

Gendering the Social Sciences: a discussion panel cohosted by the Gender Institute and the Department of Geography & Environment

# Gender and Poverty in the 21st Century

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LSE events



# **Gender, Poverty, Budgets, Crises**

Diane Elson, University of Essex  
Presentation to seminar on  
Gender and Poverty in 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
LSE 11<sup>th</sup> March 2010

# Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and Women's Poverty

- Chp 80 of *International Handbook of Gender and Poverty*
- Co-authored with Rhonda Sharp, University of South Australia
- GRB consists of the use of tools and adoption of procedures to ensure that government budgets support the achievement of gender equality
- Employed in a variety of ways by some governments around the world
- GRB can support reduction of women's poverty
  - by focusing on how budgets impact on poor women in particular
  - by supporting women's financial autonomy
- GRB has contributed in a number of countries by
  - enabling poor women in some countries to have more voice in budget decision-making
  - improving allocations of expenditure to services, infrastructure, income transfers and employment that benefit poor women
  - changing taxes and user fees in ways that benefit poor women

# **Economic crisis and government budgets :**

## **phase 1 , fiscal stimulus**

- Widespread expansion of real public expenditure, comparing 2008/9 with 2007
- UNICEF reports this includes 85% of developing countries
- Big focus on roads and cars in high and middle income countries: public projects, tax breaks, renewing government car fleet
- Preserving male jobs given priority
- GRB approach not used
- Macho stimulus plan, claim feminist economists in USA
- Offer support to small and medium enterprises, argue feminist economists in India

## **Economic crisis and government budgets : phase 2, fiscal austerity**

- Many economies in Asia and Latin America recovered quickly, especially middle income economies
- European economies did not, and governments introduced fiscal austerity programmes
- UNICEF reports many low income countries also planning fiscal contraction
- A few governments are using GRB to help manage deficit reduction
  - Iceland, where new government is committed to introducing GRB
  - Andalucía, where regional government has tried to protect expenditure important for gender equality

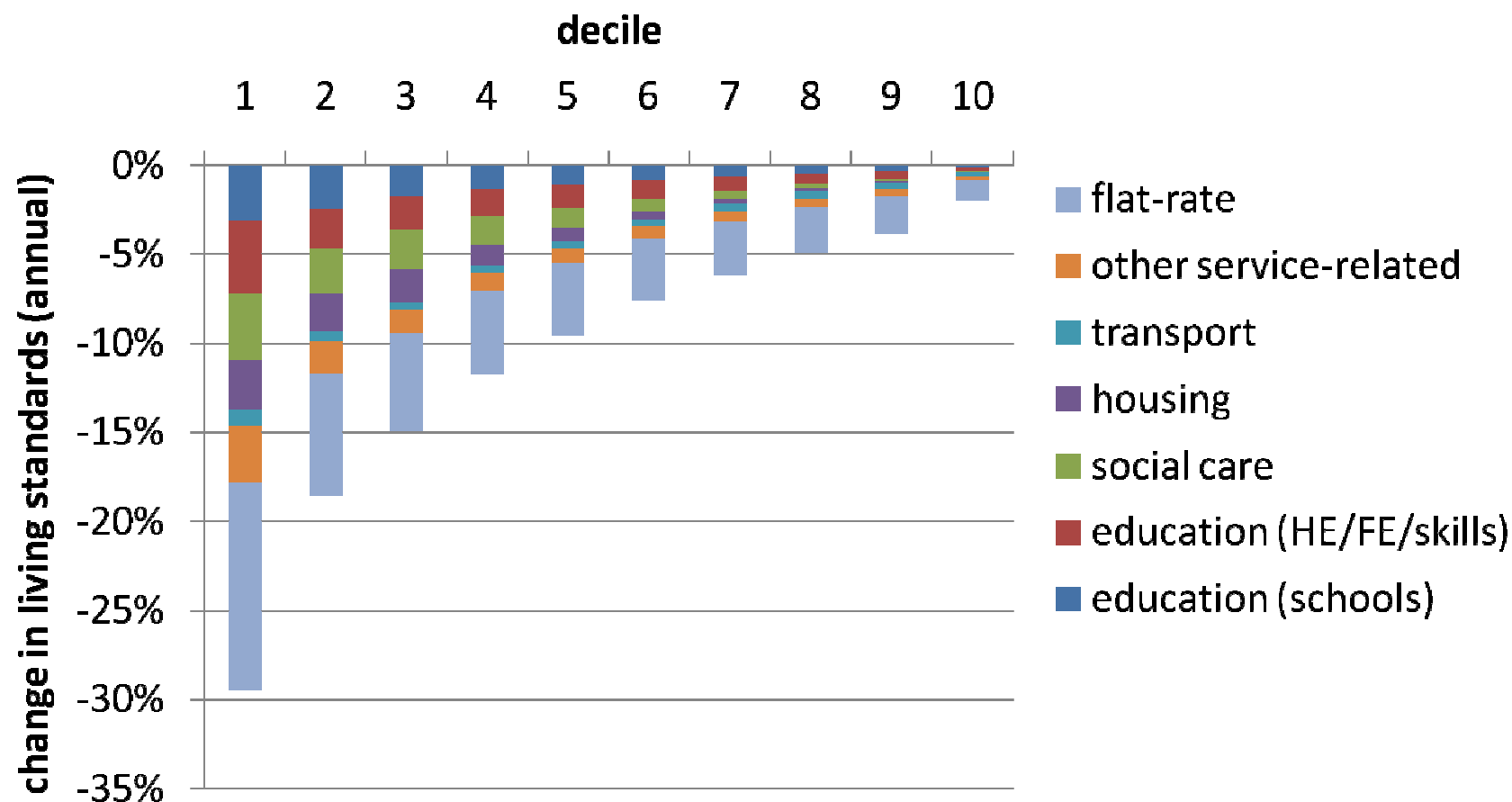
# Gender, Poverty, Fiscal Austerity in UK

- Analysed by UK Women's Budget Group, a network of about 200 academics, members of NGOs and trade unions, mainly women but also some men
- Has analysing gender dimensions of government budgets and expenditure reviews since 1989
- Sharing results with politicians, journalists, women's organizations, poverty organizations
- Voluntary work, except for part-time co-ordinator
- Critique and dialogue with government
- Con/Lib coalition government not using GRB approach
- For more information see [www.wbg.org.uk](http://www.wbg.org.uk)

# Gender Analysis of Cutbacks in Expenditure on Public Services

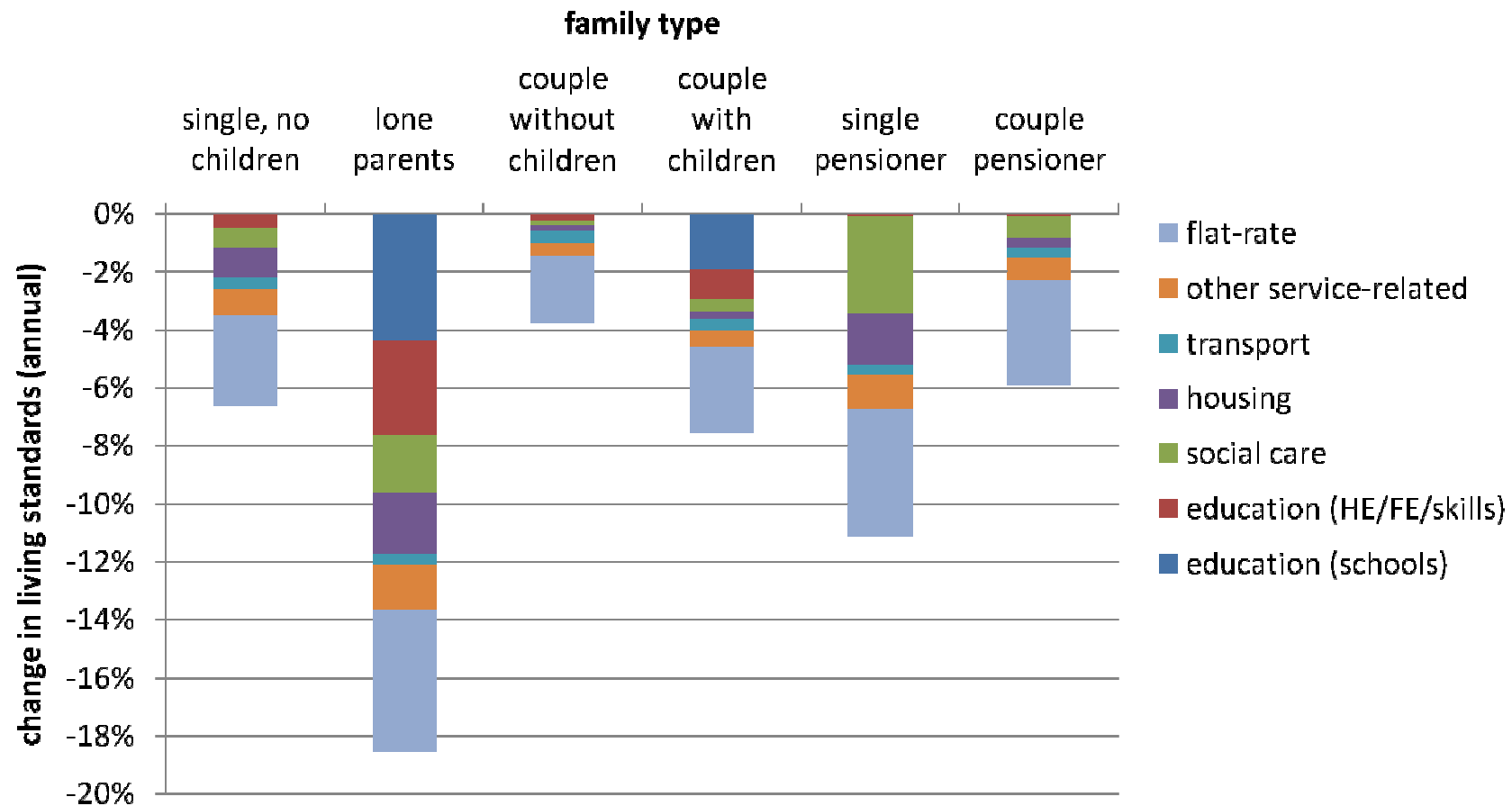
- Key findings of analysis of November 2010 Public Expenditure Review, conducted in co-operation with Howard Reed, Landman Economics
- Examines the distributional effects of spending cuts by household type, according to their gender characteristics
- For methodology see: Tim Horton and Howard Reed *Where the Money Goes: How we benefit from public services*  
<http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/wherethemoneygoes.pdf>

# Effects of spending cuts by income group: as % of net income, all services

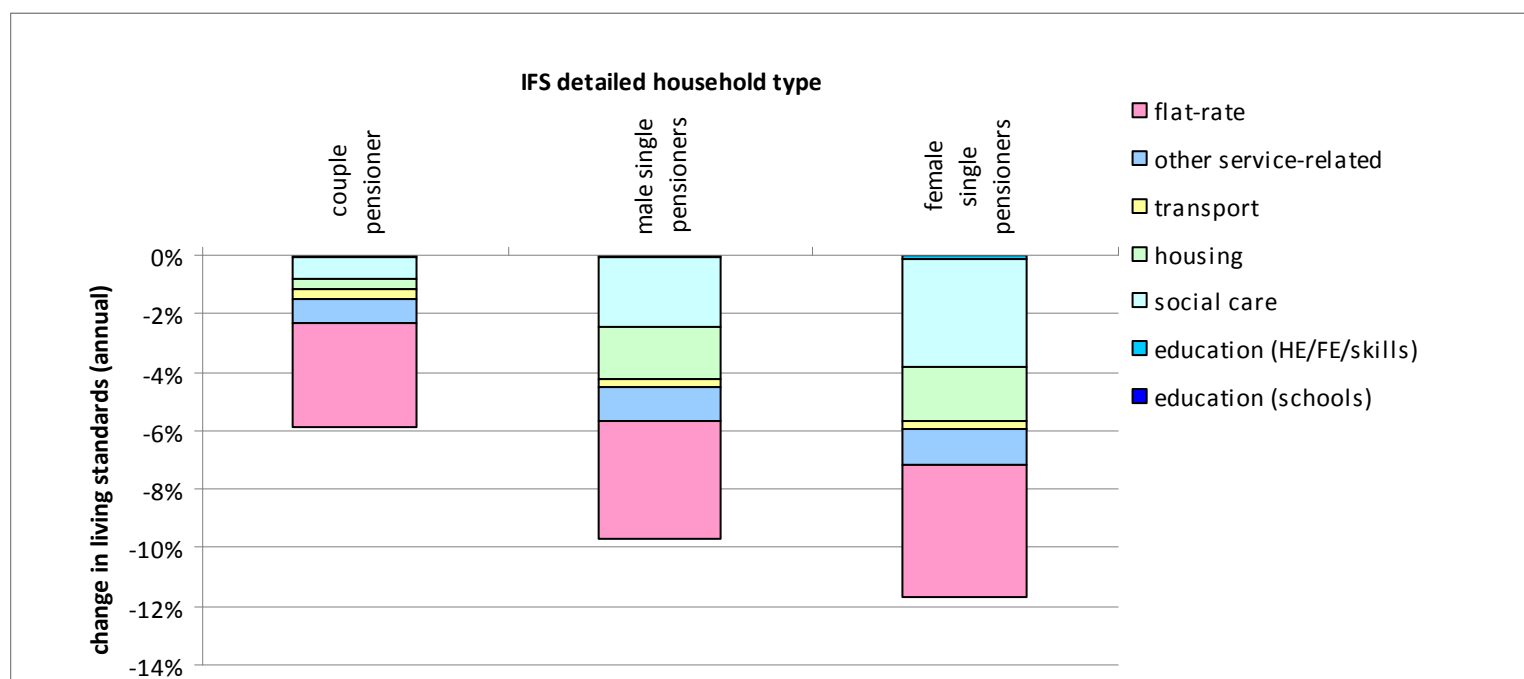




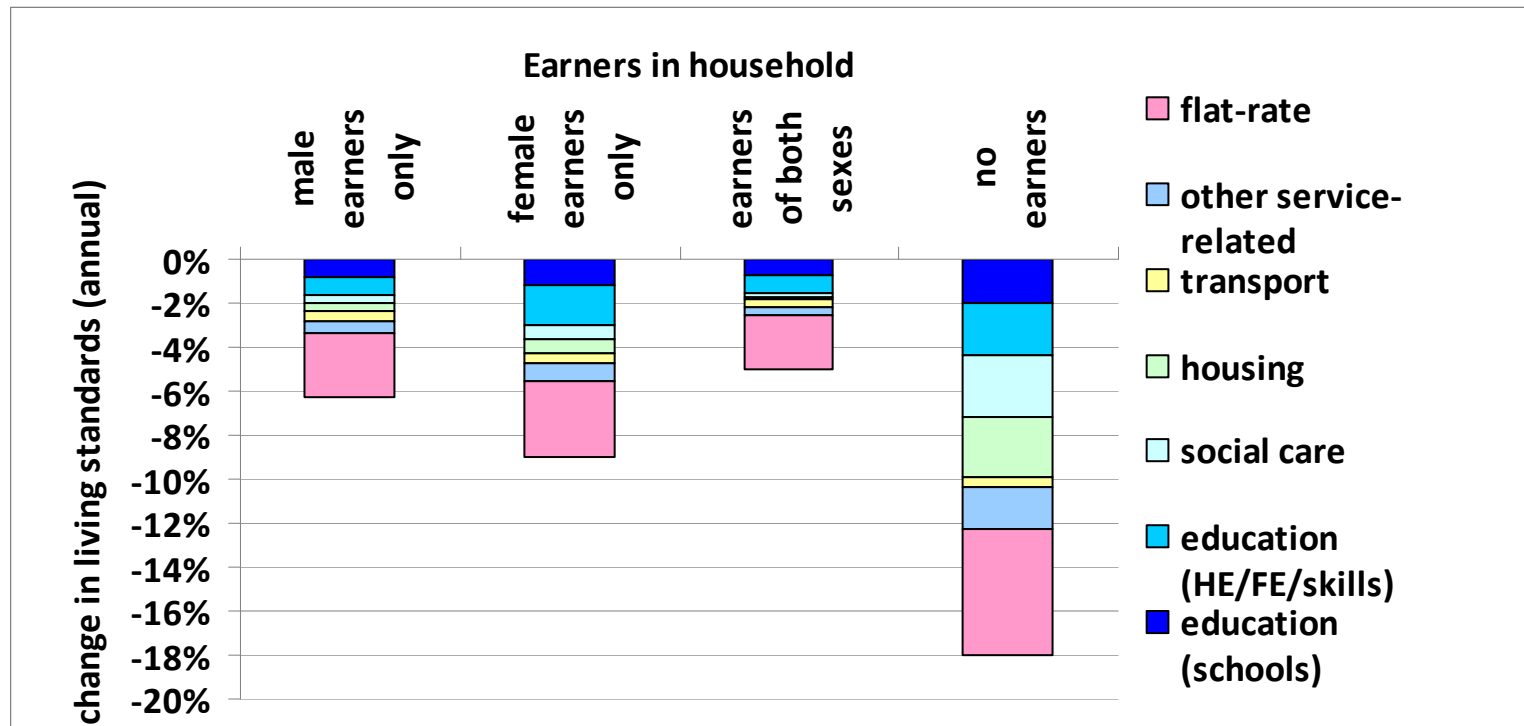
# Effects of spending cuts by family type: as % of net income, all services



# Women single pensioners hit hardest



# Households without a male wage hit hard



# Expenditure cuts, gender and poverty

- As currently designed:
  - Likely to have worst impact on poor people, among whom women are disproportionately represented
  - Likely to undermine women's financial autonomy
  - Likely to add to women's care responsibilities
- Alternatives:
  - cut differently
  - cut less and later
  - tax financial sector and high income people more