

Desk research findings: Women's experiences

Prepared summer 2022, published May 2023



List of sources

- Women's Aid
- Womens Budget Group
- Refuge
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- The Fawcett Society
- The Equality Trust
- Carers Trust
- Agenda
- Christians Against Poverty
- Judiciary UK
- Women In Prison
- House of Commons Library, UK Parliament
- Women Against Rape
- Tomorrow's Women
- Southall Black Sisters
- You Make It
- Gingerbread
- The Chartered Management Institute
- Society for Personality and Social Psychology



1. HOUSEHOLD BEHAVIOUR

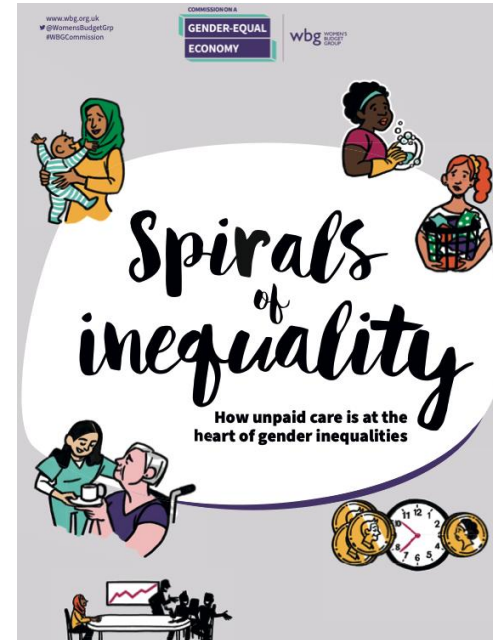
Women and the home



The household can reinforce inequalities between men and women

As we trace how inequalities between men and women persist, findings show that the household can reinforce uneven division of unpaid work.

When this constrains the economic opportunities of women, it sets in motion a pathway that leads to **economic** and **social** inequalities between men and women.



Women are almost twice as likely as men to do the bulk of household budgeting

Financial decision-making is complex and unique to every household, but the trend is that in couples the responsibility of financial admin falls unequally with women

A report by The Fawcett Society and Starling Bank says:

Women living with a male partner are almost twice as likely as men to take charge of household budgeting (37% vs 22%):
- 49% of women surveyed make the decisions on groceries, compared to 14% of men

A majority of couples are transparent about money and discuss it, but a notable minority are not aware of their partner's savings or income (34%).

Women make most of the daily decisions on household purchases

A report by The Fawcett Society and Starling Bank says:

- Women continue to make most of the daily decisions on household purchases (56% vs 15% of men)
- Women are more likely to suffer from ‘spending guilt’:
 - Women in couples are almost twice as likely as men (37% vs 21%) to feel guilty when purchasing something for themselves
- On a positive note, more women are prioritizing financial independence and having an equal say when it comes to big expenditures such as mortgages or holidays

However, The Fawcett Society argue ***“we won’t achieve financial equality for women until unpaid care work and housework is shared equally between women and men”*** and want to see the government and financial sector invest in better financial education for women and men to build resilience against future financial insecurity.

Women as carers

Women carrying out more unpaid work than men happens around the world, but in the latest World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Equality Report the UK slipped from 15th position to 21st.

Unpaid work is divided unequally - on average women carry out 60% more than men (cooking, childcare and housework). Transport (driving) is the only area where men do more unpaid work than women.

Women aged 26-35 undertake most unpaid work, aligned with birth of children and women under 50 disproportionately care for aging parents.

Types of unpaid work

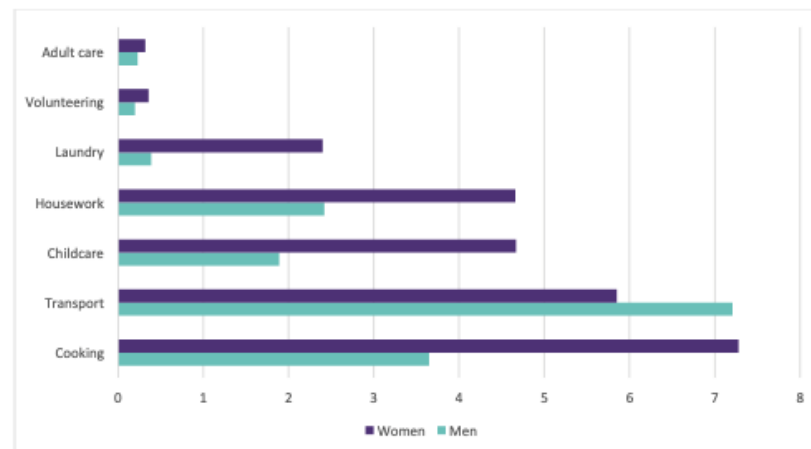


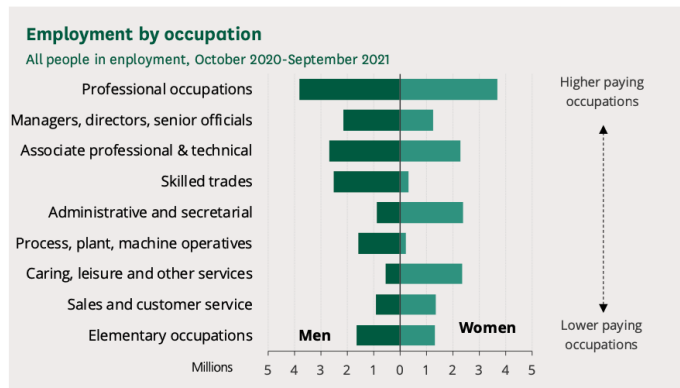
Figure 1: Average hours of unpaid work done per week in each category for men and women, UK, 2015 (Source: HETUS 2015)

Women, employment and caring

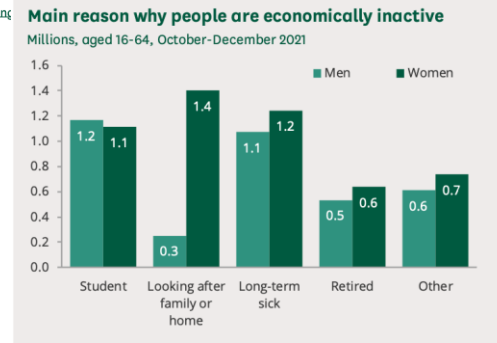
Women are more likely to be working in jobs paying the National Minimum wage. The Low Pay Commission estimates 6.2% of female employees aged 25+ were paid minimum wage vs. 4.5% of male employees at April 2021.

A higher share of men than women work as managers, directors, or senior officials.

The main reason women were economically inactive was due to looking after family or home.



Note: Occupations ranked based on median hourly pay (excluding overtime) for employees as of April 2021.
Source: ONS, Employment by status and occupation, via Namis and Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings



Source: ONS, Labour Market bulletin, Table INAC01, 15 February 2022.

The pandemic intensified pressures on carers

Due to funding cuts and closure of local services before the pandemic unpaid carers took on additional caring responsibilities. The pandemic caused even greater or new caring responsibilities, with family members unable to look after themselves due to illness, disability or old age

- Almost half (48%) of all adult carers had had to give up work and an income because of their caring role
- 49% of carers had had to use personal savings and 51% of carers had had to give personal interests because of their caring role
- More than half of all young carers had increased their caring role since the pandemic
- At least one third of young carers and young adult carers said their caring role resulted in them feeling 'worried' (36%), 'lonely' (33%) or 'stressed' (42%)



**Pushed to the Edge:
over 90% of unpaid
carers feel ignored by
the Government**

The uneven gendered division of unpaid caring work constrains women's opportunities for paid work

According to the WBG, uneven gendered division of unpaid work sets in train a **vicious and reinforcing cycle**: women's greater share of unpaid work is a key contributor to lower earnings and, in turn, the lower earnings of women relative to men mean that women are more likely to take time out of the workforce to care for a child or relative and, in doing so, perpetuate this inequality between men and women.

Commentators make arguments that sectors where women are over-represented tend to have lower wages is because these are often seen as extension of the unpaid caring work women do 'naturally', leading to skills in these sectors being undervalued.

Women's career progression and earnings is also hampered by high levels of pregnancy and maternity discrimination in Britain, with 75% of mothers reporting pregnancy discrimination.

Lack of affordable, local childcare can hinder single parents who are women from (re)entering work

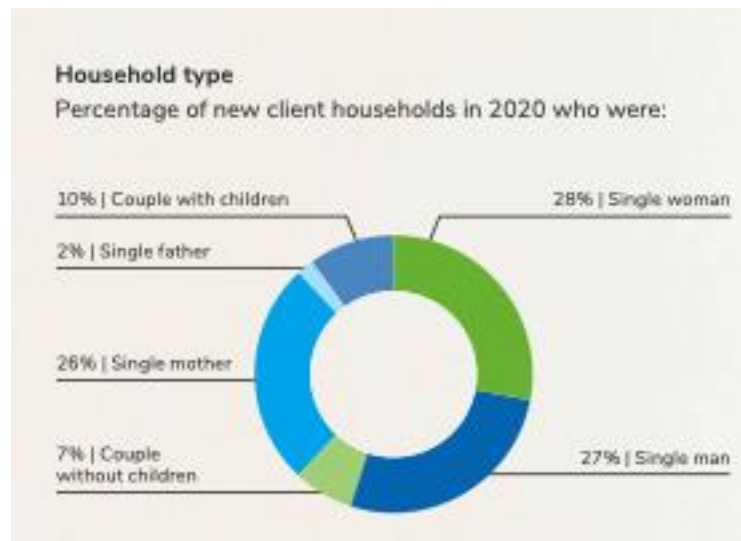
Single parent households face around twice the risk of poverty as couple-parent households. Limits to single parents' incomes are a major factor – especially the barriers to enter and progress in work and the disproportionate impact of welfare reform.

Gingerbread quote research that shows single parents are more likely to work more hours if they have access to childcare, but there's not enough affordable or accessible childcare:

- 40% of single parents found it difficult to meet childcare costs in 2019, compared to 24% of couple parents
- Nearly half of single parents surveyed by Gingerbread have had to borrow from friends, family or lenders to cover childcare costs
- Non-working mothers cite childcare issues as the main reason they can't work

Poverty has risen sharply for lone parent families

A significant proportion of new Christians Against Poverty clients in 2020 were single parents or single adults (83% altogether). Clients approach CAP for help with debt, mainly due to low income, mental ill-health, relationship breakdown, illness, unemployment



The cost-of-living crisis has increased poverty and some support has been cut

Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows relative poverty for children in lone-parent families has risen at a significantly faster rate compared with other households

Relative poverty is defined as having an income of less than 60% of the national median, adjusted for household size. For single parents, this measure of poverty rose by 9 percentage points between 2013-14 and 2019-20 to reach 49% at the onset of the global health emergency.

Despite increasing employment for lone parents, the causes are: decreasing state benefits, weak national economic growth and stagnant wages.

Among the cuts in support that have most affected single mothers are: the benefit cap, the four-year freeze in benefits between 2016 and 2020, the two-child limit and a lowering of the age of the youngest child when single parents must start looking for work.



🗨 The vast majority of the 1.8 million lone-parent families in Britain are headed by women.

Together, they are raising 3.1 million children – more than a fifth of all children.



2. SOCIAL FACTORS

How gender inequality manifests in women's experiences in society

Protected characteristics and other influences on inequality



Introductory note: gathering data on women's issues, particularly those marginalised by multiple disadvantages is problematic

The APPG panel discussed problems that parliamentarians and policy makers face when trying to gather data on women's issues:

Whilst women experience disadvantage simply by virtue of their sex, the extent and reality of that varies significantly for different women.

Young women are particularly **invisible** due to the numbers in NEET (not in education, employment or training) and the data which is broken down by age but not by other characteristics, making it hard to talk about specific experiences.

It's a challenge to find young female parents and get them to participate in surveys – they can 'drop off the map' and lack contact with services and be difficult to reach for data collection.

Women are hit hardest by economic downturn, austerity measures and benefit changes

The Fawcett Society highlight failure to tackle the root causes of inequality and policies fail to reflect the realities of women's lives:

- There's a two-child limit in Tax Credits and Universal Credit – this pushes children into poverty and whilst there's a 'rape clause' that women can use to obtain further financial support this pushes women into disclosing sexual violence
- Single parents have been most adversely affected by cuts to services and tax benefit changes
- A lack of affordable, accessible and flexible childcare is a barrier to women returning to or progressing in work
- Women born in the 1950s have been disproportionately impacted by increases in State Pension Age and many live in poverty as a result

Data shows 900 women in UK affected by benefit cap 'rape clause'

Figures on two-child cap on benefits reveal women had to disclose child was result of sexual assault



👤 Families hit by the two-child limit lose £53 a week for every ineligible child compared with previous what they would have received before its introduction. Photograph: Thodsapol Thongdeekhieo/Alamy

Patrick Butler *Social policy editor*

Fri 17 Jul 2020 06:00 BST

Source: The Guardian, July 2020

Inequalities intersect to make austerity harder for BME women

The APPG panel discussed a report by Women's Budget Group and Runnymede Trust on the impact of austerity on BME women:

- BME women aren't on a level playing field with hurdles to overcome of gender inequality, plus disproportionate caring responsibilities, discrimination in the labour market and the incidence of poverty is higher in certain groups, e.g. Bangladeshi households compared to white households
- The Runnymede/WBG report estimated a **20% disparity** in living standards of BME households by 2020

The panel argue that women are invisible in policy narratives and their needs are not addressed by policy decisions.



New research shows that poverty, ethnicity and gender magnify the impact of austerity on BME women

EMBARGOED UNTIL 0.01 HOURS MONDAY 28th NOVEMBER

Low income black and Asian women are paying the highest price for austerity according to new analysis by the Women's Budget Group in partnership with the race equality think tank Runnymede Trust.

The new analysis shows the impact of tax, benefit and public service changes at the intersection of income, gender and ethnicity for the first time. It covers fiscal policy from 2010 up to and including the 2016 Autumn Financial Statement projected up to 2020.

Source: WBG and Runnymede Trust research, 2016

Women in England's poorest areas die younger

The Guardian argues women's lives are cut short by unequal position in society.

In England women's average life expectancy in most deprived areas is **78.7 years**, which is 8 years fewer than those living in England's wealthy areas (Health Foundation analysis, 2018 data). Our female life expectancy is lower than most OECD countries except Mexico.

Deprived areas include: **Blackpool, Knowsley, Liverpool, Middlesbrough.**

To improve women's health in these areas the focus should be on providing secure jobs, adequate incomes, decent housing and quality education.



The screenshot shows a news article from The Guardian. The main headline is "Women in England's poorest areas die younger than in most OECD countries". Below the headline, there is a sub-headline: "Exclusive: average life expectancy in most deprived areas is 78.7 years, worse than the average of any OECD nation except Mexico". A red dot icon is followed by the text "Analysis: women's lives cut short by unequal position in society". The author is identified as "Andrew Gregory, Health editor". The date and time are "Sun 17 Apr 2022 18:00 BST". There are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Email. The main image shows a busy street scene with many people walking.

The pace of change to address gender inequality has been slow

The UK is one of the most economically and socially unequal countries in the developed world [Equality Trust, 2022]

Women's Budget Group argue one of the reasons the pace of change to address gender inequality and women's needs has been slow is because **men are over-represented in senior decision-making positions in politics, the civil service, business, law and the media.**

Without concerted efforts to address the barriers to women's career progression, such as unpaid caring work, discrimination which makes assumptions about women's leadership potential, and harassment, it's unlikely there will be change at scale.

“Decisions around policy, laws and spending will continue to be informed largely by the perspectives of men, and therefore address, first and foremost, the needs of men”

CMI research shows women occupy only 41% of UK workplace management roles yet an ‘action gap’ remains



Chartered Management Institute (CMI)
March 8, 2022

0 Comments

Violence against women is described as cause and consequence of women's economic inequality

Economic hardship makes violence against women and girls (VAWG) more likely and makes it harder for women to leave abusive relationships

Poorer households present with higher rates of domestic abuse and because poverty makes it harder for the woman to leave a relationship, it exposes her to prolonged violence and/or the risk of her returning to the relationship after leaving.

Abusive relationships entrench disadvantage by limiting opportunities for paid work, at a time when the state's welfare system is eroding.

Women experiencing economic abuse have a reduced ability to leave the abusive relationship

Women who are economically abused experience their partner taking complete control of their finances. These women find themselves without money or bank accounts in their name, in addition to the psychological affects of the abuse.

Lockdown made setting up a bank account and regaining financial independence more difficult because of travelling further to reach an open bank branch.

Support for women who are economically abused

In response to these challenges, Refuge's economic abuse service is collaborating with banks, credit rating agencies and government to offer support such as sorting out paperwork with creditors, claims for benefits and GP registration.



Through our partnership with The Co-operative Bank, we learnt that 1 in 6 adults identify as having experienced economic abuse within a current or former relationship. 1.6 million experienced it for the first time during the pandemic.

When those subjected to behaviours indicating economic abuse are taken into account, this figure rises to 39%. Many are left with long-term debt, a damaged credit rating and limited access to financial products and services long after leaving their abusive partner. Economic abuse lands survivors in over £3,000 debt, on average, with one in four owing over £5,000.

So, in October 2020, we launched 'Know Economic Abuse' with The Co-operative Bank. We created a five-point plan of action for government, banks and credit ratings agencies. We partnered with Experian to review the processes in place for survivors to repair their credit reports.

And we presented the Know Economic Abuse campaign to over 100 people from the VAWG and banking sectors at a virtual event hosted by Surviving Economic Abuse.

In February 2021, we started work to establish a cross-sector Commission on Online Banking. Its work will continue throughout 2021 and into 2022 and will include recommendations to make online and digital banking safer for survivors. We continue to work with the government, advocating reforms to Universal Credit that will make the benefit system safer for survivors. And we are working on a cross-government fund for survivors who are experiencing financial hardship.

After leaving an abusive relationship women still find themselves facing economic challenges

Women leaving a relationship go through some form of court proceeding such as divorce or child contact proceedings. The associated costs can be damaging, especially when women don't meet the threshold for Legal Aid, e.g. the assessment for legal aid includes property or joint savings that women may own with a perpetrator but that, in practice, they can't access.

Women with children may find themselves using most of their resources (time, energy, money) to ensure the payment of child support from the abuser. These challenges come at a time when survivors should be addressing and recovering from the trauma they experienced.

- ▶ Nearly half of respondents who had left had to pay legal fees as a result of leaving (eg divorce, child contact/custody and housing).
- ▶ Over half of those with children said that their partner had withheld child support after they left.

- ▶ Almost two-fifths of respondents had used credit to pay for essentials during the relationship, with almost a third going on to take out one or more types of credit in order to leave the abuser(s).
- ▶ 43.1% of respondents told us they were in debt as a result of the abuse and over a quarter regularly lost sleep through worrying about debt.

Often vulnerable women don't have the language to describe what they're going through

Refuge offer culturally specific services for ethnic minority groups who may have difficulties in accessing support due to discrimination, language needs or immigration status.

Refuge's approach includes helping many women suffering abuse to recognize the pattern of abuse/ control in order to rebuild their lives.

"One of Refuge's outreach workers, Anna, began supporting me. We talked about everything I had been through and she helped me to understand that Ben's behaviour was a deliberate pattern of control. It was not my fault.*

"I can honestly say that nobody in my life has done more for me than Anna. Together, we made a plan to keep me and the children safe. She held my hand, sometimes literally, through divorce proceedings and child contact battles. She gave me the language I needed to describe what I had been through. It's like she gave me a secure base, from which I could begin to rebuild my life.

"Now things are so much better. It isn't easy to break away from a violent partner; I don't think I could have done it without Refuge's support" [Isobel]

Women's Aid offer support on the many interconnected issues that domestic abuse sufferers may deal with

Women's Aid offer connection to organisations that can help with a range of audiences needing support on domestic abuse. The list indicates the range of issues influencing and impacted by abuse:

women's aid

until women & children are safe

Alcohol and drugs
Black and Minority Ethnic women
Children
Disability
Elder Abuse
Families and parenting
Female genital mutilation (FGM)
Forced marriage
Gambling
Government info on domestic violence
Housing
Immigration issues
International organisations
Legal advice
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
Men

women's aid

until women & children are safe

Mental Health
Money Issues
Perpetrators
Pet Fostering
Police
Publishers and Resources
Refuge services
Relative abuse
Sexual Health
Sexual violence
Stalking
Survivors of abuse
Trafficking
Women's campaigning groups
Young people

Women's Aid have built an evidence base for 'what works' in the domestic abuse sector

Using 'On Track', their case management and outcome measurement system to record data on referral patterns, experiences of abuse, support need, profile of survivors and feedback on external services such as housing, legal services, local authority safeguarding, NHS and police.

The system is designed to be used by domestic abuse services who want to improve the helpline/ counselling/ therapy/ refuge/resettlement support they offer to survivors of abuse.

Women's Aid suggest training for front-line professionals on the impact of domestic abuse



They suggest:

- Continued training for frontline staff to spot the signs of vulnerability and to establish clear policies on domestic abuse - e.g. Jobcentre Plus offices, at banks, at consumer financial services.
- A review of how the Legal Aid Agency calculates capital and income for women applying for legal aid, to ensure the impact of economic abuse is taken into account
- Improved Child Maintenance Service (CMS) for survivors e.g. fast-track survivors to the Collect And Pay option and charges for using the CMS should be waived

3. WOMEN, ABUSE AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

How and why women are affected by the criminal justice system differently to men

What support is available to women

Lockdown increased calls to abuse helplines

Refuge's National Domestic Abuse Helpline experienced a **64% increase** in calls and visits to their Helpline Website increased sevenfold – this included the Live Chat which allowed women to communicate online and in silence.

When women suffering abuse were locked in with their abusers, not only was their personal health at risk but also their children's schooling (which became their responsibility).

"50 years since Refuge started, women's voices still go unheard. Their experiences of domestic abuse are underestimated"
[Refuge CEO Ruth Davison]

Challenges of navigating the criminal justice system for victims of domestic abuse

During the pandemic, the experience for domestic abuse sufferers was compounded by the criminal courts closing which delayed case progression.

Virtual hearings in criminal and civil courts improved accessibility for some and created barriers for others. Access to injunctions and court orders increased, but the number of perpetrators charged and convicted dropped significantly [ONS 2020 'Domestic abuse during the pandemic, England and Wales'].

Refuge, via the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, used emergency funding to give extra support to help women who survived domestic abuse to 'move on'. Funds helped women who were furloughed or could not afford rents to:

- pay their rent deposits in advance
- buy furniture and white goods
- reduce their rent arrears and eliminate this barrier to moving on to a new home

Organisations report the effects of having a conviction on victims of abuse

Women Against Rape explain that women who are prosecuted on low-level offences can experience disproportionately harmful knock-on effects of having a criminal conviction.

These can include a lasting negative impact on employment opportunities and being denied compensation when a victim of crime - for example, of rape or sexual assault.

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Rape victims with minor criminal convictions blocked from financial compensation

Exclusive: 'Given so many of these victims were attacked as children by grown men, the trauma is lasting,' says campaigner

Maya Oppenheim Women's Correspondent • Monday 13 December 2021 18:31

• [6](#) Comments



Women from MEMC backgrounds face double disadvantage in the criminal justice system

Women in Prison report the latest statistics on women and minorities affected by the criminal justice system:

Agenda report that ethnic minority and migrant women can face a double disadvantage of gender inequality and racism:

Leading organisations working to tackle the stark disparities have announced a 10-point action plan demanding government change training, recruitment and accountability to stamp out the systemic biases and focus on rehabilitation.



Ethnic minority women and migrant women have been to be more likely to face harsher treatment across the criminal justice system.

Many have experienced high levels of abuse with 85% of the women that Hibiscus support revealing that they have experienced gender-based violence which drive them into the criminal justice system, with the majority serving short sentences for non-violent offences.

These women also face additional inequalities through race, immigration and faith inequalities when they encounter the criminal justice system.

The failure to acknowledge and support faith as an important part of their identity can further accentuate their sense of unfairness and marginalisation, while heightening the risk of reoffending.

The impact of a partner's crime on women

Domestic violence victim's appeal highlights need for reform of how justice system treats females

By **Camilla Tominey**
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The criminal justice system had long been accused of failing women before grainy CCTV footage emerged of Emma-Jayne Magson walking down a darkened street being attacked and pushed over by her boyfriend James Knight.

Just hours later, Magson killed Knight with a single stab to the heart in what she claims was an act of self-defence. After twice having been convicted of the bodybuilder's murder, the 29-year-old has launched an appeal against her life sentence by arguing that, as a victim of domestic violence, she should have been allowed to use "disproportionate force".

It is the same "householder" defence that allowed farmer Tony Martin to finally walk free after he was jailed for shooting dead a teenage burglar at his Norfolk home in 1999.

His conviction for murder was reduced to manslaughter by the Court of Appeal on the grounds of diminished responsibility.

The details of Magson's case may remain disputed, with Knight's family insisting it is "wrong" to make her out as the victim. But her appeal, due to be

decided in the coming weeks, will shine the spotlight on how women are increasingly being jailed for the crimes and treatment of their partners.

As Harriet Wistrich, of Justice for Women, which is supporting Magson, explained: "We have been campaigning to extend this defence to circumstances where a victim of domestic violence responds disproportionately, often with a weapon, to defend herself from a man who has used violence towards her in the past.

"We hope this appeal will help open the door to further statutory reform in this area and shine a light on the level of fear experienced by such victims."

The case has echoes of Sally Challen, whose 2011 conviction for murdering her abusive husband, Richard, with a hammer was quashed in 2019 after her legal team raised fresh evidence to show her fragile mental health at the time of the attack, as well as the decades spent as a victim of coercive and controlling behaviour.

Yet despite that ruling, courts still do not seem to believe women who claim they were defending themselves against the abusive men in their lives.

In February 2021, a Justice for

Women study found that 77 per cent of women who killed their partners had experienced violence at their hands, yet just 7 per cent succeeded in citing self-defence, and 43 per cent were convicted of murder.

Statistics also show that victims of domestic violence are over-represented in prison. According to the Ministry of Justice, 57 per cent of female inmates are reported to be survivors of domestic abuse. The Prison and Probation Service put the figure higher, at 67 per cent.

Defendants like Magson, who grew up with an abusive father, are all too common. It is estimated that a third of the female inmates have been in care. A 2013 study by the MoJ found 53 per cent of women in prison have survived emotional, physical or sexual abuse during childhood, with 71 per cent suffering mental ill health. According to the Prison Reform Trust, 46 per cent of female prisoners have attempted suicide at some point (compared with 21 per cent for male inmates and 6 per cent of the general population).

Self-harm is more than six times higher in the female estate than the male, with self-harm incidents in custody in England and Wales

reaching a record high of 63,528 in 2019, up 14 per cent on the previous year. There were 3,130 self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners in women's establishments, compared with 650 per 1,000 in men's.

Yet 72 per cent of women are sent to prison for non-violent offences, such as theft and shoplifting, with three out of five sentenced for less than six months. Nearly half (48 per cent) have committed an offence in order to support the drug use of someone else.

Women are also at a disadvantage compared with men in the policing of petty crimes - such as non-payment of the TV licence fee and school truancy.

Since women are home more often than their partners, they are 10 times more likely to be convicted for not paying the £157.50 annual fee because they open the door to inspectors. One third of all women's convictions are for TV licence offences.

Similarly, nine out of the 10 people sent to prison for their children's truancy from school are women. Dr Kate Paradine, chief executive of Women in Prison, says the Government acknowledges that "most women in prison should not be there".

In April, the Public Accounts Committee accused the Government of failing to prioritise women caught up in the justice system, saying its "Female Offender Strategy" to reduce the number of women in prison and increase support in the community had been a "relatively low priority" for the MoJ, even before the pandemic.

While just £9.5million has been committed to be spent on community services for women, £200million has been set aside for 500 additional prison places for women. With 58 per cent of female offenders returning to prison within a year of release, Dr Paradine argues that most offenders - who do not pose a danger to society - would be better off in community-based Women's Centres, where they can stay with their children. Yet prison population projection figures show the numbers of women inmates is predicted to climb from 3,200 today to 4,500 by 2026.

A MoJ spokesman said: "We know female offenders are often victims of crime themselves which is precisely

why custody is a last resort and since we launched our Female Offender Strategy in 2018 the number entering prison has fallen by nearly a third.

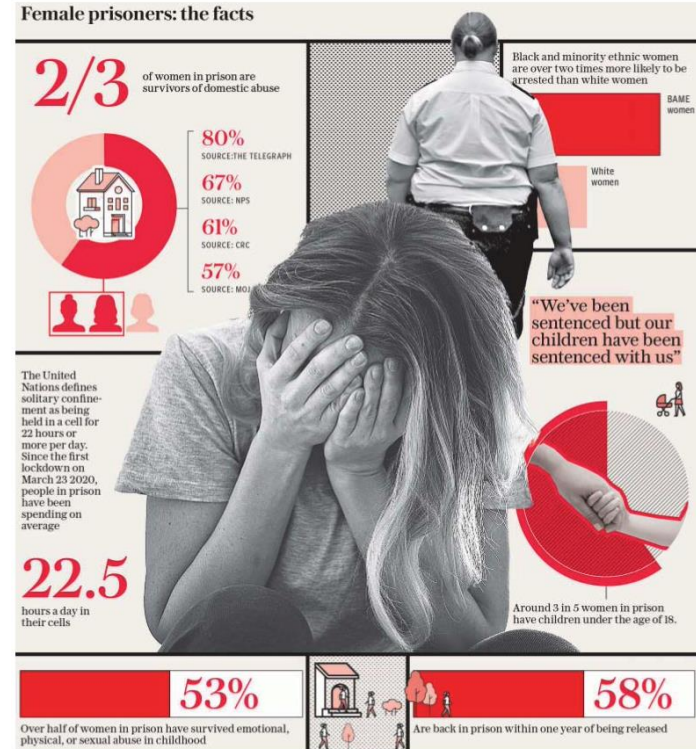
"The new prison places we are building will improve conditions and provide better access to education, healthcare and work so female offenders can turn their lives around."

The Government acknowledges most women in prison should not be there' 'We hope this appeal will shine a light on the level of fear experienced by such victims'

The population of female prisoners is increasing

Prison populations for women are predicted to increase from 3200 today to 4500 by 2026.

Many offenders who committed non-violent offences that don't pose a danger to society could be rehabilitated in community based Women's Centres instead of prison. These provide women access to their children, to better healthcare and education, plus other services to support rehabilitation.



Support for women in the criminal justice system is locally based

Tomorrow's Women are an example of a locally based organisation that offer targeted interventions to women that are offence-focused, but also recognise that often these women experience multiple and complex issues that lead to offending. So, they offer help with mental health, substance misuse, domestic abuse. TW are funded by the MOJ to deliver across Wirral, Cheshire and Chester.



Refocus Project

Tomorrow's Women offer Out of Court Disposals within the Centre. The Refocus Project is funded by Merseyside Police. It is for women who commit a crime that can be dealt with without going through the Court process. Because we offer a wrap around support for women we can address the issues that have led the woman to offend to prevent her from entering the CJS and reoffending.

Inequality in access to services, advice and legal aid

There are specific issues accessing support and advice for women from culturally different communities who are in the justice system

Southall Black Sisters is an example of a specialist organisation that provides a comprehensive service to black and minority women experiencing violence, abuse and other forms of inequality such as forced marriage.

They offer specialist advice, casework, counselling and self-help services in several community languages, especially South Asian.

They campaign against cuts to legal aid that leave vulnerable people - especially minority women who've suffered violence - without representation in courts. They highlight that certain legal aid rules prevent women who are unable to provide satisfactory evidence of domestic abuse within 24 months from accessing legal aid.

Injustice Anywhere is a Threat to Justice Everywhere... Ted X Talk by Pragna Patel

by SBS Admin | May 13, 2016 | News | 0 comments



Access to justice is something we take for granted, but it is under threat in the UK. Pragna Patel tells us heart-rending stories of how cuts to legal aid affect the most vulnerable and disenfranchised people in society; and asks "when access to justice is threatened, who or what fills the gap?"

You Make It's work aims to rebalance the intersection of race and gender

“The work we do at You Make It is about direct intervention in the lives of young women who’ve wrongly been overlooked because of issues around race and class, not just gender. Our work is all about making sure they’re able to feel the power and potential within themselves and are able to get to where they want to be in life.” [Asma Shah, Founder]

‘You Change It’ is an anti-racism allyship programme which allows people to learn about and fight for inclusion, and stand up to racism in practical ways within society and businesses.

Source: You Make It's programme “You Change It”

RM: You Make It was established almost ten years ago. How have the issues facing the young unemployed women you're in contact with changed in that time?

AS: When I started all this, it was strictly unemployed women we worked with and few to no graduates. Over time though, outreach in job centres has led us to discover increasing numbers of those who are underemployed and working zero hours contracts, as well as those who've been to university but are from BME working class backgrounds and so struggle to find employment like their middle class, white and more heavily networked peers.

RM: And how has your approach to You Make It's work changed over the years?

AS: We are user responsive, meaning we constantly develop and grow our programmes based on what our women say they need. We've basically doubled the range and length of our services to women over the last 10 years. Some examples of changes to services are linked to the impact of austerity e.g. many we work with suffer from depression, but it can take as long as 1-2 years to get to the top of the list for therapy from the NHS, so we've had to raise money for our own in-house, 1-1 service.

Recently we've also launched a new series of modular workshops called You Change It for organisations to learn how to become stronger allies in the fight for equity and inclusion at work, and to learn from the YMI approach to recruit, retain and help progress young people (You Change It, check our news page for more info).

Source: Interview with You Make It's founder Asma Shah by Rich Mix

You Make It empower unemployed women, reducing their risk of entering the criminal justice system

The 'You Make It' programme is aimed at unemployed and underemployed young women from East London. Participants are mainly from Black, Asian and other marginalised backgrounds. The programme offers mentoring, workshops, 1-1 therapy and pastoral care, work placements, start-up experience, and opportunity to pitch start-up ideas.

- The proportion of participants claiming benefits has decreased from 70% at the start of the programme to 55% at the endpoint.
- The proportion unemployed fell from 68% to 38% by the endpoint. (Note that those employed at the start of the programme are in fact under-employed in part-time casual roles that are not linked to their longer-term aspirations ie. retail, care or hospitality).



A participant's 12-month vision board following a Rebel Dreaming, values and vision workshop.