

STATE OF THE NATION 2024



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INTRODUCTION

This report marks the sixth iteration in the State of the Nation series. It is a series developed by Chwarae Teg in response to the Welsh Government's ambition for Wales to become a *world leader on gender equality*, expressed on International Women's Day 2018. The first report was launched in January 2019 to answer one simple question – how equal is Wales? Every year, the report brought together key indicators for gender equality, thereby providing an authoritative benchmark of progress, or lack thereof, towards the ambition for a gender-equal Wales.

In September 2023, after over 30 years of campaigning for a gender-equal Wales, Chwarae Teg closed. While the loss will be felt for many years to come, women's rights organisations and campaigners across Wales have been putting in extra shifts to cushion the inevitably detrimental impact it will have on gender equality and women's rights in Wales. The report at hand is part of WEN Wales' contribution to that. One year after the disheartening loss, we are honoured to be carrying on Chwarae Teg's legacy by launching State of the Nation 2024.

While the transfer process resulted in this year's report running behind the usual schedule, we have worked hard towards ensuring a seamless continuation of the series. To allow a swift turn-around, we

have kept to the original structure following Chwarae Teg's three strategic work areas (Women in the Economy, Women Represented, and Women at Risk); but we are reviewing this for future iterations.

The delay also meant we had access to newer data than would have been available if the report had been produced to the usual timescales. We opted for the most recent datasets and year-on-year comparison with revised data for previous years where available unless otherwise indicated. While this led to small discrepancies between the 2022 figures used in this and last year's report, it provides the most accurate and up-to-date picture at the time of publication.

Our analysis shows that 2023 was characterised by mixed developments for gender equality across the board.

Looking at the economy, the gender pay gap in Wales slightly increased to 11.8%, which bucks the more positive UK-wide trend. Gender disparities in economic activity and employment rates have narrowed, but both rates remain higher for men. Women's rates of economic inactivity and unemployment slightly reduced. But women remain over 3.5 times more likely to be economically inactive due to caring or domestic responsibilities, and over 2.5 times more likely than men to be working part-time. Intersectionally disaggregated data on economic inactivity

and unemployment showed some improvements for disabled women and a mixed impact on ethnic minority women, with significant disability and ethnicity gaps remaining.

Occupational segregation showed small improvements in some high-paying, male-dominated industries, but was accompanied by a worrying rise in the proportion of women employed in the lowest-paying sectors. Despite limited progress, and Wales now having a higher proportion of women-led small and medium-sized businesses than England, women remain underrepresented as business leaders and in senior positions.

In terms of representation, Wales hit some key milestones alongside major setbacks. 2024 saw the appointment of Wales's first female First Minister and a record proportion of female Welsh MPs, while the number of female local government leaders halved to only 9%.

Finding robust data on gender-based violence, harassment and abuse again posed a challenge. Police records, which have obvious limitation, suggest a very slim reduction in the proportion of sexual violence and domestic abuse-related crimes against women. But overall levels remained shockingly high, with around three quarters of domestic abuse related offences and over 80% of sexual assault cases being committed against women. Specialist services were facing

unprecedented pressures due to increasing demand, rising costs, regulatory changes and competitive, short-term funding.

Across Wales, poverty levels were again among the highest for single parent households and those relying on part-time income, both of which disproportionately affect women. Women continued to make up most Universal Credit claimants and remained more likely than men to rely on Universal Credit despite working, as the gender gap for in-work claimants slightly increased.

While the last year brought progress in certain areas, the pace of change remained glacial, and in some cases we even slipped backwards. As we launch the first WEN Wales edition of State of the Nation, we therefore find ourselves echoing the same message that Chwarae Teg repeated throughout previous reports: without renewed focus, resource and commitment to drive change, progress will not simply stall, it risks being undone. We will continue to raise this message with our vibrant coalition of members across Wales until our vision of a Wales free from gender discrimination is made reality.

INTERSECTIONALITY

At WEN Wales, our vision is of a Wales free from gender discrimination for *all* women. This cannot be achieved without recognising that the experiences of

women in Wales often vastly differ depending on other identities and social positions they occupy. This is what we commonly refer to as *intersectionality*. The term was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 as a framework to understand how Black women's experience of discrimination differs from the experiences of both White women and Black men, and is often erased in feminist and antiracist analysis. In theory, intersectionality describes the way in which power structures associated with gender, race, sexuality, gender identity, disability, class, age, faith and other characteristics interact. In doing so, they create, multiply and modify experiences of privilege and oppression.

In practice, individuals who experience intersecting discrimination tend to face additional challenges and worse outcomes. This can often be seen in data – if that data is collected and published. This has been a challenge, especially in Wales where sample sizes are often small, but it is not unsurmountable. The Welsh Government has reiterated its commitment to taking an intersectional approach in the increasingly complex landscape of ambitious equality action plans. We look forward to the work of the Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units in ensuring accountability frameworks are informed by data on the experience of women who face intersecting discrimination.

In line with the trend for all women, economic inactivity and unemployment rates for disabled women have marginally decreased by 1.7% and 0.9% respectively but remain around two-thirds higher than the overall figures for women. The gender gap in economic inactivity rates for disabled people is relatively small, and last year, economic inactivity for disabled women (44.8%) was lower than for disabled men (45.5%).

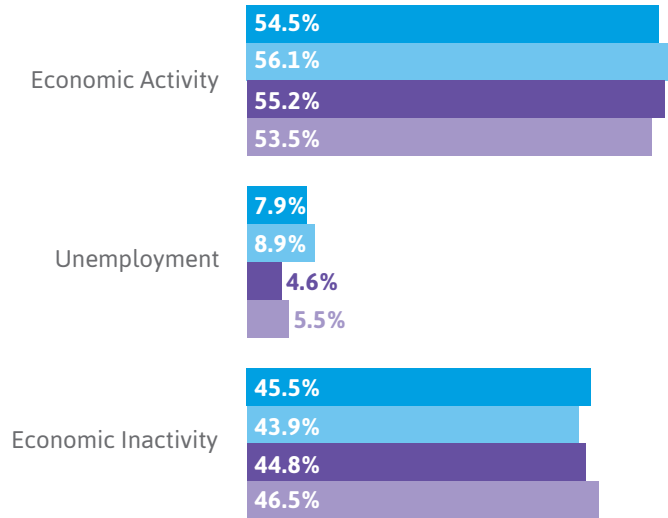
For ethnic minority women, the unemployment rate is also down by 2.2%, but marginally reduced employment rates and a 3.9% increase in economic inactivity paint a mixed picture. All figures remain significantly behind those for White women and ethnic minority men. For instance, ethnic minority women were over three times more likely than White women to be unemployed, and almost twice as likely to be economically inactive as ethnic minority men.

While the 'all-women' data used throughout the rest of the report powerfully illustrates the overall impact of gender inequality, it tells us very little about how this impact may differ for women with different intersecting identities. Prior to its closure, Chwarae Teg undertook initial scoping work to identify further intersectionally disaggregated data that could be included in this report. We are determined to build on this and work towards a better representation of intersectionality throughout State of the Nation.

DISABILITY AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY 2022-23

Source: Annual Population Survey, July 2021-June 2022 and July 2022-June 2023

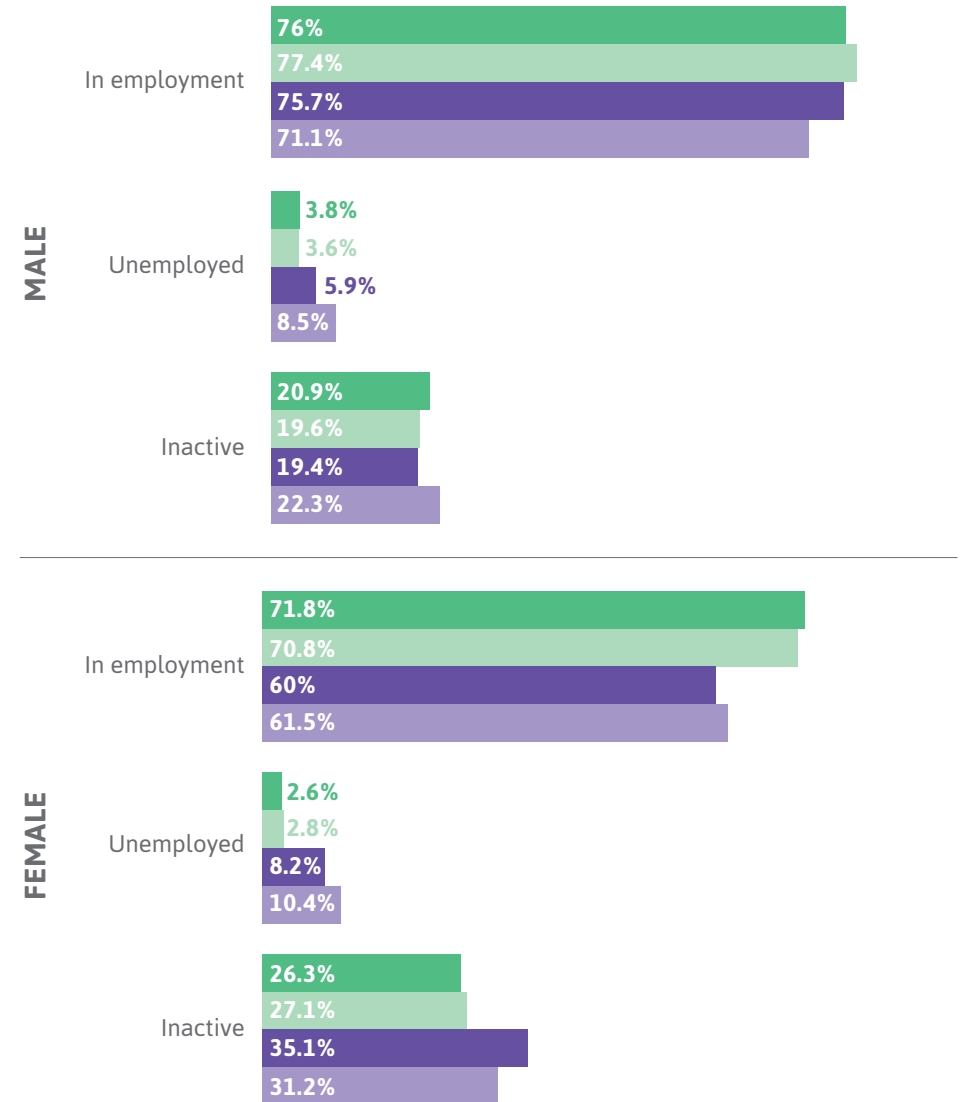
● Male 2023 ● Male 2022 ● Female 2023 ● Female 2022



EMPLOYMENT STATUS BY GENDER AND ETHNICITY

Source: Annual Population Survey, July 2021-June 2022 and July 2022-June 2023

● White 2023 ● White 2022 ● Ethnic minority 2023 ● Ethnic minority 2022



WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

Women continue to occupy an unequal position in Wales' economy. They are more likely than men to be economically inactive or to be working part-time, and they tend to be employed in different roles, sectors, occupations and job types. These differences reflect gender stereotypes and women's greater caring responsibilities, and the resulting gender pay gaps can be observed across most of Wales.

With consumer price inflation rates having fallen since autumn 2022, the costs of living rose at a slower pace than last year, but women continued to feel the impact more acutely than men. The gender pay gap in Wales increased from 11.4% to 11.8% while the UK-wide figure decreased from 14.9% to 14.3%. There remain significant differences across Wales. The Isle of Anglesey and Flintshire overtook Neath Port Talbot as local authorities with the biggest gender pay gaps, at 24.6% and 22.5% respectively. Merthyr Tydfil and Conwy saw the biggest year-on-year increases, landing at 19.3% and 14.9% respectively. This moved them from a negative to a positive gender pay gap and reduced the number of local authorities with a negative gender pay gap to only two – Ceredigion (-7.9%) and Carmarthenshire (-3.8%).

Across Wales, the gaps in economic activity rates and employment rates have

narrowed, but both rates remain higher for men compared to women. Among 20 to 24-year-olds, the economic activity gap reversed, with women of this age group being slightly more likely to be economically active than men. The biggest gap could be observed among 35 to 49-year-olds, with economic inactivity rates being 8.5% higher for women than men.

Over a quarter of women (25.2%) cited looking after the family or home as the reason for economic inactivity, making them over 3.5 times more likely to be economically inactive due to caring or domestic responsibilities than men. Both the gender gap and overall percentage of women citing this reason increased compared to 2022. The proportion of women who were economically inactive due to being a student decreased from 23.6% to 18.9%, the biggest year-on-year change observed across this statistic.

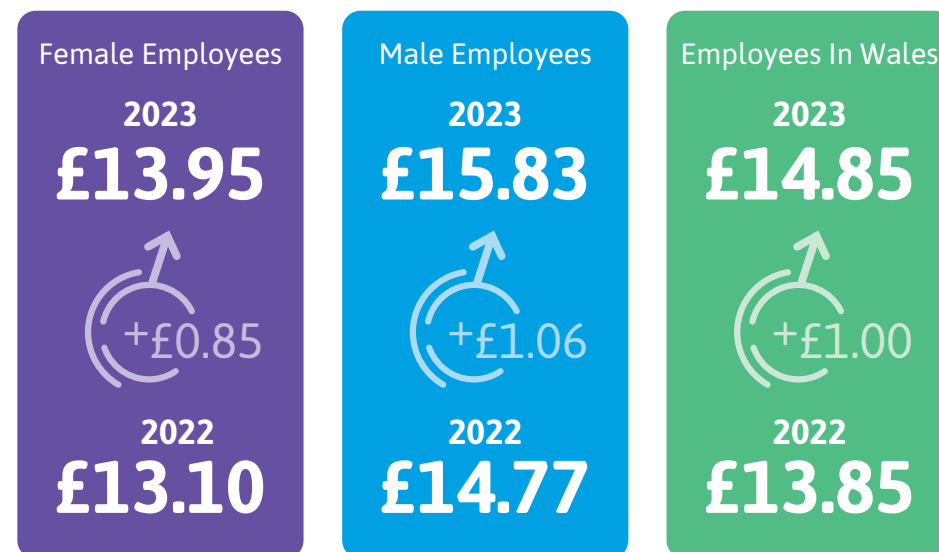
The unemployment rate for women dropped from 3.2% to 2.8%, while the rate for men marginally increased. The proportion of men and women who are self-employed remained largely unchanged, with a marked gender gap remaining.

The gender gap in part-time working has narrowed marginally and, among 20 to 24-year-olds, men were indeed more likely than women to be working part-time. Yet, overall, women remain over 2.5 times more likely than men to be part-time workers.

HOURLY PAY

Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), 2022-23, Work Geography, Table 7.6a

MEDIAN HOURLY PAY¹



GENDER PAY GAP BY LOCAL AUTHORITY

Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), 2022-23, Work Geography, Table 7.12

UK	14.3%
Wales	11.8%
Isle of Anglesey	24.6%
Flintshire	22.5%
Neath Port Talbot	21.9%
Denbighshire	16.5%
Monmouthshire	16.3%
Torfaen	16.1%
Caerphilly	15.9%
Pembrokeshire	15.3%
Vale of Glamorgan	14%
Newport	12%
Merthyr Tydfil	11.5%
Conwy	10.2%
Rhondda Cynon Taf	8.9%
Bridgend	8.8%
Cardiff	8.6%
Swansea	7.6%
Gwynedd	5.2%
Wrexham	4.3%
Blaenau Gwent	4.1%
Powys	2.3%
Carmarthenshire	-3.8%
Ceredigion	-7.9%

GENDER PAY GAP COMPARISON OF 2022 AND 2023

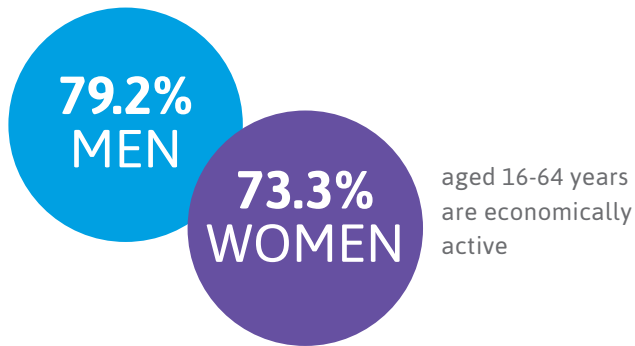
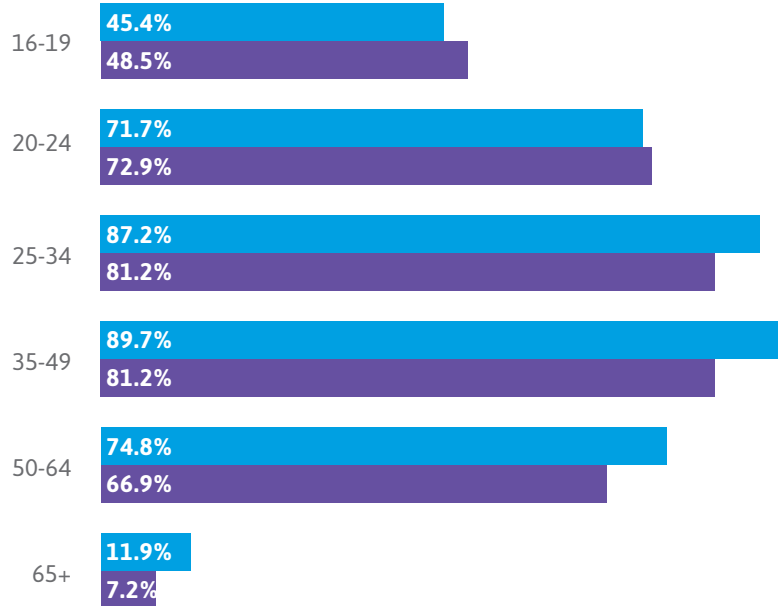
Local Authority	2022 ²	2023	Difference
UK	14.9%	14.3%	-0.6%
Wales	11.4%	11.8%	0.4%
Blaenau Gwent	17.2%	4.1%	-13.1%
Bridgend	15.4%	8.8%	-6.6%
Caerphilly	12.6%	15.9%	3.3%
Cardiff	11.8%	8.6%	-3.2%
Carmarthenshire	-1.6%	-3.8%	-2.2%
Ceredigion	-10.1%	-7.9%	2.2%
Conwy	-4.7%	10.2%	14.9%
Denbighshire	16.6%	16.5%	-0.1%
Flintshire	22.1%	22.5%	0.4%
Gwynedd	5.9%	5.2%	-0.7%
Isle of Anglesey	19.1%	24.6%	5.5%
Merthyr Tydfil	-7.8%	11.5%	19.3%
Monmouthshire	13.9%	16.3%	2.4%
Neath Port Talbot	29.8%	21.9%	-7.9%
Newport	12.3%	12.0%	-0.3%
Pembrokeshire	14.4%	15.3%	0.9%
Powys	13.9%	2.3%	-11.6%
Rhondda Cynon Taf	17.3%	8.9%	-8.4%
Swansea	1.1%	7.6%	6.5%
Torfaen	16.4%	16.1%	-0.3%
Vale of Glamorgan	15.5%	14.0%	-1.5%
Wrexham	8.7%	4.3%	-4.4%

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY BY GENDER AND AGE

Source: Annual Population Survey, July 2022-June 2023

● Male ● Female

AGE

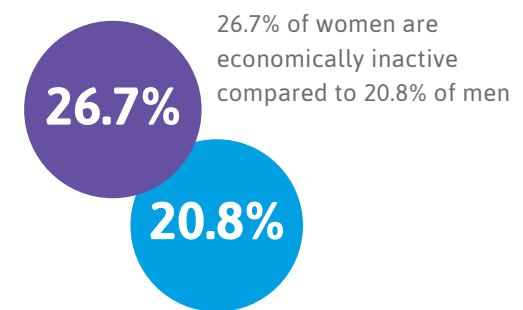
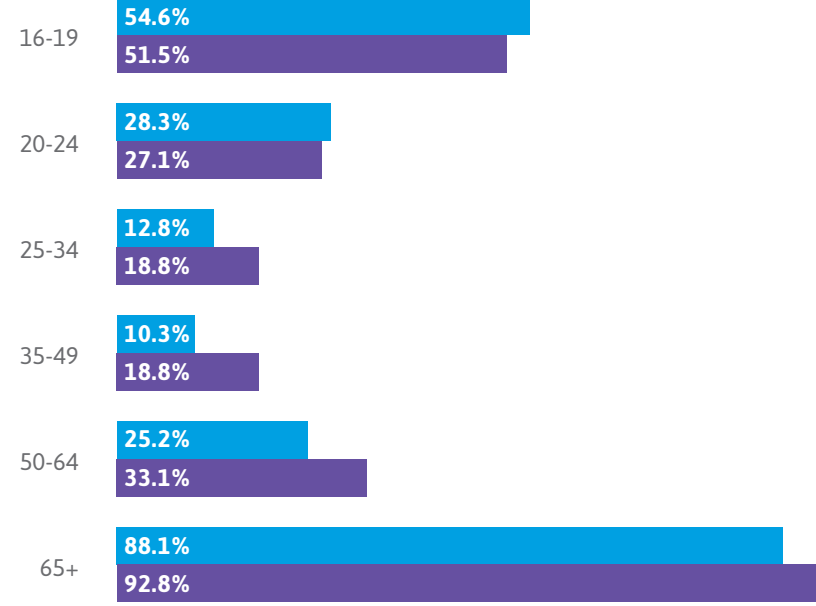


ECONOMIC INACTIVITY BY GENDER AND AGE

Source: Annual Population Survey, July 2022-June 2023

● Male ● Female

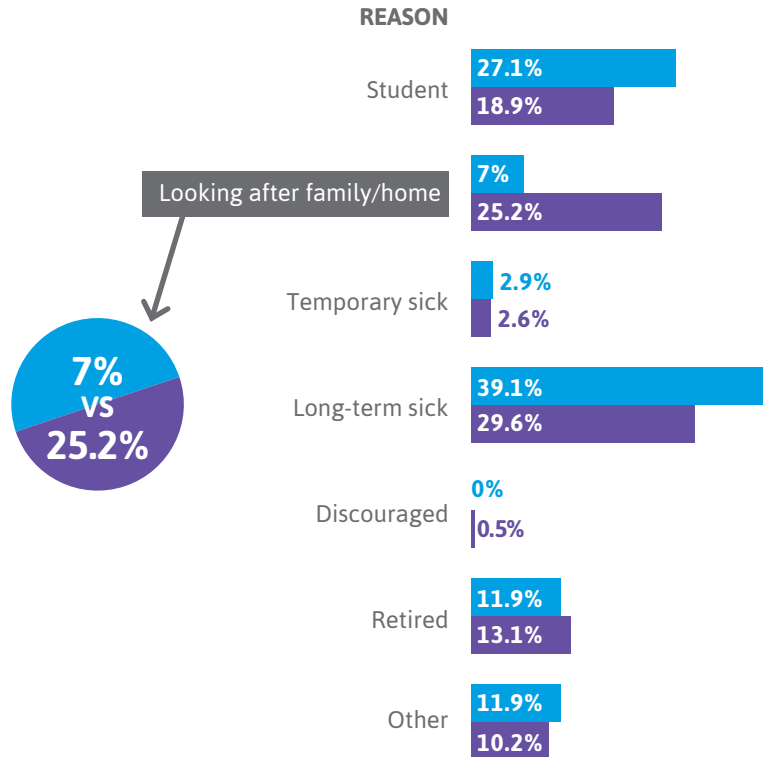
AGE



REASONS FOR ECONOMIC INACTIVITY BY GENDER

Source: Annual Population Survey, July 2022-June 2023

● Male ● Female

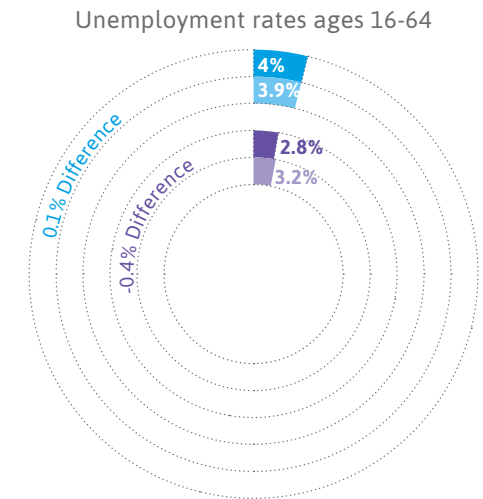
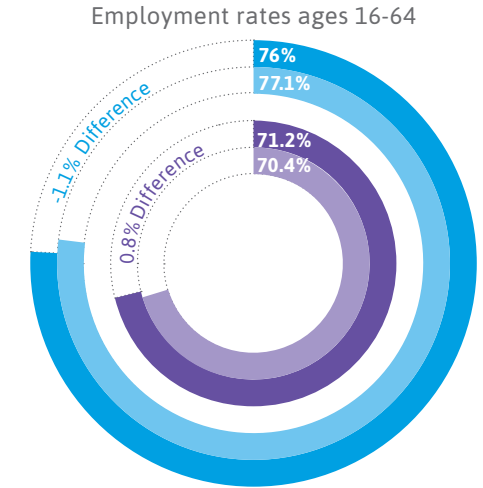
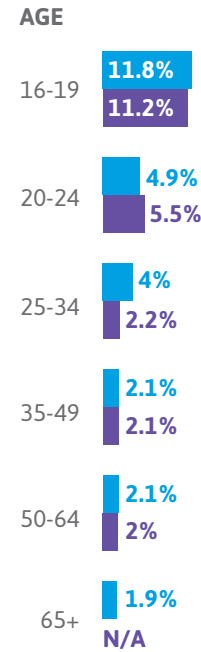


EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY GENDER AND AGE

Source: Annual Population Survey, July 2022-June 2023

● Male 2023 ● Male 2022 ● Female 2023 ● Female 2022



SELF-EMPLOYMENT

PROPORTION OF WOMEN AND MEN AGED 16-64 WHO ARE SELF-EMPLOYED

Source: Annual Population Survey, July 2021-June 2022 and July 2022-June 2023

● Male employed ● Male self-employed ● Female employed ● Female self-employed



WORKING PATTERNS

PROPORTION OF WOMEN AND MEN AGED 16-64 WHO ARE WORKING PART-TIME

Source: Annual Population Survey, July 2021-June 2022 and July 2022-June 2023

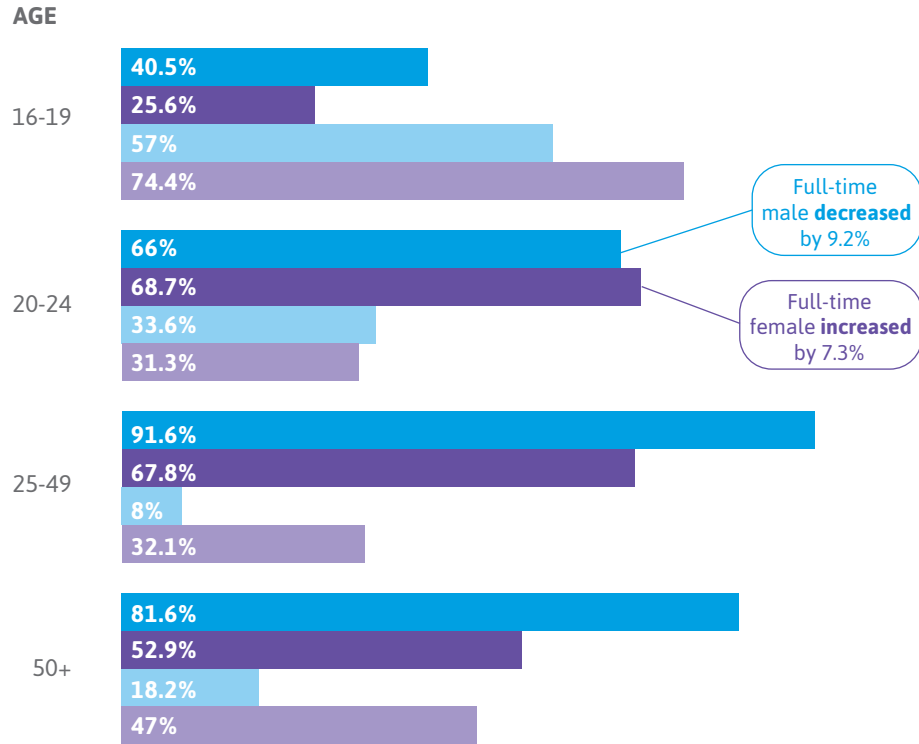
● Male full-time ● Male part-time ● Female full-time ● Female part-time



WORKING PATTERNS BY AGE

Source: Annual Population Survey, July 2022-June 2023

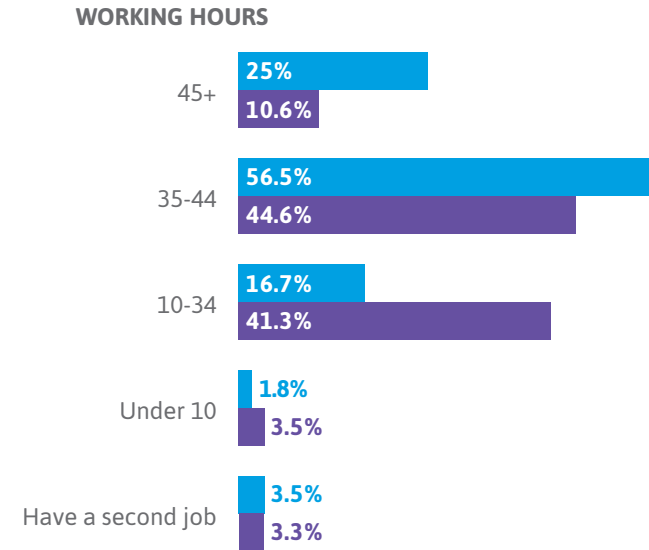
● Male full-time ● Female full-time ● Male part-time ● Female part-time



WORKING PATTERNS BY HOURS

Source: Annual Population Survey, July 2022-June 2023

● Male ● Female



WOMEN REPRESENTED

Diverse and equal representation is a key feature of a healthy democracy. Decision-makers need to reflect the population they serve, so that their work is informed by different perspectives, including those of marginalised communities. In 2003, Wales was the first legislature in the world to achieve 50% representation for women. But it missed the mark in every election since, and the representation of women who experience intersecting discrimination has remained extremely limited.

The last year presented a mixed picture with some landmark developments as well as setbacks. 2024 saw the appointment of Wales's first female First Minister Eluned Morgan MS, which is a milestone for women's representation in Wales. The UK General Election returned a record 47% of female Welsh MPs. This is significantly higher than the overall 40% female MPs elected to Westminster.

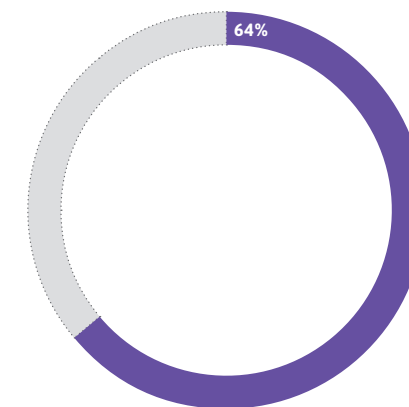
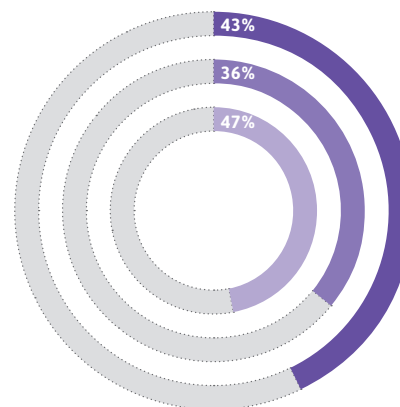
At Senedd level, women's representation remained unchanged at 43%, with only one woman from an ethnic minority background and only one woman openly identifying as LGBTQ+. As there are no up-to-date figures available for local government councillors, we have published the results from the 2022 election (36%), which are unlikely to have changed significantly. According to the

Local Government Candidates Survey 2022, 3% of elected candidates were from an ethnic minority background and 8% identified as LGBTQ+, but due to varying and low response rates, actual figures could differ substantially.³

After several reshuffles, as of September 2024, 64% of Welsh Government Cabinet members were women, which is the same as last year's figure. In terms of local government leadership, the proportion of female Chief Executives remained stable at 23% while the number of female local government leaders halved to a puny 9%.

As data challenges on public appointments have still not been resolved, the most recent figures that are publicly available remain those for 2021/22, which have again been reproduced in this report. Availability of data for other protected characteristics and intersectionality, including the representation of disabled women, remains an issue across the board.

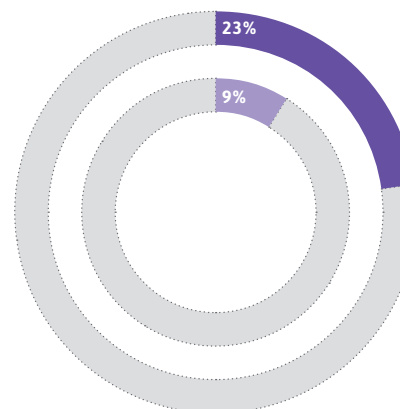
REPRESENTATION IN WELSH POLITICS



- Women MSs
- Women Councillors
- Women Welsh MPs

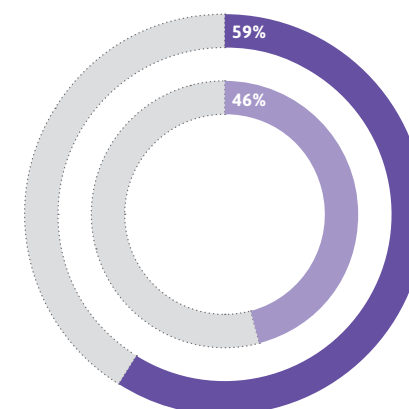
- Welsh Government Cabinet

LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT



- Women Council Chief Executives
- Women Council Leaders

PUBLIC LIFE



- Women appointments
- Women reappointments

BUSINESS AND THE WORKPLACE

Gender segregation across different sectors and occupations remains a key driver of the gender pay gap in Wales. At the sector level, we saw small improvements in some high-paying industries traditionally dominated by men. But alongside these, there has been a worrying rise in the proportion of women employed in the lowest-paying sectors. This development is particularly concerning as we are in the process of a major transition towards a green economy. It suggests that women will be left behind in this process unless governments, businesses and educators take decisive action to ensure that women participate at all levels.

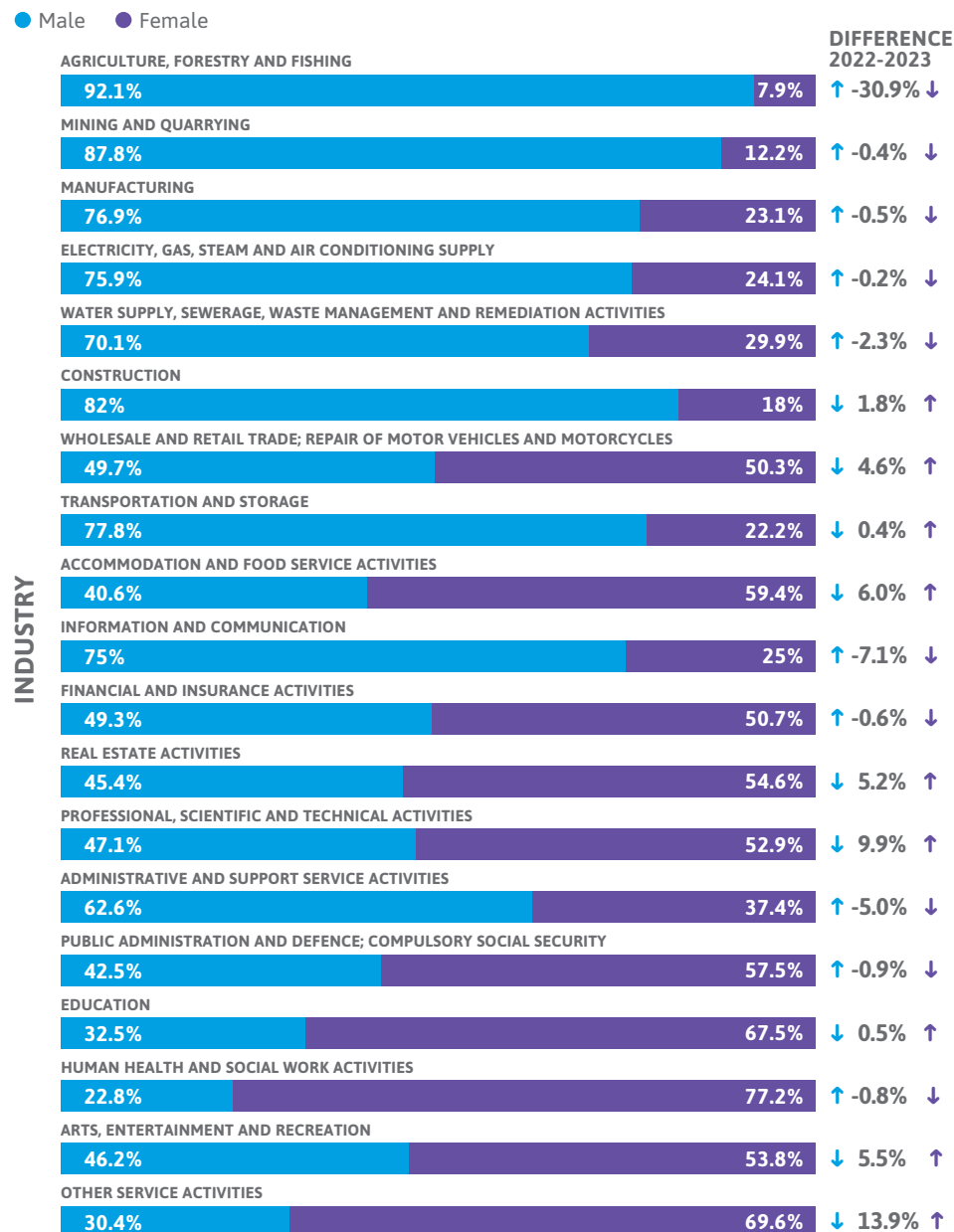
The most gender-segregated sectors in 2023 were agriculture, mining and construction. Gaps in transport and health have marginally closed. While figures for the agriculture sector tend to be volatile, the 30.9% decrease in women working in this sector is remarkable and requires further investigation. On the positive side, last year brought a 9.9% increase of women working in professional, scientific and technical activities, which is one of the higher-paying sectors. But at the same time, representation in other high-paid, male-dominated sectors like finance and electricity has marginally reduced, with a notable 7.1% reduction in information and

communication. Most worryingly, last year saw significant growth in the proportion of women working in some of the lowest-paying sectors, including other service activities (13.9%), accommodation and food (6%) and wholesale and retail (4.6%).

Despite limited progress, women remain underrepresented as business leaders and in senior positions. They continue to make up less than 40% of managers, directors and senior officials. Positively, the proportion of women-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Wales increased by 5%, bringing the percentage of women business leaders in Wales to 19%. While this is slightly above the overall figure for the UK (18%), it is still a long way off parity.

GENDER BALANCE IN WELSH SECTORS

Source: Workforce jobs by industry (SIC 2007) and sex, June 2023



PROPORTION OF WOMEN AND MEN WORKING IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONS

Source: Annual Population Survey, July 2022-June 2023

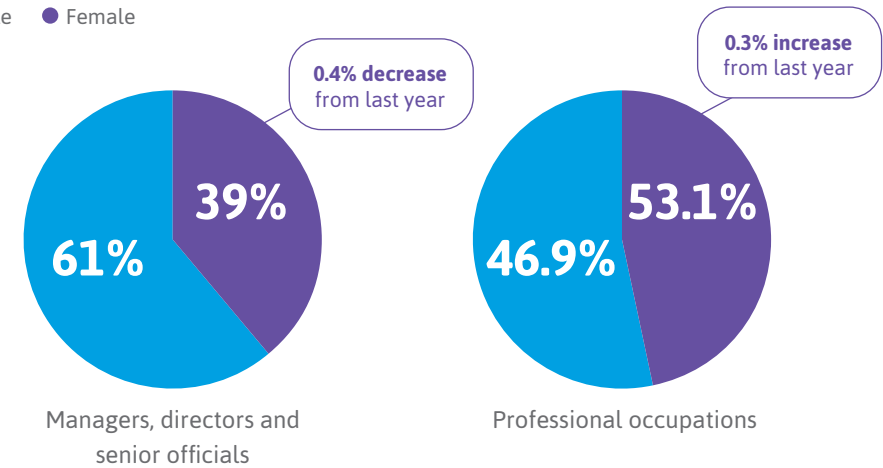
● Male ● Female

OCCUPATIONS	Male	Female	DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 2022-2023
Managers, directors and senior officials	11.2%	7.8%	↑ 0.4% ↑ 0.1%
Professional occupations	20.4%	24.9%	↓ -0.8% ↑ 0.6%
Associate prof & tech occupations	14.2%	14.1%	↑ 0.4% ↑ 0.9%
Administrative and secretarial occupations	5%	14.4%	↓ -0.3% ↑ 1.1%
Skilled trades occupations	17%	2.9%	↓ -1.3% ↓ -0.2%
Caring, leisure and other service occupations	3.9%	15.1%	↓ -0.4% ↓ -1.9%
Sales and customer service occupations	5.1%	8.6%	↓ -0.1% ↓ -0.7%
Process, plant and machine operatives	10.9%	1.8%	↓ -0.7% ↓ -0.2%
Elementary occupations	11.6%	10.2%	↑ 1.1% ↑ 0.7%

PROPORTION OF WOMEN AND MEN WORKING IN SENIOR AND PROFESSIONAL ROLES

Source: Annual Population Survey, July 2022-June 2023

● Male ● Female



BUSINESS LEADERS

Source: Longitudinal Small Business Survey 2022



WOMEN AT RISK

Due to their unequal social and economic position, women are at an increased risk of poverty and financial hardship, as well as gender-based abuse, harassment and violence.

In the context of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV), finding robust, comparable data remains especially challenging. Data which is collected and published annually is largely based on police records. It only sheds lights on some aspects of the abuse, harassment and violence that women are subjected to on a day-to-day basis. Data based on police records is also not generally disaggregated for Wales. Most importantly, due to the scale of under-reporting – according to Rape Crisis England and Wales, five out of six women who are raped do not report it to the police – it is also woefully incomplete. In line with previous State of the Nation reports, this section presents the most up-to-date data available to help demonstrate the scale and impact of VAWDASV, even if that means that many figures relate to England and Wales and year-on-year comparison is not always possible.

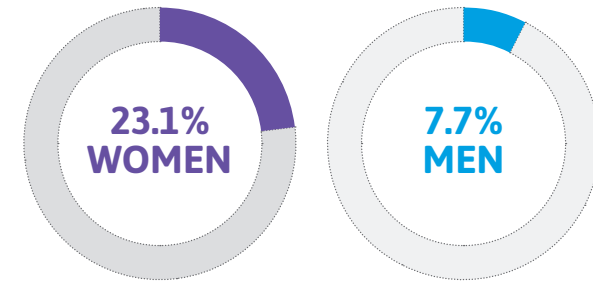
Annually published police records, with all the caveats mentioned above, show a very slim reduction in the proportion of reported sexual violence and domestic

abuse-related crime against women for England and Wales. Overall figures remain shockingly high, with around three quarters of domestic abuse related offences and over 80% of sexual assault cases being committed against women. Against the backdrop of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, it is also notable that community-based services in Wales saw a 28% increase of reported financial abuse.

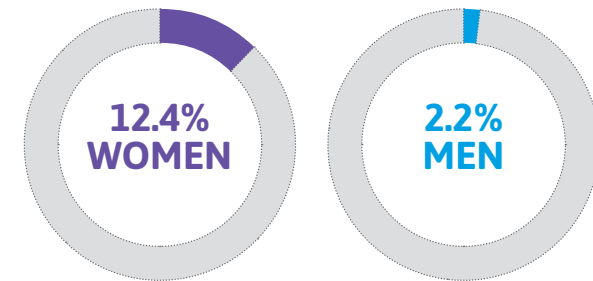
Specialist services in Wales remain under unprecedented pressure. 70% of Welsh Women's Aid member services saw an increase in demand, at the same time as grappling with the impact of rising costs, regulatory changes and an increasingly competitive, short-term funding landscape. Smaller 'by-and-for' services, which provide crucial support to women from marginalised communities, are often hardest hit by this. The need for sustainable funding, alongside a committed approach to eradicate the root causes of VAWDASV at all levels of society, remains as pressing as ever.

HARASSMENT AND SAFETY (ENGLAND AND WALES)

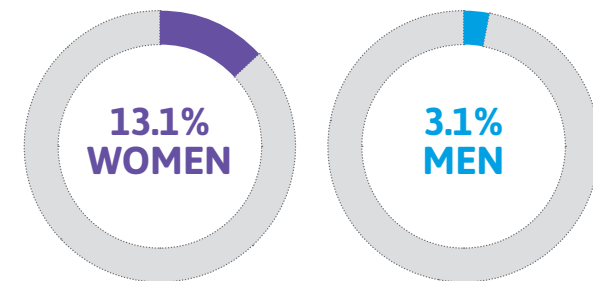
Source: ONS, Experiences of harassment prevalence and nature tables, England and Wales, March 2023, Table 3



Aged 16-24 experienced sexual harassment in the last 12 months



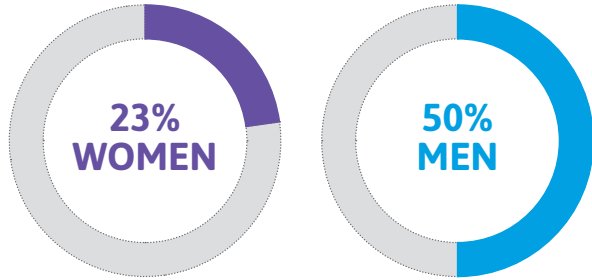
Aged 16-24 experienced unwanted touching



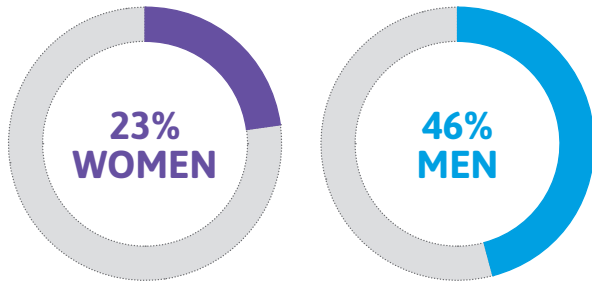
Aged 16-24 experienced inappropriate sexual jokes, comments or gestures

SAFETY IN PUBLIC PLACES

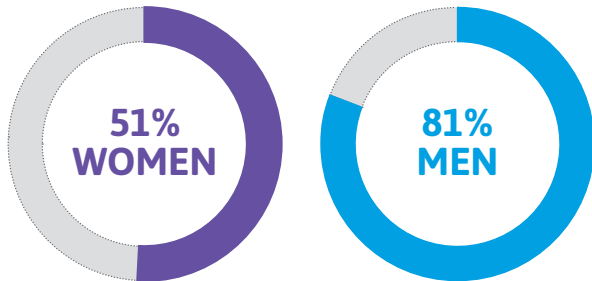
Source: National Survey for Wales, 2022



Feel safe in their local area after dark



Feel very safe after dark on public transport

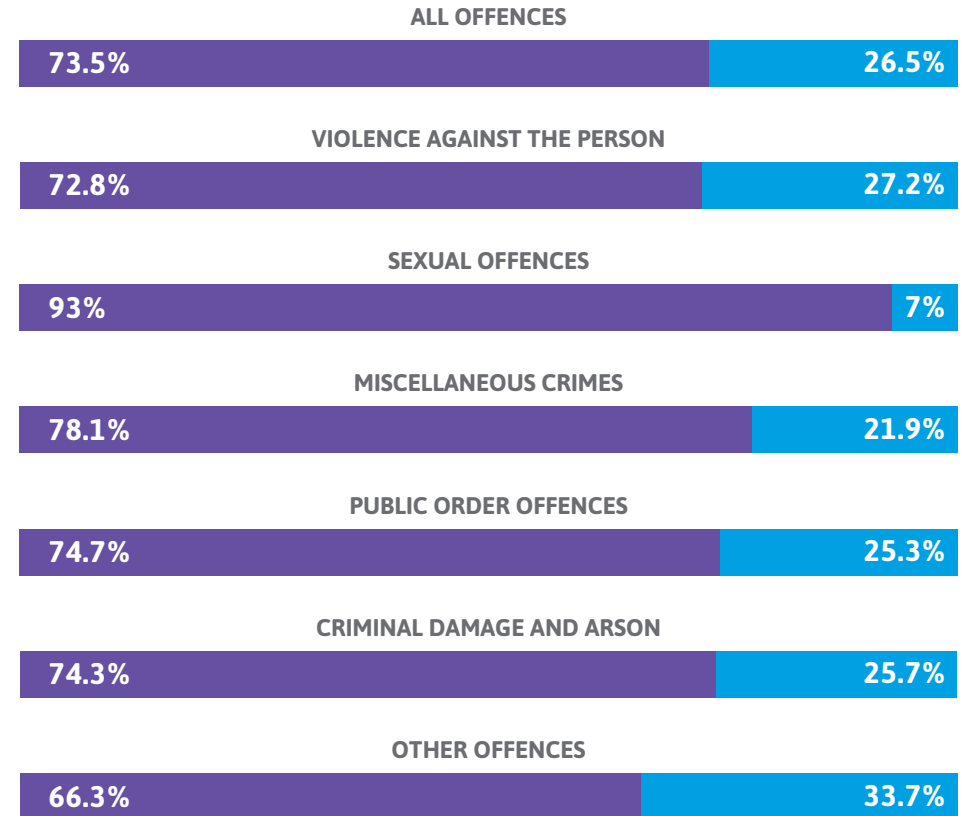


Feel safe (at home, walking in the local area, travelling)

PROPORTION OF DOMESTIC ABUSE-RELATED CRIMES RECORDED BY THE POLICE (ENGLAND AND WALES)

Source: ONS, Domestic Abuse Prevalence and Victim Characteristics, Appendix Tables, March 2023, Table 15

● Male ● Female



PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Source: ONS, Domestic Abuse Prevalence and Victim Characteristics, Appendix Tables, March 2023, Table 8, 11 and 15

2023



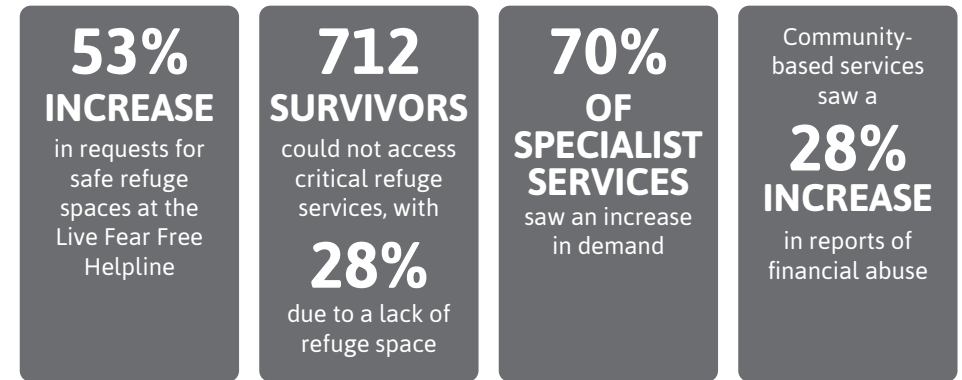
SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Source: ONS, Crime in England and Wales: Appendix Tables, March 2023, Table A4



DEMAND ON REFUGE, COMMUNITY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT SERVICES IN WALES

Source: Welsh Women's Aid State of the Sector Report 2023-24



LIVE FEAR FREE HELPLINE 0808 80 10 800 (CALL/TEXT)

DATA ACROSS ENGLAND AND WALES SHOWS THAT:



POVERTY

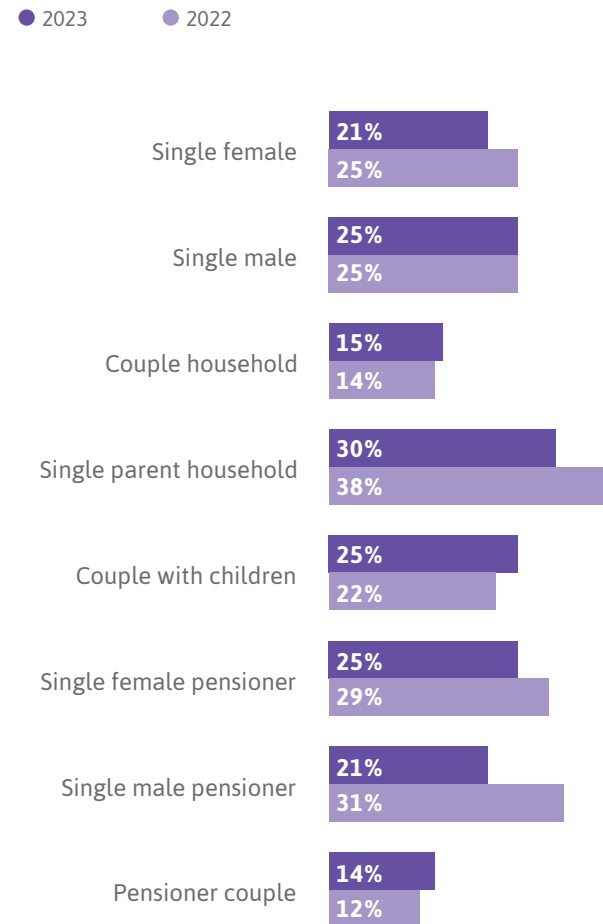
Women’s unequal position in the labour market makes them more vulnerable to poverty. While overall levels of relative income poverty in Wales were slightly below England (22%) for the first time in a decade, they remained stubbornly high at 21%. The reduction of poverty levels for single parent households (by 8%), single females (by 4%) and single female pensioners (by 4%) are encouraging. But single parents, the vast majority of whom are women, continued to face the highest risk of all household types, with almost one in three experiencing relative income poverty.

Poverty levels for households relying only on part-time work remained at almost a third (30%), which is significant as women continue to be over 2.5 times more likely than men to be working part-time.

Measured at a household level, these figures are unlikely to represent the full extent of women’s poverty. Resources between heterosexual couples may not be shared equally, especially as women tend to have less access to an independent income due to being second earners or primary carers. As the ‘shock absorbers of poverty’, mothers also often forego essentials to provide for their children.⁸

RELATIVE INCOME POVERTY BY FAMILY TYPE

Source: Stats Wales, HBAI, 2023: People in relative poverty by family type 2019-20 to 2021-22 and 2020-21 to 2022-23

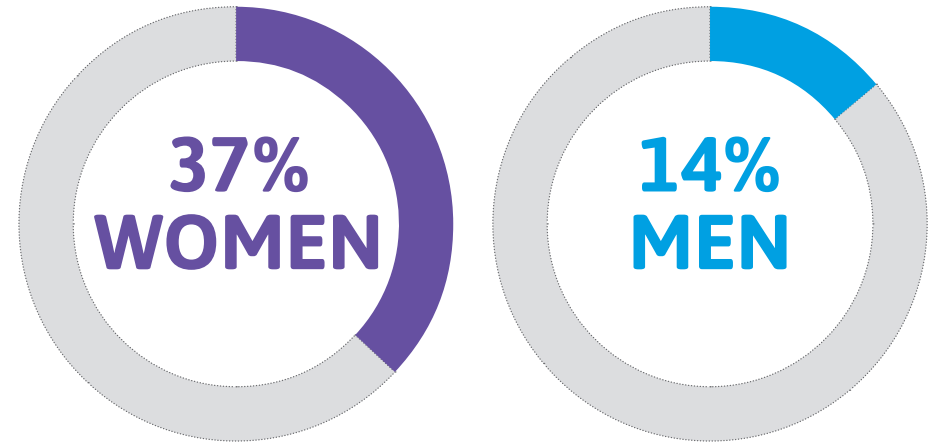
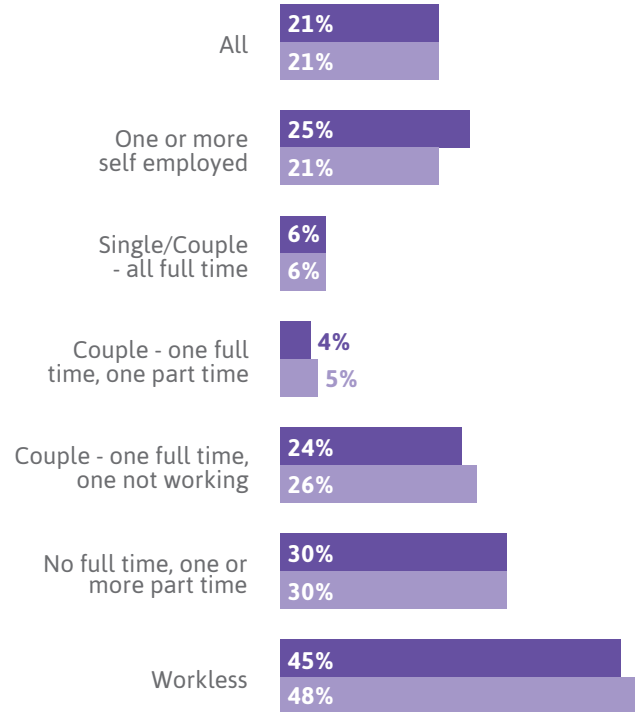


WORKING PATTERNS AND POVERTY

Source: Stats Wales, HBAI, 2023: People in relative poverty by family type 2019-20 to 2021-22 and 2020-21 to 2022-23

● 2023

● 2022



IN WALES ARE WORKING PART-TIME



OF HOUSEHOLDS
IN WALES ARE
LIVING IN
RELATIVE INCOME
POVERTY

SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE REFORM

The social security system should provide a vital safety net for people who find themselves out of work or in financial difficulty. The fact that workless households remain at the highest risk of poverty (45%) demonstrates an ongoing failure to achieve this.

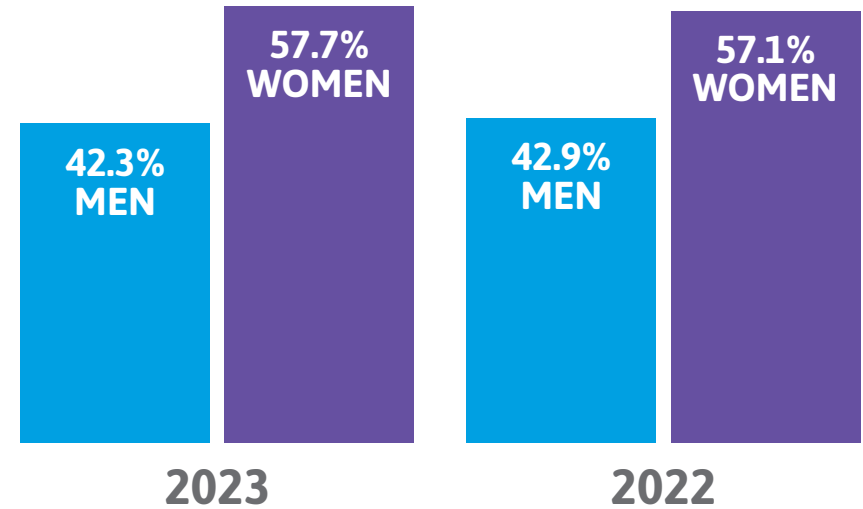
Universal Credit is the main source of support for those who are out of work, as well as those whose income does not provide enough to live on. Most Universal Credit claimants in Wales are women and this figure increased marginally to 58%. The percentage of Universal Credit claimants who are in work saw a small reduction for both men and women. Still, women remain more likely than men to have to rely on Universal Credit despite having a job, and the gender gap for in-work claimants slightly increased. This reflects the fact that, due to complex factors including unequal caring responsibilities, women continue to work fewer hours and are often paid a lower hourly rate than men.

Universal Credit's limitations in protecting women from poverty and supporting them to become financially independent are well-documented.⁹ These patterns will be further entrenched as the new UK Labour Government refused to remove the much-criticised two-child limit and is yet to commit to scrapping its predecessor's plans for increased benefits conditionality.

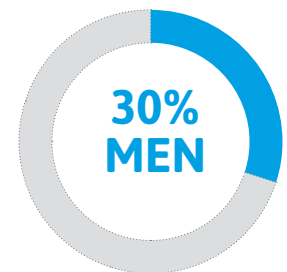
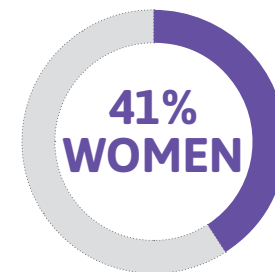
UNIVERSAL CREDIT CLAIMANTS BY GENDER

Source: DWP, September 2022-23, via Stat-Xplore

● Male ● Female



of Universal Credit claimants in Wales are women



Universal Credit claimants in Wales are in work

CONCLUSION

2023 saw another challenging year for gender equality. While the grip of inflation slowly eased, and some figures improved, the ripple effects on women were palpable across the different areas covered in this report. Budgetary pressures in 2023 resulted in real-term reductions to public services and deep cuts to the childcare and equality and human rights budget, all of which disproportionately impact women.

While the commitment to equality and social justice in Wales has traditionally been strong, this must not be deprioritised as the going gets tough. Government, business and civil society must renew their focus to turn words into action. Investments in public services, including childcare, and in the long-term, preventative progress on equality and human rights must be reprioritised. Businesses must ensure equitable access to fairly paid employment through implementing flexible working models, supporting those with caring responsibilities and eradicating workplace harassment and discrimination. At civil society level, we must challenge hate and misinformation, stand in solidarity when navigating the incredibly challenging funding landscape, and champion the voices of those who are most marginalised in our society.

Going forward, we need a renewed focus and commitment to make the most of the opportunities that may present themselves. The election of a UK Labour Government promises a more collaborative intergovernmental relationship, potentially making it easier for the Welsh Government to deliver on aligned policy objectives, such as reducing in-work poverty and pay gaps, and tackling gender-based violence, harassment and abuse. While the prospect of a new fiscal framework for Wales is on the horizon, the interim budgetary context will remain challenging. The UK Government's commitment to balance the books and limit debts means we are unlikely to see major investments, with a corresponding rise in Barnett consequentials, for some time.

The Welsh Government's commitment to equality has translated into tangible plans, including the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and the LGBTQ+ Action Plan. Work is also underway for an updated disability action framework and on outstanding and long-term actions from the Gender Equality Review. The draft Strategic Equality Plan endeavours to bring these various plans together behind three principles: mainstreaming equality, adopting an intersectional approach, and addressing the implementation gap. While

the commitment to these principles is music to the ears of equality campaigners, this is an ambitious task, and the proof will be in the pudding.

With the expiration of the Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Action Plan in 2023, it is imperative that a revised action plan for gender equality is developed to set out ambitious actions for the next three to five years. Based on the experience of other action plans published since, this plan should be accompanied by a robust evaluation framework to ensure measurable progress that will ultimately be reflected in the data presented in State of the Nation.

ENDNOTES

¹ Crenshaw, K. (1989), Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics, University of Chicago Legal Forum 139. Available at: https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/3007/

² Welsh Government (2023), Local Government Candidates Survey: 2022, <https://www.gov.wales/local-government-candidates-survey-2022>

³ Rape Crisis England and Wales, Rape and Sexual Assault Statistics, <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/statistics-sexual-violence/>

⁴ Rape Crisis England and Wales, Rape and Sexual Assault Statistics, <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/statistics-sexual-violence/>

⁵ ONS (2023), Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2023, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2023>

⁶ Home Office (2023), Crime outcomes in England and Wales 2022 to 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023>

⁷ Rape Crisis England and Wales, Rape and Sexual Assault Statistics, <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/statistics-sexual-violence/>

⁸ UK Women's Budget Group (2022), The gendered impact of the cost-of-living crisis, <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/The-gendered-impact-of-the-cost-of-living-crisis.pdf>

⁹ Wales Women's Budget Group (2023), Far From a Vital Safety Net: Benefit Conditionality, Sanctions and Women in Wales, <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Far-From-a-Vital-Safety-Net-Benefit-Conditionality-Sanctions-and-Women-in-Wales.pdf>