

Why Gender Matters

Too many people in Wales experience poor health or shorter lives because of avoidable and unfair health inequalities. **Gender inequality** is a key driver of child poverty and health inequalities in Wales.

Reducing gender inequality helps create healthier families, stronger communities, and a more resilient economy.

Gender inequalities build and compound across the life course

1 Early years

Socioeconomic disadvantage and family background drive early and persistent attainment gaps in education. Lack of access to affordable, high-quality and flexible childcare restricts women's employment opportunities.



2 Education

Socioeconomic disadvantage is the primary driver of educational inequalities. Gendered subject choices contributes to poorer labour market opportunities for women.



3 Working age

Women are more likely to be in low-paid, part-time, and insecure work. Becoming a parent often reduces women's earnings and career opportunities. High childcare costs, limited support, and unequal parental leave contribute to this "motherhood penalty." Women undertake a higher share of childcare, domestic work and informal care, impacting their participation in the labour market, reducing their earnings and increasing their risk of poverty. Having a job doesn't always prevent poverty – more working households are in-work poverty than not.



4 Later life

Lower earnings lead to reduced savings, wealth, pensions and long-term economic insecurity over the life course.



Poverty and inequalities are shaped by multiple factors

The risk of poverty is shaped by factors such as employment opportunities, family situation, childcare access and wider pressures, such as cost of living. Women are hit hardest by rising living costs and financial pressures.

Larger families and lone parents (mostly women) face higher poverty risks.

Disabled and ethnic minority women are more likely to be in low-paid, part-time and insecure work.

Violence against women both causes and worsens poverty and inequality, which can limit women's safety, stability and ability to work.

What can we do about it?

Child poverty and health inequalities can be reduced by improving how support works for families and designing policies with gender in mind. This is also known as a **gender-responsive approach**. This helps create healthier families, stronger communities and a more resilient economy.



Gender inequality contributes to higher rates of **child poverty**, leading to greater **financial strain** on families, **worse health and well-being outcomes**, and widens health inequalities.

Investment in the care economy is widely recognised as a powerful driver of **gender equality and economic empowerment** for women.



Coordinated action across **childcare, employment** and **social protection** can reduce poverty and prevent it across generations. Investment in early years, childcare and family support improves life chances and reduces inequalities over time.



Good, fair work supports better health. Supporting women's **economic security**, alongside increased participation in **fair work**, helps reduce in work poverty and improves children's health and wellbeing.

Social protection, taxation and **welfare systems** remain central to reducing health inequalities. Simpler, more inclusive support (especially for families and carers) can reduce poverty.



Embedding gender-responsive budgeting is a key lever for systemic change.

More integrated approaches such as '**cash plus**' models, offer potential to strengthen poverty reduction.

