

# Written evidence from Business in the Community [RCW0070]

## Mary Macleod, CEO, Business in the Community

Women and Equalities Committee: Inquiry on impact of the cost of living on women

Following recent witness session at The Women and Equalities Committee on the impact of the rising cost of living on women, this follows up on questions asked and also some additional questions, given the Committee's time was shortened due to a division bell.

This evidence should be considered alongside written evidence Business in the Community submitted to the inquiry, and the oral evidence provided by Mary Macleod, CEO, Business in the Community to the Committee on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024.

### **1. To what extent will the extension of 30 hours free childcare improve women's participation in and return to the labour market?**

Business in the Community (BITC) welcomes the government's extension of free childcare hours, and believes that the extra hours will support more women to stay in work, progress their careers and return to the labour market.

The extension of 30 hours free childcare was announced after BITC analysis from 2022 found that the cost of childcare exceeded over half the take home pay of the median working-age adult. In England, the cost of nursery for a child under two years is 65% of one parent's weekly median take-home pay. In Wales, the same costs would equate to 63% of one parent's weekly take home pay and in Scotland 51%.<sup>1</sup>

With the cost of childcare being so high, this reduces the incentive to work which could lead to a disproportionate number of women leaving the workforce to care. ONS data shows that full time employment rate for mothers with dependent children is 39%, compared to 84% of fathers.<sup>2</sup>

Further research conducted by BITC in 2021 in partnership with Ipsos, found that 58% of females with caring responsibilities said that their caring responsibilities, which include childcare, prevented them from applying for a job or a promotion, compared to 20% of males with caring

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<sup>1</sup> BITC analysis <https://www.bitc.org.uk/news/weekly-childcare-costing-some-parents-more-than-half-of-their-take-home-pay-new-analysis-shows/>

<sup>2</sup> Families and the labour market, UK

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/familiesandthelabourmarketengland/2021#employment-activity-of-mothers-and-fathers-in-a-family>

responsibilities.<sup>3</sup> The same research also found that women are also more likely to leave, or consider leaving, their jobs due to difficulty balancing work and care, with 36% of women agreeing compared to 21% of men.<sup>4</sup> Figures from the ONS show that 26% of women cite caring responsibilities as the reason why they are economically inactive, compared to 7% of men.<sup>5</sup> The same figures show that as many as 327,000 women who are economically inactive due to caring responsibilities say they would like a job.

On the basis of the above figures, the extension of free childcare hours will lead to an increase the amount of participation in the labour market from women, however employers also have an important role to play.

BITC research found that nearly half of all working adults have caring responsibilities, with women accounting for 85% of sole carers for children and 65% of sole carers for older adults.<sup>6</sup> To help women get into, stay and progress in work, and ensure employers have access to vital talent, we support employers to create a culture where caring is seen as the norm, not the exception and support carers, particularly women, to balance work and care.

BITC recommends that the government works with us and businesses to highlight best practices in both care policies and flexible working arrangements and encourage employers, where possible, to offer flexible working. Flexible working doesn't just mean flexibility in where a person works, but also flexibility to allow them to balance work alongside their caring responsibilities. This could mean starting later in the mornings to allow sufficient time to drop their children off at school or leaving work early to collect them. Enabling employees with the flexibility they need to be able to work and care, is essential to supporting carers, particularly women to stay in the labour market.

Larger employers such as Aviva, Diageo and NatWest, offer enhanced policies for new parents (detailed below). While these options will not be possible for all employers, simple adjustments to people's work days which makes it easier to care, can go a long way.

- **Aviva plc** has offered all new parents in the UK with 6 months paternity leave at full basic pay.
- In the UK, **Diageo plc** now offers 26 fully paid weeks of leave for all new parents.

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<sup>3</sup> [Who Cares? Business in the Community & Ipsos research reveals the great workplace divide - Business in the Community \(bitc.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Who Cares? Business in the Community & Ipsos research reveals the great workplace divide - Business in the Community \(bitc.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Employment in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Who Cares? Business in the Community & Ipsos research reveals the great workplace divide - Business in the Community \(bitc.org.uk\)](#)

- **NatWest plc** has introduced new enhanced Partner Leave policies which give all partners regardless of gender, up to 52 weeks leave, with the first 24 weeks being fully paid and the subsequent 15 weeks paid at the statutory maternity rate.

## **2. What options are available to female employees who rely on wraparound care for school aged children?**

Employers must create a culture where caring is seen as the norm, not the exception and then support carers, particularly women since they are often the prime care-givers, to balance work and care. One tool to do this is flexible working, whether being able to work from home, flexible/compressed hours or simply work part time, ensuring these are available to employees will help them chose how best to balance work alongside their caring responsibilities.

Wraparound care is invaluable to many workers across the UK and schools often have great initiatives to support parents, such as breakfast clubs and offering after-school programmes. UK businesses are also doing great work in this area, such as Greggs Breakfast Clubs. After a Business in the Community 'Seeing is Believing' visit in 1999 (a programme that brings C-Suite business leaders into communities to understand and act on challenges that impact people from access to skills, housing and food poverty), Greggs established it's first Breakfast Club to feed children at the beginning of the school day. The Greggs Foundation provides grants to primary schools in England, Scotland, and Wales to support the set-up and running of breakfast clubs. Since 1999, Greggs has grown the number of Breakfast Clubs to 900 across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and feeds 62,000 children a day.

The Government can work with private sector organisations like Greggs on initiatives such as this, promote and build awareness for what they do, ensure that best practice is shared and agree that breakfast clubs are made available to all children that need it, especially in the most deprived areas of the country.

## **3. Any more thoughts of flexible working?**

BITC welcomes the recent legislation that allows employees the right to request flexible working from day one, however the government can continue to encourage more employers to adapt flexible working policies and showcase the examples, which we can given them, where it has made a difference and boost employability, productivity and economic growth. Evidence shows that flexible working can also create lower rates of absenteeism and build a more diverse and inclusive workforce, tapping into available talent across the country.

Further to this, employers that do not create a culture that promotes flexible working could disproportionately impact women. BITC research in partnership with Ipsos and conducted in 2021 found that:

- one in three women have given up work, or considered doing so, due to a lack of flexibility, compared to a fifth of men.
- men were consistently more comfortable asking about flexible working policies, with 46% of men saying they felt comfortable asking about flexible working when first applying for a job compared to 39% of women.
- This gap widened to 48% to 39% respectively, when asked about flexible working at an interview.<sup>7</sup>
- The research also found that 35% of employees feel that those who work flexibly do not progress as quickly in their careers.

BITC is working with employers to:

- Actively monitor the take up and impact of their flexible working policy, even if informal, to ensure equitable access to the policy
- Increase the number of employers embedding flexible working across relevant organisational processes, such as within job design, recruitment processes and challenging perceptions / bias with regard to agility and performance.
- Ensure there is data on flexible working and the take up of it. For anything on these issues, data and measurement is key to driving progress.
- Encourage senior leaders to visibly be active in using and talking about flexible working so others feel they have permission to also do it.

**Sage** co-designed a Flexible Human Work vision model by listening to employees about how they do their best work, with teams agreeing to achieve personal and business balance between office and home working. The company is also experimenting with adaptable role design across the company as they seek to scale more flexible work patterns, while continuing to build on benefits like its Work Away programme, which enables colleagues to work away from their home country for up to ten weeks in any 12-month period.

### **Flexible working and older workers**

Flexible working is also an important measure to have in place to support older workers in the workplace. The pensions pay gap means women are more exposed to cost of living pressures in later life as well. BITC is working with employers to improve wellbeing in the workplace and offer better flexible working as research shows over those over 50 value flexibility in any employments.

According to the ONS, among adults aged 50 to 65 years who currently have a paid job, the most common factors they considered important were:<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> [Who Cares? Business in the Community & Ipsos research reveals the great workplace divide - Business in the Community \(bitc.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Reasons for workers aged over 50 years leaving employment since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, ONS](#)

- Permanent employment (61%)
- **Flexible working hours (48%)**
- Enough money (47%)
- **Ability to work from home (41%)**

The same data found, among adults aged 50 to 65 years who have left their job since the start of the pandemic and would consider returning to work, the most important factors when choosing a paid job were: flexible working hours (32%), good pay (23%) and being able to work from home (12%). There was no significant gender difference apart from 14% of women would require a role that fits around their caring responsibilities, compared 6% of men.

- **AXA Health** - Created the AXA Health Age Calculator and Mental Wellbeing Assessment, powerful intuitive digital tools to aid employees to discover their wellbeing status and appreciate where change could have an impact. Improved self-awareness and strong data insights created the basis for a much more effective intervention programme and informed wellbeing strategy. Working with clients, AXA Health was able to target solutions such as counselling and coaching, with great results.
- **BT** - In the summer of 2022 a campaign called "Sustainable Summer" was launched. The aim was to support employees to look creatively at their total reward package and the wellbeing support available to help combat the cost-of-living crisis and maintain their wellbeing. This led to an increased rollout of in-house "managing mental health" training for managers and peer-to-peer support network. As well as initiatives to help with finance such as 'swap shops' (including clothes, uniforms, books, toys and household items).

#### 4. Examples of business action in the community

We have 40 years of amazing examples of where businesses have been an incredible force for good in local communities. But we can focus here on a few more recent examples.

BITC has a dedicated Place programme that convenes businesses, Local Authorities and community organisations to work together on issues including supporting people with the cost of living. BITC works across all nations and regions, as well as in-depth programmes in nine towns and cities across England and Wales, including Blackpool, Bradford, Coventry, Lowestoft, Newport, Norwich, Rochdale, Sheffield and Wisbech. BITC is working to grow this work to support 16 communities by the end of this year and by 2032, to be supporting 50 places across the UK.

Through this work, BITC is working with businesses to support communities experiencing cost of living pressures. Examples include:

- In Coventry last year, **Salesforce** provided matched funding alongside other businesses such as **Coventry Building Society** so that Foleshill Community Centre and Social

Supermarket could build a much-needed extension and improve its kitchen facilities. The Social Supermarket provides a dignified shopping experience to the people of Foleshill, an area in which 67% of households are deprived in one or more dimensions. The work of the Social Supermarket ensures that some of the poorest people in Coventry can access essential goods. This example highlights how businesses are working across the UK to support local communities, particularly during a period of economic uncertainty.

- **The Celtic Collection and Linklaters LLP** - in 2023, Business in the Community in partnership with The Celtic Collection, delivered a festive experience for children in Pillgwenlly (Pill) in Newport. The event saw BITC, The Celtic Collection, the Newport Yemeni Community Association (NYCA) and Newport Council work together to hold an event to support children in one of the 10 most deprived communities in Wales. The event took place at the NYCA, was delivered by senior managers and team members of The Celtic Collection, and was attended by over 800 children, who had the opportunity to meet Santa and have photos taken with giant gingerbread men. The children were also provided with festive food, and all children brought home a gift and a selection box. The event was the first to be held at NYCA's new building in the heart of Pillgwenlly and aims to bring the community together.

The Festive Experience came as a result of one of our 'Seeing is Believing' visits to Newport earlier in 2023, led by Paul Lewis, Firmwide Managing Partner at Linklaters LLP. During the visit, business leaders were brought into communities in Newport, including Pill, to understand the challenges faced by the people in these communities and co-create innovative and long-term solutions with the community to help tackle these challenges. Following the visit, Linklaters donated to the NYCA, which went towards renovations to the centre, including building a new roof.

- **EMCOR UK and Anglian Water** - in June 2022, a BITC 'Seeing is Believing' visit to Norwich led to Anglian Water changing its business volunteering to enable employees to support food banks. Anglian Water and EMCOR UK came together to support the Feed a social supermarket in Norwich, an organisation that BITC works closely with. They combined resources sharing goods and equipment to reduce the likelihood of resource wastage to support groups that could benefit the most. This work included:
  - Supporting local residents to understand /access to various government services and financial support, which will result in more disposable income, more affordability and better health and wellbeing.
  - Providing laptops and equipment to enable customers to access online services reducing digital exclusion.

- Enabling access to environmental experts who can support The Feed in reducing its carbon footprint, costs and environmental impact.
- Providing maintenance support that enables The Feed to focus on its core mission whilst reducing costs.
- Giving access to pre-employment support, mentoring and employment opportunities.

## 5. How are working women responding to the cost of living pressures, compared with men?

Women in the UK typically earn less, own less and have fewer savings than men, so this means women are more exposed to economic shocks. That means that they are having to cope with far more during the cost-of-living crisis.

BITC conducted business research in November 2022, at the height of the cost-of-living crisis and found that one in 10 people said they would have to rely on a foodbank or warm banks over the winter period. While both men and women said they would need to rely on community support, women were disproportionately impacted because of the cost-of-living crisis from a wellbeing perspective. BITC research found:

- 65% of women were worried about paying the bills compared to 52% of men which will have an impact on their wellbeing and productivity.
- 55% of women felt that they were suffering from poor mental health related to the cost-of-living crisis, compared to 50% of men, which will impact on attendance and performance at work.

Given women were financially at a disadvantage even before the cost of living, current challenging times have made businesses think differently about what they can do. **AXA** have just rolled out an advertising campaign to raise awareness and to drive action for women:

- 83% of women experiencing women's health issues are impacted financially. Being a woman shouldn't be a risk.
- Women provide £50bn of unpaid care for adults. Being a woman shouldn't be a risk.

Without supporting women to progress in their careers whilst working part time, or enabling people to balance work and care, there will always be an economic imbalance between women and men. The rise in the cost of living is only shining a light on these pre-existing economic imbalances.

Closing the gender and ethnicity pay gaps for all employees will also be an effective way employers can support women with the rise in the cost of living and reduce the disproportionate impact of future economic shocks. BITC will continue to work with employers to measure, report and take action, so that we all create fairer workplaces, giving women a better chance to progress and earn more, achieve their ambitions and potential.

Long-term solutions such as increasing the access and affordability of childcare, creating inclusive workplaces where caring is considered the norm and ensuring women can progress in their careers, will increase equality, and thus future economic shocks will not affect women as disproportionately as they do today.

## 6. How helpful or supportive are businesses being to employees who are really struggling with the cost of living?

BITC works with businesses on a range of issues, including the rise in the cost of living. Through this work, BITC has a strong understanding of how businesses are supporting employees across their organisations.

In September 2022, BITC created a Cost of Living taskforce to bring business leaders together from across multiple sectors to help drive the business response to the rise in costs. BITC supported businesses on how to support their key stakeholders, including their employees, customers, communities and suppliers. [bitc-briefing-cost-of-living-crisis-supporting-employees-vulnerable-groups-november22.pdf](#)

Many large employers gave one-off increased payments to their employees to help deal with the immediate impact of rising bills and to help people survive. BITC also worked in supporting businesses to give guidance on how to help employees and customers struggling with financial difficulty. **Worldline** focused on supporting employees through pay, flexibility, and support. Through an approach of “leading by listening”, employees received a pay budget increase higher than previous years and were widely consulted in the planning process for benefits, which saw Worldline introduce menopause support choices, increased flexibility for carers (for example working from home 100% during key school holidays for all) and enhanced paid time-off for events such as school milestones. Worldline also reviewed its Paternity Leave policy to make it more inclusive by renaming it Family Leave and enhancing the time off from two weeks to six weeks.

While these urgent and necessary interventions were welcomed in the short-term, it was clear that the rise in the cost of living was shining a light on pre-existing economic imbalances that needed to be addressed. As part of this work, BITC began supporting businesses to take steps to address



deep-rooted inequalities that were brought to the surface during the cost-of-living crisis. This included:

- Providing support for employers to track, report and address any pay gaps for women and people from Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse employees.
- Working with employers to understand how financial stigma acts as a barrier to people asking for help. This work is due to be published later in 2024.
- Employers entering BITC's Times Top 50 Employers for Gender Equality must demonstrate action they have taken to support women in low-pay roles. This section is consistently one of the lower scoring areas we assess in the process. To help address this, BITC is working to share with employers what best practice looks like when looking to support women in low-paid roles:
  - Specifically targeting the recruitment and development of employees from lower socio-economic backgrounds, such as through the provision of apprenticeships, internships, scholarships and summer programmes in UK economic cold spots or targeted skill development programmes for support employees (i.e. executive assistants).
  - Taking an intersectional approach when setting targets (e.g. women in entry-level technology roles), monitoring and reporting these to senior leadership.
  - Expanding options for diversity data collection, to include, amongst other things adult / elder / child caregiver status, socio-economic background, neurodiversity and disability.

Closing the pay gap for all employees will be the most effective way employers can support women with the rise in the cost of living and reduce the disproportionate impact of future economic shocks. To bridge the gap, businesses must create cultures in which caring is the norm, and work can be done flexibly.

A new section in the 2023 Times Top 50 Employers for Gender Equality included encouraging employers to provide a case study on what their response to the cost-of-living crisis has been to date. It was clear that employers reacted strongly to the crisis and in a variety of ways beyond increasing pay, including:

- Taking a listening-led approach, responding to what employees considered most critical.
- Hosting internal events to raise awareness of issues such as financial wellbeing, burnout, stress and domestic abuse, signposting employees to further support if needed.
- Introduced additional benefits, such as free on-site health checks.
- Increased flexibility regarding childcare and eldercare.

- Supported colleagues to work in a hybrid way to save on commuting costs and offering financial grants towards home working costs.
- Provided access at times to free food and refreshments at work.
- Gave additional financial support to individuals where required.

## **7. What can industry and business do to make sure that women, especially, are paid adequate money in the future so they are not constantly struggling to pay their bills or to put food on the table and are not having to go through that emotional juggling?**

Without supporting women to progress in their careers whilst working part time, or enabling people to balance work and care, there will always be an economic imbalance between women and men. The rise in the cost of living is only shining a light on these pre-existing economic imbalances.

Long-term solutions such as increasing the access and affordability of childcare, creating inclusive workplaces where caring is considered the norm and ensuring women can progress in their careers, will ensure that future economic shocks will not affect women as disproportionately as they do today. Businesses could also signpost staff where to find financial advice and support.

BITC recommends for employers to take the following actions to support women to progress to more senior roles and for Government to support wherever possible:

- Increase visibility of role models from different levels, functions and backgrounds, through shared stories.
- Professional development programmes, including coaching, mentoring and reverse mentoring for different cohorts (leadership, mid-level, function-specific).
- Education and support for employees and line managers on inclusive leadership, supporting employees through life stages and thriving when working in a hybrid way.
- Diverse representation and bias awareness built into promotion decisions, for example through diverse interview panels.
- Monitoring promotions and performance data, scrutinising inconsistencies and holding senior leaders accountable for results.
- Cultivating opportunities for informal career discussions and networking to demystify senior roles and educate about different career paths.
- Employers should analyse employee experience data intersectionally to ensure no groups are being left behind in their progression efforts, for example, part-time workers or employees on the lowest pay.
- Proactive sponsorship and specific actions, that measures and finds development roles and career progression positions for a large cohort of the most senior women.

- Responsibility for women's progression and advancement in the organisation to be CEO championed and led by a senior ExCo member, with line management responsibilities to deliver it.

Line Managers at **Addleshaw Goddard** are supported by Inclusion Advocates who are asked to ensure a gender lens is applied to key decisions and communications. Advocates regularly meet with women within the organisation in "Ask Me Anything" sessions, aimed at providing a safe space to demystify and problem-solve opportunities for progression. This is supported by a female development programme 'Flourish', and more recently 'Altitude', which supports employees of all genders to demystify senior roles and offer practical skills.

### **8. To what extent are women in the workforce concerned about their long-term financial wellbeing? For example, are women not paying into their pensions, what's the long-term impact on their retirement plans?**

BITC's CEO, Mary Macleod, is also Chair of the Women's Business Council and she consulted with Jane Portas OBE, Member of the Women's Business Council, to understand further the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and women paying into the pensions.

There is clear evidence that the cost-of-living crisis is disproportionately impacting women's current financial wellbeing and their ability to contribute to pensions, and that women are concerned about their long-term financial wellbeing. This is against a backdrop where i) many women's pension savings in general are relatively low and may not meet independent retirement living standards; ii) women's (and men's) engagement in pension saving is very low; and iii) the Gender Pension Gap, lifetime earnings and lifestyle trends (including relationships and family formations) create further risks for many women's financial security in retirement. The analysis below evidences these points and how women are engaging with and feeling about their long-term financial provision as well as the challenges facing women's financial preparedness for later life and the general complexity experienced by women (and most people) navigating pensions.

#### **Women's pension savings and the Gender Pension Gap**

The median private pension savings across all women in Great Britain (including those without pensions) for all types of private pensions\* is £62,000 age 55 to 64 years and £34,000 at age 65 to 74 years (compared to £159,400 and £175,900, respectively, for men). This contrasts to the PLSA Retirement Living Standards 2023 fund size for a single person of £40,000 to £70,000 for a minimum lifestyle and £300,000 to £500,000 for a moderate lifestyle noting these amounts are based on assumptions including a full State Pension and that people are mortgage and rent free and purchase an annuity. Considering only those women with private pensions, the median values are £152,600 and £137,500 for women aged 55 to 64 years and 65 to 74 years, respectively

(£228,200 and £260,500 for men) illustrating a shortfall in women approaching later working life today in being able to secure an independent moderate standard of living in retirement.

Many people live as part of a couple in retirement and the above standards adjust for shared living costs. However, financial dependencies in relationships can also pose a risk when relationships break up. Consider heterosexual couples, the Gender Pension Gap in median private pension wealth across all men and women in Great Britain rises from two times in the 20s to five times in the late 60s and early 70s. This gap exists due to women's lower paid work, stopping work to care or to work part-time (often due to childcare costs). A lack of pension sharing on divorce, rising cohabitation (absent of pension sharing rights) with more babies born to cohabiting than married couples, and the effect of the menopause on women's employment in later working life also contribute to the gap.

Automatic enrolment has improved access to pension saving for employed workers and participation rates most recently reported by ONS (2021) demonstrate women are good workplace pension savers (79% of women participate compared to 80% for men). But nonetheless, the pension savings gap perpetuates since contributions to workplace pensions are based on lifetime employment earnings and women's average lifetime earnings are c.60% of men's. Longitudinal ONS data shows this gap closed by just 3% over a 14-year period (2004 to 2018) with some modest improvement since. Furthermore, lower earnings and part-time work means that women represent the majority ineligible for automatic enrolment.

### **Impact of Cost-of-Living Crisis on women's pensions**

The Cost-of-Living Crisis has had a disproportionate effect on women's financial wellbeing and in-turn their pension saving. While the nature of retirement provision varies especially between employed and self-employed people, for most people pensions are a primary source of retirement income. There are various surveys highlighting women's concern about pensions and retirement through the cost-of-living crisis. Considering this more fully on a nationally representative basis, the question of how women are feeling about their long-term financial wellbeing is directly related to their contributing to pensions since this impacts their knowledge and experience of, and engagement with, pensions and their retirement income needs. Data compiled from ONS and the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) Financial Lives Survey during the crisis helps to provide an overall picture.

Women's ability to contribute to pensions: Women's employment rate has remained broadly stable during the Cost-of-Living Crisis (72% compared to 78% for men in 2024) although women continue to dominate in low-paid and part-time work (one and a half as many women currently work in low-paid jobs and three times as many women work part-time compared to men) against

the backdrop of rising costs of working (such as childcare) and living. The FCA survey identifies 56% of women as financially vulnerable (compared to 46% of men), 28% of women lack financial resilience (24% overall) and 39% of women say they are not coping or finding it difficult to manage financially (compared to 32% of men). Women's lower earnings, impacting workplace pensions eligibility and contributions, and lack of financial wellbeing explains their challenge in contributing towards personal pensions and/or supplementing basic workplace pensions.

**Women's pension experience:** Women's pension participation and their experience of pensions is mixed with significant numbers of women citing lack of affordability and provision for retirement. 78% of employed women (compared to 82% of employed men) contribute to pensions, reducing to 56% of non-retired women (compared to 62% of non-retired men) overall. 33% women (compared to 40% of men) say they cannot afford to pay into pensions. 24% of women (compared to 16% of men) are likely to have no private pension wealth at all and 48% of women (compared to 31% of men) are more likely to be reliant on the State Pension (and increasingly so) as their main source of retirement income. This indicates women's concerns about pensions are likely to be two-dimensional including concern amongst women with pensions as to whether their savings will be sufficient to meet their retirement needs or goals while women with little or no pension savings will have more profound concerns about their long-term wellbeing.

**Women's pensions engagement:** Many people lack pensions education and find pensions complex, and women's non-linear lives make pensions more challenging to navigate. Consistent with the above pension experience, just 17% of women (32% of men) have high pensions engagement and 24% of non-retired women (30% of non-retired men) have given a great deal of thought as to how they are going to manage financially in retirement. However, women are concerned about their situation – 65% of women (compared to 54% men) over 45 years old agree their defined contribution pension alone would not be enough to live on in retirement. Just 15% of women (26% of men) have a clear plan on how they will withdraw money from their pension. The combined low engagement of both men and women also contributes to Gender Pension Gap and adds to the precarious position for many women when relationships break up, accentuated by trends in cohabitation and modern family formations.

A pensions campaign backed by the Government and communicated through society and business, would help in highlighting the issue and signposting women to where there are solutions.

*Sources (latest available, date reflects data): The Risks in Life Series analysis by Jane Portas based on secondary data sources: Office for National Statistics (Pension wealth in Great Britain 2020 \* data includes defined benefit and defined contribution, workplace and personal pensions including active, preserved and pensions in payment; Employee workplace pensions in the UK*

*2021; Employment rates 2024, Overview of human capital 2004 to 2018, 2020; Low pay and high pay in the UK 2023); Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association Retirement Living Standards 2023; Financial Conduct Authority Financial Lives Survey 2022.*

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