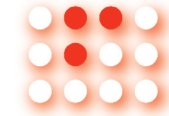


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## Fawcett finds system is failing women

The UK legal system is failing women and needs fundamental reform, according to a groundbreaking report, which finds that violence against women and girls is “endemic” in the UK.

The report was produced by the Sex Discrimination Law Review (SDLR) Panel of the women's campaign group, the Fawcett Society. The SDLR Panel was made up of a team of legal experts and chaired by Dame Laura Cox, DBE, a retired High Court Justice. It was set up to review the UK's sex discrimination laws in response to the risk that long-established rights could be eroded or weakened as a result of Brexit and leaving the EU single market. It also considered the effectiveness of current laws and how best to balance the rights of the individual with the responsibilities of the organisation.

The report, which is the first of its kind, calls for a number of specific changes to the legal system. These include strengthening the laws on sexual harassment at work to protect women from harassment by third parties, making “up-skirting” an offence, making misogyny a hate crime, making any breach of a domestic abuse order a criminal offence and extending protection from pregnancy discrimination to six months after maternity leave ends.

The reports key findings on violence and harassment are:

- half of all women have experienced sexual harassment at work;
- two-thirds of women (64%) of all ages have experienced unwanted sexual harassment in public places;
- one in five women aged over 16 have experienced sexual assault;
- in some sexual offences cases a victim's sexual history evidence is being inappropriately used in court; and
- evidence of complacency and a blame culture against women: 38% of all men and 34% of all women said that if a woman goes out at night, wearing a short skirt, gets drunk and is the victim of a sexual assault she is totally or partly to blame.

The SDLR recommends that the government strengthen the law on sexual harassment at work and protect women from harassment from “third parties” who may be customers, service users or contractors. Given the recent revelations in the *Financial Times* about the disreputable goings-on at the President's Club, change can't come too quickly.

The panel also wants employers to be proactive and introduce a new duty on large organisations to prevent discrimination and harassment in their workplaces.

Dame Laura Cox, chair of the review panel, said: “The evidence we received, of increasing levels of

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violence, abuse and harassment against women, was deeply disturbing. A lack of access to justice for such women has wide-ranging implications not only for the women themselves, but also for society as a whole and for public confidence in our justice system."

The report's key findings on employment, pay, leave and access to justice include:

- progress on closing the pay gap has stalled, a lack of transparency prevents women from challenging unequal pay and legal cases can take many years to resolve;
- 54,000 pregnant women and working mothers are pressured to leave their job early each year, but just 1% of cases go to tribunal. Women are not protected after they return to work from maternity leave;
- Statutory Maternity and Paternity Pay is among the lowest in Europe;
- Shared Parental Leave is not enough to enable many fathers to take time off work to care;
- if someone is discriminated against because of more than one aspect of their identity they are not protected by the law; and
- the number of legal centres around the country has halved in 10 years.

[www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/news/legal-system-failing-women-need-reform-says-fawcett-landmark-sex-discrimination-law-review](http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/news/legal-system-failing-women-need-reform-says-fawcett-landmark-sex-discrimination-law-review)

## Living standards hit by lower earnings growth

The squeeze on workers' living standards continues as earnings growth dipped in November and was once again well behind inflation.

In November, growth in average weekly earnings growth, including bonuses, was provisionally estimated to be 2.3% against the revised rise for October of 2.4%.

As retail price inflation rose by 3.9% in November and 4.0% in October there was a real-terms decrease in earnings of 1.6 percentage points in both November and October.

The sectoral figures published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show manufacturing earnings growth was steady at 3.0% in November compared with October. However, growth in services was down to 2.3% from 2.5%.

In the private sector as a whole, growth was down to 2.4% from 2.5% the previous month. In the public sector, excluding financial services, growth was hit and November's rise was just 1.9% against 2.3% the previous month.

Some years ago, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) stopped press releasing the average earnings data as an index and published just monetary figures and percentage rises. However, hidden away in the ONS' labyrinthine database the index figures are available. *Fact Service* has moved back to using these index figures and hopes that negotiators find them more useful than the monetary data.

Headline earnings growth (the rolling three-month average) for the whole economy was unchanged at 2.5% in November. Growth was last higher in December 2016.

In manufacturing, growth was up to 2.6% in November against a 2.3% rise in October. Growth in services was unchanged at 2.6%.

In the private sector as a whole, growth edged down to 2.6% from 2.7%, while in the public sector, excluding financial services, growth was up to 2.0% from 1.9%.

2000=100	Average Weekly Indices <sup>1</sup>					
	Whole economy	annual change	Manufacturing	Services	Private sector	Public sector <sup>2</sup>
Sept 2016	158.2	2.4%	159.6	161.6	158.2	159.6
October	159.0	2.8%	159.0	162.3	159.0	159.8
November	159.4	2.9%	159.2	163.0	159.5	160.4
December	159.1	2.0%	159.4	162.4	158.9	160.3
Jan 2017	159.3	1.8%	159.8	162.7	159.2	160.5
February	159.4	2.7%	160.0	162.7	159.4	160.7
March	160.3	2.4%	159.9	164.0	160.4	161.1
April	160.7	1.4%	160.9	164.3	160.8	161.1
May	160.8	2.0%	160.6	164.5	160.8	162.2
June	161.3	2.8%	160.9	164.8	162.0	161.2
July	161.5	1.6%	162.2	165.1	161.5	162.1
August	162.0	2.4%	162.3	165.6	162.2	163.2
September	162.6	2.8%	162.8	166.2	163.0	163.2
October (r)	162.7	2.4%	163.8	166.4	163.0	163.5
Nov (p)	163.0	2.3%	163.9	166.7	163.3	163.5
% annual rise for November			3.0%	2.3%	2.4%	1.9%
% rise — November headline rate <sup>3</sup>		2.5%	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%	2.0%

1 Average weekly earnings in Great Britain seasonally adjusted 2 Excluding financial services 3 Annual increase in rolling three-month average (p) provisional

The ONS also produces regular pay figures which strip out bonuses. In November, growth for the whole economy was steady at 2.4%. The increases in the year to November for various sectors, along with the previous month's rises in brackets, were: manufacturing 2.7% (2.4%); services 2.4% (2.5%);

private sector 2.5% (2.5%); and public sector, excluding financial services, 1.8% (2.3%).

The average increase in regular pay in the whole economy for the three-month period ending November was up to 2.4% from 2.3% the previous month.

The three-month sectoral increases were: manufacturing 2.4% (2.1%); services 2.4% (2.4%); private sector 2.5% (2.5%); and public sector, excluding financial services, 1.9% (1.9%).

The following table is based on the median average earnings figures for April 2017 published in the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. The original median figures have been updated by the 1.4% increase in average weekly earnings, including bonuses, for the whole economy between April 2017 and November 2017 to give a rough estimate of earnings now in the various occupational groups.

Full-time average weekly earnings by occupation	
	£ a week
All employees	£558.10
All male	£599.80
All female	£500.50
Managers	£835.60
Professionals	£743.40
Associate professionals	£614.10
Admin & secretarial	£437.60
Skilled/craft	£516.90
Services	£366.50
Sales	£375.60
Operatives	£479.10
Other manual jobs	£374.80

[www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentanddem-  
ployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/january2018](http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentanddem-<br/>ployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/january2018)

## Call for public inquiry into blacklisting

The barriers to justice faced by thousands of workers whose lives have been blighted being blacklisted by a secretive organisation set up by the UK largest construction companies are laid bare in a new report from the Institute of Employment Rights

*Blacklisting: the need for a public inquiry* sets out how 44 construction firms worked together to blacklist workers with a history of raising health and safety issues or fighting for decent pay and

conditions through their trade union activity and membership.

Author Dave Smith, a blacklisted worker himself, describes the long process of seeking justice after the Information Commissioner's raid on The Consulting Association. The raid uncovered the widespread blacklisting operation, with files on thousands of workers.

Smith highlights the numerous obstacles faced by victims in their fight for justice. These include the ridiculous time limits on submitting a claim to an employment tribunal and the ease with which employers could force victim into an out-of-court settlement, so avoiding a "guilty" verdict and reputational damage.

The book ends with a call for a public inquiry that would force those involved to publicly account for their actions and recommends changes to legislation that would protect workers vulnerable to blacklisting now and in the future.

[www.iier.org.uk/publications/blacklisting-need-public-inquiry-including-manifes-  
to-against-blacklisting](http://www.iier.org.uk/publications/blacklisting-need-public-inquiry-including-manifes-<br/>to-against-blacklisting)

## Unemployment down – but only by 3,000

Unemployment has continued to fall, but much more slowly, official figures suggest.

The number of unemployed people in the UK fell by only 3,000 to 1.44 million in the three-month period ending November 2017 compared with the previous three-month period ending August, Labour Force Survey data showed.

However, the total unemployment rate was unchanged at 4.3%.

In the November period, the number of unemployed men fell by 7,000 to 768,000 compared with the previous three-month period ending August, and their unemployment rate fell to 4.3%.

Meanwhile, the number of unemployed women increased by 3,000 to 671,000, and their unemployment rate was up to 4.3% from 4.2%.

There was an increase on the other main unemployment measure – the claimant count – which only includes claimants receiving Jobseeker's Allowance and those on the means-tested Universal Credit.

In December, unemployment under this count increased by 8,600 to 832,500 from the revised figure for November of 823,900.

The increase in numbers was enough to push the joblessness rate up to 2.4% from 2.3%.

Male claimant numbers increased by 3,400 to 513,800 and their joblessness rate was up to 2.8% from 2.7%.

The number of female claimants increased by 5,200 to 318,700 from 313,500, but their joblessness rate remained at 1.9%.

Unemployment seasonally adjusted				
	Claimants <sup>1</sup>		LFS <sup>3</sup>	
	(000s)	% <sup>2</sup>	(000s)	%
October 2016	782	2.2	1,612	4.8
November	789	2.2	1,600	4.8
December	783	2.2	1,594	4.8
January 2017	765	2.2	1,580	4.7
February	762	2.2	1,559	4.7
March	784	2.2	1,541	4.6
April	796	2.3	1,530	4.6
May	801	2.3	1,495	4.5
June	806	2.3	1,484	4.4
July	803	2.3	1,455	4.3
August	802	2.3	1,443	4.3
September	805	2.3	1,425	4.3
October	812	2.3	1,429	4.3
November (r)	824	2.3	1,439	4.3
December (p)	833	2.4		

<sup>1</sup> Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit claimants <sup>2</sup> Percentage of working population – the employees, unemployed, self-employed and the armed forces.

<sup>3</sup> The Labour Force Survey definition of unemployment – the number of unemployed people who want a job and are ready to start work in two weeks, and have looked for work in the past four weeks. Each figure is the average of the past three months – a rolling average. (p) provisional (r) revised

**Regions** In the three months to November 2017, unemployment was down in seven of the UK's 12 regions/countries, and increased in five. A 15,000 fall in the North West and 13,000 in the South East was offset by 14,000 increases in both London and Wales. The unemployment rate was above the UK average of 4.3% in five of the 12 regions/countries. The highest rates were 5.5% in the West Midlands and 5.2% in the North East.

In December, the claimant count increased all the 12 regions/countries.

The claimant count rate was above the UK average of 2.3% in seven regions/countries. The highest rates were 4.4% in the North East, 3.2% in Northern Ireland and 3.1% in the North West.

Region	Dec claimants		LFS Sept – Nov	
	Number	%	Number	%
North East	54,900	4.4	68,000	5.2
North West	115,300	3.1	143,000	4.0
Yorkshire & the Humber	79,000	2.8	134,000	5.0
East Midlands	49,500	2.1	97,000	4.1
West Midlands	89,200	3.1	155,000	5.5
East	51,900	1.6	119,000	3.7
London	124,100	2.1	255,000	5.2
South East	68,800	1.4	145,000	3.0
South West	46,500	1.6	105,000	3.7
Wales	39,800	2.6	73,000	4.9
Scotland	84,100	3.0	112,000	4.0
Northern Ireland	29,400	3.2	33,000	3.8

[www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/january2018](http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/january2018)

## Medical examinations for asbestos workers

Plans to reduce the period between medical examinations for asbestos workers have been abandoned by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) after being lobbied by unions including Prospect, which represents HSE staff.

Views were sought on reducing the frequency of asbestos medical examinations for licensed contractors from two years to three years after a review of the *Control of Asbestos Regulations* in 2017.

Prospect's submission to the consultation strongly opposed the change. Deputy general secretary Garry Graham welcomed the fact that the HSE had seen sense on the issue. "Asbestos is a silent killer of thousands of workers every year," he said. "Frequent medical checks for those engaged in the dangerous removal of asbestos from old buildings is vital to pick up any symptoms as early as possible."

Analysis by the HSE of the responses found that three out of five (61%) did not support the proposed amendment.

<https://www.prospect.org.uk/news/id/2018/January/19/Plans-water-down-medical-checks-on-asbestos-workers-abandoned>