

# Key indicators of women's position in Britain

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## Key points

- A recent comprehensive review of statistics on women's and men's position in Britain finds that differences between men and women are getting smaller over a wide range of areas from employment to education and health.
- Women live longer than men on average, although the gap is expected to narrow slightly over the next 25 years. There are more older women in the population: over 60 per cent of those aged 70 or over are women.
- Women's labour market participation has increased over recent years and their employment rates have risen, whereas men's participation in the labour market has declined slightly.
- Flexible working patterns have increased for both men and women in recent years, and around six million people in employment now work flexibly.
- Girls now perform better than boys in education and in getting qualifications. Educational performance of both boys and girls improved in the late 1990s.

***This article presents findings from a recent comprehensive study of women in Britain, which was commissioned by the Women and Equality Unit and carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies.***

## Introduction

IN 2001 there were around 30.2 million women in the UK, compared with 28.6 million men; women accounted for 51 per cent of the population.<sup>1</sup> It is projected that proportions of men and women in the population are moving gradually towards equalisation and will have effectively evened out by 2025.<sup>2</sup> Looking at the working-age population (defined as 16-64 for men and 16-59 for women), 17.5 million women were of working age, compared with 18.6 million for men.<sup>1</sup> Women have a longer life expectancy and this is reflected in the average age which is 40.3 years for women and 37.8 years for men.<sup>3</sup>

Around 8 per cent of the UK population are from an ethnic minority and 19 per cent of all working-age

people have a long-term health problem or disability;<sup>4</sup> these proportions are broadly similar for men and women. Older people from ethnic minorities and Pakistani/Bangladeshi people of all ages are more likely to be long-term disabled than Whites in these age groups.

This article outlines the aims of a project recently carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies for the Women and Equality Unit (WEU) (see *Box 1*) and gives an overview of its main findings. Where relevant, findings from the WEU Briefing Pack on *Ethnic Minority Women in the UK* (Hibbett, 2002) and the most recent statistics from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) are added to provide a fuller appraisal.

## Box 1 The Key Indicators of Women's Position in Britain project

The aim of this project, which was carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies for the Women and Equality Unit (WEU), was to identify a set of key statistics which accurately and meaningfully map women's position relative to that of men across a wide range of areas, and to draw together statistics from a wide range of sources and with a common reference date to provide a comprehensive overview and a reliable baseline against which future changes and improvements can be monitored.

In deciding on the key indicators, it was important to choose statistically robust measures which could ideally be broken down by age and/or ethnicity to allow a more differentiated appraisal, and which could also be given for different parts of the UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) to maximise comparability with other official sources and provide a cost-effective baseline against which devolved administrations could assess progress in gender equality in their area. The indicators cover the following areas:

- economic activity and employment;
- work-life balance;
- education and training;
- financial resources;
- participation in public life;
- health;
- crime; and
- transport.

It should be noted that a wide range of statistics was collected for each of these areas: only the most salient and robust were chosen as key indicators. The research report contains a large number of baseline statistics which provide added definition and detail to the key indicators. It is not possible here to present these in full and readers are referred to the full project report for further information (see [further information](#), p511). Key Indicators of Women's Position in Britain was published in November 2002 and

has been disseminated widely. A four-page research summary and a shorter 'key findings' summary have also been published.

### Updating the key indicators

The study utilised a wide range of statistical sources, from regular large-scale surveys, such as the Labour Force Survey (LFS), to ad hoc surveys, for example on work-life balance initiatives and their impact. The proposed programme for updating this information is still being finalised, but will most likely consist of the following elements:

- quarterly updating of women's position in the labour market using the LFS. This is already available as the *WEU Gender Briefing*, published every February, May, August and November on the WEU website [womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/research/](http://womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/research/);
- a regular update census, which will look at all key indicators and collect the most up-to-date information. As outlined above, many key indicators are covered by regular official surveys, so it would be relatively straightforward to update them;
- a fuller appraisal (in a few years' time) which would aim for a more comprehensive update, and would also explore whether the key indicators should be revised and/or extended, in line with changes in women's lives and society in general.

### The Women and Equality Unit

The 'Key Indicators of Women's Position in Britain' project underpins the Women and Equality Unit's (WEU) programme of monitoring gender equality in Britain. The aim of the WEU is to work across government and with others to reduce and remove barriers to opportunity for all and to bring about measurable improvements in the position of women which benefit society generally; and to promote equality for all, particularly in the development and delivery of government policy and services.

## Economic activity and employment

### Key indicators

- Women's economic activity rates.
- Proportion working full-time.
- Industrial breakdown of employment.
- Occupational breakdown of employment.

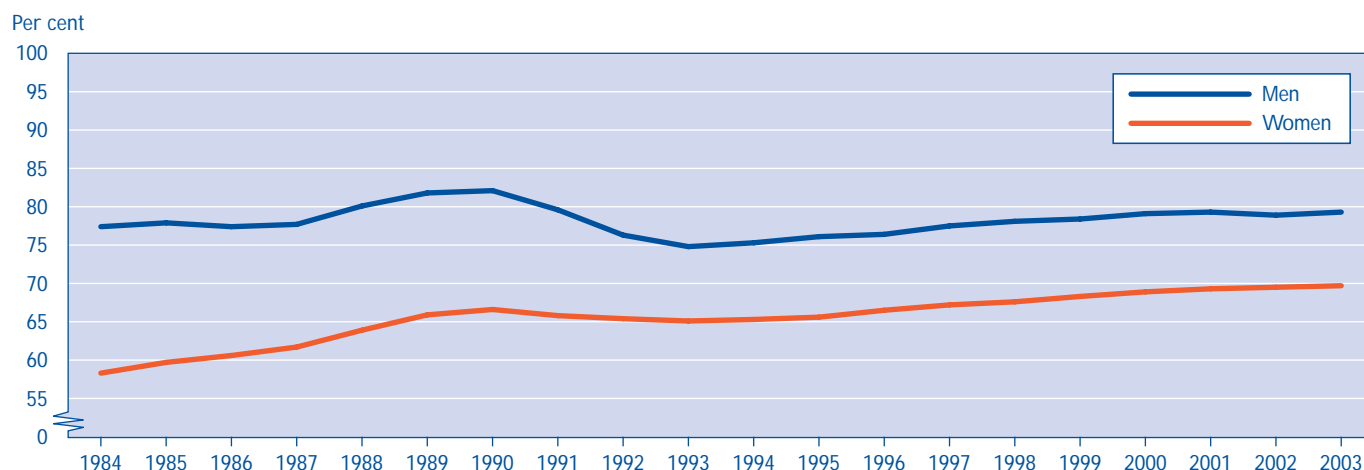
The gender gap in economic activity and employment rates has been narrowing over recent years: the proportion of women who are

economically active (that is, either in employment or actively seeking and available for work) rose from 66 per cent in 1984 to 73 per cent in 2003, while men's activity rates declined from 88 per cent to 84 per cent over the same period.<sup>5</sup> The gender gap in economic activity therefore halved from 22 percentage points to 11 percentage points over this period. In the 1980s this reflected the increasing economic participation of women, whereas in the 1990s the declining economic participation of men has been the key factor.

There has been a similar narrowing of the gender gap in employment rates,

which fell from 19 percentage points in 1984 to nine percentage points in 2003. In 1984, 58 per cent of women were in employment compared with 77 per cent for men, whereas in 2003 the employment rate was 70 per cent for women and 79 per cent for men. While both men's and women's rates moved in line with the economic cycle, women's employment increased more rapidly than men's during the 1980s and fell less markedly during the early 1990s. *Figure 1* shows employment rates by gender over time.

Employment rates are lowest for women whose youngest child is under

Figure 1 Working-age<sup>a</sup> employment rate by sex; United Kingdom; spring quarters 1984 to 2003

Source: Labour Force Survey

a Working age is 16-59 for women and 16-64 for men.

Table 1 Employment rates by age of youngest dependent child; United Kingdom; spring quarters 1990 and 2001

	1990	Per cent 2001
<b>All women of working age<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>67</b>	<b>69</b>
Youngest dependent child aged		
Under 5	41	54
5 to 10	66	70
11 to 15	74	75
16 to 18	77	80
No dependent children	73	72
<b>All men of working age<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>82</b>	<b>79</b>

Source: Labour Force Survey

a Working age is 16-59 for women and 16-64 for men.

five: 54 per cent of these women were in employment in 2001 compared with 72 per cent for those with no dependent children (see *Table 1*). However, the main growth in employment rates during the 1990s has been among women with very young children. The gap in employment rates between lone and partnered mothers increased between 1990 and 1997, then decreased in 2001.<sup>6</sup>

Employment rates also vary significantly by ethnic origin, with men and women from ethnic minorities being less likely than White men and women to be in employment. They are particularly low for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women. In spring 2003, only 22 per cent of working-age Pakistani/Bangladeshi women were in

employment, compared with 72 per cent for all White women in this age group.<sup>7</sup>

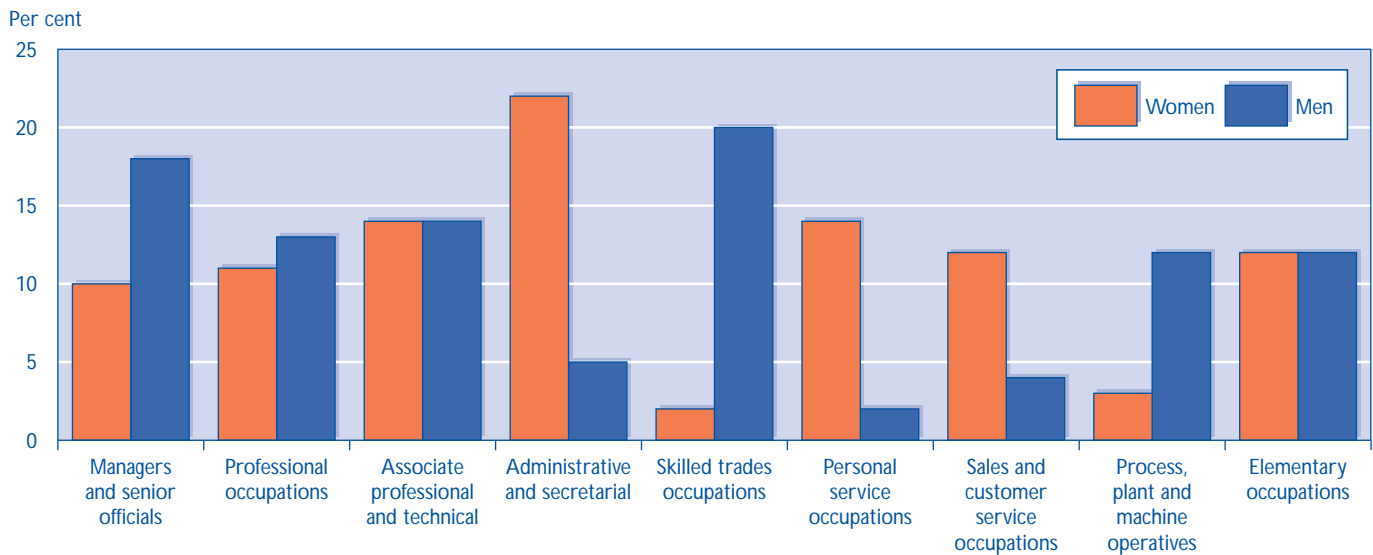
Some 57 per cent of women in employment worked full-time in 2003, the same proportion as in 1990. For men, the proportion working full-time fell from 95 per cent in 1990 to 91 per cent in 2003.<sup>8</sup> Over the 1990s there has been a growth in part-time work, which has been more marked among men. There is little variation by age in the proportion of women working part-time, whereas the highest proportions of men working part-time are found in the younger and older age groups (under 25 or 50 and over) reflecting the fact that most men who work part-time are either students or approaching retirement.

Women's likelihood of working part-time is closely related to the age of their

youngest child and decreases as the age of their youngest child increases: 67 per cent of working mothers with a child aged under five worked part-time and this fell to 45 per cent for working mothers whose youngest child was aged 16-18 (Twomey, 2002). By comparison, only 32 per cent of women with no dependent children worked part-time. The proportion of ethnic minority women working part-time is slightly lower than that of White women: this indicates that, once in employment, although their employment rates are lower than those of White women they are more likely to work full-time (Hibbett, 2002).

The traditional gender split in the sectoral pattern of employment, with women being more likely to work in services and men more likely to work in manufacturing and production, has persisted throughout the 1990s.<sup>9</sup> Women are much more likely than men to work in public administration, education and health, which account for 41 per cent of women's employment (and only 15 per cent of men's) and in distribution, hotels and catering, which account for another 23 per cent (and 18 per cent of men's employment). Service sector work has generally increased, and work in manufacturing and production decreased over the past decade; for women, the main growth in service sector jobs has been in public administration, education and health,

Figure 2 Proportions of employees of working age<sup>a</sup> by occupation<sup>b</sup> and sex; United Kingdom; spring 2003



Source: Labour Force Survey

a Working age is 16-59 for women and 16-64 for men.

b Occupations are coded according to the Standard Occupational Classification 2000.

whereas for men it has been in banking and financial services. Looking at the larger public/private sector split, women in employment are twice as likely to work in the public sector as men; and Black women and men and those from 'other' ethnic groups are more likely to do so than White and Asian women and men.

Figure 2 shows that there are consistent differences in the occupations entered by women and men: women are more likely to work in administrative and secretarial, personal services and sales occupations, whereas men predominate in skilled trades occupations, process, plant and machine operative occupations and managerial occupations. Around 10 per cent of women worked as managers or senior officials in 2003, compared with 18 per cent of men. Over the 1990s these occupations have been growing, and this growth has been experienced by both men and women. It is interesting to note that the structure of women's employment over different occupational groups has not changed much over recent years, that is, the increase in women's employment has been distributed fairly evenly across the whole range of occupations.

Where numbers are large enough to allow a comparison, findings from the

LFS show that ethnic minority women and men in employment are no less likely than Whites to work in managerial or professional occupations (Hibbett, 2002).

## Work-life balance

### Key indicators

- Women's likelihood of returning to work after childbirth.
- Proportion of women working full-time following return to work.
- Flexible working patterns.
- Availability of childcare places.

There has been a substantial increase in the proportion of women returning to work after childbirth over recent years. In 1979, 24 per cent of women were in work between eight and 11 months after having a baby and this rose to 67 per cent in 1996 (Callendar et al., 1997). There has been a relatively larger increase in women returning to full-time rather than part-time work; that is, women who worked full-time when pregnant were slightly more likely to return (69 per cent in 1996) than women who worked part-time (64 per cent in 1996). Older women and those in higher-level occupations with higher earnings and/or longer employment

with the same employer were more likely to return to work after childbirth than others.

The majority of women returning to work returned to the same employer and to the same job they had before giving birth, and this proportion has been increasing, from 75 per cent returning to the same employer in 1988 to 86 per cent returning to the same employer in 1996. Women working in the public sector were more likely to return to the same employer and job than were women working in the private sector before giving birth.

Evidence from the LFS shows that in 2003, around 27 per cent of women and 18 per cent of men worked some form of flexible working pattern, including flexitime, term-time working, annualised hours, job sharing, nine-day fortnights and zero hours (see Table 2). There has been an increase in a variety of flexible working arrangements for both men and women over the last three years, which may reflect a greater awareness of the importance of work-life balance. This means that there are now around six million people in the UK working flexibly.

Good quality, affordable and accessible childcare is often essential for combining work and family commitments. The majority of parents rate the quality of

**Table 2** Flexible working patterns for employees; United Kingdom; spring quarters 2000 and 2003

	Women		Men		Per cent
	2000	2003	2000	2003	
	<b>Working pattern</b>				
Flexitime	11	12	8	9	
Term-time working	7	8	1	1	
Annualised hours	4	5	4	5	
Job sharing	1	2	~	~	
Nine-day for night/four and a half day week	1	1	2	2	
Zero hours	1	1	1	1	
None of the above	75	73	84	82	

Source: Labour Force Survey

~ Less than 0.5 per cent.

**Table 3** GCSE results attained by sex; United Kingdom; 1999/2000

	Girls	Per cent
		Boys
5 or more grades A* to C	56	45
1 to 4 grades A* to C	24	25
Grades D to G only	16	24
No graded results	5	6
<b>Total (thousands=100%)<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>346.0</b>	<b>357.7</b>

Sources: Statistics of Education; Education and Training Statistics

<sup>a</sup> All pupils aged 15 at the start of the academic year; pupils in year S4 in Scotland.

**Table 4** Proportions of working-age population<sup>a</sup> by highest qualification and sex; United Kingdom; spring quarters 1993 and 2003

	Women		Men		Per cent
	1993	2003	1993	2003	
	Degree or equivalent	8	15	13	18
Higher education (sub-degree or partial degree)	9	10	7	8	
A level or equivalent	15	18	31	30	
GCSE grades A to C or equivalent	26	27	15	18	
Other qualifications	15	14	14	13	
No qualifications	26	17	19	14	

Source: Labour Force Survey

<sup>a</sup> Working age is 16-59 for women and 16-64 for men.

childcare and nursery education places highly, with 91 per cent of parents in England saying that the provision of childcare places was 'very good' or 'fairly good' (La Valle et al., 2000). White and Asian parents were more likely to rate quality as good than Black parents were. The view of the adequacy of provision is much less positive, however, with a

majority of parents feeling that there are insufficient childcare places in their local area (La Valle et al., 2000; Hinds and Park, 2001). A quarter of families experienced some form of unmet demand with regard to childcare provision during the previous year, although such occurrences tended to be relatively infrequent (Woodland et al., 2002).

## Education and training

### Key indicators

- Qualification levels.
- Women's participation in higher education.
- Occupations of women graduates.
- Job-related training.
- Highest qualification levels.

Girls perform better than boys in education and in obtaining educational qualifications. A higher proportion of girls than boys reach or exceed the expected level at each 'key stage', although the gap is smaller for maths and science. Performance of both boys and girls improved in the late 1990s, but the gender gap has remained.<sup>10</sup> This is reflected in the higher proportion of girls (56 per cent, compared with 45 per cent of boys), who obtained five or more GCSE grades A\* to C (see *Table 3*). There is some variation by ethnic group in this, in that although girls generally outperform boys, Afro-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani girls are not attaining the same level of qualifications as White or Indian girls. These differences may, however, be due in part to social class. The better performance of girls is maintained in post-16 education, with 39 per cent of girls achieving two or more passes at 'A'/Scottish Higher level, compared with just 31 per cent of boys, and this is consistent across most subjects.<sup>11</sup>

It should be noted that women as a group are still more likely than men to have no qualifications, due to the fact that older women are much less likely than older men to have any qualifications. However, more equal attainment between younger women and men should filter through over time and progressively reduce the differential (see *Table 4*).

There are now more female than male undergraduates and equal numbers of postgraduates. The proportion of female students has increased in both undergraduate and postgraduate study during the 1990s. There are gender differences for the subjects studied, with more women studying arts and social science subjects (apart from business and administrative studies, and

also humanities at postgraduate level) and fewer studying science subjects.<sup>12</sup>

Looking at graduates' routes into the labour market, there are no substantial differences between men and women, apart from slightly larger proportions of men entering professional employment and relatively more women taking up clerical/secretarial employment.<sup>13</sup>

Women are slightly more likely than men to receive job-related training in employment, and this holds when controlling for type of occupations, that is, taking into account that women may be concentrated in occupations which receive more training than others. Young employees are most likely to receive training, but whereas the proportion of men aged over 35 who received training stayed stable or declined in the late 1990s, the proportion of women in this age group who received training increased.<sup>14</sup>

Women have a shorter average job tenure with the same employer than men and are also more likely to have re-entered the labour market, for example on returning from a career break. This may account for their larger share of training, as much of it will be for induction.

## Financial resources

### Key indicators

- Full-time hourly earnings.
- Part-time/full-time pay gap.
- Individual incomes.
- Proportion with low incomes.
- Pension take-up.

Gender differences in earnings can be analysed in a number of different ways, which has a bearing on the results obtained. Simply comparing hourly earnings is the approach taken for the WEU *Gender Briefing*. However, this also reflects gender differences in working hours, as women are much more likely to work part-time, which is associated with lower hourly earnings. The Key Indicators study therefore compared women working full-time with men working full-time. It should be noted, however, that the related comparison between part-time female workers and their male counterparts is

**Table 5** Average hourly earnings of full-time employees by age group and sex; United Kingdom; spring 2000

	Women (£)	Men (£)	Earnings ratio <sup>a</sup> (%)
<b>Age group</b>			
16-24	5.49	5.65	97.1
25-34	8.60	9.57	89.9
35-49	9.06	11.40	79.5
50-59/64	8.39	10.78	77.8
60/65 +	7.27	11.28	64.5
<b>All ages</b>	<b>8.21</b>	<b>10.04</b>	<b>81.8</b>

Source: Labour Force Survey

a The ratio of women's to men's earnings expressed as a percentage.

hampered by the fact that part-time men constitute a very small and atypical group, which may impair the precision of any estimated differences.

Looking first at gross hourly earnings from full-time work, women earned 82 per cent of equivalent male earnings in 2000; subsequently this fell to 81 per cent in 2001,<sup>15</sup> mainly because growth in men's earnings outstripped that of women at the top end of the earnings distribution. There are substantial differences between regions: average earnings in London and the South East are higher compared with the rest of the UK, and the pay differential between men and women is also greater.

The ratio between men and women for full-time earnings is affected by age, ethnicity and qualifications. *Table 5* shows that the earnings differential is narrowest for young people aged 16-24 years, where women earn 97 per cent of the equivalent for young men, and this widens to 78 per cent for those aged 50 to 59/64 and further widens to 64 per cent for people aged over state retirement age. Earnings of people from ethnic minority groups are generally lower than those of White people. The differential between men's and women's earnings is widest for Asian groups because of the low earnings of Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani women, which are considerably lower than those of all other groups (see *Table 6*).

Qualifications also have an impact on the earnings differential, with the gender pay gap being more marked the higher qualified people are. Women with no qualifications earn 85 per cent of male equivalent earnings for full-

time work, and this falls to 79 per cent for women with a degree or equivalent.<sup>16</sup>

While earnings in non-manual employment are higher on average than those for manual occupations, the gender pay differential is also higher for non-manual work, so male average earnings in these occupations are proportionately higher than women's, similar to the effect observed for region. Looking in more detail at different occupations, the gender pay gap is widest for sales occupations, personal and protective services and managers and administrators, and narrowest for clerical and secretarial occupations.<sup>17</sup>

The picture is very different for part-time work. Here, the earnings ratio is close to parity, with women earning 97 per cent of corresponding male earnings.<sup>18</sup> This reflects the fact that men working part-time are a very atypical segment of the male workforce, with relatively low earnings. Their reasons for working part-time (for example, being disabled, or in full-time education) may also impact on their earnings potential. Part-time work is relatively more common for women, who need to command a higher wage to make this worthwhile (for example, while paying for childcare). This is confirmed by the fact that part-time working women aged 25-34 actually earn more per hour than men in that age group.

Earnings from work are an important part of women's incomes, but income also includes other sources, such as benefits and income from investments and occupational pensions. Women's gross median individual income is less

**Table 6** Average hourly earnings of full-time employees by ethnic group and sex; United Kingdom; spring 2000

	Women (£)	Men (£)	Earnings ratio <sup>a</sup> (%)
White	8.21	10.08	81.5
Black	8.88	9.62	92.3
Indian	6.93	9.45	73.4
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	6.56	8.63	76.1
Mixed/other ethnic group	9.06	9.11	99.4
<b>All</b>	<b>8.21</b>	<b>10.04</b>	<b>81.8</b>

Source: Labour Force Survey

a The ratio of women's to men's earnings expressed as a percentage.

than half that of men (49 per cent).<sup>19</sup> Gender differences in income are lowest for single pensioners and single people without children, and highest for pensioner couples and couples with children.

Looking at household incomes, women are more likely than men to live in low-income households, defined as households with below 50 per cent of mean income and 60 per cent of median income. Some 55 per cent of all people living in such households are women, although they constitute only 51 per cent of the UK population.<sup>20</sup>

## Participation in public life

### Key indicators

- Women in the legislature.
- Women in the executive.
- Women in public appointments.
- Women's participation in voluntary and community work.

Women are less likely than men to be involved in government, and women's representation in UK politics is low by European standards. They represent around 18 per cent of Members of Parliament in England, 42 per cent of the Welsh assembly, 37 per cent of the Scottish Parliament and 13 per cent of the Northern Ireland Assembly. In local government, 29 per cent of councillors in England in 2001 were women, compared with 19 per cent in Wales and 23 per cent in Scotland. There are a higher proportion of women in the newly created Greater London Authority (44 per cent in 2002).

Following the 2001 general election, 33 per cent of Cabinet ministers were women.<sup>21</sup>

An important aspect of women's public life is their participation in public appointments. Women make up 34 per cent of all appointments to the boards of non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) and this proportion has risen from 26 per cent in 1992.<sup>22</sup> Some 4 per cent of all public appointments were from ethnic minority groups and 38 per cent of these appointees were women. This would indicate that ethnic minority people as a group are underrepresented on public bodies, but ethnic minority women are not less well represented within that group than women in public appointments generally. Looking at senior appointments to public bodies, the annual report by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA) notes that women are now more highly represented among chairs of public bodies within the OCPA remit than ever before: 34 per cent in 2000/2001 compared with 20 per cent in 1996/1997.<sup>23</sup>

The Time Use Survey 2000 found that women were slightly more likely than men to have participated in voluntary and community activities in the four weeks preceding the survey and this is consistent for all age groups. Older people were generally more likely to have been involved in this way, and the survey found that 17 per cent of women aged 50 to 64 (and 14 per cent of men in this age group) were involved in voluntary activities in the previous four weeks, compared with 8 per cent for women and 7 per cent for men aged 16 to 34.

## Health

### Key indicators

- Life expectancy.
- Death rates from selected causes.
- Smoking, drinking and exercise.

Women continue to live longer than men on average, although the gap is expected to narrow slightly over the next 25 years. The life expectancy of a girl born in 2000 is 80.6 years compared with 75.8 for a boy, a difference of 4.8 years, and this is expected to decrease to 4.3 years in 2024 (based on a life expectancy for girls of 83.2 years and 78.9 years for boys).<sup>24</sup>

Among older people there are more women than men in the population: over 60 per cent of those aged 70 or over are women. Death rates per thousand of the population are higher for women, and this reflects the higher proportion of women in older age groups. When comparing within age segments (for example, women and men aged 75 to 79, or any other age group), women's death rates are consistently lower than men's in the same age group.<sup>25</sup>

Looking at long-standing illness among women and men, the rate increases with age but is generally lower for women than men. Findings from the Health Survey for England show that long-standing illness rates were higher for Black Caribbean and Irish people and lower for those of Chinese ethnic origin.<sup>26</sup> Generally, differences between ethnic groups were larger than those between women and men within each ethnic group.

Concerning health-related behaviours, the study found that while men remain more likely than women to smoke, the differential has narrowed over time, that is, men's incidence of smoking has declined more than that for women.<sup>27</sup> While there has been a rising trend for women to give up smoking, men have become increasingly less likely to start smoking in the first place. For women, the fall in the overall rate of smoking due to smokers giving up has been partly offset by an increase in young women who have started to smoke: the proportion of younger women aged 16 to 24 doing so is

slightly higher than that of men in that age group.

A similar pattern is observed for alcohol consumption, in that although men remain more likely to drink above the recommended maximum daily amount, the male-female differential is much lower in the younger age groups.<sup>28</sup> Comparing data over time, there is evidence of a dramatic growth in alcohol consumption in the younger age groups, especially among young women, whose mean weekly alcohol consumption nearly doubled from 7.3 units in 1992 to 12.6 units in 2000.

## Crime

### Key indicators

- Women as victims.
- Women as perpetrators.
- Fear of crime.
- Confidence in the criminal justice system.

In looking at women as victims of crime, the study focused particularly on violent crimes, as these are the types of crimes in which gender differences are the most apparent. Women are slightly less likely to experience violent crimes than men, but the proportion of such crimes involving women increased slightly in the late 1990s to 43 per cent in 1999.<sup>29</sup> However, the British Crime Survey (BCS), which is the source of these data, is known to understate the extent of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking against women.

The majority of violent crimes against women are committed by people known to them, while men are much more likely than women to be the victim of a stranger (and this likelihood increased in the late 1990s).

As far as the perpetrators of crime are concerned, women are a minority of known offenders, although the proportion of offenders who are women has increased slightly during the 1990s (from 17 per cent to 19 per cent).

As is the case with men, criminality among women is highest in the youngest age ranges, although criminality among women aged 18 and over rose throughout the 1990s, and tended to fall among those aged under

18. Female offenders tend to commit less serious crimes than men, and are more likely than men to be convicted of theft and related offences, and much less likely to be convicted of violent offences. Women perpetrators are less likely than men to be sent to prison, even for the same categories of offence and even when they have similar criminal records.<sup>30</sup> The BCS shows that fear of crime appeared to have fallen slightly in England and Wales during the late 1990s (1996-2000). Women were, however, more worried about crime (of all types) than men were.

On the whole, women's confidence in the criminal justice system is very similar to that of men, with most aspects of the system being rated slightly higher by women than by men.

## Transport

### Key indicators

- Proportion with a full driving licence.
- Access to a car.
- Main mode of transport.
- Purpose of trips made.

Access to (public or private) transport is a key aspect of women's lives. The proportion of women holding a driving licence has increased dramatically, and doubled over the 25 years to 1999/2000 from 29 per cent to 60 per cent (National Travel Survey).<sup>31</sup> Among both sexes, the highest proportions of licence holders are found in the 30-49 age groups. However, proportions of women licence holders have grown particularly fast in the older age groups (from 24 per cent to 68 per cent among 50-59 year olds and from 4 per cent to 22 per cent among those aged 70 and over in the 25-year period).

Men have traditionally been the main driver in two-adult households, and the National Travel Survey shows that this pattern continues. Nevertheless, over the period 1989/91 to 1998/2000 the proportion of all women who were the main driver in their household rose from 24 per cent to 33 per cent, whereas the figure for men hardly changed (48 per cent and 51 per cent respectively). This pattern can be explained by the reduction

in the number of households with no car, and the growing proportion of female heads of households. In 1998/2000 76 per cent of women and 83 per cent of men had access to a car (up from 72 per cent and 79 per cent respectively in 1989/91).

For 33 per cent of women, driving a car is their main mode of transport, compared with 48 per cent for men (National Travel Survey, 1998/2000). Women are somewhat more likely than men to cite walking as their main mode of transport (28 per cent and 24 per cent respectively), and similarly being a car passenger is more common as the main mode of transport among women than among men (27 per cent and 17 per cent). Although very small proportions of both sexes cite public transport as their main mode, the proportion of women doing so is higher than the proportion of men.

Finally, the National Travel Survey 1998/2000 shows that the most common purpose of trips is shopping for both women and men, although women report this most frequently (23 per cent compared with 19 per cent). In contrast a greater proportion of men's trips than women's involve commuting to work (18 per cent compared with 13 per cent) or business travel. Women report visiting friends at home more frequently than men, and are also twice as likely as men to be escorting children to education (7 per cent compared with 3 per cent).

## Conclusion

This article has outlined the wealth and depth of information on women in Britain collected by the Key Indicators study and has explored current trends in gender equality. These baseline indicators have been disseminated widely and are available for public use and scrutiny, and they provide a basis for public debate and policy development.

The richness and diversity of the information presented here means that there is no single main conclusion, but looking at trends over time it would appear that gender differentials have been declining across a wide range of areas and that there is certainly an indication that women and men in Britain are becoming more equal.

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Copies of the report *Key Indicators of Women's Position in Britain* are available free of charge from the DTI Publications Orderline on 0870 150 2500 or from [www.dti.gov.uk/publications](http://www.dti.gov.uk/publications), quoting reference number URN 02/1453. A short summary of the research has also been published in the March 2003 issue of *Horizons* [www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/horizons/Horizons24\\_Mar03.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/horizons/Horizons24_Mar03.pdf). Both the report and the summaries can be downloaded from the WEU website [womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/research](http://womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/research).

## Notes

- 1 2001 mid-year population estimates, ONS; General Register Office for Scotland; Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.
- 2 2000-based population projections, Government Actuary Department (2000).
- 3 These population estimates are slightly different from those in the report, as they are based on the 2001 Census, estimates of which were not available when the report was finalised.
- 4 Labour Force Survey (LFS), spring 2001.
- 5 LFS spring quarters *Historical Supplement*, 2001.
- 6 Bartholomew et al. (1992), Moss et al. (1999) and Twomey (2002).
- 7 LFS, spring 2003.
- 8 LFS spring quarters *Historical Supplement*, 2001 and LFS, spring 2003.
- 9 LFS spring quarters *Historical Supplement*, 2001.
- 10 Statistics of Education, Education and Training Statistics for the United Kingdom, 2000, 2001.
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