the UKRC

advancing gender
equality in science,
engineering and technology

women mean business

why gender equality is essential in science, engineering and technology

Welcome

At Atkins we believe that we succeed to the extent that we are able to attract and retain the most talented professionals in their respective fields and provide an environment in which they are able to apply their skills and experience in addressing our clients' varied needs. In what remains a competitive environment for the best staff, being an employer of choice who appeals to as diverse a range of people as possible, is crucial to achieving this.

The proportion of women and people from black and minority ethnic communities in the workforce grows year on year, a trend that is expected to continue, and yet this increase is still not reflected in many organisations in science, engineering, technology and the built environment. This guide highlights the impact and importance of that diversity, not just in addressing skills shortages, but also in enhancing organisational performance.

To be successful and sustainable, any changes need to be fully justified by a robust business case and be appropriate to the needs of your organisation. This guide draws upon a wide range of research and good practice to help you identify the drivers for improving gender equality in your own organisation.

Alun Griffiths
Group HR Director, Atkins
Chair of the Industry Board of the UKRC

The UKRC is the Government's lead organisation for the provision of advice, services and policy consultation regarding the under-representation of women in science, engineering, technology and the built environment (SET).

The UKRC works with employers; professional bodies; education institutions; women's organisations and networks; policy institutes; sector skills councils; the government and many others to promote gender equality in SET. It also offers tailored services and support for women at all career stages.

Contents

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for all types of organisation in science, engineering, technology and the built environment, including:

- small, medium and large employers
- private sector businesses
- public sector organisations
- further and higher education providers
- professional and research institutions
- careers advice and related agencies
- apprenticeship and work experience organisations
- trade unions
- enterprise agencies and incubators
- government departments and agencies

It provides key information for:

- chief executives and board members
- senior managers
- human resources and diversity professionals
- contract and procurement managers
- trade union representatives
- mentors, coaches and trainers
- politicians and policy makers

How will it help you?

This guide sets out the reasons why increasing numbers of employers in science, engineering, technology and the built environment are actively addressing issues of gender equality, and outlines some of the benefits.

It lists some of the steps you can take to create a work environment which is diverse, skilled and committed – and includes a fair representation of women. It draws upon extensive research and best practice to help you develop and communicate the business case for gender equality in your own organisation.

"Skills shortages, an ageing workforce profile and a decline in the overall number of school leavers are all key drivers behind the need to create a more diverse workforce within our sector. It also makes sound business sense to have a workforce that reflects its customer base including women and ethnic minorities."

Kevin Dowd,
Operations Manager, SummitSkills

Why a guide on the business case for gender equality?

The steps that lead to gender equality within organisations also promote good employment practice and an inclusive environment for **all** employees.

The impact of not taking these steps disadvantages women more than men.

A growing body of evidence demonstrates the economic value of women as employees, business leaders, consumers and entrepreneurs. Improving gender equality therefore makes good business sense. This is of particular importance in science, engineering, technology and the built environment, where the representation of women remains low. These sectors are vital to our future: they need and deserve the most talented workforce.

**The aim of this guide is to summarise the information currently in the public domain that is of most value to employers.
We highlight seven reasons why gender equality is essential for forward-looking organisations.**

We hope you find this guide of interest and that it stimulates positive action and debate in your organisation. We look forward to working with any and all organisations concerned to build gender equality.

Who's behind the guide?

This guide is published by the UKRC. The UKRC aims to improve significantly the participation and position of women in science, engineering and technology occupations, to benefit the future productivity of the UK and the lifetime earnings and career aspirations of women.

The UKRC is the UK's leading centre providing information and advisory services to businesses and organisations in these sectors, and supporting women entering, returning and progressing in these fields.

UKRC products and services include:

- CEO Charter
- SET Fair Standard
- Culture Analysis Tool (CAT)
- focus groups
- gender equality consultancy
- gender equality training
- workplace champion training
- mentoring schemes
- work placements and support for women returners
- Connect women's networks
- GetSET women
- professional development opportunities for women
- statistical inquiry service

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Gender equality matters – it values and nurtures talent, builds a more inclusive and diverse workforce and can lead to better business performance.

7 reasons for gender equality

1 Become an employer of choice

It is not always easy for organisations in science, engineering, technology and the built environment (SET) to attract and retain high calibre, qualified staff. In 2008, almost half of those qualified in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects chose not to work in SET occupations[1]. It therefore makes sense for an organisation to be an inclusive employer, appealing to as diverse a range of people as possible. Strengthening gender equality will also increase the probability of your organisation recruiting the best people for the job, rather than just the best of the traditionally available pool.

Case study: National Grid

Since 2004, National Grid has developed and implemented a comprehensive inclusion and diversity strategy. Key elements include:

- changes to its recruitment strategy (particularly to encourage more women into engineering roles)
- family provisions and flexible working policies that go beyond statutory requirements
- a global women's network
- women's development programmes
- mentoring and work-shadowing opportunities
- inclusion and diversity training for all managers

Improving gender representation is also built into the company's appraisal, development and succession planning processes.

The company was named as one of 'The Times Top 50 Where Women Want to Work' in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009, won the 'Working Families and UKRC Women in SET Award' in 2006 and was one of the 'Top Employers for Working Families' in 2009. The company also achieved platinum plus ranking in the 2008 Business in the Community Corporate Responsibility Index.

Both men and women increasingly expect to be able to combine a fulfilling career with family life and other interests[2]. A series of sector graduate surveys in 2008[3] revealed that:

- In the science, engineering and construction sector surveys, respondents considered work-life balance and training and development opportunities to be the most important factors in choosing an employer.
- For IT sector respondents, these two factors ranked highest after salary/benefits.

These factors are particularly important to women, who still tend to take on the majority of domestic caring responsibilities, and for whom traditional training opportunities can be difficult to access when working flexibly. Other significant factors which influence women's choice of employer include a friendly and welcoming working environment, fair treatment and equal opportunities to progress. Organisations that can transform their culture and working practices to meet these challenges will have a significant competitive advantage over those who do not.

"In 2004 we recognised that the profile of our organisation did not reflect the composition of the communities in which we operate and, over the next ten years the communities we serve will become significantly more diverse. We need to attract from the broadest population if we are to find and develop the necessary skills to ensure the sustainability of our company and the achievement of our strategy for growth.

A critical factor in our success was being viewed as an 'employer of choice' and in particular we wanted to create a place where women want to work."

Steve Holliday,
Chief Executive, National Grid

"In our experience an organisation that succeeds as an employer of choice is one that creates a strong inclusive culture that allows good equality and diversity policy to work in practice; one where all employees, both women and men, feel empowered to alter the way they work to balance their career aspirations and the demands of work with their home life. We hear repeatedly from employers the benefits that ensue in the form of increased staff commitment, productivity and innovation."

Jane Clarke
Assistant Director, the UKRC

2 Improve business performance

There is a growing body of evidence indicating that improving gender equality leads to better organisational performance. Employing a more diverse workforce brings a wider range of talents, skills and perspectives into an organisation, and this can translate into significant business benefits.

Research by McKinsey and Company into performance at top European companies has shown that organisational performance increases sharply once a threshold of at least three women on management committees is reached (on boards with an average membership of ten people). Below this threshold, no significant difference in performance was observed. It is thought that once this threshold is reached board dynamics become more collaborative[4,5].

Another McKinsey study of European listed companies revealed that those with the highest level of gender diversity in top management positions outperformed their peers in terms of return on equity (11.4 per cent compared to 10.3 per cent), operating profit (EBIT 11.1 per cent compared to 5.8 per cent) and stock price growth (64 per cent compared to 47 per cent between 2005 and 2007)[4].

In a US study by Catalyst it was shown that Fortune 500 companies with three or more women on their boards had stronger than average profits based on the following financial measures: return on equity (16.7 per cent compared to 11.5 per cent), return on sales (16.8 per cent compared to 11.5 per cent) and return on invested capital (10 per cent compared to 6.2 per cent)[6].

A major Canadian study has linked board diversity with good governance credentials including more attention to audit and risk oversight and control, and greater consideration for the needs of a variety of stakeholders (Conference Board of Canada, 2002)[7]. A US study showed that gender-diverse boards provided stricter monitoring of their performance (Adams and Ferreira, 2008)[8].

"If staff are treated well, customers are treated well…Over a two year period after we made the culture change our turnover doubled and our profits tripled."

Gerry Farrelly,
Director, Farrelly Facilities and Engineering Ltd[9]

Organisations which promote good diversity practices have found direct links between this and a more motivated and productive workforce. This in turn can be translated into a more effective and high quality customer service, increased turnover and profits.

Recent mathematically-based research has found that diverse groups of people of average ability tend to outperform homogeneous groups at solving complex tasks, even where the homogenous groups are more capable[10]. In addition, research carried out on the impact of gender on the innovative potential of teams concluded that having 50:50 proportions of men and women produced the most innovative teams[11]. Organisations should therefore benefit from actively promoting diversity in teams that are assigned to tackle difficult issues, such as new product or strategic development.

"The level of a firm's diversity should be thought of in the same way as you'd think of any other strategic variable. It's not about morality or fairness or doing the right thing; it's not even about hiring smart people. Instead, it's about honing a competitive weapon. Diversity is strategy."

Scott Page,
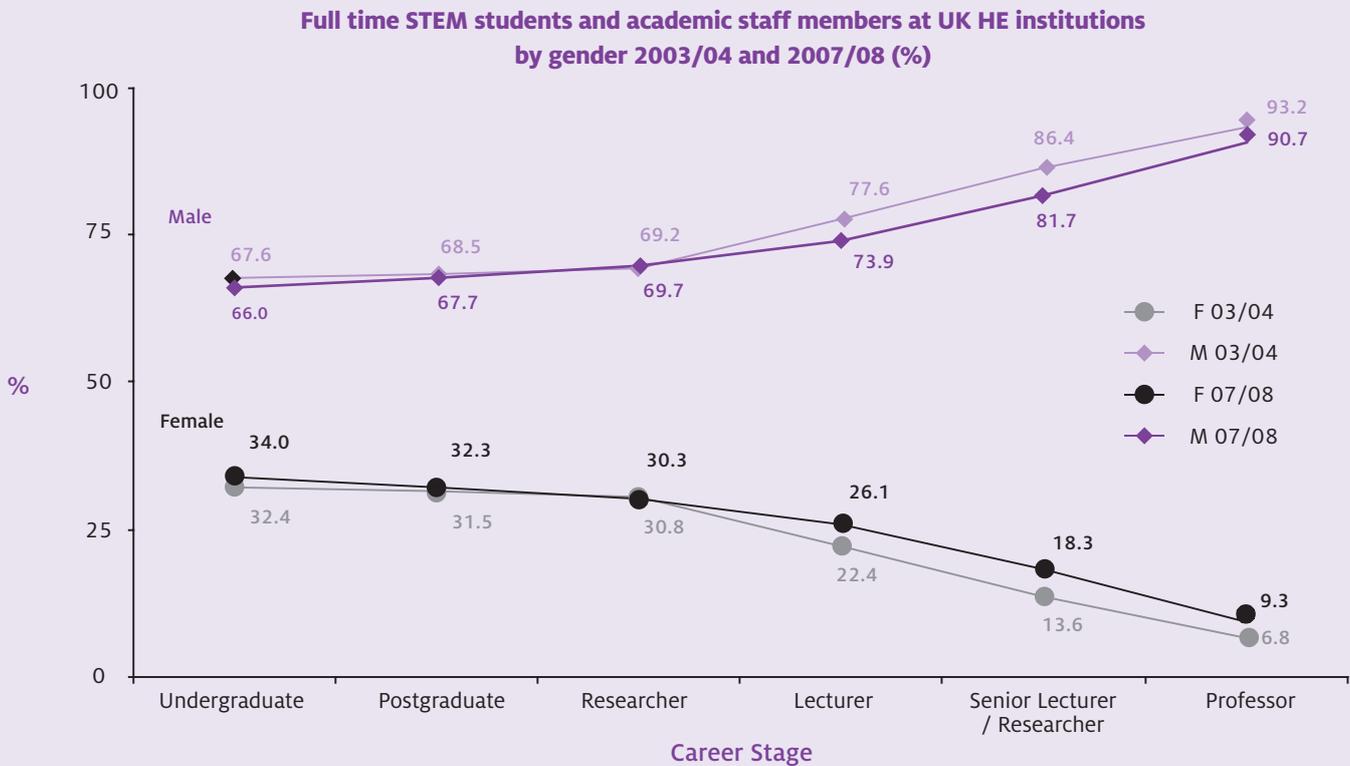Professor of Complex Systems,
University of Michigan[10]

There is also evidence that women are making a greater proportion of purchasing decisions, both as consumers and in business procurement, than ever before - a trend that is expected to continue[13]. An organisation whose workforce reflects its market will be better able to understand and anticipate the needs of its customers, translating into more successful products, services and marketing.

"I have a client who actually lost a very big piece of business because the target came back to them after they'd done enormous proposals and said 'well look, we'd love to give you this piece of business but unfortunately you don't have any senior women on the team and our senior women are not too happy about that so we have to give it to your competitor'."

Maureen Frank,
Managing Director, Emberin[12]

3 Retain knowledge and experience

Not only do fewer women than men choose to enter the science, engineering and technology sectors, there is also a disproportionate amount of women that leave these sectors at each stage of the career ladder, a phenomenon often called 'the leaky pipeline'. The graph below illustrates this occurrence in higher education careers. The experience of the UKRC is that this is also true of many other SET organisations, both public and private sector.

Full time STEM students and academic staff members at UK HE institutions by gender 2003/04 and 2007/08 (%)

Career Stage	M 03/04	M 07/08	F 03/04	F 07/08
Undergraduate	67.6	66.0	32.4	34.0
Postgraduate	68.5	67.7	31.5	32.3
Researcher	69.2	69.7	30.8	30.3
Lecturer	77.6	73.9	22.4	26.1
Senior Lecturer / Researcher	86.4	81.7	13.6	18.3
Professor	93.2	90.7	6.8	9.3

Legend:
- F 03/04
- M 03/04
- F 07/08
- M 07/08

Male / Female / % / Career Stage

Secondary analysis by UKRC. Data source: Student data: HESA (2005 and 2009) Students in Higher Education Institutions 2003/04 and 2007/08. Cheltenham, HESA. Academic staff data: HESA (2005 and 2009) Resources of Higher Education Institutions 2003/04 and 2007/08. Cheltenham, HESA.

The overall impact of the leaky pipeline can be seen in the government labour force statistics which show that in 2008 there were almost 340,000 women with SET qualifications choosing to work in other sectors and over 97,000 who were not working[1]. This represents a huge loss to both SET organisations and the economy as a whole.

The leakage becomes more pronounced at higher grades with the result that women are significantly under-represented at senior levels in many SET organisations. In 2008, women held only nine per cent of board directorships in SET FTSE 100 companies[14] and in 2007-08 only 9.3 per cent of all full time SET professors were female[15]. Although there is an improving trend, by 2030 at the current rate of increase, women would still only hold 18 per cent of directorships in FTSE 100 companies and account for just over 28 per cent of full time SET professors[16].

"If we were a manufacturing company and we had 50 per cent of our raw material coming in the front of the plant and only 17 per cent coming out as finished product on the other end, we would say we have a problem. We have leakage in our plant."

Samuel A DiPiazza Jnr
Chief Executive, PricewaterhouseCoopers[12]

These statistics demonstrate that there are still considerable barriers to be overcome to ensure that women can progress in SET careers, and that addressing recruitment issues alone will not achieve this. The effect of taking a career break has a particularly significant impact on the careers of women scientists and engineers, as flexible working opportunities are not easily accessible in SET sectors. Many do not return to the SET industry at all or do not return to these sectors at the same level at which they left.

> *"If just ten per cent of non-working mothers returned to work after maternity leave, employers could save up to £39 million each year in recruitment costs alone."*
>
> Department of Trade and Industry (now the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) [9]

A 2009 UK government review on employee engagement stated that some estimates put the cost of replacing an employee at equal to their annual salary[17]. This is likely to be higher for SET organisations due to the costs of technical training. When the less tangible, but equally significant costs, of lost corporate knowledge and intellectual capital are taken into account, it makes sound economic sense to encourage women to remain and progress with your organisation, and to help them to return after a career break.

> *"It's hard to imagine an engaged workforce where one group felt that their voice was being ignored. Ensuring equal opportunities and fair treatment is an essential strand of an engagement strategy."*
>
> Baroness Margaret Prosser [17]

Research has also suggested that the employees who are most committed are 87 per cent less likely to leave their organisation than those who are least engaged, and they perform up to 20 per cent better (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004, 2008)[17]. The factors that influence women to remain in, and be committed to, an organisation such as feeling genuinely valued and involved and the availability of flexible working options and opportunities for development, are also those that have been shown to positively engage all employees.

4 Capitalise on workforce demographics

The UK has started to experience a significant and unprecedented change in the composition of its workforce. The 'baby boomer' generation is approaching traditional retirement age. Increased life expectancy and a birth rate until recently in decline, are together creating an ageing workforce. From 2010, the number of young people reaching working age is expected to decline by 60,000 for the next ten years, leading to a shortfall of 600,000 people aged 15-24 by 2020[18]. The labour market has also become more diverse, with women forming over 45 per cent of those in employment in the UK[19] and black and minority ethnic groups almost nine per cent[20].

It will therefore become increasingly challenging for organisations to maintain an adequate supply of skilled employees. In the science, engineering and technology sectors, where the workforce is still predominantly the traditional white male demographic, this problem will be particularly acute.

With women currently forming only 12.3 per cent[19] of the SET workforce and over 335,000 SET qualified women choosing to work in non-SET occupations[1], encouraging more women to enter or return to these sectors will be a significant factor in overcoming demographically-driven labour shortages.

To appeal to this changing demographic many SET employers will need to change traditional working styles and practices. Ways forward will include offering more flexible working options, ensuring fair and transparent pay structures and providing equal opportunities for promotion and progression.

"People want to be able to work in different ways as their responsibilities change – not to stop making an economic contribution, but to make a different one at different times. They are looking to their employers and to the Government to provide a working climate that enables them to make changes without impacting on their career success or their earnings potential…The UK's demographics are already changing: the workplace cannot afford not to."

Laura Williams and Alexandra Jones, the work foundation[21]

Organisations that anticipate the trends, and adapt their policies and practices ahead of the rest, will benefit from being an employer of choice in a very competitive labour market.

5 Tackle skills shortages

Whether it is a time of economic strength or uncertainty, organisations need to secure their current and future supply of qualified and experienced employees to remain competitive. As well as facing a longer-term challenge from changes in workforce demographics, many SET industry sectors are also experiencing current skills shortages:

- SEMTA, the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for science, engineering and manufacturing technologies, reported in 2008 that the UK's world-leader status in biosciences is threatened by a widening skills gap, with 39 per cent of bioscience companies reporting hard-to-fill vacancies and 22 per cent with skills shortages[22].

- A 2008 report by Cogent, the SSC for the chemicals, pharmaceuticals, oil and gas, nuclear, petroleum and polymer industries, highlights that the current supply of employees via apprenticeship and vocational routes is insufficient to meet demand in processing and technician roles. It anticipates a significant increase in this shortfall in the five years to 2017[23].

- Engineering UK's 2009-10 report states that while the majority of engineering and technology employers claim that they do not currently face skills shortages there are problems in specific areas such as skilled trades and process, plant and machine operatives[24].

- Research by e-skills uk, the SSC for IT and telecoms, published at the start of 2010, revealed that almost half of recruiters in the digital industries are experiencing skills shortages despite the recession. It also predicts that with the technology sector expecting to need 110,500 new entrants a year up to 2013, skills shortages will increase as the economy recovers[25].

A series of government reviews and reports over the last few years, from the Leitch Review of Skills (2006) to Innovation Nation (2008) and Skills for Growth (2009) have highlighted the need for the UK to improve its skills base, to remain competitive in the global economy. New Industry, New Jobs (2009) and Jobs for Growth (2009) identified science and technology in particular as crucial to economic recovery and growth, with priority sectors including life sciences, digital media and technology, advanced manufacturing, engineering construction and low carbon energy. This increase in demand for SET skills is likely to further exacerbate skills shortages in many SET industries.

> *"We need to accept that while engineering and technology roles are traditionally male centric, future demand shows that this state of affairs is clearly untenable for the UK's competitiveness; there are still difficult issues around masculine work place culture, discrimination and work-life balance to be addressed in order to make careers in engineering and technology appealing to women."*
>
> R Spano et al, Engineering UK, 2008[27]

An investigation into occupational gender segregation found a clear correlation between predominantly male employment sectors and skills shortages[26]. SET employers clearly need more well-qualified scientists, engineers and technologists, and yet by failing to attract or retain women, many are not using the whole pool of skills and experience available to them.

6 Meet procurement standards and stakeholder requirements

Increasingly, customers, partners and other stakeholders expect organisations to demonstrate a visible commitment to corporate social responsibility, including equality and diversity. They often want to see tangible achievements in these areas.

This is reinforced by legislation. The Gender Equality Duty, introduced in 2007, requires public sector organisations to work pro-actively towards gender equality, and this obligation extends to their supply chains. In addition, the new integrated public sector Equality Duty which is expected to come into force in 2011, will require public bodies to tackle discrimination and promote equality through their purchasing functions. A firm that can demonstrate a positive track record on equality and diversity will have a competitive advantage in tendering for public sector contracts.

Microsoft UK stopped using a supplier due to its poor policy on diversity:

"We changed provider because they were cavalier towards the topic. They were supplying a perfectly good service but we stopped using them."

Dave Gartenberg,
Human Resources Director, Microsoft UK [28]

Case study: Halcrow

Halcrow used the Culture Analysis Tool, an employee questionnaire developed by the UKRC, to assess the reality in the workplace of its commitment to being 'a great place to work' for women and men. The results of the survey provided independent, demonstrable compliance with the Gender Equality Duty, which is now included in tenders for public sector contracts.

Halcrow Market Sector Director, Sally Sudworth commented:

"There were good business reasons for getting involved with the UKRC. We wanted to gather evidence for tender documents when competing for work, demonstrate how well our policies were being implemented and address a longstanding skills shortage."

Employees also want to be associated with an employer that takes its corporate social responsibilities seriously. A survey by BT found that more than one third of respondents said that working for a caring and responsible employer was more important than the salary they earned and over 40 per cent said that they would discount an employer that had a bad reputation[29].

A good public record on diversity and inclusion is therefore a significant asset for any organisation. Achieving positive recognition, for instance through equality and diversity awards, can generate a substantial amount of good publicity that can improve customer perceptions as well as staff recruitment and retention.

7 Comply with legislation

The importance to organisations of effective equality and diversity policies and practices is underlined by the substantial body of legislation that now exists on discrimination, as well as on employee protection, parental and carers' rights and working time. Failure to comply with equality legislation can be very costly for an organisation and the number of claims being brought before employment tribunals has increased substantially over recent years.

In 2008-09, 18,637 sex discrimination claims were filed with employment tribunals (11,726 in 2004-05). Equal pay claims for the same period totalled 45,748 (8,229 in 2004-05). The maximum compensation award made in a sex discrimination case in 2008-09 was £113,106, and the average award was £11,025[30]. There have been awards substantially higher than this[31]. In addition, significant out-of-court settlements are sometimes made in response to allegations of sex discrimination[32].

A County Council has paid out over 21 million pounds to settle equal pay claims involving over 2000 women who were paid less than men doing similarly graded work.

BBC News[33] and eGov monitor[34]

It should be noted that, in sex discrimination cases, there is no limit to the level of compensation that can be awarded by the courts. Organisations that fail to pay employment tribunal awards are entered on the Register of Judgements that can be searched by credit reference agencies and members of the public. An adverse outcome can also be very costly in terms of damage to the organisation's reputation and lower staff morale.

Even a successful outcome can incur costs for an organisation in terms of legal fees and lost management time. By developing comprehensive equality and diversity policies and ensuring that they are well communicated and work in practice, organisations stand a significantly higher chance of avoiding legal action and the damaging publicity that can go with it, as well as improving employee engagement.

The key pieces of UK legislation relating to discrimination on the grounds of gender are:

- The Equal Pay Act 1970 and Amendment Regulations 2003

- The Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) 1975 and Amendment Regulations 2003

- The Equality Act 2006 (including the Gender Equality Duty 2007)

Detailed information on current legislation can be found at www.equalityhumanrights.com

In addition, the Government has sought to both simplify and strengthen discrimination legislation through the Equality Act 2010. The Act became law in April 2010 but had not been implemented at the time of going to press. The main provisions of the Act are expected to come into force in autumn 2010. The Act strengthens the enforcement of discrimination legislation, requires public bodies to tackle discrimination and promote equality through their procurement functions, and aims to increase transparency on equal pay and extend the ability of organisations to take positive action on equality.

Full details on the Equality Act 2010 can be found at www.equalities.gov.uk

Comment

At the UKRC we see time and again how steps taken to include and promote women pay dividends. As this report shows, the evidence is growing and convincing.

However, it is not complete. It is therefore vital that we continue to gather information about the effectiveness of different strategies, and their impact. The UKRC is pleased to play a part in this - we are uniquely placed to gather in case studies, analyse data, review new research and share our findings with policy makers, business leaders and others. Values matter in business and - as this report clearly shows - gender equality matters as well. Not just for reasons of fairness, but because it is a sound commercial approach.

Transforming practices so equality and diversity are part of an organisation's DNA takes time but it does bring the substantial benefits highlighted in this report, including enhanced motivation, productivity and reputation. To their credit, a growing number of employers, membership organisations, education institutions, research centres and others are making public their commitment to gender equality. Many of them work with the UKRC to build best practice.

Gender equality can bring early returns. But it is also integral to a more far-sighted strategy, one which ensures that science, engineering and technology play their full part in the regeneration of the economy, and that enables women to play a full and active role as scientists, engineers and technologists and as members of society.

To quote the World Bank, gender equality is finally being seen as smart economics.

Annette Williams,
Director, the UKRC

next steps

1 Deliver effective gender equality improvements

Change can be incremental; you don't have to introduce every possible action at once. Taking an informed and structured approach towards gender equality improvements, including how and when to introduce them will contribute to a successful outcome.

Having a diverse workforce doesn't translate automatically into positive business benefits: people need to feel valued and involved, fairly treated and have equal opportunities to progress.

Five steps to gender equality

1. **Ensure top-down commitment to improving gender equality:**
   Visible support by senior management sends a strong message that gender equality matters and will help ensure that employees engage with, and contribute to, the improvements.

2. **Build a business case based on the needs of your organisation:**
   Gender equality improvements that balance the needs of the business and employee interests are the most likely to achieve successful and sustainable change.

3. **Develop a plan:**
   Base the plan on concrete evidence about what needs improving – do research, consult widely and gather evidence. Staff are an invaluable source of information on whether gender equality policies and procedures are working in practice. Employee data and the human resources department's records of staff enquiries and complaints are also useful sources of information.

4. **Implement:**
   Take a step by step approach - piloting initiatives is often a good way to test and evaluate changes before making a permanent commitment to a particular policy or practice. Ensuring that staff are informed and involved is also key to successful change.

5. **Monitor and evaluate:**
   Data monitoring and analysis is essential for assessing and demonstrating your progress towards achieving gender equality. It also focuses attention on what needs to be done.

"What gets measured gets done. We know that in business, so why would we not apply that to diversity? If diversity is based on a business case and you approach it from a business rationale, why would you not have the rigour that you would have in place for any other business initiative?"

Lisa Kepinski,
Diversity and Inclusion Director, HP [35]

2 Overcome challenges and objections

These are some questions that can arise in the process of building gender equality:

Q **Will introducing gender equality improvements be very costly for my business?**

There are many improvements that can be made that do not have to increase costs – such as reviewing where you target your recruitment adverts, offering choices in benefits such as childcare vouchers instead of a company car, keeping in touch with staff on career breaks. Even where there is some additional cost or administration required, the benefits may often outweigh the costs. The key is to make choices that support your business needs as well as fulfilling your social responsibilities.

Q **Shouldn't my organisation employ the best person for the job regardless of gender?**

Yes! Employers must make sure that they recruit on the basis of merit. However, if your recruitment practices do not inspire women to apply, you are restricting the pool of 'best people' available to you. In addition, poor job specifications and interview practices can deselect talented candidates – for instance valuable experience gained outside of paid employment may be overlooked and talented applicants not spotted as a result.

Q **Why is it necessary to take positive action and how is this different from positive discrimination?**

Positive action refers to measures that are taken to counteract the effects of past discrimination or to help eliminate stereotyping. In terms of gender equality, examples include using positive statements in your recruitment literature that applications from women are welcomed and having positive images of women in your recruitment and promotional materials. Taking positive action is lawful and will help you to recruit and retain women, widening the pool of skilled employees that is available to you.

Positive discrimination, in this context, usually means employing women because they are under-represented regardless of whether they have the relevant skills and experience. Positive discrimination is unlawful.

Q **Isn't it the responsibility of Government to encourage more young women to study SET subjects and take up SET career choices?**

The Government has a crucial role to play in establishing initiatives that promote SET education and career choices for women. However, Government efforts will be unsuccessful if not supported by employers. It is employers who can, for example, provide female role models to inspire young women at open days and school or college events, who can offer equal access to work placements to young women and men and who can provide workplaces that offer equal career opportunities and a welcoming environment for both sexes.

Q **There are more women joining our organisation and industry sector now. Do we really need to take further action to help women progress?**

Improved levels of female recruitment will not automatically translate into more women progressing to higher levels in your organisation. Lack of flexible working options, career planning that does not accommodate or compensate for career breaks or lack of access to training opportunities for part-time staff are just some examples of policies that tend to disadvantage women more than men. Positive action is often necessary to ensure that both women and men have equal opportunities to progress.

3 Be recognised for your gender equality achievements

SET Fair Standard - The gender equality award for businesses and organisations in science, engineering, technology and the built environment.

The SET Fair Standard recognises and rewards good practice in gender equality. Successful applicants are assessed and awarded at one of three levels: committed, achieving or outstanding. Carried out by experienced consultants, the straightforward on-site assessment highlights existing good practice and provides feedback and advice on areas for improvement.

Who can take part?

The SET Fair Standard is customised for:

- corporates and large organisations
- small and medium sized enterprises
- professional institutions
- research councils
- further education providers
- employer member organisations (such as sector skills councils)

What do you get?

By taking part in the SET Fair Standard you will:

- build your reputation as an organisation of choice for scientists, engineers and technologists
- increase your success in meeting procurement equality requirements
- gain market advantage by using the SET Fair Standard logo

Organisations that achieve the Standard are able to display the SET Fair logo in all their publications and on their website, as proof of dedication and commitment to gender equality. In addition, the UKRC can help you with local and national publicity – part of the process of your celebration, setting you aside from your competitors.

> *"We see one benefit being that the SET Fair Standard crosses all the sectors of science, engineering, technology and the built environment – we want a comparison with other high tech companies. It would be a fantastic step forward to be able to compare ourselves with those outside the sector."*

Vicky Beckwith,
Human Resources Director, Operations, Halcrow Group Limited

For more information contact the UKRC.

4 Find out more

UKRC Resources

The UKRC publishes a range of newsletters, guides, reports and briefings on gender equality and science, engineering and technology. These can be ordered from the UKRC, and are also available online.

Our website has information about our services for business and organisations and our services for women. There is also a comprehensive calendar of training and events taking place across the UK.

You can talk to our consultants about practical and tailored ways of building gender equality in a wide range of organisations.

UKRC Good Practice Guides

The UKRC publishes a number of Good Practice Guides on all aspects of gender equality in science, engineering and technology including:

- Mentoring
- Recruitment and selection
- Promotion and progression
- Flexible working
- Monitoring gender diversity
- Equal pay
- Workplace cultures
- Transforming boardroom cultures
- Employee development and public appointments

These can be downloaded from our website: www.theukrc.org

Useful organisations

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
www.equalityhumanrights.com

The EHRC has a wealth of information on gender equality legislation and practice on its website, including 'Talent not Tokenism: the business benefits of work force diversity' (CBI/TUC 2008), which contains lots of useful information, including good practice examples, to help organisations build their business case for gender equality.

Business Link
www.businesslink.gov.uk

Business Link provides a comprehensive resource on equal opportunities and diversity.

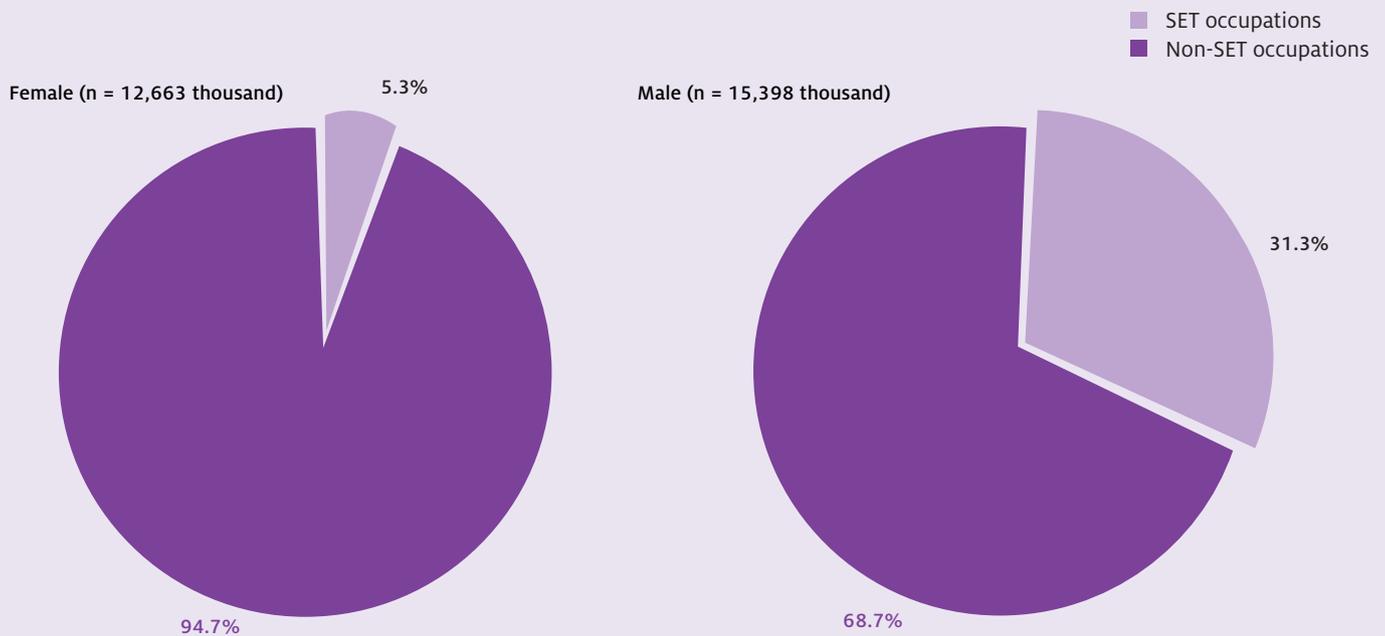### Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
www.cbi.org.uk

The CBI includes equality as one of its policy areas; aiming to ensure that the government's equality and diversity agenda works for business. In 2009 it published 'Promoting diversity – the power of procurement', a report which demonstrates, through case studies, how positive action on equality reinforces the delivery of excellent public services and that tackling inequality does not have to be time-consuming or costly.

Key facts and figures

Women are under-represented in SET in the UK:

- In 2008, nearly 13 million women were working in the UK – of these only 5.3 per cent were in SET occupations (see pie charts below)[19].

- Of 15.4 million men in employment in 2008, almost one third worked in SET[19].

- Of almost 5.5 million people working in SET occupations (including skilled trades) in the UK in 2008, only 12.3 per cent were women[19].

The UK workforce 2008: SET and non-SET

SET occupations
Non-SET occupations

Female (n = 12,663 thousand)

5.3%

94.7%

Male (n = 15,398 thousand)

31.3%

68.7%

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Secondary analysis by UKRC. Data source: Office for National Statistics, Social and Vital Statistics Division and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. Central Survey Unit ,Labour Force Survey January - December 2008 Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor]

Women qualify in SET but are lost at key transition points:

- In 2007-08 women made up 33.4 per cent of all higher education students in SET disciplines[36] and in June 2009 they made up 42.2 per cent of GCE A level students in STEM subjects[37].

- As of 2008, some 620,000 women in the UK are graduates in SET subjects. However 70.2 per cent of these do not work in SET occupations[1].

SET occupations by gender (%) in the UK, 2008

Occupation	Female	Male
SET managers	12.2	87.8
Science professionals	39.4	60.6
Engineering professionals	6.9	93.1
ICT professionals	14.4	85.6
Health professionals	46.3	53.7
Scientific researchers	38.5	61.5
Building professionals	18.6	81.4
Science and engineering technicians	22.5	77.5
Draughtspersons and building inspectors	19.2	80.8
IT service delivery occupations	24.4	75.6
Health associate professionals	78.2	21.8
Skilled metal and electrical trades	1.2	98.8
Skilled construction and building trades	0.9	99.1

%

Women are needed in SET leadership:

- In 2008, women held only 9 per cent of board directorships in SET FTSE 100 companies, and exclusively male boards still existed in 35 per cent of SET companies[14].

- In 2008, only 27.5 per cent of SET FTSE 100 companies had more than one female director on their boards[14].

- In 2007-08, only 9.3 per cent of all full-time SET professors were female[15].

- Although the representation of women in SET leadership is increasing, by 2030 at the current rate of change, women would still only hold 18 per cent of directorships in FTSE 100 companies and account for just over 28.3 per cent of full time SET professors[16].

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