

News story: Tech giants do not face enough competition – reducing consumer choice and innovation

- review finds that tech giants do not face enough competition
- new markets unit needed to set and enforce rules
- existing rules need updating to tackle mergers and improve enforcement
- experts say action is needed to increase choice and innovation for consumers

Tech giants have become increasingly dominant and ministers must open the market up to increase consumer choice and give people greater control over their data, an [independent review](#) said today (Wednesday 13 March).

Harvard Professor Jason Furman has warned that UK competition rules must be updated to be fit for the digital age. He cited the benefits brought by technology firms but said the rules needed to evolve to keep pace with the market.

He has urged the government to increase competition in the digital sector by setting up a new competition unit and strengthening outdated laws. He believes more companies would then be able to join the market on a more equal-footing – ushering in a new wave of innovation and the creation of new social media and online search platforms.

An independent panel of experts led by Professor Furman – who was chief economic adviser to President Barack Obama’s White House – and including Professors Diane Coyle, Amelia Fletcher, Derek McAuley and Philip Marsden has investigated the sector. Today they have made the following recommendations to address this international problem, so that Britain can lead the world in the technological revolution:

- a new digital markets unit should be set up with expertise in technology, economics and behavioural science and the legal powers to back it up
- the new unit should give people more control over their data by enabling people to switch between platforms more easily
- it should also develop a code of conduct so the largest digital companies know the competitive rules of the game
- regulators’ existing powers for tackling illegal anti-competitive practices need to be strengthened – making it quicker and simpler to prosecute breaches, such as bullying tactics by market leaders
- changes to merger rules are needed so the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) can better stop digital mergers that are likely to damage future competition, innovation and consumer choice
- the CMA should launch a formal market study into the digital advertising market which is dominated by two players and suffers from a lack of transparency

- powers to force the largest companies to open up to smaller firms through providing access to key data sets, when doing so does not affect privacy
- the UK should engage internationally on all of these issues

Harvard Professor Jason Furman, chair of the independent review of competition in the digital sector, said:

The digital sector has created substantial benefits but these have come at the cost of increasing dominance of a few companies which is limiting competition and consumer choice and innovation. Some say this is inevitable or even desirable. I think the UK can do better.

The Chancellor, Philip Hammond, was right to recognise there is a better way than just continuing with the status quo. My panel is outlining a balanced proposal to give people more control over their data, give small businesses more of a chance to enter and thrive, and create more predictability for the large digital companies. These recommendations will deliver an economic boost driven by UK tech start-ups and innovation that will give consumers greater choice and protection.

Responding to Professor Furman's Review, the Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond, said:

The UK leads the world in embracing technology and the opportunities it delivers for people. Competition is fundamental to ensuring the market works in the interest of consumers, but we know some tech giants are still accumulating too much power, preventing smaller businesses from entering the market.

The work of Jason Furman and the expert panel is invaluable in ensuring we're at the forefront of delivering a competitive digital marketplace. I will carefully examine the proposals put forward by the panel before responding later this year, setting out how the government will implement the changes needed to ensure our digital markets are competitive and consumers get the level of choice they deserve.

The report – [commissioned by Chancellor Philip Hammond](#) on behalf of the government and published today ahead of the Spring Statement – recognises the digital economy has delivered many benefits and helped change the way people live their lives for the better. However, it is clear that more competition is needed to continue generating new benefits for consumers.

It found these proposals could boost the economy by encouraging the development of new platforms to compete with established players. Opening markets up would also lead to new services that revolutionise how we use

digital apps and programmes. For example, an aggregator service could bring together a person's content and data from several social media platforms and make it easier to browse and message friends and family who use different apps.

Customers will be able to switch services more easily, taking their custom elsewhere and with greater control over their data. Lists of friends could be transferred to new social media sites and search histories could be transferred to a new search engine.

Next stages

The Chancellor will make an initial response to the review in his Spring Statement speech this afternoon. The government is expected to formally respond to its recommendations in the summer.

The [independent panel](#) was made up of Professors Jason Furman, Diane Coyle, Amelia Fletcher, Derek McAuley and Philip Marsden.

The panel has made 20 specific recommendations for the government. These can be found in the [full report](#).

[Press release: UK aid project helps cut violence against women by more than half in Democratic Republic of Congo](#)

- UK aid-backed research programme 'What Works to Prevent Violence' studies effective ways to reduce rates of violence against women and girls around the world.
- A pilot in the Democratic Republic of Congo dramatically cut violence against women by 58%.
- The project trained faith leaders and community volunteers in 15 remote and conflict-affected communities to speak out and make violence socially unacceptable.

A UK aid project has dramatically reduced women's experience of domestic and sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

A project working to challenge the social acceptance of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the DRC saw women's experience of domestic violence fall from 69% to 29% after two years of intervention – a drop of 58%.

Women's experiences of sexual violence from a non-partner also reduced from

24% to 4% – a more than five-fold reduction.

Supported by UK aid, NGOs Tearfund and Heal Africa trained faith leaders and community volunteers in 15 rural and conflict-affected areas in Ituri province to challenge harmful attitudes which drive gender inequality, and to make violence against women and girls socially unacceptable in their communities.

The faith leaders were trained to speak to people in their communities about the issue and were encouraged to raise the subject in sermons, prayer groups and youth groups.

Engaging with both men and women to challenge their traditional attitudes about gender and violence was key to achieving these results. At the start of the research, more than 50% of men and 43% of women surveyed said there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten. By the end, this proportion almost halved.

As well as women experiencing less domestic violence, the percentage of men reporting that they had carried out domestic violence dropped from 68% to 24%.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

Shockingly, one in three women are beaten or sexually abused during their lifetime, making violence against women and girls one of the most widespread human rights violations in the world.

But this evidence shows it can be stopped, by working with local communities to challenge outdated attitudes about gender and violence.

Every woman and girl deserves the right to live without fear. That's why UK aid is investing in the largest global study of its kind, to provide the evidence needed to help governments and international organisations end this abuse, save lives and build a better future for everyone.

The DRC project was part of the What Works to Prevent Violence Initiative. What Works is a flagship research programme from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), which is investing in projects around the world that seek to understand and address the underlying causes of violence and stop it from occurring.

During humanitarian emergencies, including conflict, violence against women and girls can become more common and severe. It is estimated that one in five displaced or refugee women are subjected to sexual violence – [2014 research from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health](#)

Veena O'Sullivan, Head of Thematic Support Team, Tearfund said:

Even in the most challenging of circumstances, we can never underestimate the potential to achieve change. To end violence against women and girls, we must make the connection between violence and harmful attitudes and norms on gender. These are attitudes held by both men and women, so engaging the whole community is key.

Faith leaders in conflict affected communities in Ituri (Eastern DRC) have done just that as evident in this brief. This project has shown that this change is possible, and it's exciting that Tearfund's model for engaging faith leaders and communities works in tackling violence against women and girls.

These results demonstrate VAWG can be tackled effectively even in conflict-affected settings, and that faith and other local leaders can play an important part in achieving this. The DRC is a vast country affected by years of protracted conflicts which have left millions of people living in unstable circumstances and lacking access to basic necessities.

Religious institutions are, however, often respected, and faith leaders can play an important role in influencing people's views, including on gender and violence.

Notes to editors

What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls

- The UK is a world-leading investor in research on the prevention of violence against women and girls (VAWG).
- What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls is a flagship programme from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), which is investing in projects around the world that seek to understand and address the underlying causes of violence, to stop it from occurring and find interventions that can be taken to scale.
- The DRC project is one of UK aid-funded 15 pilots across 12 countries in Africa and Asia to research ways to prevent VAWG in different contexts – the largest ever study of its kind.
- Psychosocial support was also offered provided for survivors of violence, including access to medical treatment.
- The evidence from these pilots shows that interventions tackling values and behaviours – in homes, schools, and communities – can achieve significant reductions in just a few years.
- UK aid is generating rigorous evidence that can be shared with other governments, donors and civil society organisations to encourage more effective global action to prevent violence.
- [What Works](#) consists of three complementary components: 1. The Global Programme – the Global Programme conducts research, evaluations of existing interventions, and supports innovation in programming through a scheme of dedicated grants from UK aid. 2. Violence Against Women and Girls in Conflict and Humanitarian Crises – this is focused on developing research and evidence to fill gaps in knowledge about what

interventions work to prevent and respond to violence in politically fragile and conflict-affected areas. 3. Economic and Social Costs of Violence Against Women and Girls – this is focused on the estimation of social and economic costs of violence against women and girls, developing the economic case for investing in prevention.

Department for International Development Press Contact: Hannah Zainuddin, h-zainuddin@dfid.gov.uk, 0207 023 0116, 0207 023 0600.

What Works Press Contact: Rebecca Ladbury, rebecca@ladburypr.com, 07941224975

Tearfund

- Tearfund is a Christian relief and development agency and a member of the Disasters' Emergency Committee. Founded in 1968, Tearfund has been working around the world for more than 50 years responding to disasters and helping lift communities out of poverty. For more information about the work of Tearfund, please visit www.tearfund.org.
- For further information or interviews please contact: Sarah Baldwin on 07776211518 or contact the Tearfund Media Team on 0208 943 7792. For out of hours media enquiries please call 07710 573749.

[Speech: PM statement in the House of Commons: 12 March 2019](#)

On a point of order, Mr Speaker,

I profoundly regret the decision that this House has taken tonight.

I continue to believe that by far the best outcome is that the UK leaves the EU in an orderly fashion with a deal, and that the deal we have negotiated is the best and indeed the only deal available.

Mr Speaker, I would like to set out briefly how the Government means to proceed.

Two weeks ago, I made a series of commitments from this despatch box regarding the steps we would take in the event that this House rejected the deal on offer. I stand by those commitments in full.

Therefore, tonight we will table a motion for debate tomorrow to test whether the House supports leaving the European Union without a deal on 29 March.

The Leader of the House will shortly make an emergency business statement confirming the change to tomorrow's business.

This is an issue of grave importance for the future of our country. Just like the referendum, there are strongly held and equally legitimate views on both sides.

For that reason, I can confirm that this will be a free vote on this side of the House.

I have personally struggled with this choice as I am sure many other Honourable Members will. I am passionate about delivering the result of the referendum. But I equally passionately believe that the best way to do that is to leave in an orderly way with a deal and I still believe there is a majority in the House for that course of action. And I am conscious also of my duties as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of the potential damage to the Union that leaving without a deal could do when one part of our country is without devolved governance.

I can therefore confirm that the motion will read:

That this House declines to approve leaving the European Union without a Withdrawal Agreement and a Framework on the Future Relationship on 29 March 2019; and notes that leaving without a deal remains the default in UK and EU law unless this House and the EU ratify an agreement.

I will return to the House to open the debate tomorrow and to take interventions from Honourable Members. And to ensure the House is fully informed in making this historic decision, the Government will tomorrow publish information on essential policies which would need to be put in place if we were to leave without a deal. These will cover our approach to tariffs and the Northern Ireland border, among other matters.

If the House votes to leave without a deal on 29 March, it will be the policy of the Government to implement that decision.

If the House declines to approve leaving without a deal on 29 March, the Government will, following that vote, bring forward a motion on Thursday on whether Parliament wants to seek an extension to Article 50.

If the House votes for an extension, the Government will seek to agree that extension with the EU and bring forward the necessary legislation to change the exit date commensurate with that extension.

But let me be clear. Voting against leaving without a deal and for an extension does not solve the problems we face. The EU will want to know what use we mean to make of such an extension.

This House will have to answer that question. Does it wish to revoke Article

50? Does it want to hold a second referendum? Or does it want to leave with a deal but not this deal?

These are unenviable choices, but thanks to the decision the House has made this evening they must now be faced.

[Press release: UK exports grow faster than top competitors](#)

UK exports continue to increase despite a challenging global outlook, new figures from the ONS reveal. On the whole British exports grew by 2.7% to £636bn.

International trade statistics for 2018 show that the UK is the second fastest growing goods exporter among the top five economies, just behind China. The latest ONS statistics show that UK good exports grew by 3.1% to £10.6bn in the year to January 2019.

Last year was challenging for the global trading environment which felt the impact of trade tensions between the USA and China and a significant slowing of growth in the Chinese economy which has led to reduced imports. The latter has had a significant impact on the Eurozone which is now predicted to grow by 1.6% for 2019.

The International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox MP said:

UK exports continuing to grow underlines the fundamental strength of the British economy despite the uncertain global economic outlook. Goods exports in particular performed well, rising faster than all of the top five largest economies except China in 2018 – yet further evidence of the massive demand for British products.

We are seeing many of our trading partners, particularly in the Eurozone, struggle to cope with external economic pressures, so maintaining an upward trend in this climate reinforces that message that Britain is open for business.

My international economic department is focused on growing exports and boosting the UK economy through our Export Strategy, providing stability as we leave the European Union and putting the UK at the heart of the world's fastest growing markets through an independent trade policy. These priorities are key to Britain's economic

future.

Notes to Editors

- Office for National Statistics: UK Trade, January 2019. Data are on a balance of payments basis.
- ITC Trademap, export of goods data are on a physical movement basis. Top 5 economies are the US, China, Japan, Germany and the UK (IMF, nominal GDP 2018).
- IMF forecasts are from the January 2019 update outlook, unless otherwise specified and is available to view online [here](#).

[News story: Celebrating 30 years of the World Wide Web](#)

The invention of the World Wide Web marks its 30th anniversary today, with Sir Tim Berners-Lee, its creator, and leading figures in Britain's technology sector coming together to celebrate at Downing Street.

Sir Tim, a renowned British computer scientist, first unveiled his vision for what would become the web in 1989 as a way to share information for free and across the world. It forms the basis of the internet we know today.

At Downing Street, Sir Tim was joined by the Digital Secretary Jeremy Wright, co-founding director of the World Wide Web Foundation Rosemary Leith, and representatives from companies such as Google, Wikipedia and Monzo, who have also been at the forefront of changing the way people consume information and purchase online today.

Digital Secretary Jeremy Wright said:

It was great to meet Sir Tim Berners-Lee today and mark 30 years since his invention of the World Wide Web. It remains one of the finest examples of British technological ingenuity.

We are at a pivotal moment in the history of the internet and I am determined to make sure it can be a force for good while supporting the next generation of tech innovators.

From entrepreneurs and innovators to bigger organisations, the digital technology sector is one of the UK's fastest-growing industries, worth £116.5 billion to the economy, boosting productivity and employing more than 2.1 million people.