Report

GENDER EQUALITY ROUTE MAP

8 steps to gender equality for employers

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

A year into COVID-19 and the world continues to experience great disruption. Our understanding of the impact of the pandemic on different groups is increasing everyday but one thing has shone through clearly from early on: women are experiencing this crisis in unique and varied ways.

While there had been some positive progress around gender equality at work pre-pandemic (a record number of women in paid work for example, and a slow, gradual shift towards closing the gender pay gap), the overall picture as COVID-19 emerged remained one of inequality.

Women still typically earn less,[1] are less likely to hold senior positions,[2] more likely to work in jobs that are less secure or stable and face a much greater risk of gender-based harassment and discrimination at work.

These 'imbalances' are particularly acute for some demographics; for example, Black women face a larger pay gap than White women; Black, Asian and ethnic minority women are twice as likely as White women to work in insecure jobs.

> **Many of the changes that have come about as the world continues to adapt to COVID-19 have offered up new opportunities to accelerate progress**

This not only undermines women's ability to prosper – at work and at home – it means business is not effectively accessing the talents and experiences women, who comprise just over half the population, have to offer.

Many of the changes that have come about as the world continues to adapt to COVID-19 have intensified these divisions; others have offered up new opportunities to accelerate progress.

Building a more gender equal future

As we continue to adapt to a still-changing environment, this '*Route map to a more gender equal future*' outlines the approach businesses should take to protect and, where possible, accelerate gender equality at work. We are calling on all employers to follow these recommendations to build back responsibly, reflecting tactics we know work in 'normal times' updated to a new context of great risk; but also great opportunity. This builds on the recommendations showcased in '*Time to Fix Up*': our report urging business to 'not let the clock turn back for women.'

This '*Route map to a more gender equal future*' collates the expertise and insight gained over years of campaigning and advising around gender equality at work, in particular:

• New analysis of a decade of The Times Top 50 Employers for Women awards – the largest and most comprehensive assessment of UK employers' approach to championing gender equality – in particular, trend data and correlations between different areas of focus.

- Insight from our research and campaigns, including our ongoing *Everyday Inclusion* campaign[i] considering how to create working cultures where everyone feels included, our 2019 *Equal Lives: Parenthood and Caring in the Workplace*, including polling of some 10,000 employees and our 2016 *Project 28–40* which surveyed some 23,000 women about their aspirations and experiences at work.

- The many years of experience we have in offering advisory, strategic guidance and thought leadership to some of the UK's largest employers via our Gender Champions programme and Gender Membership programme. This includes helping organisations take a best-practice approach to ensuring equal opportunity for women — from analysing pay gaps to ensuring more women are recruited into senior positions.

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i This includes academic analysis of the tactics different employers have pursued as outlined in our '*Everyday Inclusion: What Works*' report produced with the Global Institute of Women's Leadership at Kings College, London

BITC's 'Route map to a more gender equal future' aims to support businesses and other employers wanting to preserve and accelerate progress towards a more gender equal future

A note on remit and language:

- This document focuses on the actions employers can take to champion gender equality at work; it does not address the public policy measures government and others can deploy nor does it consider the role businesses can play in championing gender equality outside of their own immediate sphere.

- Throughout this document we use the term women, we take this to include all people who self-identify as women and engage with their current or prospective employers as such; when we use the term gender equality we take this to mean equality for all genders and those who do not identify as a gender, i.e. non gender-conforming.

8 STEPS TO A MORE GENDER EQUAL FUTURE AT WORK

1

MAKE GENDER EQUALITY A BUSINESS PRIORITY

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TAKE THE BIAS OUT OF RECRUITMENT

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COMMIT TO AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE, FOR EVERYONE

THE 8 STEPS IN SUMMARY

1 Make gender equality a business priority – without this commitment, we risk going backwards

To truly protect and accelerate change, diversity & inclusion (D&I) initiatives must be integrated across an organisation: businesses must ensure the whole company from top to bottom understands the importance of gender equality and how they can champion it.

Keeping a focus on gender equality at this time means ensuring women are not disproportionately impacted by business changes because of COVID-19. More generally, organisations should consider linking senior leaders' pay to organisational performance on inclusion objectives.

2 Take an approach that recognises women have different needs and experiences

Women are not one homogenous group. The past year has highlighted anew the role women's identities beyond gender – their ethnicity, caring status and more – play in shaping their experiences at work and elsewhere. Ensure senior leaders and others have the opportunity to actively listen to colleagues' different experiences (e.g. via listening circles) and develop plans that reflect the diversity of women's experiences – one size doesn't fit all.

3 Help everybody care – 'de-gender' caring policies

We won't have equality at work until we have more equality in the home; but too many businesses offer very different support depending on the gender of the carer, especially when it comes to parents. The time has come for all businesses to ensure their policies support everybody to care – including consideration of more equal parental leave policies.

4 Embrace flexible working – ask why not, not why

COVID-19 has changed attitudes to remote working and wider expectations about how work is done. Businesses should seize the opportunity of hybrid working to expand the pool of jobs available to women and other groups that can face barriers to entering and progressing in the workforce but should be mindful of hidden pitfalls, e.g. the development of a two-tier workforce. A mindful shift to a model where flexibility is the default rather than the exception could turbo-charge the drive for gender equality at work.

5
Be transparent about how you set pay and where you have pay gaps

Year on year, Business in the Community (BITC) analysis finds businesses struggle with developing fair, transparent approaches to pay and reward, making it harder to spot and address unequal pay.

A more transparent approach will help close the gender pay gap faster. Publish your gender and ethnicity pay gaps, identify root causes, e.g. a lack of women in senior positions, and share your plans to address them.

6
Take the bias out of recruitment

Decisions around job design, advertising and hiring are extremely vulnerable to gender bias, but simple steps like sense-checking the language you use, being up-front about salary levels, and ensuring you reach a diverse pool of applicants can make a big difference. With many more women forced out of the workplace, now is the time to double-down on efforts to ensure they can access and progress in jobs in different fields, at all levels.

7
Collect and apply a gender lens to a wide range of data

Use data to gain insight into the needs and experiences of different employees across the employee lifecycle. Go beyond numeric data to understand people's lived experiences, e.g. by inviting employee networks to share their take. 'Equality impact assess' any plans to restructure or change working patterns, mapping how changes will impact different demographics and avoiding disproportionate impacts on particular groups including women.

8
Commit to an inclusive culture for everyone – with zero tolerance for poor behaviours

A working culture where everyone feels included – like they belong, have a voice, are valued and can be their true selves every day – is core to ensuring everyone can flourish. However, too many employees, women in particular, report bullying, harassment and discrimination, from low-level non-inclusive behaviors to open prejudice. This is bad for wellbeing, retention, productivity and more. Leaders must commit to fostering truly inclusive working cultures, stamping out poor behaviours, and measuring progress around achieving this goal.

THE 8 STEPS IN DEPTH

1. MAKE GENDER EQUALITY A BUSINESS PRIORITY – WITHOUT THIS COMMITMENT, WE RISK GOING BACKWARDS

While many companies have gender targets and action plans, considering them on a par with other business objectives, and seeking to mainstream them across an organisation, is less common.

Treating gender equality aspirations as you would any other core business objective – establishing clear goals, KPIs and a monitoring framework; ensuring appropriate resourcing to meet them; taking an integrated, organisation-wide approach and, crucially, ensuring senior leadership oversight and accountability delivers better results. Year on year we see that those *Times Top 50* applicants who have made gender equality a strategic priority perform, on average, better across all the other areas assessed.[3]

One way of aligning this goal with other business priorities is to tie pay and promotion of senior leaders to performance around gender equality goals, both numerical targets and how they are perceived by colleagues to behave in respect of this objective, e.g. via 360° feedback reviews.

This approach drives progress while also sending a clear signal across an organisation of the importance a business attaches to equality; a senior, active executive sponsor for gender can also play a powerful role.

Mainstreaming your efforts in this way will also mean progress is less likely to get marginalised during times of crisis; BITC is asking all responsible businesses to commit to ensuring women are not disproportionately affected by

changes made as a result of COVID-19 and that requires senior leaders to apply a gender equality lens to decisions.

Read about how Eversheds Sutherland has aligned Diversity & Inclusion into its core business strategy.

(a) Enlist senior leaders as gender equality champions

To support your plans, senior leaders' championing gender equality ambitions as decision makers and in their wider role shaping culture, is vital.

Investing in high quality training and support helps ensure top teams understand how gender inequality can manifest, how they can challenge it and why it matters. BITC's research has identified the key characteristics of effective diversity training and wider inclusion efforts, including taking an active approach (rather than asking attendees to passively absorb data, they need to be engaged, ideally working through a task together in some way) and creating contact between members of diverse social groups. This can reduce prejudice by increasing knowledge about people who are different from oneself and so improve empathy and perspective-taking. Training should also be positive (rather than coercive) and long-term (rather than one off).[4]

Many policies and approaches that support gender equality at work, whether designed with this goal front of mind or not (e.g. flexible working), can suffer from stigma, with worries about impact on career progression and colleagues' attitudes undermining take-up. For example, BITC research has found 'concerns about how superiors would view them' is a barrier to greater male take-up of shared parental leave.[5]

Leaders' role modelling use of such policies, for themselves and in their wider teams, is a powerful way to address this. BITC research has found storytelling with real life examples is more effective at influencing colleagues' attitudes and fostering empathy than data-led narratives.[6]

Read how Sodexo empowers its senior managers to champion diversity, inclusion and gender balance.

(b) Invest in line managers' understanding of your approach

Research into working cultures regularly finds that line managers are one of the biggest determinants of individual employees' experiences[7] and that their attitude and approach towards HR policies such as flexible working can play a powerful role in determining take up.[8] The events of the past year (e.g. lockdowns leading to widespread changes to working patterns) means this group have become even more important. Businesses have told us they think line managers are acting as a 'blue light' service for employees coping with increased anxiety.

BITC's *Project 28–40* highlighted the powerful roles this group can play as 'talent managers' – with many women citing a desire for better management of their talent and stronger support for their career development;[9] similarly, our *Equal Lives* research found two in three men with caring responsibilities feel that they would be more likely to take up family friendly policies if they had the support of their line manager.[10]

As with senior leaders, organisations should invest in high quality training and support, making sure this group is equipped to deliver the organisations' gender equality strategy and championing the roll out of key policies and approaches – be it creating truly inclusive working cultures through embracing a zero-tolerance approach to poor behaviour, or promoting flexible working as an option for everyone in 121s.

Read how line managers at Thames Water are tasked with creating an inclusive and positive environment that drives performance, engagement and development.

Year on year we see that those Times Top 50 applicants who have made gender equality a strategic priority perform, on average, better across all the other areas assessed

2. TAKE AN APPROACH THAT RECOGNISES WOMEN HAVE DIFFERENT NEEDS AND EXPERIENCES

If efforts to champion gender equality do not recognise women's many different identities, they are likely to address only the issues affecting the biggest or most visible group of women, and to do so in a way that considers only one facet of women's multiple and complex identities.

The past year has exposed the extent to which women's ethnicity, life stage, social background, sexual orientation and more can dramatically impact on their life experiences at work and elsewhere.

- Polling has found Black, Asian and ethnic minority women in the UK are suffering greater financial and psychological consequences from the coronavirus pandemic than their White counterparts,[11] this group is also overrepresented in those working in front line, high risk roles during COVID-19.[12]

- A quarter of pregnant women reported experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment at work during the coronavirus outbreak, including being singled out for redundancy or furlough.[13]

- Research in summer 2020 found mothers were more likely to have quit or lost their jobs, or to have been furloughed, since the start of the lockdown than fathers; and those that were still working had less uninterrupted time to do paid work than fathers.[14]

- Single parents were more likely to have been furloughed compared to couple parents and were also twice as likely to have poor mental health, compared with other family types, immediately before and in the early stages of the crisis.[15]

- A global surge in domestic abuse has been reported during the coronavirus pandemic; there is also evidence that cases are escalating more quickly to become complex and serious, with higher levels of physical violence and coercive control. It can affect anyone, but the vast majority of domestic abuse is experienced by women and perpetrated by men.[16]

Addressing historic inequalities faced by different groups of women, and the way in which COVID-19 has exacerbated these, demands an intersectional approach.

Research has found that acknowledging and embracing differences, rather than pursuing an 'identity blind' approach can be more effective in ensuring people from all walks of life flourish at work.[17] This approach should inform diversity and inclusion programmes across the board. Specific tactics employers have shared with us include, listen, profile and take a tailored approach:

Listen – make sure you know about different groups' experiences and needs:

- Ensure data analysis (around for example pulse surveys, recruitment journeys) is intersectional, mapping across different identities to ensure businesses see a rounded picture, e.g. the gender ethnicity pay gap – not just the ethnicity *or* gender pay gap.

- Develop employee engagement or representative groups that can ensure different needs and experiences are heard by senior leadership and provide peer support. This often includes executive sponsors who can act as a key 'link point.'

- Conduct listening or focus group sessions with groups whose voices you need to hear from, e.g. if they are part of a small minority at work, if they are a group that you have a high 'turnover' around, e.g. new mothers.

- Consider reverse mentoring schemes to ensure senior leaders have dialogue with people who are different from those in their own social or professional circle.

Profile – make sure a range of voices and experiences are visible:

- Showcase senior leaders who have diverse life experiences and/or come from under-represented groups.

- Ensure wider brand activity – from vacancy adverts to annual reports to internal staff memos – is diverse in its imagery, tone and language.

- Host speakers from a wide range of groups and walks of life. BITC research has found that storytelling is a more effective way of championing diversity and inclusion than more data-led narratives.

Take a tailored approach:

- Devise targeted programmes to support different groups of women, for example those experiencing menopause, returning to work after parental leave or those where you face the biggest representation gap.

- Review policies to ensure they are inclusive and accessible to all, ideally in conjunction with key networks, e.g. assessing whether parental leave policies are LGBTQ+ inclusive.

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3. HELP EVERYBODY CARE – 'DE-GENDER' CARING POLICIES

Women in the UK still tend to do the bulk of caring, for children and elderly relatives; combining these responsibilities with paid work can be difficult and is one of the main reasons why women are more likely to look for work close to home[18] (the 'gender commuting gap' where women in mixed sex households are much more likely to find work close to home than men[19]), with flexible or reduced hours. This imbalance of labour in the home is a key driver of women's lower rates of pay, affecting the kind of sectors and roles they can work in, their ability to progress in their careers, and meaning many can find themselves restricted to lower-paid part-time work.

COVID-19 has highlighted this: successive lockdowns with accompanying school closures have seen women act as 'shock absorbers' for the additional caring families need to provide, impacting on their ability to attain and keep jobs.[20]

While the lion's share might still rest on women's shoulders, most people – of all genders – don't believe that should be the case; in fact, the majority of men agree they should be as involved in all aspects of childcare as women. At the same time, over nine in ten men believe it is equally acceptable for both women and men to take time out from employment in order to care for their family.[21] Moreover, there are signs that many men – after a year when many have been more involved at home than previously – will want to retain that increased engagement once things 'return to normal'.[22]

Businesses can do much to design jobs that enable women to combine careers with caring, but they must also ensure their policies aimed at parents and others with caring responsibilities enable people *of all genders* to share care, rather than reinforcing the idea that caring is for women.

Having tracked what works, BITC recommends businesses:

- Offer enhanced parental leave, going beyond statutory provision where possible; e.g. topping up minimum rates of pay *for all genders* taking parental leave.

- Promote these policies to all genders, where possible drafting in senior leaders particularly men, to explain or role model the offer; seeking to allay fears that taking time out impacts on career progression.[23]

- Ensure other policies and approaches known to support work-life balance, e.g. a focus on output more than when and how work is delivered, a commitment to flexible working are embedded at work – and promoted to people of all genders.

- Address known risk points around combining paid work and caring, e.g. the point of return, considering for example staggered returns, buddy arrangements and 'return to work' mentoring.

Taking this approach will not only support people of all genders with caring responsibilities in the here and now, it will chip away at the stigma working mothers can face when employers perceive them as less committed or higher risk than counterparts who don't have caring responsibilities, sometimes called 'the motherhood penalty'.[24] Companies that have 'equalized' parental leave have also told us of a wider impact on employee wellbeing and commitment, and in turn reduced costs around recruitment as, for example, new parents are less likely to leave.

Aviva introduced its equal parental leave policy four years ago with great success. Find out how they did it and the benefits to the business.

4. EMBRACE FLEXIBLE WORKING – ASK WHY NOT, NOT WHY

Flexible or agile working has long been understood as a key enabler of women's professional progression, helping them secure and retain positions and progress in their career while managing other responsibilities. But most jobs continue to be offered on a rigid basis with fixed hours and location expectations, blocking women's access to and ability to progress within some organisations and sectors; in turn driving the gender pay gap. Moreover, even where there are flexible patterns available, limited understanding of how the policy works and worries about stigma can mean low take-up and a noticeable dearth of men working flexibly.[25]

With 'location-agnostic' approaches to recruitment emerging and changed attitudes[26] to flexible working more generally, businesses should seize the moment to embrace a more dynamic, modern approach to where, when and how work is done. This could dramatically expand the pool of talent employers can access and open-up a raft of new roles to women and others who may have been shut out of certain jobs or industries because of fixed ideas around how work is done. Businesses should:

- Adopt a flexible by default approach, assuming roles can be done at least in part flexibly rather than expecting employees to make the case – this can be understood as a 'why not, not why' approach.

- Ensure wider culture and systems support this approach, investing in appropriate technology, training and guidance. Businesses have told us, for example, that they have introduced guidance requiring meetings to be 'all remote' or all 'in person' rather than mixed.

- Be mindful of any divisions that could emerge – between those working mainly at home, those on site or in the office, and the challenges of leading teams with mixed patterns.

- Address the risk of stigma through profiling senior leaders working flexibly, particularly men adjusting their working patterns.

- Promote this approach in all recruitment – internally and externally. Research has found women are more likely to apply for senior roles if they are advertised as flexible.[27]

- Pay attention to the kinds of flexible working you offer. Research has found that of all the different variations of flexible working, increased employee control over the scheduling of working hours can be associated with an increased female employment rate.[28]

Read more about how Fujitsu have embraced flexible and agile working.

5. BE TRANSPARENT ABOUT HOW YOU SET PAY AND WHERE YOU HAVE PAY GAPS

Employer approaches towards setting salaries – how numbers are arrived at, the process around reviews (and so promotions and bonus pay) and the level of transparency involved – is a consistently poor scorer in the 13 separate areas BITC assesses in the *Times Top 50 Employers for Women*; coming bottom for the last three years.[29]

Conversely, when asked an open-ended question about what they would like their organisation to introduce to improve career development opportunities, the 23,000 women we surveyed for *Project 28–40* named fair and transparent promotion and appraisal processes as top of the list.

Not only is there a problem; it is a problem women want addressed. BITC recommends that pay and reward frameworks, including approaches towards performance reviews, should be designed to minimise the risk of gender bias. This can creep in through: valuing roles requiring similar skills differently because they are considered to be women's or men's jobs;[30] treating people with different working patterns differently (perceiving part-time workers as less committed for example);[31] gendered ideas around what 'good looks like', particularly with regard to leadership.[32] Discreet or confidential approaches to setting pay, for example a lack of clarity around bonus payment criteria, can also mean pay inequality is harder to spot or challenge.[33]

Tactics to minimise this can include:

- Developing a clear salary framework and using salary bandings if possible. This can help provide consistency and fairness.

- Ensuring decision-maker bias is mitigated, e.g. training managers in unconscious bias, particularly ahead of any recruitment or salary reviews.

- Ensuring wider oversight of 'localised' choices, e.g. an organisation-wide dashboard tracking pay rises and promotions by gender.

- Regular gender/equal pay audits, including consideration of whether roles of similar skill are being paid differently and assessing any hourly discrepancy between the salaries paid to part-time and full-time workers.

- Defaulting to transparency around pay wherever possible, for example sharing pay package details while recruiting, including information on pay ratios, gender pay gaps, ethnicity pay gaps, internally and where possible externally.

Not only should businesses endeavour to take a fair and transparent approach to salary setting, but time should be given over to explaining how it works. Colleagues' perceptions of policies and processes, in particular whether they are 'fair and just' have been proven to affect how inclusive an organisation they consider their employer to be, impacting on their commitment.[34]

Find out how Shell achieved equal pay across its global operations.

6. TAKE THE BIAS OUT OF RECRUITMENT

Decisions around job design, marketing of opportunities and hiring criteria are extremely vulnerable to gender bias, significantly shaping who applies and gets jobs in different sectors, at different levels, and with different pay and reward packages. To address this:

- Pay attention to how you *design roles*, e.g. consider working to a 'flexible by default' model where you can.[35]

- Ensure your approach to *advertising* vacancies addresses the way in which different genders seek work and negotiate salary — showcasing an explicit commitment to flexible working, making publicly accessible your policies around parental leave; being transparent about salary, e.g. including bandings and avoiding asking about salary history to avoid disadvantaging women already at risk of low pay.

- Consider whether the language you use is less accessible to some genders.[36,37]

- Avoid all male recruitment panels and consider *upskilling interviewers* on the risks of unconscious bias.

Businesses should seize the opportunity of changed attitudes around flexible working, notably remote working, to revise their approach to recruitment. Employers can significantly expand the pool of talent they draw from now that many roles are, in effect, less restricted. Businesses should also harness the power they have to ensure women work in more diverse roles and sectors; 'occupational segregation', where women cluster in certain fields, is one of the reasons that the COVID-19 pandemic has had such a skewed effect.[38]

These lessons apply to both external and internal recruitment processes.

Read how Capgemini capitalizes on its recruitment process to achieve its gender equality goals.

(a) Take a targeted approach to ensuring women get promoted to the top table

Ensuring greater numbers of women in senior positions in organisations from all sectors, of all sizes, remains an elusive goal. This impacts on business bottom lines (more diverse boards, for example, are proven to impact on profitability[39]), but also wider culture and expectations.

Many of the things we know work to support gender diverse recruitment generally apply here. In addition, organisations should consider setting clear and public targets around women's representation in senior management and board positions, identifying talent 'pipelines' that will deliver against these and actively seeking gender balance in this pool — for example, requiring that executive search firms provide balanced shortlists. Recent evidence has emerged around the power of ensuring that senior roles are available on a flexible basis in encouraging women to apply for these jobs.[40]

Read about how Allen & Overy progress female talent within their business.

7. COLLECT AND APPLY A GENDER LENS TO A WIDE RANGE OF DATA

Only with insight into the needs and experiences of different genders and the success (and failures) of initiatives aimed at promoting equality, can businesses develop tailored and effective action plans.

Comprehensive data collection and analysis can help employers pinpoint issues (e.g. a dearth of women in more senior roles), identify drivers (e.g. lack of applications from women in middle management) and take steps to address them (e.g. interviewing this cohort to understand why they might not be applying and taking action to amend this). This 'collect, act, analyse' approach is also crucial in understanding the impact of any changed policies or approaches.[41]

Business should collect *and apply a gender lens* to both numerical and 'lived experience' data, spanning the full employee life cycle around recruitment, onboarding, development, retention and separation, i.e. the point at which an employee leaves an organisation.

Example data to collect and cut by gender includes: candidate short lists and appointments (e.g. the gender split of middle managers applying for more senior roles); working practices (e.g. rates of flexible working); retention (e.g. rates of return after parental leave) and general employee experience (e.g. incidents of bullying and harassment). Ensure you also take an intersectional approach, looking for example to understand the potentially different experiences of women from diverse ethnic groups. Consider also what data can tell you about long-term trends.

Frequent gender pay audits, identifying pay gaps, considering drivers, and developing responsive action plans, are key.

The limitations of 'pulse surveys' in giving a rounded picture of employee experience, particularly when many firms are grappling with newly disparate teams means businesses should invest in 'listening' opportunities where individuals and groups share more in the way of lived experience, e.g. feedback from employee networks, dedicated 'listening circles.'

Data insight is especially important during times of crisis, when businesses may need to make swift and significant changes to business-as-usual plans. Employers should conduct 'equality impact assessments', sometimes called 'inclusion impact assessments' where the impact of a proposal is mapped to different demographics at work to surface what can be unintended, sometimes negative, consequences of a plan, especially when viewed against organisation-wide D&I metrics.

As many businesses revise working pattern policies, considering for example, a hybrid model, or develop cost-saving measures, e.g. a restructure, they need to have a clear and comprehensive picture of who will be affected and how it is intensified. For example, there are early indications that while many women welcome increased support for flexible working, there may be a 'gender gap' in who chooses to return to the office.[42] BITC is calling on all businesses to commit to ensuring women are not disproportionately negatively affected by changes brought about by COVID-19.

Find out how KPMG collects, monitors and applies its Inclusion, Diversity and Social Equality data.

8. COMMIT TO AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE FOR EVERYONE – WITH ZERO TOLERANCE FOR POOR BEHAVIOURS

While many organisations aspire to inclusive working cultures, where everyone feels they belong, have a voice, are valued and can be their true selves, BITC research consistently finds a misalignment between employers' aspirations and employees' experiences. Areas of concern include:

- Experiences of bullying and harassment (shockingly, more than half of female respondents to our *Project 28–40* research said they experienced some form of bullying or harassment in their workplace in the previous three years; these levels increase for Black, Asian and ethnic minority women).

- High rates of low level 'non-inclusive behaviours'[43] (nearly half of the workers we surveyed for our *Everyday Inclusion* work reported experiencing some kind of low level non-inclusive behaviour, including unwanted comments and jokes. Rates were significantly higher for women, younger workers, and Black, Asian and ethnic minority staff).

- Poor attitudes towards flexible working and working mothers (almost half of women respondents in *Project 28–40* agreed with the statement: 'in my experience people who work flexibly are resented by their colleagues').

Workers' experiences during COVID-19 are still being understood but early research has warned that certain phenomena over the last year could amplify these non-inclusive dynamics – for example, the rapid shift to remote working for many could see teams retreat to engaging only with those 'they know' at work;[44] or increased awareness of many women's dual role as employees and mothers could intensify bias towards mothers.[45] Meanwhile, survey data has also suggested that for many working women, COVID-19 has seen 'an upsurge in online sexual harassment as harassers take advantage of online work platforms'.[46]

Cultural problems like this will not only undermine many of the policies recommended above, they also impact on wider wellbeing, performance and retention.

BITC recommends:

- Senior leaders should commit to inclusive working cultures, explicitly labelling a zero-tolerance approach towards poor behaviour and a desire to lead inclusively.

- Measure progress around this goal, assessing feedback from pulse surveys and other data sources around employee experiences, e.g. 360° reviews.

- Dial up efforts to listen and understand employee experiences – going beyond pulse surveys and considering focus groups, listening circles or similar and ensuring access to anonymous whistle-blowing facilities.

- Equip colleagues to do better, ensuring high quality and timely training and support is available and, where appropriate, mandatory.

Read about how EY cultivated a sense of belonging and inclusion within their organisation.

REFERENCES

Responsible Restructures Toolkit

Gender Pay Gap Reporting Toolkit 1-5:

- Calculating your Gender Pay Gap

- Analysing your Gender Pay Gap

- Communicating your Gender Pay Gap

- Closing your Gender Pay Gap: Attraction and Recruitment

- Closing your Gender Pay Gap: Retention and Progression

Equal Lives: Parenthood and Caring in the Workplace report

Doing Better: The Times Top 50 Employers for Women Insights report 2020

What works: Enabling Inclusive Cultures report

Workforce Data Equality Guide

Tackling Racial Harassment & Bullying Toolkit

BITC Advisory Services

Building a Responsible Business Strategy workshop

Bystander Intervention training

Everyday Advocate and Allyship

Exploring Inclusive Leadership

Health and Wellbeing for Line Managers training

Managing Multigenerational Teams training

Navigating Pay Gap Reporting workshop

Unconscious Bias training

BITC Advisory available on a consultancy basis

D&I Strategy Creation or Review

Design and Delivery of Development Programmes Such as Mentoring and Reverse Mentoring

Diagnosing Your Culture and Recommendations for Action

Listening Circles

Policy Review and Recommendations

Review of Recruitment Process and Recommendations

Support with Increasing Data Declaration Rates

1-2-1 Senior Exec and Sponsor Coaching

END NOTES

1. The gender pay gap among all employees stood at 17.3% in 2019, https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/genderpaygapintheuk/2019

2. Devine, B.F. & Foley, N. (2020) Women and the economy, House of Commons Briefing Paper CBP06838, 4th March. Available at https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06838/SN06838.pdf

3. Analysis of the applicants to BITC's *Times Top 50 Employers for Women* 20/21 cycle finds a correlation between doing well on taking a strategic approach (a specific area of questioning) and performing well in the areas assessed overall.

4. BITC (2020) *What Works: Enabling Inclusive Cultures* Report. Available at https://www.bitc.org.uk/report/everyday-inclusion-what-really-works

5. Our *Equal Lives* research found that in the workplace, 17% of men cite superiors viewing SPL negatively as a barrier to taking-up the policy, coupled with guilt for burdening other colleagues with their work. Men also question the potential impact on their future progression as a reason for not taking it up. Available at https://www.bitc.org.uk/report/equal-lives-parenthood-and-caring-in-the-workplace

6. BITC (2020) *What Works: Enabling Inclusive Cultures* Report. Available at https://www.bitc.org.uk/report/everyday-inclusion-what-really-works

7. Research has found that 'developing (the) leadership behaviour of line managers influences the way in which developmental HR practices affect employees.' See Developmental HRM, employee well-being and performance: The moderating role of developing leadership, published in the European Management Review, January 2018, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/emre.12168

8. Shared by a member at one of BITC's Gender Champions Forum, October 2020.

9. BITC (2014) *Project 28–40: The Report*

10. *Equal Lives: Parenthood and Caring in the Workplace*, a report produced by BITC drawing on a survey of 10,000 employees across the UK.

11. 'BAME women and COVID-19 – Research evidence' published in June 2020 by the Fawcett Society and others, available here: https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/BAME-women-and-Covid-FINAL.pdf

12. BME women and work: TUC equality briefing' published October 2020. Available at https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/bme-women-and-work

13. Media release from the Trades Union Congress 10th June 2020. Available at https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/employers-are-breaking-law-and-forcing-pregnant-women-out-work-during-pandemic-warns-tuc

14. How are mothers and fathers balancing work and family under lockdown?', published by the Institute for Fiscal Studies May 2020. Available at https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14860

15. *Tackling single parent poverty after the Coronavirus*, published by Gingerbread and the Learning & Work Institute in December 2020, https://www.gingerbread.org.uk/policy-campaigns/publications-index/tackling-single-parent-poverty-after-coronavirus

16. See evidence shared with the Home Affairs Select Committee, at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselectcmhaff/321/32105.htm

17. 'Taken together, research on formalized HR structures suggests that identity-conscious practices may be more effective than identity blind structures for improved hiring and advancement of women and minorities in the private and public sectors.' Designing more effective practices for reducing workplace inequality Quinetta Roberson, Eden King, & Mikki Hebl published in 2020, https://behavioralpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Designing-more-effective-practices-for-reducing-workplace-inequality.pdf

18. Women in every region of the UK apart from London are more likely than men to live within a 15-minute commute to their place of work, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

19. The 'gender commuting gap' widens considerably in the first decade after childbirth' analysis released by the IFS November 2018. Available at https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/13673

20. 'How are mothers and fathers balancing work and family under lockdown?', published by the Institute for Fiscal Studies May 2020. Available at https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14860

21. BITC (2019) *Equal Lives: Parenthood and Caring in the Workplace*. Available at https://www.bitc.org.uk/report/equal-lives-parenthood-and-caring-in-the-workplace

22. For example, see the analysis explored at: https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/nov/19/pandemic-could-lead-to-most-profound-shift-in-parenting-roles-since-wwii-say-experts-coronavirus

23. BITC (2019) *Equal Lives: Parenthood and Caring in the Workplace*. Available at https://www.bitc.org.uk/report/equal-lives-parenthood-and-caring-in-the-workplace

24. Research shows that motherhood triggers (false) assumptions that mothers are more focused on their children than on their job and are therefore less competent, committed, and productive at work than fathers or employees without children. This "motherhood penalty" results in mothers getting paid less and being passed over in hiring and promotion decisions. https://sociology.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj9501/f/publications/getting_a_job-_is_there_a_motherhood_penalty.pdf

25. Almost half of women respondents to our *Project 28–40* survey agreed with the statement: 'in my experience people who work flexibly are resented by their colleagues'. Only 40% of respondents said their organisation values flexible working as a way of working efficiently. Over a quarter agreed that their organisation's evaluation process values hours worked more than results achieved. This all indicates a strong culture of presenteeism. Our findings suggest flexible workers are not being valued for their contribution and this is having an obvious impact on their progression.

26. Chung, H., Hyojin, S., Forbes, S., Birkett, H. (2020) *Working from home during the Covid-19 lockdown: Changing preferences and the future of work*. Available at https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/business/research/wirc/epp-working-from-home-COVID-19-lockdown.pdf

27. Zurich (2020) 'Zurich sees leap in women applying for senior roles after offering all jobs as flexible', November 17th. Available at https://www.zurich.co.uk/en/about-us/media-centre/company-news/2020/zurich-sees-leap-in-women-applying-for-senior-roles-after-offering-all-jobs-as-flexible

28. 'Women and flexible working: Improving female employment outcomes in Europe', Institute for Public Policy Research, published December 2014. Available at https://www.ippr.org/publications/women-and-flexible-working-improving-female-employment-outcomes-in-europe

29. Data collected from the *Times Top 50 Employers for Women* 2017-2021.

30. Research analysing why women are often paid less has found that the jobs done by women, currently or traditionally, are generally paid less well; that this changes as the gender make-up of the workforce shifts., e.g. when more men enter a sector, the wages increase, suggesting that it's about the perceived lesser value of roles seen as 'women's jobs', rather than the actual skill or experience required to deliver them. This 'devaluation' trend was borne out in Occupational Feminization and Pay: Assessing Causal Dynamics Using 1950–2000 U.S. Census Data. https://academic.oup.com/sf/article-abstract/88/2/865/2235342

31. Research has found flexible workers can experience stigma from colleagues because of their working patterns, see for example the results of a survey of senior civil servants working flexibly explored at: https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/news/articles/women-still-harmed-by-stigma-around-flexible-working#gref

32. Organisational Pscyhologist Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic's research has shown the tendency to identify certain traits as good leadership traits, and for these to be typically 'masculine' characteristics: 'So long as we continue to associate leadership with masculine features, we can expect female leaders to be evaluated more negatively even when their performance is higher than that of their male counterparts, and even when those who evaluate them are women.' More at: https://hbr.org/2019/03/as-long-as-we-associate-leadership-with-masculinity-women-will-be-overlooked

33. For example, a study looking at the impact of a move towards greater pay transparency in higher education in Canada found it reduced the pay gap. https://hbr.org/2020/02/can-transparency-laws-fix-the-gender-wage-gap

34. BITC's *Everyday Inclusion: What Works*'report, produced with the Global Institute of Women's Leadership at Kings College London found: 'several studies show links between employees' perceptions of fairness and inclusion-related outcomes. For example, fair decision-making processes are an important factor determining employees' feelings of security, which is likely to be particularly true for women and ethnic minorities. Available at https://www.bitc.org.uk/report/everyday-inclusion-what-really-works

35. Flexible working is a known enabler of women's careers supporting to get, retain and progress in jobs. For example, research carried out by the UK government's Behavioural Inserts Team found women are more likely to apply for senior level roles if the job advert offers flexible hours. https://www.bi.team/blogs/switching-the-default-to-advertise-part-time-working-boosts-applications-from-women-by-16/

36. Basing a new employee's wages on their previous salary can disadvantage women returning to the workplace after a period away due to caring responsibilities, or those who have previously been undervalued and underpaid for their work. A survey of employers in 2018 found that while almost half didn't include details about pay while advertising, the same proportion were open to including pay bandings. https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/asking-candidates-about-current-salary-contributes-to-gender-pay-gap/

37. Research has found that certain words are understood to carry 'gender codes', and the use of these in job adverts and job descriptions can heavily influence perceptions about who should apply for a role/who would be suitable hire, e.g. analysis carried out by Total Jobs found this. More at: https://www.totaljobs.com/recruiter-advice/how-to-identify-unconscious-gender-bias-in-job-adverts

38. Data on levels of furlough disaggregated by sectors can be seen on the ONS website, see at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/businessservices/articles/comparisonoffurloughedjobsdata/maytojuly2020

39. Large UK firms whose executive boards are one-third female are 10 times more profitable on average than all-male boards. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-07-27/u-k-firms-with-more-women-on-exec-boards-outperform-on-profits

40. Zurich (2020) 'Zurich sees leap in women applying for senior roles after offering all jobs as flexible', November 17th. Available at https://www.zurich.co.uk/en/about-us/media-centre/company-news/2020/zurich-sees-leap-in-women-applying-for-senior-roles-after-offering-all-jobs-as-flexible

41. Analysis of the applicants to BITC's *Times Top 50 Employers for Women* 20/21 cycle, and the two years previous, finds employers consistently struggle to demonstrate 'impact' of their various efforts — monitoring the effect of any changes is crucial to knowing what if anything has been achieved.

42. The CMI for example have warned that "*The risk is when we go back into the office, the people that go back will be the senior leaders. And we know that those senior leaders are largely white men,"* said Francke. *"That will reinforce the kind of exclusionary, lack of diverse culture at the top of organisations. I think that would be a very dangerous step backwards*." CEO quoted at: https://www.theguardian.com/money/2020/sep/13/reopening-uk-offices-risks-excluding-women-and-minorities-says-business-chief

43. In a BITC and Deloitte (2019) YouGov Survey Findings, Workplace Discrimination, October. Polling undertaken of 2,000 UK employees found as many as 45% of respondents had experienced some form of unwanted behaviour in their place of work within the last three years. The survey showed that age and gender and race were significant determinants of whether an employee experienced an unwanted behaviour, underlining separate findings from Race at Work survey and Project 28-40. Available at: https://www.bitc.org.uk/fact-sheet/employee-experiences-of-non-inclusive-behaviours-at-work/

44. McKinsey has warned that teams newly working in separate locations can feel confused and isolated with 'uncertainty about whom to talk with on specific issues and how and when to approach colleagues, leading to hold-ups and delays. In such a climate, there is a risk of amplifying non-inclusive dynamics.' https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-andinclusion/diversity-still-matter

45. Women surveyed by McKinsey worried this could be happening with one commentator warning: The structure of life for many parents during the pandemic—more to do at home, kids highly visible during Zoom calls, flexible work hours—creates the exact conditions under which biases against mothers get unleashed. See at: https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/10/pandemic-amplifying-bias-against-working-mothers/616565/

46. Women's rights charity survey data shows that COVID-19 has seen women experience an upsurge in online sexual harassment whilst working from home, as harassers take advantage of online work platforms and social media during the pandemic. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/sexual-harassment-women-work-from-home-b1776051.html

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