



Women and Discrimination

“So many legal victories, such as the right to equal pay won in 1970, remain abstract pledges that are yet to translate into reality.”

Kate Banyard

How we judge improvements in women's equality usually reflects the experience of women in the most powerful positions in society. As women's contribution to society is increasingly recognised, it usually focusses on Directors of companies, increased pay for the employed and when women secure employment within traditionally male environments. Although this is helpful for an overview of progress in general, it does not take into account, “factors such as the gendered and racialized workplace, the organization of the family structure, societal norms, the effects of racism, sexism, and ableism, along with class, to name a few.” (Holstien, M)

This intersection of oppressions not only increases women experience of discrimination, but also reinforces issues, such as poverty, access to employment and career progression, access to services and support and even the impact of climate change (Women's Environmental Network).

The key to addressing women's oppression cannot be achieved by only identifying the outcomes we desire, but by gendering the issues we wish to address, for example:

- If we use a gendered analysis to discuss poverty we recognise that, “Women have been consistently and repeatedly hit hardest by austerity measures and tax and benefit changes” (Fawcett Society, 2017). This means, “More than one fifth of women, 22 per cent, have a persistent low income.” (National Education Union)
- Education is a key issue for girls, and we recognise that higher attainment links to improved outcomes later in life. What is not included however is the impact of sexual violence and abuse across the lifecycle, body image and responsibility for childcare, all of which impact on how women are treated when they enter employment. Furthermore, statistics showing higher attainment for girls across secondary education, does not include impact of class, e.g. boys from middle class families have higher attainment than boys and girls from working class communities. A focus on employment statistics would demonstrate that barriers are much greater for working class women, who have reduced access to employment regardless of how many qualifications they have.
- Women and girls continue to experience violence and abuse across the lifecycle, from child sexual abuse to domestic violence, rape and sexual assault in older years. This not only impacts directly on women who are abused, but as Marilyn French recognised that; “As long as some men use physical force to subjugate females, all men need not. The knowledge that some men do suffices to threaten all women.”

In order to address these and the other issues that oppress women, it is essential that women have equal representation in elected positions. The inability to achieve this in 2020, is both an indicator of the barriers women experience, and reduces Government ability to understand these barriers and their impact on the most affected women's lives. Currently only 34.9% of MSPs and 29% of Councillors in Local Government are women. The failure of successive Governments to address the lack of women's representation in their structures, compounds the oppression of the women who are most disenfranchised, and reduces government effectiveness in addressing this.

EVENT RESULTS

THEME: Prejudice, bias, inequality, intolerance, judgment or bigotry ... call it what you like but discrimination whether subtle or blatant, direct or indirect has a proven negative impact on us as women, our communities and society.

This Summary looks at issues surrounding discrimination encouraging discussion and debate, addressing the effects it has on women's lives and finding ways of challenging it.

PARTICIPANTS: Total of 81 women from local communities, representing a wide range of backgrounds, convened 20 break-out groups on issues with 68 proposed actions. **(Sept 2014 / Feb 2018)**

TOP PRIORITIES VOTED BY PARTICIPANTS (NUMBER OF VOTES)

Sept 2014	Feb 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early education to create self-belief from child to adult. 36 votes • Challenge media influences. 34 votes • Have courage and belief in yourself. 30 votes • Conversations like today needs to happen more often in more places. Use today as a launch pad. 25 votes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GP/consultant (medical evidence) should be fully accepted by ATOS and DWP. 24 votes • Access to services for all women: mobility support, data base like internet services, health services, referral pathways for women; avoid the circle of prejudice by adoptive person centred approach. 23 votes • Give job centre/DWP staff lessons in humility. 15 votes • A cultural shift in our attitudes towards boys/girls. 13 votes • Recognition of the social isolation people experience due to poor financial situation e.g. lack of fares and inability to earn money and remedy it. 13 votes

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

Sept 2014	Feb 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual action/mind-set change. 133 votes • Education/Training/Awareness raising. 128 votes • Government/legislative/ structural change. 48 votes • Organised action. 25 votes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government/Structural changes. 96 votes • Education/Training/Awareness raising/publicity. 60 votes • Individual action/mind-set change. 54 votes • Organised action/Support groups. 28 votes

DETAILED RESULTS FROM THE WORKING GROUPS

Sept 2014	Feb 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early education to create self-belief from child to adult. 36 votes • Challenge media influences. 34 votes • Have courage and belief in yourself. 30 votes Conversations like today needs to happen more often in more places. Use today as a launch pad. 25 votes • Raise awareness. 15 votes • Respect. 15 votes • Parents should be educated about discrimination and discuss this with their children. 14 votes • Less sexism in general – more women in politics. 14 votes • Life experience should be taken into account. 13 votes • In schools there should be staff training around cultural awareness and also for pupils. 13 votes • Why are politicians allowing games like Grand Theft Auto to exist? Politics needs to change to be more accountable. 11 votes • Positive representation of older women. 11 votes • Stop bundling everyone and teach everyone to love and respect everyone. 10 votes • Services working together. 10 votes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GP/consultant (medical evidence) should be fully accepted by ATOS and DWP. 24 votes • Access to services for all women: mobility support, data base like internet services, health services, referral pathways for women; avoid the circle of prejudice by adopting person centred approach. 23 votes • Give job centre/DWP staff lessons in humility. 15 votes • A cultural shift in our attitudes towards boys/girls. 13 votes • Recognition of the social isolation people experience due to poor financial situation e.g. lack of fares and inability to earn money and remedy it. 13 votes • Education and integration (children/elderly). 12 votes • Support group for ethnic minorities/women's aids. 12 votes • Government. 12 votes • Make assessor relevant to medical condition (psychiatrist, Cardiac etc.) 11 votes • Education for boys/men and girls, training within schools to help women/girls speak out. 10 votes • Raise awareness about rights in relationships. 10 votes