

The Times Top 50 Employers for Gender Equality

INSIGHTS REPORT 2026





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FOREWORD



NDIDI OKEZIE OBE
Chief Executive, Business in the Community

Workplace gender equality in the UK is not improving exponentially. It is shaped by ambition, resistance, innovation, backlash and renewal. The damaging external climate described in our 2025 Insights Report has not passed – if anything, sustained leadership on this issue matters more than ever.

For Business in the Community, gender equality is central to responsible business and to an economy where work creates opportunity, belonging and progression for everyone, everywhere. It sits at the heart of the future talent agenda – as businesses face skills shortages, demographic change and rising employee expectations, those able to create workplaces where everyone can thrive will be best placed to succeed. Gender equality unlocks potential, strengthens productivity and helps create healthy lives through stronger communities and families.

The Times Top 50 Employers for Gender Equality is a benchmark, evidence base and call to action. It helps employers understand what is working, identify gaps and learn from leading practice. The 2026 applications show continued progress. Inclusive Cultures is the highest-scoring area of the assessment for the first time and scores improved across most categories, particularly in flexible working, progression

and support for working parents. At the same time, responses highlight how rapidly expectations are evolving, from AI and new ways of working to changing approaches to inclusion and emerging legal developments.

The evidence is clear that gender equality matters for fairness, talent and long-term growth. Future competitiveness will depend on employers widening access to opportunity, designing work that enables people to contribute at every stage of life, and ensuring new technologies support equality. That means moving beyond statements of intent to set clear objectives, measure progress, equip managers and design jobs that work for real lives. To do this, organisations must make inclusion the responsibility of the whole business. The strongest employers are moving beyond organisational change to shape the wider systems that influence gender equality, extending their impact across supply chains, sectors and society.

This report reflects the progress employers have made and the challenges that remain. The next phase will require sustained leadership and a commitment to embedding gender equality into the way organisations operate. Progress is not guaranteed – it must be led.





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Business in the Community’s Gender Equality Objectives:

- Empower UK business to take bold action on gender equality
- Unlock the economic power of a gender-equal workforce
- Accelerate progress and celebrate leaders in gender inclusion



Twenty years of history

Over more than two decades, The Times Top 50 Employers for Gender Equality has evolved into one of the UK’s most established and influential benchmarks of workplace gender equality.

The journey began in 2006, when The Times first published a Top 50 List of Employers for Women. In 2011, the list and assessment process was taken over and strengthened by Business in the Community’s Gender Equality campaign. Between 2011 and 2026, Business in the Community has reviewed thousands of employer applications, recognised generations of leading employers and shared insights and best practice across UK businesses to inspire action.

Across the years, employer practice has moved from basic representation and policy commitments towards more sophisticated approaches to data, culture, accountability, flexible working, parental support, intersectionality and now, responsible AI. In the years to come, and for future generations, we must become even more ambitious. Leading employers should be recognised, but their greatest value lies in helping raise standards across the wider market.

The Times Top 50 Employers for
Women list launched

- Thousands of employer applications reviewed and feedback shared
- Generations of leading employers recognised on the list
- Insights shared across UK business
- Rebranded in 2022 to The Times Top 50 Employers for Gender Equality



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EDITORIAL INSIGHTS

Progress continues, but challenges remain

The data from the 2026 applications for The Times Top 50 Employers for Gender Equality shows that overall, scores improved in most assessment categories, and inclusive cultures became the highest-scoring area for the first time. The biggest year-on-year increases were in flexible working, progression and promotion, and support for working parents. These are important signs that many employers are continuing to invest in the conditions that enable gender equality to become real in people's working lives. However, the data tells a more interesting and nuanced story than simple improvement.

Protecting inclusive cultures in challenging times

The prominence of Inclusive Cultures reinforces a broader theme running through this year's responses: progress is strongest where gender equality is embedded into everyday leadership, management and organisational practice. Inclusive Cultures became the highest-scoring area of the assessment for the first time in 2026, suggesting that leading employers increasingly recognise that progress depends not only on policies and programmes, but on employees' day-to-day experience of fairness, trust, belonging and accountability. The data also highlights

areas where further progress is needed, particularly in relation to sexual harassment prevention, accountability and intersectional analysis.

AI presents both opportunities and risks

All but one 2026 entrant stated they were using AI in some business functions, and AI increasingly influences the systems through which people are hired, assessed, supported, developed and promoted. Used responsibly, it can support gender equality by improving consistency, accessibility and decision-making. However, used carelessly, it can reinforce bias at scale.

Of the 2026 entrants, 77% said they are now considering how AI interacts with equality, diversity and inclusion. Entrants were also asked to provide evidence and details of what they are doing in relation to this. Three themes emerged from employer responses:

- Responsible AI governance, including councils, ethics committees, bias audits and limits on decision-making
- Inclusive use of AI to aid accessibility and different working needs
- AI used to improve process consistency in areas such as hiring, performance, skills assessment and language review

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As AI becomes more embedded in organisational decision-making, employers must understand how it influences outcomes, monitor its impact and ensure it does not reinforce existing inequalities.

Sexual harassment, strategy and accountability need renewed focus

Prevention of sexual harassment remains a critical area for employer attention. Last year's responses demonstrated the significant progress many employers had made following the introduction of the preventative duty under the Worker Protection Act. The organisational context has continued to evolve, and forthcoming legal changes will place more emphasis on proactive prevention including risk assessment, governance, reporting, manager capability and third-party harassment. This makes it essential that employers treat prevention as a sustained cultural and organisational responsibility, not a one-off policy or compliance response.

Employers increasingly recognise these risks, but this year's responses suggest that practice is still evolving. Effective prevention now requires organisations to consider how harassment may occur across both physical and digital working environments, supported by clear reporting routes, manager capability, employee confidence and visible leadership accountability. Employers must prevent harassment

wherever work happens and whoever it involves, considering customers, clients, suppliers and other third parties.

Strategy and accountability also need renewed focus. The 2026 data shows that most entrants have set targets for gender balance at executive, board and senior management levels, demonstrating growing leadership accountability. However, far fewer have equivalent targets below senior leadership or within their supply chains. While senior level targets are important, employers also need visibility of representation and progression throughout the organisation to understand whether talent pipelines are strong enough to sustain long-term change. Senior level targets create focus and accountability, but they are most effective when supported by data on progression, retention and barriers at different levels of the workforce and throughout supply chains and business operations.

Flexible working and support for parents and carers is progressing but not consistently

Flexible working and support for working parents are two of the most practical levers employers have to address gender inequality and questions relating to these saw the largest year-on-year score increases in 2026.





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However, the detailed insight shows that progress remains uneven. Less than half of entrants advertise roles as open to flexible working by default, and only a third analyse rejected flexible working requests through an intersectional lens. Support for parents is improving, but equal parental leave remains rare. Only 9% of entrants offer equal parental leave to both parents, although 48% said they were considering introducing it within the next two years. Offering more equitable parental leave policies enables all parents to take time out to care when they have children, setting an equal precedent for childcare going forward.

The strongest employers treat care as a mainstream workforce reality, not a private issue. That means designing jobs, leave, progression and performance systems around the reality that employees will have caring responsibilities at different stages of their lives, whether as parents, carers, partners or family members. Offering carers flexibility and leave is crucial, as well as ensuring these are safe to use, available without penalty, flexible to changing needs, and designed into work from the start.

Gender equality must work for everyone

A major strength in the 2026 responses is a broader and more inclusive understanding of gender equality.

For the first time, the assessment asked employers whether they had a specific policy in place to support other marginalised genders at work. Nearly 90% of entrants reported that they did, demonstrating the extent to which leading employers are broadening their approach to gender equality. This reflects a growing recognition that inclusive workplaces should support people of all genders and that employers must respond to evolving expectations, guidance and legal frameworks affecting transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming employees. The publication and parliamentary scrutiny of the updated Equality Act 2010 Code of Practice during 2026 further highlighted the importance of ensuring policies, workplace practices and employee support are truly inclusive and respectful of differing beliefs and lived experiences.

While gender pay-gap analysis and action planning are now common among entrants, equivalent approaches across disability, sexual orientation/ gender identity, working pattern, region and socio-economic status remain far less developed. The best employers are taking a more intersectional approach, using data to identify where barriers and inequality persist and ensuring that pay and progression are considered across the workforce.





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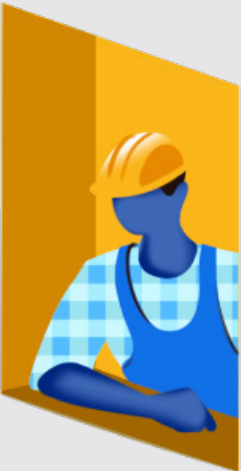
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Table 1: Overall trends, 2026 vs 2025

HIGHEST-PERFORMING 2026	HIGHEST-PERFORMING 2025
1. Inclusive Cultures	1. Sexual Harassment
2. Inclusive Recruitment	2. Inclusive Cultures
3. Line Management	3. Strategy and Objectives
LOWEST-PERFORMING 2026	LOWEST-PERFORMING 2025
10. Strategy and Objectives	10. Flexible Working
9. Sexual Harassment	9. Policies to Support Parents and Carers
8. Social Mobility	8. Social Mobility

Table 2: Data Monitoring Responses 2026

QUESTION	RESPONDED YES 2026
Theme 1: Pay Transparency	
Do you conduct equal pay audits?	74%
Are you publishing salary bands on all job descriptions internally and externally?	18%
Does your organisation pay the UK Real Living Wage nationally and in London?	55%
Theme 2: Bias Monitoring	
Are you considering the way that AI interacts with the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda?	77%
Is flexible work data analysed to mitigate bias across intersectional groups?	33%



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NEXT STEPS

The 2026 findings point to a clear conclusion: progress is strongest where gender equality is embedded into the way organisations operate. Leading employers are moving beyond standalone initiatives towards more integrated approaches that connect culture, flexibility, progression, safety and inclusion. The agenda continues to evolve and new technologies, changing workforce expectations and emerging legal requirements mean that employers cannot stand still.

Legislation as opportunity

The Employment Rights Act should be viewed as an opportunity for employers to strengthen the systems that enable fair, safe and inclusive work. Changes relating to flexible working, family-friendly rights and workplace protections should prompt employers to look again at how work is designed, how decisions are made, and whether employees can access support without penalty to their progression, pay or participation.

For gender equality, this is particularly important. Flexible working and support for carers are not marginal employment issues - they are central to closing gender gaps in pay, progression and retention. Responsible employers will use legislative

change to move beyond a request-based model of flexibility towards proactive job design, manager capability and transparent monitoring of who can access flexible work, whose requests are declined, and whether flexible workers or carers experience bias, stalled progression or lower reward outcomes.

Forthcoming requirements on gender pay gap and menopause action planning will also raise expectations that employers move beyond reporting and policy statements towards evidence-led action, measurable objectives and clear accountability. Menopause action planning should not sit apart from wider gender equality work. It should be connected to retention, progression, workplace adjustments, absence management, manager confidence, culture and the experience of women in midlife and later career stages.

The current UK government consultation on pay transparency and equal pay further reinforces this direction of travel. Greater transparency on pay ranges, pay progression and reward decisions can help employers build trust, reduce the risk of unequal pay, and address the structural causes of gender pay gaps. It also gives employers an opportunity to strengthen pay governance now, including through equal pay audits, transparent





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salary bands, objective progression criteria and clearer communication with employees about how pay decisions are made.

As advocated in this report, this must extend beyond gender alone. The UK Government has this year indicated its intention to introduce mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting for large employers. This points towards a future in which employers will be expected to understand inequality across multiple characteristics and take practical action to address it. Responsible businesses will not wait for each new requirement to arrive in isolation. They will build integrated approaches to workforce data, action planning and accountability, so that gender, ethnicity, disability, caring responsibilities, working pattern, age and socio-economic background can be considered together.

The same principle applies to the anticipated strengthening of employer duty to prevent sexual harassment. As expectations move further towards proactive prevention, employers will need to demonstrate that they have assessed risks, strengthened governance, equipped managers, created trusted reporting routes and addressed harassment in all working environments, including digital, hybrid, customer-facing and third-party

contexts. This is an opportunity to move prevention beyond policy ownership and embed it into culture, leadership, risk management and everyday operational practice.

In the current more contested environment, legislative change gives employers a clear mandate to stay the course. It reinforces the need for a robust gender equity strategy, visible senior ownership and accountability for progress, making clear that fairness, safety and transparency are core business responsibilities rather than discretionary initiatives, and that as the bar is raised, leading employers must do more to stay ahead.

Embedding responsible AI practices

With AI playing a growing role in workplace decision-making, employers should regularly review how AI tools influence employee outcomes, particularly in areas such as recruitment, performance management and progression. Clear governance, bias testing and ongoing monitoring will be essential to ensuring these technologies support inclusive workplaces and contribute positively to gender equality.



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Moving from adopting and embedding to leading and transforming

The listmakers demonstrating the strongest performance are moving beyond improving inclusion within their own workplaces and are instead driving transformational change. Their approaches are characterised by robust leadership accountability, with gender equity embedded into business strategy, governance frameworks and reward mechanisms. They focus on addressing the root causes of inequality through structural reforms to recruitment, progression, pay, reward and talent management systems, ensuring that gender equality is built into organisational decision-making rather than delivered through standalone initiatives.

Importantly, these organisations extend their influence beyond their own workforce by shaping supply chain practices, investing in future talent pipelines, and collaborating across sectors to tackle wider barriers to gender equality. They combine data-driven accountability with measurable outcomes, demonstrating sustained progress

and creating impact at organisational, sector and societal levels. This distinction between embedding inclusive practices and transforming systems is what sets the highest-performing organisations apart and positions them as leaders in advancing gender equality.





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THE QUESTIONS AND BEST PRACTICE

Part 1 – High Performing Areas

This year’s entrants demonstrated continued progress in building inclusive cultures, which became the highest scoring area this year having been second in 2025. Evidence relating to inclusive recruitment and line management also illustrate the progress that employers have made in these areas, which were the second and third highest scoring areas amongst the 2026 entrants.

1) Inclusive Cultures

The most encouraging insight from this year’s The Times Top 50 Employers for Gender Equality entrants was the employer action being taken to build inclusive workplaces. The highest-scoring organisations approached inclusive culture as a core business priority embedded within governance, leadership expectations and everyday ways of working, rather than as a standalone diversity initiative. Inclusive cultures were underpinned by clear organisational values, dedicated governance structures, robust wellbeing and inclusion policies, and visible senior leadership accountability. Leading employers demonstrated that inclusion was everyone’s responsibility, with executive-led councils, employee networks, behavioural frameworks and formal mechanisms for raising concerns all contributing to

a culture of fairness, respect and belonging. Regular communication of values, codes of conduct and anti-harassment expectations reinforced these standards and helped create psychologically safe environments where people could bring their whole selves to work.

What distinguished the strongest responses was the extent to which they combined listening, action and accountability. Employers gathered insight through employee surveys, network feedback, focus groups, listening sessions and speak-up channels, then used this feedback to shape policies and workplace practices. Inclusion efforts were supported by mandatory learning, inclusive leadership development, allyship programmes and targeted support for different employee groups, including carers, parents, LGBTQ+ employees, disabled colleagues and those experiencing menopause, fertility challenges or other life events. Organisations measured effectiveness through inclusion indices, engagement surveys, culture dashboards, ethics reporting, grievance trends and retention data, with consistently strong outcomes including high levels of psychological safety, positive inclusion scores, confidence in speaking up and evidence that employees felt respected, valued and able to be themselves at work.

	
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Best practice looked like:

- Establishing executive-led governance structures, such as Culture Councils, Inclusion Councils or DEI Steering Groups, with clear accountability for inclusive culture outcomes.
- Embedding inclusion into organisational values, behavioural frameworks and performance expectations so that inclusive conduct became part of everyday business practice.
- Maintaining robust anti-bullying, anti-harassment and speak-up policies, supported by multiple reporting channels, independent hotlines and explicit anti-retaliation protections.
- Using employee networks as formal partners in decision-making, policy development and culture change, with direct access to senior leadership.
- Providing mandatory inclusion, allyship, respect-at-work and bystander intervention training for all employees, alongside specialist learning for leaders and managers.
- Equipping leaders and line managers with practical tools, guidance and development programmes to build inclusive teams and confidently support colleagues through different life experiences and transitions.
- Offering comprehensive support covering wellbeing, menopause, menstrual health, fertility, baby loss, caring responsibilities, disability, neurodiversity, LGBTQ+ inclusion and domestic abuse.
- Applying an intersectional approach to policies, communications and data analysis, ensuring organisations understood how different groups experienced the workplace and where barriers remained.
- Creating structured listening mechanisms, including employee surveys, focus groups, listening sessions, town halls, network feedback and ethics reporting, with evidence that feedback led directly to policy and culture improvements.
- Monitoring culture through inclusion indices, engagement scores, ethical culture measures, speak-up data, retention metrics and representation trends, using results to drive continuous improvement and demonstrate progress over time.



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BITC recommends that employers:

- Provide employee and manager training focused on emerging issues of conflicting personal beliefs in the workplace.
- Measure the impact of Bystander Intervention training and inclusive leadership through employee survey results within teams.
- Co-design code of conduct with employee networks and work to embed it into everyday behaviours.
- Regularly assess and analyse psychological safety.



Kier, a leading provider of infrastructure services, construction and property developments across the UK, believes everyone deserves respect. To embed its five Expect Respect principles, it developed an innovative inclusion game that helps break down barriers to conversations about diversity and inclusion. Facilitated by trained volunteer colleagues, the session creates a safe and engaging environment that encourages open and honest discussions across all levels of the business. Feedback from participants showed a 15% increase in conversations about D&I and a 9% increase in confidence to challenge non-inclusive behaviours. With more than 125 trained facilitators across Kier, the programme continues to grow, with 30 additional games recently commissioned to meet demand.





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2) Inclusive recruitment

Beyond targeted action to create a gender-diverse workforce across different functions and levels, this question considered how organisations ensure a fair and inclusive recruitment process for all. Performance in this area was better than last year's cohort, with employers using a range of approaches to ensure an impartial and unbiased approach.

Entrants' strategic efforts to recruit a gender diverse workforce were visible throughout their recruitment processes, from the inclusive design of job descriptions through to recruitment training for hiring managers. While strategic efforts in candidate sourcing, application, selection and interview processes were a key strength in applicant responses, there is room for employers to improve how they attract women to their organisations through greater transparency of salary information and key policies.

Best practice in recruiting a gender-diverse workforce combines inclusive recruitment design, targeted outreach, robust data collection and continuous monitoring of outcomes. Across entrants, 92% advertise roles directly to diverse candidates through specialist job sites and boards, 93% attend careers fairs or partner with network groups, and 75% use targeted referral approaches to reach underrepresented groups.

Effective organisations review job descriptions to remove gender-biased language and unnecessary qualification requirements, promote flexible and family-friendly policies, provide inclusive recruitment training for hiring managers, and use structured interview processes to ensure consistency and fairness. Diverse interview panels are also widely embedded, with 79% of entrants reporting that they ensure diverse representation on interview panels wherever possible.

A further hallmark of best practice is the use of evidence-led decision making to drive sustainable improvements. More than 80% of entrants are collecting gender, ethnicity and disability data throughout the recruitment process, enabling organisations to identify barriers, analyse progression and drop-off rates, and develop targeted interventions. Additional activity to recruit a gender-diverse workforce includes partnerships that support women returning from career breaks, targeted outreach to women in STEM and other underrepresented sectors, internship and apprenticeship pathways, accessible assessment processes for disabled and neurodivergent candidates, and the use of employee networks and role models to attract diverse talent.



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Best practice looked like:

- 92% advertise roles directly to diverse candidates through specialist job sites and boards.
- 93% attend careers fairs or work with network groups to attract underrepresented talent.
- 75% utilise targeted referral initiatives to broaden access to diverse candidate pools.
- 79% ensure diverse interview panels are used to support fair and inclusive hiring decisions.
- More than 80% collect gender, ethnicity and disability data to monitor recruitment outcomes and identify barriers.
- Job descriptions are reviewed to remove gender-biased language and unnecessary criteria that may deter applicants.
- Structured interviews, skills-based assessments and mandatory inclusive recruitment training help reduce bias in selection decisions.

- Flexible working, family-friendly policies and accessible recruitment processes support a wider range of applicants.
- Partnerships with programmes supporting women, career returners, disabled candidates and those from disadvantaged backgrounds help increase representation in talent pipelines.

BITC recommends that employers:

- Evaluate the job design of every role to ensure they are accessible to all. For example, many working carers do not feel that they can access senior roles as they will not allow them to work flexibly.
- Publish salary information on job adverts and remove pay history from recruitment negotiations to address the gender pay gap.
- Publish key policies online for prospective applicants to review, such as flexible working or policies to support parents and carers – going beyond headline commitments to include details of current workforce patterns and relevant case studies illustrating how the policies are adopted in reality.





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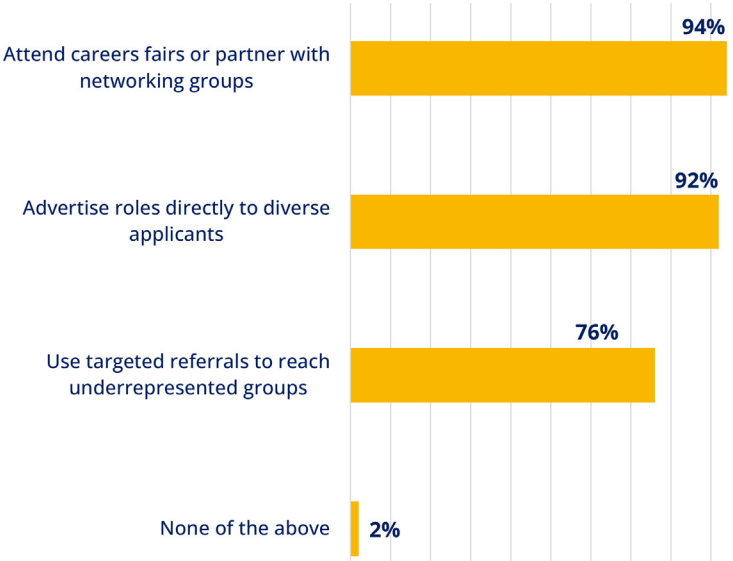


- Explicitly advertise flexible interview times outside of core hours.
- Provide interview questions in advance to all candidates.
- Monitor success of targeted partnerships, reach into social mobility cold spots and outreach programmes.



Global legal firm, **DWF**, has embedded inclusive recruitment through meaningful activity focused on broadening representation, accessible hiring practices, structured processes and strengthened DEI governance. Since 2024, enhanced monitoring, manager training and targeted outreach have increased female hiring to 62%, improved access for underrepresented groups, and expanded early-career opportunities for diverse talent.

Methods used to attract a more Gender-Diverse Workforce





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3) Line Management

Best practice in supporting line managers is characterised by a strategic and sustained approach that recognises managers as key drivers of workplace culture, employee experience and gender equality outcomes. High-performing organisations invest heavily in manager capability through mandatory inclusion training, targeted learning programmes, mentoring opportunities and practical resources that enable managers to confidently support colleagues from diverse backgrounds. Common topics include inclusive leadership, unconscious bias, psychological safety, workplace adjustments, menopause, fertility, caring responsibilities, domestic abuse, neurodiversity and mental wellbeing. Many organisations also provide dedicated manager hubs, toolkits, guidance on sensitive conversations and access to internal experts, ensuring managers have the knowledge and confidence to respond effectively to individual needs. We saw 100% of entrants providing mental health support accessible to employees.

Best practice also includes embedding accountability for inclusion within performance management and leadership frameworks. Organisations increasingly link diversity and inclusion objectives to manager performance reviews, leadership assessments, reward structures and recruitment responsibilities. Managers are supported through structured feedback

processes, employee network engagement, leadership development programmes and data-driven insights that help identify potential bias and improve decision-making. Evidence from this year's entrants demonstrates that strong investment in line manager capability continues to deliver positive outcomes, including improved employee engagement, increased representation of women at senior levels, stronger perceptions of inclusion, and greater confidence among managers in creating supportive and equitable working environments.

Best practice looked like:

- Line managers positioned as cultural ambassadors and actively engaged in promoting gender equality and inclusion.
- Mandatory training covers inclusive leadership, unconscious bias, harassment prevention, workplace adjustments and supporting diverse employee needs.
- Dedicated manager hubs, toolkits and online learning resources provide practical guidance and ongoing support.
- Employee networks play an important role in educating managers through workshops, events, lived-experience sessions and awareness campaigns.



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- Managers receive targeted support on topics such as menopause, fertility, caring responsibilities, domestic abuse, neurodiversity and mental health.
- Mentoring, coaching and leadership development programmes help managers build confidence in leading inclusive teams.
- Structured performance management processes are used to identify and address bias in people decisions.
- Inclusion and diversity objectives are incorporated into performance reviews, leadership frameworks and accountability measures.
- Flexible working guidance and wellbeing resources enable managers to better support individual employee circumstances.
- Organisational impact includes higher employee engagement scores, stronger perceptions of inclusion, improved confidence in management capability and increasing representation of women in leadership and management positions.

BITC recommends that employers:

- Actively build accountability, change management and capability building into line manager performance and development plans where relevant.
- Use smarter methods of job design to empower and enable line managers to lead more inclusively, for example, ring-fencing time to dedicate to line management duties and/or limiting the number of direct reports to allow line managers to provide more targeted support and foster psychologically safe partnerships with team members.



UK banking giant, **NatWest**, redesigned performance management to reduce bias by removing ratings-based assessment through its BEYOND framework and implementing People Progress sessions. These help leaders build an understanding of performance using goals, check-ins and feedback, supporting fairer development, progression, and reward decisions. Managers also receive practical guidance for supporting employee wellbeing.



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Part 2: Areas gaining momentum

These three areas show positive movement in 2026, with average scores improving and their relative ranking rising compared with other question areas, while still leaving room for further progress before they reach the highest-performing categories.

4) Progression and Promotion

Best practice in career progression is characterised by transparent frameworks, objective decision-making and targeted support to ensure all employees have equitable access to development and advancement opportunities. Leading organisations establish clearly defined career pathways, promotion criteria and competency frameworks that outline expectations at every level and make progression requirements visible to employees. Promotion decisions are evidence-based, supported by robust moderation and calibration processes, and reinforced through regular talent reviews to reduce bias and improve consistency. Workforce data is routinely analysed by grade, function and protected characteristics to identify areas of underrepresentation and enable targeted interventions that address structural barriers to progression.

Best practice also extends beyond formal promotion processes to include comprehensive talent development, mentoring, sponsorship and succession planning initiatives.

Organisations are increasingly investing in leadership programmes, career coaching, employee networks and targeted development opportunities for women and other underrepresented groups. Flexible working arrangements, enhanced family-friendly policies, menopause support, workplace adjustments and return-to-work programmes help remove barriers that can affect career progression. Strong leadership accountability, combined with transparent reporting and ongoing employee feedback, creates cultures where progression is perceived as fair, accessible and inclusive. Entrants provided impact data from the last two years which showed improvements in female representation at senior levels, higher proportions of women receiving promotions, stronger talent pipelines and increased employee confidence in career development opportunities.

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Best practice looked like:

- Clear career frameworks, job grading structures and promotion criteria provide transparency around progression expectations and opportunities.
- Workforce and promotion data are analysed by gender, ethnicity, grade and function to identify and address progression barriers.
- Promotion decisions are supported by structured moderation, calibration processes and objective assessment criteria to reduce bias.
- Managers receive training in inclusive leadership, equitable talent management and objective decision-making.
- Gender-diverse shortlists, interview panels and promotion committees strengthen fairness and representation in progression processes.
- Mentoring, sponsorship, coaching and leadership development programmes help accelerate progression for women and underrepresented groups.

- Succession planning is aligned to diversity objectives and focuses on building balanced leadership pipelines.
- Flexible working, enhanced parental support, carers' policies, menopause support and workplace adjustments help remove barriers to career advancement.
- Employee networks, role models and targeted development initiatives increase visibility, confidence and access to progression opportunities.

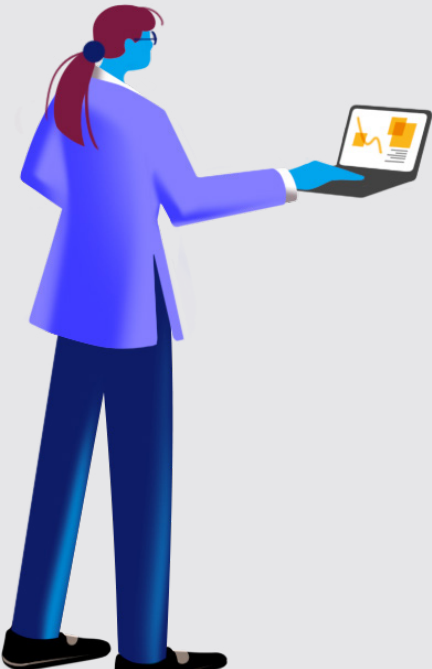
BITC recommends that employers:

- Analyse workforce and employee experience data intersectionally to ensure no groups are being left behind in their progression efforts, for example, part-time workers or employees on the lowest pay.
- Actively provide and engage employees in development opportunities outside of annual performance or career appraisal.
- Consider setting gender representation targets at entry level and/or lower management levels, as well as for senior management and executive level roles.





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Engineering Services and Nuclear company, **AtkinsRéalis** demonstrates a strong commitment to developing future female leaders through targeted training, management accountability, culture-change initiatives, and a structured leadership pipeline. Robust monitoring of inclusion, performance, and progression is supported by strong qualitative and quantitative evidence, showing clear progress in advancing women’s development and leadership opportunities.





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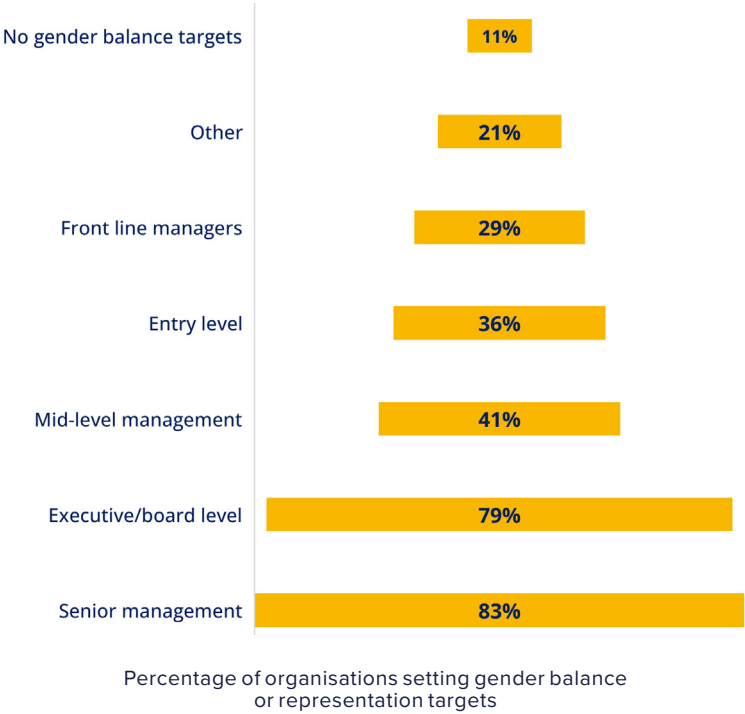
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Gender Representation Targets Across Organisational Levels





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5) Flexible work

Best practice in flexible working is characterised by a flexibility-first approach that is accessible to all employees, regardless of role, grade, gender or personal circumstances. Leading organisations embed flexibility into their operating models, policies and culture rather than treating it as an exception or accommodation. This includes offering a wide range of formal and informal flexible working arrangements from the start of employment, such as hybrid working, part-time roles, job sharing, flexible hours, remote working, annualised hours and additional leave options. Flexible working is supported through clear policies, accessible technology, inclusive workplace design and transparent communication, ensuring employees understand the options available to them and feel confident accessing them without fear of negative career consequences.

Best practice also involves creating an environment where flexibility is actively role modelled by leaders and supported by managers through trust-based conversations focused on outcomes rather than presence. Organisations use employee feedback, engagement surveys and workforce data to monitor access, uptake and outcomes across different employee groups, helping to identify and

address any unintended barriers. Family-friendly policies, equal parental leave, carers' support, workplace adjustments and enhanced return-to-work provisions further strengthen inclusion and retention. Entrants provided impact data from the last two years which showed that these approaches have contributed to higher employee engagement, improved wellbeing and work-life balance, stronger retention of parents and carers, increased uptake of caregiving responsibilities across genders, and greater confidence that flexible working does not limit progression opportunities.

Best practice looked like:

- Flexible working is embedded as a core part of organisational culture and employee experience rather than being treated as an exception.
- A broad range of flexible options are available, including hybrid working, part-time roles, job sharing, flexible hours, remote working and career break arrangements.
- Flexible working opportunities are clearly communicated from recruitment onwards through job advertisements, policies and employee communications.





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- Leaders actively role model flexible working, helping to reduce stigma and reinforce that flexibility is 'career safe'.
- Managers receive training, guidance and resources to support flexible role design, inclusive hybrid working and effective flexibility conversations.
- Family-friendly policies include enhanced parental leave, carers' leave, return-to-work support and workplace adjustments to support employees at different life stages.
- Technology, digital collaboration tools and accessible workplace environments enable employees to work effectively from a variety of locations.
- Employee feedback mechanisms, engagement surveys and demographic analysis are used to monitor uptake, identify barriers and inform continuous improvement.
- Performance, promotion and development outcomes are regularly reviewed to ensure employees working flexibly are not disadvantaged.

BITC recommends that employers:

- Actively monitor the uptake and impact of flexible working policies, even if informal, to ensure equitable access to flexible working and no disproportionate impact on those using it, for example in terms of performance, progression and engagement. This will help encourage more diverse uptake of different ways of working amongst employees and address 'flex stigma'.
- Work to embed flexible working across relevant organisational processes, such as within job design, recruitment processes and challenge perceptions and bias regarding agility and performance of flexible workers.
- Proactively consider what flexibility can be offered for all roles including those which are site-based, shift-based or customer-facing.
- Challenge recruitment teams to take the starting position of 'why not?' in relation to flexibility, supporting and encouraging hiring managers to design and advertise all roles as flexible.
- Ensure flexible working policies clearly differentiate between hybrid working and other forms of flexible working relating to hours and times of work.



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Skyscanner, a worldwide travel search and comparison platform, has embedded flexible working through a hybrid-by-default model, inclusive recruitment practices and manager accountability. Employees are supported with home-working allowances, global working options, and a trust-first approach that encourages open conversation when additional flexibility is required. Regular monitoring of engagement, progression and performance data shows no disadvantage linked to flexible working, with high levels of employee satisfaction.

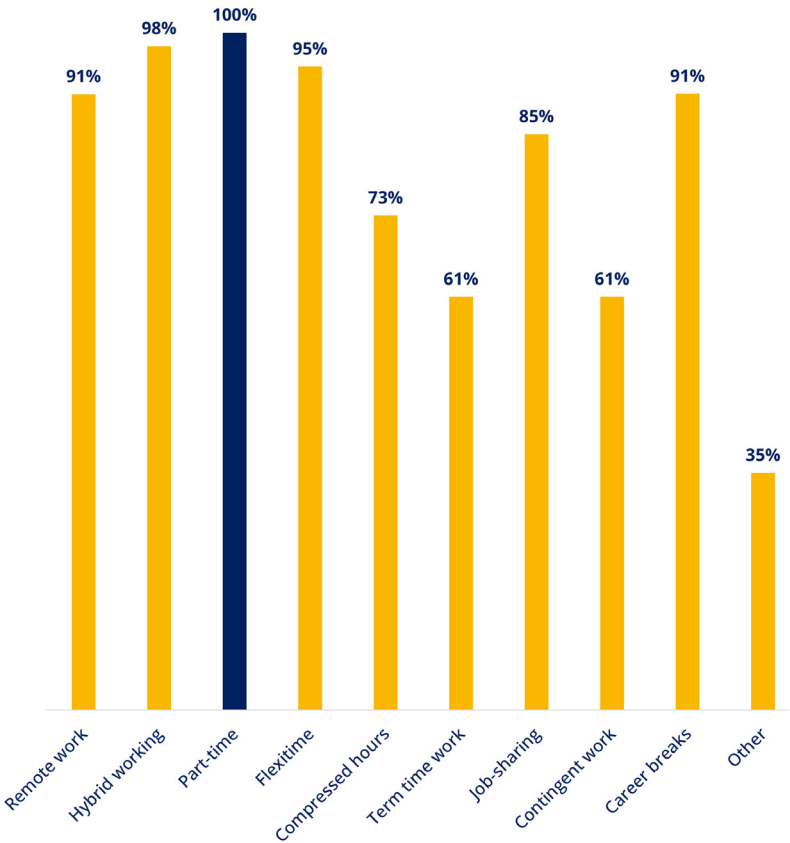




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Flexible Working Options Offered by Organisations





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6) Parents and carers

Best practice in supporting working parents and other carers is characterised by a comprehensive, gender-inclusive approach that recognises caring responsibilities as a shared issue rather than one primarily affecting women. Leading organisations provide enhanced family leave arrangements that go beyond statutory requirements, including equal parental leave, neonatal leave, fertility support, carers' leave, bereavement leave for pregnancy and baby loss, and paid emergency time off for dependants. Policies are designed to be accessible to all genders and family structures, helping to challenge traditional caregiving stereotypes and support a more equitable distribution of caring responsibilities. These provisions are complemented by flexible working arrangements, return-to-work programmes, coaching, wellbeing resources and practical support services that enable employees to balance work and family commitments throughout different life stages.

Best practice also focuses on creating an inclusive culture where parents and carers can continue to progress in their careers without disadvantage. Organisations equip line managers with training and guidance to support employees before, during and after periods of leave, while employee networks

and peer communities provide additional advocacy, connection and support. Family-friendly policies are developed through consultation with employees and are regularly reviewed using workforce data, feedback and engagement insights. The strongest examples demonstrate a clear connection between family support and business outcomes, with evidence showing improved retention, better promotion rates among parents and carers, increased uptake of caring-related benefits by all genders, and higher levels of employee satisfaction, wellbeing and inclusion. Across entrants, 58% now offer paid leave for working carers and 94% provide bereavement leave for employees experiencing miscarriage, stillbirth or baby loss at any stage of pregnancy.

Best practice looked like:

- Enhanced family leave policies provide support across parenting, adoption, surrogacy, fertility treatment, neonatal care, miscarriage, baby loss and caring responsibilities.
- Family-related benefits are designed to be gender-neutral and inclusive of different family structures, helping to encourage shared caregiving responsibilities.



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- Paid leave is offered for working carers, supporting employees to balance work and caring commitments.
 - Bereavement leave is provided for employees experiencing miscarriage or baby loss at any stage of pregnancy.
 - Flexible working is available from the start of employment and includes hybrid working, part-time arrangements, job sharing and flexible hours.
 - Structured return-to-work support includes phased returns, coaching, manager contact during leave, buddy schemes and reintegration programmes.
 - Line managers receive training and practical guidance to support employees through parental leave, caring responsibilities and life transitions.
 - Employee networks and communities provide peer support, advocacy, education and opportunities to share lived experiences.
 - Organisations actively challenge stereotypes through inclusive communications, role modelling and awareness initiatives that normalise caring responsibilities for all genders.
 - The provision of paid carers leave that can be taken in hourly chunks if necessary.
 - Additional leave for moments that matter (e.g. first day of school), made available to all caregivers (parents, grandparents, step-parents).
 - Supporting the provision of childcare through interest-free nursery deposit loans, near-site nursery places and emergency backup care for children and elderly adults.
 - Training to help employees identify and mitigate stereotypes and microaggressions towards working carers.
 - Systematic data collection and monitoring of caregiver responsibilities, and how these interact with retention and promotion rates.
 - Removing the ‘claw back’ of enhanced pay should parents decide not to return to work, providing greater financial stability to new parents.
- BITC recommends that employers:**
- Consider care, in all its facets, a mainstream workplace issue, and recognise that the nature of caring responsibilities will change throughout an employee’s career.



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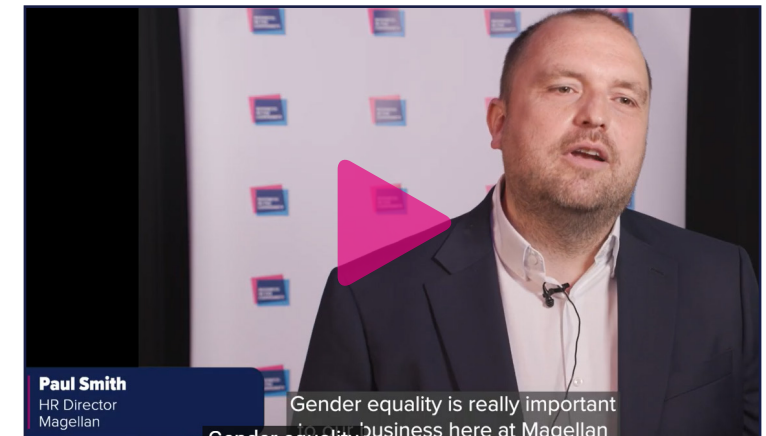


- Make caring policies gender-equal and take actionable steps to facilitate a workplace culture that supports this. Read our Who Cares? Report for more information on how to do this¹.
- Monitor the uptake of policies to support parents and carers to better track their impact and check for potential biases in the treatment of the group using these policies.
- Check annual performance reviews, compensation and promotion recommendations for any bias and penalties against parents and carers (including those on leave).
- Publish parental leave policies externally to demonstrate that supporting your people is a business priority (only 39% of entrants do this currently).
- Provide training for managers to help them hold sensitive conversations, implement reasonable adjustments and review arrangements regularly as circumstances change.
- Enhance provision of care leave such as additional family emergency leave, compassionate leave, time off for appointments and phased returns following periods of intensive care.

¹ [Who Cares? Transforming how we combine work with caring responsibilities', 2022, BITC.](#)



Magellan, a management consulting and technology group, has embedded caring responsibilities into its workplace culture by making them a visible, leadership-led priority. Its CEO actively promotes support for carers, encouraging employees to access available resources. Innovative initiatives, including the ability for all employees to work from home 100% during key school holidays, help working parents balance family commitments while sustaining career progression.





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Part 3: Areas in need of renewed focus

Employer responses in these areas point to where attention is most needed. These four question areas were the lowest scoring in 2026, falling behind other areas and showing either a reduction in average score compared to last year, or only negligible improvement.

7) Pay and Reward

As organisations prepare for increasing scrutiny around equal pay, pay discrimination, pay transparency and future reporting requirements, leading employers are strengthening governance arrangements through regular pay gap analysis, salary benchmarking and transparent pay structures. Across entrants, 98% conduct pay gap analysis, demonstrating widespread commitment to identifying, understanding and addressing the causes of pay disparities. Common approaches include publishing pay ranges, undertaking annual pay reviews with robust calibration processes, using objective criteria for pay increases and promotions, and removing salary history questions from recruitment processes to avoid perpetuating historic inequalities.

Leading organisations are also moving beyond headline gender pay gap reporting to undertake more detailed analysis of pay outcomes by seniority, function and demographic group. Whilst

98% conduct pay gap analysis, only 63% conduct a comprehensive intersectional analysis of pay trends, highlighting a significant opportunity for organisations to strengthen their understanding of how gender interacts with ethnicity, disability and other characteristics over time.

Best practice includes regular pay equity audits, transparent communication around reward decisions, employee engagement activities to understand perceptions of fairness, and linking leadership accountability to pay equity outcomes. Entrants provided impact data from the last two years which showed that these approaches contribute to narrowing gender pay gaps, increasing representation of women in leadership and promotion outcomes, improving employee understanding of pay processes, and strengthening employee confidence that reward decisions are fair and transparent.

As the UK government prepares to require organisations with 250 employees or more to publish gender pay gap and menopause action plans from Spring 2027, it was positive to see that 80% of this year’s entrants are already externally publishing gender pay gap action plans. However, relatively few entrants are action planning across the full range of workforce characteristics, suggesting that intersectional action planning remains underdeveloped, even among organisations with mature approaches to gender pay gap reporting.



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BITC welcomes the Government's commitment to introduce mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting for large employers, following the 2025 consultation and the publication of its response in March 2026, and urges ministers to bring forward the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill so these proposals become legislation and drive meaningful, accountable action on workplace inequality.

Best practice looked like:

- Conduct comprehensive intersectional pay gap analysis to understand the reasons for pay gaps, monitor disparities and identify areas requiring intervention.
- Transparent salary bands and clear pay structures provide employees with visibility of progression opportunities and reward frameworks.
- Regular salary benchmarking against external market data helps ensure pay decisions remain fair, competitive and consistent.
- Structured pay review and calibration processes reduce subjectivity and support equitable reward decisions across teams.
- Automated pay equity checks and regular audits are used to identify and address unexplained pay differences.
- Many organisations no longer rely on salary history when determining starting salaries, helping

to prevent historic pay inequalities from being replicated, although 63% of entrants still request salary history during recruitment.

- Detailed analysis of promotion, performance and pay outcomes is used to identify potential bias and improve equity across demographic groups.
- Employee surveys, focus groups and transparent communication channels help improve understanding of pay decisions and build trust in reward processes.
- Some organisations have strengthened accountability by linking executive remuneration and leadership objectives to pay equity and diversity outcomes.

BITC recommends that employers:

- Monitor and publish pay gaps through regular pay audits, including gender, ethnicity, disability and other workforce characteristics.
- Develop time bound targets and action plans to address pay gaps, with senior-level accountability for driving action – ideally linking progress to performance and reward for executive leadership.
- Take an explicitly intersectional approach to assessing pay and rewards, moving beyond using single lens assessments to combining multiple data sets.



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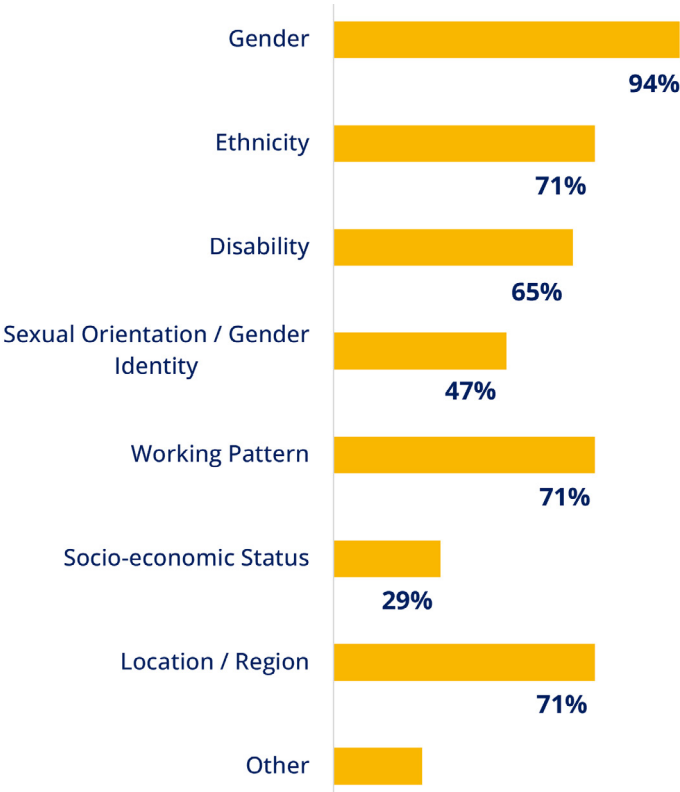


- Make pay and reward data and policies more transparent internally and externally, supported by internal communications, engagement with employee networks and extra support provided to line managers if necessary.
- Voluntarily publish menopause and gender pay gap action plans, ahead of the mandatory reporting date of April 2027, and set evidence targets for measurement.
- Consider how pay equity checks can be automated and flagged for human review.



Mott MacDonald, a global, employee-owned engineering, management and development consultancy, is committed to fair and transparent pay. This has helped to reduce its Gender Pay Gap by more than a fifth between 2019 and 2025. Through salary benchmarking, transparent reward processes, senior promotion balanced scorecards and strengthened governance, it supports equitable progression, with women receiving 42% of promotions against a 35% headcount and reporting strong levels of engagement and recognition.

Types of Pay Gap Analysis Conducted by Organisations





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8) Social Mobility

Best practice in social mobility and socio-economic inclusion is characterised by a strategic, data-led approach that tackles barriers throughout the employee lifecycle and extends beyond the organisation into supply chains, communities and talent pipelines.

Leading organisations recognise that gender inequality often intersects with socio-economic disadvantage and therefore use workforce and socio-economic data to identify where barriers exist and target interventions accordingly. This includes pay uplifts for lower-paid employees, financial wellbeing support, qualification funding, mentoring programmes, inclusive recruitment pathways and targeted outreach into communities with lower levels of social mobility. Transparency is a key enabler, with organisations increasingly using accessible dashboards and reporting tools to monitor representation plus progression, pay and engagement outcomes across social groups, while empowering leaders and employees to track progress and hold the organisation accountable.

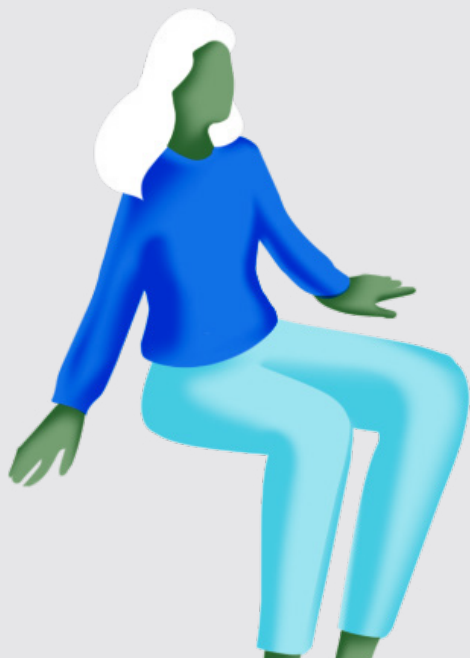
Best practice also includes influencing wider systems of inequality through supplier diversity programmes, social value commitments, inclusive procurement standards and partnerships that support underrepresented

groups. Successful organisations combine outreach, work experience, returner programmes and mentoring with targeted leadership development opportunities for women from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Workforce data is used to identify structural barriers, including occupational segregation and progression gaps, leading to evidence-based interventions that improve access to opportunity. Entrants provided impact data from the last two years which showed that these approaches have strengthened talent pipelines, increased promotion rates for employees from disadvantaged backgrounds, improved representation in senior roles, enhanced employee confidence and created measurable social value for both individuals and communities.

In terms of average scores of entrants, progress in this area has stalled since last year and there remains room for further support for women in low paid roles particularly in the current tight labour market and given evidence of the impact of AI on the availability of lower skilled work², which is likely to disproportionately impact women.

² [The Business Case for Gender Equity, April 2025, BITC](#)





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**AI & lower skilled roles:**

Of the 2026 entrants, 77% said they are considering how AI interacts with equality, diversity and inclusion. This is lower than last year when 90% of entrants responded positively to this question, indicating that this is not yet consistent across employers.

This year, entrants were additionally asked to provide details of what they are doing in relation to this. In these responses, a small but notable group of employers are actively testing, monitoring or governing AI for differential impact across workforce groups. Examples include:

- Bias and fairness audits.
- Outcome testing across groups.
- Demographic analysis of AI confidence and access.
- Provider reviews for bias testing in HR technology.
- Governance processes that require fairness, human impact and equality considerations before deployment.

Some employers specifically referenced monitoring by gender, age, ethnicity, neurodiversity and sexual orientation, while others considered the implications of AI for disabled workers, carers, parents, people experiencing menopause, part-time workers and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

All employers should now take active steps to safeguard the employment and skills of those in lower-skilled roles, invest in accessible AI skills and confidence-building for all employees, and monitor whether lower paid women are being disproportionately exposed either to job displacement or exclusion from the benefits of generative AI.

Best practice looked like:

- Pay uplifts and targeted financial wellbeing initiatives support lower-paid employees and help address socio-economic and gender inequalities.
- Socio-economic data is collected and analysed to identify progression barriers, representation gaps and social mobility 'cold spots'.
- Accessible workforce dashboards provide transparency around diversity, inclusion, engagement, progression and pay outcomes.
- Supplier diversity programmes and ESG collaborations encourage inclusive procurement and strengthen opportunities for women-owned, diverse-owned and social enterprise suppliers.
- Social mobility initiatives include mentoring, qualification support, career-readiness programmes and targeted development opportunities for underrepresented groups.
- Outreach activities with schools, colleges and communities help broaden access to careers and challenge gender and socio-economic stereotypes.
- Returner programmes and reintegration pathways support women and others returning to employment following career breaks.



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- Reciprocal mentoring and sponsorship programmes increase leaders' understanding of structural barriers and improve progression opportunities for underrepresented talent.
- Inclusive recruitment pathways support candidates facing significant barriers to employment, including those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

BITC recommends that employers:

- Pay the national living wage themselves and only work with contractors and suppliers who do this too.
- Set and monitor targets to increase the diversity of their supply chains.
- Recognise that across their workforce, including those working via contractors and suppliers, there will be women experiencing low pay and take action accordingly via targeted development, promotion and other career progression opportunities.
- Are as supportive as possible in providing working arrangements, development opportunities and access to help and support (for example, via Employee Assistance Programmes) to help retain and progress socially mobile employees.



Professional services firm, **PwC**, demonstrates a strong, data-led approach to understanding the diversity of its workforce, using insights to target action effectively. A broad range of initiatives support access, fair pay and career development, including paid work experience, refugee support, employability programmes and social mobility outreach. Strong external engagement, research partnerships and a place-based approach further strengthen impact and reach.



Network Rail, which owns, operates, maintains and develops Britain's railways, is committed to driving equity across its workforce and supply chain through robust supplier standards, transparent diversity data and targeted inclusion initiatives. Its EDI dashboard is accessible to all 40,000+ colleagues, while programmes promoting inclusive recruitment, leadership mentoring and career development help create opportunities for underrepresented groups. Its impact spans across the rail sector through programmes targeting social mobility and youth unemployment, ensuring background does not limit access to and success within rail careers.



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9) Strategy and Objectives

Best practice in strategy and objectives is characterised by gender equity being embedded as a core business priority rather than operating as a standalone diversity initiative. Leading organisations integrate gender equity objectives into corporate strategy, business planning, workforce planning and people processes, ensuring accountability exists at every level of the organisation. Clear representation targets, supported by robust governance structures, executive sponsorship and regular performance reviews, help maintain focus and momentum.

High-performing organisations use real-time dashboards, scorecards and workforce analytics to monitor recruitment, progression, retention, pay and engagement outcomes, enabling leaders to identify barriers quickly and implement targeted interventions. Importantly, many organisations are also adopting an intersectional approach, recognising that gender does not operate in isolation and analysing outcomes across ethnicity, age, disability, caring responsibilities and other characteristics.

A notable theme within this year’s entrants was that, while many organisations continue to demonstrate strong commitment and sophisticated approaches to gender equity, average scores trended downwards,

suggesting that maintaining momentum remains a challenge in a changing social, economic and political environment. This is the second consecutive year that scores for Strategy & Objectives show a decline, and it is now one of the lowest performing areas assessed, having previously held a consistently high rank compared to other areas.

Best practice organisations responded to the challenging context by strengthening leadership accountability, enhancing employee voice mechanisms, refining targets using data-driven insights and embedding inclusion into leadership objectives, performance measures and reward frameworks. Effective strategies are informed by employee feedback, external benchmarking and regular review processes, ensuring they remain relevant and responsive to workforce needs. Entrants provided impact data from the last two years which shows that these approaches have contributed to improvements in women’s representation at senior levels, stronger leadership accountability, increased workforce data transparency and higher levels of employee trust and engagement.

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Best practice looked like:

- Gender equality is embedded within overall business strategy, culture frameworks and people processes rather than operating as a separate initiative.
- Clear, measurable representation targets are established and regularly reviewed by senior leadership and Boards.
- Executive sponsorship and leadership accountability are reinforced through performance objectives, incentive plans and governance structures.
- Real-time dashboards and scorecards monitor recruitment, progression, retention, pay and representation outcomes.
- Workforce data is analysed through an intersectional lens to identify barriers affecting different groups of women and inform targeted interventions.
- Employee networks, listening sessions, engagement surveys and employee feedback mechanisms directly influence strategic priorities and action planning.

- Inclusion and equity metrics are reviewed alongside operational and financial performance to ensure sustained organisational focus.
- Leaders receive training and guidance on inclusive leadership, bias mitigation, equitable decision-making and gender equity objectives.
- Local action plans are developed using organisational data, enabling business areas to address specific challenges while aligning to broader strategic goals.

BITC recommends that employers:

- Continue to embed and communicate gender equality strategies in line with core business objectives.
- Create and monitor strategies with intersectionality in mind, with targets, action plans and initiatives outlined for individual groups as necessary.
- Use feedback from workplace interventions to actively inform strategy development to capitalise on past learnings ensure these are fed back into functional/regional action plans.





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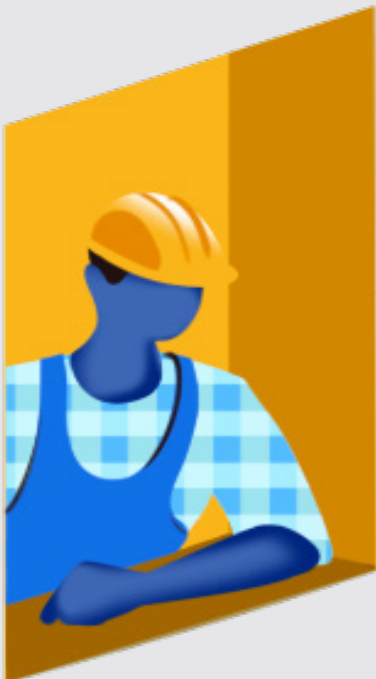
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- Organisations continue to embed accountability by linking targets and objectives to senior leader remuneration, alongside line manager and employee objectives across all levels.
- Gender-related targets are published externally to drive transparency and further accountability.
- Create Gender Pay Gap and menopause action plans, linked to business objectives, and publish these to drive transparency and accountability.



XPS Group, a UK-based consulting and administration business that specialises in pensions, employee benefits and insurance consulting, has a gender equity strategy that is driving measurable progress through clear targets, robust accountability and an intersectional approach. With female senior management representation at 39%, the ambitious target for the 2028 Women in Finance Charter is currently under review. Data-led monitoring, inclusive leadership training and business-wide action plans have contributed to increased female representation, balanced recruitment, and 51% of promotions being awarded to women in FY25.





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10) Sexual Harassment

Best practice in the prevention of sexual harassment extends beyond policy compliance and focuses on creating a culture where respect, psychological safety and accountability are embedded throughout the employee experience. While many organisations responded quickly to the requirements introduced through the Worker Protection Act in 2024, the 2026 entries demonstrate that this progress has stalled, with a notable shift towards compliance-focused activity rather than the more comprehensive, preventative approaches seen in previous years. The strongest submissions went beyond mandatory policies and training by embedding sexual harassment prevention within organisational culture, leadership expectations, employee engagement and day-to-day behaviours. This included clear behavioural standards, scenario-based learning, active bystander training, visible leadership commitment, and ongoing communication reinforcing expected conduct in both workplace and social environments.

Leading organisations also recognised that effective prevention requires robust reporting, investigation and governance processes alongside cultural interventions. Best practice included multiple

confidential reporting channels, strong anti-retaliation protections, specialist support for those raising concerns, regular analysis of reporting data and transparent communication about outcomes and lessons learned. Organisations used employee surveys, focus groups and case analysis to identify trends and emerging risks, enabling them to implement targeted interventions where required. Those demonstrating the strongest impact reported high levels of psychological safety, confidence in reporting mechanisms, trust in leadership to act appropriately, and evidence that employee feedback was driving continuous improvement in both policy and practice.

The forthcoming legal changes through the Employment Rights Act (2025) will place more emphasis on proactive prevention, requiring employers to take ‘all’ reasonable steps to prevent workplace sexual harassment and third-party harassment. It is therefore important for all employers to consider this as a sustained cultural and organisational responsibility, not a one-off policy or compliance response.



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**Best practice looked like:**

- Sexual harassment prevention is embedded within organisational culture, values and behavioural expectations rather than addressed solely through policy compliance.
- Policies clearly define unacceptable behaviour, including third-party harassment, digital communications, social media interactions and conduct at workplace social events.
- Mandatory training includes sexual harassment awareness, active bystander intervention, respect at work and scenario-based learning using realistic workplace situations.
- Managers and leaders receive enhanced training on prevention, escalation procedures, investigations and their responsibilities as role models.
- Multiple confidential reporting routes are available, including HR, specialist advisors, dedicated reporting lines and independent whistleblowing mechanisms.
- Strong anti-retaliation policies protect individuals who raise concerns, supported by ongoing monitoring following reports.

- Dedicated support is available for those affected, including wellbeing services, employee assistance programmes, trained advisors and pastoral support.
- Organisations analyse reporting data, employee survey results and case trends to identify risks and inform continuous improvement activity.
- Regular communications, awareness campaigns and leadership messaging reinforce behavioural expectations and encourage reporting.
- Organisational impact includes high levels of psychological safety, increased confidence in speaking up, strong trust in managers to intervene appropriately, improved awareness of reporting processes and more effective identification and management of harassment risks across the organisation.

BITC recommends that employers:

- Take a more deliberate approach to address fear of reprisal that may lead people experiencing sexual harassment not to report, for example:
 - Sharing the number of incidents reported quarterly with your people, including information on how they were addressed.

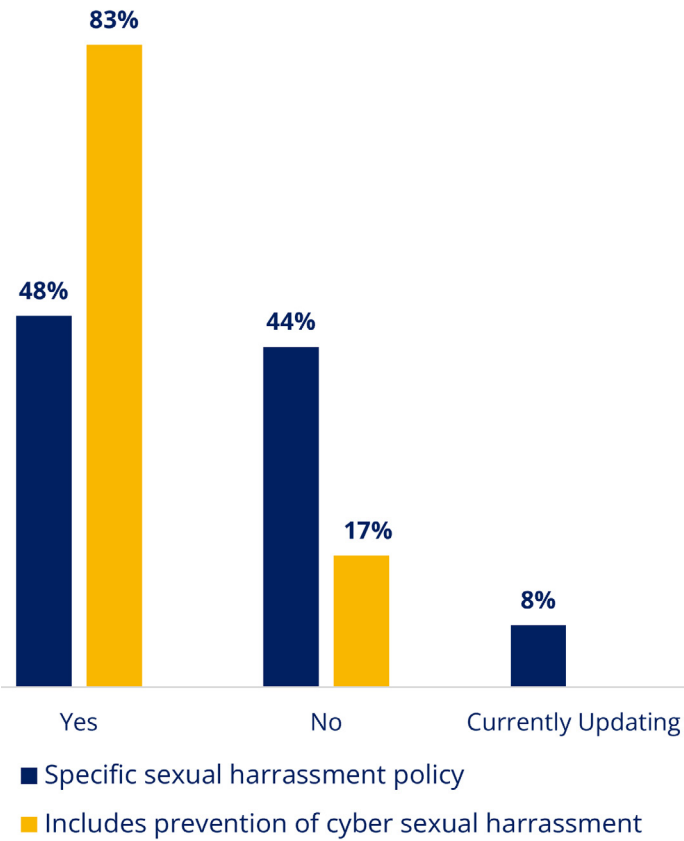


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- Sharing case studies of previous incidents, including how they were addressed.
 - Close monitoring of exit interview material and dedicated survey questions.
 - Create a direct reporting line to senior leaders to help maintain accountability on this issue.
 - Ensure an anti-retaliation policy is in place that includes proactive support for individuals who do report.
 - Ensure any barriers to reporting are thought through and addressed, for example working from home, reporting into a different team.
 - Making available and promoting independent legal support for people who report.
- In line with changes to be introduced under the Employment Rights Act 2025, do not use Non-Disclosure Agreements in cases where employees have been subjected to harassment, sexual harassment or discrimination in the workplace.
 - Strengthen the prevention of cyber harassment in hybrid/digital working environments.
 - Include dedicated questions in surveys to assess experience of third-party harassment.

Sexual Harrassment Policy Coverage





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Academic publishing company, **Emerald Publishing**, combines a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment with mandatory training, multiple reporting channels and strong wellbeing support. Leaders are held accountable for creating safe, inclusive workplaces, while proactive risk mitigation and bystander training build confidence to challenge inappropriate behaviour. In 2025, 92% felt comfortable speaking up.



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nationalgrid

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NORTON ROSE FULBRIGHT

NetworkRail

Obetisk

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Pinsent Masons

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shaw trust

Shell

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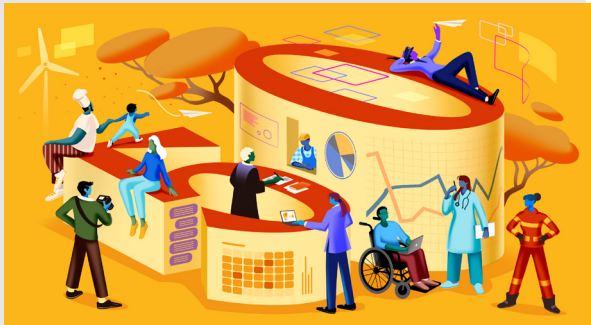
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OUR ‘ONES TO WATCH’ 2026

For the first time in 2026, we identified three entrants as ‘One-to-Watch’, recognising their strong commitment and momentum on workplace gender equality. These employers were new entrants who narrowly missed making the Top 50 list, and demonstrated meaningful action, sustained focus and the potential to progress towards leading practice, making them strong contenders to feature on future lists.





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RESOURCES

Resources from Business in the Community to support your work on workplace equality and inclusion.

Inclusive workplace culture and wellbeing

- Inclusive cultures: [Everyday Inclusion: what really works?](#)
- Employee networks: [Steps to Start and Run an Employee Network](#)
- Neurodiversity: [The Neurodiversity at Work How to Guide](#)
- Menopause toolkit: [Menopause in the Workplace](#)

Flexible working, caring and family support

- Flexible working: [Inclusive Flexible Working Toolkit](#)
- Supporting carers: [Supporting Carers in the Workplace](#)
- Who cares report: [Who Cares? report: combining work with caring responsibilities](#)
- Parental leave case study: [Equal Parental Leave: Aviva and de-gendering care](#)

Harassment and safety

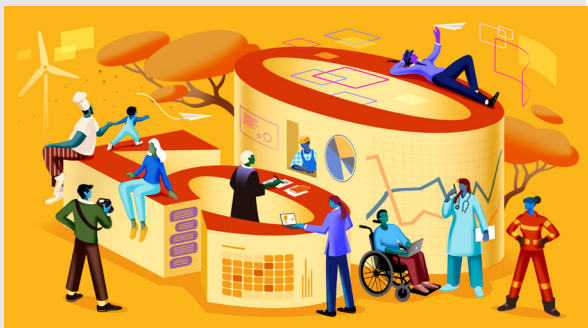
- Domestic abuse: [Domestic Abuse: a toolkit for employers – Guide For Employers](#)
- Sexual Harassment guide: [Workplace Sexual Harassment](#)

Data & technology/AI

- AI Framework: [Responsible Business in an AI World](#)
- Collecting and reporting on data: [The First Step in Creating Data Driven Diversity Strategies](#)

Social mobility and inclusive opportunity

- Social mobility: [Advancing Social Mobility in Scotland](#)
- Supply chains: [Building Fairer, More Inclusive Supply Chains](#)





Business in the Community

137 Shepherdess Walk
London N1 7RQ

www.bitc.org.uk
020 7566 8650

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