

Submission - Dr Victoria Basham, Reader in International Relations, Cardiff University

1. Do you think statutory measures should be introduced for gender pay gap reporting?

The introduction of statutory measures for gender pay gap reporting is vital. It is not possible to diagnose and solve an issue without sufficient data and there are gaps in current measuring. It is vital though that any narratives that organisations are allowed to provide as part of this reporting are looked at with care. For example, there is not a wealth of evidence that suggests that there are hidden or less visible factors that contribute to the gender pay gap such as women and minority group members not putting themselves forward for promotion opportunities. A number of companies and organisations use banding in pay and when promoting a group of people will sometimes put them all at the same pay grade. This may be a 'gender free' approach but its not necessarily a gender fair one if systemic issues have meant that women and others have been promoted later than they should be. This does nothing to remedy any pay gap that could exist as a result.

2. What are your views on other types of mandatory reporting such as the ethnicity pay gap?

For the same reasons stated in response to question 1 I am supportive of this and think it is especially important for intersectional reasons - black women, for example, can face multiple barriers in employment that can contribute to more than one pay gap.

3. Do you think there has been any change in the cultural influences which affect the gender pay gap in recent years?

Whilst many organisations have adopted conscious bias training and talk the language of equality, diversity and inclusion, there is still a tendency to view inequalities such as the gender pay gap in narrow terms and a salient reluctance to engage in positive action to address these issues. For example, whilst some organisations have made headlines by promoting and increasing the pay of all of their women staff, other organisations have seen this as inequality which fundamentally misunderstands the systemic nature of inequality. Maternity and paternity provisions are also still woefully inadequate at the statutory level, and this seems to reflect a recalcitrance in wider culture around women and care responsibilities that can be damaging to both men and women.

4. Do you think Governments undertook a gender-sensitive approach to their Covid-19 policies?

As scholars such as Claire Wenham (LSE) have pointed out, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on gender equality, and it is my view that Government responses to this have been inadequate. In the first instance, women make up the majority of the global health and social care workforce and so were more likely to be exposed to the virus but many governments were underprepared for a pandemic despite repeated warnings and so shortages of PPE, and the long and traumatic work and poor wages that the pandemic has brought into sharp relief have disproportionately affected women. There is also much emerging evidence to suggest that the burden of homeschooling and additional labour in the home has disproportionately affected women who have generally taken on more of this labour. As more could have been done to ventilate schools and provide more government support for families and schools throughout, this does not suggest that a gender-sensitive approach was prioritised. Interpersonal violence in the home, which also disproportionately affects women, was also another significant issue that was once again largely left to third sector organisations, many of whom were already struggling, to provide support and raise awareness.

5. What impact do you think Covid-19 has had on men and women in the home and workplace?

As above.