

## Responses to State of the Nation Feb. 2020

Our 2020 [State of the Nation](#) report paints a mixed picture. There have been some positive changes since 2019 – women’s employment rate has improved, the proportion of women in leadership positions in local councils has improved and the number of women MPs has increased. However, we have also seen the gender pay gap increase, there has been almost no change in the proportion of women working part-time and a large proportion of women remain unable to access employment due to caring responsibilities.

While important, statistical data will only tell part of the story, particularly for smaller groups within the population, such as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) or disabled women. At our annual State of the Nation event in January 2020 we were keen to look behind the statistics and hear from experts who are working with different groups of women across Wales. This paper sets out the key themes from that discussion, and complements the statistics contained in the *State of the Nation* report.

### *Reflections on the findings of State of the Nation*

1. The unique experience of some women, such as BAME and disabled women, can be absent from discussions of gender inequality. While mainstreaming equality and a focus on intersectionality are important, efforts must be made to ensure that this does not result in these unique experiences being overlooked or undermined.
2. The measures included in *State of the Nation* are markedly worse for BAME and disabled women, not only in terms of a gap between women and men, but also with white women and women without disabilities, impairments of health conditions.
3. Care appears as an issue cutting across different groups of women and also in relation to many of the measures included in the report, such as unemployment, low-paid work and poverty.
4. The way economic activity is measured is flawed. Language of “economic inactivity” is inappropriate as it fails to recognise the economic value of the unpaid work that women are predominantly carrying out. The challenge was put to Chwarae Teg as to whether we could start driving a change in language through our next State of the Nation report.
5. There remains a need for significant cultural change to eradicate the harassment and abuse that women face. While reporting of rape is increasing, prosecution is at an all-time low. There are also increasing issues of women experiencing non-consensual acts during consensual sexual encounters, and there remains an attitude that harassment of women is just part of a normal night out.

6. There is a need to engage with individuals when life changes occur to highlight what they are entitled to through the social security system. Currently there are large sums of money that are unclaimed by eligible people.

### *Towards Solutions*

Panelists and attendees had a number of ideas about how to tackle inequality:

1. Improve the availability of data and evidence, particularly evidence that supports an intersectional analysis. Linked to this was a call for improved capacity to carry out policy and research work across equalities fields.
2. The language of equality can be inaccessible to people not directly working in the field. To drive change we need to engage more people with the agenda and need to frame discussions in language that is more widely understood.
3. Better use must be made of existing levers. For example, employers should use positive action measures to improve the recruitment of under-represented groups.
4. Rights and protections could be bolstered through a Welsh Human Rights Act that incorporates a number of international conventions into Welsh law, such as UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
5. Mentoring schemes are invaluable. A number of organisations are currently running small-scale mentoring schemes that could be scaled up.
6. Wider uptake among employers of the real Living Wage and better availability of flexible working, could help to address issues of low pay and in-work poverty
7. Co-production of services, programmes and policies could ensure that women's lived experience is considered.
8. Employers should collect data and understand where the issues are. Making a public commitment to equality through targets and action plans to improve diversity is important
9. Create access to public office funds(?) as has been done in Scotland.
10. Share examples of best practice more effectively. This would help make the case for diversity, as well as demonstrate practical steps to drive change.
11. Maximise impact of public funding by requiring those in receipt of funds to set out their plan to achieve gender parity.
12. Current approaches, e.g. impact assessments, are not driving behavior change. Need to improve how we pay "due regard" to equalities, involve the public more in the impact assessment processes and ensure these issues are being considered at the start of the process and not the end.