



WE Party Conference

Kettering 7 – 9 September 2018

Title: Update the Equality Act to include socio-economic status as a protected characteristic

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Type of motion: Policy motion

Motion text:

1 WE call upon the government to update the Equality Act 2010 to include 'socio-economic status' as
2 a protected characteristic through the introduction of a Socio-economic Status bill in Parliament.

3 At present there are nine characteristics which are protected under the Equality Act 2010. Socio-
4 economic status was due to be included in the Equality Act under Part 1 but was not enacted by the
5 Conservative Party. Updating the Equality Act to include socio-economic status will improve upon
6 Part 1 as it will have a vast impact – both legally and culturally – on women's lives, as women
7 experience more societal discrimination and therefore the barrier due to class status is even harder
8 to overcome.

9 Having 'socio-economic status' as a protected characteristic means it would be illegal to
10 discriminate against someone based on their income or class status – but not only that, it would
11 help to change culture. It puts class status on the table as something which should be discussed
12 and considered and will help us to critique systemic classism and institutions that are still part of the
13 'old boys club'.

14 Occupational segregation vastly affects women. For example, in the NHS women make up 89% of
15 nurses and 90% of support staff – roles which pay lower wages. A study coordinated from Imperial
16 College London revealed that 'low socio-economic status has almost the same impact on health as
17 smoking or a sedentary lifestyle and is associated with a reduced life expectancy'. Having a law
18 that really considers the effect of socio-economic status on our society will mean that women who
19 are at a higher risk of experiencing socio-economic discrimination will receive support both legally
20 and culturally.



Motion rationale:

20 This motion will also have the potential to impact positively on other areas of discrimination such as
21 race and is vital to our commitment as a party to an intersectional feminist approach. We live in a
22 nation that doesn't really like to talk about class. People get uncomfortable when it is mentioned.
But 23 we at the Women's Equality Party know how important it is. It is important because it is an
24 intersectional issue – and if you have a low socio-economic status, this compounds other protected
25 characteristics and creates further barriers.

26 This change in law will help race relations amongst the working classes because it will highlight the
27 intersectional difference between someone systemically disadvantaged due to their socio-economic
28 status and because of their race – something that is often blurred in discussions about 'gang
culture' 29 or 'urban communities'.

30 So many institutions, organisations and professions are conscious of the significance of socio-
31 economic background and the barriers that having a low socio-economic status can have on social
32 mobility. In response, many organisations have set up outreach departments to encourage social
33 mobility. This includes institutions such as King's College London, Oxford University etc. Society is
34 reacting to this area of inequality, but our current legislation does not show the same support for it.

35 As countries like Ireland work to improve their equality laws by introducing the Equality
36 (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017, this is a step that the UK should also be taking to support
people 37 from disadvantaged backgrounds. We therefore ask for socio-economic status to be
included in
38 legislation as a protected characteristic. This will help to support a world of equal opportunity and to
39 reduce discrimination and social barriers. It will also put more of an onus on all organisations and
40 institutions to consider socio-economic barriers.

41 This policy will help WE achieve its objectives for Equal Pay and Opportunity and Equality in
42 Healthcare.

References

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<https://www.spectator.co.uk/2018/05/its-time-to-get-real-about-gang-violence-in-london/>

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/177249/early-death-health-linked-socioeconomic-status/>