

gender equality

in the
workplace 2022

foreword.

“ The events of the past few years have encouraged us all to place a greater focus than ever before on what we want from life and our careers. The growing feeling that ‘life is too short’, and that people should prioritise health and happiness above all things has led to not only the Great Resignation, but a serious labour shortage too. Employees around the world are leaving companies to pursue their own passions, make drastic career changes, or to put family first. In fact, many have made the decision to leave employers who failed to support them through the hardships of the pandemic – evidencing the power and importance of employee well-being.

Our **2022 annual employer brand research** survey revealed that around a quarter of Brits intended to, or have changed their job in the first half of 2022, and that 29% would take a backward career step for greater flexibility. And, as our own data will show in this report, those numbers are not set to change any time soon. It’s therefore concerning to see that skills shortages are rife and some sectors are still falling short when it comes to employee well-being and equal opportunities.



Victoria Short
Randstad UK CEO



Regardless of gender identification, it goes without saying that any form of discrimination shouldn’t be tolerated. Unfortunately, it is still evident that some employers have outdated ideas about what work is ‘appropriate’ for women, what work is appropriate for men, and how that work should be rewarded.

In this report, we’ll outline the concerns felt by employees. We will also share what female employees believe could encourage more women to join, or remain, within their respective industries, when a significant proportion are looking to change jobs within the next three months.

While there is significant room for improvement when it comes to gender inequality and employee satisfaction, there has been notable progress – particularly in the construction and technology sectors.

As we are now in a post-pandemic era, the onus is on business leaders to nurture the talent within, create a level playing field between the genders, and to encourage more people into their respective sectors by listening to the needs of the employees already on their payroll. Only then do we stand a chance of plugging the skills gap that is already threatening to overwhelm organisations around the country. ”

about the report.

In May 2022, we surveyed 6,000 workers to gain detailed insight into the status quo of UK workplaces, and to assess the persistence of gender discrimination. We also focused on what employers are doing to support their employees in these sectors, and what workers would like to see on the table this year.



gender inequality

still exists.

From our research, it's clear that gender discrimination is still present in many industries – but it's not only women who are affected. In sectors such as care and education, men remain in the minority, and can be subjected to many of the detrimental barriers a minority gender can experience in the workplace.

When questioned about the factors that stand to have the greatest impact upon their careers, 60% of the women we surveyed cited work-life balance as having a notable impact, compared to a significantly smaller 48% of men. Not far behind work-life balance, a lack of mentorship was cited as a negative career impact by 55% of women, followed by the absence of female role models (41%), and the possibility of sexual harassment within the workplace (32%).

72%

of women have encountered inappropriate behaviour from male colleagues

While just over a quarter of female workers report never having experienced any form of gender discrimination in the workplace, 72% have either encountered inappropriate behaviour from male colleagues, or have witnessed comments or inappropriate behaviour. Just 18% of women across all industries report never having experienced gender discrimination.

When it comes to career advancement, 7% of women across all industries report having been passed over for promotion due to perceived gender discrimination, while just under one in ten say they have been offered a less important role because of their gender. It doesn't come as a surprise that when looking at the same data filtered by male only responses, the percentages are lower.

Some of the discrimination comments specifically cited by the women in our survey include:

- ✗ men taking over tasks because they believed themselves to be **more suitable**
- ✗ a male counterpart receiving a greater pay rise despite a **worse performing quarter**
- ✗ **inappropriate** nicknames
- ✗ being asked to meet potential male clients to **increase the likelihood** of winning business
- ✗ being side-lined in favour of a '**boys' club culture**' when major decisions were being made
- ✗ having **negative comments** passed off as banter
- ✗ having ideas and contributions **overlooked** then attributed to male colleagues
- ✗ being asked to perform tasks that **fell under the remit of male juniors**
- ✗ **not being offered** work due to pregnancy
- ✗ direct discrimination from a manager who said "**women shouldn't work in construction**"

aside from being able to do their jobs without fear of harassment or discrimination, what do women want?



Around **one in five** of our female respondents stated that flexible working hours would encourage more women to join their industry.

And 15% said that the lack of flexible working was a cause of women leaving their industry. Validating this claim, [Randstad's 2022 employer brand research report \(REBR\)](#) – a representative survey of around 10,000 UK working adults – revealed that for the second year in a row, work-life balance is of greater importance than salary or any other consideration, when choosing a new job.

96%

of men and women surveyed said that having a female manager would either improve their working day, or would maintain it at the same level (a one percentage point increase on our 2021 survey findings).

With around a third (32%) of employees looking to change jobs in the next three months and, a continuation of skills shortages in many industries, the power is now in the hands of candidates. Employers who are looking to attract top talent and expertise need to be more in tune with the needs of the whole workforce and active in making the necessary changes to improve the well-being of their existing employees.

68% not looking to change jobs in the next three months

32% looking to change jobs in the next three months

a call for change.

Around three-quarters (73%) of the women surveyed stated that employers in their industry were not doing enough to support female employees during the menopause. And the majority of women respondents did not believe that after having a baby, they could return to work in a senior role on a part-time basis. It's time for employers to fully recognise that the UK workplace is out of step with the broad needs and expectations of half of its potential workforce, and existing female employees. Employers need to get on board if they hope to get the very best out of their teams.

73%

of women say that employers in their industry are not doing enough to support female employees at work during the menopause



tips to improve

workplace
equality.

Throughout this report, we've seen repeated themes in the responses state the same / similar fundamental needs:

- greater work-life balance help with childcare costs more manageable working hours perceived parity of pay
- equal opportunities for career progression support during menopause
- more female role models and mentors

We see the gender imbalance remains embedded in most areas, requiring urgent attention if employers want to plug their skills' gaps, improve performance and set themselves up as an employer of choice.

We know that increasing diversity and inclusion within an organisation is more commonly recognised as being of strategic importance for future success and innovation. And we know that employees are frequently found to be happier and more engaged in diverse and inclusive workplaces; all of which leads to increased performance, improved profits, and lower levels of attrition.

how can employers improve diversity and inclusion?

It's important to remember that when embedding inclusive practices into your workplace, you must be mindful of the particular needs of the different groups of people who make up your workforce. For example, the majority of workers across all of the sectors that we surveyed reported that not enough was being done by their employer to support women going through the menopause. It was also clear that the idea of returning to a senior position in a part-time capacity after having a baby was not seen as a viable option in some cases, and employers could be costing themselves a significant range of talent, skill and experience by failing to lead mindfully.

But diversity isn't about gender alone. The following steps can help you to improve D&I in your organisation overall.

ensure your recruitment process is inclusive:

- 1. Reword job ads.** Removing unconscious bias from job adverts and job descriptions can help to attract a more even split between genders. Research suggests that men are more likely to apply for roles where they have less than 60% of the required skills; this is in contrast to women who only apply if their skills are 80% aligned. A note in your job ad about the opportunity for training and development could help to alleviate concerns around not fulfilling your wish-list in its entirety. Adding in a diversity and inclusion statement also allows you to showcase your commitment. For example, you may want to include detail on flexible working styles, parental leave and location options to cater for reasonable adjustments.
- 2. Adopt blind applications.** What's the best way to remove unconscious bias from the hiring process? Introduce 'blind' applications! Removing names, gender, age, educational institution and disabilities allows for more objective decision-making.
- 3. Diversify your interview panel.** Minority groups should be represented at interviews, wherever possible, and interviewers should be trained to ask the same questions of every candidate to prevent unconscious bias from creeping in.
- 4. Consider all disabilities.** If a candidate arrived for an interview in a wheelchair, you wouldn't expect them to climb a flight of stairs. But have you considered how accessible and inclusive your online assessments are? From dyslexia to visual impairment, disabilities of all kinds can impact how people access your means of assessment.
- 5. Expand your reach.** Instead of only advertising job roles in major publications, the UK boasts a number of specialist publications, along with numerous websites aimed at minority groups. This is a great way to tap into a more expansive array of talent pools.

ensure you are working towards fostering an inclusive culture:

- 6. Assess your culture.** In order to foster inclusion in a workplace, there must be a sense of psychological safety, where people feel safe and comfortable to be their true selves. The results of our survey show some industries persist in maintaining a male-dominated culture, which is not conducive to diversity and inclusion. Carefully examine your company culture – this should include gathering anonymous feedback to identify any areas for improvement. Then act on your findings. Workplace behaviours should be examined. If there isn't already a zero-tolerance approach for bullying and harassment in place, it should be implemented immediately. This should be a real priority given the number of women who listed the possibility of sexual harassment as a roadblock to their careers.



7. Provide role models, mentors and Employee Network Groups. A lack of female role models, along with the absence of mentors within the workplace, was cited by women as having a negative impact on their career progression. Promoting women into senior leadership roles can work to inspire other women in your workforce; while the provision of mentors can address areas of concern and low confidence. Employee Network Groups also provide a safe space for conversations and shared experiences, allowing women to network and come together on common topics. Employee Network Groups have proven to promote and create psychological safety and a sense of belonging. It's important, however, to not exclude men or anyone that doesn't hold the characteristic of the network group, as these conversations should be open and inclusive of all.

8. Celebrate diverse cultures. Understanding other cultures and their unique challenges is essential in any diverse organisation. Celebrating festivals from within every culture offers a great opportunity for education – as does the formation of employee forums and mentoring programs. This can increase feelings of belonging, and nurture understanding in your teams.

ensure inclusion is weaved into the employee lifecycle:

9. Promote the benefits of diversity and inclusion. Achieving company-wide buy-in for any initiative is going to help you deliver results. Through seminars, workshops and internal communications, you can raise awareness of the benefits of a diverse workforce, and help your employees to make small adjustments to better accommodate everyone's differences.

10. Help with childcare costs. Women across the construction, education, technology and healthcare sectors listed high childcare costs as having an impact on their careers, as well as being a factor in why returning to a senior position part-time felt unachievable. If employers helped to shoulder the burden of childcare costs, working mothers could return to the workplace in a way that best suited them.

11. Showcase diversity through case studies. It's all well and good saying you're inclusive, but prospective employees want to see it evidenced. Including a diverse range of case studies on your website and careers page – from recent graduates to members of the senior management team – can help to solidify your position as an inclusive employer.

12. Consider job coaches. This might be a relatively new concept, but bringing in job coaches can help employers, line managers, and HR teams to effectively support workers who may struggle with anything from noise and light sensitivity to social interactions. Getting expert advice on supporting workers with autism or sensory challenges will help to reduce talent lost through stress.

there's no room for gender imbalance in a modern, talent-short job market.

Research from Korn Ferry on the Future of Work found that by 2030, the UK can expect a talent deficit of three million workers. Employers from all industries, sizes and sectors are already reporting major challenges in attracting and retaining the workers they need – particularly since the dawn of the Great Resignation, and the challenges of the pandemic throwing people's priorities into sharper focus.

A global health scare, multiple lockdowns, mass isolation, and severe economic uncertainty has led to great swathes of employees realigning their focus and reassessing what matters to them. For the most part – as the results of our survey have overwhelmingly shown – that's a far healthier balance between life and work.

The view of today's workforce is that they don't want to 'live to work' like previous generations. They simply want to live, and they want work to be a positive and complimentary part of that. A high salary is no longer enough to excuse excessively long hours and too much time spent away from home.

Today's workforce wants flexible working options, control over their hours, a concerted effort from employers to reduce stress, and the level of care that all humans deserve to be shown from managers and colleagues alike.

Women want more training opportunities and career progression platforms from their employers: that has been shown again and again in the results of our survey, across every sector. Leaders that encourage their female employees to grow in confidence, build their skills, and push for career advancement will benefit from happy, engaged, more productive employees. Women, like their male colleagues, simply want to realise their potential.

Today's workforce doesn't want to be passed over for promotion, projects, or career progression because of their gender; women don't want to receive less pay, or to be on the receiving end of inappropriate behaviour, and they certainly don't want to feel as though their value in the workplace has plummeted because they've had a baby, or they're experiencing the menopause.

Today's employers need to focus on expanding their reach, tapping into diverse talent pools and reinvigorating hiring processes. They need to support the unique needs of their workforce, and ultimately eliminate any remnants of discriminatory culture that may remain – and that have no part in a modern workplace.

