

We often get asked why we campaign for the rights of disabled women. Here are a few reasons.

Employment and Pay

- 35% of disabled women (and 30% of disabled men) are paid below the National Living Wage in the UK.¹
- Disabled men face a pay gap of 11%, while disabled women faced a gap twice as large at 22%.²
- Despite qualifications, disabled women have lower participation rates in higher skilled jobs and work fewer hours than both non-disabled women and disabled men.³
- 27% of disabled women are economically inactive compared with 16% disabled men.⁴
- Lone parenthood reduces female employment generally by 15%. However, disabled female lone parents are more than half as likely to work than non-disabled female lone parents.⁵

Violence and Abuse

- Disabled people experience more domestic abuse than non-disabled people. Disabled women are significantly more likely to experience domestic abuse than disabled men.⁶ In fact, one in ten experienced domestic abuse in 2012-13.⁷
- Abuse is also more severe, more frequent and more enduring.^{8,9,10}
- Deaf women are twice as likely as hearing women to suffer domestic abuse.¹¹
- The Serious Crime Act 2015 made 'coercive and controlling behaviour in an intimate or family relationship' a criminal offence (s.76). The Act provides that it is a defence for a perpetrator to show that they believed themselves to be acting in the victim's 'best interests'. This was intended to cover carers. We believe this defence risks preventing disabled women and people with learning disabilities from seeing their abusers brought to justice.

¹ Equality and Human Rights Commission. 2017. Being Disabled in Britain.

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/being-disabled-in-britain.pdf>

² Papworth Trust. 2016. Disability in UK 2016 Facts and Figures.

<http://www.papworthtrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/Disability%20Facts%20and%20Figures%202016.pdf>

³ All Party Parliamentary Group for Women and Work. 2016. Women Returns Annual Report 2016.

<https://connectpa.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Women-and-work-Annual-report-low-res.pdf>

⁴ TUC. 2015. Disability and employment. <https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/DisabilityandEmploymentReport.pdf>

⁵ The Poverty Site, 2011 <http://www.poverty.org.uk/45/index.shtml>

⁶ Adding insult to injury: intimate partner violence among women and men reporting activity limitations. Cohen, M. et al. 8, 2006, Annals of Epidemiology, Vol. 16, pp. 644-651

⁷ Public Health England. 2015. Disability and domestic abuse: Risk, impacts and response.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/480942/Disability_and_domestic_abuse_topic_overview_FINAL.pdf

⁸ Adding insult to injury: intimate partner violence among women and men reporting activity limitations. Cohen, M. et al. 8, 2006, Annals of Epidemiology, Vol. 16, pp. 644-651

⁹ Prevalence of abuse of women with physical disabilities. Young, M. et al. 1997, Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Vol. 78, pp. 34-38.

¹⁰ Partner violence against women with disabilities: prevalence, risk and explanations. Brownridge, D. 2006, Violence against women, Vol. 12, pp. 805-822.

¹¹ Women's Aid. 2015. <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/16-days-deaf-survivors-and-domestic-abuse/>

Health and Medical Care

- UK maternity care does not meet the needs of disabled women. A 2016 study revealed that only “19% of disabled women said reasonable adjustments had been made for them.”¹²
- The CEDAW Committee is concerned that “Disabled, older, asylum seeking and Traveller women face obstacles in accessing medical health care and that Disabled women have limited access to pre-natal care and reproductive health services”.¹³
- Disabled women, particularly with learning difficulties, are at risk of forced sterilisation in the UK or are encouraged to consent to sterilisation as a form of ‘menstruation management’ rather than be presented with a range of options available to other women.

Mental Health

- Disabled women with a mental health problem die on average 13 years earlier than the general UK population.¹⁴
- Nearly half of female prisoners in the UK have been identified as having anxiety and depression. This is double the rate of male prisoners. What’s more, nearly half female prisoners (more than double the rate for men) report attempting suicide.¹⁵

Public Life

- The CEDAW Committee is concerned that ethnic minority and disabled women are particularly poorly represented in Parliament, the legal system and on public sector.¹⁶

About Sisters of Frida CIC:

We are an experimental collective of disabled women. The barriers and multiple discrimination we face have not changed and we struggle to have our voices heard. As a sisterhood, we are a circle of disabled women who share experiences and explore intersectional possibilities.

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¹² Hall J, Collins B, Ireland J, and Hundley V. (2016) Interim report: The Human Rights & Dignity Experience of Disabled Women during Pregnancy, Childbirth and Early Parenting. Centre for Midwifery Maternal and Perinatal Health, Bournemouth University: Bournemouth. <http://www.birthrights.org.uk/2016/09/maternity-care-failing-some-disabled-women/>

¹³ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women : Great Britain*, November 2014, available at: <https://nawo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/CEDAW-concluding-observations-EHRC-and-NAWO.pdf>

¹⁴ Equality and Human Rights Commission. 2017. Being Disabled in Britain. <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/being-disabled-in-britain.pdf>

¹⁵ Light, M., Grant, E. and Hopkins, K. (2013), ‘Gender differences in substance misuse and mental health amongst prisoners: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners’. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/surveying-prisoner-crime-reduction-spcr>

¹⁶ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women : Great Britain*, November 2014, available at: <https://nawo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/CEDAW-concluding-observations-EHRC-and-NAWO.pdf>