

mind the gap

women in rail.



an expanding

industry.

Women make up 16% of the rail industry and **female engineers in the sector make up just 4.4%¹ of the total talent.** In our recent study of over 5,000 workers across the construction, property, engineering and rail sectors, we set out to explore the reasons why women remain in the minority.

The rail sector is growing. The industry has a net worth of £39bn and the number of passengers has more than doubled since privatisation to 1.7 billion journeys per year.² With this comes more lines, more trains and the need for more workers. NSAR (National Skills Academy Rail) have warned that the impact of a diminishing talent pool could cost upwards of £1 billion to the economy and it is estimated that the shortage requires 10,000 more entrants into the sector over the next five years.³

With this in mind, it is now increasingly integral to nurture and support those from all backgrounds into an ever-expanding sector. A workforce that is just 16% female is not one that is fully utilising the talent pool - especially when women make up 51% of the population.

41%

of rail workers have never had a female manager.

A further 15% believe there are too few female role models in senior positions. There are a number of contributing factors, such as discrimination, an unconscious bias and responsibilities outside work. One respondent commented that:

“Senior positions are not considered suitable as a job share or as part-time which is what many women need as working mothers.”

By denying seniority to part-time and flexi hour contracts, employers are essentially penalising women for having caring duties outside of work, despite the fact that this is often an unavoidable part of motherhood. Instead of making the glass-ceiling lower for mothers, we have to work at breaking it entirely.



Diversity and discrimination.

Workplace and gender discrimination can take many forms and can present itself in various ways. 17% reported being passed over for a promotion and 15% reported they had been passed over for projects or work - something that could impact the skills shortage in the future.

Organisational culture also has a part to play. Staff parties and recreation can play an important role when it comes to team bonding. However, managers must be aware that this could cause more conflict than cohesion if the activities are not inclusive.

13% said they felt excluded from activities due to the perceived male aspect of them and not included in some office conversations.

If organisations are not aware of these dynamics, it could contribute to a wider imbalance in their workforce.

1/3

of female respondents reported having received comments or inappropriate behaviour from a male colleague.

A factor that employers need to consider in the recruitment and selection process is unconscious bias. Often without realising, managers are quick to hire in their own image, and tend to be drawn to people that are similar to them. Organisations need to promote ways to ensure a more diverse and inclusive workforce; paving the way for the future. This will help balance the gender of the workforce and improve inappropriate behaviour.



Almost half of women in rail have experienced gender discrimination in the workplace.

staying on track.




When asked why women leave the rail industry, having too few female role models in senior positions (15%), discrimination (12%) and the glass-ceiling (11%) were all considered factors. A further 15% of respondents pointed towards a male dominated culture as a reason women might leave the industry. One respondent mentioned that despite an increase of women entering traditionally masculine fields,

“it takes a strong woman to fit into these roles as these areas are still quite male dominated. A strong backbone is needed when working within this sort of environment.”

This can be incredibly damaging for women trying to build their careers in a culture that hasn't been fully welcoming or accepting of their gender - especially when 14% reported being excluded from male conversations and social events.

Recommending rail.

When asked what might convince women to remain in or join the industry, the results were optimistic and showed that women believe there are measures that can be introduced to help make the workplace more female friendly. Furthermore, 86% of women responded that they would recommend the industry to female friends and family members, showing they are confident about equality in the future of the sector.

-  17% - equal pay
-  16% - flexible working hours
-  15% - culture change

Equal pay seems like an obvious incentive but the gender pay gap can present itself in ways that are slightly less obvious. As aforementioned, 17% of the women we surveyed believed they had been passed over for a promotion and 15% reported they had been passed over for important projects. Whilst pay across positions could be equal, if women are not receiving the same opportunities as their male counterparts, or if men are receiving promotions at a faster rate, women are at a disadvantage. Measures need to be put in place to monitor progression within a business and address any issues regarding diversity in the process.

steaming ahead:



the future is female.

Employers in the rail industry are failing to support the transition for women into managerial roles.

This makes it difficult for women to gain the help, motivation and role models that can be important elements when building a career in such a male dominated sector.

It is undeniable that a change needs to take place and whilst these results may seem daunting, transformation may be closer than thought. When asked whether having a female manager would affect their working day, 77% of respondents said it would be the same and 17% believed it would improve, showing that whilst people may not be aware of the issue, they are not opposed to it. It is now time for industry leaders to work on inclusion whilst attaining this talent that is essential to their business.

77%

of respondents are open to having a female manager.

4 out of 5 women unaware of initiatives to support the transition to a senior leadership position.



advice from
the top.





“Rail has always had a ‘macho’, male dominated connotation. In over 10 years of construction recruitment I have seen more and more women entering the industry and have seen women promoted into senior positions, which is refreshing as it shows the industry is beginning to remove barriers. Businesses need to analyse why women would leave the industry. Most importantly, we all need to make sure that construction is a career path that both women and men enjoy being a part of.”

Sarah Sidey, head of strategic accounts, Randstad CPE.

“There are enough events and initiatives going on in the industry, in many different sectors so the door is definitely open for women. In the six years of working with construction firms, I have seen an improvement around women in the industry. The key is in building rapport and trusting relationships.”

Pam Sherwood, health and safety manager.

“At a time when equality and diversity is making leaps forward, rail is playing catch up. Companies need to band together to build an environment that nurtures and rewards successful, hard-working women to move up the career ladder. Though the number of women entering construction is slowly rising, retention is a key area that needs development. Organisations that cannot retain, develop and enhance their female workforce will be missing out on key skills, new ideas and ways of working to help keep the industry driving forward. It is essential that we future proof the sector by taking the right steps now”

Owen Goodhead, managing director, Randstad CPE.



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1* <https://womeninrail.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/WR-Industry-Survey-Report-December-2015.pdf>

2* <http://www.railtechnologymagazine.com/Rail-News/skills-gap-costing-industry-1bn-a-year-nsar-claim>

3* https://www.nsar.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Rail-Sector-Skills-Delivery-Plan_2017_V8.pdf



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