Written evidence submitted by Women’s Equality Party

Gender pay gap: a definition

There are a variety of ways of measuring the “gender pay gap” – the gap between what men and women earn.

Based on median pay and including those who work part time, working women earn an average of £10.37 per hour, while working men earn an average of £12.92 per hour – a 20% gap.

Women are much more likely to work part time, and actually earn more on average in these jobs. However part time work is, on average, paid at a much lower rate than men or women earn full time, so including part time workers widens the gender pay gap.

Not only are women more likely to work part time, and less likely to take on overtime, they are also more likely to sacrifice the opportunity for a paid job for the sake of their family.

For full time employees, the median pay for a man is £29,441 per year. The median pay of a full time working woman is £23,889. This is a gap of 19%.

Overall, last year men earned £516bn, while women earned just £271bn – a gap of 48%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>women</th>
<th>men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of women in work</td>
<td>14,550,000</td>
<td>16,540,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average hours worked per week</td>
<td>£26.7</td>
<td>£36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average hourly wage</td>
<td>13.40</td>
<td>16.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total wages</td>
<td>£271 bn</td>
<td>£516bn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>66%</td>
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NB these calculations use the mean rather than the median average because this is a more accurate way of estimating the total income of each group.

The smallest gender pay gap is between the median (middle point average) hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of men and women who work full time.

On this measure, the gap between the earnings of men (£13.72 per hour) and women (£12.31 per hour) was 9.4% in November 2014.

The gender pay gap and older women
The pay gap widens for women after 50. There are many reasons for this: breaks in employment for children and other caring responsibilities, an increased chance of health problems or disability and the concentration of older women in low paid and part time work.

Women over 50 are also vulnerable to “dual discrimination” – when women are penalised on the basis of both age and gender, rather than solely because they are women.

The particular experience of menopause is not well understood by employers, and women who need support or to adjust their working patterns may feel unable to raise the issue, and choose simply to retire instead.

Solutions proposed by the Women’s Equality Party (WE)

**WE propose greater transparency on pay:**
- WE will require companies with more than 250 employees to publish an annual report covering the numbers of women and men – broken down by ethnicity and disability – at different levels in the company, their pay, their employment status and their working hours. WE will extend this to businesses with more than 50 employees and all those securing government contracts at any level within three years.
- WE will require HMRC to gather data through PAYE and Self-Assessment forms on gender, age, ethnicity, disability status, industry and working hours.

**WE will invest in childcare:**
- At least 600,000 stay-at-home parents would prefer to work if they could afford to do so. WE will revolutionise childcare to provide free, government-funded childcare from the end of parental leave at 9 months to all children.
- WE will introduce the same level of parental leave pay – six weeks at 90 percent of salary – so that all new parents can spend time with their children
- WE will introduce ten further months of leave at statutory pay to be shared between both parents

**WE will demand more flexible working**
- Flexible working should be the norm, not the exception. WE will require job adverts posted on the government’s own Universal Jobmatch platform and by companies with 250 or more employees – to state what forms of flexible working the post is suitable for by means of a checklist.
- WE will permit employees to submit a claim for unreasonable refusal of a flexible working request and for unreasonable refusal to offer a
trial period – with compensation where this is proven to have taken place.

**WE will demand zero tolerance for workplace discrimination**

- WE will remove barriers to justice for those who have suffered workplace discrimination by lowering the fee for issuing an employment claim from the current £250 to £50 and removing the hearing fee of £950 altogether (WE will give new parents a longer grace period of nine months for cases involving maternity discrimination or parental leave).
- WE will restore the provisions of the 2010 Equality Act that permitted dual discrimination claims. This will, for example, enable BAME women who have been discriminated against as such – rather than solely on grounds of either race or gender – to bring a claim.

**3 December 2015**