

# IWD - Choose to challenge

## International Women's Day: A step back for equality? Covid-19 and the impact on women's socio-economic rights

Abigail Holt, Garden Court Chambers (Chair)

Nicola Braganza, Garden Court Chambers

Linda Foley, Trussell Trust Foodbank

Angharad Smith, UN University Centre for Policy Research

Diana Maddah, Public Health Instructor & Research Project  
Coordinator in Lebanon



GARDEN COURT CHAMBERS



9 March 2021



@gardencourtlaw

# IWD - Choose to challenge

**International Women's Day: A step back for equality?  
Covid-19 and the impact on women's socio-economic  
rights**

**Nicola Braganza, Garden Court Chambers**

**9 March 2021**



GARDEN COURT CHAMBERS



@gardencourtlaw

# Why do we still need to have this conversation?

IWD 2021 “[Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world,](#)”

A celebration of women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

Positive results when women lead. Some of the most efficient and exemplary responses to the COVID-19 pandemic were led by women.

Women, especially young women, at the forefront of diverse and inclusive movements online and on the streets for social justice, climate change and equality in all parts of the world.

And yet –



GARDEN COURT CHAMBERS



@gardencourtlaw

# Why do we still need to have this conversation?

And yet –

Women are Heads of State or Government in only 22 countries (of 195)

Only 24.9 per cent of national parliamentarians are women (1% of under 30)

UN reports at the current rate of progress, gender equality among Heads of Government will take another 130 years.

Women are still underrepresented in public life and decision-making – see UN Secretary-General report 21/12/20 on the status of women.



# Why do we still need to have this conversation?

And then came Covid -

- Women are at the forefront of the battle against COVID-19
- They are the front-line and health sector workers, as scientists, doctors and caregivers, yet [they get paid 11 per cent less globally than their male counterparts.](#)



GARDEN COURT CHAMBERS



@gardencourtlaw



Really?  
In 2021?



# Pre-pandemic?

- Women's labour force participation reached a record high in the UK
- Female employment stood at 72% in the final quarter of 2019
- 1.94 million more women were in work compared to a decade before
- Share of women working fulltime increased strongly between 2015 and 2019



# BUT ...

- Long standing gender differences in sectors, occupations, earnings, working hours, and employment security remained
- Considerable variation in the rates of participation in paid work by ethnicity and disability - Women's Budget Group (WBG) figure
- Gender pay gap for median gross earnings (excluding overtime) amongst all employees was 17.3% in 2019
- 79% of occupations had a gender pay gap of more than zero.
- Low paid women were more likely than low paid men to remain stuck in low paid jobs.





# And it goes on ....

- Women were more likely than men to work part-time.
- Women made up the majority (58%) of those in involuntary part-time employment.
- Women were the majority of those on temporary contracts (53%) and on zero hours contracts (55%)
- Female employees were more likely than male employees to be working in jobs paying the National Minimum Wage.
- Low paid women were more likely than low paid men to remain stuck in low paid jobs.



# So has the pandemic caused a step back for equality?

- Almost daily reports about how the pandemic is impacting on women in all aspects of their lives.
- Particularly, on BAME women and the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our society
- Survey after survey – all pointing to the same devastating consequences



# The studies ...

## Countless studies and surveys – a few ...

- The impact of Covid-19 on women (2020) UN Secretary-General
- Whose Time to Care - Unpaid Care and domestic work during covid (UNW25/11/20)
- Where are the women? Gender inequalities in COVID-19 research authorship (BMJ Global Health)



# And then some more ....

- 9/3 FT global survey adds to evidence knock on effects of school closures disproportionately hurting women and because of their over representation in precarious jobs
- 28/2 Observer - Covid bringing mothers to breaking point
- ONS shows during the first weeks of lockdown women carrying out on average 2/3 more of childcare duties than men - more recently 67% women compared with 52% of men taking charge children's education
- 14/1/21 TUC survey 9 out of 10 working mothers said mental health negatively affected – pandemic hit working-class communities hardest, worst effects on women
- 7 in 10 requests for furlough turned down for working mums
- 1/4 mothers worried about losing their job through being singled out for redundancy, sacked or denied hours



# And what are the increased risks?

- Increased risk and severity of domestic abuse with requirement to stay home
- Children with special educational needs and their families will be particularly affected
- Impact on the ‘gig economy workers’, more likely to be young, from a black and minority ethnic background or have caring commitments



# At a glance ...

Economic crises hit women harder:

- Women tend to earn less.
- Women have fewer savings.
- Women are disproportionately more in the informal economy.
- Women have less access to social protections.
- Women are more likely to be burdened with unpaid care and domestic work, and therefore have to drop out of the labour force
- Women make up the majority of single-parent households.



# What do the studies tell us?

Employment and education opportunities could be lost, and women may suffer from poorer mental and physical health.

More chores for women set back gains in equality.

The coronavirus pandemic could wipe out 25 years of increasing gender equality

The care burden poses a "real risk of reverting to 1950s gender stereotypes" UN Women Deputy Executive Director Anita Bhatia



# Women and Equalities Committee report

- ‘Unequal Impact? Coronavirus and the gendered economic impact’
- Economic impact of Covid has affected men and women differently:
  - because of existing gendered economic inequalities
  - the over-representation of women in certain types of work
  - the actions the Government has taken

[9 February 2021]



GARDEN COURT CHAMBERS



@gardencourtlaw



# Recommendations

- Conduct an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of the Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the Self Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS).
- Inform schemes to support employees and the self-employed with an EIA
- Government's priorities are 'heavily gendered' in nature – investment plans skewed towards male-dominated sectors can create unequal outcomes – treasury to provide EIA for Industrial Strategy and 'New Deal'
- Amend the Flexible Working Regulations 2014, to remove the 26-weeks' service threshold for employees to request flexible working arrangements
- Maintain increases in support, including the £20 increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance. (Department for Work and Pensions)



# Recommendations

- Review the adequacy of and eligibility for Statutory Sick Pay. Women are over represented among those who are not eligible.
- Legislate to extend redundancy protection to pregnant women and new mothers.
- Review childcare provision to provide support for working parents and those who are job seeking or retraining.
- Reinstate gender pay gap reporting April 2021 – publish proposals on ethnicity & disability pay gap
- GEO and EHRC explore reporting on parental leave policies, gender pay gaps in furlough and redundancies.
- Gvt require dpts better data to improve reporting and analysis on how gender, ethnicity, disability, age and socio-economic status interact to compound disadvantage.



# ~~Choose to~~ Just challenge!

- Challenge in the workplace
- Challenge in the home
- Challenge in our schools and colleges
- Challenge in our services
- Challenge in our social interactions





Why is this funny?!



# Get angry!



GARDEN COURT CHAMBERS



@gardencourtlaw

# Thank you.

020 7993 7600

info@gclaw.co.uk

@gardencourtlaw

<https://www.gardencourtchambers.co.uk/barristers/nicola-braganza/sao>

[nicolab@gclaw.co.uk](mailto:nicolab@gclaw.co.uk)

