

Equality and Human Rights Commission
Triennial Review 2010
Executive Summary

How fair is Britain?

The first Triennial Review
Executive Summary

Introduction

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is a public body set up to challenge discrimination, to protect and promote equality and respect for human rights, and to encourage good relations between people of different backgrounds.

Our vision is of a society at ease with its diversity, where every individual has the opportunity to achieve their potential, and where people treat each other with dignity and respect.

Every three years the Commission is required to report to Parliament on the progress that society is making towards this vision.

This is the first such Review. It brings together evidence from a range of sources, including Census data, surveys and research, to paint a picture of how far what happens in people's real lives matches up to the ideals of equality. In essence, it helps answer the question, how fair is Britain today?

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The context of the review

On many objective measures, Britain is a far more diverse society than it was a generation ago.

On many objective measures, Britain is a far more diverse society than it was a generation ago. Nearly 1 in 10 British children is growing up in a Mixed Race household. Society's age structure is changing, with a growing proportion of the population aged over 50. Meanwhile, some minority groups who were once more or less invisible – for example, transgender people – have become more confident about expressing their identity in the public sphere.

At the same time as society has grown more diverse in objective terms, subjective attitudes have begun to change. In many ways, Britons are becoming more tolerant of difference and more welcoming of diversity.

The change in attitudes towards lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people is emblematic. A gap of less than 20 years separates the debate about Section 28, a piece of law which stigmatised same-sex relationships, and civil partnerships, a piece of law which gave those relationships legal recognition. There have also been changes in attitudes about race – people are increasingly at ease with the idea of working with and for people of a different ethnic background to their own. Some gender stereotypes, such as the idea that 'a woman's place is in the home', have begun to soften.

Britain is a country increasingly at ease with its diversity, proud of its heritage of 'fair play', and supportive of the ideals of equality and human rights.

Alongside attitudinal change, the fortunes of some groups have improved markedly with social, economic and technological developments so that there has been substantive change in what happens in people's lives.

Some forms of discrimination have diminished, and some of the disparities in achievements between different groups have narrowed:

- Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi pupils have begun to catch up with the average performance at GCSE.
- The gender pay gap has narrowed considerably since the Equal Pay Act 1970 came into force in 1975.
- The criminal justice system now recognises different forms of hate crime and has begun to provide more appropriate support to people who experience it.

In simple terms, Britain has become a fairer place.

However, the evidence shows clearly that whatever progress has been made for some groups in some places, the outcomes for

In simple terms, Britain has become a fairer place.

many people are not shifting as far or as fast as they should.

Particular groups, including Gypsies and Travellers and some types of migrants, are still likely to encounter negative attitudes.

Although mainstream attitudes towards other groups may have improved, many people experience instances of prejudice. And some groups of people are on average much more likely than others to fare badly in education, in work, and in public life. In other words, there is a gap between what we think society should be, and what it actually is; between ideal and reality, between our aspirations and our attainments.

To make matters worse, the current economic and social crises threaten to widen some equality gaps that might have closed in better times. And finally, without corrective action longer term trends, such as technological and demographic changes are likely to entrench new forms of inequality.

This Review sets out not only to show where society has made progress, but also to show where the gaps between different groups are at their largest, and to make recommendations about where society should concentrate its efforts.

Many people consider tackling the issues of equality and fairness to be the province of anti-discrimination law, of advocacy groups, or of government, to be addressed by discrete, often marginal programmes of activity directed at particular groups. But the greatest impacts on the opportunities open to individuals are made by everyday decisions in every part of society, most of which apply equally to everyone.

A decision to invest in a new business or to change a public service is likely to affect different groups in different ways – sometimes for better, sometimes for worse. It is the essence of fair decision-making that both those who make the decisions and those affected should know clearly what the consequences of any particular decision will be. That is why the availability of data is so important.

In short, by providing this data and identifying the most significant challenges, the Review forms what could be described as an agenda for fairness. At a moment of significant economic, social and institutional reform, it provides a vital benchmark for decision-makers to judge whether their choices will open or close significant equality gaps. And, it will allow them to review progress in making Britain a fairer nation for all.

The evidence

The bulk of the Review is a collection of objective data about the chances, choices and outcomes in life of different groups of people.

It considers the experience of groups of people who share common characteristics in terms of:

- Age
- Gender
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Transgender status

Where appropriate, the Review also takes into account the impact of socio-economic background, or class.

The data in the Review relate to activities across different areas which encompass the capabilities and freedoms – that is, the things that each of us needs to do and to be – in order to be happy, productive and fulfilled:

- Life
- Security
- Health
- Education
- Employment
- Standard of living
- Care and support
- Power and voice

A disadvantage may be rare but its impact so severe that it needs to be tackled, if only for a small number of people.

Under each area, the Review examines a set of indicators. For example, under ‘education’, the indicators include readiness for school, performance at Key Stage 4, and participation in higher education. The Review gives the best available data for detailed measures about how different groups fare in relation to these indicators. It gives, for example, the average exam results at age 16 for boys and girls, disabled people and non-disabled people, and for people of different religious and racial backgrounds.

We set out what we regard as some of the most significant findings from the Review, with each finding illustrated by a selection of the key data. These data points will, we hope, focus attention where energy and resources are needed to achieve progress.

In essence we have tried to consider a series of factors such as: human rights implications;

prevalence – i.e how many people does it affect; and impact on life chances. A disadvantage may be rare but its impact so severe that it needs to be tackled, if only for a small number of people.

We also concentrate here on highlighting firm data from the evidence in Part II of the Review. This inevitably means that some groups are not as visible as we would wish. We address the issue of data gaps in Chapter 15 of the full Review.

Some of the findings that follow will be familiar, documented over many years of academic and research study, but are no less important for that; an old injustice is still an injustice. For example, the pay gap between men and women remains significant, and progress to eliminating it may have stalled. Other findings will surprise. All should provoke action.

1 Life

A girl born at the start of the twentieth century had an average life expectancy of less than 50 years.¹ By contrast, the Office for National Statistics predicts that girls born in 2008 will live, on average, for more than 90 years. This remarkable increase is a testament to medical breakthroughs, changes in the British economy, and improvements in diet and housing that have revolutionised life over the past century.

Despite this progress, there remain significant differences between the life expectancies of different groups in modern Britain. In some cases, we do not know whether these differences are a result of innate genetic predispositions. In other cases, the evidence suggests that the differences in life expectancy tell a story about the cumulative impact of inequalities experienced by different groups. Meanwhile, more specific data about particular causes of early death suggest a failure on the part of the state to safeguard the lives of people from different groups equally.

Men's life expectancy is lower than women's, though the gap is narrowing very gradually over time.

Some studies suggest differences in life expectancy rates between ethnic minority groups. There is some evidence that some ethnic minority groups are more likely to die early from certain causes. Black people are more likely to be homicide victims than are members of other ethnic groups. A disproportionate number of people who die following contact with the police are also Black. Infant mortality is higher than average among Black Caribbean and Pakistani groups, although, by contrast, it is lower than average among Bangladeshi groups.

Some groups may be particularly susceptible to certain types of risks to life. Infants and young adults are the most likely of any age group to be the victims of murder or homicide. There is some evidence to suggest that lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) and transgender people may be more likely than average to attempt suicide or to commit acts of self-harm. People with mental health conditions are more likely than those without to die during or following police custody.

There are differences in life expectancy between different parts of Britain. Life expectancy in Scotland ranges from 3 years lower than England and 2 years lower than Wales. Overall, more people die early in Scotland than in any other western European country.

Finally, there are significant differences in life expectancy between members of different socio-economic groups. Men in the highest socio-economic group can expect to live around 7 years longer than men in the lower groups. For women, the gap is similar. Evidence also suggests that people from lower socio-economic groups may be more susceptible to such risks to life as smoking-related cancers and suicide.

¹ Hicks, J. and Allen, G. 1999. *A Century of Change: Trends in UK statistics since 1900*. House of Commons Research Paper, 1999. Available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/research/rp99/rp99-111.pdf> Accessed 25/08/2010.

Significant findings

Men still have lower life expectancy than women, though this is changing, and those in higher socio-economic groups can expect to live longer. Because of the gender gap in life expectancy a group of older people which is predominantly female is emerging. Partially as a result, women are expected to experience more years of ill health.

Headline data

- Men and women in the highest socio-economic group can expect to live up to 7 years longer than those in the lower socio-economic groups (based on life expectancy at birth).
- Women live around 4 years longer than men but the gap has been shrinking and is expected to shrink further over time.
- Black African women who are asylum seekers are estimated to have a mortality rate 7 times higher than for White women, partly due to problems in accessing maternal healthcare.

Significant findings

Infant mortality rates are higher among some ethnic groups than others.

Headline data

- Black Caribbean and Pakistani babies are twice as likely to die in their first year than Bangladeshi or White British babies.

Significant findings

Some groups are more likely to be victims of homicide than others, particularly Black people and infants aged under 1.

While a large proportion of homicide victims are men, women are more likely than men to be killed by partners, ex-partners, or family members.

A large number of homicides can be attributed to identity-based hate.

Headline data

- Ethnic minorities were the victims of around a quarter of homicides recorded in England and Wales between 2006/07 and 2008/09: just over half of these ethnic minority victims were Black.
- Infants under the age of 1 are more likely to be a victim of homicide than any other age group: one child aged under 16 died as a result of cruelty or violence each week in England and Wales in 2008/09 – two-thirds of them aged under five.
- In 2008/09, partner violence (including by ex-partners) accounted for 53% of female and 7% of male homicides in England and Wales. In the same year, partner violence (including by ex-partners) accounted for 46% of female and 7% of male homicides in Scotland.
- Over 70 homicides that occurred in England and Wales between 2007/08 and 2009/10 were charged as resulting from racially or religiously aggravated, transphobic or homophobic, or disability-related hate crimes.

Significant findings

Suicide overall has fallen, but is concentrated among certain groups. Suicide rates remain high among young men. Small-scale studies suggest that among some groups, including those who are carers, LGB and transgender people, self-harm and suicide may be relatively very high.

The background of abuse, drug-addiction and mental illness of many entering institutions such as prisons has led to an increased risk of self-harm and self-inflicted deaths in such contexts.

Headline data

- Three times as many men as women commit suicide, and rates are particularly high for younger men aged 25-44.
- Evidence suggests that both LGB and transgender people may have an increased risk of attempted suicide.
- Self-inflicted deaths (which include unintentional death for example through drug use) are more common among pre-sentence prisoners than across the rest of the prison population.

Significant findings

Rates of accidents appear to be declining over time, but some groups are much more likely to be involved in accidents than others.

Headline data

- Almost all people killed at work are men: only four fatalities (out of 129) at work in 2008/09 were women.
- Children from ethnic minorities are up to twice as likely to be involved in road traffic accidents whilst walking or playing; children with hearing difficulties are 10 times as likely.

Significant findings

Geography plays an important role in life expectancy and the likelihood of committing suicide. In particular, Scotland has very poor outcomes.

Headline data

- In England and Wales, men and women living in the most deprived areas are twice as likely to commit suicide as those in the least deprived.
- Life expectancy in Scotland ranges from nearly 3 years lower than England at the widest point (life expectancy for men at birth), although the gap closes over the age range.
- Two and a half times more young men (25-34) commit suicide in Scotland than in England.

2 Legal and physical security

Violent crime and sexual assault affect only a small proportion of the population. Most of us do not greatly fear becoming victims and are confident that those accused of crime will be treated fairly.

Some groups, however, are more likely than average to experience physical, sexual or hate crime, and are more worried about the possibility of becoming victims: they have only limited confidence in the system's ability to protect them.

While men are more likely to experience physical assault than women, they are less likely to experience rape, domestic violence or partner abuse, forced marriage and so-called 'honour' crimes; women are uniquely affected by female genital mutilation (FGM). Despite a rise in the number of cases of 'intimate violence' reported to the police, under-reporting is still a problem and high attrition rates in moving from report to conviction give cause for concern.

While older people are generally less likely to be affected by violent crime, they are more likely to worry about it: older and disabled people who experience domestic abuse by carers or relatives are particularly vulnerable to repeat occurrences. Meanwhile, newer data suggest that lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people are more likely than average to have experienced sexual assault and domestic violence during their lifetimes: they are also more likely than average to be worried about crime.

Racist and religiously aggravated attacks are a persistent phenomenon in Britain: as a result, people from ethnic minority backgrounds are roughly twice as likely as White people to report being worried about violent crime. People who are not Christian are roughly 10 times more likely

to report being attacked or harassed because of their faith than Christian people. Attacks directed against disabled, LGB and transgender people are now being recognised as specific forms of hate crime and this helps to encourage victims to report such incidents and ensure they will be dealt with appropriately. However, a large proportion of victims of hate crime are still reluctant to report such attacks, creating a justice gap.

Some ethnic groups continue to experience events such as stop and search more than others. While its degree has fluctuated, it remains a broadly constant feature of the justice system. On average, five times more Black people than White people in England and Wales are imprisoned.

Women are much less likely to go to prison than men, but the rate of imprisonment of women is increasing faster than the rate of men – many for relatively minor offences.

Many prisoners face particular risks when imprisoned. Young inmates are often particularly damaged by their experience of custody, and there is a strong link between young people experiencing the care system and being incarcerated. Ex-prisoners can experience difficulties finding work and accommodation once they leave prison. The higher rate of repeat offending of those encountering such problems suggests that better support for prisoners, particularly those serving short sentences, would help break offending cycles.

Significant findings

Trends measured in crime surveys suggest that levels of violent crime are falling overall in England and Wales: this is not reflected in the number of incidents targeting particular groups such as hate crime and ‘intimate violence’ (including rape, domestic and partner abuse).

Headline data

- Recognition in law of hate crimes based on disability, sexual orientation or transgender status is relatively new: there is now more reliable data about the incidence of racially and religiously motivated crime, which shows that it remains a persistent issue.
- Although levels of ‘less serious sexual assault’ have fallen dramatically in England and Wales since 2005/06, levels of rape have remained stable over this period.
- Levels of domestic and partner abuse recorded in crime surveys have fallen only slightly. The number of cases being reported to the police or referred for prosecution is rising.

Significant findings

The prison population in England and Wales is growing. Ethnic minorities are substantially over-represented in the custodial system in England and Wales. Evidence suggests that many of those who face sentences have mental health conditions, learning disabilities, have been in care or experienced abuse.

Headline data

- The number of women prisoners has nearly doubled since 1995 in England and Wales, and since 2000 in Scotland: currently around 5% of prisoners are women. There is evidence that a higher proportion of women in prison have

experienced domestic violence than have women in the population as a whole.

- On average, five times more Black people than White people are imprisoned in England and Wales, where 1 in 4 people in prison is from an ethnic minority background.
- Muslim people currently make up 12% of the prison population in England and Wales.
- There is now greater disproportionality in the number of Black people in prisons in Britain than in the USA.

Significant findings

Women are disproportionately affected by sexual assault and domestic abuse. People with mental health conditions report higher than average levels of abuse – as do LGB people. There has been a large rise in the number of rapes of children aged under-16 reported to the police.

Domestic violence has a higher rate of repeat-victimisation than any other violent or acquisitive crime. It is under-reported in general, particularly amongst women from ethnic and religious minority communities. It is also under-reported by disabled women abused by, but dependent on, their carers. Evidence suggests new immigrants and asylum seekers may not know what support is available.

The number of rape cases being prosecuted and convicted has not kept pace with the increase in the number of rape cases reported to the police since 2002: the attrition rate is significant and overall the reporting and conviction rate is stubbornly low.

Headline data

- Women experience over three-quarters of domestic violence and sexual assault, and encounter more extreme forms than do men.

- 1 in 4 women have experienced some form of domestic abuse in England and Wales since reaching the age of 16; and 1 in 7 women in Scotland have experienced a physical form of partner abuse since reaching the age of 16.
- Over a quarter of all rapes reported to the police in 2009/10 in England and Wales were committed against children aged under 16: over half of all male rapes reported to the police that year were of children aged under 16.
- Three-quarters of domestic violence offences in England and Wales are repeat offences: the rate of repeat-offending is higher for domestic violence than for most other crimes.
- Despite some improvements in levels of reporting, the rate of conviction for rape is lower than for similar crimes.

Significant findings

Incidents targeting people because of who they are (e.g., hate crimes) are under-reported, meaning many victims are unable to access the support they need, or to secure justice. Nevertheless, for those cases that are prosecuted, conviction rates are rising, apart from disability hate crime where the conviction rate fell by 1% between 2007/08 and 2008/09.

Headline data

- In England and Wales, the number of cases of racially and religiously motivated crime being reported to the police has fallen slightly since 2006/07. However, the conviction rate for racially and religiously motivated and for homophobic and transphobic crimes has risen in England and Wales.
- The number of racially motivated crimes reported to the police has risen in Scotland – as have the numbers of cases resulting in court proceedings: the number of cases of religiously motivated crime resulting in court proceedings, meanwhile, has fluctuated.

- The majority of incidents recorded by the police involve harassment, but the majority of cases that are prosecuted are crimes against the person. Incidents targeting different groups take a variety of forms: for example, religiously motivated crime affects community institutions as well as individuals; hate crime targeting LGB people can involve sexual assault; and disability related hate crime often targets people's property.

Significant findings

Experience of the criminal justice system – either as victims or as suspects – can be markedly different depending on social group with a consequent impact on confidence in the system.

Headline data

- Rates of stop and search for Black and Asian people suggest that there may be disproportionality; and Black people are much less likely than White people to believe that their complaints about the police will be taken seriously, and are more likely to worry about police harassment.
- Young people with limiting long-term illness (LLTI)/disabilities are significantly less likely than those without to believe that the criminal justice system is fair, or that it meets the needs of victims.
- Survey data suggests that LGB people are more likely to worry about and to experience discrimination by the police, whether they were reporting a crime or suspected of committing one.
- A small-scale study of the attitudes of transgender people suggest that while the majority expect fair treatment, around 1 in 5 have experienced problems when reporting crimes.

3 Health

Good health is not only an asset in itself; it also enables people to further their careers, look after families, and pursue their other interests to the full. Many Britons think that their health is ‘good’ or ‘very good’. Most of us are confident that when we need help the National Health Service will treat us with respect and dignity.

The evidence suggests, however, that there are some groups of people who are more likely than average to experience 'poor' health, and some who find it difficult to access care and support that meets their particular needs.

While there are obvious differences in the health needs of men and women, the evidence does not suggest a clear trend of either gender experiencing worse health than the other. Both genders may find that their health needs are not met: men are less likely to use their GP; women have specific concerns about maternity services. Both genders have a mixed record when it comes to looking after health. Men are more likely to take exercise but less likely to eat the recommended amounts of fruit and vegetables, and women vice-versa.

Our health needs change as we age. The incidence of disability rises with age and older people (65 and over) also have a higher rate of depression than younger people. There is evidence to suggest that the health service sometimes deals with some older people in ways that they find humiliating or distressing.

Overall, around 1 in 5 of us report a disability or limiting long-term illness (LLTI). The available evidence suggests that people who report a disability or LLTI are as likely as average to say that the health services treats them with dignity and respect.

In terms of ethnicity, evidence indicates that Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups are more likely to report 'poor' health than average. These groups are more likely to experience poor mental

health, more likely to report a disability or LLTI, and more likely to find it hard to access and communicate with their GPs than other groups. Among groups defined by religion, Muslim people tend to report worse health than average. It is unclear how far these worse-than-average outcomes are related to Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Muslim people's relatively poor socio-economic position.

Research has suggested that there may be an association between harassment and poor mental health. Some evidence suggests that lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) and transgender people, Gypsies and Travellers and asylum seekers, who are perhaps more likely than other groups to face hostility and misunderstanding, are all more likely to experience poor mental health.

Sometimes, these same groups can feel misunderstood by the health services themselves. Some transgender people do not feel that their doctor supports their decision to seek gender reassignment, and some Gypsies and Travellers find it difficult to register with a GP.

Finally, there is a strong association between low socio-economic status and poorer health: in England and Wales, those who have never worked or are long-term unemployed have the highest rates of self-reported 'poor' health; people in routine occupations are more than twice as likely to say their health is 'poor' than people in higher managerial and professional occupations; and people from lower socio-economic groups are more likely to have a poor diet and less likely to take regular exercise.

Significant findings

Geography matters, as does socio-economic circumstance – incidence of ill health is closely associated with area deprivation, especially among those under 65.

The available evidence points to poorer health outcomes for many equality groups, partially but not completely explained by generally worse socio-economic circumstances. This also includes higher mortality rates from specific medical conditions.

Headline data

- In Scotland deaths from coronary heart disease have been the highest in Western Europe since the 1980s.
- In Scotland, the overall death rate from cancer is higher for both men and women compared to men and women in England and Wales.
- Two-thirds of Welsh women over 75 report having an LLTI or disability compared to only half of women in England or Scotland.

Significant findings

Some ethnic minority groups appear to have worse general self-reported health than the White British majority, particularly Bangladeshi and Pakistani people. These health disparities persist even taking socio-economic circumstances into account.

Headline data

- In England and Wales, at the last census a quarter of Bangladeshi and Pakistani women reported an LLTI or disability. In older age groups (65 years and over), this rose to nearly two-thirds of Pakistani women.
- Chinese people report the best health, Gypsy and Traveller people the worst, though small sample sizes suggest such a finding should be treated with caution.

Significant findings

Groups vulnerable to pressures such as poverty and victimisation show high rates of mental illness. The risk of having poor mental health scores is higher for certain ethnic groups with high poverty rates.

Headline data

- Around 1 in 10 people in England, Scotland and Wales report potential mental health problems. Women are more likely to report potential problems, but under-reporting may mean that levels of mental health problems for men are higher than they appear.
- The risk of mental health problems is nearly twice as likely for Bangladeshi men than for White men.
- Mental health is an issue of concern for both the LGB and transgender population.

Significant findings

The number of people of normal or healthy weight is declining and obesity is on the rise. Only around 30-40% of men and women in Britain are of a normal or healthy weight .

Headline data

- Men are more likely to be overweight than women however, among Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African populations, women are less likely to be of normal/healthy weight than men (data available for England only).

4 Education

A wealth of evidence shows that education is a key determinant of life chances. As well as being a right in itself, education is an enabling right, allowing individuals to develop the skills, capacity and confidence to secure other rights and economic opportunities.

Educational attainment has been transformed in recent years. Around half of young people are now getting good qualifications at 16 (5+ A*-C GCSEs or equivalent including English and Maths), and in 2008/09, 2.4 million students enrolled in higher education in the UK – a considerable change from a time when educational opportunities were only available to a minority of young people. The indicators examined in this chapter demonstrate this success, but also show that there remain a number of areas where further progress needs to be made.

The evidence from these indicators shows that educational attainment continues to be strongly associated with socio-economic background, despite some signs that social differences in examination results may have started to reduce. At the same time, the gap in attainment between ethnic groups has narrowed more clearly, with some previously low-performing groups catching up with the average. Whereas a generation ago almost all the students on the university campus were White British, today 1 in 5 are from ethnic minority groups and an increasing number of disabled students are also attending. Women are now ahead of men in many aspects of educational success.

However, in terms of both subjects studied, and in the obtaining of good degrees, differences persist. Women remain less likely than men to study Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects, making up 48% of first degree students in STEM despite comprising

55% of first degree students overall. Gender differences in first degree subject choice appear to be declining over time, but extremely high gender segregation in vocational training remains. The proportion of Black students getting first or upper second class degrees is still only at two-thirds of the level of White students.

This chapter also notes that some groups are still not getting a fair deal out of the education system. Young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) account for 7 in 10 permanent exclusions from school in England, and continue to have low educational attainment. A growing number of disabled students are going to university, but this group is still not achieving its potential. Calls to our helpline related to disability and education also indicate that this is an area of concern.

For lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) and transgender young people, attainment trends are harder to measure, but there are signs that they are being penalised by unfair treatment and bullying in the education system, at school and beyond.

Education-related inequalities have an impact over the life-span, not just in childhood. Differences in participation in education persist throughout life. Adults with more prior education are much more likely to access learning opportunities in later life. Tools such as the internet are used to varying degrees by different groups to access information and other resources.

Significant findings

Educational outcomes differ markedly by gender, socio-economic group, ethnicity and disability. Boys, pupils from some ethnic minority groups, and those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) are performing less well as early as age 5.

For students from lower socio-economic groups, the gap widens during the school years. The gap in students' GCSE results according to their family backgrounds remains wider than most other educational inequalities, although tentative evidence indicates that it has started to narrow since 2006.

This gap is accentuated when combined with other factors associated with educational underperformance, such as gender and disability.

Headline data

- Girls outperform boys routinely at aged 5, at age 16 and at degree level throughout Britain.
- Free School Meals (FSM) are available in England and Wales to children who come from households with relatively low income. Students eligible for FSM are less than half as likely to achieve 5 good GCSEs including English and Maths.
- Ethnic differences at GCSE are narrowing except for the top where the two highest performing groups are Chinese and Indian students.
- In England, the best performing group are Chinese girls; even those on FSM outperform all other ethnic groups whether on FSM or not. The worst performing group is Gypsy and Traveller children. Their performance is declining. Less than 1 in 6 obtain at least five good GCSEs.

- The performance of Chinese children is scarcely affected by whether or not they are eligible for FSM, whilst by contrast that of Indian children is strongly diminished if they are eligible for FSM.
- In England, 17% of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) get five good GCSEs including English and Maths, compared to 61% of children without identified SEN. This does not just apply to people with learning disabilities: only 33% of children whose primary need related to visual impairment attained this level.
- When SEN is combined with those eligible for FSM, outcomes drop even further. Of children with SEN and who are eligible for FSM, only 10% of girls and 8% of boys in England obtain 5 good GCSEs including English and Maths.
- Across Britain, disabled adults are three times as likely as others to have no qualifications.

Significant findings

The experience of school life can be traumatic for some. The new phenomenon of cyberbullying is joining homophobic bullying as a serious issue. It appears that those who are bullied are more likely to be outside of education, employment or training at 16 years of age.

Headline data

- Cyberbullying is now estimated to affect around a third of secondary age young people.
- Two-thirds of lesbian, gay and bisexual students in Britain and four-fifths of disabled young people in England report being bullied. Almost a quarter (23%) of young people questioned who practiced any religion in England reported being bullied because of their faith.

- Homophobic bullying is widespread in British secondary schools. Nearly half of all secondary schoolteachers in England acknowledge that such bullying is common, and just 1 in 6 believe that their school is very active in promoting respect for LGB students.
- Figures indicate that children in England who reported being bullied did 15% worse at GCSE and were twice as likely to be NEET at aged 16.
- In England, Asian children are excluded at a rate of 5 per 10,000 students compared to Black Caribbean children at 30 per 10,000 and Gypsies and Traveller children at 38 per 10,000.
- Almost three-quarters (71%) of permanent exclusions in England involved pupils with some form of SEN in 2008/09. This is equivalent to a rate of 30 out of every 10,000 pupils.

Significant findings

For those who go on to university, there is a mixed picture. Girls continue their advantage but there is strong subject segregation. More ethnic minority students are now going to university, but they are less likely to attend Russell Group Universities.

Headline data

- Women make up 59% of the undergraduate population; the proportion has been stable since 2003.
- Ethnic minority students are up as a proportion of university students to 23% in 2009 (in line with their proportion in that age group).
- There is a higher proportion of men at Russell Group universities.
- Less than 10% of Black students are at Russell Group universities, compared to a quarter of White students.

- Around a third of Black students get a first or upper-second class degree, compared to two-thirds of White students.

Significant findings

There is a geographic component to skills and qualifications. In Wales, more adults are disadvantaged by low skills and qualifications than in most other parts of Britain. In some ethnic and religious groups there are large numbers of people without any qualifications.

Headline data

- 1 in 4 Welsh adults lack basic literacy skills, more than in any English region and in contrast to 1 in 6 in England overall. 1 in 2 people in England and Wales lack functional numeracy.
- 33% of working age Muslim women have no qualifications, and only 9% have a degree.
- The relationship between ethnicity, literacy and numeracy is very strong and specific cases extremely negative; for example, being Black and male appears to have a greater impact on levels of numeracy than having a learning disability.

5 Employment

Between 1995-97 and 2006-08, a steady growth in the number of jobs raised the percentage of women and of Black people of working age in employment by twice the average, and the percentage of Bangladeshi and Pakistani people of working age in employment by three times the average.²

However, some groups with low employment rates have done badly over the long term, especially those pushed to the margins of the labour market. For example the employment rate for disabled men without qualifications halved between the mid-1970s and early 2000s. Calls to the Equality and Human Rights Commission's helpline also indicate that employment issues are significant for disabled people with over half of the calls in 2008-09 related to employment issues coming from this group.³

Despite some growth in their employment rates, only 1 in 4 Muslim women work, and many face practical barriers preventing them from doing so. Moreover, Black people and disabled people in their early 20s are twice as likely to be not in employment, education or training (NEET) as White people and non-disabled people. Young Muslim people are also more likely than Christian people to spend periods out of the labour market. Overall, a more demanding job market is less forgiving of those without qualifications.

Many barriers within employment are breaking down, with, for example, a growing proportion of managerial and professional positions taken by women. However, the British labour market continues to be characterised by a high level of occupational segregation. Around 25% of Pakistani men are primarily taxi drivers; women

make up 83% of people employed in personal services; and over 40% of female jobs compared to 15% of male jobs are in the public sector, making women particularly vulnerable to public sector cuts.

Occupational segregation continues to feed pay differences, especially in the private and voluntary sectors where at age 40 men are earning on average 27% more than women. The large proportion of women in part-time jobs also contributes to this. Occupational segregation also explains differences in illness and injury rates in the workplace, with people in manual and routine occupations being most at risk.

There are few large-scale data on the labour market experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people. However, we do know that LGB adults are around twice as likely to report experiencing unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying or harassment at work than other employees. This is also mirrored in the nature of the queries received by the Equality and Human Rights Commission's helpline, many of which relate to harassment in the workplace for this group.⁴ There are even less data available for transgender people, though smaller-scale studies point towards evidence of harassment and other forms of discrimination in the workplace.

² Hills, J. *et al.* 2010. *An Anatomy of Economic Inequality in the UK*. Report of the National Equality Panel. London: Government Equalities Office (GEO). Tables 10.3 and 10.4. See discussion on page 272 for limitations in robustness of comparison between the two periods.

³ Calls received by the Equality and Human Rights Commission's helpline 2008-09.

⁴ Calls received by the Equality and Human Rights Commission's helpline 2008-09.

Significant findings

The recent recession has hit some groups harder than others. As in most countries, men have been more adversely affected than women and young people more than older people. People over 50 have fared better than expected during the recession, perhaps due to their propensity to be flexible in the workplace.

The impact of multiple disadvantages in a more competitive labour market, which is less forgiving of low qualifications than a generation ago, cannot be underestimated. Trends are moving in different directions however: disabled men are substantially less likely to work than in the past, while the gender gap in employment has almost halved since the mid-1990s, from 10 to 6 percentage points.

Headline data

- For low qualified British men with disabilities the chances of working halved, from 77% to 38% from the 1970s to the 2000s.
- Employment rates vary by impairment. For example, only 23% of people with depression are in employment, compared to 62% of people with skin conditions.
- Figures suggest that 45% of disabled people in their early 20s are NEET.
- Female employment has risen by 3 percentage points since 1995. Black Caribbean women are more likely to be in full-time work than any other group of women.
- Only 1 in 4 Bangladeshi and Pakistani women works and almost half of Bangladeshi (49%) and Pakistani (44%) women are looking after the family or home, compared to 20% or fewer of other groups.

- Muslim people have the lowest rate of employment of any religious group. Only 47% of Muslim men and 24% of Muslim women are employed and figures suggest that 42% of young Muslim people are NEET.

Significant findings

There is persistent gender and ethnic segregation in the labour market, where some sectors are gendered or dominated by a particular group.

Headline data

- One in 4 Pakistani men in Britain are taxi drivers or similar.
- In Britain, women occupy 77% of administration and secretarial posts but only 6% of engineering and 14% of architects, planners and surveyors. 83% of people employed in personal services are women.
- In Britain, 40% of female jobs are in the public sector compared to 15% of male jobs.

Significant findings

The occupational structure of the labour market also reveals positive changes in status for some groups.

Headline data

- Women hold 1 in 3 managerial jobs in Britain.
- Bangladeshi and Pakistani women in Britain are more likely to be employed as professionals than Bangladeshi and Pakistani men.
- Indian and Chinese people in Britain are twice as likely to be employed as professionals as White British people and the trend is upwards.

- Muslim men are as likely to be in managerial or professional jobs as elementary ones; Jewish men are 13 times more likely to be in managerial or professional jobs than elementary ones.

Significant findings

Women now do better than men in every aspect of educational qualification but the pay gap between men and women remains. After falling continuously for the past 30 years, progress seems to have halted.

The gender pay gap is lowest for the under 30s, rising more than five-fold by the time workers reach 40. It is influenced by a number of factors: lower pay in sectors where women are more likely to choose careers, the effect of career breaks and limited opportunities in part-time work. The level of earnings penalty is strongly mediated by levels of education but is not eliminated, even for the best-qualified women.

There remains a similarly pernicious earnings penalty on some ethnic minority groups and disabled people.

Headline data

- Women with degrees are estimated to face only a 4% loss in lifetime earnings as a result of motherhood, while mothers with mid-level qualifications face a 25% loss and those with no qualifications a 58% loss.
- Women aged 40 earn on average 27% less than men of the same age.

- Disabled men experience a pay gap of 11% compared with non-disabled men, while the gap between disabled women and non-disabled men is double this at 22%.
- Some research suggests that Black graduates face a 24% pay penalty.
- Disabled women experience a 31% pay penalty compared to non-disabled men.

Significant findings

Evidence suggests that the workplace remains a stressful and difficult place for some groups, specifically transgender people and irregular migrant workers.

Headline data

- People with a disability or long-term illness are over twice as likely to report bullying or harassment in the workplace as non-disabled people.
- LGB people are twice as likely to be report discrimination and nearly twice as likely to report unfair treatment as heterosexuals.
- Transgender people highlight transitioning at work as one of the most significant triggers for discrimination.

6 Standard of living

In order to flourish in life, every person needs a basic level of financial security and decent housing. Yet some groups are far more likely than others to experience poverty, to lack access to financial products, or to live in substandard housing.

The evidence shows stark disparities in relation to gender, disability, and ethnicity which in many cases result from the inequalities in education and employment outcomes described elsewhere in this Report.

Women are much more likely to be low paid than men throughout their working lives. This often translates into lower income in retirement as well. Women, particularly those who have been lone parents, are particularly susceptible to poverty in later life, as they are less likely to have been able to build up savings and pensions. Households headed by women are also more likely to live in overcrowded or substandard homes than those headed by men.

Disabled households tend to have less overall household income than those without, and working disabled people are more likely than average to be on low hourly pay. The fact that disabled people often spend periods of their working-age lives out of work increases their risk of poverty in later life. Disabled people are also less likely than average to have a bank account, and people who have learning disabilities are much less likely to have one. These worse outcomes are compounded by the extra costs associated with living with some impairments – the proportion of disabled pensioner households with low incomes is not significantly higher than that of non-disabled pensioner households, partly due to their receipt of disability benefits, but the standard threshold of low income makes no allowance for any extra costs of disability.

Meanwhile, some ethnic minority groups experience much worse outcomes than average – and even worse than might be expected, taking into account differences in age structures, educational attainments and other factors. People of Indian origin are more likely to have low household income than White people, despite the fact that a low proportion of Indian people earn low hourly wages, and they have higher than average educational attainments. More than half of Pakistani and Bangladeshi adults live in poverty and are also much less likely than average to have a current account or home contents insurance. Just over a quarter of Pakistani and Bangladeshi adults have formal savings, compared to two-thirds of White people. Asian and Black households are also several times more likely than White British households to live in overcrowded or substandard homes.

Finally this chapter highlights the gap between society's richest and poorest. The poorest 10% possess average wealth one hundredth the average wealth of the richest 10%. People on lower incomes are more likely to live in overcrowded housing, and those living in social housing, in particular, are more likely to say that their local neighbourhood has problems with crime.

Significant findings

The analysis of material deprivation and living standards in Britain today has revealed a mixed picture. Income poverty remains persistent for some groups such as some groups of women, ethnic minority groups and families with disabled members.

However, in contrast there has been growing material wealth and growing home ownership alongside a persistent gap between richest and poorest.

Headline data

- The total net household wealth of the top 10% is £853,000, almost 100 times higher than the net wealth of the poorest 10%, which is £8,800 or below.
- One person in 5 lives in households with less than 60% median income (after housing costs) this rises to nearly 1 in 3 for Bangladeshi -headed households.
- Data indicates that two-thirds of Bangladeshi and Pakistani people lack savings and half of pensioners living in Bangladeshi or Pakistani-headed households live below the poverty line (compared to around a sixth of the general population).
- Nearly three-quarters of Bangladeshi children, and half of Black African children in Britain grow up in poverty.
- Over 1 in 4 of families with disabled people live below 60% median income: 29% of those with a disabled adult, 28% of those with a disabled child and 38% of those with both.
- 60% of women reaching state pension age in 2008 were entitled to less than the full basic state pension, compared to 10% of men.

Significant findings

The experience of poverty is closely related to poorer outcomes in terms of living conditions, overcrowding, crime in the neighbourhood and destitution – leading to poor health and low life expectancy.

Headline data

- Only 1 in 40 households today are defined as overcrowded – however female-headed households are four times as likely as average to be overcrowded. A quarter of Bangladeshi households are overcrowded.
- One in 10 people report living in polluted and grimy neighbourhoods but reports of crime, violence and vandalism are higher for many groups, including women householders with children and many ethnic minority groups.
- Ethnic minority and disabled people, and religious minority groups are over-represented in the most deprived neighbourhoods in England.
- Asylum seekers are much more likely to experience destitution (lacking access to shelter, warmth and food) than other groups, including children and in dispersal areas such as Yorkshire and Humberside.

7 Care and support

We all rely on care from others as we begin our lives. Some of us need care throughout our lives, because of disabilities, and some of us need care as we grow older and less capable of managing daily activities such as shopping, cleaning and feeding ourselves.

Many of us will also, at some point, provide unpaid care to others. Many people make a positive choice to take on caring responsibilities, and consider it rewarding and fulfilling. Some feel that their choice is constrained. In both cases the evidence suggests that unpaid care can have an impact on the job prospects, income and health of those who provide it; and different groups of people are more likely, at certain points in their life, to need, and to provide, certain types of care.

Throughout their lives, women are much more likely than men to take on unpaid care responsibilities both for children, and for older people. Men are more likely than women to lack the practical support that meets their needs as they get older.

Different ethnic groups draw on different forms of care to different extents. Black children are more likely to be in formal childcare than others; Bangladeshi and Pakistani children are much less likely. Meanwhile, Bangladeshi and Pakistani people are significantly more likely than average to provide informal paid care (more than twice as likely as White people). Some literature suggests that this may, in part, be because formal care services are not always appropriate to meet the particular needs of some ethnic minority groups.

As might be expected, we are more likely to need care as we grow older. We are also more likely to provide it later in life, as we have children and as our families and friends age with us.

However, evidence suggests that there are also a significant number of younger carers – some 175,000 aged under 18 in 2001 – whose needs are less well recognised than adult carers’.

A disproportionate number of these young carers are from certain ethnic minority backgrounds (including Bangladeshi, Black African and Black Caribbean and Pakistani).

Among disabled adults, those living alone and those on lower incomes are more likely than average to have unmet needs. Partners and spouses often play an important role in supporting disabled adults, as do disabled people themselves. In 2001, of the nearly 2 million people aged 16-74 who are permanently sick or disabled, over a quarter of a million provided some unpaid care for other people. The parents of disabled children, meanwhile, provide care well in excess of other parents, and this has an accordingly greater impact on their ability to take on paid work: 16% of mothers of disabled children are in paid employment, compared with 61% of all mothers. Parents with disabled children also tend to use less childcare. It is unclear whether this is through a positive choice, or because of a lack of appropriate and affordable places.

Finally, there is a strong socio-economic dimension to caring. People from lower socio-economic groups are more likely both to need care and to provide it, at any age. Better-off people are more likely to use formal childcare, and people on low incomes, non-working parents and single parents are less likely to use formal childcare.

There are few large-scale surveys that capture the different experiences of people of different religions, though some studies indicate that Muslim women may face particular difficulties in accessing childcare. Similarly, there are few large-scale surveys that collect data on the different care needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people, though some smaller studies suggest that some older LGB people find that care homes fail to provide them with a supportive environment. There are even less data about the care needs of transgender people.

Significant findings

Britain's demographic trajectory – in particular its ageing population – is creating new kinds of chronic disadvantage. Over the next decade there will be a steep increase in the demand for personal care for older people. At the same time, more people who might have cared for their parents will have dependent children. This often means a concentration of informal care provision falling on a relatively small group – the dutiful middle aged. Most carers are women although a significant number are also children.

Headline data

- One in 4 women and nearly 1 in 5 men in their fifties are carers.
- Some research suggests that women have a 50:50 chance of providing care by the time they are 59.
- 175,000 people under 18 have caring responsibilities. Bangladeshi, Black African, Black Caribbean and Pakistani children are more likely to have caring responsibilities compared to White British children.

Significant findings

Some carers are people with health needs themselves. Critically, most carers are in paid work. A small minority of those in paid work have an intense caring burden.

Headline data

- 225,000 people provide 50 hours of care a week despite suffering ill health.
- 273,000 people aged 16-74 who reported being permanently sick or disabled in the last Census, provide unpaid care.
- Young disabled people are twice as likely as their non-disabled peers to be caring regularly for other children or adults.
- Of the 15.2 million employees in full-time paid work, 1.6 million provide at least some unpaid care; 144,000 people in full-time paid work also provide 50 or more hours a week of care.

Significant findings

The majority of families with children in Britain combine their own caring responsibilities with childcare provided by others. Early year's childcare can influence children's learning and development, with high quality formal settings having the greatest positive impact.

Ethnicity and lone parenthood are the two factors most strongly associated with the use of childcare. People from lower socio-economic groups and those with disabled children are less likely to use formal childcare than others. For those with disabled children, it is unclear whether the lower use of formal childcare is parental preferences or whether it is driven by a lack of appropriate and affordable places.

Headline data

- Bangladeshi and Pakistani children are less likely to receive formal childcare than others.
- Lone parents, non-working parents and lower income parents use less childcare, and when childcare is used, are less likely to use formal childcare. Parents with disabled children also use less childcare.

8 Power and voice

Democracy is predicated on the idea that every individual, no matter what their background or personal circumstances, should have an equal opportunity to have a say in decisions about the country's future.

In practice, some groups of people are less likely than others to exercise their democratic right to vote; less likely to attain elected office; less likely to feel able to influence decisions in their local area; and less likely to take part in other forms of political or civic activity.

Women are slightly more likely to vote than men, but despite some progress towards parity, the proportion of women in elected office in Westminster remains below 25%. The Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly are closer to gender parity, but in all three nations, local councillors are also predominantly male.

In the Westminster Parliament, despite some evidence of progress, most religious and ethnic minorities are still under-represented. However, lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people, and some people from ethnic and religious minorities, are more likely to take part in other forms of political or civic activity and more likely to feel able to influence local decisions.

People with a disability or a long-term limiting illness are generally less likely than those without to say that they can influence local decisions, and a majority of polling stations at the last election presented at least one significant access barrier.

Young people are less likely to vote than older people. They are also less likely to hold elected office. The average age of councillors, and of MPs, has increased slightly in recent years.

Finally, people's socio-economic background affects their sense of power and voice. Professionals are more likely to vote, more likely to hold elected office, and more likely to feel that they can influence local decisions than people from lower occupational groups.

Significant findings

Despite recent improvements, women and ethnic minorities remain under-represented in Parliament and other political institutions. Young people display declining levels of political activity and engagement in decision-making bodies.

Headline data

- A minority of adults aged under 25 now vote at general and devolved elections, and the proportions are falling, with under 50% of 18 to 24-year-olds voting in the 2005 general election.

Significant findings

Overall, confidence in being able to influence local decision-making fell in 2001, and has fluctuated ever since.

Levels of engagement and perceptions of influence vary by ethnic group and social class.

Headline data

- Members of ethnic minorities are more likely than White people to say that they are involved in local decision-making, campaigning or community organisations, such as those providing services to young people. They are also more likely to say that they have influence over local decisions.
- People in professional or managerial jobs are more likely to feel that they can influence local decisions than people from routine occupations.

Significant findings

Parliamentary representation of different groups remains varied. However, there is greater gender diversity in the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly than in the UK Parliament.

Headline data

- The proportion of MPs aged over 50 has risen since 1997.
- Religious and ethnic minorities are still under-represented in Parliament although the number of ethnic minority MPs doubled in the 2010 election. The number of Muslim MPs doubled in 2010, with the first three female Muslim MPs taking their seats.
- The number of openly LGB MPs in Westminster rose from 13 in 2009 to 17 in 2010.
- Women's representation in Westminster rose remarkably in 1997 and has continued to rise since but remains below 25%.
- Both Holyrood and Cardiff have achieved higher levels of female representation than Westminster has ever managed (35% of Scottish Parliament and 48% of Welsh Assembly Members are currently women).

Significant findings

At a local level, there has been greater success in achieving diverse political representation than in Westminster. Local authority politicians better resemble the British population, although far from fully.

Headline data

- Three in 10 councillors in England are women; 2 in 10 councillors in Scotland and Wales are women.

Significant findings

Some of the groups who are under-represented in formal politics are more involved in campaigning and decision-making bodies.

Headline data

- LGB people are more likely to be involved in informal civic or political actions.

Data gaps

The Review contains a lot of information. In some cases, though, it highlights what we don't know. There are several ways in which we lack reliable information to tell whether the ideals of equality and fairness are being translated into a practical change for the better in people's real lives.

In some cases we lack information altogether. For instance, we do not have a reliable baseline estimate about how many people identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Without this information, it is hard to begin to gauge the extent to which different institutions reflect these populations or meet their needs. We also lack basic information about people who are institutionalised, and people who do not live in fixed locations. In some cases, small-scale studies and the other, limited, available evidence suggest that these may also be among some of society's most marginalised and vulnerable groups.

In other cases, we have some information about different groups, but it is not always sophisticated enough to allow us to draw useful inferences. We have some data about disabled people's experiences, for example, but in most cases the way the data are collected does not make a distinction between the experiences of (say) a 20-year-old who has been blind since birth, and an 80-year-old who has recently begun to use a wheelchair following an accident, when in fact these two people might have very different needs and expectations.

Better use of existing data sources, and more sophisticated data collection techniques, would allow us to understand better the various needs and aspirations of different people. This is prerequisite to understanding whether and how we are making progress as a society towards greater equality. We recommend, therefore, that data providers and commissioners should work together to improve the available equality data, and to use more effectively the data that are already available at local and national level.

Significant challenges

Notwithstanding these gaps, the evidence chapters of the Review offer a great number of insights. They uncover many instances of unfairness and unequal outcomes. However, not all of these inequalities are of the same significance or magnitude.

Rather than directing limited resources indiscriminately, we consider it important that society in general, and the Equality and Human Rights Commission in particular, focus their energies and efforts on tackling the most pressing inequalities and disadvantages. We have therefore carried out a further simple analysis to identify which, out of all the different challenges and inequalities in modern society, are the most significant and the most urgently in need of resolution.

In essence, we have considered each of the examples of unequal outcomes revealed by the Review and asked the following questions:

- Does this equality gap present a risk to basic human rights?
- Is it caused by social, cultural or economic factors rather than by intrinsic human difference?
- Does it affect many people – and does it impair people's life chances?
- Is the problem persistent or getting worse, and does it require public intervention to arrest its decline?
- Is it in the public interest to reduce the equality penalty - (is the issue trivial? Might it be essentially insoluble? Is action now necessary to forestall further social or economic costs later)?

Significant challenges

Through this process we have identified 15 significant challenges. They are grouped under five major objectives which speak to what we believe are fundamental values in our society: that every individual should have an equal chance to make the most of their talents, capabilities and endeavour; and that no-one should have poorer life chances because of where, what or to whom they were born.

Where the challenges are in some way new, or emerging as a result of social, economic or demographic change, we highlight this in the text below. The fact that the challenges we face are constantly changing underlines the importance of reviewing progress over time.

Emphatically, this does not mean that no action should be taken on any other issues which may not be included in these challenges. Nor should these challenges be read as describing or forming the Commission's own strategic priorities.

Some issues may be extremely susceptible to our regulatory action; but others will only be affected by action from other regulators, employers, service providers or government.

Everyone will have part to play in addressing the problems; but we regard it as part of the Commission's role to offer some indication as to where society's combined resources and energy should be targeted.

First, society should aim to eliminate the effect of socio-economic background on health and life expectancy. It is a significant challenge to:

- **Close the differences in health and life expectancy between the highest and the lowest socio-economic groups.**

Men and women in the highest socio-economic group can expect to live up to 7 years longer than those in the lower socio-economic groups (based on life expectancy at birth). This overall disparity is associated with a lifetime's experience of other disadvantages and health inequalities.

Addressing these disparities would not only make a significant difference in individuals' lives, it would reduce costs to the public purse in terms of lost productivity and calls on NHS services.

- **Close the infant mortality gap between ethnic groups.**

Infant mortality is a rare phenomenon, affecting a fraction of a per cent of children born each year. The sad fact is, though, that it affects people from some backgrounds more frequently than others: Pakistani and Black Caribbean babies are twice as likely to die in their first year than White British or Bangladeshi babies.

A society committed to equality cannot be indifferent to such a disparity, and we consider it a significant challenge to understand its causes and to close it.

Second, society should aim to ensure that every individual has the chance to learn and realise their talents to the full. It is a significant challenge to:

- **Close the performance gap in education between boys and girls.**

Boys' consistently inferior performance in education is the reverse of the situation seen for most of the post-war period. With the evidence suggesting that skills will be increasingly important in the UK's economic success in the years to come, the true costs of failing to equip boys and young men with good qualifications may not be evident for a generation.

- **Reduce the level of ethnic and gender segregation in education.**

Girls and women tend to be under-represented in some courses of study (such as engineering and physical science) which lead to relatively well-rewarded jobs. Meanwhile, although ethnic minority students are participating in the higher education system in greater numbers than at any previous time, some ethnic groups are much less likely than average to get into older and more prestigious institutions. If the factors that cause forms of educational segregation are at heart to do with arbitrary stereotypes; if young girls with scientific talent are turning away from physics because it's a 'boy's subject', and if bright ethnic minority students are choosing not to apply to Russell Group universities because they fear that their face won't fit, then this is a constraint on talent, and a wasted opportunity.

- **Close the qualifications gap for disabled people.**

Among adults of working age, those with a disability are roughly half as likely to have degree level qualifications as those without, and lower qualifications levels impinge directly on employment prospects. The evidence suggest that young people with disabilities today are still significantly less likely than their counterparts to get good GCSEs and to enter higher education. It also suggests that they face barriers to learning, such as bullying, to a greater extent than other pupils. Therefore, action is needed today to give more disabled people a chance to develop skills, which may open up better opportunities to get a job later in life, and which may in turn offer the prospect of higher income, more social contacts and greater independence.

- **Reduce the disparities in educational performance by socio-economic background.**

At age 5, 35% pupils of known to be eligible for free school meals achieved a good level of development, compared to 55% of pupils not eligible for free school meals. Pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds are subsequently less likely to get good GCSEs, and less likely to enter higher education. In other words, they start off in the education system at a disadvantage and never catch up. A failure to make the best possible use of the country's available skills by allocating opportunities according to (in the words of a recent report on access to the professions)⁵ 'birth, not worth' will inevitably hamper economic performance.

⁵ Cabinet Office 2009. *Unleashing Aspiration: The Final Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions*. London: Cabinet Office.

Third, society should give every person the opportunity to play a part in strengthening Britain's economy. It is a significant challenge to:

- **Close the gender pay gap faster and further.**

The gap between men's and women's average earnings has shrunk continuously over the past three decades, but despite this progress, it has never threatened to drop below 10%, and progress today appears to be grinding to a halt. Many of the factors that may contribute to the pay gap are still evident – such as the virtual invisibility of women in the boardroom (where they hold barely a tenth of the most senior roles).⁶ A lifetime of lower incomes may mean that women are more likely to end up in poverty as pensioners, and more likely to live in overcrowded housing. Conversely, better use of women's skills could be worth in the region of £15bn - £23bn to the economy each year.⁷

- **Close the ethnic and religious employment and pay gaps faster and further.**

People from some ethnic minorities and religious groups are significantly less likely than average to be in work, and are paid less than average when they are in work. One in 4 Bangladeshi and Pakistani women work, compared with nearly 3 in 4 White British women. Chinese men earn 11% less than might be expected, given their qualifications, age and occupation and only 47% of Muslim men and

24% of Muslim women are employed. These gaps impose a cost not only on individual and families, but on the economy as a whole. While it is hard to be categorical, estimates from the National Audit Office in 2008 suggested that the overall cost to the economy could be in the region of £8.6bn per year.⁸

- **Close the employment gap for people with disabilities.**

Work is more than an opportunity to earn a living; it provides a means of meeting and interacting with others, and it can increase an individual's sense of health and well-being. 50% of disabled adults are in work, compared to 79% of non-disabled adults. Some evidence suggests that disabled people are more likely to experience discrimination and bullying in the workplace than average. Removing such barriers and increasing disabled people's participation in the workplace might benefit individuals and the economy as a whole.

Fourth, society should aim to put an end to identity-based violence and harassment. It is a significant challenge to:

- **Reduce incidence of hate crimes on all protected grounds and increase conviction rate.**

This is an emergent challenge. Though hate crime is not a new phenomenon, this is a new challenge in as much as legislative changes have only recently provided the means to take

⁶ Sealy, R., Singh, V. and Vinnicombe, S. 2009. *Female FTSE 100 Report*. Cranfield School of Business.

⁷ The Women and Work Commission 2006. *Shaping a Fairer Future*. London: GEO.

⁸ National Audit Office 2008. *Increasing Employment Rates for Ethnic Minorities*. London: The Stationery Office.

effective action to address certain forms of hate crime (such as disability hate crime), and its true extent may only now be becoming clear as people grow increasingly confident to report it. Hate crime is still significantly under-reported and its victims rarely see justice done. There are some indications that hate crimes can cause greater psychological harm to victims than similar crimes without a motivation of prejudice,⁹ and they can affect more people than the direct victims themselves by creating a climate of fear for people sharing a protected characteristic, and marring good relations between different groups.

- **Reduce incidence of homophobic, transphobic, disability-related and religiously motivated bullying in schools and workplaces.**

At school, young people with disabilities and special educational needs are most at risk of being bullied, and two-thirds of lesbian, gay and transgender secondary school students report that they have been victims of often severe bullying (17% of those bullied reported having received death threats). The same groups are most likely to report bullying or harassment in the workplace. Being bullied at school can have serious consequences for a young person's life chances. Those who report being bullied in England did 15% worse at GCSE, and were twice as likely to be not in education, employment or training at aged 16.

- **Raise the rate of rape convictions further.**

The British Crime Survey estimates that over 85,000 rapes take place each year in England and Wales alone. The victims in more than 90% of reported rapes are women. Fewer than 1 in 5 incidents will be reported to the police. Raising the rate of rape convictions has long been recognised as a challenge; the rate has begun to improve in recent years, but there is still some way to go until it matches the conviction rates of other similar offences.

- **Reduce the rate of repeat domestic violence offences.**

Women were the victims of just under three-quarters (73%) of the domestic violence recorded in the 2009/10 British Crime Survey. Three-quarters (76%) of all incidents of domestic violence in England and Wales were repeat offences. Domestic violence is an assault on basic human rights. It can compromise not only on an individual's physical safety, but their sense of worth, independence, and confidence. Quite apart from the devastating impact, research has estimated that the economic costs to society of domestic violence (including lower productivity and increased demand on services) total close to £6bn each year.¹⁰

⁹ Home Office 2009. *Hate Crime: The Cross Government Action Plan* p.13. London: Stationery Office.

¹⁰ Walby, S. 2004. *The Cost of Domestic Care*. London: Women and Equalities Office.

Fifth, society should aim to give more people greater personal autonomy and civic power. It is a significant challenge to:

- **Reduce the rise of the need for and cost of informal care, and to increase autonomy, choice and control for both carers and those who receive care.**

This is an emergent challenge, in as much as the demands for informal care are likely to increase significantly in the medium term as society ages and policy debate will need to take account of carers of different genders, ages and backgrounds, and who themselves have diverse needs and expectations. Today, 25% of women in their 50s and 18% of men in their 50s are carers. In some cases these are people who have spent their 20s, 30s or 40s caring for children and now find themselves responsible for looking after a partner, parent, or other relative. The contribution of unpaid carers to the economy has been estimated at £87bn each year.¹¹ It is in society's interest to reform our approach to care and support in order to achieve a sustainable balance between the capacity of the economy to fund care, and its ability to cope with increasing levels of economic inactivity among those leaving the workforce to provide unpaid care and support, and the reasonable limits of individual and family contributions.

- **Close the 'power gap' in public bodies on all protected grounds.**

The evidence shows that many public representative bodies are not, in fact, very representative of the people they serve. Women represent less than a quarter of Westminster MPs, and barely 3 in 10 councillors in England. 4% of Westminster MPs are from an ethnic minority background, much less than the proportion of the adult population that is from an ethnic minority background.

In some places and in some ways, public bodies are growing more representative: women make up nearly half of the Welsh Assembly, for example, and the number of Muslim MPs doubled at the 2010 election. However, progress is uneven and slow. Reports suggest that improving representativeness could increase public bodies' effectiveness and legitimacy.¹²

Next steps

The 15 challenges that we have identified through this process will inform our consideration of the Commission's work programme and strategic priorities for the future. We do not attempt, however, to recommend specific policy solutions here, and recognise that in most cases the solutions do not lie directly in the Commission's hands. Progress will depend on the choices of a number of different actors. Therefore we also

¹¹ Buckner, L. and Yeandle, S. 2007. *Valuing Carers: Calculating the Value of Unpaid Care*. Carers UK and the University of Leeds.

¹² Including House of Commons 2010. *Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation – Final Report*. London: The Stationery Office; Turley, A. 2009. *First Among Equals: Diversity in Local Government*. London: New Local Government Network; Government Equalities Office 2009. *Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women Councillors' Taskforce Report*. London: GEO.

recommend that these challenges should be the focus of attention from government and wider civil society in the months and years to come.

Making significant headway on each of these challenges will, we believe, make a powerful contribution to individuals' lives, to their families, to the economy of the country as a whole, and to good relations between people of different backgrounds.

In 2013, the Commission is scheduled to carry out its next Triennial Review. The data from that

exercise will help us measure society's success, or failure, in addressing the significant challenges identified here; and the extent to which, as our economy and demography change, we continue to make progress towards being a society with fairness, dignity and respect for all.

The full text of the Triennial Review is due be laid before Parliament by the Government. Shortly afterwards copies of the report, its annexes and supporting papers, will be available through the Equality and Human Rights Commission website at: www.equalityhumanrights.com.

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