



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP 2016/0027, 2 February 2016

Gender pricing

This debate pack is prepared for a Westminster Hall debate on Tuesday 2 February at 16:30 pm initiated by **Paula Sherriff**.

Gender based pricing is the practice of charging a different price for the same consumer goods or services on the basis of gender. Recent research by the Times found price differences across a range of items targeted at particular genders, with those marketed at women 37% more expensive on average.

This issue does not apply to all spending however – many items are not aimed specifically at men or women.



The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

By Danny Rogers
Lorraine Conway
Lorna Booth

Contents

1.	Background - Gender based pricing	2
2.	Media articles	4
2.1	Report / blog	5
3.	Petition	6

1. Background - Gender based pricing

Gender based pricing is the practice of charging a different price for the same consumer goods or services on the basis of gender.

Recently, the issue has come to the fore with the publication of research undertaken by the *Times*, which found price disparities across a wide range of gender-targeted items, with those marketed at women 37% more expensive on average.¹ According to this press article, some high street stores are charging women up to twice as much as men for practically identical products; for example, double the price for ten disposable razors simply because they are pink.² Others have highlighted the fact that price differences for gendered products can go both ways. For example, whilst toiletries targeting women tended to carry higher prices, specifically male-marketed skincare products can be significantly more expensive than equivalent women's or unisex items.³

Research on gender based pricing undertaken by Development Economics on behalf of the insurance provider Aviva, published in 2012, found that women pay on average £200 more per year than men for what are essentially the same consumer goods and services, the only difference being that they're specifically targeted at the female market.⁴ It is also suggested that manufacturers of certain products (such as toiletries) have successfully created price segments for some of their product lines. Such products, while being essentially the same in terms of active ingredients, are differentiated through use of colouring, scents and/or packaging to target women.

Gender based pricing is not unique to the UK. For example, a [study](#) published in December 2015, by New York City's consumer affairs department, compared male and female versions of almost 800 items.⁵ On comparison, goods targeted at women cost 7% more on average across toys, clothing, accessories, personal care, home and health.

Reasons suggested for gender based pricing include:

- Differences in the average cost of providing services, for example in hairdressing where typical styles may differ between men and women.
- Differences in risk behaviours between men and women (often with women showing lower risks). Insurance companies are however no longer allowed to price insurance products on the

¹ "[Women charged more on 'sexist' high street](#)", The Times, 19 January 2016, [online] (accessed 28 January 2016)

² Ibid

³ "[Women paying more than men for everyday products thanks to 'unacceptable' gender price gap](#)", Independent, 19 January 2016, [online] (accessed 19 January 2016)

⁴ "[Gender based pricing research shows women pay more than men](#)", 3 December 2012, [online] (accessed 28 January 2015)

⁵ "[From Cradle to Cane: The cost of being a female consumer – A study of gender pricing in New York City](#)", New York City Department of Consumer Affairs, December 2015, [online] (accessed 28 January)

basis of gender (see the Library note, [Insurance and the discrimination laws](#) for more details).

- Some women being willing to pay higher prices for products that are packaged or promoted in a certain way.
- Differences in negotiating skills between men and women (on average) for those products where price discounts might be achieved.
- Sellers exploiting expected differences in knowledge about appropriate prices – for example women have been quoted more than men for the same car repairs, on average.⁶

While the spending patterns and choices of men and women may differ, it is worth noting that many items are not priced according to gender. This might be because they have general appeal, for example as with many food items (think eggs or bread), or because they are sold to households as a whole (for instance housing). Where items are priced according to gender, for example with disposable razors, women sometimes have the choice of buying the cheaper product aimed at men.

There has also been a related debate around the cost to women of taxes on sanitary products – see Library note [VAT on sanitary protection](#) for more information about this.

⁶ List adapted from Development Economics, [Five reasons why gender pricing may occur](#), 7 December 2012.

["Women pay £45 more for car repairs than men"](#), The Times, 3 July 2015

2. Media articles

Guardian

25 January 2016

[Women are overcharged every day. Imagine if that happened to men](#)

Independent

21 January 2016

[So on top of the pay gap and the tampon tax, women pay more for pink razors and jeans. Bravo, capitalism](#)

Telegraph

20 January 2016

[Women must strike against the 'pink tax' with our wallets](#)

Telegraph

19 January 2016

[A sexist high street hurts men as much as women - rise up people](#)

The Times [subscription required]

19 January 2016

[Women charged more on 'sexist' high street](#)

Guardian

19 January 2016

[The sexist surcharge – how women get ripped off on the high street](#)

Telegraph

19 January 2016

[Women 'charged twice as much as men for identical items'](#)

FT.Com [subscription required]

15 January 2016

[The price of being female](#)

Independent

23 December 2015

[This is why you should buy the men's version of almost anything](#)

Guardian

4 November 2014

(Opinion) [The woman tax? Let's stop buying into the great gender con](#)

Telegraph

12 March 2015

[End Tampon Tax: 'Oi George Osborne, stop taxing our bloody periods'](#)

Daily Mail

19 February 2015

[Why is it SO expensive to be a woman? It's been called the pink tax – how women pay more than men for everything from dry cleaning to razors](#)

2.1 Report / blog

Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA)

19 January 2016

[The 'gender tax' story doesn't show what feminists think it shows](#)

Fawcett Society (blog)

26 January 2016

[The sexist surcharge: why Boots should lead the way on reviewing pricing](#)

3. Petition

Change.Org

[Boots - review the sexist pricing of everyday products](#)

Boots CEO, Simon Roberts: Review your sexist pricing!

£9.99 for eye cream for women, but £7.29 for men. £2.29 for 8 women's razors, £1.49 for a pack of 10 for men. A visit to any Boots store and it's **plain as day on the British high street that women are being ripped off.**

So-called 'women's products' are more expensive - from razors to moisturising creams. Women already buy things that men don't have to buy, like make up, hair products and tampons which are taxed as luxuries, plus we earn less than men on average across our lifetimes. Now to top it all off, research has proven what any woman who has ever been inside a hair salon already knew: **women pay more than men for the same stuff.**

An investigation by The Times found that women are being charged 36% more on average for products marketed as 'women's products'. The Fawcett Society describe this as a sexist surcharge for women - and I think that's exactly what this is.

It's time this changed -- starting with Boots.

Boots is one of the leading high street retailers. They often sell own-brand products at much higher prices to women when there are only minor differences in the product. The fact that these are own-brand products is what makes it really unfair – they don't have to overcharge you, they simply choose to.

Boots should lead the way by announcing a review of their pricing of women's toiletries and make a commitment to charge men and women fairly.

These varying prices struck me most when I first had my hair cut very short. Since then, every visit to the hairdressers has cost me £45 in a salon which charges men just £25. I am being charged substantially more just because I am a woman.

Now this research has been published, it's plain to see that this practice is everywhere, especially in products in which the only discernible difference is if they've made the packaging pink or not – such as razors and moisturiser.

Sure, I could just choose to buy the product marketed at men, but not all women realise that this is even an option. We are led to believe by

the branding and pricing that there is a huge difference in product, but for the most part, that simply isn't true.

It is the responsibility of the retailer to stop trying to trick us into buying more expensive products for their own financial gain.

If customers come together and say we don't want to pay extra any more, we can make them listen to us. We've challenged the tax on tampons - now it's time to challenge high street prices.

If you agree sign the petition, and let's stop sexist pricing!

About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publically available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email hcinfo@parliament.uk.

Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).