there were clear differences between age-groups: 43% of women aged 35-44 and 47% of women aged 55-65 were willing to only work part-time, whereas 36% of women aged 16-24 were willing to only work full-time.

For some, taking up work would depend on improved health - 13% said that better health would encourage them to take up or look for paid work.

2.5 Conclusions

Women are now an intrinsic and vital part of the Welsh workforce, but they occupy a distinctive position within it. They are much more likely to work part-time than men, with part-time working being a key factor in the terms and conditions that women enjoy. A minority of women have opted for self-employment, not least because of the self-determination it brings.

While provision of sick-pay and pension entitlement has improved markedly in the last sixteen years, a substantial minority of women, and particularly those in lower-level occupations and part-time work, still do not have access to them. Ensuring all women, irrespective of hours of work or occupation, have decent terms and conditions remains a significant challenge.

It is clear from both official statistics and women's and employers general awareness that the gender pay gap persists. However the problem is rarely recognised within an individual establishment, or is seen to be an inherent part of other gender divisions. Lack of awareness of pay differentials in the immediate environment – and hence lack of action – is likely to be a major barrier to closing the gender pay gap.

Interestingly, the specific barriers to entering employment that have previously been identified no longer seem to be as significant to women in 2012, although family responsibilities and lack of jobs continue to be the main factors mentioned and as subsequent chapters show, also play a major role in shaping women's experiences in the workforce.

3 GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORK PLACE

Key points:

- **Women continue to be concentrated into a small number of occupations and industries. Many workplaces are female dominated as a result. For example, more than half of the women in the survey (59%) work in Public Administration, Education and Health.**
- **There are powerful stereotypes about what jobs are suitable for women and men: just under 80% of women surveyed said being a builder was more suitable for a man; around half said being a plumber or electrician was more suitable for a man; and a quarter said that administration work was more suitable for women.**
- **77% of women and 56% of employers agreed the proportion of women in management roles is increasing. National figures show that 7% of employed women in Wales are in management or senior roles compared with 11% of men. Our survey findings suggest that many women feel that senior roles are not compatible with part-time working.**

3.1 Horizontal segregation at work

Horizontal segregation at work, in which women and men work in different types of occupations and industries, is a key feature of the labour market in Wales. Men are ten times more likely to be employed in skilled trade occupations than women, while more than half of all Welsh women work in public administration, education and health sectors compared to just a fifth of men. While there has been an increase in women's participation in professional occupations, over 80% of administrative roles in Wales are undertaken by women. Horizontal segregation is particularly marked in Wales compared to other UK nations⁹.

3.1.1 Gender Stereotypes

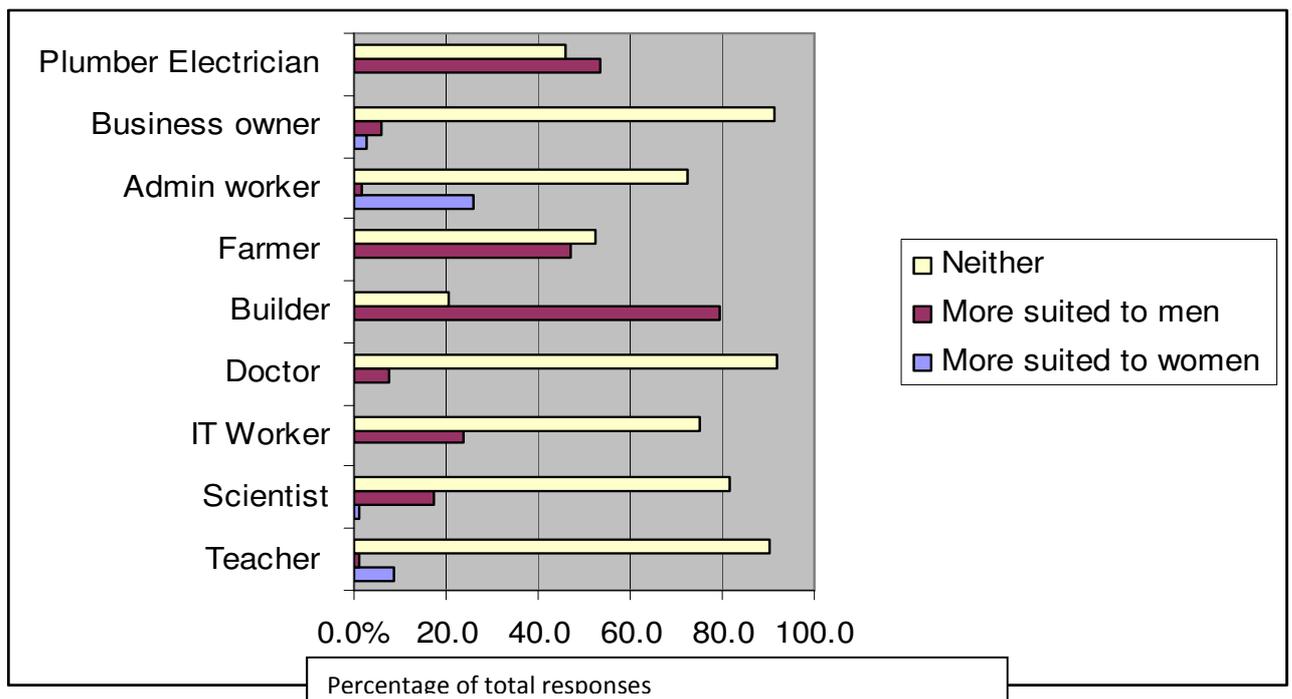
The survey of women found that many still hold stereotypes about whether some types of jobs are more suited to men or women (see Figure 1).

Some occupations were widely thought to be gender-neutral – for example the vast majority of women felt that a doctor, teacher or business leader could be male or female. A slightly smaller majority of women (82%) felt that being a scientist was suited to either gender, and a lower proportion again said this for IT workers (75%).

⁹ The Bevan Foundation (2009), *Equality issues in Wales: a research review*. EHRC: Cardiff

Even so, these figures mean that one in ten women think a woman is more suited to being a teacher and one in four women think men are more suited to being IT workers or business leaders. Even more striking is the eight out of ten women (79%) who think being a builder was most suitable for men and the half of women (54%) who thought plumbers / electrician jobs were most suitable for men.

Figure 1 Responses to the question ‘do you think that any of the following jobs are more suited to women or men?’



The in-depth interviews confirmed that women still have highly gendered views about suitable jobs for men and women. For example, one interviewee argued that women were less able than men to undertake roles (or particular tasks) requiring a high level of physical strength. A number of interviewees suggested that there were some skill sets which one gender was more likely to possess than the other, for example:

‘the women do the administrative jobs, men in sales and management. That’s just the history of this workplace. You get the odd sales women but they don’t last long. The men don’t work on the admin side because they don’t like the paperwork’.

Another woman in processing work outlined that there is a variation in the roles that men and women do as there are more men in management but also that more men work night shifts and the night shift tasks are:

‘really nasty, horrible stuff so women don’t want the jobs’.

Women also pointed out some constraints on the type of work women could do because of their caring responsibilities. For example, some interviewees described jobs which involved travel (such as sales roles) as being difficult for women with families to undertake. Interestingly, only a small proportion of the interviewees referred to men combining their roles with family or caring responsibilities, or to employer practices which aimed to support men in doing so.

A number of women recognised that *'things were changing'* in that there was an increasing awareness that men and women were able to do the same sort of tasks. For example, one woman in a factory/processing job felt that there was generally an even gender split in her employing organisation and that:

'everybody does the same type of jobs'.

3.1.2 Women-dominated Workplaces

A consequence of women's concentration into a relatively small number of occupations and industries is that many women work in all-female or female dominated workplaces. Amongst the women surveyed, one in eight (17%) in the public sector and one in ten (11%) in the private sector said they worked only with women. Around half of the women interviewed in-depth said they worked in workplaces with more female than male employees. Even within workplaces that were not in sectors that are typically female-dominated, the women usually worked in typically female-dominated occupations e.g. cleaning or administration. Most interviewees recognised a clustering by gender into sections or roles within the organisation. For instance the 'call centre' in one interviewee's organisation was comprised of mostly women employees and a number of women highlighted that it was mainly women in administrative, cleaning or HR roles, even if the workplace employed more men overall.

Those women who were in workplaces that employed a similar number of men and women still acknowledged that men and women performed different roles within the organisation. These were often larger firms that employed a range of people in a range of roles. The division of labour by gender was less marked in smaller organisations.

Awareness of the position of male and female employees within the wider workforce was very low. Professional women had a greater understanding about how typical their place of work was compared with women in other occupations, but most women interviewed did not know if their own experiences were typical of women within their industry as a whole.

3.2 Vertical segregation

Vertical segregation refers to the under-representation of women in senior positions in the workplace and their concentration in lower-level roles.

3.2.1 Women in Management

Only 7% of employed women in Wales are managers, directors or senior officials, compared to 11% of men. The barriers that prevent women from progressing into more senior positions include expectations about long hours, job mobility and cultural issues around behaviour.¹⁰ Although there has been some progress in some organisations, there are still very few women in top positions: only two out of Wales's 50 top companies had a female chief executive in 2011 and in the majority of public sector bodies, women held a minority of the top jobs¹¹.

The progress of women into management roles was recognised by the majority of women surveyed: more than three-quarters (77%) of women agreed that there are more women in senior roles in the workforce now than there were ten years ago. A smaller proportion of employers (56%) agreed that this was the case in their organisation. However a surprising 30% disagreed with this statement – in other words, nearly a third of women employees did not think women were progressing into senior roles. Amongst employers, those in large organisations and in the public sector rather than private sector or micro-employers were more likely to strongly agree that there are more women in senior roles than a decade ago.

Women managers were significantly more common in some types of organisations and occupations than others. Just under half of women surveyed (48%) said that management roles were either exclusively or mainly filled by women in their organisations compared with 21% who said that management roles were either exclusively or mainly filled by men. All-female management was most common in personal services occupations – 31% of women in these jobs said management was all-female – and female-dominated management was also more common in the public sector than in other sectors. In contrast, 9 out of 10 professional women reported that there were more men in management roles in their workplaces.

Despite this, only a small number of women interviewed in depth (3 of 25) referred to women in management in their workplace. One woman pointed out that women occupied lower-level management roles but the top management are mostly men. Most women accepted this as 'normal':

¹⁰ The Bevan Foundation (2011), *How Fair Is Wales?* EHRC. Available at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/wales/publications/how-fair-is-wales/>

¹¹ Equality and Human Rights Commission (2012) *Who runs Wales? The journey towards gender equality: International Women's Day 2012 Update*

'the majority of higher managers are male, I don't know why'.

Part-time working was identified as a particular challenge for women in management roles. Most women interviewed in-depth said that none of the managers at their workplace worked part-time. Where they did, part-time managers were not viewed as positively as full-timers as women felt that part-time work could not be effectively reconciled with a managerial post. For example, one interviewee said:

'my store manager works part-time but the majority work full-time. People do not seem to be happy about her working part-time. ... I know the people in my work feel that it is not fair, and it's difficult when she is not there because there are things that she has to deal with so now people feel like they are doing her job, kind of. That is what I have heard anyway'.

Some women suggested that women who progressed to management roles were not likely to want to work part-time anyway. One woman said:

'the more senior managers do not work part-time. I think this is mainly due to the commitment levels of the job but also might be because these people are slightly older and beyond the 'childcare' life stage'.

Significantly, no interviewees acknowledged that employers could adopt practices to enable women to combine a management role with part-time work, nor were any initiatives referred to that aimed to support men in working more flexibly at managerial level in order to accommodate caring responsibilities.

3.3 Conclusions

There is strong evidence that gender divisions remain in the workplace. Women have strong stereotypes about the suitability (or otherwise) of certain occupations for females. Women continue to be segregated into particular occupations or industries, often the stereotypically feminine roles, where they frequently work with colleagues who are predominantly female. Women are also concentrated into lower-level occupations: although some women believe that more women are progressing into management and senior roles than in the past, and that more women have female managers particularly in female-dominated workplaces, a substantial minority do not.

Part-time working emerged as a specific issue affecting progression into management roles, affecting both the route into management jobs and the perception of managerial effectiveness. With part-time working being so prevalent amongst women this is a major barrier to increasing women's participation in higher-level roles.

4 SKILLS AND PROGRESSION AT WORK

Key points:

- **Women experience a skills squeeze – they are more highly qualified and more likely to receive in work training than men yet they continue to work in lower skilled jobs and receive lower pay.**
- **A substantial minority of women (28%), especially those in lower level jobs and working part-time, feel that full use is not made of their skills and experience.**
- **59% of women would *not* be happy to stay in their current job, with one in 7 wanting promotion. Age (even among relatively young women) and lack of jobs were seen as significant barriers to progression.**
- **One in ten women said that lack of childcare hindered their progression into more senior roles, and some women said they encountered gender discrimination. Some women said they did not want to ‘upset’ the work-life balance they had achieved.**

4.1 Qualifications and Training

A number of studies show that there are clear gender differences in the levels of qualification held in Wales, which are evident from an early age through to the workplace. At the age of seven, girls are more likely than boys to attain the expected level in Key Stage 1 teacher assessments.¹² By GCSE, nearly 50% of girls achieved GCSE A*-C in core subjects¹³ in 2009 compared to less than 43% of boys. Girls are also more likely than boys to continue their education post-16, and are less likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The difference between men and women is also evident in the working age population as a whole. More women than men have a graduate-level (NVQ4+) qualification, although men are more likely than women to have an intermediate qualification (NVQ levels 1 or 2 only or trade apprenticeship). Women are slightly more likely to have no qualifications than men.

The women surveyed had a wide range of different educational qualifications. A quarter of women were qualified to degree level or above and 7.2% had a

¹² The Bevan Foundation (2011), *How Fair Is Wales?* EHRC. Available at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/wales/publications/how-fair-is-wales/>

¹³ English or Welsh (first language), Mathematics and Science in combination

professional qualification. One in ten (10%) had no qualification. There has been a significant change in levels of qualification held since the 1996 survey: then, only 7% of women had a degree / professional qualification and 37% had no qualifications.

4.1.1 Participation in Education and Training

Since leaving formal education, just over half (55%) of women surveyed had undertaken some form of further education or training, including adult education and evening classes, substantially higher than the 39% of respondents who said this in 1996.

A desire to learn new skills or update old ones motivated just over a third of women to participate in education or training. A further third were motivated by improved job prospects. Personal interest was important to just under a quarter of women (23%). However, just over a fifth (22%) said that they had no interest in further learning.

In the 2012 survey, those who had pursued training or education were most likely to have undertaken an NVQ (24% had done so) and a further 19% had undertaken a work-based training course. Professional qualifications or a degree were each pursued by around one in ten of those studying. Three-quarters of women who had undertaken further learning did so to help their career and a further 14% said their learning helped their career as well as being a leisure interest.

For a third of women, training was provided at their workplace and for a further third it was provided at a local college that offered vocational training. Just under a third of women had training that lasted less than a year, and a further third participated in training that lasted between 1 and 2 years.

Employers said they offered a range of job-related training to employees, with almost all (85%) providing job-related internal training and the majority (62%) providing first aid and/or health and safety training. A third (37%) said they provided personal development courses. The proportion of employers offering training has increased since 1996, although the emphasis on job-related training is little changed. The 2012 survey found that larger organisations were more likely to provide training than small organisations.

A large minority of women surveyed - 40% - had not undertaken any further education, mainly because they did not want to do so. However, family commitments and lack of time were each mentioned by one in six women as reasons for not participating. The proportion mentioning these latter constraints is smaller in 2012 than in 1996.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of employers did not feel that there were any barriers for women employees in accessing and participating in training opportunities. The main

barriers identified by those who did were women's caring responsibilities and the cost of childcare which were mentioned by about a quarter of employers.

4.1.2 Using Women's Skills and Experience

Overall, just under three-quarters (72%) of women felt that their job made full use of their skills and experience, a higher proportion than the two-thirds (66%) who said this in the 1996 survey (Table 2). Women working full-time are slightly more likely to feel their job makes full use of their experiences and abilities than those working part-time (78% compared with 63%). Even so, the proportion of part-time employees saying their skills and experience are fully utilised is higher than in 1996.

Table 2 Use made of women's skills and experience

	Percentage saying their job makes full use of their skills and experience
All Women	72
Full-time	78
Part-time	63
Managers	89
Senior officials	85
Sales and Customer Service roles	48
Administrative and Secretarial roles	62
Personal Services roles	75

Older women, women managers and senior officials, and women in administrative roles and personal services were most likely to feel that their job made the most of their qualifications, whilst less than half of women in sales and customer service felt this. There were no differences between public and private sectors or between qualified and unqualified women.

Of those women who felt that their job did not make full use of their skills and experience, nearly two-thirds (64%) said this was because they felt they were capable of carrying out more demanding work and nearly four out of ten (38%) said they were over-qualified for their job. This is a potentially substantial loss to the economy.

4.1.3 Aspirations and Progression

More than half (59%) of women want to change their job, about the same as in 1996. Women aged 16-24 were much less likely to be happy to stay in their current job than older women, and they were also more likely to want a change of career altogether. Women managers and senior officials were slightly more likely to want to stay in their current job over the next five years than other women - 54% of managers and senior officials said this compared with only 29% of women working in sales and customer services. Women in sales and customer services were also most likely to say they wanted a new job (26.2% said this) and a further 24% wanted to change careers altogether.

The in-depth interviews suggested that more complex factors underlay women's willingness to stay in their current role. A small number were genuinely happy to stay in their job in the long term, but a much larger number were 'biding their time' until a new opportunity arose.

In the survey, about a quarter of women were looking for new opportunities - 15% said that they wanted promotion to a new job and 11% wanted a career change. The proportion of women saying they want promotion is less than half that in 1996, perhaps a reflection of the current economic climate.¹⁴

The in-depth interviews suggested that women who worked for large employers were much more likely to have opportunities for promotion than others. For example, one woman described how in her workplace:

'every six months you get an options plan where you run through your options for promotion. The employer also puts on a 2-3 hour session where they explain how you go for promotion. If you don't want to go for promotion then that's not a problem either'.

Another woman with a large employer outlined that her employer had paid for her to undertake an evening course and that she was being supported to develop in order that she could be promoted in the future. Other women working for large employers highlighted employer initiatives such as briefings on promotion opportunities and an 'academy' training system.

However, over half of women thought that there were barriers to them being promoted or getting a new job in 2012, the same as in 1996. The main barriers identified were lack of higher-grade jobs to enable progression and lack of job opportunities in general. Women interviewed in-depth also commented on the lack of opportunities, for example noting that their organisation was not in a position to promote people and that people in more senior roles were staying in the organisation

¹⁴ Eres (1996). Women's Role in the Welsh Workforce, on behalf of Chwarae Teg

for longer than they might have done in the past. Other workplace-based barriers mentioned in the survey included lack of workplace training, mentioned by 17% of women, lack of skills and experience (cited by 14% of women) and childcare (cited by 10%).

The in-depth interviews identified a number of issues outside the workplace that also affected progression. Raising children was highlighted as a key barrier, as was part-time working, together with sex discrimination as this example shows:

'I was actually told at a recent meeting by the CEO of the business that had I not got pregnant that I would have been in line for a promotion. So, I was a bit annoyed. Fair enough in a way because he said that you can't do the job I would want you to do on three days a week'.

Another woman described her experiences in the sciences sector, which it is worth quoting at length:

'in the science industry, it is not just about skills but there is a lot of scientific knowledge that you develop over the years. And what we are finding is that people, women rather, are in their early thirties by the time they have paid off their student loan because they have done further education to get to where they are. They are in their thirties before they have children so they are leaving just as they are approaching the middle management level. And then it is harder then to go back in a senior role. You might have to take a step back, and that is quite challenging I think. I know there are people where I am now and also in my previous company that chose not to have children and they have certainly progressed as their male counterparts. So from my own personal experience, I think it is harder for a woman to have a family and to progress in a business'.

Other women commented that they saw promotion upsetting the work-life balance they had achieved, for example one feared that promotion would *'increase the stress-factor'*.

A surprising feature that emerged in the in-depth interviews was the question of age. Several women felt that they were 'past it' or that it was too late to pursue a new career direction, including two women in their thirties who felt it was too late to change career course:

'I would like to be doing something else, with more money. But you get so far, then you think you're past it and there's no point going back to uni. Well, I can't afford uni or college'.

Whilst men in their thirties often might be considered to be at an early stage in their careers, a number of interviewees implied that women *'reach the peak'* of their career at around this age.

A small proportion of women planned to retire, and were keen to work fewer hours or stop work altogether. A number of these women outlined that they hoped to spend more time with their families when they had stopped work, or have a more relaxed job if they didn't want to stop work completely.

Employers had generally positive views around women's prospects for promotion. The vast majority of employers (88%) said that men and women progressed equally within their company and two-thirds (65%) of employers either agreed or strongly agreed that women in the workplace in general are just as likely to get promoted as men. Some employers pointed out that the differences in promotion within their company were because men and women had different jobs within the workplace - one employer stated that:

'the jobs offering some progression are male orientated - hands on with construction machinery - for which women don't often apply, women usually come here to start in admin, not for the manual skilled roles.'

Another employer stated that:

'the senior roles can be very demanding on the employee's availability, and their time, including having to work on overseas placement for long periods.'

In the same vein, another employer said:

'women have enough to do when they have families and find it hard to make it to the top.'

4.2 Conclusions

Although women are more likely to have qualifications at all levels than men, this does not appear to be reflected in the workplace. A substantial minority of women feel that their skills and abilities are under-used at work, and more than half of all women expect to change jobs in the next five years. Younger women and women in part-time and lower-level jobs are particularly likely to feel under-used and to want a job change than others.

Many women are looking for either promotion or a new career altogether, but barriers such as lack of jobs, lack of training, family responsibilities, age and, in a few cases, sex discrimination were perceived to prevent their progression. Yet despite the barriers identified by women, the vast majority of employers thought women and men had equal opportunities to progress in their workplaces.

5 BALANCING WORKING AND CARING

Key findings:

- **Responsibility for looking after their families and home still has a much greater impact on women's working lives than on men's, although progress has been made; in 1992, 1 in 5 women didn't work because they were looking after family or home whereas in 2010 the figure is 1 in 10.**
- **Women are much more likely to be employed up to the birth of their child and to have access to paid maternity leave than in the past. However most employers (81%) offer the statutory minimum maternity provision and a substantial minority of employers (more than a third) have no experience of an employee taking maternity leave.**
- **Informal childcare remains by far the most common way of caring for children while parents work, used by 40% of women. Lack of childcare was thought to affect women's ability to work full-time by the majority (78%) of employers, but was thought to affect men's ability to work full-time by just 48%.**
- **Availability of flexible working arrangements has increased and is available in some form to eight out of ten women working. Employers and employees agreed that flexible working offers considerable benefits. Three-quarters of women said they are satisfied with their work-life balance. However, levels of satisfaction varied by sector, job type and working hours.**
- **A sizeable minority of women (25%) appear not to have access to their statutory rights as parents, e.g. to take parental leave, and a sizeable minority of employers (15%) appear not to implement them.**
- **In general, large employers and employers in the public sector offer better maternity and paternity provision and are more likely to provide support with childcare and flexible working than others.**

5.1 The impact of family responsibilities on women's employment

One of the most striking changes in women's employment is that the impact of women's responsibility for family and home on their participation in the labour market has decreased substantially. In 1992 nearly one in five women did not work for this

reason compared with less than one in ten in 2010. The proportion of men not working for this reason has increased very slightly over the same period, from 0.7% to 1.3%.

Although the proportion of economically inactive women not working because of family responsibilities has decreased, responsibility for family and home remains a major feature of women's participation in the workforce. Even today, women are still nearly four times as likely as men not to be working because of looking after family and home, with lack of adequate childcare being cited as the main reason that women aged 29-45 do not work.¹⁵

5.2 Maternity Arrangements

Of the women surveyed, nearly half (44%) had children. 17% of all respondents had one child, 18% had 2 children, 6% of respondents had 3 children and 3% of respondents had four or more children.

Two-thirds (65%) of women were in paid work up to the birth or adoption of their child. Of these, the vast majority (87%) were eligible for paid maternity leave. Both are marked changes since 1996, when only a third of women (36%) were in employment up to the birth of their child, and only just over half (55%) were eligible for paid maternity leave.

The 2012 survey showed that nine out of ten (89%) women returned to work with the same employer whereas in 1996 only 57% had done so. This is likely to be associated with stronger rights for women to return to work after childbirth. The largest proportion of women (35%) had returned to work with the same employer between 7 and 12 months after giving birth / adopting while just over a quarter (28%) had returned to work between 4 and 6 months after giving birth / adopting. One in five (21%) said that they had returned to work with the same employer between 1 and 3 months after the birth / adoption of their child. More than one in ten (12%) women had not returned to the same employer.

Most employers appear to do little more than the statutory minimum required of them. The vast majority (81%) of employers did not offer any benefits in addition to the statutory requirements for maternity leave; the 20% that did offer more than the minimum provided support including extra unpaid leave, extended paid leave and a bonus paid on return to work. Enhanced maternity leave was available from 23% of employers. Medium-sized and large employers were much more likely to offer additional provision than small employers – 31% of large employers and 31% of medium-sized employers did so compared with 19% of small employers and 16% of

¹⁵ The Bevan Foundation (2009), *Equality issues in Wales*

micro-employers. Public sector employers were nearly twice as likely as private sector employers to offer additional provisions (41% compared with 12%). Nevertheless, it was only a minority of employers of all types that made provision in addition to their statutory requirements.

The majority of employers (62%) aimed to support women on maternity leave by keeping in touch during their absence and on their return to work. Medium-sized and large employers and public sector employers were much more likely to keep in touch than micro-employers and those in the private sector.

In terms of the return to work, while employers most often expected a woman returning from maternity leave to work the same hours and have the same responsibilities as before, more than a quarter (26%) said that women worked fewer hours in the same job if she wished, while one in twenty said women worked fewer hours and had fewer responsibilities. A further quarter (25%) said women typically returned to work on a part-time basis.

Most employers (60%) said that there were no challenges faced by their organisation in reintegrating women back into work after maternity leave. Some employers (13%) said that women required a training update, 7% of employers said that the company had to be more flexible and about the same proportion found that women took more time off because of childcare responsibilities.

It is worth noting that more than a third of employers said that they had never had an employee on maternity leave.

Some women interviewed in depth reported that some employers had supported their return to work e.g. through keep-in-touch days and discussions about women's preferences:

'I sat down with them and discussed what I could do when I went back. I went back to my old position. They created special hours just for me because I had difficulties with childcare.'

However some women felt that they were losing out on opportunities as a result of being off work or going back to work on reduced hours.

When it occurred, women attributed their positive experiences to their employer's family-friendly policies and in addition to the attitudes of their manager. Larger organisations with established HR functions tended to have clearer procedures and processes around maternity leave and women returning to work, which were seen to make the return to work easier.

5.3 Paternity Arrangements

Despite paternity leave becoming a statutory right in 2010, the survey suggests that use of paternity leave is relatively uncommon. More than two-thirds of the employers surveyed (68%) said that no male staff had taken up paternity leave in the last two years. Of the employers that had provided paternity leave, almost all was paid.

A third of employers said they actively encouraged fathers to take paternity leave (or similar), with large and medium-sized organisations and those in the public and third sectors being more likely to do so than others.

5.4 Childcare

Two-thirds of families with children in Wales use some form of childcare. Higher income families, and those where both parents are working, are more likely to access childcare than lower income families.¹⁶ It is widely recognised that the cost of childcare discourages take-up¹⁷ and for lone parents in particular, childcare is a major barrier to work.¹⁸ Around a fifth of lone parents want to work but are unable to, often on account of childcare issues.¹⁹

In the final quarter of 2011, there were 76,135 places in children's day care²⁰, up from 72,856 places in 2007-08²¹. There is evidence of a shortage of Welsh language childcare²².

In the survey of women, nearly half felt that they had main or sole responsibility for caring for children (of which 28% had most of the responsibility and 19.9% had sole responsibility). A very similar proportion - 48% of women - shared responsibility for their childcare equally with their partner. Just 4% of women said that their partner took sole responsibility for childcare. In the in-depth interviews, the majority of women felt they carried more responsibilities for care, including care of children and other relatives, than male partners or family members.

¹⁶ The Bevan Foundation (2011), *How Fair Is Wales?* EHRC. Available at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/wales/publications/how-fair-is-wales/>

¹⁷ Blackaby, D. , Jones, M. , Jones, R., Latreille, P., Murphy, P., O'Leary, N. and Sloane, P. (2006). *Identifying Barriers to Economic Activity in Wales Part I: Literature Review*. Cardiff: Welsh Development Agency.

¹⁸ The Bevan Foundation (2009), *Equality issues in Wales*

¹⁹ Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research Data and Methods (WISERD) (2011), *An anatomy of economic inequality in Wales*, EHRC

²⁰ StatsWales, total of all Childcare services by Local Authority, by settings and places quarterly

²¹ Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

²² The Bevan Foundation (2011), *How Fair Is Wales?* EHRC. Available at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/wales/publications/how-fair-is-wales/>

Amongst those women who shared childcare with their male partners, the extent of sharing often reflected the respective employment positions of each partner and ability to negotiate flexible working with their employer.

In terms of arrangements, by far the most common type of childcare was provided unpaid by a relative (other than their partner) or friend (used by 40% of women). One in five (20%) relied on their partner and one in six used a nursery. Child-minders, before or after school care and paying relatives were much less commonly used. One in ten women said their children looked after themselves.

The arrangements made by women do not appear to have changed significantly since 1996. Although the question asked was slightly different, then 18% of women with school-aged children and 33% of women with pre-school children said their partner took on a significant proportion of childcare responsibilities.

A high proportion (78%) of employers either agreed or strongly agreed that a lack of childcare opportunities make it difficult for mothers with children to occupy a full-time job. Lack of childcare was seen to have much less impact on men – only 48% of employers either agreed or strongly agreed that a lack of childcare facilities make it difficult for fathers with children to have a full-time job.

5.5 Support with care

Overall, three-quarters of women said they were entitled to some sort of help with childcare and other care. The most common help, reported by half of women, was entitlement to unpaid leave, while 36% had parental/carers leave available. One in five women said they were entitled to childcare vouchers. A number of women said they were entitled to help with the costs of childcare through Working Tax Credits.

Despite their entitlements, a relatively small proportion of women reported that they had taken up the support available to them – more than a third did not use any support with their care arrangements. Childcare tax credits followed by unpaid leave were most commonly taken up (used by 39% and 22% of women respectively). Only one in ten used childcare vouchers.

The help most likely to be offered by employers was leave - 76% of employers offered unpaid leave to parents, 65% of employers said they offered paid parental and carers' leave and 19% said they offered other 'special leave' in respect of child sickness. As table 3 shows, large employers and public sector employers were much more likely to offer all types of help with childcare than others.

Table 3 Employer support for childcare by employer size (%)

Measure	5 -9 Micro	10-49 Small	50-249 Medium	250+ Large	Total
Childcare vouchers	14	25	40	69	24
Parental/carers' leave	50	72	82	94	65
Unpaid leave opportunities	64	82	87	100	76
Other, please detail	7	11	9	13	9
None of these	25	8	4	0	15

Source: Ecorys Survey results (base response 400)

5.5.1 No Help

It is worth noting that a sizeable minority of women (25%) said they were not entitled to any help with childcare and that 15% of employers did not offer any support. This is despite parents of children under 5 (and older children in certain circumstances) being entitled to unpaid parental leave as well as being allowed to take 'reasonable' time off work (usually defined as one or two days) to deal with an emergency involving a dependant (including a child). Whilst there is some ambiguity in the terms used by both employers and employees in the survey about time-off for parents and carers, e.g. it is not clear if the 'parental and carers' leave' is different to 'unpaid leave' it is nevertheless considerable cause for concern that such a substantial minority of women appear to be being denied their rights whilst employers are not aware they must allow leave.

5.6 Flexible working

Flexible working is key to enabling parents of either gender to combine paid employment with caring for children and other family members.

5.6.1 Availability of Flexible Working

It was estimated in 2009 that around 38% of women in Wales had some form of flexible working arrangement, compared to 27% of women in England²³. However, other studies suggest the opposite: a 2007 Institute of Education (University of London) study looked at eight types of flexible working arrangements, and found that

²³ The Bevan Foundation (2009), *Equality issues in Wales*

women in Wales had less access to any flexible working opportunities than women in England, and in the most part Scotland, with one or two exceptions (most notably flexible working hours and school term-time contracts). 9% of the women in the study had no access to any flexible working arrangements, higher than England (7%) and Scotland (8%)²⁴.

The survey found that eight out of ten women said they have opportunities to take up some form of flexible working. Nearly two-thirds of employers interviewed said they offered flexible working.

The availability of flexible working has increased significantly in recent years. The vast majority of women surveyed (78%) agreed that there is more opportunity for flexible working than 10 years ago. Employers are also much more likely to offer flexible working today than in the past. Overall, 62% of employers now offer flexible working hours in 2012, compared to 39% in the 1996 survey, and more than two-thirds of employers (69%) agreed that there are now more flexible working opportunities in their organisation compared to ten years ago.

5.6.2 Types of Flexible Working

There are many different types of flexible working arrangements, ranging from flexibility in the total number of hours worked, the length of the working day or week, to those that are flexible about the weeks worked or the place of work. Figure 2 shows the proportion of women reporting the availability and take-up of types of flexible working.

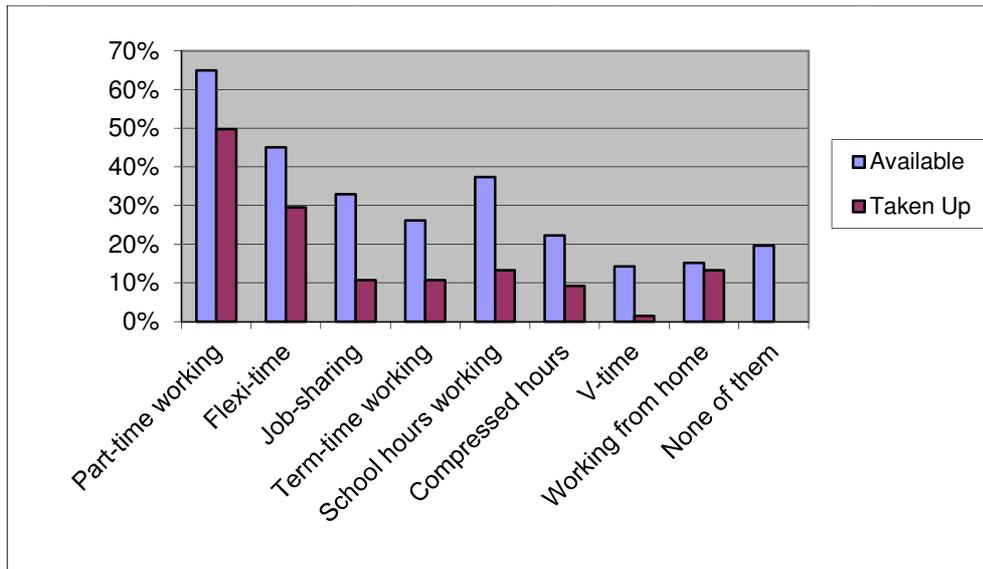
Women themselves and employers reported that part-time working is the most common form of flexible working (available to 65% of employed women and offered by 88% of employers). Flexi-time²⁵ was available to around 45% of women surveyed and is offered by 61% of employers, while around a third of women had the option of job-sharing, offered by 39% of employers. Much lower proportions of women reported that other forms of flexible working were available, and many fewer employers offered them.

²⁴ Dex, Shirley. and Ward, K. 2007. Parental care and employment in early childhood, Working Paper Series, No. 57, Institute of Education, University of London.

<http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/uploads/publications/257.pdf>

²⁵ Flexi-time was referred to by the interviewer as the opportunity for an employee to vary worked hours but be able to take banked hours as flexi leave

Figure 2 Availability and Take-up of Flexible Working



Source: Ecorys survey, base response 337 (available) 271 (taken up)

Flexible working options were much more common among public sector employers and in larger organisations than in the private sector and small organisations. Public sector employers were twice as likely to offer job-sharing than the private sector (66% compared with 34%), and were two and a half times more likely to offer term-time working than private sector employers (44% compared with 18%). Eight out of ten (81%) of large employers offered flexi-time compared with just over half (53%) of medium-sized employers, while three-quarters of large employers allowed job sharing compared to just over a third (34%) of micro employers.

5.6.3 Take-up of Flexible Working

Whether or not employers offer flexible working, employees – male and female - have a right to request a change in their working arrangements that their employer must consider. The in-depth interviews revealed that women in elementary roles tended to choose overtime and shifts to fit in with their family responsibilities. The type of flexible working that women used varied by sector and occupational grouping. Self-employed women, or those working on a client appointment basis could schedule their work around their wider life and commitments.

Amongst employers, requests to work flexibly are relatively uncommon - the majority of employers surveyed (57%) had not received a request for flexibility from employees in the past year and a quarter (25%) had received requests from less than 5% of the workforce to work flexibly. Micro-sized employers were six times more likely to have no workers requesting flexible working in the last year than large employers (66% compared with 11%). No differences between sectors were found.

5.6.4 Reasons for Flexible Working

The main reasons that women said they used flexible working practices were childcare (33%) or to suit other personal needs (42%). Childcare was a much more important reason than others for women of child-bearing age - two-thirds of women aged 35-44 said they worked flexibly because of childcare responsibilities.

Amongst employers, childcare was the most common reason employees requested flexible working (identified by 61% of employers), followed by other caring responsibilities (identified by 15% of employers) and personal needs (identified by 14%). However, more than a quarter of employers (26%) said that employees did not generally seek flexible working opportunities.

Of the different types of flexible working, the women surveyed were most likely to take-up opportunities to work part-time - half of all women surveyed did so. Flexi-time was also relatively common, being taken up by 30% of the overall number of women surveyed. Other forms of flexible working (e.g. school hours working, home-working, job-sharing and term-time working) were used by much smaller proportions of women.

There are differences in the opportunities for and take-up of different types of flexible working between different occupations. Women in higher-level occupations and in the public sector were more likely to have opportunities for flexi-time than others, and women in senior roles were also more likely to work at home than those in other roles. Women in administrative and secretarial roles were most likely to use flexi-time and those in sales and customer service roles were most likely to work part-time.

5.6.5 Benefits of Flexible Working

The research found that many women and the majority of employers reported that flexible working offers benefits.

In in-depth interviews with women, many felt their employers recognised the merits of flexible working for women and the wider organisation:

'the company are good at allowing flexible working, they know they get the best from the staff if they allow flexibility. It's an understanding organisation'.

Some women acknowledged that their employer had helped them to negotiate a flexible work pattern or working part-time on returning to work after maternity leave:

'They created special hours just for me because I had difficulties with childcare';

Where women had been able to agree flexible arrangements, they acknowledged the benefits:

'I am in a job with total flexibility and it makes such a difference. It works both ways, as I can adapt to the needs of the job and can also fit it around the needs of family, so my employer benefits and I do too'. (online forum)

The majority of women, especially those in lower level occupations, said that the opportunity to work flexibly had been a key factor in attracting them to their current job.

Employers had a generally positive view of flexible working. Overall, 71% of employers said that offering staff flexible working opportunities brought benefits to their organisation. The likelihood of identifying benefits increased with the size of the organisation (88% of larger companies felt that flexible working brought benefits to their organisation, compared to 76% of medium-sized employers, 71% of small employers and 69% of micro employers).

The main benefit of flexible working, identified by 38% of employers, was a positive and/or more motivated workforce. In addition, 26% of employers said that it helped them to retain staff, 23% said it worked out better for the business and 12% highlighted reduced stress.

However, despite this generally favourable view of flexible working, a number of women described various ways in which working part-time had adversely affected their prospects for promotion – these are covered in Sections 3 and 4. There is a clear implication that whilst flexible working might help women to juggle their family responsibilities with paid work, it may hinder their success in the workplace.

5.6.6 When Flexible Working is not Available

Although the overall picture on flexible working is positive, a sizeable minority of women do not have access to it and an even larger minority of employers do not offer or favour it. One in five women surveyed said that they do not have opportunities for flexible working. A number of others who participated in the online forum said that they had had difficulties negotiating flexible working with their employer. One woman interviewed in depth said that whilst her employer accommodated flexible working, her company penalises absenteeism which she considered to disadvantage parents or people with caring responsibilities that sometimes cannot avoid being off work. This was particularly an issue for women that were single parents.

Amongst employers, although only 4% said they did not offer flexible working their answers to other questions suggested some ambivalence towards it. Almost four out of ten employers (39%) said that although their company offered some form of

flexible working they 'would not want to extend this further' and nearly one in ten (8%) stated that they were not in favour of flexible working. One in three employers (29%) said that they felt flexible working had not brought any benefits to their organisations.

Overall women thought it was unusual for men to negotiate flexible working - in a few cases women did not seem to consider it a priority for employers to help men accommodate their family and caring roles: *'a male colleague has been away for a few days on paternity leave. I don't know how it was achieved, but I imagine the employer wants him back to work as soon as possible'*. In other cases, women accepted that, whilst flexible working opportunities are available to men as well as women, it is often the women whose careers are affected to a greater degree (primarily women that work part-time whilst accommodating caring roles). This view was held by women in the financial / business sector in particular.

45% of employers also either agreed or strongly agreed that men are increasingly making use of flexible working opportunities, in comparison to 29% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. A quarter of employers did not know.

5.7 Work-life balance

Three-quarters of women surveyed said they are satisfied or very satisfied with their work-life balance. However a substantial minority - one in six - said they were fairly or very dissatisfied. Women aged 16-24 were least likely of age groups to be very satisfied, and more professional women said they were dissatisfied than other occupations. Women in the public sector were more likely to be very satisfied than those in the private sector (40% compared with 24%), as were women working part-time compared with full-timers (46% compared with 32%). Table 3 shows the main findings for different groups of women.

Table 4 Satisfaction with Work-Life Balance

	Percentage very satisfied
All women	39
Full-time	32
Part-time	46
Public Sector	40
Private Sector	24
Public administration, education and health sector	53
Wholesale, retail and trade sector	29

Source: Ecorys survey.

These findings were reflected amongst the women interviewed in depth. Most had a positive view of their work-life balance, and a high proportion talked about choosing a working pattern that suited them and that fitted around their other life commitments. A minority of women said that they would prefer to work less but could not do so for financial reasons (in some cases where partners had been made redundant). Some recognised that a more senior or managerial role would be more demanding and would likely have a negative impact on their work-life balance.

Many of the women with children had negotiated flexible working opportunities or part-time roles that gave them the balance they sought. It was the women who provided care to relatives who felt that they had a poor quality work-life balance. A number worked part-time or had done in the past (or stopped working altogether) to accommodate these responsibilities.

The women working in roles which had specified shifts had a more positive experience of their work-life balance than women who were in associate professional or professional roles, as the latter had a greater tendency to encroach into the personal time of the interviewed women.

A small number of women interviewed were self-employed. They considered that self-employment made it easier to manage childcare and family/ caring responsibilities alongside employment, although sometimes the demands of growing a business made getting an appropriate balance difficult.

5.8 Conclusions

The responsibility for looking after their children, family and home has a much lesser impact on women's employment than in the past. Nevertheless, women are still much more likely to be not working because of family responsibilities than men, and their family responsibilities have a very major effect on their position within the workplace.

As part of the changes, women are much more likely to be employed up to the birth of their child and to have access to paid maternity leave than in the past. However, the survey shows that most maternity provision is at the statutory minimum, and that a substantial minority of employers have no experience of an employee taking maternity leave at all. This has important implications for the ways in which employers handle an employee's pregnancy, maternity leave and return to work.

For women with dependent children, informal childcare remains by far the most common way of caring for children while parents work. Lack of childcare was thought to affect women much more than men.

The availability of flexible working arrangements has increased substantially and now comes in a variety of different forms although part-time and flexi-time arrangements are by far the most common. Most employers and employees agree that flexible working offers benefits. As a result, most women are satisfied with their work-life balance although women in higher-level jobs are less satisfied than others.

In general, large employers and employers in the public sector offer better maternity and paternity provision and are more likely to give support with childcare and flexible working than others.

One finding of considerable concern is that a sizeable minority of women appear not to have access to their statutory rights as parents, in the form of parental leave and the right to request flexible working, and a sizeable minority of employers similarly appear not to implement these rights.

6 ACTION ON GENDER EQUALITY

Key points:

- Two-thirds of women and almost all employers believe that equality of opportunity has increased in recent years, although only a very small number of respondents strongly agreed with this statement. Interestingly, more respondents working in the private sector strongly agreed that equality of opportunity had improved (22% compared with 11%). Disappointingly, 31% of respondents had seen no progress.
- A small majority of employers (60%) think that further action by the state would help to achieve equality, in particular help with childcare. However a substantial minority (40%) do not want state intervention.

6.1 Attitudes to gender equality

There is widespread belief that there is greater equality of opportunity in employment now than in the past (see Table 5). Two-thirds of women in employment (63%) agreed that there are now more equal opportunities for men and women in the workplace. Women working in the private sector were more likely to strongly agree with this than women in the public sector (22% compared with 11%), but there were few other differences amongst women. An even higher proportion of employers - 90% - agreed that there are equal opportunities for men and women in their workplace. Nevertheless, these figures mean that a third of women and one in ten employers *do not* think there is more equality of opportunity – a small but significant minority.

Table 5 Views on equality of opportunity in the workforce

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
There are equal opportunities for men and women in the workplace	13.5%	49.4%	25.6%	5.7%	5.8%

Source: Ecorys Survey results (base response 601)

6.2 Sex discrimination cases in Wales

Despite the belief that equality has increased, there continue to be hundreds of cases brought to tribunals alleging sex discrimination. Sex discrimination is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 as it was under the several Acts and Regulations which previously formed the basis of anti-discrimination law, including the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. Those experiencing sex discrimination (which includes equal pay disputes or harassment claims) can make a claim to an employment tribunal.

Recent Employment Tribunal statistics²⁶ show marked variation year on year in the number of sex discrimination cases received in Wales (excluding equal pay cases), although there is a downward trend in the numbers. This compares with a steady number of around 18,000 cases (also excluding equal pay) for the past few years at the UK level²⁷.

Table 6 Sex Discrimination Cases, Wales

Year	Sex Discrimination
2010-11	210
2009-10	510
2008-09	920
2007-08	1,600
2006-07	360

Source: Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service, 2012

At UK level, unfair dismissals related to pregnancy have held steady at just under 2,000 while equal pay cases have dropped from 45,700 in 2008/9 to 34,600 in 2010/11, possibly reflecting the economic recession and the development of risk-averse attitudes amongst employees²⁸. Commentators however believe that the number of cases may rise in the next few years as more employees are made aware of their rights following publicity about the Equality Act 2010.

Although interviewees were not asked about their experiences of sex discrimination, a number of responses suggested that women had been discriminated against either directly or indirectly. This may be an area for further research.

6.3 Actions to increase equality of opportunity

The survey indicated that a slight majority of employers thought that action could be taken to make it easier for their organisation to recruit, retrain, progress and offer

²⁶ Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service, researcher emailed data 8th March 2012

²⁷ Ministry of Justice (2011) Annual Tribunals Statistics, 2010-11: 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011 <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/statistics/tribs-stats/annual-tribunals-statistics-2010-11.pdf>

²⁸ Ministry of Justice (2011) Annual Tribunals Statistics, 2010-11: 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011 <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/statistics/tribs-stats/annual-tribunals-statistics-2010-11.pdf>

better opportunities to women. Nearly a quarter of employers (23%) felt that childcare subsidies would be helpful (small employers and those in the public sector were most likely to say this). About one in thirteen employers (7%) felt that financial incentives for employers would help, and the same proportion considered that increased availability and flexibility of childcare would make it easier for employers. Other types of action mentioned by 18% of employers included expanding the tax credits system to offer more help for childcare, increasing apprenticeship numbers and increasing training budgets for staff. For example one employer said that the state should:

'help women back into work after maternity leave, both financially with help with the childcare and also with practical help of making childcare hours more expansive.'

Another said:

'it would help if the government force[d] private companies to keep to all the regulations and actively promote equality.'

However, a substantial minority (40%) of employers felt that the government or local authorities did not need to take any action to promote progression and wider opportunities for women and/or that there was no problem in this regard. This view was most widely held in private sector organisations.

6.4 Conclusions

Despite the evidence that has emerged in this research of persistent gender inequalities in the workplace and of women's and employers' awareness of inequality *in general*, there is a striking lack of concern about and willingness to take action on inequality *in individual workplaces*. Given that nine out of ten employers believe that there is equality of opportunity in their workplace, it is hardly surprising that only half think that further action to help them to improve equality is required. Persuading them – and the two-thirds of women who think there is gender equality – of the need for action will be a major hurdle.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The 2012 survey of women and employers provides a unique and invaluable insight into the position of women today. It demonstrates beyond any doubt that while women have made considerable progress in the Welsh workforce in the last sixteen years, deep-seated inequalities in the workplace remain. The findings raise new challenges as well as showing that old ones persist and as such they have important implications for everyone concerned with equality and the labour market in Wales.

Crucially, the evidence suggests that the challenges for women in the workforce are changing. In 1996, there was substantial evidence that responsibilities for family and home and in particular lack of childcare were major barriers to women's entry into employment. Today, women's economic activity has increased and employment is the norm for the vast majority of women. Although women still cite their domestic responsibilities as a factor in finding work they are just as likely to feel that lack of jobs is a problem. Enabling and supporting women to enter the workforce is therefore still important, but it is not the only issue.

The findings show that women face many challenges in the workforce. Although many statistical measures of gender inequality, such as the gender pay gap and vertical and horizontal segregation at work, are diminishing the survey of women's experiences indicates they face continued and pervasive disadvantage at work. Differences in pay, poor provision for sick-pay and pensions, concentration into lower-level and stereotypically female occupations, wasted skills and lack of opportunities for progression, lack of flexible working or lack of awareness of rights at work were reported by substantial proportions of women. There were suggestions that in some cases employers and employees were not aware of or securing their statutory rights, and also instances of apparent direct discrimination. Women in part-time, lower-level jobs and in small, private sector employers fared worst in almost all these areas.

The majority of women and employers were aware of gender inequalities in the workforce but most seemed resigned to them, believing they do not occur in their own workplace and that, at least amongst women, there is little they can do. This is far from the case – there is a great deal that can and should be done to ensure that women are not penalised simply because of their gender and to reduce the loss of women's skills and talents from the Welsh economy.

One of the most striking areas of improvement since the 1996 Chwarae Teg survey is in the terms and conditions of employment, almost certainly attributable to legislation including that on part-time workers, maternity, parental and paternity leave, and the right to request flexible working. It is vital that this legislation

continues to underpin women's employment, and that employers across the board – including small, private sector employers – as well as women are aware of both their rights and responsibilities under the law.

The survey also indicates that the long-standing issues of the gender pay gap, flexible working and progression at work are still key issues. There has been some improvement in the last sixteen years, but there nevertheless remains a substantial minority of women who do not have equal pay, the means of balancing work and home responsibilities or equal opportunities for promotion. These issues are by no means resolved and work will need to continue, perhaps with a particular focus on private sector and small employers, to ensure that they are addressed in all parts of the workforce.

It is also clear that women who work in part-time employment face significant disadvantages compared to those who work full-time – not only do they generally have poorer terms and conditions but they face considerable barriers to progression especially into management roles. Yet part-time working is the way in which the vast majority of women with family responsibilities balance them with paid work. Addressing the difficulties part-time workers face in securing equality at work would seem to be a high priority.

Last, but by no means least, the survey highlights that inequality outside the workforce continues to shape inequality within it. Women's responsibility for childcare, men's low take-up of paternity provisions, and powerful stereotypes about the suitability of certain jobs for different genders play an important role in the jobs women do, their patterns of work and their aspirations. There has been social change since the mid-1990s, and even more so since the mid-1960s, so further change is not impossible – it is just unlikely to be easy. Achieving change here, as in so many other areas of the economy and society, needs ambition and leadership, popular and political support, and above all, action by employers, women and men.
