INVISIBLE WOMEN

APPG on Sex Equality
June 2018
INTRODUCTION

Too often, women remain treated as a homogenous group by researchers and policymakers, with the assumption of a single female experience. However, this one size-fits all approach means there are, in effect, millions of invisible women, who are not being seen or heard by policymakers.

Factors such as race, faith, ethnicity, age, disability, sexuality, location and employment status can combine with gender to create distinct and particularly troubling experiences of discrimination and inequality - but this intersectionality is still largely being overlooked. As a result, valuable insight into the different experiences of women is often being lost.

That is why the APPG on Sex Equality decided to focus its work on understanding what can be done by government to take a more effective approach to understanding the discrimination, inequality and exclusion that too many women in the UK continue to face – especially when it comes to accessing work.

The APPG, supported by the Fawcett Society and Young Women’s Trust, organised four evidence sessions in Parliament from 2016-17, which form the basis of this report. These covered women who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), wellbeing, the experience of work and the collection and availability of data.

This short report presents the key findings from those sessions. We have also proposed a way forward to address gender inequality in a more sophisticated way, which requires policymakers to have access to better data, review policies to ensure they meet the needs of all women and work with a diverse range of women when developing policies and designing services.

We have therefore recommended that:

1) **We need data to see her:** To fully understand the experiences of “invisible women” we need additional data that allows for comparisons between different groups of women. This could be achieved by better linkages between datasets and data sharing between public services. Government should resource the creation of intersectional pay gap data as a priority. But existing data should also be analysed and published in a way that allows for better understanding of the experiences of distinct groups of women.

2) **We need policy to see her:** The Government should evaluate and review existing legislation and policy to ensure it takes a joined up view of the interaction between gender and other protected characteristics. In particular, the APPG draws attention to the need for a more intersectional approach to closing the gender pay gap, apprenticeship recruitment, childcare provision, and industrial strategy.

3) **We need the law to see her:** Make it possible to bring a discrimination claim based on an individual’s true identity, by reviewing and then implementing Section 14 of the Equality Act 2010.

4) **We need services to see her:** Many public services do not reflect the needs and experiences of intended service users. This risks excluding women with multiple characteristics from much-needed support. This could be overcome by more sensitive public service design. The APPG advocates greater efforts to involve beneficiaries in service design in order to make them more responsive to the needs and experiences of diverse groups. In particular, the APPG urges work to improve mental health and employment services.
COLLECTING THE DATA

Making Women Visible: The need for high quality intersectional data

One of the most significant problems facing research into women’s inequality is the lack of data. The lack of evidence on the inequality specific groups face frequently limits the public debate on women’s inequality.

In practice, this often means the experiences of mainly white British women are generalised to be representative of all women. Yet the limited data we do have shows that the experiences of women from ethnic and religious minorities, disabled women, LBT women, and women of different ages and backgrounds differ widely.

This section highlights how some of these differences play out in the experiences and outcomes of women with different characteristics. It also builds on evidence presented throughout the inquiry into current data gaps. Subsequent sections examine how policy has failed to properly address these issues.

Making Women Visible: Age

Young women are more likely to be economically inactive.

Data from the latest ONS Labour Market Statistical bulletin demonstrates that women aged 16-17 (65%) and 18-24 (32%) are more likely to be economically inactive than women in older age bands (25-49 year olds have an inactivity rate of 18%). A lack of focus on the different experiences of young women in relation to employment means that policy responses lack the necessary sophistication to meet the unique needs of young women and the additional barriers they face.

The APPG heard from Professor Sue Maguire from the University of Bath who presented evidence from a recent report she has completed with Young Women’s Trust. This study examined the reasons behind young people’s economic status with a particular focus on young women who were not in education employment and training (NEET) and who were Economically Inactive. The term “NEET” usually refers to young people aged 16-24 who are not currently studying or in employment. There are two sub categories of NEET - economically active (EA) and economically inactive (EI).

EA refers to those people who are actively seeking work and are able to start work more or less immediately. They will often be claiming out of work benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance and will have conditions attached to their benefits related their job search.

The EI category includes those who are unable to start work immediately. This may be due to caring responsibilities, health issues or a lack of available opportunities. This group may be receiving benefits such as Employment Support Allowance for which there are fewer job seeking conditions, although conditionality has increased for such benefits in recent years. This group can be excluded from the unemployment statistics and as such are often missing from interventions intended to get people into work. Yet in the last ten years there have, at any given time, been an average of more than 60,000 more young women aged 16-24 in this category than there have been young men. Women in this group are often assumed to not want to work - they may not be accessing services, and are frequently isolated with limited access to support.

1 ONS (2018), Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity by age group (seasonally adjusted) https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/unemployment/datasets/youngeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneettable1
2 Ibid.
These factors already mean that young women NEET are in many cases hidden because of the focus on young people as a homogenous category and a failure to understand the challenges facing economically inactive young women in particular. These factors are exacerbated still further for ethnic minority young women. Analysis of labour market statistics in 2016 showed that Pakistani and Bangladeshi young women had the highest percentage who were NEET (18.4% and 17.3% respectively), in line with these groups having high unemployment rates across all ages. In contrast, no Chinese women were recorded as NEET, while 6.6% of Indian women, 7.1% from Other Asian backgrounds and 12.6 % of young White women were NEET.³

**Older women and younger face a larger pay gap**

Existing data makes clear that the size of the gender pay gap varies significantly across the life course. Whilst the median gender pay gap for women in full-time work is 9.5%, it rises to 16% for women in their fifties.⁴ It is often argued that there is no longer a pay gap for younger women but the ONS’ statistics indicate that the picture is more complicated: whilst the gap is 3% for those aged 18-21 and just under 1% for those in their twenties it is much higher for under 18s at 9.5%.⁵ There is also concern about the persistent gender pay gap amongst apprenticeships, which is a particular issue for younger women. The latest apprenticeship pay survey published in July 2017 shows that for level 2 and 3 apprenticeships women earn an average of £6.85 compared to the £7.10 average for men.⁶

Disabled women experience a further wage penalty relative to non-disabled women, which the EHRC found was an additional 7% across the period from 1997-2014.⁷ Disabled people are also more likely to be out of work.

Different cohorts and age groups face particular challenges in the workplace, from the lower National Minimum Wage rates for younger workers creating greater inequality, to the cumulative impact of inequality over the life course for older women.

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³ Young Women’s Trust (2016), Young, Female and Forgotten
⁴ ONS (2016), ASHE provisional results, table 6.6a https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/agegroupashetable6
⁵ Ibid.
Making Women Visible: Race and faith

Ethnic minority women and women of religious minority groups face higher gender pay gaps

The gender pay gaps faced by ethnic minority women vary significantly. Fawcett Society research produced with Professor Yaojun Li of the University of Manchester found that taking white British men as the starting point for comparison the gaps by ethnicity range from 20% for Black African women to a reversed pay gap of -6% for Chinese women (although Chinese women still earn 11.5% less than their male counterparts).8

Despite this variation official ONS statistics do not provide information by ethnicity or religion and public debate often focuses on the headline figures.9

![Fig. 1 - Full-Time Gender Pay Gap with White British Men by Ethnicity (2010s)](image)

Similarly, women of different religious groups experience varying pay gaps. Although there is some correlation with ethnicity, religious groups do not map neatly onto ethnic groups and it is important to recognise religion or belief as a distinct phenomenon.

Professor Li presented evidence to the APPG that controlling for the effects of age, marital status, health, children, hours, education and occupational position there are significant variations in pay by religion or belief. For instance, on average White Christian women earn £386 a week, compared to £456 for Hindu women but £392 for Sikh women.10

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8 Prof. Yaojun Li and Anthony Breach (2017) Gender Pay Gap by Ethnicity in Britain – Briefing Fawcett Society https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=f31d6adc-9e0e-4bfe-a3df-3e85605ee4a9
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
The overall gender pay gap is caused by a combination of factors: the unequal impact of caring roles and a lack of support for mothers’ career progression; a divided labour market in terms of skills and occupational segregation of women into more low-paid work; outright discrimination against women; and the over-representation of men at the top of the pay scale and women at the bottom. All of these factors, alongside varying kinds and degrees of direct and indirect discrimination, and cultural norms, in turn shape the different gender pay gaps for different ethnic and religious groups.

Although this lies outside the scope of this evidence, it is important to note just because a group enjoys high average pay does not mean that pay equality has been achieved. Highly qualified and skilled groups such as Indian women might still be being underpaid relative to their skills even if they are highly paid, if they are experiencing discrimination or occupational segregation.

**Ethnic minority women have different experiences of public services**

Similarly, ethnicity has been found to be a factor in determining the propensity to claim benefits on the part of women classed as “economically inactive”. A study of the participation of women in the labour market in Leicester found that the relatively large number of Asian women who were economically inactive or unemployed did not access the benefit system. This is turn reduces their visibility to the welfare state, as they are less likely to appear on the radar of local government. One of the few earlier studies of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in the UK suggested that, while young women aspired to remain economically active after getting married, this was something which often had to be negotiated with their husband and mother-in-law.

The complexity of these vastly different experiences means that simplistic approaches that either only tackle racial inequality, sex inequality or even particular combinations of the two run the risk of excluding large numbers of women. Government strategies to tackle racial inequality in Britain must take into account not just women’s inequality, but the different inequalities different groups of women face.

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11 Prof. Yaojun Li, APPG on Sex Equality, Evidence Session 3 - The Experience of Employment
12 See Fawcett’s work on the gender pay gap: www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/policy-research/the-gender-pay-gap/
13 Beatty, Gore and Powell (2010), Participation of Women in the Labour Market in Leicester, Centre for Regional Social and Economic Research
14 Dale (2008), Pakistani and Bangladeshi Women’s Labour Market Participation, Centre for Census and Survey Research, University of Manchester
Making Women Visible: Rural Women

One of the inequalities that emerged during the inquiry was the experience of rural women, a group of primarily white and Christian women who comprised 17% of the female population at the time of the 2011 Census. Although often privileged on some axes, their economic opportunities differ through a combination of their gender and their geography.

The APPG heard from Professor Jo Little of the University of Exeter about the changing experiences of rural women. Her evidence described how historically rural women were less likely to be engaged in paid work than non-rural women, but that gap has closed in recent years and according to 2011 Census data 57% of all 16 to 74-year-old urban women are employed compared with 59.4% of rural women.

However, Prof Little described how they are still more likely to be in low paid and insecure work than women in urban areas. Slightly more rural women are employed part-time than urban women, and far more are self-employed (8.8% compared with 5.5% in urban areas). Seasonality, and a mismatch between skill levels and available opportunities, were also described as contributing to this picture.

The publicly available data on rural employment and earnings from DEFRA’s ‘Statistical Digest of Rural England’ monthly publications is up-to-date, but does not disaggregate by gender or other characteristics – meaning that different rural women’s employment experiences are not surfaced at all in timely data.

Making Women Visible: Mental health

The APPG heard evidence about mental health inequalities which demonstrated significant differences in the experience of mental ill health along gender lines, with women more likely to report some mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression. These differences were even more acute for BAME women who experienced much higher rates of mental ill-health both in comparison to other women and BAME men.

Sally McManus presented evidence from the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Study that demonstrated that common mental disorders were more prevalent amongst women. 1 in 8 men have a common mental disorder at any point of time compared to 1 in 5 women.

These trends are supported by a wider body of evidence. Young Women’s Trust’s polling of 4,000 young people showed that young women were more likely to report mental ill health. 45% of young women said they were worried about mental health compared to 36% of young men. This was particularly true for women from the poorest socio-economic groups - 50% of young women from the DE groupings reported worries about mental health. Similarly, The Princes Trust Youth index highlighted that women (31%) were more likely to report that they did not feel in control of their lives than men (26%).

16 Census 2011 data, Economic Activity by Sex and Urban/Rural Classification, accessed via nomisweb.co.uk
18 NatCen (2016), Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Study
19 Ibid.
20 Young Women’s Trust (2017), Worrying Times
21 Princes Trust 2017, Youth Index
Furthermore, the APPG was told that the prevalence of mental disorders in men has remained static since the year 2000 but has been increasing amongst women.\textsuperscript{22} In the wider context of emotional wellbeing, Girlguiding research also showed this apparent worsening of women and girls’ situation. Their Girls Attitudes Survey showed that the proportion of women who reported that they are happy has fallen from 35\% in 2011 to 27\% in 2016.\textsuperscript{23} This was supported by the Princes Trust data that showed that confidence and happiness in relation to emotional health has dropped significantly in recent years.\textsuperscript{24}

Importantly the APPG also heard evidence that mental health outcomes were often much worse for BAME women. Sally McManus gave evidence that 29\% of Black/Black British women and 24\% of Asian/Asian British women suffered from a common mental disorder compared to 21\% of White/White British Women. Further analysis and research has indicated that Asian women also suffered from higher levels of anxiety and depression (63.5\% compared to 28.5\% of white women).\textsuperscript{25}

Farah Elahi from Runnymede also told the APPG that experience of hate crime and micro aggressions against ethnic minority women had significant impacts on their mental health. Ethnic minority women were three time more likely to suffer depression after an incident of verbal abuse. This increased to five times more likely for women who had suffered a physical attack.\textsuperscript{26}

**Making Women Visible: The limitations of current data**

The above examples highlight just some of the many ways in which women with distinct characteristics have different experiences of inequality. Current data breakdowns do not show the picture beyond gender: sexuality, disability, ethnicity and age are all overlooked. However, publicly available evidence that allows for further analysis of these inequalities is often lacking. This means that policy is often not made for or with the women who experience the sharpest inequalities.

One such example of the limitations of existing data was presented by Chris Payne, Senior Research officer at the ONS. Chris spoke about the ONS’ Household Satellite Account, which calculates the unpaid production and labour carried out by households, including childcare, adult social care, cooking, transport, chores, clothing, and volunteering. The gender ratio of the value of unpaid childcare provided by parents in the home under this study, as reported publicly after the APPG’s session, is 67:33 mothers to fathers at pre-school age and 72:28 above pre-school age.\textsuperscript{27} Chris noted that the top-level figures from those reports do not show how varied women’s experiences were depending on other characteristics. A break down by age, race, religions, and other characteristics may create a different picture.

While specific data sets such as the Census are rich enough to allow for truly intersectional analysis, these are uncommon, or in the case of the Census, only available once every decade – too infrequently to keep ethnic and religious minorities women’s issues on the policy agenda.

Other data sets face technical and policy barriers to an intersectional analysis. In his evidence to the APPG, David Freeman, Deputy Director of the ONS’ Labour Market and Households Division, stated that while the annual gender pay gap’s source, the Annual Survey Hours and Earnings (ASHE), is a rich data set in terms of occupations and geographic data, it currently lacks data on race and religion. This is due to it being calculated from PAYE tax data and a survey of businesses, neither of which collect information on ethnicity and faith.

\textsuperscript{22} Evidence from Sally McManus to APPG based on NatCen (2016), Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Study
\textsuperscript{23} Girlguiding (2016), Girls Attitude Survey
\textsuperscript{24} Princes Trust 2017, Youth Index
\textsuperscript{26} Evidence presented to APPG on 16th November 2016 by Farah Elahi, Runnymede Trust
\textsuperscript{27} ONS, (2016), ‘Changes in the value and division of unpaid care work in the UK: 2000 to 2015’
Even surveys which do collect ethnic and religious data like the ONS’ Labour Force Survey (LFS) can face a sample size problem with cross-tabulating for small groups in the population. For instance, the population of Bangladeshi women in full-time work is very small relative to the total population.

Current sampling methods for surveys like the LFS can struggle to get the sample size needed for such small groups with very different experiences to the rest of the population.

David Freeman also stressed that the LFS suffers from the problems regarding self-reporting that surveys experience (as some groups are particularly difficult to reach), which can combine with inequalities to make certain groups of the population less visible. This means even where we have data on minority women’s inequalities, women from smaller minority groups are hidden from policy makers.

Freeman also gave evidence about the potential that matching surveys to administrative data has for increasing the quality of data. Administrative data – which is created from individuals’ contacts with Government services rather than through surveys – is an increasingly important source of evidence for academic economics research because it tends to have fewer problems with both sampling sizes and self-reporting. However, he noted that work of this sort is time-consuming and costly and therefore requires funding.

The Government has committed to closing the gender pay gap in a generation. Serious attempts to deliver on that goal will require rigorous analysis of quality data. As a first step, alongside the headline figure the Government must annually publish the ethnic and religious gender pay gaps.

However, the APPG also heard that there are limitations to data sharing at present. For example, the ONS is for the moment legally constrained in the data sets it can link together. Lucy Russell from Plan UK pointed out that local authorities hold a large amount of data about their communities, but sharing is currently poor, and devolution poses a risk for increasing the invisibility of women.

The APPG heard that data sharing orders and reform of how data linkage works both within the national government and between it and local government would allow for more nuanced analyses of women’s experiences. The Government should explore how new ways of linking datasets could facilitate data sharing between relevant institutions to give a more complete picture of how multiple disadvantages combine and impact on women’s experiences.

**Recommendation** We need data to see her

To fully understand the experiences of “invisible women” we need additional data that allows for comparisons between different groups of women. This could be achieved by better linkages between datasets and data sharing between public services. Government should resource the creation of intersectional pay gap data as a priority. But existing data should also be analysed and published in a way that allows for better understanding of the experiences of distinct groups of women.
RETHINKING POLICY

The APPG heard evidence on a number of areas in which current policy is letting many women down. In this section we present the case for the Government to review a number of existing policy and legislative positions. We also call on the Government to consider the combined effects of multiple disadvantage when developing new policy. Policy for which such a review would be particularly helpful include: gender pay gap reporting, apprenticeships, childcare, and the industrial strategy.

**Gender pay gap reporting**

Section 78 of the Equality Act 2010 has commenced, and it requires all organisations with more than 250 employees to publish their gender pay gap data. This is an important first step, though it is important to go beyond this and conduct full gender pay audits in order to remove doubt that unintentional discrimination is occurring and to correctly reward female (and male) talent. Only work at this level of detail will enable employers to develop substantial and clear action plans.

However, it is clear that an approach to pay audits which only reflects on gender is likely to obscure the experiences of women with other characteristics who may be experiencing particular disadvantages in the workplace. As such, gender pay reporting and audits should be expanded to include other characteristics such as age, ethnicity and faith. Only when the discrimination and challenges faced by all groups are addressed will employers be able to reap the business case benefits of equality and ensure they are treating all their employees fairly.

**Apprenticeships**

Despite the recent growth in apprenticeship starts, there remain huge differences in the experiences of women and ethnic minorities. Research by Young Women’s Trust shows that, on average, young women get paid less, are less likely to receive training and are more likely to be out of work following an apprenticeship.28

Similarly, only 9.5% of apprenticeship starts in England are by people from an ethnic minority group despite 25% of on-line apprenticeship vacancies applications being made by that group.29

It is encouraging that the Skills Funding Agency has established a Diversity Advisory Group and a Diversity Champions Network which will seek to increase the representation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in apprenticeships. However, there remains concern that these will be issues tackled in isolation with limited ability to understand the combined impact of different characteristics.

**Childcare**

Official data shows that the take up of formal childcare varies significantly between ethnic groups. For example, whilst 89% of parents of White children take up the Government’s offer of 15 free hours of care for 3-4-year-olds only 73% of parents of Black children, 72% of parents of Pakistani children and 64% of parents of Bangladeshi children take up their places.30

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28 Young Women’s Trust (2016), *Making Apprenticeships Work for Young Women*
29 BTEG (2014), *Apprenticeships and Ethnic Minorities*
30 Department for Education (2016), *Childcare and early years survey of parents: 2014 to 2015*
Similarly, the survey found that only 23% of ethnic minority parents had used informal/family childcare over the previous six-months compared to 36% of white parents, indicating ethnic minority mothers may be doing the lion’s share of their childcare.

Data on take-up of the free formal childcare offer and informal childcare in government statistics finds no significant difference by rural/urban split, and that data finds that rural families are no less satisfied with childcare affordability and flexibility.\textsuperscript{31} However, looking at the costs, reports by the National Farmers’ Union find that rural families pay a 6% premium on childcare compared with urban areas, and that 25% of rural families say there is no nearby childcare provision.\textsuperscript{32} In addition, the Family and Childcare Trust’s 2016 survey finds that childcare sufficiency is poor in rural areas.\textsuperscript{33}

This means that the current childcare policy, whilst welcome, supports some groups of women more than others. This has an impact on the ability of sub-groups of women to access employment which in turn contributes to some of the gender pay gaps highlighted in the previous section. The expansion of free childcare is welcome and an important step forward but without efforts to understand and address lower take up amongst families from different ethnicities it risks leaving many mothers and children behind.

**Industrial Strategy**

The Government’s Industrial Strategy was launched for consultation at the start of 2017.\textsuperscript{34} At the time we expressed concern over the lack of focus on gender and equality. Studies have shown that increasing gender equality, especially in terms of economic participation is positively correlated with increasing productivity.\textsuperscript{35 36 37} Although our concerns were partially addressed in the final strategy there remains a need for a more intersectional approach to enable participation of all women.

Countries such as Canada, the United States and Switzerland perform better than the UK in terms of both gender equality (in terms of economic participation) and global competitiveness. In fact, the UK ranks 18th overall for gender equality (which includes access to education and healthcare for example) but 43rd in terms of women’s economic participation. Of the G12 countries it is the 7th best performer in terms of economic participation of women and has lagged behind in global competitiveness too.\textsuperscript{38}

The APPG believes that this presents strong evidence that increasing women’s economic participation is a key element of some of the most successful economies. If the UK is to successfully meet the challenges of a modern economy, it must address the issues that face the full diversity of women in the labour market – given the variety of their experiences outlined in this report. ‘Inclusivity’ should be a key pillar in implementing the Industrial Strategy, with a specific focus on an intersectional view of gender and equality. This must include efforts to reduce occupational segregation, increase the technical skills of all women and girls, and support families through investment in free childcare and the promotion of flexible working.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Jill Rutter (2016), *Childcare Survey 2016*, Family and Childcare Trust
\textsuperscript{36} Revenga and Shetty (2012), ‘Empowering Women Is Smart Economics’, *Finance and Development*, Vol. 49, No. 1
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
Multiple Discrimination

The law continues to fail to recognise the complexities of women’s identities in relation to discrimination. It is not currently possible for a woman to bring a discrimination case on the basis of multiple characteristics. So, for instance, whilst she might be able to make a claim on the basis that she has been discriminated against in the workplace because she is a woman or because she is black the law does not enable her to make the case she has been discriminated against specifically because she is a black woman. Drawing on more than one characteristic would make a big difference in strengthening claims, or securing adequate rights.

This is a significant gap in our protection and reflects a wider failure to recognise the impacts of multiple characteristics on women’s lives. Section 14 of the 2010 Equality Act would enable cases to be brought on the basis of two protected characteristics and it should be implemented. However, as the evidence presented to the APPG has identified, it is likely that whilst this would be a great improvement it would still limit the characteristics that can be recognised in a case. The wording of Section 14 and the limit to two characteristics should be reviewed and refreshed.

Recommendations

We need policy to see her

The Government should evaluate and review existing legislation and policy to ensure it takes a joined up view of the interaction between gender and other protected characteristics. In particular, the APPG draws attention to the need for a more intersectional approach to closing the gender pay gap, apprenticeship recruitment, childcare provision, and industrial strategy.

We need the law to see her

Make it possible to bring a discrimination claim based on an individual’s true identity, by reviewing and then implementing Section 14 of the Equality Act 2010.
The APPG heard evidence about a lack of tailored support that is made available to people accessing public services. Services should be designed in consultation with a wide range of beneficiaries to ensure they reflect the realities of their users’ lives. The APPG heard that services that could particularly benefit from such an approach include employment support and mental health services, although the principles could equally be applied across a range of public services.

**Employment Support**

The APPG heard evidence that much Government-led employment support is failing to meet the demands of specific groups of women. For example, Young Women’s Trust research found that just 19% of young women who visited a job centre in the last year felt it had supported them to find work. The same report found that 59% of women found the jobcentre humiliating. 39

This lack of tailored support is concerning and was reflected in evidence the APPG heard about the treatment of young mothers by support services. Many of those services continue to treat all mothers as a homogenous group with an assumption that they are not interested in working. In reality the vast majority of young women who are economically inactive (the biggest reason being childcare) want to work. 29% of young women who are NEET and EI said they would like to work now and even more – 86% – thought they would work in the future. 78% said they thought this would be within five years and almost a third (31%) expected to work within a year. 97% of EI young women in lone parent households expected to work in the future and 93% of those living with a partner and children said the same. 40 This suggests young mothers view being economically inactive as a temporary status in their working lives.

Employment support is less available for rural women too – the NAO finds that for benefit claimants in urban areas, 89% are within 30 minutes of their local jobcentre by public transport. For people living in rural areas, however, just 35% of claimants are within 30 minutes. 41

These women are all but invisible to policy makers and are largely shut out of services that would be able to support them. The Women and Equalities Committee has recently reported on the barriers facing Muslim Women entering the labour market and the APPG believes that women of ethnic and faith minorities face significant challenges in accessing appropriate support.

The Department for Work and Pensions must seek to develop more tailored, one-to-one support or mentoring which could help these groups to access and stay attached to services. This could, in turn, lead to easier transitions into work.

In addition, the expansion of good quality childcare built around the needs of families with a range of characteristics could see more young women feeling able to access work and re-enter employment sooner.

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39 Young Women’s Trust (2016), *No Country for Young Women*
40 Young Women’s Trust (2016), *Young, Female and Forgotten*
Mental Health

The APPG heard that some of the difference in ethnic minorities' experiences of mental health may be down to the attitudes of healthcare workers in diagnosing and treating ethnic minority patients and the inability of healthcare services to adapt to differing cultural attitudes towards mental health. This can lead to a lack of preventative support. Other studies have highlighted other causes related to both personal and social factors such as stigma, social networks and cultural identity as well as the way healthcare system relates to ethnic minority patients as barriers to receiving timely interventions.

Similarly, many ethnic minority patients, particularly women who have grown up overseas, may have limited social and family connections in the UK. This can leave them isolated and less likely to have the social resources that could both prevent mental health deterioration and support them in accessing treatment. Additionally, for some the social networks they do have often replace healthcare services which were frequently mistrusted. This again delays access to treatment.

Furthermore, research finds that financial factors play a part. The high cost of accessing therapy and long waiting lists for accessing treatment via NHS services are also reported as barriers. This is particularly true for minority groups who are more likely to have limited financial resources.

The relationship with healthcare providers also influences access to mental health provision in a number of ways. For some people within the ethnic and religious minority community, particularly recent immigrants, the inability to communicate effectively in English limits access to services. This is especially notable for women in those communities. It was also felt by many minority participants in the cited work that healthcare providers took a generalised approach and failed to listen to individual needs. This may have been exacerbated by services' drive to be 'colour blind' as a way of addressing previous concerns about institutional racism.

Some patients from ethnic minority groups felt that doctors did not understand their experiences as ethnic minorities and the impact that had on mental health issues. This resulted in naïve assumptions, cultural insensitivities and discrimination leading to frustration and exacerbating the feeling of mistrust in services.

Additionally, there were significant numbers of ethnic and religious minority women who were unaware of the support that was available to them. This again limited their ability to access support and treatment. Furthermore, the APPG was made aware that a lack of data has meant that BAME women's experiences of mental health have been largely hidden. There remains concern that despite previous investment by the NHS in the Delivering Racial Equality programme between 2005 and 2010, progress in this area has stalled. Much of the data provided by the Health and Social Care Information Centre is not disaggregated by gender and in some recent reports as many as 1 in 5 people who had contact with mental health services did not have their ethnicity recorded.

42 Suman Fernando (2014), Racism in the delivery of mental health services
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
48 Dharmi Kapadia (2016), ‘Racial inequality in mental health services: we can’t fix the problem if we don’t have the data’ http://blog.policy.manchester.ac.uk/posts/2016/07/racial-equality-in-mental-health-services-we-cant-fix-the-problem-if-we-dont-have-the-data/
These insights into the experiences of BAME women using health services rely on qualitative data and as such they are not necessarily representative. However, such research indicates the experiences and challenges of those involved, and these themes should be investigated further.

**Recommendation**  
We need services to see her

Many public services do not reflect the needs and experiences of intended service users. This risks excluding women with multiple characteristics from much-needed support. This could be overcome by more sensitive public service design. The APPG advocates greater efforts to involve beneficiaries in service design in order to make them more responsive to the needs and experiences of diverse groups. In particular, the APPG urges work to improve mental health and employment services.

**CONCLUSION**

We are increasingly aware that we must take an intersectional approach to research and policy yet often the data simply does not support that. As a result, the reality is millions of women are simply not present in our evidence or public policy.

Women who experience multiple discrimination or who have complex needs are particularly vulnerable to being overlooked if the data does not reflect their lived experiences. Yet arguably they are also the women it is particularly important for us to reach.

Unless we see women in all their diversity we will make the wrong policy decisions and will not achieve the impact we are intending.

The recommendations made in this report would begin to address that.
The Fawcett Society is the UK’s leading campaign for equality between women and men.

We trace our roots back to 1866, when Millicent Fawcett began her lifetime’s work leading the peaceful campaign for women’s votes. Today we remain the most authoritative, independent advocate for women’s rights in the UK.

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Young Women’s Trust supports and represents women aged 16-30 struggling to live on low or no pay in England and Wales and who are at risk of being trapped in poverty.

We have a proud history, having been originally founded over 150 years ago as YWCA England & Wales. We relaunched as Young Women’s Trust with a new vision and direction, shaped by the young women we work with.

www.youngwomenstrust.org

Young Women’s Trust is the operating name of YWCA England & Wales.
Charity number 217868. Company number 137113.