

# Work and Equalities Institute

## The future of equalities

### The future of work and the future of equalities

Predictions that the application of AI, robotics and digitalisation will lead to major job losses are adding to concerns about the future of work and equalities (see box 1). The financial crisis and subsequent austerity already exacerbated the inequalities stemming from a less regulated labour market and the decline of trade unions and collective bargaining. Further challenges to the future of equalities are stemming from Brexit (see box 2). To address these issues WEI researchers have proposed a new approach to understanding the segmentation of the

labour market to inform policies on how to make work more equal (Grimshaw et al., 2017) based on three propositions: that employers play a key role in the shaping of labour markets; that social inequalities such as gender are embedded in employer practices; and that differences in national institutions and policies can and do influence the extent and form of inequalities.

Grimshaw, D., Fagan, C., Hebson, G. and Tavora, I. (eds.) (2017). *Making work more equal: A new labour market segmentation approach*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Howcroft, D., and Rubery, J. (2018a). 'Gender Equality Prospects and the Fourth Industrial Revolution' in O'Reilly, J., Ranft, F. and Neufeind, M. (eds.), *Work in the Digital Age: Challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution*. London: Rowman and Littlefield International, pp. 52-60.

Howcroft, D. and Rubery, J. (2018b). 'Automation has the potential to improve gender equality at work', *The Conversation*, June. Available at: (<http://theconversation.com/automation-has-the-potential-to-improve-gender-equality-at-work-96807>).

### Box 1. New technologies as a threat or an opportunity for promoting a gender equal society

Recent contributions by WEI researchers to debates on the future of work have argued that even if the predictions of major job losses only partly materialise then this rupture should be seized upon to develop a more egalitarian society based on sharing of both paid and unpaid work. Rather than revert to the norm of men earning a family wage while women care for family members, steps should be taken to allow more free time for both women and men to create the conditions necessary for a more equal sharing of care.

**THE CONVERSATION**  
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**Automation has the potential to improve gender equality at work**

June 11, 2018 12:30pm BST

There are considerable differences in pay, employment levels, and the types of activities that men and women perform in the workplace. *Photo: Shutterstock*



Fagan, C. and Rubery, J. (2018). 'Advancing Gender Equality through European Employment Policy: The Impact of the UK's EU Membership and the Risks of Brexit', *Social Policy and Society*, 17(2), pp. 297-317.

Koukiadaki, A., Tavora, I. and Martinez Lucio, M. (eds.) (2016a). *Joint regulation and labour market policy in Europe during the crisis*. Brussels: ETUI.

Koukiadaki, A., Tavora, I. and Martinez Lucio, M. (2016b). 'Continuity and Change in Joint Regulation in Europe: Structural Reforms and Collective Bargaining in Manufacturing', *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 22(3), pp. 189-203.

Tavora, I. and Rodriguez-Modroño, P. (2018). 'The impact of the crisis and austerity on low educated working women: the cases of Spain and Portugal', *Gender, Work and Organization*. Available at: (<https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12238>).

## Box 2. Austerity and Brexit as dual threats to equalities?

Research by the WEI on the impact of austerity measures on collective bargaining and employment regulation particularly in Southern European countries found that the measures not only reduced real wages in all the countries but also in increasing dualism, divisions and inequities in the workforce, such as differences in pay and working conditions between existing and new employees, along gender and age lines and between those on permanent contracts and those in atypical employment (Koukiadaki et al., 2016).

Austerity policies challenged support for gender equality through its effects on both the labour market and on public services. Research on low income women workers in Spain and Portugal revealed how the women showed even more commitment to work and to shouldering a large burden of household finances, despite facing lower wages and higher work intensity (Tavora and Rodríguez-Modroño, 2018).

A new threat is emerging in particular to gender equality as many of the rights that have led to progress in gender equality have stemmed from European hard and soft law which, as Fagan and Rubery (2018) spell out, will be less likely to drive progress in the UK post-Brexit.

penalty. This is related to more women now being able to negotiate reduced hours in their previous job under the right to request flexible working policy so that they do not always have to change jobs to gain flexibility (Olsen et al., 2018a,b).

Olsen, W., Bayliss, D. and Zhang, M. (2018a). *The Gender Penalty: Exploring the causes and solutions to Scotland's gender pay gap*. Glasgow: Close the Gap. Available at: (<https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/The-Gender-Penalty-Feb-2018.pdf>).

Olsen, W., Gash, V., Kim, S. and Zhang, M. (2018b). *The gender pay gap in the UK: Evidence from the UKHLS*. Social Science in Government, May. London: Government Equalities Office. Available at: ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/706030/Gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_in\\_the\\_UK\\_evidence\\_from\\_the\\_UKHLS.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/706030/Gender_pay_gap_in_the_UK_evidence_from_the_UKHLS.pdf)).

Rubery, J. (2018). 'Why closing the gender pay gap requires a new debate on fair pay', policy@manchester, February. Manchester: The University of Manchester. Available at: (<http://blog.policy.manchester.ac.uk/posts/2018/02/why-closing-the-gender-pay-gap-requires-a-new-debate-on-fair-pay/>).

Rubery, J. and Grimshaw, D. (2015). 'The 40-year pursuit of equal pay: a case of constantly moving goalposts', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 39(2), pp. 319-343.

Rubery, J. and Koukiadaki, A. (2016). *Closing the Gender Pay Gap: A Review of the Issues, Policy Mechanisms and International Evidence*. Geneva: International Labour Organization. Available at: ([https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_540889.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_540889.pdf)).

## Box 3. Sexual harassment and the #metoo movement

The #metoo campaign on social media, following the revelations around the sexual harassment by the powerful US film producer Harvey Weinstein, has documented the widespread sexual harassment facing women in the workplace. By sharing their experience, many women, and some men have drawn attention to the scale and the scope of the problem, and the underlying socio-cultural factors contributing to and sustaining it, including tolerance for sexual harassment, with particular attention given to men's power over women and wider gender inequalities. The debate has revealed the need for national conversations about boundaries for acceptable behaviour, with the debate itself pushing the boundaries in a more restrictive direction. Beyond the workplace, women's experience of sexual harassment in public spaces, in particular on crowded public transport or in political life, has faced scrutiny, acknowledging that all forms of violence against women are interconnected, with transgression in one area fuelling and reproducing behaviours in others.

Hoel, H. and Vartia, M. (2018). 'Bullying and sexual harassment at the workplace, in public spaces, and in political life in the EU', FEMM Committee. Brussels: European Parliament. Available at: ([http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/604949/IPOL\\_STU\(2018\)604949\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/604949/IPOL_STU(2018)604949_EN.pdf)).

## Closing the gender pay gap: two steps forward, one step back

More than forty years after gender equality legislation was passed in the UK and Europe problems of gender inequality persist, whether it be in pay, employment position or responsibility for care. Problems of the gender pay gap have been attributed to changes in the overall system of wage setting (Rubery and Grimshaw, 2015, Rubery, 2018); work for the ILO has suggested that the promotion of inclusive and transparent labour markets is as important as gender specific initiatives in closing the gender pay gap (Rubery and Koukiadaki, 2016). These problems have emerged just as women have become more educated and more stable and committed employees, thereby confounding supply side explanations of the gender pay gap. This is not to suggest that progress has not been made in some areas: for example research by WEI affiliates has found not only some reduction in the aggregate gender pay gap but also a specific drop in the part-time pay



### The Gender Penalty

Exploring the causes and solutions to Scotland's gender pay gap



Di Marco, D., Hoel, H., Arenas, A. and Munduate, L. (2015). 'Workplace Incivility as Modern Sexual Prejudice', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 33(12), pp. 1978-2004.

Hershcovis, M.S., Reich, T.C. and Niven, K. (2015). *Workplace bullying: Causes, consequences, and intervention strategies* [SIOP White Paper Series]. Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Available at: (<http://www.siop.org/whitepapers/workplacebullyingfinal.pdf>).

Ng, K., Niven, K., and Hoel, H. (2018). Moral disengagement as an explanation of bystander behaviour in workplace bullying: A dynamic sensemaking theory of workplace bullying by bystanders. *The Academy of Management*, Chicago, IL, August, 2018.

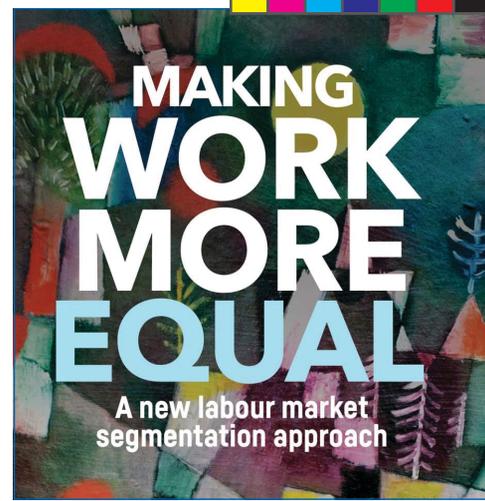
## Harassment and bullying

WEI research into bullying and harassment is long standing but has become increasingly topical as a consequence in particular of the #metoo movement ( see box 3). Workplace bullying is found to take on multiple forms from face-to-face interactions to cyber bullying and to include abusive supervision, social undermining and incivility. WEI research has contributed to a white paper from the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology which makes a number of recommendations aimed to help organizations and individuals prevent and cope with these various forms of workplace bullying (Hershcovis et al. 2015). Incivility has also been linked by WEI research to a subtle form of discrimination against Lesbian and Gay people in the workplace (Di Marco et al. 2015). Recent research, presented at the 2018 Academy of Management Annual Meeting, suggests that bystanders play an important role in affecting bullying. Organisations can encourage helpful bystander responses by emphasising individual responsibility and the severity of bullying as well as reducing victim blaming (Ng et al. 2018).

Chandola, T. and Zhang, N. (2018). 'Re-employment, job quality, health and allostatic load biomarkers: Prospective evidence from the UK Household Longitudinal Study', *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 47(1), pp. 47-57.

## Box 4. Precarious work and well-being

Research by WEI affiliated researchers using longitudinal data has found that formerly unemployed adults who transitioned into poor quality work had greater adverse levels of health and chronic stress-related biomarkers compared with their peers who remained unemployed. A key message from this research is that just as 'good work is good for health', poor quality work can be detrimental for health. This means that in measuring the employment success of the unemployed job quality needs to be taken into account.



## Addressing stress and wellbeing at work

WEI research is continuing the pioneering work by Sir Cary Cooper, an affiliate of the WEI, into stress and well being at work (see Cooper and Quick, 2017). Changes in the nature of work (e.g. towards the gig economy and precarious work), and in workforce characteristics (e.g. an ageing workforce) could mean that the risk of stress is increasing. WEI researchers have been reviewing stress management interventions to identify which employee and organisational-focused interventions are most useful (Holman et al., 2018) and contributing case studies to a recent book on well-being (Johnson et al. 2018) that detail the current approaches adopted by organisations when addressing wellbeing at work. WEI researchers have been studying stress in specific occupational groups such as pharmacy (Jacobs et al., 2018), academia (Johnson et al., 2018) and mental health staff (Woods et al., 2016).

Cooper, C.L. and Quick, J. (2017). *The Handbook of Stress and Health: A Guide to Research and Practice*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Holman, D., Johnson, S., and O'Connor, E. (2018). 'Stress management interventions: Improving subjective psychological well-being in the workplace' in E. Diener, S. Oishi, and L. Tay (eds.), *Handbook of well-being Salt Lake City, UT*: DEF Publishers.

Jacobs, S., Hassell, K., and Johnson, S. (2018). 'Managing workplace stress in community pharmacy organisations: Lessons from a review of the wider stress management and prevention literature', *International Journal of Pharmacy Practice*, 26(1), pp. 28-38.

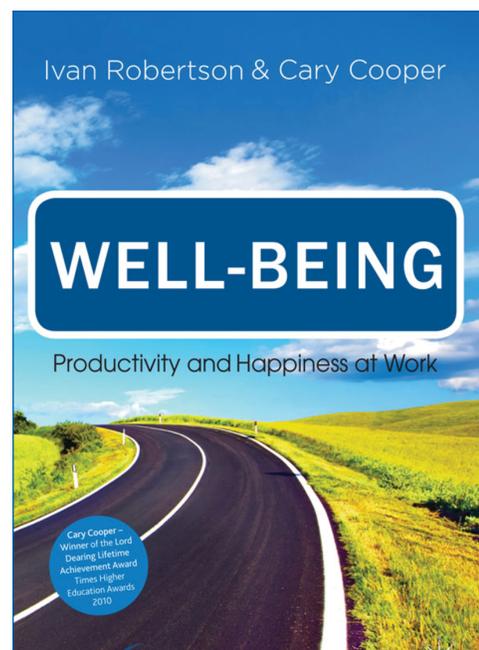
Johnson, S. J. Robertson, I. Cooper, C. L. (2018). *Wellbeing: Productivity and Happiness at Work*. (2nd ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Johnson, S. J. Guediri, S. M. and Robertson, I. T. (In Press). 'ASSET Pulse: Cross-validation of a very short stress measure' *International Journal of Stress Management*.

Johnson, S., Guediri, S., and Evans, J. (In Press). 'An examination of stressors, strain and resilience in academic and non-academic UK university job roles', *International Journal of Stress Management*.

Johnson, S. J., Machowski, S., Zapf, D., and Holdsworth, L. (2017). 'Age, emotion regulation strategies, burnout and engagement in the service sector: advantages of older employees', *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 33(3), pp. 205-216.

Wood, S. J., Niven, K., and Braeken, J. (2016). 'Managerial abuse and the process of absence among mental health staff', *Work, Employment and Society*, 30(5), pp. 783-801.



# Work and Equalities Institute

## Identifying and promoting the conditions for more inclusive and fair work and employment arrangements

New thinking on how to address the challenges posed by changes in work, employment and equalities is urgently needed. Inequalities – from health and education to poverty and exclusion – are influenced by labour market factors, but employment conditions are also shaped by patterns of inequality. The Institute brings together two internationally-recognised Alliance Manchester Business School research centres (European Work and Employment Research Centre and Fairness at Work Research Centre) with expertise across human resource management, industrial relations, labour economics, organisational psychology, employment law, technology, organisation studies, sociology and social statistics.

Our research is being used in knowledge exchange, dialogue and debate with key stakeholders and policy makers, and makes informed contributions to policy formation and practice. To achieve this, the Institute draws on input from an advisory board of policy makers and practitioners with local, national and international expertise. The Institute's research ranges from the local to the global, and builds on the already strong connections with national and international policy bodies. Our approach to research includes the use of international institutional and comparative analysis, organisational case studies and qualitative interviews, and surveys and quantitative data analysis.

### Our work is central to the debate on inequality in society

The team has a track record, built over more than twenty five years, of informing the evidence-base and policy agenda of the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the United Nations' International Labour Organisation, as well as national organisations such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and the Trades Union Congress. They have also helped launch many doctoral students and early career researchers onto successful careers as academics, researchers and policy makers in various sectors and countries.

### WEI has an active PhD community of over 20 students

Our research students are working on a range of issues concerned with the changing nature of regulation and work including: new forms of worker voice and conflict in the gig economy, migrant networks and the emergence of independent worker networks, regulation and HRM in SMEs, union revitalisation in South America, CSR and labour standards in West Africa, precarious work and women's employment, technostress and well-being, the impact of automation on women's work in the retail sector, the experience and/or the regulation of precarious employment, UK pension reforms, bystander behaviour in workplace bullying, and women stepping away from high level careers, to name but a few. The group of students actively present at conferences and organise a range of seminars and research networks within the institute. They build on long traditions of work on labour market segmentation and inequalities, comparative employment research, regulation and representation issues in employment relations, human resource management, stress and well-being and technology and work organisation. There are a number of AMBS scholarships available each year to support new PhD students as well as studentships from the ESRC's North West Doctoral College.

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