

FEMINIST SCORECARD 2024

Tracking Welsh Government action to advance
women's rights and gender equality



FEMINIST SCORECARD 2024

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INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth iteration of Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales and Oxfam Cymru's Feminist Scorecard, which evaluates the Welsh Government's performance in six key areas of gender equality.¹ Since the last Scorecard was published in July 2022, women in Wales have remained deeply affected by the cost-of-living crisis, facing soaring costs and reduced public services, exacerbated by increased global conflict.

The Welsh Government has offered short-term relief through initiatives like the Discretionary Assistance Fund and the Carers Support Fund—critical measures that address immediate needs. However, it is concerning that these emergency actions coincide with a steady decline in resources and capacity dedicated to addressing the long-term, systemic roots of gender inequality. This trend is evident in recurring cuts to the childcare and equality budgets, alongside the rapid contraction of the Welsh women's sector, most strikingly illustrated by the closure of Chwarae Teg in September 2023.

Over the last two years, the Welsh Government has taken some positive steps, including providing support for survivors with no recourse to public funds and targeted investment into women's health alongside the development of a women's health plan. Other areas, such as implementing gender budgeting, expanding childcare and incorporating the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) into national law, have seen only limited progress. Concerns over financial sustainability for the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) sector - and indeed the wider women's sector in Wales - are more pressing than ever, and the decision to withdraw legislation that would have introduced gender quotas in Senedd elections presents a major setback.

The 2024 General Election of a UK Labour Government introduces the possibility of a more collaborative intergovernmental relationship and the potential for a new fiscal framework. With this, women in Wales will rightly look to the Welsh Government to redouble its efforts to address the systemic drivers of gender inequality through gender budgeting, as well as seeing through major reform in the areas of childcare, women's health, incorporation of CEDAW, further electoral reform measures and sustainable funding for VAWDASV.

Policy and legislative landscape

Since the last Scorecard, there have been significant policy shifts with the launch of the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and the LGBTQ+ Action Plan, both holding potential for improving the lives of women facing intersecting discrimination.² There has been limited progress around the complex accountability and monitoring framework for the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, and there is a need for sustained focus on intersectionality as plans are refreshed and implemented.³

¹ [Feminist Scorecard | Women's Equality Network Wales](#)

² [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan; LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales](#)

³ [Action, not words: towards an Anti-Racist Wales by 2030 | Senedd Equality and Social Justice Committee](#)

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The development of the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 is particularly promising, aiming to integrate various action plans under three principles: mainstreaming equality, adopting an intersectional approach, and addressing the implementation gap.⁴ The work of the Equality, Race, and Disability Evidence Units in supporting these through data and evaluation frameworks is also welcome.⁵ As the Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Plan expired in 2023, it is crucial that a revised Action Plan is developed with ambitious actions and a robust evaluation framework to ensure measurable progress.⁶

The end of the 2021 Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Labour Government and Plaid Cymru in May 2024 has brought some uncertainty around key plans to advance gender equality. Government rhetoric suggests a continuing commitment to the expansion of the childcare element of Flying Start and the creation of a National Care Service. However, the withdrawal of gender quota legislation in September 2024 represents a significant setback: this was a key commitment of the Agreement.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are intended to help public bodies assess the equalities impact of their policies and practices, but there has been mounting evidence that they are not being effectively utilised. A 2022 review by Audit Wales found that many public bodies are not using EIAs to their full potential, identifying key areas for improvement.⁷ Similarly, a 2023 report by the Equality and Social Justice Committee recommended a new 'gender equality test' for all policy and legislative proposals. This underscores the failure of current EIAs to drive real change.⁸

Previous Scorecards have advocated for the incorporation of international conventions into Welsh law, specifically CEDAW, CRPD and CERD.⁹ Commitments were made to incorporate into domestic law CEDAW and CRPD as part of the 2021-26 Programme for Government.¹⁰ The Welsh Government has made slow progress on enshrinement of these human rights treaties since the 2022 Scorecard, taking forward recommendations from the 2021 Strengthening and Advancing Equality and Human Rights in Wales Research Report, and it seems that this work will continue into the next Senedd.¹¹ It is critical that the current Welsh Government lays the ground for this, for instance through a green paper, within this Senedd term.¹²

⁴ [Consultation on the strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028: proposed principles of approach and objectives](#)

⁵ [Equality, Race, and Disability Evidence Units](#)

⁶ [Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Plan](#)

⁷ [Equality Impact Assessments: more than a tick box exercise?](#)

⁸ [How we must all play our part: a public health approach to halting the epidemic in gender-based violence](#)

⁹ United Nations conventions: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

¹⁰ [Welsh Government Programme for government: update](#)

¹¹ [Strengthening and advancing equality and human rights in Wales; Delivering Justice for Wales: 2024 progress report: Part 1: improving justice outcomes in Wales under the current constitutional settlement; Equality and Social Justice Committee, September 2024](#)

¹² [Welsh Labour push back plans to enshrine international human rights treaties into Welsh Law | Carmarthenshire News Online](#)

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Renew the Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Plan, expired in 2023.
- Embed CEDAW and other human rights conventions through appropriately resourcing the work and introducing a green paper in this Senedd term.
- Set targets and accountability frameworks to embed measurable progress into equality action plans.
- Take immediate action to support the shrinking women's sector in Wales, including through committed investment.
- Ensure the Evidence Units give equal priority to gender alongside other protected characteristics, provide gender-specific data and consider the experiences of women facing multiple forms of discrimination.
- Implement a gender equality perspective in all phases of policy-making through gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming.

FEMINIST SCORECARD 2022/2024

Tracking Welsh Government action to advance women's rights and gender equality

RATING KEY: GREEN = SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS

AMBER = SOME PROGRESS

RED = LITTLE PROGRESS

FAIR FINANCE

2024 Rating - Red

2022 Rating - Red



Some positive steps have been made, but persistent challenges hinder overall progress. Economic inactivity among women remains high, and cuts to essential services have worsened the situation. Urgent and decisive action is needed to achieve meaningful progress toward financial equality.

EQUAL REPRESENTATION & LEADERSHIP

2024 Rating - Amber

2022 Rating - Amber



The appointment of the first female First Minister marks progress, but female leadership in local government has declined. While legislation to improve candidate diversity and the development of voluntary guidance for political parties are positive steps, the impact of these measures is unlikely to compensate for the loss of the Gender Quotas Bill, which is a major setback.

TACKLING GENDER HEALTH INEQUALITIES

2024 Rating - Amber

2022 Rating - Red



The Welsh Government has renewed its commitment to women's health, introducing a specialist endometriosis nurse in every health board and starting work on a 10-year NHS Wales Women's Health Plan which will aim to reduce diagnostic delays and improve care for a range of conditions. Significant health disparities remain, including limited menopause services, maternal care issues, cancer diagnosis and unequal access to healthcare, particularly for marginalised women and rural communities.

CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

2024 Rating - Red

2022 Rating - Red



The Welsh Government has made progress in supporting unpaid carers and improving wages for social care workers, although significant challenges persist in both these areas. The long-standing and pervasive issue of insufficient respite for unpaid carers has not been sufficiently addressed. Childcare accessibility remains a major issue, with limited integration between programmes and inconsistent provisions across local authorities.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

2024 Rating - Amber

2022 Rating - Amber/Red



The Welsh Government has introduced a refreshed VAWDASV strategy and launched the Migrant Victim of Abuse Support Fund, addressing key gaps. However, the VAWDASV budget remains unchanged, creating real-term funding pressures, and sustainable funding for specialist organisations has yet to be implemented. Capacity issues persist, leaving many survivors without sufficient support.

GLOBAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS

2024 Rating - Amber

2022 Rating - Amber



The 2023 Social Partnerships and Public Procurement Act is a positive step in promoting ethical employment and tackling modern slavery. However, urgent action is needed to improve support for women asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, particularly in areas like language education and housing, to ensure Wales fully embodies its commitment as a Nation of Sanctuary and towards global solidarity.

FAIR FINANCE

SCORE: RED

Jobs and pay equality

Women bear a larger share of caring responsibilities and dominate traditionally lower-paid sectors, such as health and social care, leading to higher rates of economic inactivity and part-time, insecure employment. These challenges are even more pronounced for women facing intersecting discrimination, including minority ethnic and disabled women, as well as single mothers.

Women experience higher rates of economic inactivity, with 27.4% of women aged 16-64 being economically inactive (unchanged since 2022-23) compared to 20% of men (down from 21.5% in the same period). The disparity is especially stark for minority ethnic women, who saw a significant increase in economic inactivity from 27.9% in 2022 to 41.8% now. Similarly, 46.3% of disabled women are economically inactive, up from 45.5%. Women are far more likely to work part-time, with 37.6% of women in part-time roles compared to just 12.7% of men. In 2022, the proportions were 37.4% and 13.6% respectively.¹⁴ Furthermore, only 58.5% of women earn the Real Living Wage, compared to 68.3% of men, highlighting ongoing economic inequalities across multiple dimensions.¹⁵

"...structural inequalities mean that women occupy an unequal position in the Welsh and UK economy, leaving them more vulnerable to economic precarity."

WALES WOMEN'S BUDGET GROUP ¹³

Gender segregation across sectors drives the full-time pay gap, with women concentrated in undervalued, underpaid jobs that limit their earning potential and career advancement. One of the Welsh Government's national milestones aims to eliminate the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps by 2050.¹⁶ Progress is monitored through regular reporting and data analysis, ensuring transparency and accountability, with public bodies required to track and report on their efforts to close these gaps. The Welsh Government has noted that, between 2015 and 2023, the gender pay gap has seen an improvement, the disability pay gap has seen no change and the ethnicity pay gap has deteriorated.¹⁷ The gender pay gap for all workers currently stands at 11.8% in Wales, having briefly reduced in 2022 before rising again, compared to the UK average of 14.3%.¹⁸ An ethnicity pay gap persists across Wales and the UK.¹⁹

¹³ [Far From a Vital Safety Net: Benefit Conditionality, Sanctions and Women in Wales | Wales Women's Budget Group](#)

¹⁴ [Annual Population Survey, April 2023-March 2024 and April 2022-March 2023](#)

¹⁵ [Percentage of people in employment, who are on permanent contracts \(or on temporary contracts, and not seeking permanent employment\) and who earn at least the real Living Wage](#)

¹⁶ [Shaping Wales' Future: The first national milestones for Wales](#)

¹⁷ [Wellbeing of Wales, 2024: progress towards national milestones](#)

¹⁸ [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings \(ASHE\), 2022-23, Work Geography, Table 7.12](#)

¹⁹ [Ethnicity pay gaps, UK - Office for National Statistics](#) | NB The ethnicity pay gap shows the difference in the average hourly rate of pay between Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and White employees in an organisation, expressed as a percentage of average White employee earnings. This is calculated using the same calculation methodology as for gender pay gap reporting.

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The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 received Royal Assent in May 2023.²⁰ While the Act emphasises fair work, socially responsible procurement and well-being, it does not specifically mention pay gaps. There is an opportunity for the Welsh Government to use public procurement to incentivise businesses to adopt gender-equality practices, which would address occupational segregation and reduce the gender pay gap. For example, contracting decisions could consider an organisation's efforts to promote gender diversity and provide fair pay.

The 2022 Feminist Scorecard recommended that the Welsh Government take steps to improve gender pay gap reporting.²¹ Stakeholders have repeatedly called for increased transparency around pay gap reporting for gender, ethnicity and other protected characteristics, alongside more representation in senior positions. While the Welsh Government has not taken additional action on pay gap reporting, the UK Labour Government has committed to progressing improvements, including the requirement to publish action plans and mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting alongside GPG reporting, which would extend to Wales.²²

The Welsh Government's 2022 smarter working strategy sets a target of 30% of the Welsh population working remotely regularly.²³ While this is a positive commitment, a lack of published data hinders tracking progress and the impact on women. Furthermore, there is uncertainty around the Welsh Government's future ambitions for remote working.²⁴ In December 2022, the WPC published their report on agile and flexible working, which consolidates lessons learned from the pandemic and highlights areas of good practice in the public sector and beyond.²⁵

Concerningly, there has been a loss of capacity and resources in addressing the root causes of women's financial inequality. The closure of Chwarae Teg, a key advocate for women's economic empowerment, alongside repeated cuts to equality budgets, represents a significant setback and highlights broader issues in funding. Research by the Rosa Foundation found that only 1.8% of total UK charity grants in 2021 were directed toward women and girls-focused activities.²⁶

Poverty and gender

As acknowledged by the Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment accompanying the 2024/25 draft budget, households with women are disproportionately affected by employment inequalities, the cost-of-living crisis and the impacts of poverty.²⁷ Single parents, the vast majority of whom are women, face the highest risk of all household types, with almost one in three experiencing relative income poverty.²⁸ A Public Health

²⁰ [Social Partnership and Public Procurement \(Wales\) Act 2023](#)

²¹ [Feminist Scorecard | Women's Equality Network Wales](#)

²² [Closing the Gender Pay Gap "Once and for All": Labour's Proposed Reforms to GPG Reporting in the UK | OHRH](#)

²³ [Smarter working: a remote working strategy for Wales](#)

²⁴ [Welsh Government First Minister says working in office good for 'workforce and mental health' | North Wales Live](#)

²⁵ [Workforce Partnership Council \(WPC\) report: agile and flexible working](#)

²⁶ [Mapping the UK Women and Girls Sector and its Funding](#)

²⁷ [Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25](#)

²⁸ [Stats Wales, HBAI, 2023: People in relative poverty by family type 2019-20 to 2021-22 and 2020-21 to 2022-23](#)

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Wales survey found that being ‘very worried’ about rising costs of living was associated with characteristics such as being female, having children in the home and being of other than white ethnicity.²⁹

The Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) was established in 2013, and from 2020 to 2023 was expanded to include claims for reasons relating to COVID-19.³⁰ The Welsh Government also invested in the Wales Fuel Support Scheme and Fuel Bank Foundation Heat Fund, providing one-off cash payments and vouchers to prevent fuel poverty. These support mechanisms have helped hundreds of thousands of people across Wales, preventing worsening hardship. Schemes such as the Bwndel Babi programme, piloted in 2020/21 and currently under a scoping exercise as of 2024, can provide practical support to parents who most need it.³¹

However, the cost-of-living crisis following so soon after the pandemic means the demand for this support has grown rather than diminished over the past two years. Citizens Advice noted a significant increase in the number of people they helped from 2023 to 2024 in Wales, up 22% for Discretionary Housing Payments and up 40% for DAFs.³² A worrying trend has emerged of ‘repeat clients’ who need to access emergency funds not only occasionally due to a one-off crisis, but on a more regular basis as their income is insufficient to live on. As Governments across the UK face difficult budgetary decisions, the future of DAF and other emergency funds is uncertain.

Over the past two years, the Welsh Government has focused on addressing child poverty, which affects 30% of children in Wales—the highest rate in the UK.³³ In January 2024, the Welsh Government introduced the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales, the only anti-poverty initiative of its kind in Wales.³⁴ While this strategy focuses on increasing family incomes and reducing household costs, it does not fully address the gendered impacts of poverty.

The cost-of-living crisis has also impacted the third sector services that support individuals and families. More than half of community organisations in Wales reported that demand on their services had increased, whilst their income decreased.³⁵ This means that organisations do not have the resources and capacity necessary to support people facing complex challenges.

Concerns remain about women’s access to independent income, especially with benefit payments being made at the household level. The lack of disaggregated data further complicates efforts to evaluate how effectively these measures support women.

“Given the situation we now find ourselves in, is the current emergency support system still ‘fit for purpose’?”

CITIZENS ADVICE ³⁶

²⁹ [The rising cost of living and health and wellbeing in Wales: a national survey](#)

³⁰ [Discretionary assistance fund: quality report](#)

³¹ [Written Statement: Bwndel Babi Programme – an update on progress \(11 March 2024\)](#)

³² [Reaching crisis point: The story in Wales | Citizens Advice](#)

³³ [Child Poverty - Children’s Commissioner for Wales](#)

³⁴ [Child Poverty Strategy in Wales 2024](#)

³⁵ [Community Responses to Cost of Living | BCT](#)

³⁶ [Reaching crisis point: The story in Wales | Citizens Advice](#)

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Budgets and taxation

Rising costs and unprecedented budgetary pressures have significantly impacted areas vital to women's lives in Wales. Local authority deficits effectively represent real-term cuts to public services, disproportionately affecting women. Women are more likely to work in public services, rely on them and become providers of last resort when services are cut—a 'triple whammy' that is unlikely to improve under the new UK Government.³⁷ The Welsh Government's 2024/25 Budget made a commitment to protecting key services, including frontline NHS services and the core local government settlement, which funds schools, social services and social care.³⁸ This is welcome, but it is concerning that current support levels may not keep pace with the rising costs faced by providers.

"To tackle gender inequality in Wales, it is essential that we address the root causes of inequality and adequately fund the services that women rely on."

WALES WOMEN'S BUDGET GROUP

In 2023, repeated cuts were made to budgets supporting Early Years, Childcare and Play activities, as well as to the Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights budget. The Welsh Government diverted £16.1 million from childcare and early years during the October 2023 in-year spending review, followed by another £11.2 million cut for the 2024-25 budget.³⁹

The Social Justice Budget was reduced by £7 million in October 2023, with 60% of these savings—£4.2 million—coming from the Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights budget, despite it comprising just 13% of the total. The Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights budget, which funds a range of equality and human rights programmes and third-sector equality organisations, saw a cut of £1.6 million in the 2024-25 budget from the 2023/24 budget.⁴⁰ The Welsh Government's funding cuts exacerbated the challenges already faced by the third

sector, which was grappling with financial losses due to the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. This has significantly hindered progress on gender equality in Wales, as demonstrated by the closure of Chwarae Teg.

Gender budgeting, which considers gender and intersectional differences in budgetary and policy decisions, is essential to addressing unequal outcomes. This requires the use of gendered and intersectional data to understand these differences. It is encouraging that equality mainstreaming is a principle in the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28. While the ongoing piloting of gender budgeting and the publication of the Personal Learning Accounts (PLA) pilot evaluation are positive steps, the evaluations from the other two pilots—Young Person's Guarantee and e-bike active travel—are still pending.⁴¹ These learnings will be crucial for broader implementation, and it is important to develop plans to mainstream gender budgeting across the Welsh Government to improve policy-making and resource allocation. It is encouraging that guidance is now available to Welsh Government officials and policymakers on understanding gender budgeting and how to incorporate it into policy development, review and monitoring.⁴²

³⁷ [The gendered impact of the cost-of-living crisis on public services | Women's Budget Group](#)

³⁸ [Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25](#)

³⁹ [Interactive diagram to explore the 2024-25 Final Budget](#)

⁴⁰ [Interactive diagram to explore the 2024-25 Final Budget](#)

⁴¹ [The Young Person's Guarantee; E-bike pilot scheme to launch in Wales](#)

⁴² [Budget Improvement and Impact Advisory Group meeting: March 2024](#)

Following two consultation phases, council tax reform is expected no earlier than 2028. Its inclusion in the Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill is welcome, but the delay is disappointing. Unlike in the UK or Scotland, Wales cannot adjust income tax bands or create new ones. The Welsh Government must continue advocating for further devolution of taxation powers to allow greater flexibility and enable it to better respond to the needs of Welsh taxpayers. In the absence of more powers to adjust income tax, council tax reform remains a key lever to make taxation more progressive, which is particularly important for women due to the inequalities outlined.

Progress since the 2022 Feminist Scorecard

There has been very limited progress, with many issues outlined in the 2022 Scorecard persisting and some even worsening. The gender pay gap has only slightly improved, standing at 11.8% in the 2024 Scorecard after briefly decreasing in 2022. Moreover, as figures show, barriers against women's participation in paid employment and career progression persist. Cuts to crucial funding and services, including the Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights budget and childcare, highlight a troubling regression in the resources available to support women's economic empowerment. These persistent challenges underline the need for more robust action and comprehensive strategies to ensure meaningful progress toward financial equality for all women in Wales. The Welsh Government's ongoing commitment to gender budgeting is encouraging. However, progress towards wider implementation has been slow and needs to be urgently accelerated to tackle the root causes of financial inequality by using intersectional data to inform budgeting and resource allocation decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Take decisive action to address the root causes of the gender pay gap, focusing on structural gender inequalities, including occupational segregation, and gender-based disparities in care responsibilities.
- Legally require and enforce all public bodies in the scope of the Well-being of Future Generations Act to report on their gender pay gaps, alongside publishing ethnicity, disability and LGBTQ+ pay gaps, and for reporting to be followed by corrective action.
- Ensure the gendered impact of poverty is acknowledged and that a strong gender lens is applied across all poverty-related strategies and actions.
- Regularly report against indicators in the Smarter Working 2022 strategy by implementing a gender lens to understand the impact of remote and agile working on the workforce.
- Progress the full implementation of the Gender Equality Review and roll out gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming across government.
- Develop a framework to monitor and analyse the impact of any budget and taxation decisions on all women in Wales, using the evidence provided by the Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units to understand intersecting and compounding levels of inequality.
- Continue to advocate for further devolution of taxation powers to Wales to introduce a fairer Council Tax system.

GLOBAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS

SCORE: AMBER

Global Solidarity

Global solidarity in the context of this Scorecard encompasses both an international dimension, reflecting Wales' policies toward women worldwide, and a domestic commitment to supporting women who have sought refuge in Wales. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 emphasises global responsibility, urging the Welsh Government to act with the interests of global citizens in mind.⁴³ This ensures that Wales' decisions contribute to a fair and sustainable future for all.⁴⁴

The Welsh Government's international strategy was launched in 2020 and is due to end in 2025.⁴⁵ A Senedd consultation is currently open on the impact of the strategy and the Welsh Government's approach to international relations beyond 2025.⁴⁶ Since the 2022 Scorecard, the Wales and Africa Grant Scheme has funded several projects supporting women's rights and livelihoods in Uganda and Lesotho.⁴⁷

The Social Partnerships and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, while promoting social, economic and environmental considerations in procurement, lacks an explicit focus on women's rights or global solidarity with women. The Welsh Government's Code of Practice on Ethical Employment in Supply Chains, published in January 2024, includes commitments to address modern slavery and promote ethical employment, with supporting online training modules and guidance. As implementation of these measures continues, progress must be shared with stakeholders in a transparent, timely and accessible way.

The crisis in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, now spreading through other Middle Eastern countries such as Lebanon and Syria, has remained a key concern for the international community over the past year.⁴⁸ The impact on women and girls has been acute, especially in regards to food security, protection and shelter.⁴⁹ There are also significant challenges due to the lack of access to adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.⁵⁰ A Senedd debate in November 2023 resulted in the endorsement of an immediate ceasefire.⁵¹ In October 2024 the Disasters Emergency Committee Cymru launched a Middle East Humanitarian Appeal, to which the Welsh Government donated £100,000.⁵²

⁴³ [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)

⁴⁴ [A Globally Responsible Wales](#)

⁴⁵ [International Strategy](#)

⁴⁶ [Welsh Government's International Strategy](#)

⁴⁷ [Welsh funding empowering women in Africa | WCVA](#)

⁴⁸ [Israel and Gaza at the Senedd: the story so far](#)

⁴⁹ [Gender Alert: The Gendered Impact of the Crisis in Gaza | UN Women Arab States](#)

⁵⁰ [Scarcity and Fear: A Gender Analysis of the Impact of the War in Gaza on Vital Services Essential to Women's and Girls' Health, Safety, and Dignity - Water, Sanitation and Hygiene \(WASH\)](#)

⁵¹ [Plaid Cymru Debate | Conflict in Israel and Gaza](#)

⁵² [Disasters Emergency Committee; DEC Cymru launch Middle East Humanitarian Appeal](#)

Nation of Sanctuary

While immigration is a reserved matter, the Welsh Government has stated its commitment to being a Nation of Sanctuary, with various initiatives to support people seeking asylum and refugees from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine.⁵³ It is worth noting that the overall response to Ukrainian refugees was more positive than to those from other areas of the world.⁵⁴ While 'a distinctly Welsh response' was adopted in 2021 to support Afghan refugees,⁵⁵ the Welsh Government's Super Sponsor scheme was limited to those fleeing Ukraine.⁵⁶ A review and refresh of the Nation of Sanctuary Plan 2019 is overdue, with commitments made to do so in 2023.⁵⁷

The 2023 Migrant Integration Framework is a positive step toward making Wales a safe and welcoming place for migrants, but it is crucial that the data collected leads to meaningful change.⁵⁸ This is especially important given the recent rise in global conflicts. There should also be an explicit acknowledgement of the role gender can play in varying outcomes and experiences, as well as specifically gendered approaches to reflect this.

Although there have been improvements, particularly in funding for VAWDASV survivors who are migrants or have no recourse to public funds (NRPF), more work is needed to make this support sufficient and sustainable.

The Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan was published in June 2022 and includes an action aiming to reduce domestic abuse or exploitation experienced by migrants. However, a Senedd Equality and Social Justice Committee inquiry found that implementation of the action plan had been inconsistent and that stronger enforcement, better coordination among service providers and more comprehensive data collection is needed.⁵⁹

A crucial challenge remains the limited time that people seeking asylum have to move on from Home Office-provided accommodation once granted Leave to Remain. In theory this is 28 days, but in reality it can be less than one week. Stakeholders across the sector emphasised this issue. The proposed extension in Welsh homelessness legislation reform contrasts sharply with the much shorter timeframe for people seeking sanctuary; this discrepancy pushes them towards housing precarity and homelessness. Mental ill-health can also be exacerbated, especially for women sanctuary seekers who have experienced nuanced and intersectional trauma. The Welsh Government must continue its efforts to align UK policies with its vision of being a Nation of Sanctuary, especially with a new UK Government in place.⁶⁰

⁵³ [Examining the Welsh political response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis](#)

⁵⁴ [Media portrayal of Ukrainian refugees was unusually positive | BPS](#)

⁵⁵ [A Nation of Sanctuary: Wales and Afghanistan](#)

⁵⁶ [Wales and the war in Ukraine: two years on](#)

⁵⁷ [Plenary 13/06/2023 | Welsh Parliament](#)

⁵⁸ [Migrant Integration Framework](#)

⁵⁹ [Action, not words: towards an anti-racist Wales by 2030](#)

⁶⁰ [Joint Shadow Report to CERD | Race Equality First, June 2024](#)

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The Welcome Ticket scheme, open to refugees across Wales, ended in March 2024 with a Welsh Government commitment to establishing a new phase that is sustainable and fit for purpose.⁶¹ Progress is needed soon to ensure all people seeking sanctuary, regardless of race, can access public transport.⁶²

The July 2023 review of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) policy in Wales highlighted significant barriers to participation, particularly the lack of creche and childcare facilities. Recommendations were made around funding, infrastructure, access and course design.⁶³ As stakeholders highlighted that the barriers women face in accessing ESOL were known for over a decade, it is imperative that these are addressed without further delay.

Research by the Bevan Foundation highlights issues around free school meals for children of NRPF families, estimating that around 1,500 secondary school children are restricted from accessing these meals due to unclear guidance. They recommend that eligibility for free school meals be permanently extended to all children with NRPF in Wales, as the universal primary roll-out of free school meals has not yet addressed the issue.⁶⁴

There is also a need to better understand the varied experiences of people seeking sanctuary, particularly as resettlement has expanded to all 22 local authorities. Many local authorities lack training and resources, emphasising the importance of sharing best practices and addressing challenges in rural areas. Accurate data is needed to capture these experiences and better inform public services and decision-makers.

Climate justice

Climate change disproportionately impacts marginalised communities, minority ethnic people and women, making it a justice issue with gendered, racial and geographic dimensions. The Global Climate Risk Index highlights that the countries most vulnerable to climate change are often those that contribute the least to global emissions.

Wales may be a small nation, but its potential to influence global climate action is significant. Wales must urgently and fairly transition to a net-zero economy, guided by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which emphasises long-term sustainability and a globally responsible approach.⁶⁵

Wales has made significant strides in climate action, achieving a 28% reduction in emissions from 1990 levels and successfully meeting its first Carbon Budget (2016-2020), although the majority of reductions relate to action at UK Government level.⁶⁶ In 2019, Wales became the first parliament in the world to declare a climate emergency.⁶⁷

⁶¹ [Written Statement: Welcome Ticket, March 2024](#)

⁶² [Cardiff: Refugee 'humiliated' by denial of free bus travel | BBC News](#)

⁶³ [A review of English for Speakers of Other Languages \(ESOL\) policy for Wales: executive summary](#)

⁶⁴ [Free School Meals and no recourse to public funds in Wales | Bevan Foundation, 2024](#)

⁶⁵ [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)

⁶⁶ [Progress Report: reducing Emissions in Wales, Climate Change Committee.](#)

⁶⁷ [Welsh Government makes climate emergency declaration](#)

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The Welsh Government has set a target to achieve net zero by 2050.⁶⁸ However, the Cooperation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru aimed for a more ambitious goal of reaching net zero by 2035, following advice from the Climate Change Committee.⁶⁹ To explore this, the Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group⁷⁰ was established and produced a report in September 2024, advocating for the 2035 target despite the end of the Cooperation Agreement.⁷¹ Although the Welsh Government has not officially committed to the 2035 target, they have indicated they will carefully consider the group's recommendations while maintaining the 2050 goal.⁷²

The Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group's proposal is a critical step for Wales. In addition, adopting the UN's Race to Zero framework and supporting the local governments joining the network offer a vital opportunity for Wales to unify its climate efforts and lead the charge as the first Race to Zero nation.⁷³ Failure to take urgent and sustained action on climate change will result in missed opportunities for the wellbeing of Wales, increased exposure to climate risks and a more costly transition.⁷⁴

As noted in the 2022 Feminist Scorecard, neither the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 nor the Climate Change (Wales) Regulations 2021 explicitly recognise climate change as a human rights or women's rights issue, missing the opportunity to adopt a social justice approach. Applying a gendered lens to its economic and social policy will help Wales in facing the challenges presented by the climate emergency.⁷⁵

"Health inequalities mean that health risks from climate change are not evenly distributed, threatening the goals for a healthier and more equal Wales."

CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE ⁷⁹

In 2024, the Welsh Government consulted on its Just Transition Framework, setting out how it plans for Wales to move to net zero in a fair way.⁷⁶ It is imperative that the transition addresses rather than exacerbates existing inequalities and prevents the emergence of new ones. There is a distinct lack of focus on care jobs in the Welsh Government's plans for employability and net zero skills, despite this sector being central to social and economic well-being, already low-carbon and having a predominantly female workforce.⁷⁷ Broadening the definition of green skills to include care professions was a key recommendation of a Wales-specific Evidence Panel to ensure the benefits of the net-zero transition extend beyond traditionally male-dominated occupations.⁷⁸

⁶⁸ [Net Zero Wales](#)

⁶⁹ [Progress Report: Reducing emissions in Wales - Climate Change Committee](#)

⁷⁰ [Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group](#)

⁷¹ [Pathways to a Prosperous And Resilient Wales in a Changing Future](#)

⁷² [Written Statement: Publication of the Final Reports of the Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group](#)

⁷³ [Race to Zero; Race to Zero Cymru](#)

⁷⁴ [Pathways to a prosperous and resilient Wales in a changing future | Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group](#)

⁷⁵ [A Wales That Cares for People and Planet | IWA and Oxfam, July 2024](#)

⁷⁶ [Consultation – summary of responses: Just Transition Framework](#)

⁷⁷ [Stronger, fairer, greener Wales: a plan for employability and skills and Net zero skills action plan; A Care-Led Recovery from Coronavirus - Women's Budget Group, 2020](#)

⁷⁸ [An Equal and Just Transition to Net Zero - Mainstreaming and Just Transition Evidence Panel, 2023](#)

⁷⁹ [Adapting to climate change: Progress in Wales | Climate Change Committee](#)

Progress since the 2022 Feminist Scorecard

One significant point of progress is the implementation of the Social Partnerships and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, which emphasises ethical employment and aims to address modern slavery. This marks an important step forward in aligning procurement practices with global solidarity principles. Additionally, the Welsh Government's commitment to the 2023 Migrant Integration Framework indicates a shift toward a more structured and supportive approach for asylum seekers and refugees, particularly in enhancing access to services. This builds upon the previous commitment to being a Nation of Sanctuary, which, while commendable, faced challenges in its delivery. However, the commitment to improving the situation of women asylum seekers and migrants remains incomplete, including in terms of housing and language education. The Welsh Government should take a stronger stance on women's rights and safety, as well as on the global humanitarian and climate crises.

"A just transition to a net-zero and green economy should be at the heart of governments' policies regarding the climate emergency."

OXFAM CYMRU ⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Response to the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee consultation into the Green Economy | Oxfam Cymru - March 2024

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reestablish the Welcome Scheme urgently, ensuring effective implementation with partners.
- Work with the UK Government to extend the move-on period from asylum accommodation beyond 28 days to prevent homelessness and exploitation among women and children.
- Work with the UK Government and partner agencies to ensure inclusive data collection to accurately represent women and children seeking sanctuary in UK datasets.
- Progress the overdue review and refresh of the Nation of Sanctuary Plan, including influencing UK Government decisions to align with Wales' commitment and values.
- Address and develop actions against the barriers to women attending ESOL classes, such as a lack of childcare facilities.
- Ensure that the Just Transition to Net Zero Framework includes investments in women-dominated, low-carbon sectors like care and education as essential components of a wellbeing economy.
- As the representative of a globally responsible nation, commit all available resources to address global humanitarian and climate crises through funding and active political advocacy for diplomatic solutions.

CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

SCORE: RED

Unpaid care

According to data from the 2021 Census, 10.5% of the population of Wales are unpaid carers. Almost 60% are women and nearly a third are disabled themselves.⁸¹ Minority ethnic groups such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people are overrepresented among informal caregivers, and stakeholders told us that people from certain minority ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds are less likely to access publicly funded care support.⁸² There is also a socio-economic dimension: 11.5% of people in the most deprived areas in Wales provide unpaid care, compared to 9.7% in the least deprived areas.⁸³

The financial strain on carers across Wales is evident, with nearly one in four (23%) cutting back on essentials such as food and heating, and more than a third (34%) struggling to make ends meet. More than half (53%) need more financial support, while 64% are finding it more difficult to manage financially due to the cost-of-living increase.⁸⁴ Furthermore, 44% of current or former unpaid carers reported that caring had a negative impact on their finances and savings, while 45% said that unpaid caring had a 'slightly' or 'very' negative impact on their job and ability to work.⁸⁵ This adds a further dimension to women's disproportionately low participation in employment.

The toll on carers' health and wellbeing in Wales is profound. Over a quarter (28%) reported that their mental health was bad or very bad, while 52% said their physical health had suffered, with 23% attributing injuries to their caring duties.⁸⁶ The lack of respite is a pressing issue, with 56% of carers indicating that taking regular breaks from caring would be challenging in the coming year, and 41% expressing a need for more breaks or time off from their caregiving roles.⁸⁷ These findings highlight the urgent need for better support systems and resources for carers to alleviate their financial, physical, and mental pressures.

The Welsh Government's Short Breaks Scheme has committed £9m from 2022 to 2025, with this funding disseminated via Regional Partnership Boards and Carers Trust Wales.⁸⁸ This very welcome addition of capacity aims to support around 30,000 unpaid carers, although there are more than 300,000 people in need of this support.⁸⁹

Though the heavy disruption to services for unpaid carers caused by the Covid-19 pandemic is behind us, some services have not been restored to their pre-pandemic

⁸¹ Unpaid care, England and Wales: Census 2021; Policy Briefing: Protected Characteristics and unpaid care in Wales | Carers Wales, 2023

⁸² Unpaid care and protected characteristics, England and Wales: Census 2021

⁸³ Unpaid carers in Wales and access to financial and statutory support | Carers Trust Wales

⁸⁴ State of Caring 2023: The impact of caring on finances in Wales | Carers UK

⁸⁵ Carers Week Report 2024 | Carers UK

⁸⁶ State of Caring 2023: The impact of caring on health in Wales | Carers UK

⁸⁷ State of Caring 2023: The impact of caring on health in Wales | Carers UK

⁸⁸ Short Breaks Scheme Wales

⁸⁹ Unpaid care by age, sex and deprivation, England and Wales: Census 2021

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levels. Local authorities are stretched thin due to budget cuts, rising costs of living and service provision and mounting pressures within the social care system, all of which limit progress. Where public services cannot meet needs, unpaid carers must fill the gaps. Campaigners and stakeholders continue long-time calls for targeted financial support and sufficient respite for carers, as well as collaboration and co-production between policy makers and carers.⁹⁰

“Unpaid carers in Wales provide invaluable care, often at great cost to their own health and wellbeing, as well as their own finances. Research shows that in Wales alone, the care provided by Wales’s unpaid carers saves the state over £10 billion per year and has a huge impact on the wellbeing of the people they provide care for.”

CARERS WALES ⁹²

The Welsh Government-financed Carers Support Fund provides grants for food, household items and electronic items, as well as support services for unpaid carers. This £4.5m investment was established in June 2022 and is due to end in March 2025.⁹¹ Broader eligibility criteria have been helpful and represent progress since the 2022 Scorecard, but the fund has only scratched the surface. Future iterations could make a significant impact if increased resources were committed and dissemination of funds were more consistent.

Challenges in implementing the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 persist, and stakeholders observed that this only exacerbates many of the issues facing unpaid carers. Multiple reports have highlighted inconsistent awareness of rights and access to support for unpaid carers.⁹³ In the most recently available data, in 2021/22, over 90% of unpaid carers in each Welsh local authority lacked an assessment or re-assessment of their needs, and only 0.1% to 6% had a support plan.⁹⁴ Stakeholders noted that there are challenges around both carers’ awareness of their right to an assessment, and carers waiting long periods to receive an assessment once it is requested. In March 2023, the Welsh Government-commissioned independent evaluation of the Act published its final report, which reconfirmed the implementation challenges associated with the legislation and

found that the system remains difficult and exhausting for unpaid carers to navigate, limiting access to entitled support.⁹⁵ The recent launch of the Charter for Unpaid Carers, which sets out the legal rights of unpaid carers in Wales under the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act 2014, may help improve awareness. However, the Welsh Government must consider a dedicated action plan, with continuous monitoring, evaluation and reporting, to ensure accountability and consistent delivery of national rights and policies.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ [State of Caring 2023: The impact of caring on finances in the UK | Carers UK](#)

⁹¹ [Carers Support Fund Wales Programme](#)

⁹² [New Report Highlights Urgent Need to Address Poverty Among Unpaid Carers in Wales / Adroddiad Newydd Yn Amlygu Angen Brys i Fynd i'r Afael â Thlodi Ymysg Gofalwyr Di-dâl yng Nghymru](#)

⁹³ These have included the [Carers Wales 'Track the Act' series](#); the [National Care Service Expert Group report](#); a [Senedd Health, Social Care and Sport Committee inquiry](#); a [University of South Wales independent evaluation](#); and a [rapid review by ADSS Cymru](#).

⁹⁴ [Unpaid carers in Wales and access to financial and statutory support | Carers Trust Wales](#)

⁹⁵ [Final report: evaluation of the Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014; Statement on the independent evaluation of the Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act | Carers UK](#)

⁹⁶ [Charter for unpaid carers](#)

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Childcare

The absence of affordable and accessible childcare continues to hinder women's participation in paid employment and exacerbates gender inequality in Wales. Oxfam Cymru's 2023 report highlights persistent barriers to childcare access, affecting women's workforce participation, mental health and economic and social equality.⁹⁷ Annual Population Survey data indicates that 25.2% of women, compared with 7% of men, are out of work due to 'looking after family/home'.⁹⁸

Childcare costs in Wales continue to rise, with prices increasing by 2.6% for three to four year olds and 2.8% for zero to two year olds between 2022 and 2023.⁹⁹ Research by Pregnant Then Screwed and the New Economics Foundation showed that, in proportion to their income, lower-income parents in Wales spend nearly ten times more on childcare, compared to the wealthiest 20% of parents. The high cost of childcare (despite the low wages received by the sector's workers), estimated at £46,215 for 40 hours per week over four years, places a significant and often prohibitive burden on families.¹⁰⁰

These developments have been mirrored in mounting public pressure. The March of the Mummies in October 2022 brought the motherhood penalty to life across the UK, calling for good quality affordable childcare for all children as well as flexible working as the default and properly paid parental leave.¹⁰¹ Two Senedd petitions jointly gaining nearly eleven thousand signatures and triggering a plenary debate in January 2024 were a notable mobilisation that underscored the need for the Welsh Government to act urgently.¹⁰² An Expert Group for Childcare in Wales, made up of several third sector organisations, is working to develop a blueprint for childcare in Wales.¹⁰³

The Welsh Government's September 2022 expansion of the Childcare Offer to include parents in training or education, and eligible parents on adoption leave, was a positive step.¹⁰⁴ The most recent evaluation of the Childcare Offer found that it has successfully increased workforce participation and provided financial relief for parents.¹⁰⁵ But it also highlights the need for improvements, such as expanding capacity in the sector, increasing flexibility and addressing geographical disparities in order to make childcare more accessible.¹⁰⁶

The evaluation also noted differences in take-up across local authorities, with some areas experiencing a decline. Lower-than-forecast demand has been used as a justification to cut childcare funding in the 2024/25 Welsh Government budget, which contrasts with

⁹⁷ [Little steps, big struggles: Childcare in Wales | Oxfam Cymru, Nov 2023](#)

⁹⁸ [Annual Population Survey, July 2022-June 2023](#)

⁹⁹ [Childcare Survey 2023 | Coram](#)

¹⁰⁰ [Welsh families are spending £46,215 per child for full time childcare. It's time for a Family Childcare Promise | Pregnant Then Screwed](#)

¹⁰¹ [March Of The Mummies Protest | Pregnant Then Screwed](#)

¹⁰² [Completed petition: Offer Welsh working parents the same financial support for childcare as England](#)

¹⁰³ [Letter from Expert Advisory Group on Childcare in Wales to Jenny Rathbone MS](#)

¹⁰⁴ [Early years childcare entitlement Frequently Asked Questions](#)

¹⁰⁵ [Evaluation of Year Five \(September 2021 to August 2022\) of the Childcare Offer](#)

¹⁰⁶ [Evaluation of Year Five \(September 2021 to August 2022\) of the Childcare Offer](#)

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many parents' experiences and the pressing need for affordable and accessible childcare in Wales.¹⁰⁷

The childcare element of the Flying Start Scheme continued to be rolled out for two to three year olds. While the scheme has many positives, its impact in supporting families' working lives is extremely limited. In one survey, almost 90% of parents believed the Flying Start entitlement of 2.5 hours per day is insufficient, and surveys from Local Authorities' Childcare Sufficiency Assessments suggest it does not offer enough hours for parents to work.¹⁰⁸ Limits to eligibility leave many families with high childcare costs.¹⁰⁹ Concerns have also been raised about the strength of the Welsh Government's ongoing commitment to expanding early years provision for two-year-olds.¹¹⁰

Various stakeholders, including early years sector representatives, observed that parents' childcare pathway is more complex since 2022 and can include navigating statutory maternity/paternity pay, access to Flying Start for two-year-olds, the Childcare Offer and eventually full-time education from age three.¹¹¹ It is worth noting that there is currently no funded support for babies and children under two and above four years old, presenting challenges to parents in the first two years and during school holidays.

The Welsh Government launched Teulu Cymru ("Family of Wales") in April 2024 after undertaking research with parents in Wales. Teulu Cymru seeks to help parents, carers and families of children aged 0-18 to navigate the various Welsh Government sources of practical and financial support. This includes information about the Childcare Offer, Flying Start and tax-free childcare, as well as signposting to benefit support, local family support, and trusted advice on parenting.¹¹² This scheme is an encouraging step to make it easier for families across Wales to access support, but more work to simplify the system is urgently needed.

Gaps in provision have persisted and, in some cases, increased. Coram's Childcare Survey 2023 found that no local authorities in Wales reported enough childcare across the borough for disabled children, parents working atypical hours and families living in rural areas. Since 2021, the number of local authorities which lacked childcare for these groups across their entire area has gone up and now stands at around a third of local authorities for each of the three demographics.¹¹⁴ Given the scope of the challenges facing

"There are widespread concerns that the Welsh Government's approach to early childhood education and care is confused, fragmented, and lacks a clear vision."

SENEDD EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE ¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ [Childcare putting Welsh parents in debt, Senedd told | BBC News](#); [Little steps, big struggles: Childcare in Wales | Oxfam Cymru, Nov 2023](#)

¹⁰⁸ [Little steps, big struggles: Childcare in Wales | Oxfam Cymru, Nov 2023](#); [Overview of key themes in the 2022 to 2027 Childcare Sufficiency Assessments](#)

¹⁰⁹ [Issues Affecting the Early Years Sector from the Expansion of Flying Start.](#)

¹¹⁰ [Rolling back on childcare commitments? | Bevan Foundation](#)

¹¹¹ [Tackling disadvantage through childcare in Wales | Bevan Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2024](#)

¹¹² [Teulu Cymru](#)

¹¹³ ["Their Future: Our Priority?", Senedd Equalities and Social Justice Committee, July 2024](#)

¹¹⁴ [Coram - Childcare Survey 2023](#)

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the childcare and early years sector, it is unlikely that these gaps can be filled with the amount of funding currently provided.

The Welsh Government's 2024-25 Draft Budget gives no indication that the £140 million Barnett consequential, resulting from increased childcare spending in England, will be allocated to childcare in Wales.¹¹⁵ Stakeholders noted that this indicates a lack of dedication to invest in childcare. It is imperative that, rather than reducing funding, resources are committed to ensure childcare provisions meet the needs of families by addressing barriers such as a complicated and disjointed system, gaps in provision and lack of information.¹¹⁶

It is important to understand the uptake of childcare among different communities, including minority ethnic families. The establishment of the Anti-Racist Wales Childcare & Play Governance Group to implement the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan is therefore welcome.¹¹⁷ In October 2024, the IPPO and WCPP published research on early years childcare uptake among minority ethnic families, with recommendations on the need for a bespoke and integrated strategy; addressing social, cultural and practical barriers; and community outreach and engagement.¹¹⁸ The recently refreshed 10 Year Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan commits to establishing a working group to identify barriers faced by minority ethnic people in accessing services.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the Welsh Government has funded Cwlwm and Diversity and Anti-Racism Professional Learning (DARPL) to develop inclusive processes, resources and training for childcare settings.¹²⁰

The loss of the Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE) programme, which was jointly funded by the Welsh Government and the European Social Fund, removes vital childcare support for parents engaged in training or seeking employment. With caring responsibilities being a key barrier to women accessing the workforce, the closure of this project is likely to have a particularly significant impact on women's employment opportunities.¹²¹

The social care and childcare sector

Women make up 82% of the social care workforce in Wales, a workforce that has been in crisis since before the pandemic.¹²² The continuation of funding to ensure the payment and successive uplifts of a Real Living Wage (RLW) for all social care workers is positive. However, stakeholders have raised concerns that Welsh Government funding for RLW is not reaching the sector, partly because it was not hypothecated. Work must continue to ensure the RLW is implemented across the sector, including work by the Social Care Fair Work Forum to improve terms and conditions.¹²³

¹¹⁵ [Draft Budget 2024 to 2025; Children, Young People and Education Committee 11/01/2024 | Welsh Parliament](#)

¹¹⁶ [‘Their Future: Our Priority?’, Senedd Equalities and Social Justice Committee, July 2024](#)

¹¹⁷ [Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan](#)

¹¹⁸ [How can policy increase access to early years childcare support for ethnic minority families?](#)

¹¹⁹ [10 Year Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan: Review and Refresh - 2024](#)

¹²⁰ [Early Years Minister launches anti-racist guidance for childcare settings](#)

¹²¹ [Evaluation of Parents, Childcare and Employment \(PaCE\) Final Summative Evaluation Report](#)

¹²² [Social care workforce survey 2023; A spotlight on social care workers – the latest challenges facing the sector - Part 2](#)

¹²³ [Social Care Fair Work Forum: annual progress update 2024](#)

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The long-term goal of establishing a National Care Service would make social care free at the point of need, address inconsistencies in eligibility testing across Wales, reduce care costs and support the integration of health and social care services. However, stakeholders observed that this ambition conflicts with the proposal to increase the cap on non-residential social care charges, which would worsen conditions for disabled people and unpaid carers.¹²⁴

Significant issues persist with employment conditions across the paid care sector, particularly concerning the recruitment and retention needed to expand childcare in Wales. Stakeholders noted that, while childcare is unaffordable for parents, many childcare workers are low-paid and on precarious job contracts. These challenges have contributed to a drop in the number of childcare workers in Wales. The childcare and play workforce in Wales was estimated at around 17,300 workers in 2021, and at just over 16,000 as of 2024.¹²⁵ While childcare workers face challenges and responsibilities not dissimilar to social care, they are not currently entitled to the Real Living Wage. Funding is not high enough to allow workers' wages to increase and quality standards to be maintained, as well as ambitions such as Cymraeg 2050 to be realised.¹²⁶ A recent survey revealed that 91% of nurseries in Wales expect to either break even or operate at a loss, which poses risks to local economies and the wider infrastructure provided by care services.¹²⁷

The 10 Year Childcare, Play, and Early Years Workforce Plan has been reviewed and refreshed, with the forthcoming establishment of a Childcare and Playwork Social Partnership Fair Work Forum to address key workforce issues like recruitment, retention, career progression and fair work.¹²⁸ The Plan also aims to support a diverse workforce, aligning with the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan.

The Welsh Government's 2023 Independent Review of Childminding is a positive step, with ongoing efforts to support new and prospective childminders, especially in rural areas, and forthcoming guidance to reduce administrative burdens.¹²⁹

Several improvements have been made for childcare providers, including the Childcare Offer for Wales digital service that now streamlines payment processing for providers.¹³⁰ The extension of the business rates relief exemption to March 2025 is helpful for registered childcare premises, with hopes for it to become permanent.¹³¹

The Welsh Government's initiatives, including the creation of a dedicated Working Wales webpage and a January 2023 social media campaign, highlight career opportunities and progression in the childcare and playwork sectors. Additionally, a commissioned

¹²⁴ [Raising the weekly maximum charge for adult non-residential care and support](#)

¹²⁵ [Mapping the childcare and play workforce: Phase 2 report](#)

¹²⁶ [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers](#)

¹²⁷ [Wales Childcare Crisis: Nine in ten nurseries expect to make a loss or break even | NDNA](#)

¹²⁸ [10 Year Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan: Review and Refresh](#)

¹²⁹ [Independent Review of Childminding; Written Statement: National Childminding Week: Supporting childminders, May 2024](#)

¹³⁰ [Childcare Offer for Wales digital service: introduction for providers](#)

¹³¹ [Rates relief extended for childcare providers until 2025](#)

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workforce mapping project aims to better understand sector composition and address recruitment challenges, noting the need for increased Welsh-medium childcare provision to meet local authority targets.¹³² Accountability and monitoring frameworks will be vital to make these endeavours a success, as recruitment and retention of staff remains a pressing issue and improvements in pay, working conditions and career progression may be needed alongside these.

Progress since the 2022 Feminist Scorecard

The Welsh Government has made some progress in addressing the challenges faced by unpaid carers, particularly through the establishment of the Carers Support Fund and the commitment of £9m to the Short Breaks Scheme. The broadened eligibility criteria for the Carers Support Fund has allowed for more inclusivity in accessing grants for essential needs. Additionally, the Welsh Government's ongoing efforts to implement a Real Living Wage for social care workers indicate a positive shift towards improving conditions for the paid care workforce, addressing long-standing issues highlighted in the 2022 Scorecard.

Unpaid carers still face intense physical, mental and financial strains, however, with limited relief available. A gap persists between the promises of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 and the reality for carers on the ground. The Welsh Government's response to childcare challenges has similarly shown only modest improvements. Although there have been expansions in childcare offerings and improved information campaigns, the lack of integration between different programmes, along with inconsistent provisions across local authorities, continues to hinder accessibility and affordability. The concerns raised about the adequacy of provisions for families facing barriers, particularly those in rural areas and low-income households, remain prominent. These highlight an urgent need for comprehensive policy reforms to ensure that support is equitable and effectively meets the diverse needs of families in Wales.

¹³² [Mapping the childcare and play workforce in Wales](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Produce an implementation plan to address the identified challenges within the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, in line with the 2023 independent evaluation.
- Simplify the Childcare Offer and Flying Start programmes through a single application form and provide for a seamless transition between different childcare support programmes.
- Work towards providing 30 hours of funded childcare for all children from when paid parental leave ends and expand eligibility to unemployed parents, those working fewer than 16 hours and people seeking asylum.
- Ensure funding levels are adequate to enable providers to recruit and retain childcare professionals to support the expansion of childcare services and address gaps in childcare provision.
- Introduce and consistently implement a sector-wide real living wage for social care and childcare workers, with better career progression opportunities and support for mental health and well-being.
- Recognise and value unpaid care work across all ages, with appropriate investment in respite care, support services and improved identification of unpaid carers.

EQUAL REPRESENTATION AND LEADERSHIP

SCORE: AMBER

Senedd

The composition of the Senedd has remained unchanged since the last Feminist Scorecard in 2022. Women's representation stands at 43%, with no change in the data for other marginalised groups. Since devolution, there has been only one minority ethnic woman MS, and three MSs (5%) from minority ethnic backgrounds overall. There have been three (5%) openly LGBTQ+ MSs, but no openly transgender or non-binary MSs.

In the 2022 Feminist Scorecard, nine out of fourteen (64%) cabinet members were women. This proportion was matched in the most recent cabinet reshuffle in September 2024. There is one openly LGBTQ+ cabinet secretary (a man), but there is now no minority ethnic representation in the Welsh Government's Cabinet.

In August 2024, Eluned Morgan MS was appointed as the first female First Minister. While this was a significant milestone in breaking the glass ceiling in Welsh politics, it was soon followed by the reversal of a key Welsh Government commitment to enshrine gender quotas in law through the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill.¹³³ The Bill was originally intended to come into force in 2026, but was withdrawn in September 2024. This represents a devastating change of direction, particularly given the years of work to develop this legislation, and the fact that in June 2024, it passed its general principles vote in the Senedd.

A wealth of research and comparative examples clearly shows that legislative gender quotas are the single most effective tool for enhancing women's representation in elected bodies.¹³⁴ The Welsh Government has committed to focusing on guidance regarding diversity and inclusion strategies for political parties, introduced under the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act, as a means to deliver tangible change by the next Senedd election in 2026.¹³⁵ While parties have an important role to play in promoting diverse and equal representation, there is a risk that these voluntary measures will be insufficient to prevent a further reduction in women's representation as the Senedd is expanded from 60 to 96 members in 2026.¹³⁶

The Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act 2024 also establishes a duty for the Welsh Government to promote candidate diversity through measures such as advice,

"The Welsh Government's decision to drop plans for gender quotas at the next Senedd election is a huge step back for Welsh democracy and risks seeing the Senedd becoming the least representative it has ever been at the next election."

ELECTORAL REFORM SOCIETY CYMRU¹³⁷

¹³³ [Senedd Cymru \(Electoral Candidate Lists\) Bill](#)

¹³⁴ [Gender Quotas Database | International IDEA](#); Drude Dahlerup et al. (2013), *Atlas of Electoral Gender Quotas*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [IDEA], IPU and Stockholm University, retrieved 27 Mar 2024

¹³⁵ [Elections and Elected Bodies \(Wales\) Act 2024](#)

¹³⁶ [Senedd Cymru \(Members and Elections\) \(Wales\) Act](#)

¹³⁷ [Dropping of gender quotas legislation risks backstep on women's representation, warn campaigners](#)

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mentoring, training, and financial assistance, all of which have been shown to encourage diverse and equal representation.¹³⁸ The provisions, which apply to both Senedd and local government elections, also make permanent a financial assistance scheme for disabled candidates that was piloted in recent Welsh elections and could allow for a similar scheme for candidates with caring responsibilities.

Local government

There is no up-to-date data at the local government level, but women's representation can be expected to remain around the 36% reported after the 2022 elections.¹³⁹ The number of female local government leaders halved to just 9%.¹⁴⁰ According to the Local Government Candidates Survey 2022, 3% of elected candidates were from a minority ethnic background and 8% identified as LGBTQ+. However, due to varying and low response rates, actual figures could differ significantly.¹⁴¹

The persistent issue of insufficient reliable data on candidate diversity at both local and national levels remains a concern, with some councils reporting response rates as low as 1% in the most recent candidate surveys.¹⁴² Additionally, there is still a notable gap in data regarding the number of disabled candidates across all levels of government.

Culture and ways of working

Job-sharing is an important tool for making elected office more accessible to a wider range of candidates, including disabled candidates and those with caring responsibilities, and it has been long called for by campaigners.¹⁴⁴ Recommendations to progress job-sharing have also been made by the Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform in 2017 and the Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform in 2022.¹⁴⁵ Recent consultations on job-sharing for committee chairs in the Senedd, and on expanding job-sharing in local government, indicate partial progress since the 2022 Scorecard.¹⁴⁶ However, according to the provisions in the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Act 2024,

Responses to the Standards Committee's 2023 inquiry into dignity and respect indicate that more work is needed to ensure women can have confidence in the Senedd's policies and procedures for effectively addressing reports of misconduct, particularly sexual harassment.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ [Elections and Elected Bodies \(Wales\) Act 2024 | Senedd; Barriers to Women Entering Parliament and Local Government | Institute for Policy Research](#)

¹³⁹ [Election 2022: Welsh politics needs more women, new councillor says](#)

¹⁴⁰ [State of the Nation 2024 | WEN Wales](#)

¹⁴¹ [Local Government Candidates Survey: 2022](#)

¹⁴² [Local Government Candidates Survey: 2022](#)

¹⁴³ [Inquiry into dignity and respect | Senedd Standards Committee](#)

¹⁴⁴ [Job-sharing for Senedd Members | WEN Wales](#)

¹⁴⁵ [A Parliament that works for Wales | Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform; Reforming our Senedd | Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform](#)

¹⁴⁶ [Committee chair job sharing | Senedd Business Committee; Consultation on the extension of job share provisions for elected members of principal councils to non-executive roles](#)

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“The most important thing, in my opinion, is to try and change the culture and the way people behave in politics – and unfortunately this isn’t happening in the way we want it to.”

PROFESSOR LAURA MCALLISTER¹⁴⁷

substantial committee work on job-sharing will not commence until after the 2026 election, marking nearly a decade of delay since this work was first recommended.¹⁴⁸

In June 2022, remote working arrangements in the Senedd were made permanent, making the role of MS more accessible. Regrettably, there are still no childcare facilities in the Senedd. It is critical that such provisions, along with family-friendly working arrangements, are part of the Senedd Commission’s preparations for the 2026 Senedd expansion.

Violence against women in politics is a complex and growing problem.¹⁴⁹ Research from 2023 found that 80% of Welsh MPs and MSs have felt threatened while in office, and 43% have received death threats.¹⁵⁰ Some groups are targeted more frequently and in

different ways, including women; nearly three-quarters of women MPs say they ‘do not use social media to speak on certain issues because of the abusive environment online’, compared to 51% of men.¹⁵¹

Public sector boards

As data challenges regarding public appointments have yet to be resolved, the most recent publicly available figures remain from 2021/22. These show that 59% of appointments were women, an increase from 56% in 2020/21.¹⁵² The proportion of public appointments and reappointments of people from minority ethnic backgrounds also rose, from less than 5% in 2020/21 to 12.7% in 2021/22.¹⁵³ However, the availability of data for other protected characteristics and intersectionality, including the representation of disabled women, remains an issue across the board.

The delivery of the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for Public Appointments in Wales 2020-23 was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁵⁴ The commitments in this strategy should now be reviewed and evaluated, with a refreshed work programme established to ensure that public bodies have board members who reflect the diversity of Welsh society.

The Equal Power Equal Voice: Public Life Mentoring Programme ended in June 2024, with no immediate continuation funding.¹⁵⁵ Such schemes are essential in increasing diversity of representation in public and political life in Wales, and we hope the Welsh Government will address this gap. Cardiff’s election of its first minority ethnic woman as

¹⁴⁷ Gender equality in politics: Changing culture is most important | Professor Laura McAllister

¹⁴⁸ Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Act 2024

¹⁴⁹ Strengthening democracy by reducing threats to women in politics | Blavatnik School of Government, 2024

¹⁵⁰ MP abuse: ‘My staff have to sit behind bulletproof glass’ says Welsh politician Fay Jones | ITV News Wales

¹⁵¹ A House For Everyone: The Case for Modernising Parliament | The Fawcett Society, 2023

¹⁵² State of the Nation 2024 | WEN Wales

¹⁵³ Annual reports | Commissioner for Public Appointments

¹⁵⁴ Written Question, WQ93887 | Welsh Parliament

¹⁵⁵ Equal Power Equal Voice: Public Life Mentoring Programme

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Lord Mayor in 2023, an alumna of an earlier initiative to encourage women into public life, demonstrates the positive impact of such programs.¹⁵⁶

The closure of Chwarae Teg meant the end of Step to Non-Exec, a 12-month programme that helped women develop the skills and confidence to become non-executive directors. As a result, there will now be fewer opportunities for women to access the support needed to secure board positions.

Progress since the 2022 Feminist Scorecard

The appointment of the first female First Minister marked a milestone for women's representation, and the proportion of women in the Welsh Government Cabinet remains high. However, the number of female local government leaders has significantly reduced to just 9%. At the wider Senedd and local government levels, women's representation remains unchanged due to the absence of elections, with limited representation of women who face intersecting discrimination.

Legislation is underway that has the potential to make a positive difference if meaningfully implemented ahead of the next Senedd and local government elections. The introduction of a duty to improve candidate diversity, along with guidance on voluntary actions for political parties in the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act, reflects a clear commitment to enhancing diversity.¹⁵⁷ The Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) (Wales) Act also indicates a continued commitment to job-sharing, but progress has been disappointingly postponed until after the 2026 election.¹⁵⁸

The withdrawal of the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill – despite passing its general principles vote in the Senedd and being a core element of the Cooperation Agreement – is a significant missed opportunity to introduce gender quotas.¹⁵⁹ It remains to be seen if other measures, which are known to be less effective than quotas, will deliver the relevant progress.

¹⁵⁶ Cardiff: First woman of colour Bablin Molik appointed lord mayor | BBC News

¹⁵⁷ Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act 2024

¹⁵⁸ Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) (Wales) Act

¹⁵⁹ Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill is reinstated on the legislative agenda in time for the 2030 election.
- Implement timely, robust guidance and monitoring to ensure political parties consider diversity in their candidate lists, covering all protected characteristics, including race, disability, age, sexuality and gender identity.
- Ensure provision of childcare facilities and family-friendly ways of working form part of the Senedd Commission's preparation for the 2026 Senedd expansion.
- Encourage the use of executive job-sharing in local government to benefit a diverse range of elected members by sharing best practice across Wales.
- Support and expand mentoring programmes for women and other underrepresented groups in political and public life by urgently committing investment in the upcoming budget.
- Continue to improve the collection of candidate diversity data across the Senedd, local government and public boards.
- Implement recommendations from the Review of the Access to Elected Office Fund Wales Pilot, including extending the Fund to cover caring expenses and exploring support for candidates with other protected characteristics, particularly those facing socio-economic disadvantage.
- Strengthen standards and grievance procedures to protect candidates and elected representatives from harassment and abuse.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

SCORE: AMBER

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) remain key concerns, disproportionately affecting women and primarily perpetrated by men.¹⁶⁰

In 2023, 5.7% of women and 3.2% of men aged 16 and over in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse in the past year, compared with 6.9% of women and 3% of men in 2022.¹⁶¹ Women continue to be more likely than men to be killed by someone they know.¹⁶² In the year ending March 2023, 70% of domestic homicide victims in England and Wales were women – a slight increase from 67.3% in 2020-2022.¹⁶³ Incidents of VAWDASV remain underreported, and there is a lack of disaggregated data for Wales. Neither the Welsh Government's national strategy nor its annual progress report includes Wales-specific data.¹⁶⁴

"The prevalence of [gender-based violence] in our society can be described as an epidemic. [...] We believe the root cause of this epidemic lies in social inequality, the most important of which is gender inequality. Implementing policies that promote gender equality must be the overarching imperative."

SENEDD EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE ¹⁶⁹

The proportion of disabled people reporting domestic abuse is approximately three times higher than that reported by non-disabled people.¹⁶⁵ Domestic violence and abuse were the most common adverse experiences cited by women referred to food banks in the Trussell Trust network in Wales.¹⁶⁶ In the year ending March 2023, there were 4,732 reported transgender hate crimes in England and Wales, an increase of 11% from the previous year.¹⁶⁷

Reported offences in England and Wales involving so called 'honour-based' abuse, including forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), increased from 2,642 in 2020/21 to 2,871 in 2021/22 and 2,905 in 2022/23.¹⁶⁸

Policy and legislation

Since the 2022 Scorecard, the Welsh Government has issued its VAWDASV strategy for 2022-26.¹⁷⁰ This strategy aligns with the VAWDASV (Wales) Act 2015 and includes a commitment to

¹⁶⁰ Making Wales a safe place to be a woman

¹⁶¹ Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2023

¹⁶² Who is missing in the data? What the available data on domestic abuse does and doesn't tell us about women's experiences | Women's Aid

¹⁶³ Domestic homicide is the death of a person aged 16 or older that appears to be the result of violence, abuse or neglect by someone they are related to, in an intimate relationship with or in the same household as.

¹⁶⁴ Designated a National Threat: Senedd to debate measures to halt the epidemic of violence against women and girls

¹⁶⁵ Equality and Human Rights Monitor: Is Wales Fairer?

¹⁶⁶ Hunger in Wales | The Trussell Trust, 2023

¹⁶⁷ Hate crime, England and Wales, 2022 to 2023 second edition

¹⁶⁸ Statistics on so called 'honour-based' abuse offences, England and Wales, 2022 to 2023

¹⁶⁹ How we must all play our part: a public health approach to halting the epidemic in gender-based violence, Jan 2024

¹⁷⁰ Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence: strategy 2022 to 2026

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review the national indicators first published in 2019.¹⁷¹ Rapid progress that can be measured is essential, particularly as the strategy's scope has expanded since 2019 to include workplace harassment and gender-based harassment in all public spaces.¹⁷²

Now halfway through this ambitious VAWDASV strategy, stakeholders remain supportive of its aims but note that the long-hoped-for change has not yet been felt on the ground. In reality, services are still stretched beyond their capacity and the refreshed blueprint has not yet translated into a cohesive approach. Stakeholders have observed inconsistency across local authorities' understanding of their own duties when supporting VAWDASV survivors with NRPF. There are clear signs of good practice, such as specialist officers for NRPF, which could be replicated in more local authorities across Wales.

The UK Government ratified the Istanbul Convention in July 2022, binding both the UK and Welsh Governments to protect women and girls from violence.¹⁷³ The Convention aligns with the VAWDASV (Wales) Act 2015, aiming to prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women, including domestic violence. In March 2024, the EHRC conducted a baseline evaluation of the UK's implementation, recommending improvements for both the UK and Welsh Governments, including measurable outcomes and regular evaluations of awareness campaigns.¹⁷⁴ While the Welsh Government's commitment to the Convention is encouraging, effective assessment requires robust indicators and monitoring. Currently, there is no way to measure the Act's impact or fully understand the intersecting nature of VAWDASV.

TUC Cymru's toolkit demonstrates that sexual harassment is part of a wider, relentless culture of sexual violence and misogyny. The Welsh Government must continue working with trade unions and other stakeholders to improve workplace cultures in Wales.¹⁷⁵

The Welsh Government published its peer-on-peer sexual harassment action plan in January 2024 following the Senedd Children, Young People and Education Committee's findings on the sheer scale of this harassment and the extent to which it has been normalised across schools and colleges.¹⁷⁶ The plan represents a key step forward, although timeframes have not yet been allocated to actions.

The Welsh Government's *Sound* early intervention and prevention campaign, launched in 2023, seeks to address the pervasive knowledge gap around gender-based violence.¹⁷⁷ Sector organisations have long called for an increased focus on prevention so this commitment from the Welsh Government is encouraging, although the impact of it can not yet be assessed.

¹⁷¹ [The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse, and Sexual Violence Wales Act 2015; Welsh Government response: Inquiry into a public health approach to preventing gender-based violence, Feb 2024](#)

¹⁷² [Designated a National Threat: Senedd to debate measures to halt the epidemic of violence against women and girls](#)

¹⁷³ [The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence \(Istanbul Convention\) | Gender Matters](#)

¹⁷⁴ [UK implementation of the Istanbul Convention: Baseline Evaluation | EHRC](#)

¹⁷⁵ [Sexual harassment in the workplace | TUC Cymru](#)

¹⁷⁶ [Peer-on-peer sexual harassment in education settings: action plan; Everybody's affected - Peer on peer sexual harassment among learners](#)

¹⁷⁷ [Sound](#)

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There are ongoing concerns about the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, which, since coming into force in 2022, treats refuge accommodation like a regular home rather than specialist emergency housing. This lack of flexibility hinders the ability of survivors to move from refuges when necessary, compromising their safety and placing strain on refuge providers.¹⁷⁸ Additionally, contradictions between UK and Welsh Government policies, such as the occupation contracts and the spare room subsidy (bedroom tax), are exacerbating the situation, leading to longer refuge stays due to a lack of alternative housing options.¹⁷⁹ The Welsh Government must continue engaging with the sector, particularly refuge providers, and seek closer alignment with UK Government policies to address these issues.

Funding and support

Welsh Women's Aid data shows that, in the last financial year, 739 survivors in Wales were able to access refuge-based support services, while 712 survivors were not. A lack of refuge spaces has been the most common reason for this for several years.¹⁸⁰ In one survey, nearly 70% of specialist services reported an increase in demand compared with the previous year.¹⁸¹

The VAWDASV specialist sector relies heavily on short-term, competitive funding, which adds administrative burden, hinders long-term planning, and affects staff recruitment and retention. This challenge disproportionately affects smaller 'by and for' organisations that serve minority ethnic, disabled, LGBTQ+ and migrant women. The need for sustained funding for organisations addressing complex and intersecting victim needs is becoming increasingly urgent.¹⁸²

The refreshed VAWDASV strategy commits to developing a system of sustainable commissioning within the third sector, focusing on improvement through collaboration and providing stability. However, third sector organisations have yet to see the benefits and continue to rely on precarious, short-term funding from various sources. Longer-term funding cycles would allow providers to take a proactive rather than reactive approach, and progress here is long overdue.

"The pressure on services shows no sign of relenting, indeed it appears to be worse year on year."

SARA KIRKPATRICK, WELSH WOMEN'S AID¹⁸³

The Welsh Government's VAWDASV budget has remained at the same level — £8m revenue and £2.2m capital — since the 2022/23 budget.¹⁸⁴ While it is positive that this budget has been protected amidst cuts elsewhere, the lack of increase means a real-terms reduction since the 2022 Scorecard. Rising costs across the sector make it difficult for service providers to absorb these increases without at least inflation-linked budget growth.

¹⁷⁸ [Briefing on The Renting Homes \(Wales\) Act 2016 | Welsh Women's Aid](#)

¹⁷⁹ [State of the Sector 2023-2024 | Welsh Women's Aid](#)

¹⁸⁰ [State of the Sector 2023-2024 | Welsh Women's Aid](#)

¹⁸¹ [State of the Sector 2023-2024 | Welsh Women's Aid](#)

¹⁸² [Launch of Bawso Forced Marriage Research Report](#)

¹⁸³ [State of the Sector 2023-24 | Welsh Women's Aid](#)

¹⁸⁴ [Final Budget 2024 to 2025](#)

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The 2024/25 budget saw an increase in the Welsh Government's Housing Support Grant (HSG) for projects aimed at homelessness prevention and supporting groups such as VAWDASV survivors, including through refugees. This increase acknowledges the severe pressures on services and represents a slight budgetary improvement since 2022. However, it follows years of underfunding relative to inflation and demand.

A key improvement since the 2022 Scorecard is the Welsh Government's launch of the Migrant Victim of Abuse Support Fund (MVASF) in April 2023, offering crisis support for VAWDASV survivors with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) by topping up the Home Office's Support for Migrant Victims (SMV) fund. While the MVASF provides essential aid for accommodation and living costs, it does not include support staff to help women navigate services. Stakeholders are urging the Welsh Government to maintain the MVASF and consider the Home Office's SMV pilot evaluation to guide a sustainable funding solution for NRPF survivors in Wales.¹⁸⁵

The Home Office has redesignated the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) as the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC), expanding temporary support and immigration relief to a broader range of migrant victims of domestic abuse.¹⁸⁶ Although this expansion is welcome, stakeholders noted an increase in referrals to third-sector organisations, particularly from the police. Without sufficient and sustainable funding, these organisations will struggle to support the influx of referrals. A continued commitment to finding a Welsh solution for migrant survivors with NRPF is essential if Wales is to be "the safest place in Europe for everyone."

Progress since the 2022 Feminist Scorecard

A notable advancement is the launch of the refreshed VAWDASV strategy for 2022-26, which emphasises prevention, cultural change and a commitment to intersectionality across policy areas, including housing, education and social services. This strategy aligns with the broader goal of making Wales "the safest place in Europe for everyone" and reflects the urgent need for a cohesive approach to addressing violence against women. Additionally, the introduction of the Migrant Victim of Abuse Support Fund in April 2023 marks a significant step towards better supporting survivors with NRPF, which was a critical gap identified in the previous Scorecard.

Ultimately, reported crimes of violence against women and girls remain unacceptably high, and the Welsh Government's VAWDASV budget has remained unchanged since the 2022/23 fiscal year. This leads to real-term reductions when accounting for inflation, putting immense pressure on service providers. Moreover, the commitment to develop a system of sustainable funding within the third sector has not yet materialised, leaving many organisations reliant on short-term funding that complicates long-term planning and staff retention. Challenges around the treatment of NRPF survivors, and the strain on refugee services due to limited capacity have not been adequately addressed. The Welsh Government's response to the increased demand for refuge services remains insufficient, with many survivors still being turned away due to a lack of available spaces and resources.

¹⁸⁵ [Written Statement: Migrant Victim of Abuse Support Fund pilot, July 2023](#)

¹⁸⁶ [Changes to the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that the VAWDASV Strategy 2022-26 and Blueprint framework translates into measurable and impactful action, a robust evidence base and sufficient resources to fulfil the commitment to intersectionality.
- Create a sustainable funding model for VAWDASV specialist services that provides additional support for women with complex needs, disabled women, LGBTQ+ individuals and minority ethnic women, with simplified tendering and reporting processes and long-term contracts in place.
- Continue the Migrant Victim of Abuse Support Fund at the year-one level as a minimum, and expand the fund to cover designated support staff as well as accommodation and living allowances.
- Use the upcoming Home Office report on the Support for Migrant Victims pilot to inform a sustainable, long-term funding solution in Wales for supporting survivors with no recourse to public funds.
- Commit to ensuring that all local authorities are fully equipped to discharge their duties around NRPF by sharing guidance, resources and supporting the appointment of specialist NRPF officers.
- Introduce an exemption for refugees under the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, or support refugees to manage the additional administrative and legal work if an exemption is not provided.
- Work with the UK Government and data evidence agencies to improve the availability of data disaggregated to Wales.
- Act urgently to reduce the scale and impact of peer-on-peer sexual harassment by progressing commitments in the 2024 action plan.

TACKLING GENDER HEALTH INEQUALITIES

SCORE: AMBER

Across the UK, women have a longer life expectancy than men but spend a higher proportion of their lives in poor health.¹⁸⁷ While in total years, women still generally have a longer healthy life expectancy than men, most recent figures for the years 2020 to 2022 show that this reduced during the pandemic. In Wales, we saw a dramatic decrease by over 22 months compared to 2019 to 2021, with women now having a shorter *healthy* life expectancy than men.¹⁸⁸ There is a need for more timely data on this so that changes can be monitored.

Gender health gaps are driven by a number of factors, including socio-economic disadvantage and a lack of research into specific physiological conditions that solely or disproportionately affect women. Women who experience intersecting discrimination can face additional barriers to accessing the healthcare they need, resulting in even poorer experiences and outcomes. It is now widely known that maternal death is almost four times higher among Black women, and nearly two times higher among Asian women.¹⁸⁹ More generally, diagnosis and treatment can be delayed when family members are relied upon to translate during medical appointments, particularly when trained professional interpreters are unavailable.¹⁹⁰

Representation of the experiences and symptoms of ethnic minority, disabled, and/or LGBTQ+ women is vital in equipping medical professionals to identify and address health issues in all women. This includes sufficient awareness of so called 'honour-based' abuse, including forced marriage and FGM.¹⁹¹

Initiatives and research

Since 2022, there has been progress on the NHS Women and Girls' Health Plan, focusing on establishing the necessary infrastructure and governance. It is vital that the plan is now developed and implemented swiftly. This plan must be co-produced with the public and patients, and should consider women's health throughout the life-course and holistically beyond a narrow focus on reproductive health.¹⁹² There are many health conditions which uniquely or disproportionately affect women and for which they are not currently receiving optimum care, such as asthma and heart disease.¹⁹³

The Welsh Government has demonstrated a considerable commitment to women's health in the past two years, particularly in efforts to destigmatise menstruation while

¹⁸⁷ [Health state life expectancies in England, Northern Ireland and Wales | Office for National Statistics](#) Data for Scotland was not available at the time of publication.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ [MBRRACE-UK, Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care: Lessons learned to inform maternity care from the UK and Ireland Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths and Morbidity 2018–20, November 2022](#)

¹⁹⁰ [Life or death medical mistakes happen due to bad translation](#)

¹⁹¹ [How we must all play our part: a public health approach to halting the epidemic in gender-based violence](#)

¹⁹² [Women's Health Wales: A Quality Statement for the Health of Women, Girls, and those Assigned Female at Birth 2022](#)

¹⁹³ [Asthma is Worse for Women | Asthma + Lung UK; Bias and Biology | British Heart Foundation](#)

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addressing the associated challenges. The Period Proud Wales Action Plan 2023-2028 highlights several key issues, including the link between periods and broader health concerns, workplace implications and participation in sport and culture.¹⁹⁴

Another positive step is the integration of menstrual well-being into the education curriculum, although more clarity is needed on the specific content and delivery.¹⁹⁵ Prior to its roll-out, concerns had been raised through a Senedd petition about the lack of menstrual education in schools.¹⁹⁶

The School Research Network Survey now includes questions on period pain and its impact on school attendance, which could inform future policies. Meanwhile, the Bloody Brilliant website continues to provide valuable menstrual health resources for young people.¹⁹⁷ However, the Period Dignity Grant, which provided free period products in schools, was cut in the 2024/25 budget. Stakeholders reported that concerns were raised about products not being completely freely available and that this may have affected demand.¹⁹⁸

The current Maternity Care Plan is expiring this year, and its successor must align with other strategies, such as the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, the LGBTQ+ Action Plan and the work of the Disability Rights Taskforce. The forthcoming Maternity and Neonatal Quality Statement and action plan must be trauma-informed, inclusive and ensure equitable care, particularly for minority ethnic women. This plan should also connect effectively with the broader women's health plan to address health issues that affect maternal and neonatal experiences.

Recent investments in women's health are encouraging. The Welsh Government committed £750,000 to a women's health research fund, with a commissioned call for research due in April 2025, and Health Care Research Wales has prioritised women's health.¹⁹⁹ Welsh Government funding has supported initiatives like the Endometriosis Cymru website, including a Symptom Reporting Tool, as well as the HCRW-funded Severe Period Pain Is Not Normal (SPPINN) project.²⁰⁰

Despite these advancements, stakeholders report that more work is needed to build a robust evidence base. Data must be properly disaggregated to monitor the impact of both gendered and non-gendered conditions across different groups. Clinical trials also need to be more representative of gender and other protected characteristics. Additionally, research should focus on the experiences and needs of disabled and neurodivergent women during pregnancy and birth.

¹⁹⁴ [Period Proud Wales Action Plan: annual highlight report 2023 to 2024](#) | NB In 2023 the 'Period Dignity Strategic Action Draft Plan' was renamed [Period Proud Wales Action Plan](#)

¹⁹⁵ [Curriculum for Wales: Relationships and Sexuality Education \(RSE\) Code](#)

¹⁹⁶ [Change how schools educate us on periods. - Petitions](#)

¹⁹⁷ [Bloody Brilliant Wales](#)

¹⁹⁸ [Equality and Social Justice Committee 22/01/2024 - Welsh Parliament; Plenary 21/05/2024 - Welsh Parliament](#)

¹⁹⁹ [Written Statement: Update on Women's Health, March 2024; Wales champions women's health and social care research](#)

²⁰⁰ [The Endometriosis Cymru Symptom Reporting Tool; Severe Period Pain Is Not Normal \(SPPINN\) Study | Health Care Research Wales](#)

Access to healthcare

Diagnosis times for endometriosis have increased across all four nations of the UK, with Wales experiencing the longest wait times. In Wales, the average time to diagnosis increased from 9 years in 2020 to 9 years and 11 months in 2023.²⁰¹ The prolonged waiting period and multiple GP visits significantly impact patients' employment, education, mental health and well-being.²⁰² The 2022 Scorecard recommended that the Welsh Government improve endometriosis healthcare by updating guidelines, raising awareness, and allocating funding. Each health board in Wales now has one specialist endometriosis nurse, which is a positive step. But more work is needed to reduce the unacceptable delay in diagnosis and provide adequate support for the estimated 150,000 women living with the condition in Wales.

This issue reflects broader challenges in women's health services. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) recently found that 89% of healthcare professionals across the UK believe that gynaecology waiting times negatively impact patients' quality of life.²⁰³ In December 2023, the Senedd Health and Social Care Committee published a report on gynaecological cancer care in Wales. The report highlighted the severe consequences women faced when their concerns were dismissed by healthcare professionals..²⁰⁴ The stories highlighted in Claire's Campaign bring these findings into sharp relief.²⁰⁵ The National Gynaecology Clinical Implementation Group aims to address non-cancer services disproportionately affected by COVID-19.²⁰⁶ However, adequate funding is crucial to ensure these improvements are realised.

In the 2022 Scorecard, it was recommended that menopause be the subject of a dedicated Public Health Wales campaign and that a menopause specialist be available in every GP surgery in Wales.²⁰⁷ Two years after the recommendation, public awareness of menopause has somewhat improved. Some health boards now have specialist menopause clinics, but these are oversubscribed with long waiting lists and some women must travel long distances for support.²⁰⁸ A 2024 Senedd petition highlights the challenges that women in areas such as North Wales face in accessing menopause services.²⁰⁹ There remains a pressing need for more widespread and accessible specialist menopause services across all health boards in Wales.

Over the past two years, maternity services in Wales have faced significant challenges. Several recent reviews and reports highlight issues related to staffing shortages, care

"The inequalities revealed when scrutinising the provision of gynaecological services are replicated in the care of diseases which impact both men and women, with women experiencing comparatively poor outcomes."

FAIR TREATMENT FOR THE WOMEN OF WALES

²⁰¹ "Dismissed, ignored and belittled" - The long road to endometriosis diagnosis in the UK | Endometriosis UK, March 2024

²⁰² Endometriosis care in Wales: Provision, care pathway, workforce planning and quality and outcome measures

²⁰³ Gynaecology waiting lists leave thousands of women waiting too long for care | RCOG

²⁰⁴ Unheard: Women's journey through gynaecological cancer

²⁰⁵ Claire's Campaign

²⁰⁶ Our programme for transforming and modernising planned care and reducing waiting lists in Wales

²⁰⁷ Feminist Scorecard 2022 | WEN Wales and Oxfam Cymru

²⁰⁸ Menopause: Anglesey woman faces 80-mile trip to clinic | BBC News

²⁰⁹ Women of North Wales have the right to have a Menopause Services/Clinic in Ysbyty Gwynedd - Petitions

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quality and inconsistent service provision across health boards. The maternity unit at Singleton Hospital in Swansea was placed under enhanced monitoring after being deemed “unsafe” by Healthcare Inspectorate Wales.²¹⁰ A recent report from the Maternity and Neonatal Safety Support Programme revealed systemic issues across Welsh maternity services, including leadership shortcomings, workforce strain and cultural barriers to improvement.²¹¹ These factors contribute to ongoing inequalities, resulting in some women receiving lower standards of care based on their geographic location.

There is also a lack of access to abortion care in Wales, with women seeking this care being routinely sent to England for treatment. In many parts of the country, there is no abortion care beyond 9 weeks of pregnancy, and after 18 weeks there is no care available in Wales at all.²¹²

Following another recommendation in the 2022 Scorecard, a new regional mother and baby unit will be opened to serve women from North Wales.²¹³ While progress to improve access to these critical services was welcome, the decision to locate the unit at the Countess of Chester Health Park in England has been criticised for entailing long travel times and lack of Welsh language provision.²¹⁴ In addition, the continuing lack of a dedicated recurrent miscarriage clinic in Wales is disappointing.

Progress since the 2022 Feminist Scorecard

The Welsh Government’s renewed commitment to women’s health, as evidenced by work undertaken towards the NHS Women and Girls’ Health Plan to establish a comprehensive infrastructure for women’s health, presents a key advancement. While the 2022 Scorecard highlighted the UK’s longest wait time of nearly ten years for endometriosis diagnosis, the presence of a specialist nurse in every health board indicates steps towards improvement. Additionally, initiatives like the Period Proud Wales Action Plan demonstrate an increased focus on menstrual health and well-being, with the integration of menstrual education into the school curriculum.

While these efforts show a promising shift towards recognising and addressing women’s health issues, women in Wales still face substantial disparities around access to timely healthcare services. This is especially true for minority ethnic women. The lack of sufficient menopause services noted in the 2022 Scorecard remains a concern, as many women continue to face geographical disparities in access. Previously highlighted issues with staffing shortages and care quality in maternity services remained largely unaddressed, and pressures have now reached crisis point in some areas. These persistent challenges underscore the need for the Welsh Government to take further action, particularly in ensuring equitable access to healthcare across all demographics and geographic areas, and to develop targeted solutions for the most marginalised groups, including minority ethnic women and those facing socio-economic disadvantages.

²¹⁰ [Maternity services at Singleton Hospital in Swansea require immediate improvement | Healthcare Inspectorate Wales](#)

²¹¹ [The Maternity and Neonatal Safety Support Programme in Wales](#)

²¹² [Women’s Equality Party Wales; NHS 111 Wales - Health A-Z : Abortion](#)

²¹³ [New unit set to transform mental health experience for new and expectant mums](#)

²¹⁴ [Welsh mum expected to access mother and baby unit mental health service in England sparks debate | Cambrian News](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure women in all areas of Wales have access to high-quality health services including maternity care, menopause services and abortion care.
- Provide resources and support for the Women and Girls' Health Plan in Wales, ensuring it is co-produced with public and patient advocates as equitable partners.
- Ensure the Quality Statement for Maternity and Neonatal Care is adequately resourced, co-produced with patients and staff and includes clear targets for reducing pregnancy loss, baby deaths, enhancing maternity safety and eliminating inequalities.
- Ensure mandatory training for all patient-facing healthcare practitioners, co-developed with those with lived experience, covering women's health conditions and conditions impacting women who face intersecting discrimination.
- Evaluate the roll-out of menstrual well-being education in schools.
- Expand menopause specialist support across all health boards and ensure GPs in Wales undertake Continuing Professional Development on menopause management.
- Commission specialist services, including tertiary endometriosis centres and at least two dedicated recurrent miscarriage clinics in Wales.
- Develop a women's health nurse offer in primary care for conditions like severe period pain, contraception, menopause and HRT, with pathways to specialise in complex conditions such as endometriosis and recurrent miscarriage.

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Disability Wales
Electoral Reform Society Cymru
Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team (EYST)
Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales
Institute of Welsh Affairs
National Federation of Women's Institutes
Race Council Cymru
Race Equality First
Welsh Centre for International Affairs
Welsh Local Government Association
Welsh Refugee Council
Welsh Women's Aid
Welsh Women's Budget Group

METHODOLOGY

This Scorecard evaluates both the Welsh Government's strategic intentions and the practical implementation of its policies in pursuing the goal of making Wales a feminist nation. It assesses the Government's objectives, commitments and initiatives by analysing policy documents, strategic plans and public statements to understand its aims and priorities. The implementation and impact analysis examines how these policies are executed, focusing on resource allocation and the outcomes achieved. This dual approach highlights successes and identifies gaps between policy goals and actual results, providing a comprehensive view of progress and areas needing improvement.

For each policy area, we reviewed relevant Welsh Government statements, the Programme for Government, legislation, policies and practices. We also gathered evidence from specialists, analysed available statistics and consulted with experts in each field. We are grateful to everyone who contributed their time, knowledge, and data. Each area was rated using a traffic light system (red, amber and green) to indicate the level of progress towards equality for women and girls in Wales. It is important to note that comparing 2022 with 2024 is challenging due to the unique context of the UK's emergence from the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022.

FEMINIST SCORECARD 2024

ABOUT WEN WALES

Our vision is a Wales free from gender discrimination.
Join our coalition to help deliver that vision.

<https://wenwales.org.uk/join-us/>

Charity number: 1145706

Company number: 07891533

ABOUT OXFAM

Oxfam Cymru believes in a radically better world, free from the injustice of poverty. As part of the global Oxfam family, Oxfam Cymru works with partners across Wales and around the world to tackle poverty and drive change in and from Wales. Oxfam Cymru believes that when people come together, change comes about. We're striving for a world where all of us are empowered with exactly what we need to thrive.

<https://oxfamapps.org/cymru/>

Charity number: 202918

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