FACTSHEET SERIES

What is data?

Data is information. This information is often divided into two types: information that can be counted and is based on numbers, and information that is based on descriptions and ideas. These categories are called **quantitative** (numbers), and **qualitative** (not numbers).

Here, we will cover quantitative data, but it is also important to know how to combine the two types of data. We'll consider that in another factsheet.

Quantitative data
Information that can be counted and is based on numbers

£ 4 6 8
£4, £6, £8

Qualitative data
Information that is based on descriptions and ideas

IDEAS
IDEAS
IDEAS

Where can you find data?

A lot of data is publicly available. The government publishes data on a range of topics through the **Office of National Statistics** (ONS). For example, you can find information about the number of women in employment here. They also provide links to other sources of public data.
Learn more at **www.wbg.org.uk/ldp**

Why is data important for women?

Data can show us where inequalities lie, and where inequalities are at their greatest. Whether you start from wanting to understand a problem, or are just curious about a situation, **good data provides the evidence we need to find solutions to problems that women face.**

For example, if we use the information on the number of women in employment, in early 2020 the **data** showed that almost 73% of women were in employment in the UK (compared to 80% of men) which was a record high for women.

Number of women in employment in the UK

57%	66%	73%
1980	2000	2020
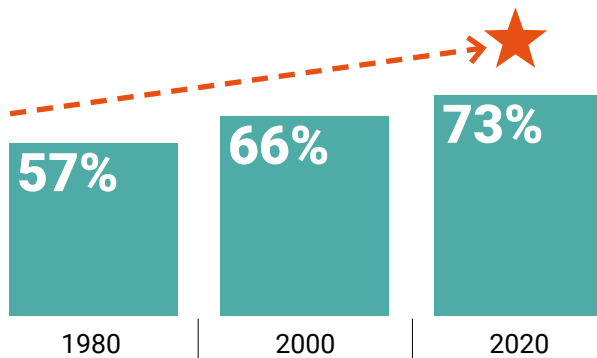
However, a single number is unlikely to give us the full picture. We need to examine it closely to really get a better understanding. When we focus in, **we find that**, around the same time, over two thirds of low earners were women (69%). Women were also much more likely to be in part-time employment (74%), and women made up more than half of those in temporary employment and on zero hours contracts (both 54%). So, while it might seem from the first figure like there were gains for women in employment overall, this did not translate to gains in economic equality.

As well as examining the bigger picture, we may want to find information about a particular place. Again, using the **data** on employment, it is possible to see that within the UK, unemployment is highest in Northern Ireland.

Or, we can focus more closely to find information about specific groups. When we separate the information about groups of people, this is called **data disaggregation***. This is helpful to understand the specific challenges that particular groups of women face.

Inequalities can overlap, too. This is often called **intersectionality**. Sometimes the data does not provide information about these intersections, so we need to remember to consider this when thinking about how policies affect people differently.

Returning to the data on employment in early 2020, **we find that** employment rates of Black women were lower than for White women, with Bangladeshi and Pakistani women falling the furthest behind that of all other ethnic groups.

Employment rates for women within ethnic groups in 2020

37%	68%	39%	75%
Bangladeshi	Black/African/Caribbean	Pakistani	White
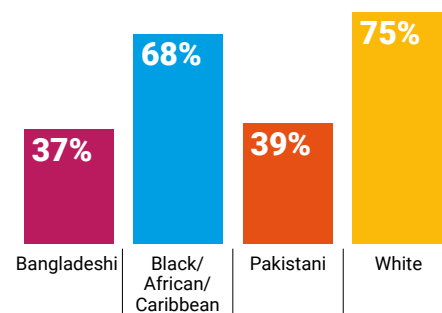
* NOTE: Not all data is disaggregated by different groups of people (for example, disaggregated on race, disability, age, etc). Sometimes that is because this information is just not collected. Sometimes, this information is collected but it's just not published. We'll look in more detail at disaggregated data in our factsheet: Disaggregated Data.

Local data highlights local inequalities

Let's consider some examples of how data can be used to explore specific local situations.

In 2019, the Women's Budget Group worked with the Coventry Women's Partnership* to assess housing affordability. We compared private rents with local salaries of women and men and **found** that there is no region in England where private-rented homes are affordable for women. In Coventry itself, we found that average rents take up 41% of the average salary for women in the city, compared to only 25% of the average salary for men. The lower incomes of women from ethnic minorities make the situation even more stark for them. Disabled women, too, often struggle to find adapted houses. This combined with their lower incomes leads to lower housing affordability.

* Coventry Women's Partnership is a collaboration between Coventry Haven - Women's Aid; Coventry Law Centre; CRASAC; FWT; Kairos WWT

Percentage of salary spent on rent in Coventry

59% remains

An average salary for women

41% income goes on rent

75% remains

An average salary for men

25% income goes on rent
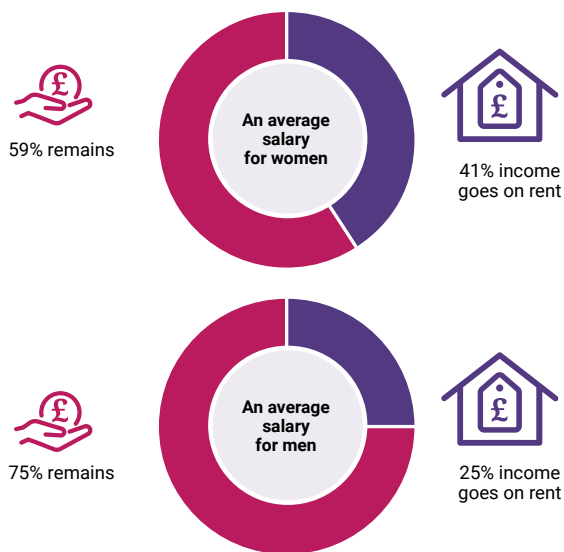
In Wales, Chwarae Teg produces a State of the Nation **report** every year which provides information about the situation for women in Wales. One outcome of their 2021 report shows that in almost all age groups and working patterns, women are more likely to be at risk of living in poverty. This may be due to a combination of factors, but the fact that women are more likely to be in low paid employment is surely one of the key factors.

AT RISK OF LIVING IN POVERTY

NOT AT RISK ...

▶ **'Local data highlights local inequalities' continued**

The Women's Budget Group also supported the Fawcett Society's *Making devolution work for women* campaign, producing a joint report in 2019, along with UNITE, on the economic situation for women in the Sheffield City Region. Among the data, we discovered that the high costs of childcare have a disproportionate effect on women's economic security. We compared the salaries of women in the region with the average costs of childcare in Yorkshire and the Humber. We **found** that women with children under the age of three could be spending up to half of their own salaries (53%) on part-time childcare, and up to 21% of their salaries on part-time childcare for children aged three and four.

Percentage of woman's own salaries spent on part-time childcare in the Sheffield City Region

Children under the age of three	**53%**	**47%**
Children age three and four	**21%**	**79%**

Now what?

Understanding the information can help you to follow what happens when things change. Knowing that women were more likely to be in low paid and insecure employment meant that it was unsurprising that women would be **hard hit** by the economic impact of the pandemic for example.

It can also help to advocate *for* change. You can help your local community by finding out what the situation is where you live. Join us for the **Local Data Project** to find out more on how to do this.

LOCAL DATA PROJECT | wbg WOMEN'S BUDGET GROUP