



How will budget cuts impact women?

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Key points

- 47% of women work in the public sector. The public sector in Wales accounts for 1/3 of the economy and women make up around 70% of the public sector workforce. Any job cuts or pay freezes will affect them more than men.
- Women hold 2/3 of benefit schemes in the public sector so any cuts to pensions will disproportionately fall on them.
- Women are more reliant on public services so any service cuts will impact women more than men.
- Women's unpaid work already fills many gaps in public services. If these services are cut then women may have to do more unpaid work. This will reduce the time available for paid work and risk tipping them further into poverty.
- Women make up 60% of the workforce in FE and are more vulnerable than men to the impact of public sector cuts.

- There is a chance that adult education will face disproportionate cuts. Women make up 64% of learners over 25 and 60% of all women in FE are in this age group.
- Women will lose the most from cuts to welfare. For example, 1million more women than men claim housing benefit.

Who will be hardest hit?

- Lone parents will be hardest hit by the cuts. They will suffer service cuts equivalent to 18.4% of their income (£3,121 per year).
- Single pensioners are next, losing services worth 11% of their income on average (£1,305).
- A family with two school-age children on modest earnings will suffer service cuts equivalent to 13.2% of their income, or £2,631 a year.
- A working lone parent with two children will suffer service cuts equivalent to 15.7% of their income, or £3,132 a year.
- A pensioner couple will suffer service cuts equivalent to 16.2% of their income, or £2,226 a year.

What services are most likely to lose out?

- Local government
- Housing
- Further and higher education
- Police
- Justice

What are the proposed changes to benefits?

- Child benefit frozen for next 3 years
- the health in pregnancy grant will be abolished from April 2011
- the Sure start maternity grant will only be paid for the first child
- child tax credit changes will cut the income of many families

What are the hidden impacts?

- The combined average loss in income and services (including tax and benefit changes), will amount to almost 22% for the poorest households in the UK. This compares with just 1.6% in the richest households.
- Although the tax cuts were billed as helping the lower paid, the corresponding loss of services to fund those cuts mean that the poorest households will actually be worse off as a result.
- 1 in 5 women act as unpaid carers for adult family members. Cuts in services mean this figure is almost certain to rise, with women's caring responsibilities being one of the major causes of the gender pay gap.
- Cuts have already been announced in daycare centres, and increased care charges are being planned in many public authorities.
- Around half of lone-parent families are defined as low-income – more than twice the rate for couples with children. Women head 9 out of 10 of these lone-parent families.
- Services used primarily by women and children are already being targeted for cuts – libraries, leisure centres, children's centres and out of hours school clubs.
- Voluntary sector and community projects supporting women will be particularly vulnerable to cuts. This includes women's advice centres and refuges – the majority of which are also staffed by women.
- Past evidence has shown that where services are contracted out, women have suffered disproportionately as their pay and conditions have been cut.

- 30,000 women lost their jobs in 2009 as a result of being pregnant. Pregnant women are unfairly selected for redundancy, despite laws to protect them.
- Low incomes increase the risk of violence. Women in households with an income of less than £10,000 were 3.5 times more likely to experience domestic violence than those living in households with an income of over £20,000.

Sources

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Unison (2010) *Spending Review Analysis*

Unison (2010) *Families Bear Burden of Deficit*

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*Evidence from the University and College Union: Submission to the
Equality of Opportunity Committee*