



The gender impact of the cuts

The Government's savage austerity programme, including £18bn of cuts to social security and welfare and hundreds of thousands of job losses in the public sector will clearly hit women and families hard – particularly pregnant women, women pensioners and single mothers.

Women's jobs axed

Public sector job cuts will hit women hardest

- Women make up 65 per cent of the public sector workforce.
- Just under 40 per cent of women's jobs nationally are in the public sector, compared to around 15 per cent of men's jobs.
- In some regions, as much as 50% of the female working population is employed in the public sector.
- Public sector jobs provide more security, flexibility, and better pay and terms and conditions than women are likely to find in the private sector. Cutting public sector jobs will mean many women facing either precarious, low paid work in the private sector or unemployment.

Benefits and welfare for women and families slashed

Women will pay for 72% of the changes in taxes, benefits and tax credits set out in the budget.

- Many benefits relating to pregnancy and families have been cut or frozen. For example, the Health in Pregnancy Grant, Child Benefit, the Baby and Toddler Elements of Tax Credits. Other cuts such as housing benefit cuts will disproportionately affect women as more women rely on these benefits than men.

"The government cannot sit back and let women bear the brunt of public sector job losses, tax and benefit changes and cuts to public services. A radical rethink of the impact its policies are having on women is needed, starting with making low-income families the beneficiaries of welfare reform, rather than the losers of welfare cuts." Brendan Barber, General Secretary TUC

- Even discounting benefits and tax credits related to children, women still pay £3.6bn (66 per cent) compared to men paying £1.9bn (34 per cent) because women will also be hardest hit by housing benefit cuts and the switch to CPI uprating for public sector pensions and benefits.



“Caps on Housing Benefit, increased rents for social housing and cuts in expenditure on social housing will impact disproportionately on women, particularly lone parents and those with larger families, many of whom are from minority ethnic backgrounds” Women’s Budget Group

- Single mothers will be particularly hard hit by the changes to the welfare and tax system. Single mothers will lose 18.5 per cent of their net income (-£3,121 in cash terms).

Save our Services

Women rely on the services that the government plans to cut

- Women will bear the brunt of cuts to services as women are more likely than men to use many services including social care, libraries, education (further education and higher education), early years care, sexual/reproductive health services, and healthcare services.
- Although the Sure Start budget has been protected in cash terms, in reality it faces a 9 per cent cut in real terms over the four-year period due to the effect of inflation.
- Sure Start grants used to be ringfenced but as of 2011/12 they won’t be. We are already seeing Sure Start services being cut.

Pensions

Women face poverty in retirement

- The government’s announcement that it plans to accelerate the equalisation of state pension age for women by 2018, and then increase both men and women’s state pension ages to 66 by 2020 will hit women particularly hard – especially those aged around 56-57.

“The extra three years of income could be worth more than £15,000 just looking at the basic state pension, and could be much higher for women with substantial entitlements to Serps or the

state second pension.” Towers Watson, pensions specialists

- Women are already at a disadvantage with regard to state pensions and are more likely to face pensioner poverty than men.
- Women face cuts to their work-based pensions as pensions will be uprated according to the (lower) CPI measure of inflation rather than RPI.
- In the public sector the government has indicated their intention to save £1.8bn per year by 2014-5 by increasing employee contributions to public service pensions.

So what can we do about it?

- Make our voices heard. Get the gender impact of the cuts on the agenda at your union branch meetings. Talk to your friends, family, and colleagues about these issues.
- Write to your MP
- Ask your union for help in getting local press interest in stories about services or jobs being cut in your area and the effect that it will have on women and children.
- Get involved in local campaigns.
- Organise a campaign meeting – The TUC can help supply information and your union may have its own materials for you to use.
- Visit the TUC’s campaign website www.falseeconomy.org.uk where you can share your news about cuts being made in your area and find out about local campaigns, meetings and demonstrations.
- Come to the March for the Alternative on 26th March 2011. Check www.marchforthealternative.org.uk for route details. Bring your friends, colleagues, family and children. Ask your union if they are organising transport from your region.
- Visit http://www.tuc.org.uk/alltogetherfor/key_documents.cfm?theme=alltogether for materials.